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New Literary History, Volume 45, Number 2, Spring 2014, pp. 157-181
(Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: 10.1353/nlh.2014.0017

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David Scott

I

For a number of years now, more than a decade and a half, in fact, I have been engaged in a research project that I have come, retrospectively, to think of as an investigation that links the ideas of generation, memory, tradition, and criticism—all dimensions, to my mind, of temporal experience. The project, as yet unfinished, in ways perhaps impossible to finish (I’m coming to learn), has entailed conducting long, detailed interviews with Caribbean writers, scholars, and political actors whose work and working lives have been formative in the making of the postindependence Anglophone Caribbean.1 These interviews take the overall form of intellectual biographies. They seek to connect the arc of an individual life (shaped by particular familial, historical, political, social, cultural, and economic circumstances) with the emergence of a distinctive itinerary of literary or scholarly or political concerns. They aim to reconstruct in dense, sometimes intimate detail the historical milieu of a person’s thinking and acting in such a way as to draw out the events that have oriented their preoccupations, the events that one might see, looking back, as having animated the problem-spaces in which their intellectual questions—their quarrels, their anxieties, their hopes and horizons, their doubts, their objects—emerged as questions to have answers to. But notably, too, as I was to discover only later, the interviews have a profoundly personal or autobiographical dimension, inasmuch as, in large measure, what I am aiming to understand through them is the social imaginary of the Caribbean that is my inheritance as someone born on the very eve of political independence and who, therefore, has no firsthand experience, no immediate memory, of colonialism, of its orders of prejudice and exclusion, its techniques of repression and violence, and, correspondingly, no lived experience of the anticolonial longing for political freedom, of the anticipation of sovereignty.

When I began this work, in the context of initiating the journal Small Axe, I scarcely had a notion of what I was doing.2 I was feeling my way,
making the path by walking. Thus the first two interviews—with Lloyd Best and Stuart Hall, conducted within a day of each other, in March 1996—are marked not only by their brevity but also by their naiveté of structure and purpose when compared with later interviews, for example, those with Sylvia Wynter or George Lamming or Rex Nettleford or Orlando Patterson. I certainly had no covering theoretical language (of the sort that will interest me in this essay) by which to name or orient what I was up to. I was only trying, tentatively, blindly, to assuage an inchoate sense of temporal unease, an unease concerning a certain experience of political time. The temporality of this unease I would now, in retrospect, call generational, inasmuch as it is marked by my sense that within the span of my own lifetime crucial aspects of the historical cognitive-political present in relation to which we conceive the background as well as the horizon of criticism have altered with bewildering speed and apparent finality. So much so (or so radically so), it seems to me, that it is no longer as clear as it once appeared which memory of the past or which expectation for the future ought to frame the exercise of our critical faculties, our moral judgments, concerning our dissatisfactions with the present. This generational apprehension, to give it now a more concrete autobiographical specificity, grows out of my experience of the collapse and seeming dead-end of the projects of political sovereignty, anti-imperialist self-determination, and socialist transformation that gave shape and point to the making of the Anglo-Creole Caribbean I take to be my generation’s inheritance. I gradually became motivated by my sense of the effective exhaustion of the nationalist and socialist social imaginaries of the intellectual-political generations that conceived and activated these projects. By this I mean to suggest less my belated recognition of the inadequacy of these generations’ intellectual or political understanding of what was required of sovereignty or socialism, or their betrayal of their promises and principles once they grasped the reins of power within their hands, than the diminishing returns, so to call them, of the moral vision through which they sought to connect their collective historical experience of colonialism with their radical demands and expectations for nationhood and, subsequently, socialism. I mean to register (however inchoately) my apprehension of these generations’ increasing inability to define the present in a critical idiom that captures the distinctiveness of the prevailing social-political malaise, the new problem-space, that can shelter the capacity to evoke directions of possible alternatives, or at least that enables imagined futures to be invested not only with hope and desire and longing but also with conceptual traction and political will. In other words, and to be less abstract about it, my generational apprehension was of the exhaustion of men and women now growing
old and whose sense of a life played out I could tangibly discern as I became, myself, a man of a certain age.

Thus it began to dawn on me that in some relevant sense I did not fully appreciate where the older—preindependence-formed—generations were coming from, how their lives connected to their intellectual visions. I did not fully appreciate how they had come to imagine their futures in the moral and cultural-political terms in which they imagined them, which pasts (and which notion of pasts) they mobilized to inform their sense of what their present demanded and how the present could be made into the futures they hoped for. And it seemed to me, therefore, that a certain kind of inquiry was called for, one in which the task was not to write, from the outside, as it were, an intellectual history of these generations but to reconstruct, from the inside, the intellectual problem-spaces out of which these older generations had conceived and promoted the anticolonial project of political sovereignty, the imagining and building of the new nation-state, and the anticapitalist search for socialist change that I would come to inherit, more or less, as a ruin.

And it seemed to me, further, that one methodological way of approaching the labor of this internal reconstruction of generational social imaginations was through the modality of the structured life-history interview, a staple of a certain kind of anthropological inquiry. For, the promise of such an interview, thought of as a formalized technique, is that it offers a mode of investigation that simultaneously underscores two existential and hermeneutical dimensions crucial to my concerns: dialogue and time.

The interviews are organized around the classic dialogical structure of question and answer, and this facilitates a path of constructive understanding that is both exploratory and participatory. They are exploratory in the sense that my interlocutor and I are not truth making; we are not in search of final or objectively valid statements but engaged, rather, in an exchange that, while directed, is nevertheless relatively open-ended, unpredictable, vulnerable to contingency. The interviews are participatory in the sense that there is a hermeneutic codependence between my interlocutor and myself in which the form and content of my interlocutor’s answers are unintelligible without the form and content of my conditioning questions, in which the overall shape of the ensuing historical understanding is inseparable from the give-and-take, sometimes agonistic, never critical, as my interlocutor and I have to continually adjust to each other’s perspectives over the uneven course of the dialogue. Importantly, what is going on in these interviews is not a “conversation,” properly speaking—casual, undirected, accidental—nor is it a disputatious argument, a sophistic, dialectical joust, in which I am trying to rhetorically persuade, or analytically outdo, my interlocutor.
My aim is neither consensus nor critique, but clarification. Above all, I am *listening*. I am challenging myself to *hear* something new about a past that somehow also belongs to me. Admittedly, therefore, the interviews neither presuppose nor encourage symmetry or reciprocity between my interlocutor and myself. To the contrary, they underline rather than dissolve certain dimensions of social difference, specifically generational ones. The vector of curiosity runs largely *one* way, as does its counterpart, the work of memory. There is, on the one hand, someone who wants to *know* (namely, me), and, on the other, someone (my interlocutor) who is being urged to *remember*. And this distinction—or, rather, this uneven *relation*—is precisely constituted by *temporal experience*. Not only does the extended interview take place in *time*, over time (thus enabling, even obliging, that recursive dialogical negotiation of question and answer between my interlocutor and myself), but also the dialogue itself in this form is precisely *about* time, specifically, *generational* time: the *temporality* of generations.

In my interviews with Caribbean intellectuals, then, the dialogue is constructed as a live, cross-generational exchange. But the time we inhabit in this exchange is evidently *paradoxical*. It is not a self-evident, seamless, or one-dimensional duration. We sit together, my older interlocutor and I, in a present time, the time of our *copresence*, built around our temporally overlapping lives as well as our sense of mutual recognition that there is something *enough* we share, something enough we hold in common, to give point to our dialogue. In this sense we are *co-temporal* with each other; we are *co-temporaries*. But at the same time, we are not simply *coeval* with each other, because we do not come to this copresence from the same past or from the same *relation* to pasts. We do not share the same *habitus* of temporal experience. We are, in this sense, not *contemporaries*. We are not necessarily motivated to remember pasts by the same experience of presents, nor are we haunted by the same displacements of *futures past*. I am looking back through my generational experience of the ruin of the postcolonial and postsocialist present at what my interlocutors are remembering looking forward to as a horizon of future possibility. And this is why the questions I pose to my interlocutors seek less to provoke them to rehearse accounts of—or to render justifications for—the directions they pursued in the itinerary of their lives than to urge them to reconstruct (or constructively remember) the internal discursive landscape of *problems* that animated the social imaginary of the horizon of political futurity—of sovereignty, of socialism—toward which they thought they were headed.

In short, driven by an intimation of the conceptual salience of generations to the recovery of the intellectual past in the present, and for
thinking about the relation between collective historical experiences and social imaginaries of futurity, I began to see generations as linked to a chain or network of other temporal concepts, including memory, tradition, and criticism. My wager is the following: if a dialogical relationship (whether implicit or explicit) to older intellectual generations is important for the ways younger intellectual generations collectively remember or forget, it is important because generations, as social institutions of time, are important to those agonistic, constituting, and orienting processes of transmission of values, virtues, languages, practices, disciplines, and so on—the process that is usefully called *tradition*. And how a rising generation works out its relation of connection and disconnection to fading generations and their particular ethos of preoccupations—the structure of feeling that shaped their questions—is to my mind crucial to thinking about the deconstructive and reconstructive work of *criticism*.

II

To gain some purchase on the salience of the idea of generations as a particular social institution of time—or institutionalization of temporality—relevant to the questions of tradition and criticism, I turn to Karl Mannheim’s essay “The Problem of Generations” (1927). While not completely neglected in the contemporary human sciences, this essay has nevertheless not been made central to discussions of the *lived experience of social time*—which is, to my mind, where it belongs. Indeed it seems to me that the whole problem of temporality that structures the essay has been largely missed in favor of the “social constructionism” that is read as implicit in Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. As is well known, “The Problem of Generations” is one of a number of interconnected essays that Mannheim wrote in Germany in the 1920s in which, in a tentative, experimental, though still protosystematic way, he is trying to come to terms with what is both an *intellectual crisis* (namely, the prolonged crisis of historicism in the German-speaking world in the wake of Hegel’s death, when the collapse of the dominance of Absolute Idealism threw into question a whole range of concerns not only with history but also with science, understanding, values, life, being, and so on) and a *political crisis* (produced by the enormous catastrophe of the Great War and its chaotic aftermaths of revolution and counterrevolution, and the disintegration of Weimar through the 1920s). Mannheim was born in 1893 and therefore was himself part of the so-called front generation that defines in many ways our very sense of the principal features and dimensions of generational identity; his essay may be read, therefore,
as offering a conceptual portrait, from the inside, of the self-conscious experience of a particular **conjuncture** of generational disillusionment and displacement.\(^{10}\) At least as I read it, the problematization of time in the social being—and in knowledge about the social being—of generations is partly Mannheim’s response to the challenges posed by a moment of grave uncertainty, one in which the familiar idioms of Marxism, liberalism, and conservatism seemed less than adequate.\(^{11}\)

Mannheim’s sensibility for the conceptual styles of thought embodied in political creeds is undoubtedly one reason why he begins his essay by contrasting two prevailing approaches to the question of generations—a “positivist” approach and a “Romantic-historicist” approach—that can be roughly mapped onto contrasting attitudes to the larger social, historical, and political realities of the day. For positivists (and Mannheim has French liberal-rationalist thinkers in mind, primarily Comte) generations constitute a problem reducible to quantitative terms—reducible to some general law of the rhythm of historical development based on the regular succession of measurable spans of human life. Generations, here, are quasi-natural kinds. As Mannheim puts it, the aim of the positivists is to “understand the changing patterns of intellectual and social currents directly in biological terms, to construct the curve of the progress of the human species in terms of its vital substructure” (278). Indeed, here we have the center of Mannheim’s critical focus: the positivist motivation to mobilize the problem of generations as an illustration of progressive time. What is characteristic of this view, he says, is that it adopts a “mechanistic, externalised, concept of time, and [attempts] to use it as an objective measure of unilinear progress by virtue of its expressibility in quantitative terms” (281).

It is precisely this conception of time and its cognate progressivist notion of history that is challenged by the rival approach to generations, namely, that of the (largely German, conservative) Romantic historicists. For Romantic historicists, Mannheim argues, the problem of generations offers evidence not for but **against** the concept of a progressive linear development of history. Here, by contrast with the positivists, the problem of generations points to an **interior**, as opposed to an exterior, temporality, one that cannot be measured but only **experienced** in qualitative terms. Generations in this view are quasi-existential kinds. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it is Wilhelm Dilthey who is represented as the **agon** of this approach, who is said to have introduced the distinction between an internal and an external conception of temporality into the historicist debate.\(^{12}\) According to Mannheim, what interests Dilthey about conceiving generations as a framework of temporality, as an institution of temporalization, is that it thus becomes possible to displace such purely external units of
time as hours, days, weeks, months, years, and so on (that is, the units of chronological time) by a more hermeneutically meaningful appreciation of the experience of lived time (281-82). Memorably, Dilthey rejects the lifeless and abstract formality of theories of time derived from mathematical or physical models (as in Kant’s, for example) because what these are unable to appreciate is the extent to which experience is itself a living mode of temporality. For Dilthey, then, there is not merely the historicity of the object but also the temporality of the subject to consider. We do not merely live in history, in the commonplace sense that we inhabit a social and political environment conditioned by historical forces; rather, as historical subjects our consciousness is itself saturated with time. Or, to put it another way, history is not merely an object of consciousness, there to be apprehended by a timeless subject; rather, temporality itself is the objective content-of-the-form of experience.

Moreover, Mannheim sees Dilthey as recognizing that conceptual interest in the problem of generations does not rest solely in the prosaic fact of their succession, that generation follows generation one after the other, but also, indeed more so, in the fact of their coexistence, that they overlap with each other. Different generations live at the same time. It is precisely the coexistence of generations that renders the temporality of generations paradoxical, because it brings into view the contrasting, sometimes conflicting, ways prevailing intellectual, social, and political circumstances are experienced by individuals who, while living at the same time and in the same milieu, are at different points in their biosocial lives, some in their formative, some in their later, years. It is the coexistence of generations, therefore, that poses the question of contemporaneity. In Dilthey’s view, contemporaries are not those who are merely cotemporal, who are, so to speak, together in the same world, but those who are linked to each other by having been subjected to similar formative influences—such as political upheavals or natural disasters (282). Contemporaries constitute a generation. The fact of the noncontemporaneity of cotemporal generations underscores that, as Mannheim puts it, “every moment in time is in reality more than a point-like event—it is a temporal volume having more than one dimension, because it is always experienced by several generations at various stages of development” (283).

Of course, in thinking about Dilthey in this way, Mannheim is in effect compressing and condensing (and this, too, in his own idiosyncratic way, for his own purposes) a whole intellectual history of Dilthey’s complex intervention in the historicist debate and his role in turning that debate, as one historian has put it, “from a taxonomical dispute about method and logic to a philosophical reflection on the meaning of historical
existence.”13 From a certain point of view, Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, published at the same time as Mannheim’s essay, is the best-known uptake—and critique—of Dilthey’s hermeneutic turning.14 Indeed, Mannheim recognizes that it is, as he expresses it, but “one step” from Dilthey’s formulation of time as a problem of the historicity of *life* and experience to Heidegger’s ontology of the interior temporality of *Being as such*, his ideas of *thrownness* and *Fate* (282-83).15 However, if it can be said that Heidegger adapts and transforms Dilthey’s hermeneutic of temporality on the plane of ontology, Mannheim (while not relinquishing this register altogether) responds to two other shaping influences: on the one hand, he holds on to certain neo-Kantian preoccupations with the prospect of a *methodological* theory of knowledge; on the other hand, he retains, from his old mentor Georg Lukács, a concern for specifically *social* knowledge, and from the Weber brothers (Max and Alfred) a systematic interest in social theory and empirical research. Because for Mannheim, what Romantic historicism often obscured is the fact that between the natural-physical and the mental-spiritual-cultural spheres there is a level at which *social* forces operate (284-85).16 In short, in Mannheim’s view there remains a specifically “sociological” problem about generations to be explored, an important dimension, he argues, for the help it would afford us in understanding the structure of social and intellectual movements, especially in times (as were his—and are ours) of rapid social and political change. In a certain sense the work of “The Problem of Generations” is to translate Dilthey’s intuitions about the contemporaneity and noncontemporaneity of generations into the idiom of a formal sociology of knowledge.

Perhaps the most fundamental, and at the same time most difficult, term in Mannheim’s problematization of the idea of generations is *location*. It is fundamental inasmuch as everything hangs on it. To pose the question “In what does a generation consist?”—or, more precisely, “In what does the *unity* of a generation consist?”—is to arrive at a social phenomenology of “location.” However, the unity that such location constitutes does not consist of the kind of social bond that characterizes “concrete social groups,” whether based on ties of biological proximity (such as the family) or on the application of a rational will (in self-consciously organized associations such as youth groups). Generations for Mannheim are social forms, but they are governed neither by an abstract *rational* process nor by an abstract *biological* one. Rather, the unity of a generation consists of a similarity of location of a number of individuals in a social whole—individuals of roughly the same biological age, it is true, but who collectively share a range of formative historical experience (of wars, for example, or revolutions) that tends to orient
them around, and predispose them toward, a certain style of response in thought and action (290). In a certain respect (though these are not exactly his terms) the idea of location in Mannheim’s use of it is meant to identify a temporal moment in the social organization or social expression of the dynamic of “life”—a term not to be taken, as we are apt to take it, as a mere category of the biological sciences but as a frame in which to think of the plenitude as well as the finitude of human existence. One way of thinking about Mannheim’s idea of generations, then, is that it was his sociological translation of the “life-philosophy” of Dilthey and Simmel and, indeed, of Nietzsche.

With the idea of location Mannheim tries to tease out some of the implications of the fact that generations are successive and continuous as well as overlapping and cotemporal. For example, one consequence of the fact that new participants are always emerging in a cultural process is that there is always a disjuncture between those involved in cultural innovation and those involved in cultural accretion, between those who initiate change and those who inherit the social fact of it—or as Mannheim puts it, the same individuals do not accomplish cultural creation and cultural accumulation. (One of the questions that compelled Mannheim himself in these years was precisely how his generation was to make use of the philosophic achievements, as he perceived them, of earlier generations.) As individuals we engage a cultural world of objects and initiatives created before us by members of earlier generations. This means that each generation inhabits a “changed relationship of distance” (293), as Mannheim called it, to the accumulated heritage, and thus a changed relationship of vantage from which to use or assimilate or resist or transform what has been received. Or again, if individuals are endlessly entering the cultural process, so individuals are endlessly withdrawing from it. People age and die. This raises the problem of social memory: how the past is collectively remembered and forgotten. And for Mannheim, there is a distinction to be made between what he calls “personally acquired” memory and “appropriated” memory (that is, between memories based on a direct experience of an event and memories based on what older generations have experienced). But such memories, even when they are personally acquired, depend on the age at which they come into being, depend on the “stratification” of consciousness upon which the event impinges. This is a disjuncture that forms an important dimension of my conversations with Caribbean intellectuals: the discontinuity, specifically, between those who were part of the generation that made political independence and those who, like myself, inherited it as a given social fact.
Further, because Mannheim is concerned not merely with sameness and structure but with difference and action, he makes a distinction (on the analogy of the Marxist distinction regarding classes) between generations as “potentiality” and generations as “actuality”—that is, between mere copresence in relation to the experience of a social event or social process and the active participation in what Mannheim called “the common destiny” (302-4). And even within actual generations, Mannheim introduces a further distinction, between what he calls “generation units.” He argues that people with, say, radically differing political views (for Mannheim, Romantic conservatives as against liberal rationalists) can be thought of as belonging to the same generation yet to two “polar-forms” of the social and intellectual response to a historical stimulus experienced in common by all (304).

In my view, then, Mannheim’s essay still offers us at least a useful starting point from which to consider the constituent dimensions of the temporality of generations. It keeps us alert to the interior existential landscape of time, since it constitutes the lived experience of older and younger generations differently located within a social-historical process. It keeps us alert to the fact that mere copresence in historical time does not make for contemporaneity—that contemporaneity depends, rather, on a similarity of formative influences, a shared location, that creates the conditions for a rough commonality of perspectives. And it enables us to see that generations need not be thought of as homogeneous social forms; they are internally differentiated depending on how the tendencies inherent within them are realized by individuals or concrete groups. This seems to me important for thinking about how traditions are existentially embodied and transmitted, and argued with and over as a matter of criticism.

III

It is with this temporality of generations, and, in particular, with the contrast between the political sensibilities of successive-yet-overlapping generations, that the interviews I have conducted with Caribbean intellectuals are concerned. The interviews are a platform on which to think together a number of intersecting planes of temporality: biographical time (the time of a life), historical time (the time of events), and generational time (the time of contemporaries). They are about the internal temporal rhythms that organize and characterize a generation’s way of living the relation between pasts, presents, and futures—of living, if you like, the relation between experience, memory, and expectation. In them I am
aiming to explore the senses in which each generation might be said to constitute, if not exactly an *entelechy*, then at least a distinctive structure of temporal feeling, a style that sets the tone of its moral and political sensibilities. And in this sense it may be apt to talk about the moral and political temporality of noncontemporaneous generations, the way, for example, a younger generation might look back from a present it experiences as a ruin or dead-end in company with an earlier generation remembering looking forward to this not-yet-present as the anticipated horizon of its sovereignty or political emancipation.

To a very large extent, virtually all the interviews I have conducted with Caribbean intellectuals, writers, and political actors have had a single preoccupation: they are doggedly trying to catch a glimpse of the ways these individuals, standing where they did and looking out toward what they perceived to be the horizon of the coming future, understood the project and challenges of Caribbean sovereignty—whether the earlier nationalist, or later socialist, one. In these interviews I am trying to gain an appreciation of the temporal texture of expectations that shaped the moral and aesthetic and political commitments in the work they undertook in the name of that future-to-come. Again, obviously, I am staging all this implicitly (and often explicitly) against the backdrop of the temporality of my own moral and political experience of the present; I am, in effect, implicitly (and often explicitly) rereading my own present and redescribing its relationship to its generational pasts.

I now turn briefly to one of the interviews, one I conducted in 2005 with Rex Nettleford, the distinguished Jamaican intellectual and choreographer who, alas, passed away in February 2010. A complex personality and a creative voice of diverse preoccupations and accomplishments in postcolonial Jamaica, Nettleford is interesting to think with—and think about—because he so self-consciously embodied one style of the *habitus* of that generation socialized within the nationalist movement as it matured and consolidated itself in the late 1940s and 1950s in a punctuated process of constitutional decolonization. Thus, Nettleford was an *active* participant in the “common destiny” (as Mannheim called it) of his generation, the Jamaican generation that came of age in the immediate aftermaths of the great labor upheaval of 1938. At the same time, however, this generation certainly did not realize its “potentiality” in a single, homogeneous way. Born in 1933, Nettleford was a contemporary, for example, of Sylvia Wynter (born 1928) and Stuart Hall (born 1932); but in terms of both the color-class structuring of that generational location and the intellectual response to the event of decolonization that constitutes its overall frame, he was not identical to
either Wynter or Hall. Moreover, through Nettleford one can catch a glimpse of the contrast with a younger, yet still overlapping, generation of radicals—people I have interviewed such as Robert Hill and Rupert Lewis, for example, born in 1943 and 1947, respectively—who inherited political independence as an “unfinished” project of sovereignty and who in consequence are noncontemporaneous with Nettleford. Needless to say, my own generation (born at the end of the 1950s and in the first years of the 1960s) is cotemporal with both these older generations but shares neither’s location of temporal experience. For our purposes here I want to extract two moments in the long conversation I had with Nettleford in Kingston over the course of many months that capture instructively something of the tension among noncontemporaneous generational perspectives.

The first moment (perhaps, really, an ensemble of moments) occurs early in the interview in response to my questions about growing up, family, school, and the social and political atmosphere that enveloped these. Nettleford, notably, was born in the eighteenth-century slave-trading port town of Falmouth, Trelawny, in the shadow of one of the great monuments to slave abolition, the Knibb Memorial Baptist Church; but he spent his early formative years in the relative but distinctive poverty of the postemancipation peasantry in the small village of Bunker’s Hill on the edge of the almost mythical Cockpit Country, home to the western branch of the maroons.24 He was not yet six years old when in September 1938 (in the wake of the labor riots of May and June that year) N. W. Manley, O. T. Fairclough, Ken Hill, H. P. Jacobs, and others formed the People’s National Party, which then became the platform for the nationalist movement; and he was only eleven when the first adult suffrage elections were held in December 1944.25 Therefore, as Nettleford liked to say, he grew up, quite literally, with the emerging project of the “new” Jamaica, the Jamaica of the new nation-in-waiting. In a fascinating description (and against the generational assumptions embedded in my questions) he recalls that this new Jamaica was not narrowly political, certainly not narrowly party political.26 This is important because this idea of the “national” as the construction of an ideological political contest between the party organizations of the rival cousins, Manley’s People’s National Party and Alexander Bustamante’s Jamaica Labour Party, is the retrospective sense of my generation, for whom nationalism seems less a social or cultural affair than an instrumental party-political one. By contrast, for Nettleford growing up in the 1940s, the emerging sense of the new Jamaica was a more diffuse experience ofbildung, articulated through a variety of idioms and institutions and in a variety of affective, aesthetic, and cognitive registers. Most impor-
tant, according to Nettleford, the new Jamaica had to do with a “sense of self,” a sense of possibility, and the sense of a destiny for which one, as he puts it, had to prepare: “The future was a wide open space. . . . I was very conscious that you could make your way, because . . . Jamaica was opening up.”

Notice the picture of colonialism as a power that principally denied a proper sense of self, that is, of authentic identity, and notice the idea of nationalism as a disciplining moral labor to be actively performed on the self, one that had to be undertaken in anticipation of the arrival of the new dispensation of political freedom. This is what “preparation” entailed—the responsible cultivation of readiness. Notice, too, the confident experience of a progressive rhythm of temporality in which the unwanted or rejected colonial present is rapidly becoming the past, and the approaching postcolonial future is eagerly anticipated as an open horizon of untold possibility. And notice, finally, the coupling of this temporal experience with a poetics of geopolitical spatiality, such that the horizon of expectation is linked to the overcoming of constraints governing how one could belong to the new sovereign territoriality of the nation-space.

For my generation, in contrast (the first generation that has no concrete experience of colonialism), the temporalities and spatialities of the now-existing nation are not of this sort. For my generation the nation has become a state; it has ceased to be an imagined and projected ideological horizon. It is experienced now not as an open possibility but as a closed totality, an “actually existing” structure of instrumentalized distributions and exclusions and opportunities and constraints. Here again, vividly, is Mannheim’s contrast between those who create and those who accumulate the cultural heritage. It would be inconceivable, I think, for anyone of my generation to experience Jamaica as “virgin territory,” the telling phrase that Nettleford later uses to describe the contrast between the old England and the new Jamaica on the eve of his return after taking his degree at Oxford University in the late 1950s—and not because for us the nation, after fifty years, say, is now itself growing old but because the horizon in relation to which it is experienced, and the social space in relation to which it can be imagined, has now immeasurably contracted and become mediated by the pressing realities of managing and contesting state power.

The second moment I want to briefly consider occurs somewhat later on in the interview, when I am trying to understand Nettleford’s seemingly ambiguous relation to the radicalism of the Jamaican generation of “1968,” the generation of Robert Hill and Rupert Lewis, for example. This is an explosive, impatient, generation. Born in the 1940s it lived political independence in 1962 as a betrayal, not an achievement. It was
formed ideologically by black power, the event of the Cuban Revolution, anti-imperialism, and Marxism; and it was ignited into action in October 1968 by the expulsion from the country of the radical Guyanese historian, Walter Rodney, by the repressive Jamaica Labour Party regime. This is the generation that founded the popular weekly paper Abeng and launched a cultural-political attack on the “neocolonial” state that would mutate into the revolutionary Marxist politics of the 1970s. Specifically I ask Nettleford to tell me what he thought of Abeng and the young radicals associated with it. It is an important question for me because, on the one hand, I have no immediate experience of the event of 1968 (for my generation it is an “appropriated memory”), and, on the other hand, the figure of Nettleford I grew up with in the late 1970s, a picture of him drawn largely by this agonistic generation of 1968, is of a black conservative who defended the status quo instead of throwing in his lot with the revolutionary movement. In his reply to me about Abeng, Nettleford says,

First of all, I loved the name—again, my African thing. Oh God, the thing was wonderful! I thought it was a necessary and appropriate polemical journey for the times. Abeng was useful because it was giving another side; it was discrediting existing establishment hegemony. I think it probably overdid itself, but that was its job: discrediting most of everything that had gone before. It spoke in terms of a failure of just about everything leading up to independence, and independence itself. And my response to Abeng was that in truth and in fact this was necessary. Let all ideas contend. But if you sit down and really carefully look at the thing, the people who were writing could not have been writing had it not been for what had gone before. I am very conscious of that. Again, it’s because one has come, not out of a position of privilege, but I like to feel that I grew up with Jamaica, and was able, by luck, to take advantage of the—albeit limited—opportunities. And therefore I had a responsibility not to be smug. . . . But it’s interesting to see what happened, because a lot of the people behind Abeng felt that as a vehicle for expression, articulation, whatever, it was not enough. And a number of them were open to Marxism, you would have noticed. So Abeng, even with its ancestral links to the Maroons, Africa, and what have you, was too limiting for the Marxist theorists. We have so far interpreted the world, now let’s change it. Fine! Even that process I understood.

There is in this short passage a very nuanced sense of generational location, indeed, of a tension between successive if still overlapping generational locations—a tension that again illuminates Mannheim’s idea of a “changed relation of distance” between the creators and the inheritors of cultural-political initiatives. But consider the expression “a responsibility not to be smug.” Nettleford wants us to notice here the contrast between a younger generation’s arrogantly dismissive attitude
toward the older generation that did the defining work of decolonization (men and women born between about 1890 and 1915), and his own sense of connection and responsibility to them. He wants us to notice the contrast between their unwillingness to recognize any internal, genealogical relationship to, and therefore dependence on, what this older generation had made possible, and his own sense of almost filial appreciation—even gratitude. In Nettleford’s view, this younger radical generation was refusing to see in political independence a foundation, perhaps flawed, on which new work and new directions were possible; all they could see was betrayal, and therefore all they could express was denunciation. And for Nettleford, interestingly, this smug disdain for the independence generation was the result of both the privilege of youth and the privilege of class. With one or two exceptions, the members of the generation of 1968 who formed Abeng were not only people born in the 1940s (and so would not share with him the essential identity with the form of the nationalist project) but they were largely people of relative privilege: brown, urban, middle-class, and university-connected people, not poor black people from the rural peasantry. They were not only people ten to fifteen years younger than Nettleford but people of very different social background. The radicals had inherited independence not as something for which sacrifices had been made but as the assumption of an entitlement for which neither respect nor appreciation was relevant. The generation of 1968 was made up of men and women who had no shaping experience of being part of the independence movement as an active process, and thus they had no excitement about the prospect of new institutions and new citizenship. Rather, the generation of 1968 was driven principally by a sense of irritation and dissatisfaction with the nation-state as a constraining political reality and by what Nettleford would see as an intemperate demand for immediate change. For them the theoretical reasons of black power or of socialism underwrote a revolutionary idea of change-without-remainder—one that my generation, in turn, would come to question.

These, as I say, are but two moments in the interview in which you can feel the tension between generational perspectives. For me this is the virtue and the burden of the interviews. They are a dialogical documentary terrain on which to think out loud about the temporality of intellectual generations. The very dialogue itself is an instantiation of an intergenerational exchange about the contending perspectives from which we argue about the moral history we share. And in particular, given my own formation and preoccupations, the interviews are a terrain on which to gain some appreciation of the internal texture, the complexity, of the ideas and expectations of sovereignty that informed the thinking
of those who lived it: to give a sense, as I have said, of how my generation looks back from a present it inhabits as the ruin of what an earlier generation looked forward to as the horizon of its hope.

IV

I want to close these reflections by briefly elaborating what is at stake in a mode of inquiry, such as I am commending here, that works through the idea of a temporality of generations, or, anyway, through the idea of a temporality of intellectual generations. As I suggested at the beginning, ultimately my target is less “generations” as such (I am not aiming at a revised sociology or anthropology of generations) than the prospect of reframing the problem and practice of criticism. What interests me is the prospect of a way of practicing a relation to the past in the present that dispossesses criticism of its presumption of sovereign distance from its worlds of engagement by taking the critic to always be generationally located in various, and variously connected, intellectual traditions. It is the relation, then, that generations might have to the idea of criticism and traditions that I am aiming at. My interviews with Caribbean intellectuals, at least as I conceive of them, are so many chapters in mapping the interpretive generations of a Caribbean intellectual tradition.

One of the problems about criticism that has exercised me for some years is how one builds an intellectual relationship with an earlier, formative generation of thinkers with whom one holds something in common—a relationship that both registers one’s sometimes considerable disagreement with, even incomprehension of, their particular understandings and arguments about the connections among pasts, presents, and possible futures and, at the same time, acknowledges and honors the senses in which one’s own understandings and arguments about such connections depend on, and in some important ways are made possible by, theirs. I think of this perhaps pervasive conundrum as central to the temporal problem of an intellectual tradition.

My preoccupation with this relation among generations, traditions, and criticism grows out of my dissatisfactions with a quite prominent tendency in contemporary theory to regard the work of earlier generations of intellectuals as work to be surpassed, superseded, on the grounds, for example, that their conceptual frameworks hang on what can now be identified as “metaphysical” assumptions. This is the wearisomely familiar antiessentialism or social constructionism that is almost an instinctive gesture in much contemporary criticism. Typically the approach of this strategy is to identify the ways—in the matter of some significant topic,
such as race, say, or gender or nation or sexuality—an earlier generation of scholars was guilty of gross philosophical naiveté, of failing to recognize what should have been obvious, namely, that the concepts they are so blithely naturalizing are in fact historically specific social constructions. The genealogy or deconstruction that follows will only confirm how curiously ignorant this earlier generation of intellectuals was of some very elementary principles of conceptual analysis. There is something very troubling about the conceit of this critical strategy, and for some years I have been occupied with thinking about its sources and its effects. Part of what troubles me is the presentist hubris embodied in the assumption of the past’s lack of philosophic sophistication, and in the implicit idea that the present is more theoretically advanced, more enlightened, more . . . than a past thereby invariably read as error, as somehow deficient, impoverished. There is at work here, apart from anything else, an ill-conceived notion both of the temporality of criticism and of the temporality of the subject position of the critic.

I can expand the point I am trying to make here by roughly connecting R. G. Collingwood’s hermeneutic idea of the “logic of questions and answers” to Mannheim’s idea of a temporality of generational locations. Readers of Collingwood’s famous autobiography will doubtless remember his argument—well worth repeating for its disarmingly elegant simplicity—that a body of knowledge consists not merely of propositions or statements that give it positive standing but of these together with the often unarticulated questions they are meant to answer. Therefore, to understand any such assertive acts of thought it is necessary to reconstruct the questions that have provoked, and therefore shaped or oriented, them. Part of the value of Collingwood’s insight is that it obliges us to recognize the dialogical character of discursive communication, and consequently that to properly think historically one has to think in terms of the problem spaces in which distinctive conceptual or ideological provocations demand response. History is more interestingly thought of as an uneven series of changing questions than as a progressive succession of answers. From this perspective, it is easy to see that in accusing thinkers from earlier generations of having bad—that is, essentialist—answers, what younger critics assume is that this older generation of theorists were asking then the same questions as the new generation are posing now, that is, questions from the same problem space as the young critics now inhabit. They assume, in other words, that these older generations of thinkers are their contemporaries. But of course they are not. We have already seen, after all, that successive—even overlapping—generations are in fact noncontemporaneous; they do not share the same moral-political location of experience and thus discursive space of questions. Indeed,
we have seen that successive and overlapping generations are better thought of as being shaped by distinctive formative experiences that in effect produce distinctive frameworks of collective memory and different “frameworks of anticipation,” as Mannheim called them (297). And thus it may be that criticism needs to revise its approach to the past-in-the-present in such a way as to oblige it to unlearn its assumption of the epistemological privilege of the present, so as to rethink the relation between a generation’s problem-space and its moral-political vision. Perhaps this will be one way for later generations to better discern whether or to what extent the questions earlier generations asked continue to be questions worth asking, that is, to better discern the conceptual distance between one generation and another. It is no longer clear to me, for example, that the questions anticolonial nationalists posed about the new nation-state or development or the international order, or that Marxists posed about “the revolutionary transition to socialism,” continue to be questions worth having answers to. It may be that our present demands that we pose new questions.36

Perhaps, too, thinking the past’s relation to the present in this way will be one path along which criticism can better learn to think in terms of an idea of traditions. For the point I am making here about criticism and generations (by roughly linking Collingwood and Mannheim) can be connected to an argument about intellectual traditions drawn roughly from the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Alasdair MacIntyre.37 Working from within admittedly different, not always consonant, intellectual sources, both Gadamer and MacIntyre reject the Enlightenment’s counterpositioning of reason and tradition (the view that critical reason defeats tradition) and urge that the virtue of the idea of a tradition is precisely that it enables the recognition of the internal temporality of reasons and judgments and of their modes of moral and intellectual authority in relation to the subjects constituted by them.38 Reasons and their authorizations, and their idioms of human finitude, are internal not external to traditions.39 Thus, in this view, tradition cannot be defeated by reason; rather, the defeat of rational arguments is the result of an adversarial contestation of rival authoritative reasons within and between (representatives of) traditions. But for Gadamer and MacIntyre too, the doubts about the posture of the Enlightenment’s assumption of a single ground and horizon of reason that overcomes tradition can be extended in important respects to the radical perspectivalism of much contemporary theory (whether offered in the name of Derrida’s deconstruction or Foucault’s genealogy) that takes itself to be post-Enlightenment.40 The impulse of genealogy and deconstruction, of course, is subversion. Often figured in the rhetorical guise of an ironist, the deconstructionist and
genealogist both aim to enact a playful opposition to some constraining past-in-the-present by undermining our normative dependence on the conventions of the status quo. Such subversion unmasksthe pretensions of positivism and rationalism to an absolute ground that guarantees a single horizon of moral identity and community. Neither Gadamer nor MacIntyre is entirely unsympathetic to this practice of subversion (they both practice a historicizing hermeneutics of suspicion regarding the status quo), but in their view the deconstructionists and genealogists have in some important ways misconceived the problem about grounds and therefore misconceived the argument about horizons. The deconstructionist and genealogist, remember (with Nietzsche taken as the inspiring organon), unmask the objectivist’s assumptions about grounds not in order to offer in its place a revision of our idea of them but in order to dismiss grounds altogether as necessarily a universalizing act of will-to-power. But this endless play of subversion is only plausible, Gadamer and MacIntyre suggest, through a philosophic sleight of hand by which the ironists’ perspectivalism is not extended to themselves as located critics, as knowing subjects of philosophic utterance constituted somehow, and standing somewhere, including (Mannheim might add) generationally. For Gadamer and MacIntyre, by contrast, the problem about grounds is not that they do not exist (in some relevant ontological sense) but that they are not external to historically constituted discourse and practice, including, of course, the discourse and practice that constitute generationally located interpretive subjects of discourse and practice.

Grounds and horizons, in short, are internal to the disciplines and virtues of traditions—to say which, of course, is not to maintain that they are fixed forever, sealed time out of mind (as many critics of the idea of a tradition assert). It is to acknowledge that although grounds and horizons shape the contours of our finitude, they do not foreclose our ability to revise them. The point about grounds and horizons for both Gadamer and MacIntyre, though, is that they are revisable only by engaging their internal temporal structures, the historically constituted logic of question and answer through which, in their relevant intellectual traditions, they have been recognized and argued over by generations as grounds and horizons as such. Similarly, to think of grounds and horizons as internal to traditions is no guarantee of agreement across generational parties to a dialogue, nor does it necessarily enlist their mutual affirmation of the inherited status quo. Conflict and misunderstanding are endemic to living traditions. But what is avowed by the perspective of intellectual traditions is the recognition that across generations there is enough that is held in common for there to be, in the first place, something at stake in raising a challenge to the received opinion.
In my view, then, Gadamer and MacIntyre are enormously important for connecting criticism to traditions. But notably, despite their use of the linguistic figures of “dialogue” and “argument,” and consequently their departure from the monological thinking so characteristic of moderns, both are considering tradition principally through the interpretation of written texts and not, as I am trying to do in the interviews, through spoken discourse. For Gadamer, for example, the task of his philosophic hermeneutics is to enter into an interpretive dialogue with texts (his preoccupation with Plato’s dialogues is well known), so as to bring the written tradition “out of alienation” and into the living present.43 I imagine MacIntyre would not disagree, even if he might put it differently. But surely there are meaningful differences between entering into a relationship of question and answer with a written text (whether ancient or modern) and, as in my interviews with Caribbean intellectuals, doing so with a living person. I do not need to stand on a spurious claim about the authenticity of speech over writing to maintain, for example, that the answerability of a written text and the answerability of my interlocutor facing me in real, if noncontemporaneous, time are not of the same order, are not equivalent.44 I would argue that the hermeneutic possibilities of dialogical interaction in the interviews are more open to the varied contingencies born of the presence of reflexive voices engaged in recursive verbal action: questioning, probing, misunderstanding, re-framing, doubting, dissenting, reiterating, evading, rejoining, all in an ongoing round of clarification and elaboration that aims to extend and complicate our understanding of certain remembered pasts in the generationally overlapping cotemporal present. Among other possibilities, therefore, what the interviews offer is the prospect of giving substantive form to an as yet not clearly defined hermeneutics of listening.45

V

Perhaps one way of capturing the relation that I am trying to evoke here between generations, traditions, and criticism is to suggest the following: if the idea of an intellectual generation names the temporally constituted social and existential location of cohorts of individuals sharing roughly similar founding experience, the idea of a discursive tradition names the dramatic and agonistic narrative through which such successive and overlapping generations give embodied point to the normative virtues or moral-political worldviews that make them distinctive. Generations are the existential means through which traditions become embodied and by which they extend themselves in time;
traditions are the authoritative discursive content of generations. In this view, criticism might be thought of as a practice of situated remembering (or remembering-and-forgetting), an internal mode of worldly engagement in which a moral-intellectual tradition speaks and listens to itself in order to recall and quarrel with itself across the existential time of its successive and overlapping generations. At least, this is one way of thinking about the dialogical work of the interviews I have conducted with Caribbean intellectuals, one way I am just beginning to explore.

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This essay has a long history. The very earliest versions were offered, first, at the Institute for Historical Research, University of London, in February 2011; then, as the Gilbert Osofsky Lecture, University of Illinois, Chicago, in April 2011; and subsequently, as the keynote for a symposium on the intellectual history of the Arab Left, American University of Beirut, in July 2012. In its present form, it was given as the keynote lecture at a conference on “Contemporalities,” the Graduate Center, CUNY, in April 2013; and finally, presented in outline at the New Literary History conference “Interpretation and its Rivals,” University of Virginia, in September 2013. Needless to say, I am grateful to all those who made these occasions possible, and to those who offered criticisms and suggestions for improvement.

NOTES


3 This is a contrast that needs further exploration but one on which I want (however provisionally) to stand: the distinction, namely, between writing intellectual history (even the intellectual history of an intellectual tradition) and writing through the reconstruction of an intellectual tradition to which one recognizes oneself as being connected, however agonistically, and which one might want therefore to advance as much as argue (even disagree) with. Within the context of the latter—the internal reconstruction of an intellectual tradition to which one owes something of one’s identity—one has stakes (moral
and intellectual and political), and therefore something stands or falls on how one argues in the present over the past, over how earlier generations argued the futures that one will come to inherit as one’s own. For an important contribution to the former project in relation to a discussion of Caribbean intellectual formations, see “Intellectual Formations: Locating a Caribbean Critical Tradition,” special issue, *Anthurium* 10, no. 2 (2013), scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol10/iss2/1.

4 For a fascinating discussion of the question of dialogue, see Dmitri Nikulin, *On Dialogue* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006). While very pertinent to my concerns here, Nikulin is not interested in the sort of dialogue that I am focusing on, namely, interviews.

5 There are other kinds of revisionary work to be undertaken as well, in my view, work that rereads, for example, the story of decolonization and reassesses our conventional judgments of the cultural texts that sought to understand it in nonprogressivist—even tragic—terms. See, for example, David Scott, “The Tragic Vision in Postcolonial Time,” *PMLA* 129, no. 4 (forthcoming).


7 For book-length studies, see Colin Loader, *The Intellectual Development of Karl Mannheim: Culture, Politics, and Planning* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985); and Henk Woldring, *Karl Mannheim: The Development of His Thought* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1986)—the first a work of intellectual history, the second a more historical-philosophic investigation.


13 Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism*, 153. This is a book of fascinating intelligence, not least for my purposes because it thinks the argument about time and history in this German debate as a kind of generational dispute in the age after Hegel.


15 On this idea of Heidegger’s, the paradoxical temporality of Fate, see the exemplary exposition of Magda King in *A Guide to Heidegger’s “Being and Time”*, ed. John Llewelyn (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 305–6.

16 Mannheim had been part of Lukács’s circle in Budapest critical of the Second International. Although he never himself embraced political Marxism, he seems to have been greatly influenced by Lukács’s Hegelian turning and the publication of *History and Class Consciousness*, which appeared in 1923. Mannheim was enormously influenced by Max Weber (the “vocation” essays, not least), and of course Alfred Weber was one of the supervisors of his *Habilitationsschrift*.

17 This is why the idea of a *habitus* has seemed an apt way of characterizing a generational location. See Eyerman and Turner, “Outline of a Theory of Generations,” 93, 99.

18 See the fascinating chapter 5 on “life” in Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany*, 139–60.

19 Recall Dilthey’s remark that each generation “forgets the experience of the one before it.” See Dilthey, *Formation of the Historical World*, 303.


22 See Scott, “To Be Liberated from the Obscurity of Themselves.” I recognize, of course, that my published interviews are a *mimesis* of dialogue; they are transcriptions of dialogue, rather than the dialogue itself. And therefore they already diminish the rich multidimensionality of the live, spoken dialogue.

23 Nettleford was a student of Isaiah Berlin’s at Oxford University in the 1950s and was significantly influenced, in my view, by Berlin’s value pluralism and the ineradicable tension between liberalism and nationalism. See Scott, “To Be Liberated from the Obscurity of Themselves,” 97–100, 144–56.

24 On Falmouth, see Carey Robinson, *The Rise and Fall of Falmouth, Jamaica* (Kingston: LMH, 2007); on the English Baptist missionary William Knibb, see Catherine Hall, *Civilis-


28 Scott, “To Be Liberated from the Obscurity of Themselves,” 160.

30 See, helpfully, Rachel Manley, Drumblair: Memories of a Jamaican Childhood (Toronto: Ken Porter Books, 1996). Manley tells the story of her grandfather, N. W. Manley, being upset with the “angry young men” from the university who did not appreciate what his generation had done for them (395–96).


32 Remember that the National Dance Theatre Company, Nettleford’s great contribution to the cultural institutions of the new nation, was founded precisely in 1962: it was birthed with the nation. See Rex Nettleford, Dance Jamaica: Cultural Definition and Artistic Discovery; The National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, 1962–1983 (New York: Grove, 1985).

33 Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997) is not often read as articulating a practice of social criticism connected to a problem about generations, but readers of that book will no doubt recall how Gandhi chides his young radical interlocutor for his desire to break with an older generation of nationalists, in particular, Dadabhai Naoroji. Gandhi writes, “Is Dadabhai less to be honored because, in the exuberance of youth, we are prepared to go a step further? Are we, on that account, wiser than he? It is a mark of wisdom not to kick against the very step from which we have risen higher” (15).


35 This was in essence the point my book Conscripts of Modernity sought to argue.
37 Though this is not acknowledged, I have a sense that Truth and Method was an important text for MacIntyre’s turn toward the idea of a tradition. See Christopher Stephen Lutz,

39 The question of “authority” is in many ways at the heart of the misunderstanding of the idea of a tradition. For a helpful discussion, see Hannah Arendt, “What Is Authority?” in Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought (New York: Viking, 1961), 91–142.


41 For both Gadamer and MacIntyre, the question of the dynamism and motion of traditions and the conflict and argument that keep them going is important. See Gadamer, Truth and Method, 304, and MacIntyre, After Virtue, 26.

42 This is a point that Michael Walzer has eloquently made in a book of many years ago, Interpretation and Social Criticism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987) that has significant points of contact with both Gadamer and MacIntyre. Walzer writes, “Morality, in other words, is something we have to argue about. The argument implies common possession, but common possession does not imply agreement. There is a tradition, a body of moral knowledge; and there is this group of sages, arguing. There isn’t anything else” (32). There is, of course, a connection to be made between Walzer’s “three paths of moral philosophy,” namely, those of discovery, invention, and interpretation, and MacIntyre’s “three versions of moral inquiry,” encyclopaedia, genealogy, and tradition.

43 Gadamer, Truth and Method, 368.

44 Gadamer is not unaware of this issue. See Truth and Method, 377. It should be stressed that this dialogical mode, at least as I use it, is far removed from the celebrated form of question and answer in the Socratic dialogue. Anyone who reads Meno or Crito or Phaedo can really be under no illusion that here the question-and-answer structure of the dialogue is really just the rhetorical device through which the defeat of Socrates’s ideological enemies or philosophic rivals is staged. However, I am not interested in defeating or overcoming my generational interlocutors. See Richard Bernstein’s useful discussion in “The Conversation That Never Happened (Gadamer/Derrida),” Review of Metaphysics 61, no. 3 (2008): 577–603. And see too Nikulin, On Dialogue, 146–49, on the text-bound tradition on which Gadamer relies.