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Intellectuals and Power: Supplicants or Dissidents?

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ABSTRACT

This article looks into the changing conception and roles of intellectuals in modern times, especially with relation to power politics. It begins by discussing their ability to effect social or political change or voice opposition to the status quo. It then moves to establish a distinction between private and public intellectuals with regard to their political relevance and commitment. The article specifically discusses the interrelationship between intellectuals and power, using as illustrative examples and for theoretical framing the cultural work of Edward Said and Michel Foucault on the one hand and the fictional work of J. M. Coetzee on the other hand. It is argued that there is an inevitable clash between intellectuals and power which can be tackled in two ways: opposition or conformity. While there is no escape from the dynamics of power relations and influence, intellectuals have the crucial and ethical duty of "speaking truth to power," creating in the process a counter power. There is, however, an essential difference between approaching power as a supplicant pleading for truth and justice or as a dissenter who rejects or challenges power. In a nutshell, intellectuals have a difficult and even ambivalent relationship with power structures.

Keywords: Intellectuals; Power vs. Politics; Said, Foucault; Coetzee

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1. Introduction: Intellectuals and Commitment

By nature, intellectualism is a politicized activity. In times of political turmoil, intellectuals are expected to side with the marginalized and oppressed against unjust, hegemonic powers. Nowadays, for instance, the world is witnessing a brutal war in Gaza strip in Palestine, a war that has claimed thousands of innocent civilians, mainly women and children. Intellectuals (regardless of national, religious, or ethnic affiliations) have to say something about this war, in public. They are expected to give the full picture of the historical context surrounding this war and even condemn the killing of civilians on both sides, the Palestinians and the Israelis. Admittedly, the ongoing media distortion and manipulation of this war is making it difficult to get the full picture about the history of Arab/Israeli conflict and the settler colonialism still taking place in the historic land of Palestine since 1948. All in all, silence is not an option.

Debates on the role and function of intellectuals in the 21st century waver between influence and ability to transform societies (being paradigm shifters) on the one hand and declining authority on the other hand (being paradigm followers). While some view intellectuals as politically committed and relevant, as agents of change and criticism, others still view them as essential for social and political stability since they can act as "mediators between public authorities and society" (Karpova et al. 1). While some theorists have viewed them as classless or as a separate class, the Italian Marxist critic Antonio Gramsci has famously argued that intellectuals are class-bound, carrying the hopes and the socioeconomic demands of their group:

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. (qtd. in Kurzman and Ownes 66).

Gramsci's thought has highlighted the political potential of intellectuals and made them organically evolve with their social classes, and in particular the working class.

In the words of Sam Dallyn et al., the basic and general (even universal) functions of an intellectual include objectivity and involvement, i.e. being "a critical and independent commentator, the philosophical gadfly, the conscience of the public, the person who stands outside the crowd and tells them to wake up or die, the professional irritant against established interests" (1036). Directing the aesthetic tastes, artistic creations, and refined sensibilities in a society, intellectuals "elicit, guide, and form the expressive dispositions within a society" (Shils 7). And if they do not participate in revolutions, they provide the doctrines which can act as the basis for such revolutions. Moreover, a collaboration between intellectuals and the authorities is necessary for "order and continuity in public life and for the integration of the wider reaches of the laity into society" (Shils 21). Unlike scientists and professionals who possess and disseminate specialized knowledge, intellectuals are typically distinguished in their engagement in public debates. In this case, Edward Said's public interventions in favor of the rights of Palestinians and against different forms of oppression as well as his cultural criticism go beyond his specialization in literature and adhere to the definition of the public intellectual as politically relevant. While we might disagree on the exact definition and function of intellectuals in modern society, we still concede that contemporary life is imposing new challenges, options, and responsibilities on intellectuals worldwide.

In general, an intellectual should not be moved only by oppressions taking place in their culture or geographical affiliation. The ethics of care and impartiality transcend national borders and regional loyalties. Postcolonial discourses are often distinguished with regard to their practitioners and based on "two postcolonial spaces, the First or Third World" (Rajan 605). Oftentimes, postcolonial intellectuals from the Third World address and move to the First World academy. Ernest Mandel argues that intellectuals in the Third World and the imperialist countries can develop different reactions to imperialism, ranging between having "a bad conscience" as a "refusal to admit colonialist repression and wars" (13) or seeking to lessen the misery of the formerly colonized or call for aid in the case of Westerns intellectuals as opposed to attempts at "individual commitment and group responsibility" (13) in the second group of Third World intellectuals. In each case, we are dealing with different levels/forms of political commitment. Between refusal to indict the oppressor and attempting to plead for him before the oppressed, intellectuals lose both in political status and commitment. According to Arif Dirlik, "The Third World was a residual category, a dumping ground for all who did not qualify as capitalist or socialist" (136). The term, being involved in hegemony and counter-hegemony as well as ideological restructuring, can imply a sense of complicity on the part of Third World intellectuals who can contribute to the creation of the Third World as the West's other. As Malreddy Kumar clarifies, "a genuine counter-discourse can be produced only by those who are usually spoken for, that is, the subalterns, not by those who (claim to) speak for them – the postcolonial intellectuals)" (667). Therefore, intellectuals in the Third World cannot and should not evade the historical and political responsibilities their cultures impose on them. Nor can liberal humanist intellectuals in the rest of the world evade similar responsibilities.

On the other hand, the critic Gayatri Spivak maintains that the oppressed in general, and the female oppressed in particular, pose risks and pitfalls for the intellectual. Representing/speaking for the oppressed can be as harmful as the historical and economic conditions that oppress them. Hence, the logic that those who cannot represent themselves "must be represented" (71) adds insult to injury. The oppressed may not be a monolithic category in the first place, and those claiming to represent them in the First World can be well complicit in their oppression. Hence, Gayatri Spivak speaks of "the possibility that that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of the Other as the Self's shadow" (75). For Spivak, this is an instance of "epistemic violence" whereby postcolonial intellectual might seek to "constitute the colonial subject as Other" (76). In the case of the female subalterns, Spivak contends: "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (83). Spivak, commenting on the double colonization Third World subaltern women suffer from between patriarchy and imperialism, argues that such a woman disappears between "subject-constitution and object-formation" and "tradition and modernization" (102). Male and female intellectuals in the Third World have serious political duties. Such intellectuals become less drawn to questions of ethics and

philosophy and more involved in political issues of dealing with and responding to power. Within the postcolonial context, Western intellectuals need to be wary of misrepresentation or appropriation; and local intellectuals are not expected to replicate Western discourses.

2. Power and Politics: Private vs. Public Intellectuals

Michel Foucault, arguing in a relevant line of thought on power dynamics in society, contends that intellectuals have a crucial role to "struggle against the forms of power in relation to which [they are] both object and instrument" (qtd. in Kurzman and Owens 70). However, the fact remains that changing technologies and lifestyles are necessarily changing the roles and functions of intellectuals as agents of or victims of power. In the words of Rajendra Pandey, and in modern times in particular, "the functional aspect has become more dominant than the liberal aspect of the role of the intellectual" (71). This means that as intellectuals become more specialized, hired and conformists, they necessarily become less radical and less critical. To maintain a critical stance, intellectuals might need less of complicity with institutional power structures and more of the "amateur" stance, in Edward Said's words, as will be argued in the next section.

Overall, the idea of the autonomous, innocent intellectual is probably becoming a myth nowadays. More emphasis is given to a new conception of intellectuals as committed or engaged critics and ideologically invested. This view is best captured by Pierre Bourdieu's plain formulation: "the intellectual is a writer, an artist, a scientist, who, strengthened by the competence and the authority acquired in his field, intervenes in the political arena" (3). Bourdieu also contends that he intellectual ought to be "reflexive, that is to say critical of himself and, in particular, critical of behaviour determined by the search for the profits of visibility" (5). Thus, the autonomy of this intellectual class is questionable. While intellectuals can gain their intellectual capital within what can be viewed as an autonomous universe, they "enter into the political arena" and impose values once they get out of their universe (Bourdieu 3). Once the intellectual speaks to or writes for the public, they transition form the private into the public realm. Intellectuals who have a distinguished publication history, we should remember, have a great influence and readership. Undoubtedly, interviews and recorded speeches augment this influence of the public intellectual.

In a similar line of thought, Edward Said argued that intellectuals should avoid provincialism and narrow specialization in their search of universal values like truth and justice. They should have a cause and be affiliated with a political movement or institution so that they are this worldly rather than other worldly ("Intellectual and War" 20). Arab intellectuals, in particular, should not simply seek to please Western media or Western policy makers. Rather, intellectuals should be frank and not identify with the oppressor. Calling things by their names is one responsibility of the Arab intellectuals seeking to be fair and free from influence. Hence, Said calls for rejecting the role of the "native informant" or "guinea pig witness" speaking about local issues when asked to do so ("Intellectual and War" 18). Objectivity entails, for Said, being able to speak truth regardless of the source of oppression: "We have to deal not only with general problems in the Arab world, but we have to be able to say things about *this* [USA] country, where we live and work" (18). Despite living and working from the USA for most of his life, Said mainly wrote about the Middle East and Islam and their relationship to Western imperialism.

Commenting on the political function of intellectuals, Herrera-Zgaib contends that "The intellectual function is essential to every modern society because it defines the fabric of hegemony" (154). And according to Edward Shils, intellectuals "have lived in a permanent tension between earthly power and the ideal" ("Ideology" 459), which means that they have always stood with relation to ideology and politics as well as realities of life rather than simply abstractions and ideals. Speaking of ideology (and commenting on Gramsci's notion of "organic intellectuals"), Clement explains that organic intellectuals, while advancing the experiences of the dominant class as those of all society, "provide the link between dominant and subordinate groups by articulating the former's experiences and interests as common values, taken for granted assumptions, and shared interests" (351). Thus, organic intellectuals manufacture ideologies supportive of the interests of the powerful. In the words of one critic,

> While it is hardly a misnomer, the term *public intellectual* harbors its own built-in contradictions. It embodies the notion of exposing both the certified intellectual and his or her process of intellectual reflection to a broader public audience, which, by nature, is only interested in the product….The 'public' label then is predetermined, not by any evidence of a popular audience, but by the preemptive labeling of the mass media. (Morris 671)

Public intellectuals establish a reputation for themselves outside the confines of their institutions or universities. Writing and speaking to audiences outside the circle of professional colleagues and intellectual peers is one sign of achieving the public status. According to Christopher Hitchens, "To be a public intellectual is in some sense something that you are, and not so much something that you do" (62). It has nothing to do with being exceptionally smart or holding a specific academic rank. When the work of intellectuals is properly done, the result can be bridging "the chasm between the ivory tower and the public" (Todorova 708), making intellectuals more practical and more down to earth from an interventionist perspective. The public intellectual does not live within the enclaves of academic institutions, narrow specialization, or technical expertise.

3. Edward Said and J. M. Coetzee: The Intellectual vs. Power

Intellectuals, we have suggested so far, stand in a dubious relationship with power. Hence, exile and censorship have been ways and means of dealing with them, especially the outspoken group. While some might serve as apologists and propagandists for the state or political authority, some might choose to directly oppose and criticize by way of serving as "catalysts" or "legitimators" of change (Eisenstadt 17). Oppositional intellectuals do not get the sympathy or support of the government, while complacent ones might enjoy rewards, wealth, and positions.

Intellectual autonomy, hence, is difficult to maintain. In the words of Ewan Stein, the state "continues to exert an overweening influence within domestic public spheres, through the direct or indirect control of intellectuals and their ideas" (4). Despite this influence, some intellectuals try to achieve objectivity in the face of state power. Eisenstadt asserts that one common image of intellectuals is that of the conscience of the nation: "the guardians or would-be guardians" of a society, especially when "that conscience was thought to be opposed to the established order" (1). Eisenstadt characterizes the tension/ambivalence in this relation in such terms: "Political authorities need the basic legitimation provided by intellectuals, religious or secular, and that provided by elites. Intellectuals and intellectual organizations need the protection and help of political institutions for the establishment and maintenance of their own positions" (8-9). While intellectuals legitimize political authority, they also receive the benefits of patronage by this political authority. In short, in a society where power relations are prevalent, one major task of the intellectual becomes "to establish a counter-power" (Gabriels 568) to the prevalent or dominant one.

Within academic circles, Noam Chomsky is known as an intellectual who has been speaking truth to power, publicly arguing against the war in Vietnam and opposing governmental foreign policy of the USA on ethical and moral grounds. Denouncing US imperial policies in the Middle East and the war on Iraq, Chomsky worked from within one of American's and the world's most vital academic centers, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as a celebrated linguist as well as a strategic political thinker. He often spoke the truth that many Americans did not hear from their press, social media, or political leaders. In this light, he fits Edward Said's criteria for the oppositional intellectual whose main task is to speak truth to power. Transcending his professional training in linguistics, Chomsky left his mark on foreign politics and ethical questions, again conforming to Said's conception of the "amateur" intellectual. Chomsky fits Edward Said's criteria for the public intellectual as a figure of dissent speaking truth to power.

Essential to the cultural work of Said and the postmodern fictional work of the South African writer J. M. Coetzee was the intricate relationship between the intellectual on the one hand and power/authority on the other hand. Said's most adequate contribution on this issue is his 1993 Reith Lectures published under the title *Representations of the Intellectual.* Said represents the intellectual, mainly, as an oppositional figure of exile and dissent, as an "outsider, 'amateur,' and disturber of the status quo" (x) and as "the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power" (xvi). Hence, breaking communication barriers, stereotypes, and reductive logic and upholding standards of truth and justice while making universal connections are all essential tasks of the intellectual for Said. Patronage, authority, and corporate rules can all limit the intellectual. Taking side with the underrepresented and disadvantaged is a key role because the intellectual for Said has a "public role" against "orthodoxy and dogma" (11). Instead of pleasing power, the intellectual should upset and challenge or even embarrass it.

Two points should be made here about Said because they constitute the intersection with Coetzee on the topic. First is Said's conviction that the intellectual "always has a choice either to side with the weaker, the less well represented, the forgotten or ignored, or to side with the more powerful" (32-33). This means that the intellectual faces two sides: domination and subordination. Speaking out for, representing, and testifying to suffering, therefore, can be one major task. Second

is the question of how to deal with power/authority. The intellectual for Said has two options: challenge or opposition on the one hand and conformity and pleasing on the other hand. As Said puts it, "But in either case, there is no getting around authority and power, and no getting around the intellectual's relationship to them. How does the intellectual address authority: as a professional supplicant or as its unrewarded, amateurish conscience?" (83). Choosing to speak truth to power does not come without a price, and it is no empty idealism. Said explains: "it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change" (102). Intellectuals, then, have an ethical duty of siding with the marginalized subalterns rather than the oppressors. It is a real challenge to give up the benefits of siding with the powerful. While this article is being drafted, to reiterate a point already made in the introduction to this argument, the world is witnessing a ruthless war being carried out on Gaza strip in Palestine. Thousands of innocent civilians have been killed in the matter of days. The vital question now is: who among intellectuals can speak truth to Western hegemony? Who can defend the owners of the land against occupation and genocide? Who among intellectuals can get heard in the West that blatantly supports the dispossession and dislocation of millions of Palestinians? While we should not exaggerate our expectations on what intellectuals can achieve, silence is not an acceptable option nor is absorption in narrow-minded academia a way out.

Said's argument regarding the intellectual's relation to power can be better understood if juxtaposed against a relevant literary work. In J. M. Coetzee's 1980 novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (hereafter abbreviated as *WB*), the main character and narrator is an old Magistrate serving a declining Empire in a remote outpost. With border turmoil, the Magistrate receives guests from the imperial center, the Third Bureau, officials investigating raids by tribespeople, hunters, and fisher folks living in the vicinity. The Magistrate's encounter with authority/power is manifested in his encounter with Colonel Joll, a ruthless torturer assigned with investigating border trouble. The Magistrate is an intellectual of sorts, a reader of classics, a reader of the weather, a guardian of the law-court, a cartologist, and an archeologist (41). His ethical dilemma begins with his questioning of the mentality of the torturer who exercises violence to get the "truth" he wants to hear. In the process, the torturer employing power can become depraved with regard to the poor victim of torture:

> I find myself wondering too whether he has private ritual of purification, carried out behind closed doors, to enable him to return and break bread with other men. Does he wash his hands very carefully, perhaps, or change all his clothes; or has the Bureau created new men who can pass without disquiet between the unclean and the clean? (13).

The Magistrate, in Saidean fashion, tries to be controversial, not accepting imperial practices of torture: "I write an angry letter to the Third Bureau, unsleeping guardian of the Empire, denouncing the incompetence of one of its agents. 'Why do you not send people with experience of the frontier to investigate frontier unrest?' I write. Wisely I tear up the letter" (21). He recognizes an essential split between himself and the hegemonic power of the Empire on ethical grounds yet a complicity with the torturers: "The distance between myself and her torturers, I realize, is negligible; I shudder" (29). Realizing this confrontation with imperial power, the Magistrate transitions from the position of the supplicant humbly entreating the Empire into direct dissent, which is why he gets tortured and imprisoned for sympathizing with the prisoners.

To be specific, Coetzee makes the Magistrate answer the two points I have raised with regard to Said's book *Representations of the Intellectual*. First, the Magistrate chooses to side with the weak, tortured girl, not the hegemonic Empire: "There is nothing to link me with torturers, people who sit like beetles in dark cellars….I must assert my distance from Colonel Joll! I will not suffer for his crimes!" (48) Answering one young officer who asks about the dissatisfaction of the barbarians, the Magistrate responds in anti-imperial rhetoric: "'They want an end to the spread of the settlements across their land. They want their land back, finally. They want to be free to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to'" (54). Second, after he comes back from a difficult journey to return a barbarian girl to her tribe, he finds Warrant Officer Mandel in his office and gets accused of having been "treasonously consorting" with the enemy (85). On this occasion, the Magistrate's role as an intellectual of dissent begins, and he gives up his former position as an ethical figure pleading for the victims.

The Magistrate is aware now that he is a free man; he had set himself in opposition to the Empire and that the bond with the Empire of pain is broken. He is tortured and imprisoned, and thus he identifies more with the captive prisoners. His challenge to imperial authority comes directly when Joll returns from the desert with a file of barbarian prisoners whom he wants to punish publicly by smashing their feet and flogging their backs until they are washed with their own blood. Joll writes

the word "ENEMY" (115) on the backs of the prisoners, which testifies to the way power constructs its version of truth and justice. In Foucauldian logic, truth is constructed here as an effect of power and politics (Foucault 131). Escaping his prison cell to witness the spectacle of humiliation and pain, the Magistrate feels sick at heart. He objects to the depraving torture to take place and brings himself face to face against imperial power: "'*No*! I hear the first word from my throat, rusty, not loud enough. Then again: *'No*!' This time the word rings like a bell from my chest. The soldier who blocks my way stumbles aside. I am in the arena holding up my hands to still the crowd. *'No*! *No*! *No*!'" (116). As he becomes a dissident figure, he sustains a broken hand and a bloody face, which helps him empathize with the victims of torture. The Magistrate moves from an introspective life (trying to stay away from power by being preoccupied with his recreations and administrative duties) into a state of questioning the mentality of the torturer on ontological terms and finally into direct opposition with the Empire.

In a piece entitled "Into the Dark Chamber," Coetzee tackles the question of representing torture and the torturer in fiction as an issue that fascinated South African writers. His approach is related to the issue at hand, the intellectual's relation to power. In the words of Coetzee, *WB* is about "the impact of the torture chamber on the life of a man of conscience." Coetzee significantly adds by way of justifying this fascination: "relations in the torture room provide a metaphor, bare and extreme, for relations between authoritarianism and its victims." In *WB*, the man of conscience is the Magistrate, the ethical intellectual confronted with state atrocities against the native inhabitants of the frontier settlement whom the Empire labels as barbarians. In discourses on intellectualism, the man of conscience can be viewed as the intellectual who is the conscience of their nation. Ideally, this intellectual opposes injustice and oppression at all costs and is moved by universal values of humanism and peace.

Coetzee's Magistrate wants to live outside history, imperial history in particular, because in the words of Foucault, "The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning" (114). The Magistrate thinks that the Empire imposes its hegemonic history on its subjects and victims alike. To Joll he says by way of defending the poor prisoners and exonerating himself from imperial hegemony (thus confirming his status as a universal intellectual in Foucauldian fashion for us): "History will bear me out!" (125). He wants this obscure chapter of imperial history to be forgotten so that a new start can be made without torture and injustice (26). Joll mocks him as the "One Just Man" who is ready to sacrifice his life to save his principles (124). In Foucault logic, the Magistrate's role as the "consciousness / conscience of us all" (126). Foucault calls the intellectual who is driven by values of truth, freedom and justice for all "the universal intellectual" as opposed to the "specific intellectual" (126).

Foucault's concept of the universal intellectual fits Coetzee's employment of the Magistrate in *WB* as "the one just man." Foucault asserts:

> It is possible to suppose that the 'universal' intellectual, as he functioned in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was in fact derived from a quite specific historical figure: the man of justice, the man of law, who counterposes to power, despotism and the abuses and arrogance of wealth the universality of justice, and the equity of an ideal law. (128)

By contrast, the specific intellectual occupies a specific position in society linked to "the general functioning of an apparatus of truth" (Foucault 132). Class affiliation, specialization, and politics of truth create the specific intellectual for Foucault (132). Foucault clarifies: "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A' regime' of truth" (133). The specific intellectual has to deal with the production of truth, its regime and politics. As opposed to the Magistrate as an embodiment of justice and law, the interrogators of the Empire whom the Magistrate describes as the specialists of pain, the "devotees of truth, doctors of interrogation" (9), serve the function of the specific intellectual guarding a regime of truth. Through ideological mechanisms, the Empire constructs and eradicates its own enemies. The power it exercises on its assumed enemies is a hegemonic, political one.

4. Coda: Power and the Law

In Franz Kafka's parable "Before the Law," which appeared in his novel *The Trial* (1925), a man from the country comes to a formidable gatekeeper seeking acceptance and entry into the Law. The man is told that he might gain admission but not at the time being. The man is also threatened that he is the first of many more powerful gatekeepers inside. In the process, he tries to please the keeper with bribes and gifts, and the keeper accepts everything in order not to make the man think he spared

an effort. He sits and waits for years until his eyesight is poor and he is dying. Only then is he told that this gate was meant only and specifically for him, which is why others are not approaching it although everyone seeks entry into the Law. The gate has been always open, yet the man was apparently prohibited from entry. Now, the gatekeeper decides to close it when the man is ironically weak and incapable of entering it. However, the man never tried to challenge the authority of the keeper. Kafka's enigmatic parable can provide us with a good grasp of the relationship between subjects and authority. The gatekeeper might well represent religious authority or political one. The man from the country may be taken as an emblem of the hesitant intellectual before power structures. Intellectuals may approach power as passive supplicants or dissenters who challenge and protest against authority. The man from the country never tried to challenge authority. He simply waited to be interpellated into power. Intellectuals might venture into new terrain by challenging authority. There are risks and pitfalls, but they are worth the try.

Said insists that the intellectual is an "outsider" yet a "disturber of the status quo" (x). The man from the country in Kafka's parable is an outsider to law, yet he is passive and silent. He never questions the power of the law. Said says: "There are no rules by which intellectuals can know what to say or do; nor for the true secular intellectual are there any gods to be worshipped and looked to for unwavering guidance" (xiv). The man from the country wastes his life hoping to be an insider accommodated by the law, which is exactly against Said's thesis on opposition and dissent as being essential to the real intellectual. Taking risks, being controversial, and challenging the status quo are all ways of evading the supplicant position of intellectuals.

Indeed, Kafka's parable brings to mind Jacques Lacan's concept "the name of the father" or "the law of the father," which is a paternal metaphor Lacan used in the 1950s to describe the relationship between the subject and power, the rules and taboos governing desire and communication. In this analogy, the prohibitive function of the symbolic father, i.e. the restrictions imposed on the subject by language and culture, are tantamount to the "no" of the father. It is with entry into the symbolic, for Lacan, that the restrictions of the Superego and the Oedipal complex are active. In a sense, Lacan's "the name of the father" can be thought of as "the name of god," with religion being a repressive or prohibitive order. This association brings us back to Kafka's parable "Before the Law," with the law being authority of any kind (religious, social, or political). Institutional authority, the demands of narrow specialization, party affiliation, and national loyalties, for many intellectuals, assume the Lacanian "Law of the Father." Intellectuals deal with different kinds of power, overt and covert. In Foucauldian logic, power is everywhere because it comes from everywhere. Speaking truth to power remains a real challenge, yet seeking no risks or being detached (i.e. practicing the life of the "safe" intellectual) means that one is not true to one's principles. Abstractions cannot be simply served. Real intellectuals are socially and politically engaged ones. If intellectual objectivity is a myth, then intellectuals must champion causes and adopt stances. In particular, championing just and universal causes is what we expect.

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