Daniel Nemenyi (Kingston University)

Alexandre Koyré's 'The Political Function of the Modern Lie', originally published in French in 1943, is a prescient anachronism: a timely analysis of a future coming to pass, but one whose very conceptual architecture, whose associations and divisions, are about to become vestiges of precicely the history it designates – and rightly so – to be *of* the past. Koyré is too timely; he anticipates a certain fundamental transformation in the power of communication, or rather, the communication of power, but like a World Wide Web of the 1930s envisaged through the glorious advance of microfilm, he fails to transcend his own moment, to adequately write of the *un*timely.

What limit's Koyré's analysis is his stress on the opposition between 'liberal anthropology' and 'totalitarian anthropology'. At the 'liberal' pole of this world, implicitly that fended for by the Allies, is 'truth' appreciated as sheer 'light', the search for 'reality as it is'. Certainly the lie exists in this regime, it is even 'tolerated, admitted' in everyday business and diplomatic affairs but it is 'not approved of': only in the exceptional circumstances of war does the lie become a legitimate use of the word, of reason.[1] At the opposite pole, in what Arendt calls the 'topsy-turvy world' of totalitarianism[2], truth becomes 'weapon', the norm of society becomes the '*primacy of the lie*'.[3] Where the 'sin' of lying – 'a most grevious sin, a sin of pride against the spirit, a sin that parts us from God and opposes us to him'[4] – becomes manifest in a new, 'modern' anthropology of man, *genus totalitarian*, and where this is opposed by the 'popular masses of democratic countries' who are 'refractory to totalitarian propaganda' since they are 'men who think',[5] the condition is one of good against evil, or a becoming-open and a becoming-secret. The later culminates in the totalitarian regime's 'open-conspiracy' in which truth becomes a 'pure and simple instrument of deception', where 'conspiracies born of hatred, fear and envy' are communicated 'in broad daylight'.

This opposition of the liberal and totalitarian worlds also concerns the status and porousness of the threshold governing inner 'friends' and outer 'others'. Every society makes such a distinction, says Koyré, and there is 'a certain definite hierarchy' to every organisation. But whereas in an open regime the 'barrier' is 'more or less penetrable and surmountable between itself and outsiders', in the 'secret body' it becomes, as a rule, 'impermeable', 'irrevocable', its solidarities premised on 'exclusive bond' and a certain 'veracity' of concordance with the 'spirit' ones own

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1   Koyré, Alexandre. 1945. 'The Political Function of the Modern Lie'. *Contemporary Jewish Record* 8, 293.
2   Arendt, Hannah. 1976. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 437.
3   Koyré, ibid.
4   Ibid, 292.
5   Ibid, 300.

race, nation or class substitutes for truth.[6]

Now, Koyré tempts fate by posing that, 'The study of the secret society has been singularly neglected by sociologists', for Reinhardt Koselleck's seminal *Kritik und Krise. Pathogenese der Burgling Welt*, published in 1959, not only fulfils Koyré's heed but shows the essential role played by secret societies in the constitution of Enlightenment reason and the modern State itself – liberal and all – thereby undermining Koyré's simple identification of truth and openness with liberal societies, and lying and secrecy with totalitarian (or Absolute) ones.

Moreover, he fails to anticipate the nascent revolution in governance that, as of the Manhattan Project, will after WWII become the model of governance for the United States and its empire.[7] That is, the internal 'compartmentalisation' of knowledge according to access-defined networks. Not only should this implode any residual myth of bond between liberalism and openness to the extent that today every liberal democracy produces arcanum of incredible proportions, but it shatters the consistency – impermeability, exclusivity, irrevocablity – of the group structures which Koyré imagines. They can no longer be conceived simply according to elite 'initiates' who hold the cryptographic keys to decipher and conspire in the lies of a group, and 'masses' who are 'acted upon' by the 'initiates' and governed by their confused 'passions'. Or rather, this schema suggested by Koyré must be applied infinitely and myriadically in every direction: everyone is an 'initiate' who holds certain keys over others, *controlling* them, who knows certain things that others may not, whilst in turn also being acted upon, or rather, *controlled*. The threshold separating self and other is as porous as its competition for control demands.

We need to insist on such a 'positioning' of each with respect to the secrecy of others, on deconstructing Koyré's distinction of liberalism and totalitarianism, openness and secrecy, in order to read 'The Political Function of the Modern Lie' alongside Stuart Hall's 'The Meaning of New Times', published in 1988 (when the 'personal' computer had come into its own). In Hall's paper, traditional groupings, such as those Koyré refers to, contend among a proliferating, pluralising, labile series, which 'change and alter'. Further, where Koyré relegates the partial use of truth (as a weapon) to totalitarianism, identifying universal – and thereby non-partial and non-political – reason with liberalism, Hall's positionality, theorised for the 'left', embraces the political and the strategic: 'Perhaps there isn't, in that sense, one "power game'' at all, more a network of strategies and powers and their articulations – and thus a politics which is always positional.'[8]

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6   Ibid, 294–95.
7   Connelly,   Matthew.   2015.   'The   Cold   War   and   the   Culture   of   Secrecy'.   January   2015. http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/events/events/2015/15-01-13-M.-Connelly3.aspx; Galison, Peter. 2004. 'Removing Knowledge'. *Critical Inquiry* 31 (1): 229–43.
8   Hall, Stuart. 2017. *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and Other Essays*. Edited by Sally Davison, David Featherstone, Michael Rustin, and Bill Schwarz. Duke University Press, 261.

But perhaps even if there is no single 'power game' in the sense of a single struggle against, say, capitalism, might there not be a single game-of-games, a meta-game of which all others express, reflect or are parts thereof? Would such a unifying field not be necessary if one is to still talk, as Hall does, of a political 'left' and 'right'? And if that is the case then, by means of the lie, does Koyré not point to a certain 'move' of such a politics wherein the aim is to disadvantage the other by means of secrecy and lies and to gain control with respect to them? Perhaps Hall's 'new times' – published the same year as Deleuze introduces the 'control society'[9] and Haraway the 'situated knowledge' of modern technoscience[10] – must be read in the wake of Wiener's *Cybernetics*, which proffers with concrete philosophical foundations a game whose 'moves' include – but are not limited to – secrecy (cryptography) and lies (disinformation); a resolutely positional ontology of communication and control that critically speak of and itself grounds the *coming* historical moment; among whose earliest readers were those who invented the personal – and internetworked – computer.

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9   Deleuze, Gilles. 1992. 'What Is a Dispositif?' In *Michel Foucault, Philosopher*, edited by François Ewald, translated by Tim Armstrong, 159–68. London: Harveser Wheatsheaf.

10   Haraway, Donna J. 1988. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–99.