Chapter Four: Terrorism in Motion

The United Red Army incident

The Western world has considerable historical experience with the phenomenon of terrorism. But despite this, the Japanese United Red Army incident of 1972 remains largely unrecognised in the Western imagination. Whereas in Japan, the context and meaning of the United Red Army incident has served as a stable fixture across all of political and social theory. The Chapter that is to follow will constitute a summary and analysis of one such major text from this canon—one that has until now been absent from the English-language literature. In furtherance of this project, we must therefore first develop a factual record of the United Red Army incident.

Among the historical touchstones of the *soixante-huitard*—sixty-eighter—generation, events in far-off Japan are generally only remembered in a diminished capacity: the existence of the United Red Army is therefore relegated to a mere footnote as next to their tangential connections to major global incidents, such as the contemporaneous Lod Airport attack in Israel. But for Japan itself, the United Red Army incident remains definitional; at its close, "the so-called Asama-sansō incident gained iconic status as an event that announced the end of the postwar New Left movements that had pursued revolutionary dreams in Japan." (Igarashi 2007) The resonance of the incident was equal parts cerebral and visceral—abstract and immediate. Its sheer violence produced a spectacle that captured the attention of the nation,[56] and the subsequent flurry of analysis and criticism elicited an effective cultural embargo of the far left of Japanese politics that lasted for decades.

[56] Just shy of 90% of Japanese television sets (Kunō 2000) were tuned in to coverage of the incident at its peak.

Even prior to the incident itself, the United Red Army was a peculiar fixture in the constellation of militant organisations on the Japanese far left. "The United Red Army was the product of a rare merger of two radical organizations—the Red Army faction of the second Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Communist League) and the Kakumei Saha (Revolutionary Left)—that shared the desire to destroy the existing political system in favor of a communist regime in Japan through militant confrontations with the state authority." (Igarashi 2007) More exactly, to note the relevant internecine distinctions, the Red Army Faction was a Trotskyist-Maoist Third Campist organisation dedicated to the violent overthrow of the Japanese government—an act through which it hoped to catalyse a "world revolutionary war" in accordance with a doctrine of permanent revolution. Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Left "embraced anti-American patriotism, while aspiring to a revolution on the national level under Maoist ideology." (Igarashi 2007) This is to say that despite certain ideological tensions, which proved proportionately important in the fullness of time, the two organisations also had sufficient ideological overlap to justify a contingent unification. They resultantly merged the administration of their terrorist operations under the label of the United Red Army.

Concerning the United Red Army incident itself, its characteristic brutality was at least partially anticipated by the escalating violence of these two constituent groups. In late 1971, just prior to the incident itself, the Revolutionary Left executed two of their own members in order to prevent their defection to the police. But even before this, in 1970 the group had made a name for itself with an attack on a police box[57] in Tokyo, which was intended to kill or injure any police officers present and to steal their guns. (The attack was a failure, resulting in the death of one of the Revolutionary Left militants.) Contemporaneously, the Red Army Faction attacked police boxes using Molotov cocktails and improvised explosives across Kansai in 1969 and 1970, hoping to set off a revolutionary

[57] In contrast to the unstaffed phone boxes that go by the same name in the United Kingdom, a Japanese "police box" (交番, *kōban*) refers to a lightly staffed police station.

action that they referred to as the "Osaka War." They were also behind a series of kidnappings and beatings of more moderate members of the Communist League during their schismatic break in 1969.

In fact, it was precisely this string of clearly violent, but nonetheless highly ineffective, outbursts by both groups that brought about the immediate circumstances of the United Red Army incident. By 1971, both groups were being aggressively pursued by the police—they had targets on their backs. But they had also failed to accumulate the personnel or weapons to effectively fight back in their imagined revolutionary war. Therefore, a plan was concocted to pool their weapons, explosives, finances, and members in mountain hideouts across the Winter of 1971/1972, and to train for their inevitable revolutionary war against the Japanese police. "The two organizations found themselves in need of each other. The Revolutionary Left had weapons with hardly any cash, while the Red Army faction managed to raise funds by robbing a number of financial institutions during the months the six members of the Revolutionary Left hibernated in Sapporo. The Red Army faction also gained know-how in producing homemade explosive devices. Yet, despite repeated attempts, it had never succeeded in obtaining firearms by force. The guns that the Revolutionary Left owned but were unable to use would complete the Red Army Faction's preparation for armed uprisings." (Igarashi 2007) However, this joint training session also failed; the following disintegration of the unified organisation of the Red Army Faction and the Revolutionary Left over the course of the Winter of early 1972—first through a series of self-inflicted purges within their own mountain hideouts, and then during a climactic hostage standoff with police at a *sansō* (ski lodge) on Mount Asama—came to be known as the United Red Army incident.

The overall incident can be separated into two sub-incidents. Firstly, there were the lynching incidents in the United Red Army's hideouts. Secondly, there was the *Asama-sansō* siege. Although it was the sensational and public nature of the latter that originally captured the attention of the media, commentators soon turned to scrutinising

the preceding purges. "In the few weeks between December 1971 and February 1972, ten of the original 29 participants in the United Red Army's military training camp were killed in the name of *sōkatsu* (self-critique), while two were executed for the alleged crime of contemplating escape." (Igarashi 2007) Altogether, that makes for twelve executions in a little over a month. And for a survival rate of less than 60%. As the sheer barbarism of the events became clear, they conjured the worst excesses of the Stalinist Great Purges or the then still-ongoing Maoist Cultural Revolution. "As soon as these acts were reported by the media, whatever sympathy the public had afforded the group immediately dried up. Even those who had defended the United Red Army's armed confrontation with the police dared not support its members' bloody purges." (Igarashi 2007)

The example of Mieko Tōyama is particularly evocative. Tōyama retained a position of relative authority within the United Red Army through her marriage to Takahara Hiroyuki—an Executive in the Politburo of the Red Army Faction. However, her standing steadily declined during the joint training session of 1971/1972—especially once she was antagonised by the leader of the Revolutionary Left, Hiroko Nagata. "In early December 1971, Nagata Hiroko insistently criticized Tōyama for keeping long hair, wearing make-up, and refusing to dispose of her ring." (Igarashi 2007) A month later, after such trivialities compounded beyond all reason, Tōyama "was ordered by Mori to beat herself on 3 January 1972. Surrounded by the other members, Tōyama repeatedly hit her face with her own fists for about 30 minutes until it was a swollen bloody mess. … Tōyama dutifully applied the ideological assistance to herself. Yet her self-assistance was deemed insufficient for completing her comprehensive self-critique; and the others rendered helping hands in her deadly endeavor, hitting her, cutting her hair, and finally leaving her tied up until her death on 7 January." (Igarashi 2007) Tōyama's case was, however, just the most sensational among a sequence of undeniably horrific incidents. Yoshitaka Katō was beaten to death for "having chatted with the interrogator while in police custody following his earlier arrest." (Igarashi 2007) Setsuko Ōtsuki was killed after being "accused of having had a haircut at a

beauty parlor." (Igarashi 2007) And one of the pretexts given for the murder of the (eight-months) pregnant Michiyo Kaneko was "treating [her fetus] like private property, or for assuming that she would not be killed as long as she was pregnant. The demand for her comprehensive self-critique was transformed into a struggle to transfer the fetus into the possession of the United Red Army." (Igarashi 2007)

In parallel to the accelerating violence of the United Red Army, their strategic position collapsed. Among those who were unwilling to remain in a situation where indiscriminate murder was a tangible possibility, the obvious alternative was to flee from the mountain—and possibly, to defect to the police. This is naturally exactly what happened, which pushed the survivors of the United Red Army into a metaphorical corner. "On 16 February 1972, after realizing the police were encroaching on them, the remaining members abandoned their mountain cave in Gunma Prefecture, to which they had moved to evade police pursuit a few days earlier. In order to outwit the police search teams, members decided to take a treacherous winter mountain route to reach the Nagano Prefecture part of the Japan Alps." (Igarashi 2007) The majority of the members were arrested en route, but the last five members, fearing arrest, took a hostage and locked themselves within an *Asama-sansō*. The resultant nine-day police siege captured the attention of the nation and inculcated a climate of retroactive interest in the lynching murders, once their aftermath was uncovered.

It is in this light that we turn to *The Phenomenology of Terrorism: An Introduction to the Critique of Ideas* by Kiyoshi Kasai. (To be simply referred to as *PT* for the rest of this Chapter.) Originally published in 1984, *PT* is a notable intervention into what was then a decade-long debate into the causes and meaning of the United Red Army incident. Especially because the author, Kasai, had himself been a famous (if pseudonymous) Marxist essayist and theorist during the New Left era preceding the United Red Army incident. However, the United Red Army incident catalysed a moral reckoning that gradually led to Kasai's departure from the core tenants of Marxism—as it did for many others on the Japanese far left. "The

grotesque sequence of deaths at the mountain hideout unsettled me—it felt like having a bone stuck in my throat. Our newspaper, *Red Front*, denounced the United Red Army and attributed their defeat to fighting a 'people's war without the people.' Nonetheless, this explanation could not shake my lack of comprehension at the cruel cycle of death left by these self-critiques in the snowy mountains of Jōetsu."[58] Both the incident and the decline of the Japanese far left in its aftermath drove Kasai towards a methodological reassessment of his fundamental political theory. *PT* is the culmination of this effort.

Before proceeding into an account of *PT* itself, it is worth taking an aside to introduce Kasai more formally to Western readers—who have generally lacked any English-language path to his thought. Kiyoshi Kasai, born 1948, is a novelist, literary critic, and political theorist. Today he is most well known for writing fiction, especially his detective novels featuring the "phenomenologist detective" Kakeru Yabuki. But, as alluded to earlier, Kasai started his public life in Japanese literature as a pseudonymous but well-known leading voice among the Marxist discourses on the Japanese hard left. And with similar notoriety in *PT*, for savagely criticising Marxism whilst nonetheless attempting to sketch out a post-Marxian case for the hard left. As a political and philosophical thinker, Kasai is eclectic, but most strongly associated with—firstly—the phenomenological tradition that he attaches to his famous detective character, and secondly a wider range of non-phenomenological 20th century left-wing French thinkers.

As a Marxist, Kasai's methodological tradition was most closely associated with the Japanese Marxian economist Kōzō Uno, the Hungarian theorist György Lukács, and the German Marxist critic Walter Benjamin. He was, moreover, an active and influential member of the left flank of the Japanese Communist workers' Party. However, beginning with his study of Martin Heidegger, Kasai started to grapple with an increasing array of non-Marxist thinkers.

[58] (Kasai, Autobiographical Revolution Theory: 1968 and Marxism at Breaking Point 2024)

In line with the phenomenological tradition associated with Edmund Husserl and Heidegger, Kasai's thought is strongly influenced by the left-wing of French phenomenology—especially Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Levinas. On the non-phenomenological side of the French tradition, Kasai's strongest influences are Georges Bataille, Simone Weil, and Michel Foucault.

Terrorism and totality

The definition of terrorism is highly contested. Originating in the Reign of Terror of Revolutionary France, the term has always and everywhere been burdened by the weight of political insinuations. However, beyond this problem of its meaning, the *location* of terrorism is just as difficult to grasp. Does terrorism belong under the domain of individuals, sub-state groups, or to the state itself? In the context of the Revolution, The Terror was firstly the policy of the Jacobin nation-state, before being reinstituted by the succeeding nation-state of the anti-Jacobin Directory. However, would it not be the intended victims of each Terror—the terrifying 'enemies of the people'—who most closely fit the image of terrorists in the contemporary imagination? Terrorism is commonly understood as the use of violence to undermine or circumvent the 'proper' political process—which would place it exclusively within the realm of individuals and groups opposed to the state, since the state names its own violence as definitionally 'proper'. This is why the archetypal terrorist of the current age is an immoral ideological rebel, such as the agents of international Jihadism. But then again, if we instead proceed with a critique of the legitimacy of this naming of violence by the state, we might turn around and name the state itself as an agent of terrorism—as critics of Israel have done when they accuse it of being a "terrorist state." When one lives in what Judith Butler refers to as a "field of violence,"[59] a label such as terrorist fails to clarify the nature of any given violent action. It simply reveals the

[59] (Butler, The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind 2021)

relative perspectives of accuser and accused. Hence, political terror could refer simultaneously to the Jacobin Terror carried out with the sanction of the state or to the non-state organisation of the anti-Jacobin counterrevolutionaries who resisted them; or even the small cell of individuals who orchestrated the attempt to assassinate Napoleon Bonaparte using the *Machine Infernale*.

Kasai develops a phenomenological analysis of terrorism in *PT* by recognising a fundamental historical harmony between all of these possible locations for terrorism. Within modernity, terrorism has been experienced as a phenomenon of individuals (lone wolf attacks), a phenomenon of organised anti-state resistance (as an extension of guerrilla tactics), and as a property of authentic 'terror states'—especially the camp states, that is to say Nazi Germany and the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. The historical coincidence of all of these phenomena does not necessarily make them identical, but it does provide a clear frame of reference for the study of violence as a tool of politics. Put precisely, the conditions of modernity sharpen the need to study the use of violence for purposes distinct from what Hannah Arendt calls the "prepolitical phenomenon" of necessity; when "all human beings are subject to necessity, they are entitled to violence toward others; violence is the prepolitical act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life for the freedom of world."[60] Quite apart from this deeply ancient—even prehistorical—impetus of violence for the sake of socio-biological stability, Kasai is interested in the development of violence for the sake of *ideas*: That is, his titular "Critique of Ideas" deals especially with the existence of violence as it operates within the justificatory schemes of ideology.

This makes the context of the United Red Army incident inseparable from the project of *PT*. The United Red Army incident was, for all of its apparent barbarism, inexplicable as a realisation of any transhistorical, pre-civilisational human aspiration for mere survival. Within an enclosed environment that was relatively unconstrained by base necessity or any material barrier to cooperation, the twenty-

[60] (Arendt, The Human Condition 1998)

nine-member strong United Red Army disintegrated through a sequence of twelve improvised show-trials and accompanying executions of its most loyal members. In the mountains of Gunma Prefecture, this group of would-be revolutionaries planned for the destruction of capitalism through organised terrorism in the form of guerrilla warfare, but instead destroyed themselves in a manner that echoed the Great Purges and Cultural Revolution—the even-then famously symptomatic crises of two of the most notable terror states in world history. There is no avoiding the sociological importance of such a dramatic, microcosmic reenactment.

Kasai begins this task with the problematisation of the subject-object dichotomy. Efforts to separate subjectivity from objectivity—"the old 'centered self' and the old 'real' world of scientific objectivity"—have recurred time and again as a central motif in the theoretical development of modernity. Moreover, this tendency has a special importance within the context of Japanese criticism; the history of Japan is one where the evolutionary stages of modernity, "separated in the West by two hundred years, have [instead] been compressed into a century;" meaning that, "those otherwise invisible scars of our modernization" can "here briefly light up like an infrared flare."[61] Put another way, this description speaks to the unique insights of a cultural context which has made something of a transition from outsider to insider as it relates to the Western perspective. This allows for a problematisation of the subject-object dichotomy, and Western modernity more widely, from both within and without. Kōjin Karatani puts it in these terms:

> What I am referring to as "landscape" is an epistemological constellation, the origins of which were suppressed as soon as it was produced. … "Description," as practiced by these writers, was something more than simply portraying the external world. First, the "external world" itself had to be discovered.

[61] (Jameson, In the Mirror of Alternate Modernities 1993)

> I am not here talking about a matter of vision. This inversion, which transforms our mode of perception, does not take place either inside of us or outside of us, but is an inversion of a semiotic configuration.
>
> As Usami Keiji has suggested, medieval European painting and landscape painting share something in common that differentiates them from modern landscape painting. In both, place is conceived of in transcendental terms. For a brush painter to depict a pine grove meant to depict the concept (that which is signified by) "pine grove," not an existing pine grove. This transcendental vision of space had to be overturned before painters could see existing pine groves as their subjects. This is when modern perspective appears. Or more accurately, what we call modern perspective had already emerged at some point before this in the form of a perspectival inversion.
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> (Karatani, Origins of Modern Japanese Literature 1993)

For Kasai, as with Karatani, [62] the subject-object problem additionally owes its centrality to the work of the Japanese Marxian economist Kōzō Uno. Kasai's early essays as a Marxist polemicist draw heavily on Uno's work, combining it with the perspective of Lukács to cast the subject-object split as the primary epistemological condition of capitalism. The theory of reification advanced by Lukács pays unique attention to the total domination of autonomous objective processes for individuals within capitalist commodity exchange. That is, it explains the very distinction between subject and object as a historicised product of capitalism. Within a world where labour is organised to operate mechanistically (through the division of labour), to interface with the processes of machines (capital), and where labour returns not as its product but in the form of an unrelated object (money), human consciousness is

[62] Karatani was trained as an economist at the University of Tokyo—studying there only two years after the forced retirement of Uno from the faculty. Importantly, much of Karatani's thought follows in the lineage of the Uno school of Marxian economics.

programmed to divide itself from the world, finding subjectivity in its unrelatedness to the 'reality' of these autonomous objective processes. Uno, despite his considerable differences from Lukács, locates a similar tendency in the theory of history implied by Marx:

> It is common knowledge that a commodity-economy which constitutes the subject-matter of political economy existed to some extent even in pre-capitalist societies, operating as a supplementary, though alien, economic activity to the prevalent mode of production. As Marx correctly observes, a commodity-economy always arose from the exchange of products among independent economic communities. But the impersonalisation (or reification) of human relations brought about by the exchange of material things enabled the commodity-economy quickly to expand its scope, so that it soon permeated these communities, disintegrating their traditional form of economic organisation. … In particular, unlike any preceding societies, it [capitalism] develops its production as a purely economic process, that is to say, as a self-supporting process undisturbed and essentially unaffected by any superstructural ideologies.
>
> (Uno 1980)

Here, Uno makes the radical suggestion that the inner dynamics of the base-superstructure metaphor—the respective dominance or autonomy of each layer; as in Althusser's (2001) "index of effectivity"—is significantly, if not entirely, historically determined. That is, that one can distinguish certain transhistorical (purely theoretical) principles within dialectical materialism from the dialectical effectivity of the political economy of specific real historical moments—which contrasts itself as being decidedly not transhistorical. Reading Lukács in this light, (the young) Kasai for example is able to claim that:

> Bourgeois forms of knowledge (bourgeois ideologies) invariably reveal their fundamental limitations by falling into the dichotomy of subject and object. … The autonomy of economic processes

> drives a merely relative autonomy of illusory processes as first mediated by these economic processes. Thus, social reality emerges as antagonistic to humans, presenting them with an "eternal regularity" that they cannot modify. … In the pre-capitalist forms preceding capitalist production, there was an undifferentiated fusion of real economic processes and illusory processes (political, legal, ideological processes).
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> The true origin of this development lies in the realisation of labour power as a commodity. The autonomous self-propulsion of economic processes is made possible by the subsumption of the production process by the commodity form, and the subsumption of the production process by the commodity form is made possible by the commodification of labour power. The capitalist commodity economy established in this manner exists fundamentally as something governed by economic laws.
>
> For example, what and how much to produce are determined by economic laws that govern the movement of prices. Beyond just labourers and producers, even the judgement of capitalists merely serves as a subjective intermediator for economic laws. … Thus, real economic processes in a capitalist commodity economy … unfold as their own autonomous self-propulsion whilst determining human actions via their laws.
>
> (Kasai, The Methodological Prerequisites to a Theory of Class Formation 2024)

The crucial step here is that Kasai's reading of Uno transforms certain sociological assumptions which are presented in negative form into positive sociological claims. That is, Uno's suggestion that "preceding societies" (prior to capitalism) lacked "a purely economic process, … undisturbed and essentially unaffected by any superstructural ideologies" is inverted by Kasai to produce the theory that pre-capitalist sociology depended upon an "undifferentiated fusion of real economic processes and illusory processes (political, legal, ideological processes)." Resultantly, the

historical development of objectivity as a phenomenon of reification, as in Lukács, is read backwards to imply a pre-reified condition of sociality which does not correspond to the subject-object split. This all amounts to a fairly simple extension of these modes of thought, rather than reinventing them: Kasai's mission in *The Methodological Prerequisites* (…etc.) is after all simply to explicate the theories of Uno and Lukács in the context of revolutionary Marxist strategy. The consequences of such a theory of pre-objective sociality are more fully realised once Kasai moves beyond Marxism in *PT*.

The history of objective ideas

In the manner of its subtitle, *PT* develops a phenomenological account of ideas as conditioned states of being. In this sense, it is not dissimilar to Hannah Arendt's undertaking in *The Human Condition* to phenomenologise activity—as well as her account of mental (in-)'activity' in *The Life of the Mind*. We might also compare it to the rethinking of death and time undertaken by Heidegger, or to the account of perception and bodily sensation given by Merleau-Ponty, or to escape and the encounter in the case of Levinas, or to intentionality and space in Husserl. That is, Kasai approaches ideas, such as terrorism, as constitutive of a fundamental phenomenon that can be understood in a methodological tradition that connects all of these thinkers. But for him, the phenomenon in question is the 'idea' ('*kannen*').[63]

[63] Written 観念; literally *appearing idea* or *perceived idea*. To be distinguished from 概念 for *general idea* or *blueprint idea*. These two words can be separated from each other by the location of the idea—first-person for the former versus third-person for the latter.

Kasai structures his vision of the idea into four basic forms:

- The Self-idea (‘*jiko kannen*’)
- The Communal-idea (‘*kyōdō kannen*’)
- The Partisan-idea (‘*tōha kannen*’)
- The Ensemble-idea (‘*shūgō kannen*’)

There is a danger of mistaking the meaning of these terms when they are taken too literally. Firstly, it should be noted that Kasai’s phenomenology centres human sensation, in a manner that echoes Merleau-Ponty. In particular, a recurring motif for Kasai is the forms and modes of pain as a sensation that is both physical (that is, has a material ‘reality’ and phenomenal distinction from introspective consciousness in the idealist sense), and yet deeply personal and interior. Relatedly, attempting to interpret the Self-idea as uniquely subjective, as next to the objective-seeming forms of ideas at the group level, would be to make a decisive analytical error. All of these forms of the idea are phenomena that humans occupy in the first-person. However, it would also be a mistake to confuse Kasai’s ‘idea’ with Arendt’s *Life of the Mind* and its *vita contemplativa.* Kasai’s idea is not the process of interiority or the experience of being within a mental process. It is instead the existence of concepts or understandings or frameworks as phenomenal appearing-beings in their own sense. In the same typology as pain, the idea dwells within a person, but in some sense comes from somewhere else—somewhere tangibly real and at some distance from the direct control of the mind and the imagination. This is, in other words, the first-person encounter with comprehensible abstractions as-such.

Notably, Kasai’s derivation of four distinct forms for this phenomenon of the idea directly extends from a phenomenological rethinking of his, originally Lukácsian, study of the subject-object dichotomy. For Lukács, objectivity is the product of the reification inherent in capitalist political economy. Kasai instead does away with the all-encompassing determinism of dialectical materialism, and

names the reifying power of political economy as just one constitutive element of an expansive and contingent historical whole. But we should not confuse such a phenomenological perspective with an idealist one. Even if such a model implies certain attenuations, it is nonetheless the case that the idea—the world in *abstraction*—is produced by way of a certain correspondence with human labour processes, which themselves both construct and destroy the world in *materiality*.[64]

For Kasai, all ideas are produced through alienation. "The basic character of the idea is 'self-deception'." (*PT*) This is because alienation and abstraction are, formally speaking, near synonyms. Any attempt to comprehend the world and retain it will be under constant assault from the reality of the world; not merely because of some empirical contradiction between the two—it is rather that the attempt to hold the world in comprehension, and to enclose or encapsulate it, is threatened by the non-ideational structure of the real world. Hence, ideas in general correspond to "the ideal restoration of a lost real world." (*PT*) In the context of Marxian thought, alienation is a product of the reification of labour in the political economy of capitalism. In *PT*, Kasai reiterates some role for labour and political economy in the production of ideas and their alienation, and attributes this version of the story to the "Engelsian" theory of ideas. But he also critiques this method by developing a historico-theological account of society as an ethical, rather than economic, structure.

By way of example, Kasai analyses the shifting theological emphasis of Second Temple Judaism, and its subsequent variant known as Christianity, in conjunction with an account of the changing function of social institutions in the increasingly stratified political climate produced by the Roman Empire. In earlier eras, Judaism presented itself as the coextensive horizon of religious ritual, political law, and personal ethics. It should of course be noted that emphasising such coextensivity corresponds closely with Kasai's reading of Uno,

[64] This view of labour places Kasai in agreement with Marx over Arendt as concerns her definition of labour and work.

which posits an "undifferentiated fusion of real economic processes and illusory processes (political, legal, ideological processes)"[65] in such pre-capitalist political economies. However, it was not merely a shift in political economy that altered this relationship for Second Temple Judaism. As Judaism transitioned away from the customs or laws of a lived-in tribe and became a unitary juridico-political institution, under the domain of the Roman Empire, "adherence to social ethics merely signalled the practices that produced stable social life, and the law changed from a path to God to a path to the state." (*PT*) The religious-law was no longer a lived-in cultural space, but rather the idea of the law and the idea of the religion as embodied by the state, which the individual apprehended as distinct from, but adjacent to, the horizon of their internal idea of ethics. Correspondingly, the motifs of the Messiah and the Prophets came to the forefront as the hope to purify this fallen division and bring the individual back to God—that is, back to a state of unity with the idea of religion and law. And Christianity realised this hope in the form of a Messiah who allowed the individual to approach God from within their interior sense of religious ethics, as in the model of 'personal' salvation. In other words, the institutionalisation of certain ethical, religious, cultural, and socio-political practices in the context of early world empire formalised a variant of the subject-object epistemological break—the same development which Lukács and Uno solely attribute to the later political economy of commodity exchange and capitalism.

In stepping away from the ground of pure political economy and highlighting the customs of the superstructure, Kasai designates certain features of the idea which are peculiarly underestimated—or sometimes altogether missing—in Marxian accounts of reification and the subject-object dichotomy. For Lukács, the "hiatus between appearance and essence" (Lukács 2023) within modern metaphysics depends upon the seeming objectivity and autonomy of rational processes under capitalist political economy. While Lukács admits a limited degree of objectivity in pre-capitalist modes of thought, he

[65] (Kasai, The Methodological Prerequisites to a Theory of Class Formation 2024)

nonetheless argues that these are "qualitatively" distinct from the epistemological shift engendered by commodity exchange and its totalising social position:

> The extent to which such exchange is the dominant form of metabolic change in a society cannot simply be treated in quantitative terms—as would harmonise with the modern modes of thought already eroded by the reifying effects of the dominant commodity form. The distinction between a society where this form is dominant, permeating every expression of life, and a society where it only makes an episodic appearance is essentially one of quality. For depending on which is the case, all the subjective and objective phenomena in the societies concerned are objectified in qualitatively different ways.
>
> (Lukács 2023)

But for Kasai, the apparent forms of sociality—the explicitly visible superstructural social relations, not merely those 'disguised' relations of political economy—have the capacity to regulate the phenomenal distance of ideas as a matter of psychophysical sensation. Let us think back through the phenomenology of pain as an analogy: at its causal ground, pain is a product of both the mind and the body. However, pain as a phenomenon does not uniquely privilege either; humans do not feel pain as something held within their brain or in their body; pain lays atop both of its originary locations, in a curious parallax.[66] As Kasai crucially emphasises, pain feels as though it is invading the mind from the outside, but nonetheless lacks the concrete capacity to be shared with others in the manner of the common physical world. The phenomenal sensation of pain is not located either in the life of the mind or in the world beyond it, and yet it has an undeniable presence of being of its own, not reducible to either constitutive causal ground.

[66] Cf. Karatani (Transcritique: On Kant and Marx 2005) and Žižek (The Parallax View 2009)

In a related but distinct[67] manner, attempts to grasp phenomena through their abstracted, or alienated, form removes them from any reducibility to their originary location. The idea of a given rock is not located in the rock itself; the alienation of the idea from the rock is definitional to it being ideational in the first place. Nonetheless, reducing this idea to a mental process or to human imagination is not accurate to its phenomenal experience. In contrast to thinking itself, which retreats from the world,[68] the completed idea stands apart in its partially thing-like distance from pure internality:

> The capacity of the self for recovery solely depends on the tangibility of the alienated idea. In order for a lost world to return with substance, the idea must totally negate the immediate reality of existence. In this sense, vague and half-done ideas are inherently contradictory. The precipitated idea leads, inevitably, to the absolutisation and purification of the self. We might say that this inevitability is the physiology of ideas. Takaaki Yoshimoto's concept of the "distant objectivity" of ideas was also discussed in terms of this inevitability. The distant objectivity of ideas is merely one of their key elements, but if one also grasps how ideas are supported by an earnest desire to recover a self beyond its own ground in the face of the loss of the world's reality, one encounters the very site where the ideational emerges.
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> (*PT*)

This implies a capacity, independent of political economy, for ideas to present themselves with a "distant objectivity" no matter whether they appear in the "relative autonomy"[69] or in an "undifferentiated fusion"[70] of the superstructure. In simpler terms, this is to say that

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[67] That is, pain as an idea and the parallax phenomenon of pain itself are entirely different. Confusing them would be a fatal analytical error. The latter is nonetheless a useful structure for understanding the former.
[68] Cf. Arendt (The Life of the Mind 1981)
[69] (Althusser 2001)
[70] (Kasai, The Methodological Prerequisites to a Theory of Class Formation 2024)

whether or not Lukács' notion of totality has some historical substance, his alleged "qualitative" difference does not present itself phenomenologically: the epistemological categories utilised by the process of reification, as in Lukácsian theory, depend for Kasai upon an older and pre-existing history of the forms of ideas. If capitalist political economy makes objectivity into the reigning social totality of the superstructure, it does so in correspondence with the superstructure's own capacity for the phenomenal form of objectivity. It is for this reason that Kasai makes the boldly anti-Marxian move of designating the forms of ideas as having their own phenomenological history—prior to the emergence of the modern commodity form.

In order to sketch out the consequences of this methodology, we will follow along with Kasai's history of ideas and thereby reach his applied phenomenology of contemporary terrorism. Kasai begins with the emergence of the idea in general through world abstraction, and then proceeds to the specific construction of an opposition of subject and object through and within this space of abstraction. Kasai's core phenomenon for the first case is, in critical correspondence with Heidegger, death and mortality. "The immediacy of death as an existential experience acts as the founding basis for alienated ideas." (*PT*) Consciousness of death as an always present [71] possibility threatens to totally destroy any stable perspective in the world. It is both wholly inevitable and yet immediately uncertain. Therefore, abstraction allows the self to distance itself from death's ever-present possibility: the self as an idea, which is thereby alienated from unabstracted being, is built as a stable location to break off from the ceaseless movement of a reality filled with death. Recall Kasai's fundamental characterisation of the idea: abstraction, alienation, self-deception, and the restoration of a lost world. The confrontation with mortality renders the state of unmediated being-in-the-world intolerably uncertain; Kasai therefore refers to a "lost world" in the sense of such a flight

[71] The immediacy of death in Kasai's account is clearly derivative of Heidegger's being-towards-death, which is itself a necessary feature of Dasein's ecstatic temporality.

from the pure and authentic presence of being in the natural world. The self cannot remain 'itself' in a world where 'itself' is always threatened with destruction.

To put this essential thesis in an Arendtian as opposed to a Heideggerian vocabulary: Human beings cannot find a home in the endless and cyclical metabolism of nature. Nature absorbs everything within it into its processual whole, and is therefore not a suitable point of perspective for self-consciously distinct beings such as humanity. The idea is the mental fixed point to which human beings step away from the cyclical metabolism of pure reality. From this, we can see that Kasai's sense of the idea is a close sibling of Arendt's concept of work and its corresponding function of world-building. If Arendt's account of reification is taken literally in conjunction with Kasai, work becomes the enactment and materialisation of the world-making condition of the idea.[72]

For Kasai, mortality is both the foundation of the idea and the archetype of its logical physiology. The general form of the idea emerges as an escape from the direct confrontation with death in an unmediated natural existence. But even beyond this initial appearance of death—that is, even as physical death subsequently finds itself recast to a merely supporting role—the evolution of alienated ideas continues in the same pattern as in this general case. The interior of any ideational form is continuously threatened by its exterior; in correspondence with its world-building condition, the idea exists to solidify and stabilise a conceptual space as next to the unstable and fluid conditions that lie beyond itself. In consequence, this means that an abstraction is always being eroded by its distance as compared to its original basis. In other words, the idea is gradually destroyed by its inauthenticity and is therefore driven towards self-destruction and change. This is firstly because of the inherent and unavoidable categorical distance between reality and the alienated idea, and secondly because reality is the site of continuous change,

[72] Such an understanding of reification flips Marx on his head. In Kasai's hands, Lukácsian totality means nothing more than a return from Marx's dialectical materialism to the Hegelian spiral.

which in turn enlarges this inherent distance. The idea may ensure some distance from the confrontation with physical death, but ideas will in turn find themselves in an endless battle with their own disintegration by way of their inauthenticity. This ideational form of destruction is effectively a replacement for physical death in this structure. Resultantly, alienation is a never-ending process of reinvention and escape; what begins as the emergence of the idea in general becomes the history of ideas in the plural and their infinite spiral of re-alienation.

A crucial moment in this history is the development of the subject-object divide, and the corresponding "distant objectivity" of ideas. The emergence of ideas and their concomitant building of a perspective for the self is, of course, closely associated with what Kasai refers to as the Self-idea. But understanding this original idea in accordance with Kasai's history of ideas is not exactly identical with a definition of the Self-idea. This is because the Self-idea, as apart from the raw emergence of ideas in general, cannot properly be grasped independently of its dialectical companion in the Communal-idea. The relationship between the Self-idea and the Communal-idea once again features mortality as a familiar core motif. However, this is closer to a sociological reenactment of the initial encounter with death, rather than that moment itself. Nature is a metabolic cycle featuring death as an ever-present and arbitrary force. Standing athwart nature is the community, which is an enacted space that protects its members from directly confronting the immediacy and meaninglessness of natural mortality.[i] In other words, the human community mirrors key features of the alienation of ideas through the medium of social organisation.

We must return to the phenomenological function of worldliness in order to better access Kasai's understanding of the role of the Communal-idea. From such a perspective, "the common world must be characterized by a certain stability. It can only be *common* on this condition, because, amidst an ever-changing flux, intersubjective reference to the same is not possible. To the picture of the with-world and the world as a place of appearance, Arendt hence adds the necessary stability of the world in the form of objecthood and

objectivity, and calls this the 'worldliness of the world'." [73] The worldliness of the community in Kasai's sense is similar to this Arendtian notion of the worldliness of the world. A common-unity of perspectives within a world-space produces the necessary stability to guard against the risk of ideational death inherent to abstraction. In addition, as discussed earlier, the human community alienates its members from the immediacy of physical death in nature. In other words, the Communal-idea acts as a shelter from both physical and ideational death.

While such a shelter may seem redundant given its overlapping functionality as next to the idea in general, it is nonetheless a necessary safeguard against the fragility of the initial moment of alienation, and its accompanying hope to recover a lost world: the idea begins with the world alienation that is set off by a confrontation with death and mortality—or most accurately, the idea *is* that alienation. Self-conscious mortality throws human beings out of 'pure' reality, causing the loss of, or alienation from, that world. However, the world-building function of alienation can easily collapse into worldlessness given its lack of a "necessary stability of the world in the form of objecthood and objectivity:" in Kasai's terminology, the danger to the interior of an idea posed by its distance from its exterior. Ideational efforts at world-building are paradoxically on the verge of worldlessness because "to say that human existence appears in ideal thought is to define humanity by the experience of worldlessness." (*PT*) Therefore, the appearance of an idea held in *common* will necessarily threaten any idea which does not share an "intersubjective reference to the same [world]." In other words, the commonality of an idea distances itself as a phenomenal experience, amplifying its "distant objectivity," and placing it into an exterior that can erode the interior of any contrary idea which is experienced in closer proximity. Putting this process in sociological terms, the 'subjective' proximity of the Self-idea and its concomitant risk of worldlessness is only discoverable in correspondence with human collectivity and the "distant objectivity" of ideas held in

[73] (Loidolt 2018)

common—that is, the Communal-idea—as a world-building experience.

Dialectical terrorism

The antinomy of the Self-idea and the Communal-idea corresponds closely to the epistemological distinction between subject and object in general. If we reuse our earlier terminology, the Self-idea and Communal-idea are the two particular phenomenal forms through which reification as a historical process finds its superstructural coherence. In order to unmask the emergence and physiology of the idea, as well as the resultant formation of the subject-object dichotomy, we chiefly emphasised the phenomenological elements of Kasai's thought. However, Kasai's history of the idea does not limit itself to this methodology. Beyond the suggestion that the subject-object break has a history prior to Lukácsian reification, Kasai also argues that modern terrorism developed in accordance with an even broader history of the idea that extends beyond the subject-object break. To this end, he deploys G. W. F. Hegel's dialectical method—but with an intentionally ironic bite. Put concisely, Kasai defines the Partisan-idea as the sublation of the dialectic between the Self-idea and the Communal-idea. He explains the intentions of this dialectical methodology like so:

> Given the necessity[74] to infiltrate the system of the Hegelian dialectic, the structure of this book, … will act as camouflage and mask our infiltration; it is the product of a deliberate Hegelian mimicry. This strategy was chosen for a destructive purpose—for turning the Hegelian structure … inside-out from within.
>
> … The first task will be an account of the Self-idea, which serves as the interior aspect of the ideational at the site of its emergence.

[74] Due to the importance of Hegelian motion to Leninist terrorism in particular.

> Next, the movement of the Self-idea must be understood in its relation to the Communal-idea, which is prior to the Self-idea as both a matter of logic and history. The third topic will be the history of the Ensemble-idea, which mitigates against the perversions of the "Communal-idea–Self-idea" movement. And lastly, the corruption and collapse of the Self-idea into the Partisan-idea will be laid out, as an inevitable opposition to the Ensemble-idea.
>
> This structure is a parody of the Hegelian system, … and came into being under the influence of phenomenology in the sense of both Husserl and Hegel.
>
> (*PT*)

At our current stage of analysis, the fact that "the Communal-idea … *is prior to the Self-idea* [my emphasis] as both a matter of logic and history" is absolutely key. It is only through this directionality that we can hope to comprehend Kasai's "product of a deliberate Hegelian mimicry." It is correct to identify the Self-idea with "the ideational at the site of its emergence:" the relatively low distance of the Self-idea places it within the horizon of the original experience of alienation. However, the recognition and phenomenal perception of this Self-idea as ideational only begins because of the comparative "distant objectivity" of the Communal-idea. The common-unity of a world that we experience with others—what Arendt refers to as the "common sense" of a "plural" world of appearances; that is, a space of intersubjective perception—exists prior to alienation and abstraction. "Nothing that is, insofar as it appears, exists in the singular; everything that is is meant to be perceived by somebody. Not Man but men inhabit this planet. Plurality is the law of the earth."[75] Therefore, we discover the abstract and ideational exactly among that which does not appear in the common world. And relatedly, the common sense of intersubjective perception is prior to the idea. Even for unalienated animals, the world is rooted in the

[75] (Arendt, The Life of the Mind 1981)

stability of 'as it appears to us all' among social creatures. It is only through alienation, and thereby the ideational abstraction, that we discover the appearance of 'as it appears to me, but not you' in the Self-idea. Once this is noticed, it becomes possible to articulate a concept of 'as it appears to you all, but not me' as the physiology of the ideas that are *exclusively* held in common. The ideational type, as it appears in the Self-idea, brings coherence to a wider sense of the ideational, and not merely material, 'objects' of common sense as-in the Communal-idea. It is through the tension between 'as it appears to me' and 'as it appears to you' that we encounter the phenomenal anatomy of subjectivity and objectivity as paired ideational structures.

Another crucial distinction here is that the Self-idea acquires its qualitative determination precisely because its interior encounters a negative exterior, which thereby imposes finitude.[76] The discovery of subjectivity through alienation—the capacity for building our own world after being alienated from the instability of unmediated being-in-the-world—retroactively discovers its negation as the idea of objectivity in the world created together in the community. This movement suggests a certain point of translation, where the phenomenological observation of ideas as the general product of alienation—as a psychophysical phenomenon—can develop into a procedure where ideas develop into further forms of specific determination in the sense of Hegel's process-based dialectic of ideas. In plainer terms, Kasai begins with phenomenology in Husserl's (and other's) sense to demonstrate the physiology of ideas in general, and then moves on to the evolutionary development of ideas in the negative dialectical sense as-in Hegel.[77]

We can demonstrate this processual evolution of ideas in a concrete and comprehensible manner by stepping away from such purely philosophical gestures and returning to an applied phenomenology of terrorism. The Self-idea is, in summary, the intermediating ideal world we build for ourselves in order to have a fixed place of being.

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[76] (Cf. Hegel 2010)

[77] Kasai, as mentioned, is being more than a little playful regarding how Hegelian this movement truly is.

The Communal-idea is the sense that there is an ideal world shared in common among others. The commonality of this world gives it a "distant objectivity" as next to the Self-idea, and it is by way of this exteriority and objectivity that the Communal-idea finds its sense of worldliness. Insomuch as the Communal-idea contradicts the comparative lack of reality within the Self-idea, the attempt to build a world for the self risks a collapse into worldlessness. This worldless condition must necessarily proceed through a path of destruction and negation:

> A person undergoing total worldlessness has already been forced to confront destruction. The only options left for them are destruction in the sense of gradual suffocation, or a more sudden kind. Total worldlessness reenacts itself endlessly, as a continuous sensation of pain and suffering. Unable to feel the world, they cannot accept its reality, but they also cannot reside in the pain and its burdensome authenticity of life. Such a world is only a world for others. It always appears on the other side, like the stage of a play. Its rules and laws are not a source of connection with the world and its people, but only the terror of arbitrary sanction—an artifice of oppression.
>
> (*PT*)

Yet, it is not as though we can painlessly do away with this Self-idea as soon as it takes on a condition of worldlessness. Human beings cannot escape their rootedness and thrownness within a discrete individual perspective. Moreover, the contrary Communal-idea of shared human perspectives is itself justified by the "necessary stability of the world in the form of objecthood and objectivity."[78] The problem is that this gap "reenacts itself endlessly," as Kasai suggests. Insomuch as the apparent "objectivity" of the Communal-idea contradicts the immediate sensations of a particular human perspective, that lone person will find themselves stuck between two incompatible worlds. They must either dispose of their common

[78] (Loidolt 2018)

sense and trust only in their inner experience of perception, or else they must refuse to 'believe their lying eyes' and therein surrender entirely to the Communal-idea sustained by others. Both possibilities only lead to a freshly alienated perspective on the world, and therefore necessitate an encounter with new forms of the idea.

The Partisan-idea which follows from this problem is neither strictly subjective nor objective in its phenomenal distance. Its purpose is, as with any idea, the "restoration of a lost … world." (*PT*) The disunity between the Self-idea and the Communal-idea unavoidably produces a sensation of worldlessness—as the objectivity and stability of a common world can no longer be reconciled to the immediacy of individual human existence. Without this, the Self-idea tends towards idealised hopes and fantasies. The Partisan-idea comes into being in order to objectify the Self-idea's alienation from the common whole. Its method lies in producing an alternate arena of commonality apart from the general whole. This makes for something of a facsimile of the Communal-idea; the Partisan-idea is a shared idea held in common by a sub-group that defines itself by its incompatibility with the Communal-idea of the 'general' or 'universal' community. In other words, when the imaginary content of the self is placed in opposition to common sense, it can only be sustained by finding others who share in the same ideal or fantasy. We give ourselves a permanence appropriate to existence in a material world only by performing that self in the presence of others. And therefore, insomuch as a particular self is excluded from the common-unity of others, they require recognition from the shared perspective of a similarly excluded community. This sub-division of the common-unity is characteristic of the Partisan-idea.

We can also describe the development of the Partisan-idea in dialectical terms. Beginning with a state of alienation from unmediated being, the Self-idea constructs a substitute world within the horizon of individual human perspective. However, this Self-idea will necessarily differ from the Communal-idea—which is located in the same common sense that human beings use to confirm the objectivity and solidity of the material world. The appearing nature of this Self-idea is originally world-building, but the specification of

its boundary as next to the Communal-idea reveals its "determinate negation" in the solitary condition of worldlessness. Through a process of sublation, or positive speculation, a unity in the self-determination of the idea unfolds as the sharing of this internal substitute world. The Partisan-idea describes the capacity for this shared self-world to be realised as a unit of social organisation.

Such language is necessarily quite abstract. Moreover, Kasai does not intend for any Hegelian account to be taken literally. His methodology is after all a "parody" of Hegel. Hegel's method concerns the dialectical, processual self-determination of ideas. The negative determination of certain immediate historical events unfolds as the processual development of a world-historical absolute spirit of rationality and freedom. Kasai recasts the implicit teleology of this method and suggests that the basic phenomenology of ideas inevitably finds its self-determination in the Partisan-idea—which he then characterises as the engine of an anti-rational, domineering terrorism. That is, as having precisely the opposite end to Hegel's absolute spirit of rationality.

We must therefore consider the connection between the Partisan-idea and terrorism in some detail. It is hardly surprising that the Partisan-idea, as the sub-unified alienation of the counter-community, would have some correspondence to terrorism: that is, it is a concept that is relevant to counter-hegemonic violence among sub-state groups that do not enjoy the legitimacy of political authority. As a purely linguistic concern, 'partisan violence' is simply an older synonym, from the Romance languages, for the modern concept of 'terrorism'. Kasai deploys the Hegelian notion of negative self-determination to suggest that the logic of ideas demands an endless historical cycle of self-purification. Wherever a gap develops between an idea and the common sense of its exterior, a process of sublation is realised via a purifying sub-division of this dialectical tension into a new common sense. In Hegel, such a process would be realised in the world-historical absolute spirit of rationality. Despite the apparent 'negativity' of Hegel's dialectic, his world spirit is as representative of the constructiveness of Habermasian communicative action as it is reflective of the destructive impulses

of terrorism. This is to say that the Hegelian theory of history leaves open the capacity for a rational and gradual development towards the realisation of a perfected political state,[79] built on the still existent foundations of what once was. This is not the case for Kasai's model of self-purification. While Hegel's dialectic implies the continued co-existence of the sublated totality and its constitutive dialectical movements, Kasai's phenomenological history of the idea tends towards pure destruction. The alternative common sense of the Partisan-idea cannot obtain its necessary solidity and objectivity unless it removes itself from the domain of the Communal-idea. And similarly, any continued distance between the Self-idea and the Partisan-idea will resuscitate the world alienation which justified its development in the first place. This implied mutual incompatibility between the world-building function of different forms of the idea leads to a purifying, destructive kind of dialectical movement. The cycle of world alienation described by Kasai implies the continual abolition[80] of ideas, and not merely their continued development.

When it comes to the relationship between this dialectical movement and concrete violence, one need only think back to the United Red Army incident, which hangs over all of *PT* as the seminal embodiment of the Partisan-idea. The isolation of the United Red Army partisans from mass society was not merely a coincidence of guerilla tactics, but a natural extension of their epistemological posture. Tsuneo Mori, the leader of the United Red Army, repeatedly demanded that his victims "communise" themselves. This "communisation" of the self was posited as the only method of freeing a would-be revolutionary from their naturally counterrevolutionary disposition. But neither Mori nor his victims demonstrated any clear understanding of what this concept meant in practice. The accusations which motivated the self-critique struggle sessions of the United Red Army incident—such as failing to prepare enough water bottles or being excessively attached to

[79] For example, liberal democratic capitalism at the 'end of history' for Francis Fukuyama.

[80] Hegel's use of sublation (*aufhebung*) may alternatively be translated as 'abolition' in certain contexts for particular emphases.

personal beauty—were so directionless, vague, and broad that communisation came to be defined as a tautological buzzword. Communisation was simply equivalent to doing the 'right' thing in whatever revolutionary terms Mori accepted in the moment. However, the relative incoherence of the United Red Army incident, as a question of the content of the victims' behaviour, is far less mysterious when studied in terms of the "standpoints" of the members of the group as revolutionary subjects. According to Kitada (2005), "Marxist ideological spaces bring attention to the narrator's position, intensifying interest in self-consciousness and self-negation as methodological issues of identity formation." In analysing the importance of this fixation, Kitada additionally quotes Michinori Katō, a survivor of the United Red Army incident, who in turn explains that "making a mistake did not stop at admitting fault and declaring 'I will carry out self-critique'. It also involved digging down and unearthing the original ideological causes of the mistake. Self-critique was a presentation of one's personal history as the fundamental cause of the mistake, and then an analysis of how one would transcend it." (Kitada 2005) Communisation is consequently defined as:

> [The effort] by which an individual subject obtains the physicality of a revolutionary warrior via "comradely discussion, mutual debate, and self-critique."[81] … Mori's favoured catchphrase was "from the perspective of communisation;" saying things such as … "from the perspective of communisation, it is not acceptable to become the centre of attention." … It is almost impossible to locate any ideological core to this "perspective of communisation." … However, this does not mean that the ideology of communisation was haphazard or meaningless. It was a meta-ideology of negation that could not be articulated in positive terms. … The theory of communisation was a network of discourses that sustained a desire for the impossible state of total communisation; this state did not need to correspond to any exact goal or end. … It is best to think of the privileged position

[81] This sentence is quoting the head of the United Red Army, Tsuneo Mori.

> they [Mori and Nagata] held in this discursive space. … A deified, transcendent authority is necessary to see through the self-deception of self-negation; Mori and Nagata instrumentally took on the role of that authority.
>
> (Kitada 2005)

In other words, the functioning of communisation and self-critique in the United Red Army incident was not a matter of behavioural content, but position. What defined counterrevolutionary conduct—even demonstrably harmless conduct in empirical terms—was that it could not be articulated "from the perspective of communisation," which was itself instrumentally attached to Mori and Nagata as a function of their hierarchical leadership. To repeat this system in the vocabulary of *PT*, the isolation of the United Red Army in a mountain base was intended to develop a revolutionary unity of action corresponding to the Partisan-idea, which Mori understood as the "communisation" of the bodies of the United Red Army members. This meant abandoning both the positionality of the Communal-idea of outside society as well as the Self-idea of the prior lives of autonomous individual members. A successful process of self-critique therefore demanded that a member accurately explain how their prior sense of self was determined by the objective processes of capitalist political economy, and then also to subsequently articulate how the unity of perspectives of the United Red Army would allow for the transcendence of these processes through the "communisation" of the individual self within the group.

The isolation of the United Red Army corresponded to its systematic self-intensification as a manifestation of the Partisan-idea. The problem was, firstly, the mutual incompatibility between the Partisan-idea and other forms of the idea. And secondly, the impossibility of total self-purification of the Partisan-idea as an ideological structure. That is, in the vocabulary of the United Red Army, the impossibility of "total communisation." Once these conditions were in place, self-purification found its only possible outlet in the form of the United Red Army incident. The

intensification of the Partisan-idea demands the purification of all lingering remnants of the Self-idea and Communal-idea from the group. And it is only natural for this need to express itself in an explosion of violence, given the equal impossibilities of ideational co-existence and peaceful self-purification. In conventional social contexts ruled over by a mainstream socio-political community, the purifying destructivity of the Partisan-idea tends to be directed outwards towards the Communal-idea—as is the case in the general phenomenon of terrorism and partisan violence. But, contingent on the mix of intensity and impotence displayed in physically isolated situations such as the United Red Army incident, this capacity can transform inwards towards a totalitarian purification of everything and everyone that embodies a positionality different from the Partisan-idea.

The Ensemble-idea and heterogeneity

In contrast to the famous triads that can be found in the work of Hegel, Kasai separates his model of the idea into four separate forms. Earlier, we utilised only three of these to develop a triadic model of ideational change. But we must now introduce the remaining fourth form of the idea. We owe the belatedness of any discussion of the Ensemble-idea to the purely relative terms of its definition: Kasai intends the Ensemble-idea as a kind of answer to the inevitability of the dialectical unfolding of the Partisan-idea. It is therefore best to grasp the Ensemble-idea via its negative relationship to the pseudo-Hegelian emergence of the Partisan-idea, rather than through a positive description of the Ensemble-idea's independent historical features.

Kasai's thinking on the Ensemble-idea is closely connected to the methodology of Georges Bataille. For Bataille, the base material conditions of all phenomena are inherently misrecognised when viewed in the context of hierarchical structures—precisely because these hierarchies are ideational and not material. This is not a

problem with the "high" position of the superstructure in specific, but rather a general critique of all hierarchical relationships between "high and low," including the Marxian flipping of the Hegelian dialectic "on its head," as embodied in its base-superstructure metaphor. This allows Bataille to articulate a kind of "anti-dialectical" (*PT*) mode of materialist thought, in contrast to the process-based dialectical methodology of the Marxian tradition. He derives this anti-dialectical way of thinking from his own general ontology of immanence; according to Bataille:

> The animal that another animal eats is not yet given as an object. Between the animal that is eaten and the one that eats, there is no relation of *subordination* like that connecting an object, a thing, to man, who refuses to be viewed as a thing. … The animal eaten by another exists this side of duration; it is consumed, destroyed, and this is only a disappearance in a world where nothing is posited beyond the present.
>
> That one animal eats another scarcely alters a fundamental situation: every animal is *in the world like water in water*. … The animal can be regarded as a subject for which the rest of the world is an object, but it is never given the possibility of regarding itself in this way.
>
> The positing of the object, which is not given in animality, is in the human use of tools. … The positing of the object known clearly and distinctly from without generally defines a sphere of objects, a world, a plane on which it is possible to situate clearly and distinctly. … Generally speaking, the world of things is perceived as a fallen world. It entails the alienation of the one who created it.
>
> … Death is nothing in immanence, but because it is nothing, a being is never truly separated from it. Because death has no meaning, because there is no difference between it and life, and there is no fear of it or defense against it, it invades everything without giving rise to any resistance. Duration ceases to have any

> value, or it is there only in order to produce the morbid delectation of anguish. On the contrary, the objective and in a sense transcendent (relative to the subject) positing of the world of things has duration as its foundation: no *thing* in fact has a separate existence, has a meaning, unless a subsequent time is posited, in view of which it is constituted as an object. The object is defined as an operative power only if its duration is implicitly understood. If it is destroyed as food or fuel is, the eater or the manufactured object preserves its value in duration; it has a lasting purpose like coal or bread. Future time constitutes this real world to such a degree that death no longer has a place in it. But it is for this very reason that death means everything to it. The weakness (the contradiction) of the world of things is that it imparts an unreal character to death even though man's membership in this world is tied to the positing of the body as a thing insofar as it is mortal.
>
> (Bataille, Theory of Religion 1989)

Notably, Bataille's ontology of immanence prefigures Kasai's own understanding of alienation. Given the centrality of Bataille to Kasai's thinking, we might even describe Kasai's history of the idea as a reformulation of Bataille in phenomenological terms. The phenomenon that Kasai names as the "distant objectivity" of ideas—drawing on the language of Takaaki Yoshimoto—appears in Bataille as the contra-animalised transcendence of "the positing of the object." Bataille also repeats Kasai's linking of this objectivity to the alienation of mortality. But most importantly, Bataille transforms the concept of objectivity into a general model of social organisation that captures some of the key features of the Ensemble-idea.

Bataille as a thinker is generally highly concerned with the transgression of seemingly self-contained systems. In particular, he emphasises the totalising capacity of such systems to bound themselves and render their own exterior as beyond recognition. Bataille categorises this fundamental difference in recognition with the labels of homogeneity and heterogeneity. The homogeneous

world is composed of the accumulation of all phenomena which are able to be situated by their interrelated purposefulness: "*homogeneous* society is productive society, namely useful society." (Bataille, The Psychological Structure of Fascism 1979) Crucially, objectivity itself, in the form articulated in Bataille's ontology, is a frame of perception that imposes homogeneity as a function of its nature. The world of things is a world with the necessary stability to posit that each thing has a possible relation and use within the greater whole.[82] Hence, Bataille is able to claim that "*homogeneous* reality presents itself with the abstract and neutral aspect of strictly defined and identified objects (basically, it is the specific reality of solid objects)." (Bataille, The Psychological Structure of Fascism 1979) Whereas the excluded exterior, which practically manifests in phenomena such as the taboo and the sacred, cannot register in the terms of objectivity; "*heterogeneous* reality is that of a force or shock. It presents itself as a charge, as a value, passing from one object to another in a more or less abstract fashion, almost as if the change were taking place not in the world of objects but only in the judgments of the subject." (Bataille, The Psychological Structure of Fascism 1979)

Attaching the subjectivity of heterogeneity to the internality of the Self-idea would amount to a fatal misreading of both schemas. The Self-idea depends upon a state of alienation from the unmediated immediacy of the world; in Bataille's ontology, this is equivalent to alienation *from* the immanence of animality. The Self-idea discovers itself through the Communal-idea as a matter of its negative determination in the Hegelian sense, and thereby manifests the paired abstract transcendences of subjectivity and objectivity. But this dialectic is exactly what marks the Self-idea as entirely distinct from the immanent being that is prior to objecthood in Bataille's telling. The Self-idea is an abstract positionality that is located

[82] There is a rarely recognised connection between Bataille's concept of homogeneity and Arendt's concept of worldliness. Arendt (The Human Condition 1998) links the world-building condition of work to the instrumentalisation of all things; *homo faber* sees everything through the lens of *poesis*—activity towards some separate end. This is contrary to the *praxis* of action, which is its own end.

through a system of distance that appears through the relational schema of objecthood. Insomuch as a 'subjectivity' is attached to the Self-idea, it is as a companion to objectivity. It does not correspond to the first-person immanence of Bataille, where one is "*in the world like water in water*." (Bataille, Theory of Religion 1989)

The relationship between the respective dichotomies of heterogeneity–homogeneity and immanence–transcendence is even more complex. There is no direct way to map these systems onto one another, but it is nonetheless the case that the former relies heavily on the ontology of the latter. To jump straight to the point: immanence is largely incompatible with homogeneity, but this does not imply that transcendence is exclusively restricted to the domain of the homogeneous. The relationship is a two-step process. Homogeneity depends upon transcendence for the objecthood inherent to its perspective and has no meaning otherwise. The heterogeneous is defined by its opposition to the homogeneous, and it therefore also depends ontologically on the transcendent. However, this oppositional nature also sees the heterogeneous bleeding over into concepts that are related to immanence; the lingering remnants of immanence in a world made through transcendent homogeneity will inevitably take on a heterogeneous character.

We can illustrate the interplay between all of these systems by considering the Ensemble-idea in some detail.

As discussed previously, the dialectical relationship that brings about the Partisan-idea is characterised by the interpenetrative abolition of ideas. This sort of ideational structure undergoes recurrent contradictions with the plurality that brings itself into being in the first place. And from the resultant process of self-purification, we can moreover see that each form of the idea unfolds as a doomed attempt to transform itself from a merely particularised idea into *the* supreme or absolute idea—as the abolition of its own antecedents. But what is the regulative principle behind this destructivity of ideas, as opposed to the relatively constructive dialectic of Hegel? Kasai

does not place any such principle within the three-stage history of the idea itself. He instead relies on the ontology of Bataille to locate an additional fourth position beyond the cyclical process of self-purification, and then designates this position as the Ensemble-idea.

The Communal-idea, for example, is enacted both as an ontological frame—the common-unity of perspectives—and as an existent socio-political space—the community *qua* the community. These two communalities coincide in the form of alienation from the nature of mortality. In Bataille's vocabulary, we would additionally define this distance as a state of transcendence, or removal, from the immanence of animality. Indeed, Bataille's notion of transcendence and Kasai's use of the term alienation are largely synonymous. And as in Bataille, the objecthood of such alienation is intrinsic to the production of homogeneity in Kasai's history of the idea. Bataille's description of animality is crucial for this point: the role of mortality in immanence as next to transcendence is not merely the experience of death in a more immediate and visceral sense. Death in a state of immanence is "only a disappearance in a world where nothing is posited beyond the present." (Bataille, Theory of Religion 1989) In such a state of immanent being, prior to objecthood, wherein "duration ceases to have any value," (Bataille, Theory of Religion 1989) mortality is beyond recognition as an idea or 'thing' that invokes contemplative fear. It is that the threefold temporality[83] of transcendence is incompatible with an immanent—that is, present-tense—relationship to mortality that renders it intolerable for the homogeneous perspective.

Immanence does not per se correspond to either the pure atomisation of the world or the melting away of the world into a monadic totality. Immanence is a condition without either any-thing or every-thing—it is dominated by no-thing-ness. Homogeneity is the perspectival frame that seeks to impose thing-like relatedness over and against the unrelatedness of an immanent nothing. At the

[83] As in Heidegger.

distance of transcendence, homogeneity bounds the world within an intrarelated and comprehensible everything.

The heterogeneous is defined in strict relation to the homogeneous. That is, its definition is purely negative; for Bataille, whatever cannot be delineated by the borders of the relational totality of the homogeneous is categorised as heterogeneous. Therefore, the idea in Kasai's sense—"the ideal restoration of a lost real world" (*PT*)—has a fundamental incompatibility with the worldlessness of the heterogeneous. An idea which finds itself excluded from the homogeneous perspectival frame that imposes relational order on the world will find itself overwhelmed by a radical instability. It is natural for humans to only recognise one world; the world-building function of ideas necessarily fills them with the desire to homogenise and colonise all contrary (unrelated; heterogeneous) ideational systems. The role of world alienation and self-purification in Kasai's dialectical history of the idea are, together, extremely similar to the operation of the homogeneous world in Bataille's thought. The homogeneous bounds the world within one unified system of relations; a system where everything 'has its place', and one that also obscures the recognition of all phenomena beyond itself. Kasai's history of the idea unfolds under the premise of this instability: a new idea, which originates in the heterogenous exterior to a reigning homogeneity, necessitates the abolition of that same homogeneity. This is because a new idea of this kind cannot be at home in the worldless heterogenous exterior, and therefore seeks the worldliness of unity and totality through the imposition of its own homogenising frame. This homogenising frame, by which ideas need to destroy one another to move from heterogeneity to homogeneity, is the origin of destructivity in Kasai's system of ideas.

Kasai's three-stage history of the idea is an articulation of (a destructive variant of) the Hegelian dialectic, in a manner designed to be interoperable with the ontology of Bataille. In correspondence with Bataille, Kasai additionally includes his own analysis of the "anti-dialectical" (*PT*) limit-experiences that stand outside of the processual self-purification of the idea. In other words, Kasai attempts to situate a form of the idea that is native to the

heterogeneous, and therefore beyond the bounded totality of the Hegelian system and its dialectical movements. This heterogeneous exterior is the Ensemble-idea, which can therefore be defined negatively as whatever form of the idea is immune to homogenisation within a social totality.

Kasai continues to draw on Bataille for his positive description of the Ensemble-idea as a historical phenomenon. In a reflection of its heterogeneity, the Ensemble-idea is associated with the sacred, the taboo, and the inarticulable unconscious. Since homogeneous society is characterised by the instrumentalisation and systematisation of all things into a related totality, a natively heterogeneous idea is instead characterised by its anti-systematic pointlessness. The Ensemble-idea does not appear in highly pragmatic institutions, but in particularised excess practices—a surplus, in the same manner as what Bataille refers to as the "accursed share" of the "general economy."[84] This allows Kasai to part ways with the dialectical motion of Marxian-Hegelian revolution—which is thereby connected to the self-purifying destructivity of the United Red Army incident—whilst nonetheless positing the capacity for a valid form of post-Marxist left-wing revolutionary energy within the heterogeneous excess. He therefore hopes to rescue the revolutionary potential of spontaneous anarchic action, such as the Paris Commune, Russian Soviets, or even the contemporaneous soixante-huitard moment of May 1968, as apart from the totalising obligations of Marxism and dialectical materialism.

To summarise Kasai's entire system of the idea: the origin of the idea in general lies in human alienation from the immanent character of animality. This transcendent position removes itself and becomes unable to confront mortality in its 'natural' temporal frame of the animalistic present tense. The resultant phenomenon of death as-an-abstraction is the originary idea that typifies the function of all subsequent ideas: ideas exist to solidify and unify the otherwise

[84] (Bataille, The Accursed Share 2017)

worldless nature of transcendent experience. That is, ideas offer a simulated worldliness for the sake of "the ideal restoration" of the "lost real world" (*PT*) of immanence. But this worldliness is fragile; the seeming solidity of any subsequent rival idea risks a collapse of the preceding ideational perspective into world alienation. So long as ideas are driven by a need to homogenise and unify their world, they will proceed through a cycle of dialectical abolition—as modelled by Kasai's history of the Self-idea, Communal-idea, and Partisan-idea. The Ensemble-idea is appended onto this system as the formal space for heterogeneous action that is irreducible to the totalising gaze of other ideas. While it is an 'idea', the Ensemble-idea is comfortable with the plurality and unrelatedness of the heterogeneous world. This is in contradistinction to the generally homogenising nature of ideas. The Ensemble-idea is therefore positioned as the only possible resolution to the Partisan-idea's terroristic nature: the Partisan-idea is characterised by a perverse dialectical desire to communalise the imagination of the self—to unify the Self-idea and Communal-idea by abolishing each on their own. Whereas the Ensemble-idea allows for the pluralistic accumulation of differentiated selves, as an anti-dialectical alternative to the totalising dialecticism of self and community.

Notes

[i] Kasai heavily draws on the work of René Girard to establish this point. According to Girard, the community does not just prevent the random violence of nature; the community regulates, channels, and displaces it with its own uniquely human mode of violence. And most crucially, the violence of the community is meaningful—even sacred—as next to the meaninglessness of the violence of nature. This distinction is of only minor importance given our narrowly tailored approach to reading Kasai in conjunction with a particular phenomenological tradition. But a properly comprehensive account of Kasai's thought would heavily emphasise this point since it proves to be foundational to his later theory of violence. (Cf. Kasai, Society of Exception: Divine Violence and Class/Culture/Crowd 2009)