



Murray Spindel, who died of cancer on July 7, 1999, was a great friend to the University of Memphis and to the faculty members and students in the Philosophy Department who came to know him during the preceding two decades. Murray and his good friend Bert Bornblum, both Memphis businessmen, participated in their first philosophy courses in the department during the 1981–82 academic year. Murray and Bert took Hoke Robinson's course in nineteenth century philosophy that fall and Terry Horgan's course in contemporary philosophy of mind the following spring. Thereafter, they continued to take classes on a regular basis and became actively involved in the intellectual and social life of the department.

While taking Hoke's course, Murray endowed a gift to the University of Memphis (then Memphis State University) to be used by the Philosophy Department to fund an annual conference on varying philosophical topics, with the proceedings to be published as a supplement to *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (then edited by Nancy Simco). Since the first conference was held in the fall of 1982, the Spindel Philosophy Conference has become an internationally renowned event, and the Spindel Supplements are timely and important contributions to philosophy.

Splendid though they were, Murray's financial generosity to the department and tireless service in support of the College of Arts and Sciences and the University represented only one dimension of his friendship. Over the years, Murray and his wife, Chris, hosted many events in their home, including meetings of our undergraduate Philosophy Club, philosophical talks, informal Sunday afternoon conversations beside their swimming pool, and every year a dinner reception for attendees of the Spindel Conference. Especially those faculty who now qualify as department old-timers came to be good friends not only with Murray and Chris but also with their daughter Carol, her husband Tom, their son Alan, and his wife Karen.

The marvelous sketch above was drawn by Carol and reminds us that Murray is sorely missed but not forgotten. His legacy to philosophy lives on in the annual conferences and supplements that bear his name.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

KAS SAGHAFI

It was my honor to organize the 30th Annual Spindel Conference on "Derrida and the Theologico-Political: From Sovereignty to the Death Penalty," hosted by the Department of Philosophy at the University of Memphis from September 29 through October 1, 2011. A group of dedicated scholars gathered to address Jacques Derrida's analyses of "the theologico-political" in works of philosophy, political theory, religion, psychoanalysis, and literature. Derrida's later writings specifically undertake an extensive study of the relation between sovereignty, the death penalty, and the theologico-political, putting into question the supposed secularism of the modern nation-state. This conference furthered the investigation of the theologico-political—the unacknowledged theological roots of political concepts and modern political institutions—by examining its relation to the death penalty, sovereignty, the death of the animal, as well as the pivotal role of Kant.

A word about the nature of Derrida's seminars may be helpful here. From the beginning of his teaching career (starting at the Sorbonne in 1960) to his last seminars at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (through 2003), Jacques Derrida completely wrote out all of his lectures, which were usually presented over twelve to fifteen weeks during the course of each academic year. A decision was made by Derrida's heirs to edit and publish his seminars—which amount to some 14,000 printed pages or 43 volumes—in reverse chronological order. These seminars, which are being published by Editions Galilée in France and the University of Chicago Press in the English-speaking world, constitute an invaluable addition to the already existing corpus. The 2011 Spindel Conference focused on, yet was not limited to, Derrida's recently published seminars and, in particular, the forthcoming Death Penalty Seminars.¹ Devoted to detailed and painstaking examinations

¹ The Death Penalty Seminars will be published first in French as *Peine de mort*, 2 vols. (Paris: Galilée, 2012–2013), then in English as *Death Penalty*, trans. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth

of major texts of philosophy and literature by Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Schmitt, Heidegger, La Fontaine, Hugo, Camus, and Genet, among others, the Death Penalty Seminars enrich the elaboration of the theologico-political in his already published works.

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to those who made the 2011 Spindel Conference possible. First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to the Spindel family, who generously endowed the Spindel Fund, which serves as the main source of support for these important annual conferences. I would also like to thank the Department of Philosophy, in particular our Chair, Deborah Tollefsen, the University of Memphis Public Service Funds, and Wiley-Blackwell Publishers for additional support. Finally, I would like to thank Lauren Shelley, Conference and Event Coordinator at the University of Memphis, for her assistance throughout the planning stages. I am also very grateful to the University of Memphis graduate students who so willingly volunteered to help with registration duties. I would not have been able to organize this conference without the aid of three people: Connie Diffe (who made sure I kept on the right financial track), Linda Sadler (who is a one-woman publicity machine), and my colleague Pleshette DeArmitt (whose sage advice and assistance was invaluable).

Above all, I would like to thank all of the participants, particularly the keynote speakers, Peggy Kamuf and Geoff Bennington, for their presence, for their generosity of spirit, and for their affirmation of the 2011 Spindel Conference, which proved to be an important opportunity to discuss the later work of Jacques Derrida, whose writings still continue to challenge us, teach us, and surprise us. It was a pleasure to have such a dedicated group of Derrida interpreters gather for an intensive two-and-a-half-day exploration of the theme of "the theologico-political" in Derrida's later works.

Finally, please indulge me for a moment as I recount a few anecdotes from my first Spindel Conference on "Derrida's Interpretations of Husserl." In 1993, the fall of my second year in graduate school—yes, this dates me, yes, it did take me ten years to get my doctorate (but, I say to myself, at least I did not take fifteen years, the average length for a University of Chicago PhD)—I took, with my companion, the Amtrak train from the magnificent Union Station just outside of Chicago's Loop, most memorably captured in Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables*, to Central Station in Memphis, very close to where I now live, to attend a conference. The 12th Annual Spindel Conference on Derrida and Husserl, sponsored by what was then Memphis State University, was being held at the Pyramid Arena, a 60 percent replica of the

Rottenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013–2014). Because the publications are not yet available, citations to the Death Penalty Seminars throughout this volume will be to the year and session number.

Great Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, operational since 1991 but whose fate has been in question in the past few years. Peering out from a side street near this building that houses a 20,000-seat arena (considered to be the third largest pyramid in the world) with a twenty-foot statue of Ramses the Great standing watch outside, and having just been transported from the hustle and bustle of a densely populated area of Chicago near Lake Michigan, I marveled at the spooky streets devoid of pedestrians save a couple of forlorn horse and buggies carrying bemused tourists.² The scene reminded me of a Jim Jarmusch movie, the same Jim Jarmusch who shot *Mystery Train* at the Arcade Restaurant in Memphis, Elvis's favorite haunt, a location about which he is to have said: "Man . . . this crossroad is filled with so many ghosts." This is the same spot that Wong Kar-wai, the great Hong Kong director of *In the Mood for Love* shot parts of his first English-language and best-forgotten film *My Blueberry Nights*.

My memories of the conference, given the passage of time, are rather hazy. I recall observing the proceedings of the conference, where the then graduate students, at least two of whom I remember, Amit Sen and Kevin Thompson, hurried about as conference assistants. I remember Jacques Derrida apologizing for not presenting a paper, because he had spent the past few months finishing a book on Marx, the book that was published as *Specters of Marx*. I recall the elevated pitch of Derrida's voice saying in no uncertain terms to J. Claude Evans, one of the moderators and the author of *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice*, who had challenged Derrida's readings of Husserl, why he did not like his book. I remember sheepishly approaching Jacques Derrida after one of the sessions clutching a copy of *Memoirs of the Blind*, which had just been translated into English by two of my professors at DePaul, one of whom participated in the 2011 Spindel conference, and which I had hurriedly purchased from Barbara's Bookstore in Lakeview before boarding the train, a copy that to this day bears his autograph dated October 3, 1993.

I still have a copy of *The Commercial Appeal*, the Memphis newspaper, dated Saturday, October 2, 1993, with a headline of "Philosophical Groundbreaker Digs Tunes on Beale," which informed the reader that "the father of deconstructionism" was not afraid to boogie on Beale Street after "a sold out conference with about 200 people attending." At a private party held at Blues City Café on Friday evening, Derrida enjoyed the music of Booker T. Laury and Chick Rodgers and danced with conference participants, at least two of whom were present at this year's Spindel to vouch for it and tell the tale. According to *The Commercial Appeal*, Derrida, whose first stop was at the Civil

² As of April 24, 2012, the statue of Ramses II adorns the University of Memphis campus, where he will reign for the next one hundred years.

Rights Museum in Memphis, was in town “as a favor to a pal Robert Bernasconi, conference co-director,” who alongside Len Lawlor had ably organized not just the conference itself but the previous evening’s soiree.

I could go on about a lunch companion having alligator soup at a restaurant in the company of Paul Davies and Miguel de Beistegui, about a well-respected professor who at breakfast stealthily put *my* copy of *The Commercial Appeal* in his book bag right in front of me after hearing that Derrida was on the front cover, or about having to wait for what seemed like an eternity at breakfast in the hotel before one of the sessions, obviously a clash of my “Northern” anxiety with “Southern” ways. But rather than continuing my self-indulgent, nostalgic reverie about Derrida’s visit to Memphis, I need to turn your attention to the proceedings of “Derrida and the Theologico-Political” and the future of Derrida’s thought. By exploring the theological roots of the political in general and the political concepts underlying Western culture, this Derrida conference was a very timely and rewarding discussion of what still remains and needs to be thought.

PROTOCOL: DEATH PENALTY ADDICTION

PEGGY KAMUF

ABSTRACT: “What if the death penalty were a drug?” This question opens the essay and is pursued through two very different kinds of texts. On the one hand, Derrida’s 1999–2000 Death Penalty Seminar is brought to bear for its analysis of what is called there the “anesthetical logic” of capital punishment. This logic, Derrida argues, has determined both pro- and anti-death penalty discourses since at least the mid-eighteenth century. On the other hand, the essay gathers evidence of events that led, in 2010, to the unavailability in the United States of sodium thiopental—the anesthetic component of the three-drug protocol of the lethal injection—which forced many death penalty states to halt executions. Current events thus confirm the philosopher’s analysis that anesthesia is indeed the lynchpin of the apparatus of state-sanctioned executions. But the analysis of this anesthetical logic also leads one to pose the further question of who is being anesthetized by this protocol and its discursive devices: the sentenced or the sentencers?

What if the death penalty were a drug? More particularly, what if it were an anesthetic? And more particularly still, what if it were a chemical compound with anesthetic effects called sodium thiopental, also known by the trademarked names of Pentothal™ and Trapanal™, and often referred to simply as thiopental?

I am going to explain in some detail how and why this question has come to be such an urgent one today. Before that, however, since I have the honor of delivering the first keynote lecture at this conference, let me also be the first to thank Kas Saghafi for his tireless efforts in organizing and preparing this very promising event. It is his inspiration, intellectual vision, and gentle

Peggy Kamuf is Marion Frances Chevalier Professor of French and of Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. Among her most recent books are *Book of Addresses* (Stanford University Press, 2005) and *To Follow: The Wake of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010). Her essays on literary theory, the university, and deconstruction have appeared in journals and anthologies in the United States, Canada, Britain, and throughout Europe. She is project director of the NEH grant supporting the Derrida Seminars Translation Project and co-editor, with Geoffrey Bennington, of the series *The Seminars of Jacques Derrida* at the University of Chicago Press.