

CHAPTER 1



Introduction: The Philosopher's Voice

Voice and Philosophy

Besides colors, it is especially *sounds (die Töne)* which evoke in us a corresponding mood (*Stimmung*). This is chiefly true of the human *voice (Stimme)*; for this is the principal way in which a person shows forth his inner nature; what he is, that he puts into his voice.

—Hegel, *Encyclopedia*¹

Voice is the origin of philosophy, politics, and poetry. Voice is the medium in which persons commune with one another by communicating their thoughts. It is the conjunction of body, mind, and community. It is the material medium by which we expose ourselves to one another, by which we persuade one another, by which we pursue together the truth, and by which we create and share ideas and emotions. Voice is the mechanism by which the inner becomes outer. It is the source of dialectic and inspiration as well as the source of manipulation and coercion. Voice joins the universal and necessary laws of logic to a particular and contingent locus in space and time. All voices are embodied: they speak in concrete historically defined languages; they speak from a definite social and political position; and they address a concrete politically located audience. A voice is philosophical insofar as it is the active appearance of thinking, which aims beyond these historical contingencies toward the universal. The voice of philosophy is a mutual communication aimed at provoking thought in order to call forth truth. A voice is poetic insofar as it is actively creative. The voice of poetry sings, rejoices, mourns, and inspires. Such poetic vocalization aims at evoking a mood, feeling, or idea. Voice is political insofar as it is the mechanism for distributing social goods, for persuading others about legitimate distributions, or for invoking authority.

A continual problem for philosophy is to distinguish itself from poetic and political voices. This is a problem because philosophers cannot guarantee that their voices will be heard properly amid the cacophony of political life. As Aristotle noted, there are many other species of social animals, but only

humans speak about justice. However, speaking about justice is not a simple task. Political life includes a complex web of interconnected voices. It resounds with the voices of the oppressed and the oppressors, the silenced and the silencers. Lately we have learned that political life is—and perhaps should be—polyphonic. It is both the raucous din and the harmonious symphony of a plurality of voices. Amid this polyphony, while political voices use poetic rhetoric to attain political ends at the expense of philosophical truth, the philosopher’s voice struggles to articulate the question of justice that is the heart of political philosophy.

Despite the fact that philosophical thinking is expressed by particular, contingent, historically and politically located voices, the philosopher’s voice is somehow different from the other voices of political life. Most notably, the philosophical goal of critical self-consciousness demands that philosophy account for the sound of its own voice. The philosopher must locate his/her own voice within the multiple voices of political life in order to differentiate his/her voice from those others with which it is often confused. The most difficult problem for political philosophy is to speak to a political audience while also speaking differently than the political voices, which also address that audience. Political philosophers who seek the truth about justice and political life must speak of politics while not speaking politically. They must deliberately revoke the poetic flourishes of political rhetoric in order to make sure that truth is revealed. Of course this is not a simple task because philosophers are political and poetic beings who speak in a historical language to an embodied audience. Like these other voices, the voice of philosophy also seeks to inspire and persuade. However, the norms of philosophical inspiration and persuasion are different from the norms of political and poetic speech.

Philosophy has struggled to defend these norms for millennia. This struggle has required philosophy to use its voice to defend itself against the voices of political interrogators. Socrates, for example, initiated his apology with the following words: “how you, men of Athens, have been affected by my accusers, I do not know.”² His voice cried out to the crowd, addressing his audience by name, initiating and enacting the dialectic between philosophy and politics. Socrates’ apology provides us with a vivid example of the dilemma of political philosophy: it is an attempt to comprehend political life within a broader purview that always remains tied to the partisan squabbles of political life. Socrates asked the members of his audience to look beyond their immediate interests in order to properly hear his voice, a voice that sought a higher good, which includes and reinterprets political life. He appealed to the philosophical imagination of the men of Athens and sought to encourage them in the pursuit of virtue by asking them to consider a truth about justice that transcends partisan politics and personal bias.

The problem for Socrates, and indeed for all philosophers, is that the philosophical imagination is often not yet active in the political audience. Moreover, philosophers are constrained by a normative conception of the philosopher's voice. While philosophers must use their voices to teach the political audience to hear differently, they ought not use their voices to persuade the political audience by way of rhetorical tricks because such persuasion no longer conforms to the norms established for the philosopher's voice.³ The voice of the philosopher is thus at risk when it addresses a political audience because the political audience may not believe that the philosopher's voice initiates a disinterested pursuit of the good and that it is constrained by norms which run contrary to the standard practice of political persuasion. Nonetheless, philosophy must address a political audience. The philosopher's voice is, at least in part, an embodied, political voice: it is a voice that occurs within a given particular moment of history that is also directed toward a given particular political audience. The political nature of the philosopher's voice often leads to tragedy—as in the case of Socrates—because the political audience does not believe that the philosopher pursues a disinterested *elenchos*, a method of teaching devoted to disclosing truth. Rather, the political audience hears the philosopher's voice—including its own claims about its normative commitment to the truth—as merely another political voice dedicated to the political art of persuasion. The political audience cannot yet properly hear the philosophical voice, which would teach it how to hear differently. Rather, the political audience hears the philosopher's voice echoing through the agonistics of political life, where voice is used to manipulate and coerce but not to disclose truth.

This tragedy continues to repeat itself throughout the history of philosophy. Indeed, the continual repetition of this conflict would almost be comical, if it were not for its deadly seriousness. This tragicomedy seems to require a resolution in both philosophy and politics. One way of approaching such a resolution is to properly understand the nature of the philosopher's voice and the way in which its disclosive function differs from the persuasive function of a truly political voice. Socrates and Plato began this endeavor over two millennia ago. We continue to struggle with it today. A crucial moment of clarity about this struggle occurred in the nineteenth century, in the self-consciousness of voice that occurred in the development of thought from Kant to Hegel. Ironically, the very attempt to clarify the difference between the voices of philosophy and politics led to the repoliticization of the philosopher's voice by thinkers such as Fichte and Marx, who rejected the Kantian and Hegelian attempts to distinguish philosophy from politics. The present book attempts to consider the problem of the relation between philosophy, politics, and language, as it was instantiated in the thought and lives of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx.⁴

The Philosopher's Voice and the Problem of Enlightenment

The articulate sound is torn from the breast, to awaken in another individual an echo returning to the ear. Man thereby at once discovers that around him there are beings having the same inner needs, and thus capable of meeting the manifold longing that resides in his feelings.

—Humboldt, *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*⁵

The focal point of the conflict between philosophy and politics is the philosopher's voice. A full consideration of the philosopher's voice must include an understanding of its quality as physical reverberation emanating from the real body of the philosopher in space and time. It must also include a consideration of the origins of language and its evolution from the emotional outbursts of our animal bodies to the abstract discourse of philosophical systems. Finally, it must consider the social and historical constraints imposed by the fact of linguistic diversity. These topics became explicit matters for philosophical concern in the nineteenth century, as can be seen, for example, in the writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt. Indeed, this concern with language grows out of the work of Leibniz in the late seventeenth century and Rousseau, Herder, and Hamman in the eighteenth.⁶ By the nineteenth century, it was not remarkable that language should be a focus of philosophical concern. This was especially true given the historical context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. European intellectuals, as a result of colonialism and imperialism, were beginning to comprehend the true nature of the diversity of languages. Moreover, this era was a time of rapid expansion of literacy, literature in vernacular languages, and political rights. European understanding of language was developing, just as the nature of political justice was expanding to recognize the bourgeoisie and eventually the proletariat. This historical situation resulted in a critical self-examination of the role that philosophy should have in leading the project of enlightenment.

The present book looks at this development by examining conceptions of philosophical method, rhetoric, philosophy of language, and political philosophy found in the development from Kant to Fichte, Hegel, and Marx. I focus on these thinkers, not because of the depth of their philosophies of language—indeed, their philosophies of language are often not explicit—but rather because of the importance of their political philosophies. One of my goals is to make explicit the philosophy of language that is implicit in these thinkers and to connect it with their political philosophies. Each of these thinkers represents a unique approach to the question of the proper relation

between philosophy and politics. Although none of them offers a complete philosophy of voice, they each have something important to say about the link between philosophy, politics, and language.

Hegel says, for example, as quoted at the outset of the present chapter, that the voice (*die Stimme*) “is the principal way in which a person shows forth his inner nature.”⁷ The voice of the philosopher would be, according to this account, the point at which the “inner” spirit of philosophy enters the real material world of political life. In this transition of inner to outer, the conflict between philosophy and politics arises. For the most part, a political audience is persuaded by the *sound* of a voice: its intonations, inflections, location, and direction—as Hegel says, its “power to evoke in us a corresponding mood.”⁸ Despite the fact that the philosopher always has a voice in this sense—he or she inevitably vocalizes and externalizes the inner spiritual content of his/her thought—i.e., despite the material basis of philosophy in the embodied human voice, philosophers tend to use their voices to point beyond the material power of sound toward the “higher” more spiritual content of what Hegel calls “language [*Sprache*]”: “the sound [*Ton*] which articulates itself further for determinate representations—speech [*die Rede*] and its system, language [*die Sprache*]—gives to sensations, intuitions, conceptions, a second and higher existence than their immediate existence—it gives them an existence which is valid in the realm of representation [*im Reiche des Vorstellens*].”⁹ The spiritual content transmitted (sent across space in speech and time in writing) by the material medium of sound, when interpreted philosophically, is *logos* or reason: the universal idea that transcends the particularity of the voice which speaks it. Hegel’s analysis leads us to the general problem of communication. How can material sound communicate the “higher” inner stuff of spirit without corrupting this spiritual content? The difference between language and voice indicates a problem in distinguishing that which is to be sent (language, *logos*, reason) from the medium in which it is sent (voice, sound, and written language). I should note at this point that I will for the most part ignore the difference between spoken and written language. Both of these are instances of voice. As we shall see, however, Hegel at least, does attempt to distinguish spoken language from written.

The problem of communication lies at the heart of the problem of philosophy and its political integument. This problem might seem to be exacerbated by the fact of diversity of languages: can a universal idea be expressed in a variety of languages? Or is there a properly philosophical language? This question has obvious political overtones and was considered variously by Leibniz, Herder, Fichte, Hegel, and Humboldt. The question of German nationalism thus lies just below the surface of much of this discussion. The history of the twentieth century gives us sufficient reason to be concerned with the way in which linguistic and philosophical nationalism can be tied to

political tyranny. As we move into the cosmopolitan and multicultural world of the twenty-first century, the relation between language, rhetoric, philosophy, and politics continues to be a problem linked to questions of diversity, identity, and universality. The basic problem of cultural relativism can be understood as a problem of the relation between the diversity of linguistic expressions and ways of life and the supposed unity of the moral law and the universality of human rights.

Kant, the philosopher most closely associated with the idea of universal human rights and the cosmopolitan League of Nations, was not unaware of these problems. Although he was ultimately interested in pushing beyond the question of voice toward the universal truth of reason and the moral law, he did recognize the importance of style and form. In the *Anthropology*, in a consideration of good taste with regard to politeness and manners, Kant considers the way in which language helps us to communicate and participate in the goods of sociability. Kant goes so far as to claim that good manners have a tendency toward “the external advancement of morality.”¹⁰ This is so because the tendency to try to please others in speech and action is a rudimentary moral tendency. In other words, acting well and speaking properly are external “appearances” of inner morality: “morality in external appearance (*äußeren Erscheinung*).”¹¹ Kant states this, even though he admits that, strictly speaking, there is a contradiction implied in speaking of morality’s outward appearance: morality is, for Kant, a matter of the good will in itself and not a matter of external action. Nonetheless, Kant concludes by claiming that poetry (*Dichtkunst*) and rhetoric (*Beredsamkeit*) are both examples of “the discursive way of imagining (*die discursive Vorstellungsart*) through the spoken or written word (*durch laute Sprache oder durch Schrift*).”¹² Speaking well (*Beredsamkeit*) might thus seem to be a way in which the inner truth of morality can make its appearance, a way of stimulating the imagination so as to be able to properly hear the philosophical content of speech, despite the fact that philosophy and morality are not supposed to be dependent upon concerns such as eloquence and politeness.

The problem of rhetoric, which Kant confronts in the *Anthropology*, is a reiteration of the basic problem with which he struggled in his transcendental idealism: how is one to distinguish the in-itself from the appearance? Kant is aware that we tend to be confused by the difference between form and content, appearance, and reality. In another section of the *Anthropology*, Kant condemns rhetorical skill for its tendency to deceive its audience and confuse the distinction between form and content. “The art, or rather the skill, of speaking in the socially proper tone, and appearing to be up-to-date, especially when the conversation is about science, is falsely called popularity, but should rather be called polished superficiality (*Seichtigkeit*) because it frequently cloaks the paltriness of a narrow-minded person. Only children can

be fooled by this.”¹³ There are clear links here between Kant's understanding of critical enlightenment and his disapprobation of rhetorical skill. While Kant says in the *Anthropology* that only children can be fooled by rhetorical skill, in his response to the question “What is Enlightenment?” he says that “enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity.”¹⁴ Critical rationality, then, involves the ability to see through rhetorical skill to the content that lies behind the form of its appearance. In other words, enlightenment is the ability to hear the *language* which is conveyed by the *sounds* of human speech; it is the ability to listen to the truth beyond rhetoric.

Unfortunately, we are not born with this ability. For the most part we only hear the surface of voice. We are susceptible to political manipulation because we are unable to penetrate beyond hearing to listening. As we shall see, Kant's disciple, Fichte, despaired of being properly listened to. He recognized the fundamental difficulty which his audience had in attending to the truths of transcendental idealism. He blamed this inability upon a deficient educational system and a degenerate political life. Fichte then took up the task of engaging political life on its own terms, by speaking its own language. Unlike Socrates, however, Fichte fully appropriated the rhetoric of political persuasion in order to prepare his audience to listen to his philosophical voice. Nonetheless, Fichte remained committed to the cosmopolitan moral vision of the Kantian project. Thus, unlike Marx who took up political rhetoric in earnest and viewed claims about the integrity of the philosopher's voice as a rhetorical strategy within political life, Fichte remained committed to an idealized conception of the philosopher's voice. The problem with this approach, however, is that it reaffirms the political audience's suspicions that the philosopher's voice is no different from the politician's. Indeed this is Marx's conclusion, as he finally rejects the Kantian and Hegelian attempts to differentiate philosophy from politics.

As Kant notes in “What is Enlightenment?” enlightenment requires the public use of reason, it requires speech addressed to others. However, the voice of enlightenment risks being misheard and confused with the superficiality of the rhetoric that conveys it. There are two iterations of this problem: a problem of reception and a problem of transmission. The problem of reception stems from the fact that there are always two ways in which we can “receive” the human voice. We can *hear* the physical, tonal quality of the voice or we can *listen to* the meaning conveyed through the voice. The first of these focuses on the rhetorical, persuasive, poetic, and indeed political mode of speech: *hearing* is a mode of reception that focuses upon the visceral quality of sound, its power to evoke vivid representations without invoking judgment about these representations, its power to compel reaction without reflection. This mode is primarily passive and reactive. The second focuses upon the philosophical, logical mode of speech: *listening to* is a mode of reception that

focuses upon the logos transmitted by sound and thus invokes reflection and judgment about the representations evoked by the sound.¹⁵ This mode of reception is active and is thus not merely receptive. It actively searches for meanings and reasons that lie beyond the sounds which were “passively” received. The problem of transmission stems from the fact that there are two analogous ways in which we can “speak.” We can speak so as to persuade and sway our audience without provoking them actively to judge the content of our speech; such is the voice of poetry and politics. Or we can speak so as to transmit language and provoke active judgment about the content of our speech; such is the voice of philosophy.

Since both of the iterations of the problem involve the proper relation between judgment and voice, activity and passivity, this problem is not merely a philosophical problem, it is also a political problem. Given the fact that philosophical speech always occurs within the context of a given form of political life, the challenge for the philosopher is to synthesize both of these modes within his/her own voice so as to teach the political audience to listen properly, i.e., to *teach* the members of the political audience to exercise their active judgment upon the content of what is spoken without succumbing to the temptation to use the persuasive techniques of rhetoric. This was the problem of the Socratic *elenchos* and is also the ongoing problem of enlightenment: how to exercise public reason in such a way as to stimulate judgment in others without succumbing to the temptation to force one’s own judgment upon those others by way of rhetorical tricks. The problem is that any synthesis of philosophical reflection and rhetorical skill such as must occur when the philosopher addresses the public always risks being misunderstood as merely another political ploy that uses persuasive rhetoric to stimulate passive/reactive judgment, rather than being an effort to stimulate active, enlightened judgment. In this way, the conflict between philosophy and politics is centered on the problem of voice.

Can the philosopher speak such that his or her voice will contribute to enlightenment without being misheard as merely another voice in the rhetorical cacophony of the political realm with “enlightenment” itself being misunderstood as code for some sort of hidden political agenda? Since there is no way to guarantee that his/her voice will be received properly, that it will be *listened to* as well as *heard*, the philosopher is always subject to political misunderstanding. Moreover, since the audience has no guarantee that the voice of a so-called philosopher is not merely another political voice, they have no guarantee that the “philosopher’s” admonitions about enlightened judgment are not merely part of a very clever rhetorical ploy. Such was Marx’s criticism of Hegel and his followers. Marx viewed the Hegelians as bourgeois apologists. Their rhetoric of “reason,” “spirit,” and “the absolute” was merely an attempt to sanctify the ideas of the ruling class. Thus Marx

famously concludes in the *Manifesto* that “the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.”

It is clear that “enlightened” philosophers require a sophisticated self-consciousness of the status of their own voices. Recent scholarship has begun to recognize the self-conscious style of Kant, the philosopher most closely associated with the concept of enlightenment. Hans Saner pioneered this approach to Kant with an analysis of the relation between Kant’s transcendental and political philosophy, with an explication of Kant’s polemical style, and an account of Kant’s use of metaphor.¹⁶ Dieter Henrich has also argued that Kant was a self-conscious stylist and that the political metaphors which haunt his critical philosophy are not accidental.¹⁷ Willi Goetschel extends this account of Kant’s rhetoric even further and argues implicitly throughout his *Constituting Critique* that Kant’s recognition of the dilemmas imposed upon philosophical writing by the problem of addressing one’s audience in the proper voice is a core issue in Kant’s writing. Goetschel claims that Kant’s awareness of the dialectical nature of the public-private distinction informs all of Kant’s writings. He concludes by claiming that Kant was aware that his own philosophical activity was itself produced by the demands of the public realm.¹⁸ Recent scholarship thus indicates that Kant was explicitly aware of the nature of his own activity as produced by a certain historically determinate form of political life, addressed back to political life, and even subject to misinterpretation within this form of political life. It is this self-consciousness of the sound of his own voice that leads to Kant and his follower’s characteristically turgid style: they are trying to articulate their own self-consciousness of the limits of their language from within this very language.

Goetschel’s intriguing analysis of Kant’s use of literary devices indicates that it is Kant’s republican ideal of justification that leads him to develop an explicit concern for his readers. However, Goetschel does not believe that this concern for the philosophical audience remains a concern in the subsequent development of German idealism. He states with regard to Kant that “such concern for his readers on the part of the philosopher is rather rare—for Hegel, for instance, who seems to address the absolute Spirit as his reader, it would be unthinkable.”¹⁹ This claim, which Goetschel leaves undeveloped, is one I argue against in what follows. I will argue that the self-conscious use of rhetoric that Goetschel demonstrates in Kant is also present in Fichte, Hegel, and Marx. While Goetschel is correct, for example, to state that Hegel addresses absolute spirit, this does not mean that Hegel is unaware of the presence of his readers and of the need for an adequate mode of presentation of his system. Indeed the systematic tendencies of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx—their need to account for the origin of their own process of thinking—leads them to be acutely aware of the use and abuse of rhetoric in philosophy. Moreover, their recognition of the historical and political situatedness of

philosophical thought leads them to make the dilemma posed by the rhetorical and political nature of philosophy a central focal point of their political theory and practice. The philosophers of the nineteenth century attempted to resolve the dilemma of the philosopher's voice exposed by Kant's concept of enlightenment by thinking about the following question: how can a philosopher use his/her voice to enlighten his/her compatriots when this political audience will inevitably hear the philosopher's voice as merely another political voice resounding with the persuasive techniques of rhetoric? Although their answers differ radically, they were each aware of the importance of the question.

Situating the Dilemma

The reform of consciousness consists *only* in making the world aware of its own consciousness, in awakening it out of its dream about itself, in *explaining* to it the meaning of its own actions.

—Marx, “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing”²⁰

Critical philosophy occurs in the space opened by the dilemma of the philosopher's voice as an attempt to clarify the difference between philosophy and politics. The need for critical clarification of this difference develops out of political life's lack of self-consciousness, its lack of enlightenment. This lack of self-consciousness makes it necessary for philosophy to continually defend itself against political misinterpretation. Political life cannot properly comprehend philosophy because it lacks philosophical enlightenment and cannot hear the subtle differences between the voice of the philosopher and the voice of the politician. Thus, the philosopher must continually defend, explain, and clarify the peculiar sound of his/her voice. Marx indicates that this is the nature of critical philosophy and of the age of enlightenment: “self-clarification (critical philosophy) to be gained by the present time of its struggles and desires. This is a work for the world and for us.”²¹ The ambiguity of Marx's claim is important. The struggle for enlightenment is a struggle situated in time and space. It is a work of our time in the sense that philosophy is itself a product of our time that focuses its critical activity back upon our time. Enlightenment would be self-consciousness of the dilemma. Said otherwise, enlightenment would be self-consciousness of the difference between political and philosophical speech, even when this self-consciousness amounts to denying the difference as in Marx's critique of Hegel.

Of course this dilemma is not limited in time and space to the nineteenth century. We see this dilemma again and again throughout the history of philosophy. Socrates' voice, his words, his manner of speaking, his arguments, diatribes, and dialogues—all of this is the very subject matter of his indictment.

The material impact of his voice resounds doubly throughout his apology. On the one hand, his voice is the only resource that he can employ in his defense. On the other, it is the strangeness of his voice, a voice unaccustomed to political speech and yet intimately involved in the life of the polis, which led to his indictment. The Athenians indicted the specific quality of Socrates' voice: the voice of a peculiar citizen who is guided by the daemons of philosophy. Ironically, this is the very voice that came before the Athenian assembly in defense of itself, futilely asking its audience to hear it otherwise, to *listen to* and *judge* it according to its content and not merely according to its rhetorical power. Thus, in responding to the indictment of the political community with his philosophical voice, Socrates effectively seals his fate and condemns himself to death by renouncing persuasion and remaining committed to the process of teaching. Socrates' voice was judged by a political audience according to political criteria, i.e., it was judged according to its persuasive power. Since Socrates avoided deliberate use of persuasive rhetoric, he cannot persuade his audience to judge him according to other criteria. Nor can he teach them otherwise, for, as I noted earlier, his political audience lacked philosophical imagination.

Socrates' case could be interpreted as an example of mishearing, a failure on the part of his audience to properly receive his words. One might conclude that his audience failed to *listen to* the language, in Hegel's sense (i.e., the *logos* or reason), behind his speech. However, what is significant about Socrates' case is that he is self-conscious of the fact that the failure of language and of reason is not merely a matter of mishearing but also of misspeaking. He speaks of the very issue of his own inability to speak in a properly political voice and is thus aware of the fact that his voice will be misheard. By misspeaking to the Athenian assembly, he effectively *teaches* us about the problem that lies at the heart of philosophy's political integument. The problem still remains, however: as long as the political audience lacks a developed philosophical imagination, the philosopher's admission of his inability to speak in a politically persuasive voice will still be heard as merely another rhetorical ploy.

The philosopher's voice has had to defend itself before courts of political judgment ever since Socrates asked his political audience to listen to the language conveyed by his voice. Moreover, philosophical audiences have heard, in the reverberations of the voices of philosophers silenced by political authority, a trenchant indictment of the injustice of political life. For centuries, from Socrates to Boethius, from Cicero to Russell, the voice of philosophy has addressed political life and has been addressed by political authority. Often, as in the above examples, this voice has been indicted by political power as a strange and treacherous threat to its authority. Often this voice indicts political life as biased, illogical, and ultimately unjust. And yet, throughout the

history of the struggle between philosophy and politics, the philosopher's voice has also been embraced by power, from Aristotle's service to Alexander to Heidegger's service to the Nazi regime, from the American constitution's appropriation of Locke to Russian Communism's deification of Marx. One wonders about the differences in this odd dialectical history: why does one philosopher's voice antagonize power, while another's is accepted by it as an ally? Clearly the content of the philosopher's speech is important, as is the type of political power that confronts the philosopher's speech. Moreover, the philosopher's voice itself is important: the demeanor with which the philosopher addresses power, the geographical and historical location of the philosopher's utterance, the intended audience of the philosopher's speech, and the philosopher's stature within the political community.

Twenty-four hundred years after the death of Socrates, following in the wake of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx, the issue of the philosopher's voice has become an explicit matter of concern for political philosophers. A quite different voice, the voice of a woman, Iris Marion Young, makes this issue explicit in the introduction to her *Justice and the Politics of Difference*: "Philosophers acknowledge the partiality of the audience to which their arguments are addressed, it seems to me, often even less than they acknowledge the particularity of the voice of their writing."²² Young claims that political philosophers must recognize the particularity of their own voices and refrain from trying to speak in the monological voice of an imperial reason. Our current fascination with the material reverberations of the voice of philosophy stems in part from the twentieth century's general obsession with language, itself a result of the growth of philosophy of language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wittgenstein, for example, understood philosophy as clarification of language. "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language."²³ It is the philosopher's task to expose these limits, as it were, from the inside. Gadamer made the same point from another perspective: "All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is laid up within it an infinity of meaning to be explicated and laid out."²⁴ Gadamerian hermeneutics amount to a continual circulation within the limits of language. The conclusion of both of these ways of thinking is that we cannot escape from our own linguistic context: philosophy is located at a certain point in space, time, language, and culture.

Moreover, multiculturalism and feminism have taught us that there are indeed different voices and that within this plurality of voices there is the continual possibility of misunderstanding. As Carol Gilligan concludes: "men and women may speak different languages that they assume are the same, using similar words to encode disparate experiences of self and social relationships."²⁵ Problems arise when we assume that there is some one voice

that transcends the limits of these different voices, that each speaker means the same thing when he or she speaks, or that each listener hears the same words in the same way. The philosophy of the twentieth century has shown us that philosophy cannot attain the position of a disembodied transcendental subject who addresses the universal truths of the human being.

The bloody history of political life in the twentieth century has shown us that attempts to address finite human beings in a universal voice lead to perverse cruelties. The claims of the universal monological subject often become obsessed with homogeneity, purity, and unity at the expense of those others who do not fit the master narrative of monological reason. Young's politics of difference is a deliberate attempt to re-introduce into political philosophy the notion that the voice of the political philosopher is a spatially, temporally, and culturally located voice. I say "re-introduce" because this notion was already present in Socrates' address to the Athenians just as it was present, as we shall see, in the political philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx.

Accusations against the monological imperialism of philosophy are often aimed at the systematic philosophers of the nineteenth century specifically, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx. Ironically, these philosophers are also appealed to in attempts to break the hold of monological reason. These thinkers are often indicted for speaking in the monological voice of the transcendental ego, spirit, or the proletariat. At the same time, these thinkers are appealed to as progenitors of that type of critical dialectical reason that is offered as an antidote for monological reason. For instance, Seyla Benhabib claims that "Kantian ethics is monological, for it proceeds from the standpoint of the rational person, defined in such a way that differences among concrete selves become quite irrelevant."²⁶ Benhabib then appeals to Hegel and Marx—whom she admits inherited much from Kant—as forerunners of a more complete dialogical model of philosophical discourse. On the other hand, Karl Popper criticizes Hegel (and by implication Marx) for engaging in what he calls "oracular philosophy."²⁷ The problem is that, with Hegel, meaning becomes historically and culturally determined and thus, "a new kind of dogmatism becomes fashionable, in philosophy as well as in the social sciences. It confronts us with its dictum. And we can take it or leave it."²⁸ In other words, Popper accuses Hegel of consistently avoiding a dialogue with his readers in order to pronounce the truth from the oracular perspective of the famous owl of Minerva. Popper concludes his critique of Hegel and Marx's historicism by appealing to a historicism of his own: "Interpretations are important since they represent a point of view. But we have seen that a point of view is always inevitable . . ."²⁹ Popper does not recognize, however, that the issue of points of view is a crucial one for both Hegel and Marx. Indeed, each of the four philosophers we will discuss in what follows recognized the importance of understanding the location of one's voice.

The imperious, monological model of reason occasionally imputed to nineteenth century philosophers has been under attack for some time. After the critiques of thinkers such as Nietzsche, Freud, Adorno, Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida, James, Wittgenstein, and Rorty we can no longer believe that the voice of the philosopher is the voice of universal reason that can speak from everywhere and nowhere. As Habermas concludes: “master thinkers have fallen on hard times.”³⁰ The problem for Habermas, however, is that “postmodern” critiques of philosophy themselves reiterate the problem of voice: “these discourses can and want to give no account of their own position.”³¹ Habermas calls for a return to Hegelian dialectics, albeit with a Kantian twist. Recent returns to Hegelian dialectics are themselves ironic, therefore, because Hegel was long considered to be one of those “master thinkers” who had fallen on hard times. Adorno’s and Lyotard’s critiques of Hegel themselves remain Hegelian, at least to the extent that they charge Hegel with not being enough of a dialectician himself to see the negativity that remains within the dialectic.

Does the tradition that includes Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx represent the origin or the end of the monological tradition in philosophy? In what follows I argue that it is both. This tradition creates an awareness of the inevitable political sound of the philosopher’s voice while also providing us with hope that we may become self-conscious enough of this to transcend it. It inspires us to pursue the norms of truth that govern the philosopher’s voice while recognizing the inevitable politicization of these norms within the plurality of audiences to whom the philosopher must speak. The argument of the present text is that the issue of the location and embodiment of the philosopher’s voice was a serious issue for these philosophers and that the roots of our contemporary realization of the importance of this issue can be found in these philosophers’ thought, especially in their thought about political life and about the relation between philosophy and politics. Finally, I argue that in nineteenth century German philosophy, the importance of the political location of the philosopher’s voice becomes a philosophical issue as philosophical judgment itself becomes defined in political terms. Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx each explicitly recognize the political orientation of the philosopher’s voice and its relation to power. They differ to the extent that each resolves the dilemma of the philosopher’s voice differently; they agree to the extent that each recognizes the importance of situating and resolving this dilemma.

As we shall see, these philosophers address political life with their voices and offer theoretical accounts of the political importance of the philosopher’s voice. They each occupied a similar position as Socrates in his address to the Athenian jury: they addressed the polis both as members of the polis but also as philosophers whose voices sought to transcend the finite perspectives of political life. Other philosophers have occupied this position before and after

the era that stretched from the 1780s to the 1860s. What is of historical interest in the story of these four thinkers is (1) the way in which each recognizes that the sound of his own voice is of both political and philosophical significance and (2) the way in which this self-consciousness necessarily leads each to bring his voice to bear on political issues of the day, while self-consciously recognizing that this political intervention itself marks the limit of philosophical speech. In short, the story of the development from Kant to Marx is a story of the developing self-consciousness of the dilemma that persists between philosophy and politics.

This development occurs in a period of political turmoil. The period that stretched from the 1780s to the 1850s was a crucial period in the formation of German political and intellectual identity. The French Revolution had a strong impact on German liberals. Reaction against Napoleon's invasion of Germany acted as a catalyst for the formation of German identity. The revolutions of 1848 promised, if only for a moment, a new liberal era. And finally, in the 1860s and 70s the German empire was founded. It was a time that called for great philosophers as well as statesmen to reflect upon the issues of the day: the institution of a republican constitution, the identity of the German nation, and social justice during rapid industrialization. Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx each responded to changing political conditions. I will try to indicate the importance of these changing conditions as we proceed.

Précis and Conclusion

And yet they [philosophers] do not address their voices (*ihre Stimme an... gerichtet*) themselves in familiar tones to the people (who themselves take little or no notice of them and their writings), but in respectful tones to the state, which is thereby implored to take the rightful needs of the people to heart.

—Kant, *The Contest of the Faculties*³²

According to Kant, a proper understanding of the scope of our thought and the audiences to whom it is addressed ought to result in an increase of enlightenment. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the more than two hundred years since Kant responded to the question "What is Enlightenment?" enlightenment continues to be a problem. Kant envisioned the outcome of increased freedom in the public employment of reason as a benign result in which there would be a convergence of opinion toward truth and in which the moral politician would contribute toward a gradual reform of political institutions. However, it seems as if truth remains even more at a distance today than it did in Kant's time. The fractious nature of philosophical thinking at

the end of the twentieth century, the “culture wars” that continue to rage, and indeed the whole of what has come to be known as “postmodernity” shows us that increased freedom for the public employment of reason results in an increase of disagreement, contention, and dispute. It is not too much to claim that philosophy itself (at least as it is practiced within the academy), which for over two thousand years had struggled to distance itself from cliquish factionalism and the irrational persuasive tactics of politics, has become thoroughly politicized. At the same time, philosophers find themselves more and more marginalized, unable to leave the ivory tower to have any real impact on political life.

This is true, in part, because with the proliferation of managed media sources, it is no longer possible freely to address the general reading public as it perhaps was in Kant’s day.³³ Indeed it is no longer possible to assume that there is a unified public that could be addressed. This situation is not unique to political life in America at the end of the twentieth century, however. Even Kant was aware that the general public really did not care or understand the philosophical project of enlightenment. In part this is a problem of diversity, but more than this, it is a problem of the failure of the philosophical imagination. We can see the breakdown of the Kantian faith in a unified reading public as a concern for Fichte, Hegel, and Marx. Moreover, each of these philosophers was also aware of the inability of their intended audience to be able properly to listen to the philosopher’s voice. Kant recognized that part of the problem was the state itself and its repression of free speech but also that another part of the problem was the timidity of philosophical speech and its reluctance to speak critically to power. For Fichte, the same problem obtains. The public is unable to comprehend philosophical thought because of the sorry state of political affairs. Fichte took it upon himself to address the political audience in order to create receptivity for his philosophical voice. Fichte thus recognized that philosophical reason is politically located and that there will always be different audiences with varying capacities for comprehension. Fichte’s goal was to create a nation in which there would be individuals capable of knowing the truth of his philosophy, i.e., individuals capable of listening to the *logos* transmitted by his voice. Ironically, he endeavored to create this philosophical nation of listeners by addressing it with the manipulative, rhetorical speech that we would expect to hear from a politician. With Fichte, philosophy became political in order to create its own public audience.

Fichte’s acknowledgment of the political role to be played by philosophy became institutionalized in Germany after Prussia obtained its independence from France. In post-Napoleonic Prussia, philosophy became a function of the state itself, a servant of the crown. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* was delivered at a time when the nation already existed in the form of an inde-

pendent Prussia. Although, like Fichte, Hegel acknowledges that individuals vary in their ability to comprehend philosophical thought according to their real historical conditions, he believes that there then (1820s) existed a class of people who had overcome the limitations of these conditions to such an extent that they were able to attain philosophical comprehension of themselves and their position within the state. Hegel's audience was an audience that Hegel, at least, seemed to believe was capable of properly listening to philosophical logos. This is why he did not address the members of his audience as individuals but, rather, as representatives of the spiritual or "universal class." This spiritual class is roughly equivalent to the general reading public that Kant claims the philosopher ought properly to address. While Fichte addressed the German nation in order to create this liberal public, Hegel addressed the universal class in order to help this "liberal" public understand itself.

With Hegel, however, the following problem arises: the truly universal aspect of the state, the sovereign, need not be conscious of itself. Philosophy was, thus, according to Hegel's own thought on the matter, an organ of the state, the state's consciousness of itself. Hegel, however, admitted that his own view was problematic. While the state demands that it be addressed by philosophy, the sovereign need not listen to the voice of philosophy. Despite the fact that his own political text explicitly addresses an audience that we would ordinarily think was political, the universal class of Prussia, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* seems to contain the implication that philosophers cannot have an active impact upon the course of real political life. This is so, at least, because the sovereign need not comprehend the philosopher's voice. This is why Hegel's republican hopes trail off into vague spiritual politics. In addressing the state, Hegel claimed that he addressed everyone in general, no one in particular, and each of us as individuals. This is what Hegel means by spirit. This complex view, however, results in a vague account of the relation between theory and practice. On the one hand, Hegel argues for a radical connection between philosophical reflection and political action. He sees philosophical reflection as political action and understands political action as resulting in philosophical reflection. On the other hand, Hegel refuses to follow the implications of this conclusion beyond a mere statement of the case. He simply postulates this unity in the name of spirit without considering how recognition of this unity will transform both theory and practice. Hegel thus conservatively retreated to the ivory tower just as he discovered the fact that philosophy is inextricably tied to political life: the spirit whom Hegel addresses remains a political spectator who has yet to return to political action.

Marx rejected both Fichte's philosophical politics and Hegel's spiritual philosophy. For Marx, the nation, the universal class, the sovereign, and indeed spirit itself are ideological constructions which do not constitute the

general public. Indeed for Marx, there is no “general public.” For Marx, the proper address of philosophical thought is the proletariat, the “materially” universal class, which was itself marginalized and ignored by the Hegelian philosophy. Marx thus politicized his own philosophical activity in order to create the conditions under which the proletariat could become self-conscious. Like Fichte, Marx found that he could not address his audience directly because it did not yet exist as an audience: the proper audience of his address is incapable of listening to his voice because its ears have been muffled by the bourgeois ideology. Like Fichte, Marx attempts to create this audience in the very act of addressing it. However, Marx’s goal is material freedom and not the abstract philosophical freedom of Fichtean and Hegelian philosophy. Moreover, Marx realizes that there will inevitably be unresolved contradictions within the material realm of politics. With Marx, then, philosophy becomes explicitly political to the extent that Marx recognizes the persistence of difference and the necessity of continued political struggle.³⁴

Marx thus overturns Kant’s view of the relation between philosophy and politics. One might claim, using Kant’s terms, that Marx is more of a “political moralist” than a “moral politician”: “one who fashions his morality to suit his own advantage as a statesman.”³⁵ Indeed, many have criticized Marxism for the tendency of its leaders to be “opportunists.” However, at his best, Marx resists the urge to demand a synthesis of philosophy and politics: he recognizes that the limits of present political life prevent us from clearly prognosticating the philosophy or morality of the future. The problem for Marx is that although he wanted to liberate both politics and philosophy from their bourgeois limitations, he found that he could only do so by engaging in politics. Marx thus recognized the problem of the philosopher’s voice which this chapter has discussed: the philosopher’s voice always reverberates within a certain form of social and political life and will be heard within that context, even when it endeavors either to point beyond it or embrace it. Finally, with Marx’s recognition of the antagonisms that exist within the general human audience, Marx’s voice becomes multiple. A different voice is required to speak to the different needs of the diverse members of the audience.

The history of thought from Kant to Marx thus shows us the roots of our own current struggle, a struggle in which philosophy has become politicized and in which political life proceeds heedless of philosophy. As we shall see in what follows, both the historical and rhetorical settings of seminal texts by Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx indicate that their different approaches and conclusions depend upon the different audiences they address and the historical and political circumstances in which they speak. This history indicates a successive redefinition of the notion of the philosophical public and also indicates a redefinition of the distinction between philosophy and politics.

This story will be developed more fully in what follows. In Chapter 2, I will discuss historical antecedents in modern political philosophy by considering the issue of voice in Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. I then look in detail at the issue of voice in the political philosophies of Kant (3 and 4), Fichte (5 and 6), Hegel (7 and 8), and Marx (9 and 10). In these chapters, I show that these philosophers were each aware of the problematic distinction between philosophy and politics. Each of these philosophers takes up a unique position within the struggle between philosophy and politics, and each builds upon the thought of his predecessors about the interconnections between philosophy, politics, and language. These chapters thus form a historical argument to the effect that Marx's turn away from philosophy represents the political culmination of the philosophical struggle to resolve the tension between philosophy and politics. I conclude in Chapter 11 by arguing that contemporary problems in political philosophy can be understood in terms of the ongoing struggle to resolve the dilemma of the philosopher's voice.

Note on Method

A final note on my own method and voice is apropos as I conclude this introduction. Some might see my focus on voice as a tangential issue focused on some obscure corners of the systematic edifices of these philosophers. However, I do not claim to have completed a systematic analysis of any of the philosophers I approach. Nor do I claim to have systematically resolved the question of what is political philosophy. I do not, for example, claim that these four philosophers can fit easily into a set of paradigms for political philosophy.³⁶ Indeed these four philosophers are fascinating precisely because they cannot easily be categorized. The complexity (and the contradictions) of their work develops out of the fact that they each audaciously attempted to bridge the gap between philosophy and politics while also acknowledging the paradoxical nature of the endeavor to build such a bridge. My modest goal is to weave together the threads of philosophy of language, political philosophy, and political activity found in these philosophers in order to gain clarity about the complexity of the conflict between philosophy and politics.

In order to achieve this goal, I focus extensively on places—occasionally obscure but never tangential—at which these philosophers provide us with indications of their own methodological self-consciousness. I interpret Kant's discussions of method in often-overlooked portions of the first *Critique* and compare these discussions to the spirit of his admittedly unsystematic political philosophy and his thoughts on progress as found in his book on religion. I look at Fichte's popular political works and his own explicit considerations of language and politics and compare these discussions to his

account of imagination as articulated in the depths of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. I consider Hegel's systematic methodology and his brief but crucial philosophy of language in order to discuss its influence on his political voice as found in the *Philosophy of Right* and his other topical political articles. Finally, with Marx, I search for a philosophy of language scattered among his unsystematic writings and his collaborations with Engels in order to discover Marx's self-conscious appropriation of political rhetoric and his turn away from political philosophy. These reflections on language and philosophical methodology, which I have unearthed in the work of these philosophers, have been often overlooked. However, since the critical turn in philosophy, which begins with Kant, is a methodological turn, these considerations are essential for understanding the development of the critical project. Uniting this research agenda and the methodological considerations of these philosophers is the idea that philosophical self-consciousness demands that questions of language and method be made explicit, especially by philosophers who would speak to a larger political audience.

As part of this project I attempt to situate the political and philosophical activity of the philosophers in question. To this end I have provided some historical details about their lives and careers. These details are interesting for what they tell us about these men and about this era. I hope that these details can help us to conceive the concrete historical events with which these philosophers were concerned. However, since my chief task was to interpret the texts left to us by these thinkers—to listen to their voices—I have left out a narrative account of many of the details that would be found in a straightforward historical or biographical text. Moreover, the way I have organized the material into discrete chapters on each of the philosophers tends to disrupt the continuity that exists in this era. To remedy this and to make the biographical, bibliographical, and political history of this period more perspicuous, I have included as an appendix a detailed chronology of the lives, works, and events, which I am discussing. The reader will hopefully find this useful as a schematic synopsis of the story that I develop in the text.

Finally, I hope that this book is a book of philosophy and not merely a book of history or intellectual biography. What I mean by this is that the problem of the philosopher's voice that I address here is a philosophical problem, one with which we are still struggling. I hope that the reader will share with me a concern for this problem and that the reader will be familiar enough with the basic outlines of the history of philosophy to follow me through the development of this problem. It is still not clear to me what the solution to this problem is, although after having thought about it for several years now, it is clear to me that some solutions are not valid. Indeed, the resolutions of the conflict between philosophy and politics offered by Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx each are inadequate in different ways, even if they

are understandable given the historical and political contexts in which these solutions were enacted. I spell out these inadequacies in the chapters that follow. My hope is that by considering these inadequacies, we might begin to contemplate further solutions in the continual effort to bring reason to bear on political life.