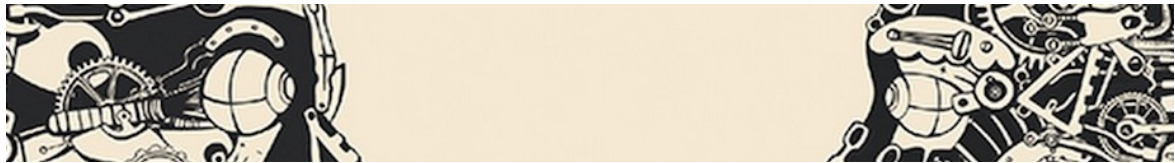


It is to be expected that more works inspired by Gramsci and Foucault in social, political, cultural and intellectual studies will really lead to a richer shared discourse oriented to the future. But this cannot happen within the isolation of a scientific ivory tower. As is amply shown by this volume, Gramsci and Foucault already constitute two points of reference for critical thought and social movements. However, connecting the elements that emerge from both thinkers is still an endeavor that is tentatively pursued. One should openly acknowledge that deep and enduring political-cultural transformations cannot be expected from academic exercises. Nor can a political legacy be reactivated in isolation from society. As Gramsci argued, no revolution of thought can possibly be separated from societal change, since “ideologies do not generate ideologies”. Rather, it is “history, revolutionary activity, that generates the *new humanity*, that is, new social relations” (*Prison Notebook* 6, 733). To be sure, this volume is symptomatic of a shared concern among engaged scholars for the renewal of leftist culture. It sends an important signal: that closer connections should be established between academic culture and society. In the light of future developments it will be possible to fully assess the validity of today’s manifold pursuit of a novel alliance between theory and praxis.

*Pietro Daniel Omodeo*



**2** PAOLA ZAMBELLI, *Alexandre Koyré in incognito*, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2016, p. 288. ISBN 9788822264497, €32.00.

Aleksandr Vladimirovič Kojre, widely known as Alexandre Koyré (1892-1964), is mainly identified as an important scholar in the field of history of science and history of philosophy and as a historian who dealt with classical authors like Descartes, Galilei, Newton but also Anselm, Böhme, Paracelsus and early modern alchemists. He is also known as a disciple of Husserl and Scheler and he

is famous for his original contribution to the French epistemological tradition and for the importance of his historical approach in the philosophy of science. Many classical studies have contributed to this diffused image but, despite these widespread ideas, Koyré was more than a disciple of Husserl deeply involved into the history of modern science, and this new biography by Paola Zambelli elucidates some less known aspects of his life and work. In particular, Zambelli gives an overview of the previously unexplored youthful experience of Koyré in Russia, Germany, and France and of his life during the two World Wars.

Using a number of little known sources and documents, Zambelli tries to offer an account of the political life of the young Koyré, especially of his involvement in the subversive and revolutionary Russian environment in 1907-1914 and the European spy scene during World War I along with the *entre-deux-guerres* period. Concerning the first point, we learn that Koyré was arrested at least twice before 1907 and during this period he started to be monitored by the Tzar's political police because he was suspected of revolutionary terrorism. As Zambelli observes, it is curious that no one among Koyré's relatives or friends has ever mentioned his political background, except for an anecdotal reference attributable to Roman Jakobson. Koyré himself contributed, after the first World War, in covering up his own political past, concerned about his position as a foreign scholar without a permanent position in Academia. Probably for the same reason during his period at the New School for Social Research (New York), where many people considered him a 'gaulliste', he was not given any information about his socialist and 'revolutionary' past. One of the most original parts of Zambelli's biography is precisely related to Koyré's revolutionary activity in Russia (p. 11-26) and, in particular, to his work in publishing. New documents show that the role of Koyré in the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) movement was most probably in press propaganda activity. We don't actually have any assurance about how many articles or documents Koyré wrote in this period, but the fact he was involved in this kind of revolutionary propaganda allows us to read his works in the field of Slavic Studies—in particular, his essay on *La philosophie et le problème national en Russie au début du XIX siècle* (1928)—from a whole new perspective. It is exactly because of this activities that he was arrested for the first time, attracting the attention of the Tzar's police. After a second arrest, again concerned about his 'revolutionary' status and life, he decided to leave Russia and to go to study in Paris and in Germany, in Göttingen. Here

he spent some time (from the *Wintersemester* 1908-1909 to the *Wintersemester* 1911-1912) principally attending lessons by Husserl—courses on *Logic* (1910-1911) and *Ethics* (1911)—and by the Göttingen school of mathematics members: Klein, H. Minkowski, Carathéodory, Zermelo and, notably, Hilbert. In this period he developed a strong interest in the field of the philosophy of mathematics, especially in Russell and Frege, but Husserl rejected his proposal for a thesis on this subject. In Göttingen he also met Max Scheler and he attended his lectures at the Göttingen Philosophische Gesellschaft, where he found a stimulating philosophical environment. Zambelli particularly remarks Scheler's influence on Koyré during this period when the German philosopher was working on the draft of the later *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft. Probleme einer Soziologie des Wissens* (1926): she suggests that Koyré's later interest in sociological and mental elements in the history of philosophy and sciences are in part a result of the Scheler's influence. After this period in Göttingen Koyré decided to permanently move to France, continuing his studies in Paris.

World War I found Koyré during his stay in Paris, where the young philosopher quickly decided to join up with the French Army. Officially he served in the French Army scarcely a year, but he was probably employed as a French informant in Russia after 1919. Zambelli states that some sources report that Koyré kept his political revolutionary convictions after the October Revolution but it is unclear if and when he cooperated with the Bolsheviks. In this part of the book (p. 27-54), Zambelli tries to assess the facts about Koyré's espionage activity between France and Russia during the period 1915-1919 and then, using a number of archive documents and trying to determine his real movements during this period. Actually, this reconstruction of the events is quite fascinating and compelling, but it is also relevant to the general intellectual history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because it shows a genuine depiction of a young intellectual deeply involved in his political contemporaneity.

The second part of Zambelli's work focuses on the intellectual and philosophical education of Koyré in Germany and France. Even though this part of the life of Koyré is better known, Zambelli gives a new understanding of the role of some notable intellectual personalities of that period in Koyré's early life: Husserl and Scheler, and also Bergson, Levy-Bruhl, Meyerson, Gilson and many others. Even if the influence of Husserl and Scheler on the early phenomenological interests of Koyré still remains important, Zambelli finds a strong con-

nection between Levy-Bruhl and Gilson (who was himself a disciple of Levy-Bruhl) and Koyré's own work. In this respect, I find that Zambelli follows an important line of studies that have reconsidered the place of Koyré in a wider 'research program' in the French Epistemological tradition. In this context I am thinking for example of Cristina Chimisso, *Writing the History of Mind. Philosophy and Science in France, 1900 to 1960s* (London: Ashgate 2008), which investigated, among other elements, "Koyré's ambiguous place in French Post-War Academia" between history and philosophy and which clearly establishes the role of concepts like 'mentality' (Levy-Bruhl) or 'outillage mentale' (Febvre) in the development of Koyré's own approach to the historical research. Also Zambelli finds a consensus between Levy-Bruhl's use of the psychological notion of 'collective representation' and Koyré's aim to explore the metaphysical preconditions of scientific thought (p. 99). According to Koyré, the phenomenological method appears in fact close to Levy-Bruhl's analysis of primitive mind but, contrary to a traditional phenomenological assumption, Levy-Bruhl's approach tries to describe the 'pre-logical level' in its relationship with the logical one, without attempting to place them in a chronological and genetic sequence. According to Zambelli, the importance of Levy-Bruhl for Koyré's background is therefore comparable to the influence of Husserl and Scheler.

Another unfamiliar aspect Zambelli points out in the third part of the book is the role which Koyré played in spreading French philosophy in Germany and vice-versa. Even if Koyré is mostly known to have organized Husserl's Paris lectures on Descartes, he also contributed to the early reception of Bergson in the Göttingen Phenomenological Circle, where he spoke at a conference at the Philosophische Gesellschaft on "Bergson's Zeittheorie" in 1913. This is really remarkable, given that Scheler himself was one of the first German scholars to publish an essay on Bergson and his paper is subsequent to Koyré's speech. In the *entre-deux-guerres* period, Koyré also played a role in introducing German philosophy in France, giving a number of lectures and conferences on Hegel during the 1930s, organizing the lectures given by Husserl at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1929 and maintaining, in the following years, personal contacts with Jaspers, Arendt, Anders and also Heidegger. Zambelli dedicates an entire chapter of her book specifically to Koyré's interests in the 'Heidegger controversy'. Even if Koyré was one of the first intellectuals to draw the French public's attention to Heidegger's philosophy, he was also one of the earliest to be concerned

about his political position (p. 235) and even Emmanuel Levinas recognized that it was “the lamented Alexandre Koyré” who first drew his attention to Heidegger’s sympathy for National-Socialism. Koyré was deeply interested in Heidegger’s work between 1929 and the early 1930s, but then he interrupted his interest in the author of *Sein und Zeit* at least until 1946. On the basis of epistolary documents, Zambelli acknowledges that Koyré kept an interest in Heidegger’s philosophy during this period, but he did not write anything about his thought, disappointed as he was for the political choices of the German philosopher. It was only in 1946 that he decided to write a contribution for *Critique* about the development of Heidegger’s philosophy, but even if this short essay testifies to his attention to the German philosopher, afterwards he did not show anymore interest in Heidegger and he openly declared that he was bored by the never-ending debate on existentialism in France and in Europe.

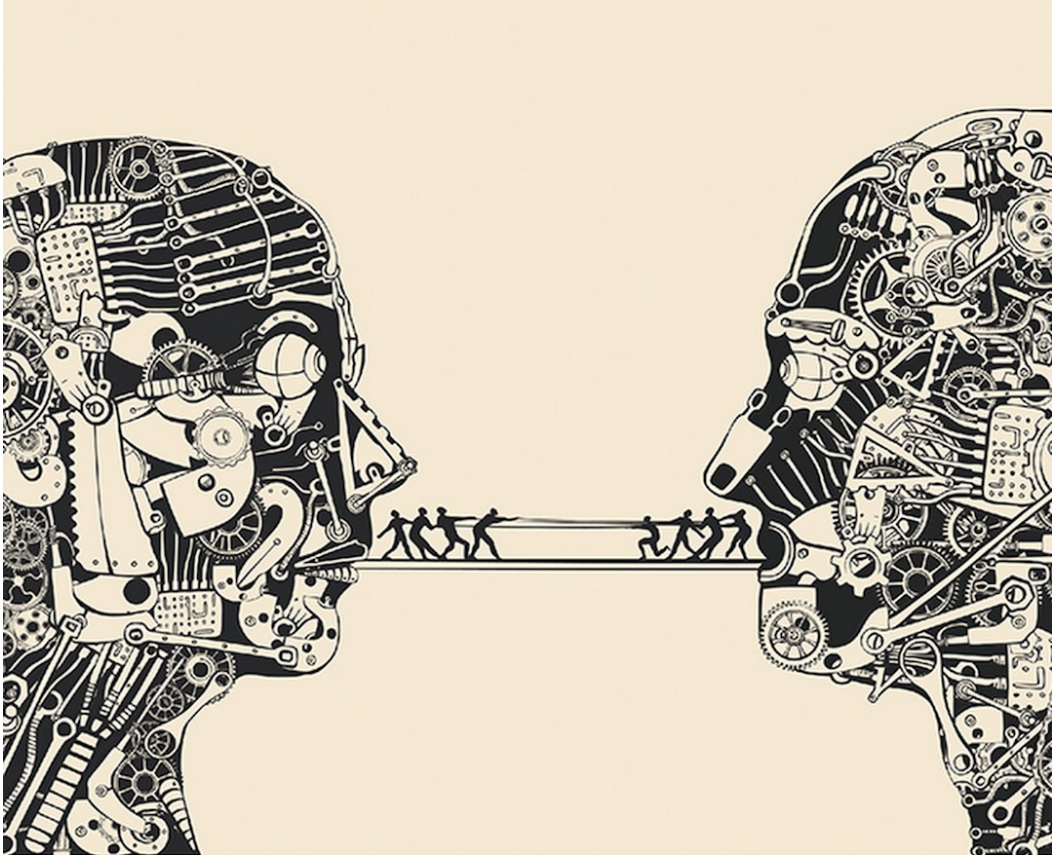
Even after his forced exile in the USA because of the World War II, Koyré played a significant part in the setting-up of the European intellectual community and its continuity in the United States and he kept a respected place in French Academia. He helped a number of German and European scholars to find a place in American departments during the war, even if his own position was insecure. It is unclear how much Koyré’s political background influenced his life during the World War II and what his genuine political convictions were at that time, but undoubtedly his support for the French Resistance and his open *gaullisme* during the conflict raised some suspicion in the American Academia, as many documents of the internal academic staff of the Rockefeller Foundation can attest. A large part of the American university establishment was convinced that many French émigrés in the USA were actually using their positions to create gaullist propaganda with the purpose of gaining a good position in the post-war France and Koyré himself was unjustly accused many times of being an academic careerist, who was actually planning a brilliant ‘émigré’s career’. In any case, the marginal position of Koyré in the American, French, and German Academia was actually a problem for this ‘between-two-worlds intellectual’, but it is also the reason why he played the role of a ‘cultural link’ between different philosophical national traditions. In this last part of the biography, which covers World War II and the following years, we find a mature philosopher capable of building up a strong network of personal contacts and a scholar interested in the most up-to-date political and academic topics. In

the post-war period, we find Koyré commuting between the United States and France, between Princeton—where he was permanent fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS)—and Paris—where he taught with Lucien Febvre in the Cinquième Section and then in the Sixième Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), under the scientific direction of Fernand Braudel. In this period Koyré kept his between-two-worlds position: in the USA he was considered by a large part of the Academia as the initiator and founder of the history of science, he was in contact with important scientific personalities (e.g. J. R. Oppenheimer or E. Panofsky) and he influenced a number of important scholars of the following generation (Claret, Gillispie, Grant, Murdoch, Kuhn); in France he put all his energy into trying to develop the history of science as an academic discipline, firstly trying to obtain a chair at the Collège de France, and then founding in 1958 the Centre de recherches d'histoire des sciences et des techniques at the EPHE. This Center, which has been called 'Centre Koyré' since 1966, sealed the cooperation between Koyré and important members of the *École des Annales*, like Febvre or Braudel, who showed a deep interest in Koyré's approach to history of science, philosophy and techniques. In these years Koyré had no real need to travel and commuted between Europe and America but, according to Zambelli, he was unable to find his place in a permanent location. All his life had been spent traveling and he had spent a large part of his life as an exile and in his later years he intentionally chose to be a sort of nomadic intellectual, a type of scholar that would become a common status in the following years, but which was not so ordinary for his times.

Recently, a number of significant studies have been published on the French tradition in history and philosophy of science, notably some appreciable collective works, such as M. Bitbol - J. Gayon, *L'épistémologie française 1830-1970* (Paris: Éd. Matériologiques 2015) or A. Brenner - J. Gayon, *French Studies in Philosophy of Science. Contemporary Research in France* (Boston: Springer 2009). Other scholars like Chimisso have also tried to give a general account of the unique French style in the philosophy of science. There is a floating emphasis on Koyré's role in these different works but, generally speaking, the most recent orientation in this branch of the XX Century history of philosophy recognizes the critical relevance of Koyré in the fields of history and philosophy of science and in the birth of the tradition of historical epistemology [*épistémologie historique*]. A distinguished line of research specifically dedicated to Koyré

began in the 1980s with the work of scholars like G. Jorland (*La science dans la philosophie. Les recherches épistémologiques d'Alexandre Koyré*, Paris: Gallimard 1981) and there is today a little but lively debate around some aspects of his thought—such as, in recent times, the collective book directed by J. Seidengart, *Vérité scientifique et vérité philosophique dans l'œuvre d'Alexandre Koyré* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres 2017) or F. Capranzano, *Koyré, Galileo e il 'vecchio sogno' di Platone* (Firenze: Olschki 2014). An important *Bibliographie d'Alexandre Koyré* has been published by J.-F. Stoffel (Firenze: Olschki 2000) with an introduction by Zambelli herself. This valuable panorama of studies appears promising but many aspects need to be developed and this new biography could be a starting point for further research. At present, *Alexandre Koyré in incognito* does not claim to give a complete intellectual presentation of Koyré's philosophical and historical work. This biography rather aims to give us an unfamiliar profile of an 'intellectuel engagé' in a political and cultural background, which was very dynamic and vibrant, and the most remarkable merit of this book is to give a new acknowledgment about these underestimated aspects. Zambelli brings Koyré back to his own time and put him into his historical context, giving back the complex image of a philosopher deeply connected with some of the most influential philosophical and historical personalities of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We also discover his path between different scientific and philosophical traditions, such as the phenomenological circle, the 'Annales School', the Levy-Bruhl entourage and the French tradition in epistemology. But above all, we figure out an unsuspected political profile, more intricate and difficult to define than expected and deeply involved in the tumultuous beginning of the short Twentieth Century. Zambelli clearly shows us a philosopher located at the meeting of different worlds, but it is still necessary to precisely determine how these diverse traditions and methods had impacted on Koyré's own original approach.

*Gabriele Vissio*



*Detail from the cover of Kreps (ed.), Gramsci and Foucault: A Reassessment.*