2

Intellectuals as experts[1]

Those who are charged with saying what counts as true
— Michel Foucault[2]

As I am writing this chapter, the news is heartbreaking: floods in India, Nepal and Bangladesh displacing millions and killing thousands – a taster of climate change to come; the resurgence of fears of nuclear war and ill-chosen jokes about Armageddon from those who have not experienced this fear as real; a US president who equates armed neo-Nazis in Charlottesville with anti-fascist protesters and sanctions police brutality; a UK prime minister who imposes austerity on the vulnerable and disabled at home and turns away those fleeing war abroad; and universities capitulating to a regime of targets and managerialism without a fight. And what are scholars doing in the face of all this? What can we do?

In February 2003, Steve Smith gave his Presidential lecture at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, meeting in Portland, Oregon. He courted controversy by arguing that scholars of international relations were complicit in singing into existence a world in which the events of September 11 could take place. He pointed out that 'the social world … is not something that we observe, it is something we inhabit, and we can never stand in relationship to it as neutral observer'.[3] Of course, as mentioned in the previous chapter and discussed more fully in the next, neither is the 'natural' world. The two cannot be distinguished in any case. Smith called on us not to evade our inevitable ethical responsibility but to speak truth to power, whilst at the same time quoting Max Weber on the dangers of political intervention: 'whoever wants to engage in politics at all … lets himself

in for the diabolical forces lurking in all violence'.[4] The previous year's convention, the first since September 11, had been surprisingly silent on the implications of the events of six months before. It was almost as if nothing had happened. On the flight home from this one, people were animated: trying to persuade themselves that Smith could not have been right – or that if he was, he shouldn't have used his speech to make this point.

What is the responsibility of intellectuals more generally? To what extent can work arising from academia have relevance to the practical political choices faced by policy-makers and others on a daily basis? With science, the relevance can be clear, as in the case examined in Chapter 3, but for those in the arts and humanities it is less so. How best can concerned academics intervene in the politics with which they would so like to be involved? Or, indeed, are they already deeply implicated in that politics, as Smith argues, so that the question of intervention does not arise?

There are two related but distinct preliminary points that are worth making. First, as Smith pointed out, intellectuals are of course not as separate from political and social structures as might seem to be the case, or as they might like to think. Antonio Gramsci addresses the question of whether intellectuals are 'an autonomous and independent social group', as they so often appear.[5] He argues against looking for criteria that distinguish intellectuals as such 'in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations'.[6] We should focus not on what defines an intellectual but rather on what categories are historically made available for intellectual activity and how struggles for dominance between different groups or classes can be conceived in these terms. He distinguishes *traditional intellectuals*, on the one hand, who have an apparent neutrality and absence of class-belongingness, but whose status and authority derive from their historical position and whose role is as 'the dominant group's "deputies", exercising the … functions of social hegemony and political government' and *organic intellectuals*, on the other, who are part of a subaltern group or class that is engaged in a struggle for dominance.[7] Traditional intellectuals are those who are

commonly recognised as intellectuals: academics, writers, scientists, and so on. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, though not recognisable as intellectuals, articulate the 'new modes of thought' of their group.[8] Organic intellectuals serve to disrupt rather than reinforce the prevailing hegemony.

The second preliminary point is that contemporary intellectuals in the Western context operate within a particular '"regime" of truth', one that constitutes as 'truth' knowledge that is the product of scientific methods of working.[9] Michel Foucault argues that the figure of what he calls the *specific intellectual* is of central importance in present-day struggles. Specific intellectuals – and Foucault points to atomic scientists as the prime example – who have a 'direct and localised relation to scientific knowledge and institutions' constitute a political threat because of their ability 'to intervene in contemporary political struggles in the name of a "local" scientific truth'.[10] In other words, because of their status as experts, and despite the fact that 'the specific intellectual serves the interests of state or capital', they remain in a strategic position to intervene on behalf of local struggles.[11] There are dangers, of course: the risk of remaining at the level of local struggles, of manipulation or control by other interests, and of not being able to gain widespread support. Nevertheless, the specific intellectual should not be discounted. What is important is the relation between 'truth' and power, and the way in which

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.[12]

Foucault argues that, in contemporary Western societies, the dominant regime of truth is centred on scientific discourse and the institutions that support it. The specific intellectual has a particular class position, as Gramsci noted too, and particular conditions of work, but more than that, a particular connection to the way that the politics of truth works. This position gives such an intellectual the possibility of

struggle at the level of the regime of truth. Of course, because 'this regime is not merely ideological or superstructural [but] a condition of the formation and development of capitalism', interventions that challenge the regime of truth constitute a challenge to the hegemony of the social and economic system with which it is bound up.[13]

It is in this context of a particular, scientific regime of truth and the role of the intellectual that I discuss two examples. First, I elaborate on a point raised in the previous chapter: how the academic search for 'causes' and 'solutions' operates in the case of famines and how it can prohibit change. Second, I look at an example of the backlash that happens when a scientific expert attempts to contest political conclusions that claim to be drawn from their expertise. The role of the intellectual, both Gramsci and Foucault have argued, can be central to change and contestation, but it can also be part of the structures that prohibit change and keep existing systems and problematisations in place. If social-scientific analyses and direct political interventions can be counter-productive, what are the alternatives? What are academics to do? The second part of the chapter puts forward some suggestions.

Causes and solutions: famine

Framings that prevail in much academic or intellectual work – even that of a so-called critical bent – are of a distinct type, and the narratives that they produce limit what can be achieved in practical, on-the-ground terms. They can even be argued to perpetuate, or even give rise to, the 'problem' to which they attempt to provide a 'solution'.[14] Is a search for causes and solutions in some way constitutive of the very problems that analysis purports to attempt to resolve?

There are two ways of interpreting this question. First, it can be read as asking whether what academics propose as causes originate from the analysis of what is happening (in other words, were the causes there already, waiting to be identified and analysed), or whether they come from the imagination of academics and only later are found in what we call social reality. In other words, did the theorising of academics predispose them to find certain things 'out there' in the real world and thus prompt behaviour of a type that then made the real world appear to be as the academics had proposed? To put it simply,

is academic theorising a self-fulfilling prophecy? Does the way we see the world, influenced at least in part by academic analyses, affect how we act in the world and thus produce a world that resembles academic theorisations?

These questions, although interesting, are still framed within a very particular way of thinking, one that operates with an assumed separation between the 'thinking' academic and 'the world'.[15] They raise the question of whether intellectual analysis in the social world can be seen as independent or whether it should rather be regarded as constitutive of the world. There is a strong argument for the latter position. Adopting this view brings into question a scientific regime of truth, since such a regime depends on notions of objectivity.

However, alongside this first concern there is a second. To what extent does the way in which 'problems' are approached have a specific impact too? Is it just the question of objectivity that is problematic here? Or is the search for causes and solutions itself a very particular form of academic analysis, and one that has certain implications? The idea that wars or famines, for example, have causes, and that if we could understand what those causes were we could remove them and put an end to the 'problem', reflects a specifically modernist, Western, academic approach, where answers are sought in technical terms. The point is that even if it is accepted that theories in some sense constitute the world, it is still often tacitly assumed that that 'problems' exist 'out there': solutions may be problematic in terms of objectivity or the impossibility of separating theory from practice, but often the existence of problems themselves (war, famine) to which 'solutions' are sought is not questioned. It might be useful to examine this further.

Much of the literature on famines, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, is centred on the idea that famines are a technical problem. They have causes, and we can end famines through scientific, social scientific or economic research. The assumption is that if we can find out what the causes of famines are then hopefully we can remove them. Early accounts that constitute 'famine' as an object of study in relation to 'population' – Malthusian accounts – regard famine as an almost inevitable consequence of population growth. If human populations expand (it is taken for granted in these accounts that they will, and at an increasing rate), then the size of the population will at some stage

outstrip the growth in food production, which takes place, according to these accounts, at a slower pace.[16] Famines will then occur that will bring population and food supply in line again. Arguments like this in terms of population growth and resources have been made in relation to conflict and genocide as well as famine.[17] They are similar to views that see famines as the consequence of environmental degradation or climatic factors.

There are two problems with these accounts. First, they set to one side the way in which 'famine' as we think of it now is produced as an object of study at a particular historical point and represents a specifically Western view.[18] In the accounts discussed above, there is an assumption that famines are a 'natural' phenomenon. This way of looking at famines has been disputed for some time, and the view that famines are man-made strongly argued.[19] However, even among those who want to emphasise political, structural or economic causes rather than climatic or environmental ones, there remains a sense that famine is an appropriate object of analysis, and that the causes of famine can be understood in terms of scientific, social-scientific or economic laws. Secondly, there is an assumption that famines take place because of a failure: they happen because of a breakdown of agricultural systems, or a failure of social support systems, or a problem with economic resources.[20] If we can find out what the cause of this failure is then we can act to put it right. However, famine is not something that just happens: in many cases it is not a failure, but rather a process of exploitation or even, in some cases, a deliberate act akin to a genocide.[21] It is also a process with beneficiaries as well as victims: while some starve, others make profits because of increased prices of foodstuffs, or by taking the land of those who emigrate, for example.[22] By treating it as a phenomenon that has 'causes' we are taking out the politics involved. Famines are not just things that happen because the rain fails or because the potato becomes diseased. They are more complex, and more political, than that. They happen because particular people take particular forms of action – when they could do otherwise.

In sum, what this way of thinking does is constitute famines as events that have causes, and that most usually can be seen as the failure or breakdown of an otherwise benign system. They close off the

possibility of seeing famines as events, like genocide, for example, that involve the particular actions or inactions of certain people, people who could in some instances at least be held responsible for what happens. It does not recognise that there will be those who will resist any attempt to put in place solutions that propose such things as welfare systems to cushion the poor in bad times or aid provided in such a way that it cannot be exploited by the parties to a conflict. It is assumed that everyone is behind the effort to make sure that famines do not take place, and that all that is missing is the know-how to do this. It forgets that very many people benefit in a wide variety of ways from the system as it stands, a system that effectively produces famines. Famines are arguably the product of the system rather than of its failure.

Thinking in terms of causes and solutions, then, is an approach that in the case of famines makes it impossible to see certain aspects of the situation. It makes the politics of what is going on invisible. This blind spot then means that the search for 'causes' or 'solutions' is more than just constitutive of the reality it aims to reflect. This approach is complicit in perpetuating the very thing it seeks to 'end'. Seeing famine as a failure or a breakdown limits the questions we ask. We need to look at the politics of it, not just treat it as a problem, a technical malfunction of an otherwise benign system. Treating famine in this way enables the economy of oppressions and benefits that surrounds it to continue. We need to consider the possibility that famines happen because the social and political system in which they are embedded is working *all too well* rather than because it has failed.

Expert evidence: Dr David Kelly

In Anglo-American culture at least the intellectual is often synonymous with the expert: someone who has technical expertise and whose knowledge can be called upon to replace a political decision. Often if experts can be said to agree, political debate is closed down or even pre-empted altogether. The stakes are high in these manoeuvres. As politics specialists we are accustomed to talk of power relations, but perhaps less experienced in dealing with them: in coming up against those we censure. We may critique – others will try to disparage or close down our criticism.

Dr David Kelly was a UK weapons scientist who made a series of political interventions that were controversial and contested, and that eventually led to his death in July 2003. An inquiry was set up, chaired by Lord Hutton.[23] Unusually, at that time, the inquiry made public through the internet many of the documents that were submitted.[24] Although the hearings were not televised, dramatised extracts based on the transcripts were shown each night. Despite the intricate questioning, the detailed scrutiny of every move that was made in Whitehall, Downing Street and the BBC, and the pages of evidence placed in the public domain, the eventual report was widely regarded as a whitewash. Many commentators noted that the conclusions of the report did not seem to reflect the evidence. In the end the whole affair – Kelly, what he did and why – did not seem to make sense.

In brief, Kelly was a senior UK scientist closely involved with weapons inspection programmes in various countries and peripherally involved in the compilation of the so-called dossier that the Blair government published in September 2002, ostensibly to make public the intelligence on which its case for an attack on Iraq was based.[25] In May 2003, after the invasion of Iraq had taken place – and at the point where it was becoming apparent that no weapons of mass destruction were going to be found – Kelly began a series of conversations with journalists during which he is said to have claimed that there was political interference in the wording of the dossier. Members of the Downing Street team had influenced the content of a document supposedly compiled by the intelligence services. When a BBC radio broadcast featuring journalist Andrew Gilligan and based on one of these encounters was aired it caused a furore. The Blair administration responded strongly to the accusations levelled against it. The BBC stoutly defended its journalists and refused to name its source. It then appears that Kelly wrote to his line manager at the Ministry of Defence volunteering that he had spoken with the press, but claiming that he was not the sole source of the BBC's story. He appeared before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, at that point denying explicitly and in public that he was the supplier of information that he had indeed, it later emerged, conveyed to Susan Watts, a correspondent with BBC *Newsnight*. A few days later he was dead: his body was found on the

outskirts of woodland a short distance from his home. He seemed to have committed suicide.

Expert testimony and scientific knowledge is generally regarded as true, objective and incontestable: it cannot be challenged, except by another expert. David Kelly's role as a technical expert was, or should have been, to prevent or pre-empt the possibility of political discussion. What he in fact did in his briefings of Andrew Gilligan and Susan Watts could perhaps – and this, like so much else about the affair, remains unclear – be seen as an attempt to enter the political arena and open a debate. In other words, contrary to the expected role of the expert – closing down debate – Kelly attempted the reverse. His claim was (or appeared to be) that there had been political interference with the expert judgements of the intelligence community. The interesting thing was that in making this claim he himself had also crossed a boundary: he had made use of his status as expert to enter the political fray. More ironically even, it was his taking of his status as an expert literally – in other words his belief in the impartial, apolitical nature of the expert – that led him to protest the contamination of that expertise with political manoeuvrings or changes of emphasis. What had happened, then, was that the boundary between politics and the expert had been thrown into question by one person's movement across that boundary. This revealed the way in which 'expert advice' is employed in political debate as a closing down of possibilities.

The response to Kelly's death was swift and decisive. It culminated in the announcement of an enquiry 'into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly'. What did this announcement do? One interpretation would be that what it did was to divert attention again from the political question concerning the justification for the Iraq war to technical questions of what was done in relation to Kelly and his revelations. This happened not just because the inquiry's particular terms of reference were too narrow, in that they did not include any reference to whether or not the attack on Iraq was justified, but because of the way the inquiry worked.

In the course of the inquiry, Kelly's intervention was depoliticised and invalidated in a number of ways. First, his evidence was discredited: it was said that he was not involved in the relevant meetings, he could not have been speaking from first-hand knowledge, and so

forth. Second, he was presented as a victim: he was painted as stressed, overwhelmed, and out of his depth. This meant that his suicide (if that is what it was) was to be seen as the desperate act of someone weighed down by his own personal situation and not in any sense a political act. Finally, the focus of the enquiry was on how he was treated as an employee: his pension rights, his terms of contract, and what his duties included. By focusing on technical questions and by casting Kelly in the role of victim his political intervention was invalidated.

The inquiry's effects need not have been unambiguously one-way. The detailed, step-by-step unpacking of what had happened, hour by hour, in this small segment of bureaucratic life was fascinating. The evidence that was produced and made public revealed a process of decisioning and politics that is generally concealed. But finally, though it remains there in the evidence, the enquiry and its report took a path that again concealed political decisions behind a smokescreen of expert knowledge: the suicide expert, the personnel officer, the pathologist.

Kelly's dilemma perhaps was that he believed in the role of the expert, and yet he wanted to move outside that role himself. To set things right, he had to be other than he was.[26] We do not have a satisfactory explanation of why he committed suicide, if indeed that is what happened. The narrative that came out of the inquiry is deeply unsatisfactory. However, Kelly's death perhaps did more than is admitted. It prompted an inquiry (maybe two, if calls for an inquest are eventually allowed to proceed) and unsettled the narrative that the Blair administration was attempting to impose.[27] Perhaps, and what follows has to be no more than speculation, Kelly, the weapons inspector, chose to weaponise his own body. He was someone familiar with (and perhaps even in possession of), the tools of assassination and someone supremely skilled in the forensic detection of cover-ups. By the apparent manner of his death he posed questions of intelligibility that remain as yet unanswered. He set the scene on Harrowdown Hill to resemble the scene of a simple suicide and yet to reveal, on closer examination, that the apparent manner of that suicide seemed an impossibility. If this is the case, he both retrieved his integrity and confounded his political opponents through the manner of his death.

Several books have been written in succeeding years, and conspiracy theories abound.[28] However, according to Norman Baker, 'the aftermath of David Kelly's death presented Tony Blair's government with his greatest political challenge', especially since it 'returned the political focus firmly onto Iraq'.[29] It arguably led to the Chilcot Inquiry. W.G. Runciman writes:

> Thanks to Hutton … we now know things about the workings of power in the run up to the invasion of Iraq for which historians might otherwise have had to wait for decades, and it is up to their commentators, whether journalists, politicians, or academics, to use the evidence they have made available to draw conclusions which they have not chosen to draw themselves.[30]

The unintelligibility of Kelly's death is reminiscent of the suicide of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, described by Gayatri Spivak in her paper 'Can the subaltern speak?'[31] Spivak's question could be rephrased: Can the 'expert' or 'intellectual' subject constituted within and constitutive of relations of power and knowledge have a critical voice?[32]

Spivak examines the custom of widow immolation or *sati* in India, and towards the end of the essay turns to the case of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri as a different example of female suicide.[33] Bhuvaneswari was found dead in 1926, having hanged herself. However, the reasons for her suicide seemed unclear. It was not a case of illegitimate pregnancy: she was menstruating when she died. Not until nearly ten years later was it discovered that Bhuvaneswari had been recruited as a political assassin in the struggle for Indian independence. Unable to carry out her task, or reveal it – perhaps she also could not in the end be other than she was – but unwilling that her suicide be seen as the result of a forbidden love affair, she waited until menstruation before killing herself. This was both a reversal of the custom that a widow had to wait until the end of bleeding before self-immolation, and a specific refusal of the most likely interpretation of her death. Spivak is ambiguous in her conclusion. In one sense 'the sexed subaltern subject' had 'spoken'; Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri 'perhaps rewrote the social text of *sati*-suicide in an interventionist way'.[34] However, Bhuvaneswari's suicide remained a puzzle at the time, and found no place in the

memories of the independence movement. It is remembered today by her family as a simple case of illicit love. David Kelly's family continue to insist that his death was suicide caused by his fear of losing his job and his pension.[35]

What are academics to do?

If the search for causes and solutions can be counterproductive, and if speaking out against powerful forces can be manipulated and misinterpreted, what are academics to do? One possibility, as mentioned in the case of famines, is to pay attention not to causes but to functions: to look not at what causes a famine, war or conflict, but who it benefits and how. How does constituting something as an object of analysis produce certain effects?

When Foucault examined prisons, he was interested in the way they always appeared to fail: a large proportion of people who had been imprisoned reoffended.[36] Despite the fact that numerous enquiries and reports pointed this failure out, the prison system, whose supposed purpose was the re-education and reform of prisoners, continued without significant alteration. However, according to Foucault the failure of the prison could be seen as pointing to a positive function. The prison system worked to depoliticise a whole underclass of people who were labelled delinquent and thereby denied a political voice. As Foucault puts it:

> If the law is supposed to define offences, if the function of the penal apparatus is to reduce them and if the prison is the instrument of this repression, then failure has to be admitted … *But perhaps one should reverse the problem and ask oneself what is served by the failure of the prison* … If so, one would be forced to suppose that the prison, and no doubt punishment in general, is not intended to eliminate offences, but rather to distinguish them, to distribute them, to use them … The differential administration of illegalities through the mediation of penalty forms part of … mechanisms of domination. Legal punishments are to be resituated in an overall strategy of illegalities. The 'failure' of the prison may be understood on this basis.[37]

David Keen, as we saw, applies a similar approach to the study of famines. He looks at the functions of famines, at who benefits and how. He concludes that famines function to perpetuate a system of oppression that benefits a range of people, from local actors to members of the international community.[38]

As well as looking at the possible functions of an 'event', there is a parallel move that presents itself if we are to give up on the counter-productive search for causes and solutions: the need to become more specific. We need to look closely at the detail. This second move also draws on Foucault. To uncover the functions of, for example, the prison, he demands that we pay attention to what he calls subjugated knowledges and detailed genealogies.

By subjugated knowledges, Foucault has in mind two things. First, the rediscovery of what he calls 'historical contents'.[39] By this he means a rediscovery of the history of struggle and conflict that the systematising thinking that goes along with the search for cause and effect disguises. Linear narratives of cause and effect superimpose on a messy history a retrospective story, produced in the main by the political victors. Recovery of the detail of events, in contrast, demonstrates that the outcome was hardly ever as inevitable as it might appear in retrospect and that struggles contain violence and illegality that are later disowned or suppressed. This rediscovery of the history of struggle takes place through exacting, meticulous historical scholarship.

Second, he includes marginal knowledges, in other words, knowledges that have been disqualified or regarded as insignificant. These are not a general common-sense knowledge in the Gramscian usage, but in some ways quite the opposite: a 'particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it'.[40]

These two lines of attack put together, then, lead to the approach he calls a genealogy: 'the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today'. What such a genealogy does is

entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, dis-
qualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary
body of theory which would filter hierarchies and order them
in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea
of what constitutes a science and its objects. Genealogies are
therefore not positivistic returns to a more careful or exact form
of science. They are precisely 'anti-sciences'.[41]

This is, of course, not an easy enterprise. It is a struggle against forms
of power that go along with certain forms of (scientific) knowledge,
which, as we have seen, entails a challenge to the social and eco-
nomic systems that grew up alongside and depend upon such forms
of knowledge or such particular 'regimes of truth'. The dominant
regime of truth fights back: often, 'no sooner are fragments of geneal-
ogies brought to light than they are re-incorporated into the unitary
discourses that previously rejected them'.[42] Genealogy is a process of
resistance and repoliticisation that has to be repeated time and time
again.

To what extent can these genealogies and subjugated knowledges
be found in the local context, and to what extent is it helpful perhaps
to locate 'events' in their global context? Susan Buck-Morss, in her
book *Thinking Past Terror*, writes of the global public sphere in
a post-September 11 context. Most interestingly, the question that
fascinates her is not dissimilar to the question of the universalising ten-
dency of certain approaches to theorising that I have been discussing.
She considers what form of engagement there might be with Islamist
political thinking, and calls for nothing less than a rethinking 'of the
entire project of politics within the changed conditions of a global
public sphere'. She says:

> We co-exist immanently, within the same discursive space but
> without mutual comprehension, lacking the shared cultural
> apparatus necessary to sustain sociability. We are in the same
> boat pulling against each other and causing great harm to the
> material shell that sustains us. But there is no Archimedean
> point in space at which we could station ourselves while putting
> the globe in dry-dock for repairs – no option, then, except the
> slow and painstaking task of a radically open communication

that does not presume that we already know where we stand.[43]

There are problems with the implication that a fully open communication might be possible, but Buck-Morss appears to acknowledge that difficulty. She continues:

> Rather than forcing the homogeneity of differences under over-arching rubrics of human universality … the incoherence, the ruins, the ruptures in the global terrain [must] remain visible.[44]

This is interesting first, because she is emphasising, as Foucault does, how an overarching theoretical or other stance can be damaging – and she is doing this not in a local but a postcolonial, globalised context – but second, because she calls for the ruins to remain visible. There is no point in papering over the cracks with a veneer of 'solutions' or a claim to universality.

Just as Foucault is calling for a recovery of the buried memories of struggles, so Buck-Morss demands that the ruptures and the gaps remain visible, whilst at the same time a form of dialogue is attempted. This notion of keeping the gaps or the disruptions visible is what I want to examine a little further.

Remaking the world

Messy questions are inevitably concealed in searches for causes and solutions. Such searches assume they know what the problem is and focus on the need to solve it, not on the results or implications of what is happening or has happened. They ignore the way in which it is often difficult even to describe fully or coherently what has in fact happened, let alone subsume it under a label: for example, calling something 'a famine' is deeply problematic.[45] Seeking academic theories that will account for conflict, famine and the like in terms of cause and solution involves concealing struggle and contestation, and hiding the fragility of anything that might be called a solution. Both involve grand narratives, whether grand theoretical narratives or grand narratives of statehood. They also involve hiding the vulnerability of life itself,

and this, of course, is part of their appeal. And maybe it is part of why people like me become academics, as my account in the previous chapter perhaps reveals.

Elaine Scarry contrasts practices that 'make' the world, practices like making a coat to keep out the cold, for example, which are practices where the sentience or feeling of the human body and its frailty are taken into account, with the violence of torture and war, or other forms of violence which 'unmake' the world. A woman making a coat, for example,

> has no interest in making a coat per se but in making someone warm: her skilled attention to threads, materials, seams, linings are all objectifications of the fact that she is at work to remake human tissue to be free of the problem of being cold. She could do this by putting her arms around the shivering person … but she instead more successfully accomplishes her goal by indirection – by making the freestanding object which then remakes the human site which is her actual object … The coat-maker … is working … not to make the artefact … but to remake human sentience … She enters into and in some way alters the alive percipience of other persons.[46]

Making the world is a slow, painstaking process – like the processes of detailed genealogies of struggle or the determination to engage in dialogue while not forgetting the ruptures that accompany difference.

A slow, meticulous process of remaking occurred in New York City after September 11. Gangs of firefighters and others worked in the recovery effort, sifting through the rubble left after the collapse of the World Trade Center in Manhattan.[47] In the early pictures, we see them working in human chains, moving the rubble piece by piece, searching for human remains. The workers in New York were endeavouring to separate the remains of the built, insentient structure from what was left of sentient human beings who had been in the buildings at the time of their collapse. There was, of course, no way in which those human remains could be used to remake living human beings. All that could be done was a lesser form of remaking: identifying and giving a name to those who had disappeared. In the end, of course, even

that was to prove impossible for many of the people who had been lost.[48] The unbuilding of the World Trade Center Towers was taking place alongside a reassertion or remaking of the distinction between sentience and non-sentience.

As time went on, large construction machines were brought in to make the effort more efficient and speed things along. This led to protests and confrontations between different groups on the site. For the firefighters the most important thing was the recovery of the remains of their colleagues – they wanted to continue to discriminate between human remains and rubble, and had a personal stake in the process. The city authorities were more concerned to speed the procedure of unbuilding the World Trade Center and remaking the city environment as ordered and under control.[49] The DNA identification of those killed could, as far as the city authorities were concerned, take place later, when the remains of people and buildings had been removed together to the Fresh Kills waste site on Staten Island. During the protests at the actions of the authorities feelings ran high. At one point, firefighters were arrested for trespassing on the site. At an emotional confrontation at the Mayor's office, one widow remarked: 'Last week my husband is memorialized as a hero, this week he's thought of as landfill?'[50] In the end a compromise was reached. The crane known as 'Big Red' was removed from the site, and a number of firefighters allowed to return.

The remaking of the world takes time, and cannot be hurried. The unmaking of the world brought about by violence of one sort or another can only be undone by a slow painstaking remaking. This remaking, piece by piece, is similar to the process of a careful, sited listening called for by Fiona Sampson, a listening that requires attentiveness to differences and difficulties that cannot be replaced by abstractions.[51] Les Back stresses the value of slowness of pace in his discussion of a global sociological imagination, which entails 'an attention to the implication of our most intimate and most local experiences in planetary networks and relationships'. A form of active listening is required 'to admit the excluded, the looked past, to allow the "out of place" a sense of belonging'.[52] In concluding, Back describes such an academic practice as 'a resource of hope'.[53] I return to this thought in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

In the end, perhaps, the responsibility of the intellectual, if he or she is to resist the closure that comes with the status of 'expert', is to refuse to give an easy, generalising answer to a political question. In other words, the task of the intellectual is to not cover over the impossibility of answering. However, this means the intellectual must do the impossible: both be an intellectual *and* refuse the role of pundit and the status of expert. This fidelity to the crack is a stance of dis/engagement, a repudiation of claims to technical knowledge by the person who is considered to have such knowledge.

Contemporary regimes of truth, based as they are on scientific approaches as the validation of what is to count as true, operate largely, at least in the social sciences, with approaches that seek to find causes and solutions to 'problems'. This type of approach prevents the raising of questions of politics and responsibility. We saw that it does not engage with the possibility, raised by Foucault, that such 'problems' or 'failures' may in fact be a sign that the function of the practice in question is not what it seems at first sight. It is necessary to ask what the process functions to sustain and how, and who benefits.

If we are to avoid talking in terms of causes and solutions, or adopting uncritically the role of 'expert', how are we to proceed? If confronting the system head on, speaking truth to power as Smith might put it, is risky and unlikely to succeed, do we keep quiet? One possibility is to undertake detailed genealogies and bring to light local knowledges that together reveal hidden histories of struggle that can be deployed tactically. At a global level it becomes necessary, as Buck-Morss argued, to undertake an inevitably messy and incomplete attempt at dialogue, an attempt that recognises from the start the slow and difficult nature of such an undertaking. Grand theories of cause and solution can be counter-productive. What is required, perhaps, are local and located processes, and a cautious, gentle and meticulous engagement in remaking the world.

Notes

1 The chapter draws together and develops elements of two embryonic essays: Jenny Edkins, 'Ethics of Engagement: Intellectuals in World Politics.' *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (March 2005): 64–9; and Jenny Edkins, 'The Local, the Global and the Troubling.' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 9, no. 4 (2006): 499–511.

2 Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power.' In *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, edited by Paul Rabinow. Vol. 3: Power, 111–33. New York: The New Press, 2000: 131.

3 Steve Smith, 'Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11.' *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2004): 491–515; 513.

4 Max Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation., In H.H. Gerth Mills and C. Wright, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. London: Routledge, 2007: 77–128; 127.

5 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971: 5.

6 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 8.

7 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 12.

8 Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 9.

9 Foucault, 'Truth and Power', 132.

10 Foucault, 'Truth and Power', 128–9.

11 Foucault, 'Truth and Power', 130.

12 Foucault, 'Truth and Power', 131.

13 Foucault, 'Truth and Power', 132.

14 See, for example, on the production of the crime of 'mugging', Stuart Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. N. Clarke and B. Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978.

15 Maja Zehfuss, 'What Can We Do to Change the World?' In *Global Politics: A New Introduction*, edited by Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss, 483–501. London: Routledge, 2009.

16 T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Translated by Patricia James. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, edited by Raymond Geuss and Quentin Skinner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

17 Peter Uvin, 'Reading the Rwandan Genocide.' *International Studies Review* 3, no. 3 (2001): 75–99.

18 Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

19 For an early example, see, Susan George, *How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.

20 Jenny Edkins, 'Legality with a Vengeance: Famines and Humanitarian

Intervention in "Complex Emergencies".' *Millennium* 25, no. 3 (1996): 547–75.

21   Amrita Rangasami, 'Failure of Exchange Entitlements Theory of Famine 1.' *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 41 (1985): 1747–52; Amrita Rangasami, 'Failure of Exchange Entitlements Theory of Famine 2.' *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 42 (1985): 1797–801; Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. Oxford: African Rights and the International African Institute in association with James Currey, 1997; Jenny Edkins, 'Mass Starvations and the Limitations of Famine Theorising.' *IDS Bulletin* 33, no. 4 (2002): 12–18.

22   David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

23   Lord Hutton, *Report of the Inquiry into the Circumstances surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly C.M.G.* Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 28th January 2004. HC247: Chapter 1, Section 9.

24   William Twining, 'The Hutton Inquiry: Some Wider Legal Aspects'. In *Hutton and Butler*, edited by W.C. Runciman, 29–50. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2004: 42.

25   United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government*. Norwich: Stationery Office, 2002.

26   This draws on Tamsin Lorraine's discussion of Hamlet's predicament in 'Living a Time out of Joint', in *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, edited by Paul Patton and John Protevi. London: Continuum, 2003, 30–45.

27   Justin Schlosberg, 'David Kelly, Ten Years On: A Spectacular Failure of Accountability.' *New Statesman*, 17 July 2013. https://www.newstatesman.com/uk-politics/2013/07/david-kelly-ten-years-spectacular-failure-accountability.

28   Kevin Marsh, *Stumbling over Truth: The Inside Story of the 'Sexed up' Dossier, Hutton and the BBC*. London: Biteback, 2012; Robert Lewis, *Dark Actors: The Life and Death of Dr David Kelly*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2013; W.G. Runciman, ed., *Hutton and Butler: Lifting the Lid on the Workings of Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2004; Norman Baker, *The Strange Death of David Kelly*. London: Methuen, 2007.

29   Baker, *The Strange Death of David Kelly*, 304–5.

30   Runciman, *Hutton and Butler,* 22.

31   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 271–313.

32   Vivienne Jabri, 'Critical Thought and Political Agency in Time of War.' *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2005): 70–8.

33   Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', 307–8.

34 Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', 307.
35 Kelly's body was reportedly exhumed and cremated in July 2017 at the request of his family: Kevin Rawlinson, 'Body of Iraq WMD Dossier Scientist David Kelly Exhumed.' *Guardian*, 29 October 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/29/body-of-wmd-dossier-scientist-david-kelly-exhumed.
36 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: Allen Lane, 1991.
37 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 271–2. Emphasis added.
38 Keen, *Benefits of Famine*.
39 Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures.' In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. Brighton: Harvester, 1980: 81.
40 Foucault, 'Two Lectures', 82.
41 Foucault, 'Two Lectures', 83.
42 Foucault, 'Two Lectures', 86.
43 Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*. London: Verso, 2003: 5–6.
44 Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror*, 10.
45 Alex de Waal, *Famine That Kills: Dafur, Sudan, 1984–1985*. Revised ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005: 9–20.
46 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985: 307.
47 Dennis Smith, *Report from Ground Zero: The Heroic Story of the Rescuers at the World Trade Center*. London: Doubleday, 2002.
48 Victor Toom, 'Finding Closure, Continuing Bonds, and Codentification after the 9/11 Attacks.' *Medical Anthropology* (2017). http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2017.1337118.
49 William Langewiesche, *American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center*. London: Scribner, 2003: 146.
50 Smith, *Report from Ground Zero*, 352.
51 Fiona Sampson, 'Heidegger and the Aporia: Translation and Cultural Authenticity.' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 9, no. 4 (2006): 527–39.
52 Les Back, *The Art of Listening*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013: 22.
53 Back, *The Art of Listening*, 167.