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**“The world is too large”:
Philosophical Mobility and Urban Space in
Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Paris**

Stéphane Van Damme

From the very beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant draws a link between skeptics and nomads and adds that from time to time “they break the social bond.” Thus he appears to establish a correlation between sedentarism, truth, and society, on the one hand, and nomadism, skepticism, and anarchy, on the other.

Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Too often associated with the tropes of exile, wandering, or nomadism in postmodern thought, philosophical mobility has been little studied in itself, except in connection with the singular travel practices of a Voltaire, a Denis Diderot, or a Jean-Jacques Rousseau.¹ True, recent efforts in the history of education and university culture have specified the modalities and the circuits of the *perigrinatio academica* of students and professors.² Similarly, historians of science have renewed their interest in voyages of exploration and have underlined the impact of science exercised by the great European cities on the colonies or the periphery.³ Closer to home, the development of the new field sci-

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¹ On such philosophical travel, see Roger Chartier, “L’homme de lettres,” in *L’homme des Lumières*, ed. Michel Vovelle (Paris, 1997), 159–209.

² Dominique Julia and Jacques Revel, “Les pérégrinations académiques, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles,” in *Les universités européennes du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Dominique Julia, Jacques Revel, and Roger Chartier (Paris, 1986), 66–73; Willem Frijhoff, “La circulation des hommes de savoir: Pôles, institutions, flux, volumes,” in *Commercium litterarium: La communication dans la République des Lettres, 1600–1750*, ed. Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet (Amsterdam, 1994), 229–60.

³ Within a considerable bibliography of works on scientific journeys, see especially Marie-Noëlle Bourguet and Christian Licoppe, “Voyages, mesures, et instruments: Une nouvelle expéri-

ences, like physical geography, geology, or mineralogy, demonstrates the importance of movement over shorter distances in the establishment of modern science.⁴ In the city itself, scholars have shed light on local urban knowledge constructed through scientific and administrative inquiries. The observation of movement in late-eighteenth-century Paris, for example, has been the subject of recent work.⁵ The science of policing, the problem of customary rights, local history, architecture, and urbanism were linked and sustained by a “philosophy” of the urban produced by a kind of mobility specific to the Enlightenment. Most recently, Daniel Roche has sought to bring together these different cultures of mobility while underscoring the decisive role played by the philosophes and *érudites* in imposing new norms of sociability and mobility.⁶ He underlines the plurality and complexity of travel inside and outside the town and emphasizes the cognitive value of these voyages for learned men. Finally, he shows the centrality of the theme of mobility in a metropolis of the future—a motif that structures discourse, urbanization, and elite culture.⁷

To choose the philosophe’s point of view in the framework of this social and cultural history of mobility is clearly not self-evident. It requires taking seriously not only a wide array of intellectual practices but also a scholarly imagination in the throes of change; it requires giving as much importance to exchange, to the flow of scholarship, as to the localization of intellectual resources and the cartography of sites of sociability. At the turn of the eighteenth century, new learned practices linked to experimental proof; the growth of scientific infrastructure (laboratories, botanical gardens, menageries, etc.); and new kinds of scientific institutions all underscored the importance of knowledge sites in the capital’s cultural geography.⁸ The logic of this pro-

ence du monde au siècle des Lumières,” *Annales: Histoire, sciences sociales*, no. 5 (1997): 1115–51; and Charlotte de Castelneau and François Regourd, eds., *Connaissances et pouvoirs: Les espaces impériaux (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles): France, Espagne, Portugal* (Bordeaux, 2005).

⁴ Isabelle Laboulais-Lesage, “Voir, combiner et décrire: La géographie physique selon Nicolas Desmarest,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 51 (2004): 38–57; Laboulais-Lesage, “Les géographes français de la fin du XVIIIe siècle et le terrain: Recherches sur une paradoxale absence,” *L’espace géographique* 30 (2001): 97–110. For more general approaches, see Henrika Kuklick and Robert E. Kohler, eds., *Science in the Field* (Chicago, 1996).

⁵ Daniel Roche, ed., *La ville promise: Mobilité et accueil à Paris (fin XVIIe–début XIXe siècle)* (Paris, 2000). For a brief historiographical overview, see Stéphane Van Damme, ed., “Discipliner la ville: L’émergence des savoirs urbains (17e–20e siècle),” *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines*, no. 12 (2005): 3–140.

⁶ Daniel Roche’s book *Humeurs vagabondes: De la circulation des hommes et de l’utilité des voyages* (Paris, 2003) has greatly inspired this field of research and has oriented its future development.

⁷ Important contributions include Daniel Roche, *Le peuple de Paris: Essai sur la culture populaire au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1981), and the essays in Roche, *Ville promise*.

⁸ On Paris as a metropolis and cultural capital of the eighteenth century, see Daniel Roche and Christophe Charle, eds., *Capitales culturelles, capitales symboliques: Paris et les expériences euro-*

gressive “enclosure” of the philosopher of nature called into question the continued existence of other itinerant learned practices, more individual and informal.⁹ It is not necessary to systematically oppose two regimes of practice and discourse chronologically, but stressing their tension remains important because each engages different representations of the urban world. The geometrical and monumental vision of the classical city, cut into spaces and institutions, that prevailed in cartographical representations and travel guides as early as the second half of the seventeenth century was followed by a metropolis interwoven by the intense, even feverish, mobility of the “new philosophies,” where the concrete experience of the town and sites of sociability counted most.¹⁰ This way of imagining the social and political was increasingly wrought by the metaphor of the network, which honored the engineers of bridges and causeways on the eve of the Revolution.¹¹ Philosophes and scientists are thus essential actors in this new world bounded by the contours of a metropolitan identity, itself established through new sites, new knowledge, and new representations of the urban.

Yet the effects of this culture of learned mobility on the development, maintenance, and renegotiation of urban identities are still poorly understood. How did these philosophical practices entail a reconfiguration of Parisian political culture among the city’s elites? In introducing and rendering exchange banal at different levels of society (local, regional, national, European, even global), did these practices modify traditional forms of political attachment to the city? Did they propose the formulation of a new localism unique to the metropolitan dimensions of the city-as-world?¹² As the anthropologist Michèle de La Pradelle has written, “The ‘local,’ whatever it might be, is never given as such; it is always the effect of a series of operations of ‘localization,’ of continuous construction more or less focused on a world

péennes, XVIIIe–XXe siècles (Paris, 2002); and David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley, CA, 2002).

⁹ On the logic of embedding scientific practice, see Christian Licoppe, *La formation de la pratique scientifique: Le discours de l’expérience en France et en Angleterre (1630–1820)* (Paris, 1996).

¹⁰ For a synthetic treatment of this problem in cultural history, see Daniel Roche, “La ville transformateur,” in *La France des Lumières* (Paris, 1995), 157–88; and Dominique Poulot, “La ville sociable,” in *Les Lumières* (Paris, 2000), 167–205.

¹¹ Antoine Picon, *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment*, trans. Martin Thom (New York, 1992); and Picon, “Nineteenth-Century Urban Cartography and the Scientific Ideal: The Case of Paris,” in *Science and the City*, ed. Sven Dierig, Jens Lachmund, and J. Andrew Mendelsohn (Chicago, 2003), 135–49.

¹² On the emergence of new forms of urban localism at the end of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century, see Pierre-Yves Saunier, *L’esprit lyonnais, XIXe–XXe siècle: Genèse d’une représentation sociale* (Paris, 1995); and Saunier, “Que faire du localisme? L’institutionnalisation de l’identité locale, Lyon au XIXe siècle,” in *Politiques locales et enjeux culturels: Les clochers d’une querelle, XIXe–XXe siècles*, ed. Vincent Dubois and Philippe Poirrier (Paris, 1998), 29–52.

of ad hoc practice and symbols: it is built from between selves, from one's actual self."¹³ If it is difficult to answer the questions above directly, it is worth trying to understand how each practical regime of philosophical mobility was tied to a different political representation of the city. The different practices of mobility that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries blurred a simple sense of territorial belonging and multiplied the sites of identification. The ideal of cosmopolitanism, for example, poorly disguised the strength of local ties and specific geographic affinities.¹⁴ The universalist affirmations of Enlightenment philosophies were poorly adapted to the claims of philosophical nationalism that played themselves out in the canonizations or "pantheonizations" of philosophical grandeur in the great European capitals, principally Paris, London, and Berlin, with René Descartes, Isaac Newton, and Gottfried Leibniz.¹⁵ The emergence of wide networks of mobility in the Republic of Letters, along with tighter networks of urban sociability, produced an acute awareness among contemporaries about the problems of belonging to a place, to a "fatherland" if not to a "nation."¹⁶ Our approach cannot be limited to the discourses of mobility; it should also take into account how the adoption of normative positions on mobility and on political models of urban identity imposed a radical change of philosophical practices. Analyzing these transformations, I will consider the imbrication of these identities in Old Regime Paris.

Itinerant Philosophers, Philosophers in Transit: Invisible Paris?

Let us begin with Descartes's Parisian experience, to the extent that it can be reconstructed from the meager evidence offered in his correspondence. What is most striking here is the relative scarcity of documentary material about Paris, and above all the total lack of the city's description. The Cartesian perception of Paris led not to a global discourse about the city, or to a general description of the old town such as one might find in a traveler's report, but to scattered impressions intermingled with ordinary epistolary practices. As a result, the experience of his stays in Paris cannot be grasped directly but must be situated in

¹³ Michèle de La Pradelle, "La ville des anthropologues," in *La ville et l'urbain: L'état des saviors*, ed. Thierry Paquot, Michel Lussault, and Sophie Body-Gendrot (Paris, 2000), 45–52n50.

¹⁴ Jean-René Suratteau, "Cosmopolitisme et patriotisme au siècle des Lumières," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 55 (1983): 364–89.

¹⁵ On Newton and London, for example, see Patricia Fara, "Isaac Newton Lived Here: Sites of Memory and Scientific Heritage," *British Journal of History of Science* 33 (2000): 407–26.

¹⁶ See David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge, 2001).

relation to an ensemble of cultural practices (travel, epistolarity, sociability) and to a series of functional sites (of the fabrication of instruments, of legitimation and reception, of book publication).

One need not delve into the chronology of Descartes's letters to prove that few of them contain traces of his stays in Paris, apart from those of 1648. In effect, Paris never appeared as a final destination of his travels; it was merely a way station. His Parisian stays were always inscribed into longer itineraries. In 1623 he had to pass through Paris before returning to Brittany and then heading to Poitou. In 1628 he made a stop in Paris between his stay in La Rochelle and his departure for Holland. In 1644, passing through Leiden, Amsterdam, The Hague, and Paris, he set out for Touraine, Brittany, and Poitou. In 1647 and again in 1648 Descartes spent a few months in the capital with a royal pension. His Parisian stays were always on the way to somewhere else. His apparent avoidance of Paris was all the more astonishing because he was a great connoisseur of Europe. He got to know Germany and Denmark in 1619, then Italy and France between 1620 and 1625, before fatefully venturing to Stockholm, the Athens of the north, in 1649 and 1650.

To understand the invisibility of Paris in Descartes's correspondence, it is not enough to invoke simple chance or the scarcity of documentary evidence; rather, one must put pressure on the few indices left by Descartes about his travels. Most of the time, he experienced mobility as a constraint, not as a practice of sociability fundamental to intellectual exchange. In a letter to France's ambassador to Sweden, Chanut, in May 1648, Descartes described the negative effects of frequenting the urban universe:

I pray that you attribute the fault to the Parisian air more than to my inclination, since, as you have said before, this air disposes me to conceive chimeras instead of philosophical thoughts. I see there so many other people who are mistaken in their opinions and calculations that it seems to me to be a universal affliction. The innocence of the wilderness from which I come pleases me much more, and do not believe that I could prevent myself from returning shortly.¹⁷

These travel experiences bore no resemblance to the educational journey of the *perigrinatio academica* that appeared in the account of the scholar Gronovius, for example. Instead, they integrated several cultures of mobility: an ordinary culture essentially close to representations of community, a culture of adventure that led Descartes to

¹⁷ *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 12 vols. (1897–1910; rpt. Paris, 1964), 5:182–83.

become a soldier in Germany, and a culture of learning that prolonged epistolary exchanges and in which the journey was also a professional formation.¹⁸ Descartes's letters still celebrated a place, the union with an organic community, however much it remained for him an imaginary one.

These metaphors could also be employed to unify a cultural space that sometimes appeared fragmented in a proliferation of places. Descartes himself constructed this opposition between space and place in a letter to Chanut on March 6, 1646:

I complain that the world is too large on account of the paucity of honest people that one finds there: I would like them to be assembled in one town, and indeed I would be happy to quit my hermitage, to live with them, if they would consent to receive me into their midst. Although I flee the multitude on account of the many insolent and importunate people one meets there, I will not give up thinking that the greatest good in life is to enjoy the conversation of the people one esteems.¹⁹

This Cartesian representation of scholarly exchange calls into question a historiographical topos: that of an accelerated international communication at the heart of the Republic of Letters, expressed through a network of great cities.²⁰ Philosophical and urban networks did not always coincide, and the "wilderness" still played a role in this geographic production of philosophical knowledge. The town was not a crucial component of thought or philosophical commerce, nor did it provide an infrastructure, as Descartes implied in the opening sentences of *The Discourse on Method*:

I thought that I should aspire by all means to render myself worthy of my reputation, and eight years have passed since this desire made me resolve to travel away from all the places where I had acquaintances and to withdraw here to a land where, . . . in the throng of a great people, energetic and more concerned about their own affairs than curious about those of others, without want of the commodities that can be found in the most frequented cities, I could have lived as well alone and withdrawn as in the furthest wilderness.²¹

The Cartesian city offers with greatest clarity a domain for exploring a series of tensions between networks of communication and withdrawal,

¹⁸ Daniel Roche, "Voyage," in *Le monde des Lumières*, ed. Vincenzo Ferrone and Daniel Roche (Paris, 1999), 349–58, and for a more general treatment of the three cultures, see Roche, *Humeurs vagabondes*.

¹⁹ *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 4:378.

²⁰ Letter to Guez de Balzac, May 5, 1631, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 1:234.

²¹ René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, pt. 3 (Paris, 1637), 146, cited in Louis Marin, *Lectures traversières* (Paris, 1992), 61.

the multitude and the individual, mobility and sedentarism. Descartes conceived of the city as an isolate opposed to the wilderness. As Louis Marin has aptly put it: “The philosopher on his urban island, a circle in a network of intersecting circles, making use of its commodities to ‘devote himself solely to the pursuit of the truth,’ fulfilling in the solitary pleasure of contemplation the sublime desire to know.”²²

Descartes counterbalanced this negative culture of mobility by valorizing the immediacy of conversations and practices of sociability that grounded a philosophy of intellectual place. The description of exchanges, of places, often disappeared in correspondence as the encounter with the correspondent approached. It was as if diminishing distance supplanted the necessity of epistolary mediation, finally imposing silence. For this reason, correspondence would never become a travel diary. If the description of Parisian life often disappeared in a flood of face-to-face encounters—and this was also what Descartes implied—the intellectual encounter with Paris was not neutral; it aimed first of all at the living, intellectual, practice, however subtle, of philosophy. In a letter written on June 4, 1648, to the theologian Antoine Arnaud after a brief stay in Paris, Descartes evoked the esteem in which he held conversation: “But because he [a third person] says himself that it is not addressed to me as a challenge, but only out of a pure desire to discover the truth, I will reply to him here in brief, in order to save something for our conversation. I believe that one can act more surely by letters with those who love to argue, but for those who seek only the truth, the interview and the live voice are best.”²³ The learned world of the classical age was thus profoundly shaped by this insular model, faithful to maritime and oceanic metaphors that permeated scholarly discourse. Cartesian mobility repeated a political representation of the town as a whole, as a social totality founded on a unitary outlook. The town was above all an abstract, conceptual reality that offered little in the global sense to the description of a concrete experience of the encounter: it remained opaque. The abbé Adrien Baillet, charged with writing a biography of the philosopher that was to preface his edition of the complete works, incessantly filled in these blanks, these silences of the correspondence or philosophical treatises, by adding Parisian anecdotes or stories of encounters with famous men.²⁴

²² Marin, *Lectures traversières*, 61.

²³ *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 5:192.

²⁴ Jean-Robert Armogathe and Giulia Belgioioso, “Une publication attendue: L’édition critique des *Lettres de Descartes* par Adrien Baillet, Jean-Baptiste Legrand et alii,” *Archives de philosophie* (2005): 140–42.

Scholarly Archipelagoes: Knowledge between Mobility and Place

The invisibility of Paris in the Cartesian texts gives way in the second half of the seventeenth century to another representation of learned Parisian space divided into places. The amplification of travel and published accounts by traveling scholars from elsewhere led to a new vision of the city that imposed a new way of imagining the center of learning. In eighteenth-century Paris, foreign scholars remained, of course, an absolute minority among travelers. They represented 3.16% of the mobile foreign population (9,300), according to Jean-François Dubost.²⁵ Foreign scholars were mostly Italian, Dutch, and German, but some came from the Austrian Netherlands. Surprisingly, the English were the smallest group. If scholars remained a minuscule population among the legions of travelers who came to the capital, their travel narratives and descriptions constituted nonetheless a formidable documentary tool for imposing new representations. In effect, their travel practices in Paris were inscribed in a culture of mobility that was in the process of transformation. In their texts, the authors did not offer a panoramic, bird's-eye view of Paris but insisted instead on the internal divisions of the urban space and on the points of passage through them. The city of Paris appeared divided into isolated archipelagoes. Two elements contributed to this representation: the ritual of the visit and the practice of inventory and list making.

This legibility of philosophical activity arose from complicated practices of writing that were incorporated into a phenomenology of urban space.²⁶ The givens of the experience in fact occupied a decisive place in this new visibility of intellectual city life. Thus the presentation of places of knowledge did not simply conform to the logic of the description or to the list; they could also take the form of an experiential account. The visit became the strategic episode in the comprehension of the scholarly world. The Parisian descriptions of travelers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Leibniz, Ezechiel Spanheim, and Francesco Bianchini, or the memoirs of Cardinal Angelo Maria Querini and other less renowned travelers, like John Evelyn and Peter Heylen, were not pure reflections of reality but themselves constituted a set of topoi; that is, they defined places.²⁷ The learned space of Paris was

²⁵ Jean-François Dubost, "La mobilité des étrangers à Paris au XVIIIe siècle," in Roche, *Ville promise*, 244.

²⁶ On this phenomenology of landscape, see the stimulating reflections of Jean-Marc Besse, *Voir la terre: Six essais sur le paysage et la géographie* (Arles, 2000).

²⁷ Francesco Bianchini is cited by Bruno Neveu, "Mabillon et l'érudition gallicane," in *Erudition et religion aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1994), 177–79. See also John Lough, *France Observed*

seen not as a space of mobility, traversed by incessant movement and exchange, but as a linear succession of places distributed according to a symbolic itinerary that fixed the hierarchy of circles of sociability. Specific accounts were totalized into the ritual visits of scholarly hospitality. The accounts dwelled excessively on the University of Paris and stressed the importance of the number of the colleges. English travelers during the seventeenth century, Evelyn and Heylen among them, paused at length in their accounts to record their number and the cost of administering them.²⁸ The religious orders were also ubiquitous: the Mauristes of Saint-Germain-des-Prés,²⁹ the Jesuits of the college of Clermont, the Génovéfains of Sainte-Geneviève, the Blancs-Manteaux, the Dominicans, the monks of Saint-Denis, and above all the Oratory and the Society of Port-Royal. All European capitals knew this movement of description, the inventory of their facilities and infrastructure, and of their scholars. Thus Antonella Romano has demonstrated the existence of comparable sources in Rome for the same period.³⁰ One description from 1664 listed the collections of Giovanni Giustino Ciampini, who possessed seven thousand volumes; another, from 1698, mentioned the twelve thousand volumes of Cardinal Giuseppe Renato Imperiali. A century later Cardinal Giuseppe Garampi published the catalog of the library, edited by M. de Romanis in 1795–96. The cataloging of books was a powerful instrument for ordering the world of learning.

The multiplication of accounts rooted the representation of the philosophical world in collective forms of research. It encouraged a process of identification through the localization of authors. The place of origin and the address became tangible criteria in tracking scientific activity. The proliferation of lists of antiquarian bookstores, of historians, and of scientists worked in the same way, connecting scholarly activity to a geography of cabinets of curiosities. A 1686 description by Charles-César Baudelot de Dairval privileged sites and inert objects (“curiosities”), rendering a configuration of locations visible.³¹ This practice of making lists endured into the century of the Enlightenment

in the Seventeenth Century by British Travelers (London, 1985). My distinction between space and place in this passage is indebted to Michel de Certeau, *Arts de faire*, vol. 1 of *L'invention du quotidien* (Paris, 1990), 173.

²⁸ John Evelyn, *Diary*, ed. E. S. De Beer, 6 vols. (London, 1955); Peter Heylen, *A Full Relation of Two Journeys: The One into the Main-Land of France; the Other into Some of the Adjacent Islands* (London, 1656).

²⁹ Daniel-Odon Hurel, “Les Bénédictins et l’histoire,” *Littératures classiques*, no. 30 (1997): 36.

³⁰ Antonella Romano, “Il mondo della scienza,” in *Storia di Roma dall’antichità a oggi: Roma moderna*, ed. Giorgio Ciucci (Rome, 2002), 275–306.

³¹ Charles-César Baudelot de Dairval, *De l’utilité des voyages, et De l’avantage que la recherche des antiquités procure aux sçavans*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1686), 2:683.

and grew more specialized as a function of the collection of artifacts themselves. In 1742 Antoine-Nicolas Desallier d'Argenville published a list of the principal collections of natural history in his *Conchyliologie*, which went through several editions between 1757 and 1767.³² Similarly, in 1776 a mathematician from Basel, Jean Bernoulli, prepared his *Liste des astronomes connus actuellement vivans*, which classified scholars "in alphabetical order by their places of residence."³³ These different lists concerned not only Paris; they were extended to include France and even at times the rest of Europe.

Long framed by the *perigrinatio academica* and the conferring of university degrees, these scholarly journeys strongly adhered to a model of worldly apprenticeship.³⁴ During the second half of the eighteenth century, travel correspondence and well-known travel diaries, like those of Benjamin Franklin and David Hume, invoked such a description of the world and urban sociability. The educational journey became synonymous with the aristocratic Grand Tour. For these curious travelers, the publishers Hébert and Alletz issued their *Almanach parisien en faveur des étrangers et des personnes curieuses* in 1765. Even from abroad, publishers enriched the library of travelers to France. For the worldly Englishman, *The Gentleman's Pocket Companion for Traveling into Foreign Parts* appeared in 1722. And in 1784 John Andrews published *Letters to a Young Gentleman on His Setting Out for France, Containing a Survey of Paris*.³⁵ The emergence of place-specific knowledge (through travel guides, almanacs,³⁶ and maps) was intended to guide foreigners and Parisians toward new centers of intellectual exchange. To Paris was dedicated an entire utilitarian literature that "trumpeted a monumental representation of Paris."³⁷ Far from being fixed, this print production translated the new territorial dynamic of philosophy. The example of the *Almanach du Palais-Royal*, published in 1786, accompanied a commercial and

³² Antoine-Nicolas Desallier d'Argenville, *Conchyliologie ou Histoire naturelle des coquilles de mer, d'eau douce, terrestres et fossiles*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1780).

³³ Jean Bernoulli, *Liste des astronomes connus actuellement vivans* (Berlin, 1777).

³⁴ Jean Boutier, "Le Grand Tour: Une pratique d'éducation des noblesses européennes (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)," *Bulletin de l'Association des historiens modernistes des universités* 27 (2004): 7–21. The scholarly and worldly foreigners in Paris have been the subjects of several works: see Wladimir Berelowitch, "La France dans le 'Grand Tour' des nobles russes au cours de la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 34 (1993): 193–210; and Willem Frijhoff, "Le Paris vécu des Néerlandais, de l'Ancien Régime à la Restauration," in *Paris, de l'image à la mémoire: Représentations artistiques, littéraires, sociopolitiques*, ed. Marie-Christine Kok Escalle (Amsterdam, 1997), 8–36.

³⁵ Paul Gerbod, *Voyages au pays des mangeurs de grenouilles: La France vue par les Britanniques du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours* (Paris, 1991), 18–19.

³⁶ On the history of this genre, see Véronique Sarrazin, "Les almanachs de Paris" (thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris I, 1998).

³⁷ Gilles Chabaud, "Les guides de Paris: Une littérature de l'accueil?" in Roche, *Ville promise*, 100.

urban project that stressed a redefinition of the cultural attractiveness exercised by new sites of knowledge, including museums, scientific and technical collections, or even Masonic lodges.³⁸ The proximity to cafés, spectacles, and boutiques spoke volumes about the commercialization of natural philosophy in Paris.³⁹ The House of Orléans, orchestrating real estate operations, reformulated the aristocratic patronage of science on the eve of the French Revolution.⁴⁰

These operations of transforming space into place slowly froze institutional novelty in the name of rationalizing and mastering the fluctuations of learning in practice. At the same time, it is necessary to insist on the variety of experience and accounts, and on the diversity of the institutional forms that struck foreign visitors. The process of making inventories conferred a certain “robustness” on forms of learned sociability, fixing for a time the map of sites of learning in Paris.

The Interplay of Scales of Mobility: Paris, the Provinces, and the European Capitals

In the constitution of this new geography, philosophical mobility was structured by different scales of movement and circulation. In the first place, the cultural dynamic between Paris and the provinces grew with the establishment of academic movements in the provinces after 1680.⁴¹ A fixed map of exchanges emerged with the accumulation of many external points of view, a game of boxed scales. Paris appeared as a center that held thanks to its prestigious peripheries. The case of the Royal Academy of Physics in Caen, founded before the Academy of Sciences of Paris, reminds us that the transition from a private and informal assembly to a royal academy resulted from at once a correspondence and an intensifying set of exchanges between two learned men, one Parisian, Huet, and the other Norman, Graindorge.⁴² In the seventeenth century, internationally recognized provincial correspondents such as Fabri de Peresc, Jacob Spon, and Pierre de Fermat stimulated intellectual life in the provinces. Indeed, circuits of innovation were

³⁸ *Almanach du Palais-Royal utile aux voyageurs pour l'année 1786* (Paris, 1786). See Lise Andries, “Paris et l’imaginaire de la ville dans les almanachs français du XVIIIe siècle,” in *The Secular City: Studies in the Enlightenment*, ed. T. D. Hemming, E. Freeman, and D. Meakin (Exeter, 1994), 15–26.

³⁹ Colin Jones, “The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 13–40.

⁴⁰ Michael R. Lynn, “Enlightenment in the Public Sphere: The Musée de Monsieur and Scientific Culture in Late-Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32 (1999): 463–76.

⁴¹ Daniel Roche, *Le siècle des Lumières en province: Académiciens et académies provinciales, 1680–1789*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1978).

⁴² David Lux, *Patronage and Royal Science in the Seventeenth Century: The Académie de Physique de Caen* (Ithaca, NY, 1995).

far from exclusively Parisian. The correspondence of the secretary of the Royal Society of London, Henry Oldenburg, underlined the importance of these provincial centers in the creation of a European experimental space.⁴³ With the reign of Louis XIV and the proliferation of royal academies, the relation between Paris and the provinces played itself out for a long time according to the model of Parisian academic sociability. For example, the Paris Academy of Sciences maintained close ties with the Royal Society of Science of Montpellier, founded in 1706, which functioned as an extension of the Parisian institution. The recognition of the peripheries in this model existed side by side with other forms of organization, like the Republic of Letters, itself founded on practices of communication (periodicals, correspondence, etc.) that allowed it to escape a strict polarization in Paris.⁴⁴ In the second half of the eighteenth century, even though the European network of scientific academies was essentially established, isolated scholars like Esprit Calvet in Avignon and Jean-François Séguier in Nîmes continued to animate a vast network of epistolary exchanges and of sociability that counterbalanced Parisian power through small Republics of Letters that unified regional spaces.⁴⁵ Similarly, if the journey to Paris remained the principal aim of scholarly travel, circuits of intra-provincial mobility were not negligible and reinforced a network for the exchange of books, plays, manuscripts, and inscriptions closely linked to local historical inquiries. Intense exchanges, a circulation of scholars, instruments, objects, and information, solidified this local network, which during the eighteenth century became articulated with a global academic one. In 1789 no fewer than seventy academies could be found throughout Europe, and others had been established in the colonies.⁴⁶ In the second half of the eighteenth century, the stabilization of the European academic network reinforced the significance of the great cities and their resources.

A hierarchy of places began to emerge as scholars compared various sites of learning. Scholars aimed not only to describe urban spaces themselves, to establish a list of the sites of knowledge that mattered, but also to record the disparities and inequalities among Europe's principal centers of learning. In a descriptive mode, in a lecture at the

⁴³ David Lux and Harold Cook, "Closed Circles or Open Networks? Communicating at a Distance during the Scientific Revolution," *History of Science* 36 (1998): 179–211, esp. 192–93.

⁴⁴ Jean-Pierre Vittu, "Le journal des savants et la République des Lettres au XVIII^e siècle (1665–1714)," 5 vols. (thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris I, 1997).

⁴⁵ Françoise Waquet and Hans Bots, *La République des lettres* (Paris, 1997); Laurence Brockliss, *Calvet's Web: Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 2002).

⁴⁶ J. McClellan III, "Scientific Institutions and the Organization of Science," in *Eighteenth-Century Science*, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed. Roy Porter (New York, 2003), 90–91.

Academy of Sciences, Charles-Marie de La Condamine described the intellectual predicament of the Italian capitals of learning, Naples and Rome among them, from within a purely Parisian interpretive framework.⁴⁷ In 1784, in a satirical mode, François Lacombe proposed a comparison between Paris and London for Swiss travelers.⁴⁸ On several different scales, the construction of a localized representation of the philosophical world of Paris conformed to this intersection of interior and exterior perspectives, accumulating points of view. Philosophical mobility was a powerful factor in the emergence of hierarchies that led directly to the problem of interpreting and decoding Paris. Methodologically, the abundance of these descriptive sources opened the possibility for a historical sociology of the perception of urban worlds.⁴⁹

Mobility within the City and the Work of Science: Inventing a Parisian Terrain

Paris was not simply a way station for philosophers in transit; for other scholars, the city was a space to be surveyed and mastered, a site for philosophical and scientific inquiry. The fabrication of Paris as a “terrain” of knowledge lay at the crossroads of practices that founded observation, the description of the natural and social worlds of Paris, and the bodily and sensory knowledge of the scholar himself. The process began with the assertion of the intellectual preeminence of Paris among other cities. On one level, Parisian space gained a physicality, since it became an object of knowledge and investigation; but at the same time, it also became an abstraction that itself served as a model of scientific knowledge.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Charles-Marie de La Condamine, “Extrait d’un journal de voyage en Italie,” in *Histoire de l’Académie royale des sciences, année 1757* (Paris, 1762), 336–410. On this text, see Maria Pia Donato, “Accademie e accademismi in una capitale particolare: Il caso di Roma, secoli XVIII–XIX,” *Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome: Italie et Méditerranée* 111 (1999): 415–30; and esp. Donato, *Accademie romane: Una storia sociale (1671–1824)* (Rome, 2000).

⁴⁸ François Lacombe (d’Avignon), *Tableau de Londres et de ses environs, avec un précis de la Constitution de l’Angleterre et de sa décadence* (London, 1784), epistle to the reader.

⁴⁹ See the theoretical propositions formulated by Christian Bessy and Francis Chateauraynaud, *Experts et faussaires: Pour une sociologie de la perception* (Paris, 1995). These sociologists insist on the necessity of constituting a research field based on the operations of perception constructed by actors to decode and interpret the world that surrounds them: “In ordinary experience, the world is conflated most often with evidence and people require neither proof nor tests. . . . At the same time, [human beings] swing easily into another realm, that of critique, in which they discuss good and bad representations, produce interpretations, distrust appearances, negotiate among contradictory views of the world” (13).

⁵⁰ In addition to Kuklick and Kohler, *Science in the Field*, see Claude Blanckaert, “Histoires du terrain entre savoirs et savoir-faire,” in *Le terrain des sciences humaines: Instructions et enquêtes (XVIIIe–XIXe siècle)*, ed. Claude Blanckaert (Paris, 1996), 9–56.

Paris, a “Moving Laboratory”

Alongside the figure of Cartesian travel, there were other scientific practices in the seventeenth century that by contrast emphasized the development of fixed features in the urban space. Just as the scholar Francesco Redi, who served the Medici princes of Florence, used the movements of the court to establish his laboratory in the four corners of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in the middle of the seventeenth century, similar practices made urban territory into a “moving laboratory” in Paris.⁵¹ The open-air astronomy of the abbé Jean Picard was characterized by a persistently mobile scientific activity that crisscrossed the city before definitively settling down in the buildings of the Royal Observatory.⁵² A careful consideration of his notebooks reveals that Picard made astronomical observations from a variety of locations in the capital. Between January 1666 and July 1673 he placed his instruments “near the gate of Montmartre,” in a location two minutes north of the Royal Observatory, but also at Passy, where he recorded a number of observations in 1666, and also in a house on the Rue des Postes, from January to March 1677, before setting up his instruments at the King’s Library on the Rue Vivienne. Far from being fixed, Picard’s scientific practice was eminently itinerant. The construction of the Royal Observatory of Paris, where he was given a second-floor apartment in July 1673, ended his scholarly wanderings. But one would be wrong to think that all astronomical activity was reduced from this point on to the space of the Royal Observatory. On the eve of the French Revolution, as the mathematician Jean-Etienne Montucla later recalled, private observatories had grown up all around the Royal Observatory of Paris, powerfully interconnected by the mobility of the scholar Joseph Lalande, who assisted several lucky amateurs:

Joseph de Lisle, on his return from Russia in 1748, went to live on the Rue Maturins, in the Hôtel de Cluny; citizen Lalande worked with him from 1749, and citizen Messier used it for observations from 1753 onward. Louville had made astronomical observations from the cupola of the Luxembourg Palace in Paris. De Lisle and Lalande had also worked there. Godin and Fouchy had their observatory on the Rue des Postes, near the Estrapade. Le Monnier obtained with the credit of the Noailles an observatory at the Capuchin monastery of the Rue Saint-Honoré, and it was always furnished with the

⁵¹ See the illuminating analysis of Paula Findlen, “Controlling the Experiment: Rhetoric, Court Patronage, and the Experimental Method of Francesco Redi,” *History of Science* 31 (1993): 35–64.

⁵² Solange Grillot, “Picard observateur,” in *Jean Picard et les débuts de l’astronomie de précision au XVIIe siècle*, ed. Guy Picolet (Paris, 1987), 143–56.

biggest and most expensive instruments. Until the year 1791 a great number of important observations were recorded there. La Caille set one [an observatory] up at the College of the Four Nations [the Collège Mazarin]. Next he worked for citizen Lalande. In 1776 he installed an observatory at the Collège de France. Geoffrey d'Assy, the former treasurer of the receiver-general of finances, established one at his home, Rue de Paradis, for Lalande. . . . He assembled, in remarkable circumstances, those members of the Academy who did not have observatories of their own as well as amateur scientists.⁵³

The space of Parisian astronomy was unified by Lalande's mobility.

In this type of scientific practice, the vision of the city could be compartmentalized. The economy of the gaze was not organized in a complete fashion but depended on limiting vision to what was necessary for scientific action.⁵⁴ The evolution of Parisian mapmaking, with the introduction of geodesic methods, transformed urban space into a graph of points and authorized a bird's-eye view of the city. In the 208 maps known to have been produced between 1600 and 1769, there is evidence of an important change.⁵⁵ The circular representation of the city, which lasted until 1670, where the Seine flows vertically and separates the town in two, was replaced by a horizontal representation that gave greater weight to the city's southern extension. This change of orientation corresponds to a major technical innovation, the introduction of triangulation techniques from fixed points in the capital.⁵⁶ In the same way, during the eighteenth century, aerostatic experiments allowed the city to be crossed and taken in at a glance. The verticality of the town was established. Learned men were conscious of this change, which affected their experience of science and of the city. In November 1780 Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier (1754–85) successfully completed the first journey by hot air balloon between the Château de la Muette and the Butte-aux-Cailles. As Marie Thébaud-Sorger has shown, in the second half of the eighteenth century the conquest of the air was a new aesthetic and scientific experience that overturned the representation of the city.⁵⁷ These figures of itinerant philosophers did more

⁵³ Jean-Etienne Montucla, *Histoire des mathématiques, dans laquelle on rend compte de leurs progrès depuis leur origine jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, an VII [1799]), 345–46.

⁵⁴ Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant, *Paris, ville invisible* (Paris, 1998), 76–80.

⁵⁵ Bernard Lepetit, *Les villes de la France moderne* (Paris, 1988), 64–66; Jean Boutier, with the collaboration of Jean-Yves Sarazin and Marine Sibille, *Les plans de Paris: Des origines (1493) à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2002), 13–30.

⁵⁶ Josef W. Konvitz, *Cartography in France, 1660–1848: Science, Engineering, and Statecraft* (Chicago, 1987).

⁵⁷ Marie Thébaud-Sorger, "La conquête de l'air, les dimensions d'une découverte," *Dix-huitième siècle* 31 (1999): 159–77; Thébaud-Sorger, "L'air du temps: L'aérostation; Savoirs et pratiques à la fin du XVIIIe siècle (1783–1785)" (thèse de doctorat, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2004), esp. chap. 4.

than underline the opposition between science confined to the laboratory and science practiced in the open air.⁵⁸ They also revealed a will to conquer the city by scientific practice, to dominate it, to measure it.

The Natural History of Paris and Its Surroundings

In the eighteenth century Paris emerged as a privileged site of observation for certain earth sciences. This was the case, for example, with the natural history that took on the site of Paris, intensifying the observations and inventories of vegetable and animal life within its precise geographic limits. The work of Etienne-Louis Geoffroy was significant in this redirection of scientific activity toward a local geography. As the nephew of Claude-Joseph Geoffroy, he could rely on his uncle's cabinet of curiosities; in fact, he had published its catalog in 1753. In 1762 he started publishing works of natural history dedicated to Paris and its surroundings with his *Histoire abrégée des insectes*, followed in 1767 by his *Traité sommaire des coquilles, tant fluviales que terrestres*.⁵⁹ Even though he never alluded to the conditions under which he observed and collected, he defined the geographic area as a space "two or three leagues from Paris that could be encountered on various walks that one takes around this great city."⁶⁰ Such attempts to delimit the terrain under investigation remained feeble and impressionistic, resembling quotidian, leisure-time activities more than scientifically inspired exercises of the sort that Laurent Jauffret codified at the time of the Revolution when he made his naturalist excursions into the Parc Saint-Cloud.⁶¹ It is possible nevertheless to find many examples of such experiments with terrain in the eighteenth century. On one of his stays in Paris, Rousseau did not hesitate to leave for nearby villages in search of plants, sometimes in the meadows around Charonne and Ménilmontant:

Thursday, October 24, 1776, after dinner I followed the boulevards up to the Chemin Vert, by which I reached the heights of Ménilmontant, and from there, taking the footpath over the vineyards and fields, I crossed the smiling landscape separating the two villages up to Charonne; then I made a detour to return by the

⁵⁸ Yannick Barthe, Michel Callon, and Pierre Lascoumes, *Agir dans un monde incertain: Essai sur la démocratie technique* (Paris, 2001), chap. 1.

⁵⁹ Etienne-Louis Geoffroy, *Histoire abrégée des insectes qui se trouvent aux environs de Paris; dans laquelle ces Animaux sont rangés suivant un ordre méthodique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1762); Geoffroy, *Traité sommaire des coquilles, tant fluviales que terrestres, aux environs de Paris* (Paris, 1767).

⁶⁰ Geoffroy, *Traité sommaire*, preface.

⁶¹ Jean-Luc Chappey, *La société des observateurs de l'homme (1799–1804): Des anthropologues au temps de Bonaparte* (Paris, 2002).

same fields, taking a different path. I enjoyed passing through them with the pleasure and interest that agreeable places have always evoked in me, stopping a few times to take special note of individual plants within the greenery. I found two there that I have rarely seen around Paris but that were abundant in this district. One was *Picris/hiercioides*, the other *Bupleurum falcatum*, an umbelliferous plant. I delighted in this discovery, and it kept me happy for a long time, until finally I discovered a plant still rarer, at least on cultivated land, known as *Cerastium aquaticum*, . . . which I found in a book that I had taken along, and placed it in my herbarium.⁶²

There is a clearly a bucolic tone in this description of Paris. The passage also stresses the entrenchment of the “cantonal” vision of the urban territory. The work of keeping an herbarium, like that of composing a mineralogical catalog, suggests the panoptic character of compiling natural history collections. Rousseau is again an exemplary witness:

No more will I see these beautiful landscapes, these forests, these lakes, these groves, these boulders, these mountains, whose aspect has always touched my heart: but now that I can no longer visit this happy country, I have only to open my herbarium and it transports me there at once. These fragments of plants I picked suffice to remind me of the magnificent spectacle. This herbarium is for me a journal of herbal collections that makes me relive it, charmed, in an optical illusion that hangs them afresh before my eyes.⁶³

This solitary, naturalistic activity lies at the greatest distance from the worldly practice of the philosophical promenade founded on the art of dinner-table conversation and described by Jean-François Marmontel: “When the weather turned pleasant, we intermingled these dinners with philosophical picnics around Paris, on the banks of the Seine. . . . Most often these took place at Saint-Cloud: we floated there by boat in the morning, breathing the air of the river, and we returned in the evening through the Bois de Boulogne. Believe me, on these promenades, conversation rarely languished.”⁶⁴

With the exception of a few stray remarks, the method of conducting research was rarely explained. Thus, in the work of Claude-Joseph Geoffroy, the geographic references that would have permitted

⁶² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire* (Paris, 1948), 19–20. On Rousseau as a botanist, see Jean-Marc Drouin, “Rousseau,” in *Dictionnaire culturel des sciences*, ed. Nicolas Witkowski (Paris, 2001), 368; and Drouin, “Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre et l’histoire naturelle,” *Dix-huitième siècle* 33 (2001): 507–16. See also Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Bruno Bernardi, eds., *Rousseau et les sciences* (Paris, 2003).

⁶³ Rousseau, *Rêveries*, 150–51.

⁶⁴ Jean-François Marmontel, *Mémoires de Marmontel* (1804; rpt. Paris, 1998), 2.7.239–46.

the identification of precise locations for insects or shells did not appear in the printed articles devoted to them. The method consisted instead in applying to Parisian locales the Linnaean classification system. In his introduction Geoffroy expanded on his use of the system. The world of the “terrain” dear to twentieth-century anthropologists and sociologists had not yet been born; Geoffroy offered neither an account nor a report. He also withheld his personal experience from the reader. References to a physical space were confined to a vague domain of research in which the naturalist exerted his taxonomical competence, which united the real to a vast library of natural history. Indeed, in his acknowledgments Geoffroy underscored his debt—and thus linked his own walks—to a network of scholarship, to an internationally recognized method, to a cabinet of natural history. The mobility of naturalists legitimated Parisian space as a world of work where one could exercise curiosity and observe intensively. The case of Geoffroy attests both to his own familial and professional investment and to the greater interest of the Parisian elites in natural history. More surprising, it was the same for Parisian municipal councilors in the eighteenth century. This celebration of the “Parisian terrain” permitted Geoffroy to combine his belonging in a world of academics and science with an affiliation to urban institutions. His friend, Bernard de Jussieu, claimed that there were seventy-six hundred books listed in his library at his death, along with his apothecary collection, his cabinet of natural history, and his shell collection. In his last will and testament, Geoffroy claimed to have acquired it all “little by little by means of my savings.”⁶⁵ The collection, unusually, gave rise to a published catalog that thirty years later was held as exemplary for all Parisian amateurs of science.⁶⁶

The collection of M. Geoffroy, of the Royal Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of London, covered all aspects of natural history. His study on the ground floor contained about eight hundred crystal vials filled with what was most curious in the three kingdoms [mineral, plant, animal]. Those from the sigillated lands were truly complete, as were the bezoars. The collection of drugs, arranged on shelves, occupied two sides of his study, with the snakes conserved in glass tubes and placed in the sides of the cabinet. The third side offered a library concerning natural history and medicine. The ceiling was decorated with crocodiles, scaly lizards, snakes, and other reptiles. Below the shelves were four rows of drawers filled with pet-

⁶⁵ Archives Nationales, Minutier central, CVIII, 498, Mar. 9, 1752, testament of Claude-Joseph Geoffroy, quoted by Catherine Junges, “Les échevins parisiens au XVIIIe siècle” (thèse pour le diplôme d’archiviste paléographe de l’Ecole Nationale des Chartes, 1998), 222.

⁶⁶ *Catalogue des livres et estampes des défunts Messieurs Geoffroy* [Claude-Joseph and his son, Claude-François] (Paris, 1754).

rified minerals, fossils, and disfigured rocks. In another study on the first floor, composed of multiple rooms, one saw a collection of choice shells, very well arranged.⁶⁷

The postmortem inventory revealed in addition the presence on the ground floor of a whalebone priapus, heads of wild animals (tiger, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, etc.), and multiple arrows, bows, and quivers of “savages” kept in his Parisian residence and on his country estate. Even if Geoffroy was exceptional for the volume and variety of the books and objects he possessed, postmortem inventories reveal that no fewer than six municipal magistrates owned scientific instruments. All shared a passion for natural philosophy. Among the possessions of Thomas Germain were a globe of the earth and a globe of the heavens; among those of Thomas-Léonard Lagneau, two barometers, a thermometer, and two microscopes. “Several pieces of natural history” were found in the study of Jacques-Philippe Desvaux, and at the home of Denis Cochin there could be found a barometer, a thermometer, and a framed collection of butterflies and flowers.⁶⁸ The making of Parisian space according to the model or paradigm of natural history was hardly an unusual occurrence: municipal elites participated actively in amateur science.

Mobility and Foundation: The Birth of a Parisian “Archaeology”

This type of local mobility can also be found in the early archaeological investigations of Paris. Here the invention of a terrain was linked directly to the inventory of riches. The cult of local history became an interrogation of the historical foundations of the capital’s privileges. The antiquarian’s interests approached the preoccupations of lawyers and the experts in Parisian law. It is not surprising that the publication of the first work of archaeology goes back to the lawyer at the Paris Parlement Henri Sauval (1623–76). In his *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris*, published posthumously in 1724, Sauval combined the methods of philology and numismatics with discoveries stemming from “excavations.” Underlining the originality of his project, his editor specified that

his investigations were based as much on the charters of the Hôtel de Ville, those of the Chambre du Trésor des Chartes, and the registers of the Paris Parlement as on the title deeds of Notre-Dame, the

⁶⁷ Desallier d’Argenville, *Conchyliologie*, 1:234.

⁶⁸ Junges, “Echevins parisiens,” 222.

Sainte-Chapelle, Sainte-Geneviève, and the manuscripts of Saint-Victor. There are scarcely any archives or collections of charters, whether public or private, that he has not scoured; thus he found himself in a position to give an account of the period and give evidence for all the facts.⁶⁹

His text provided evidence of the city's "antiquities" confirmed by written sources: Caesar, Strabon, Ammian Marcellin, and the emperor Julian. But Sauval's major innovation lay in his discussion of "archaeological discoveries." Not limiting himself to the standard accounts of tombs and palaces, Sauval described a mummy and medallions found in the tombs of Saint-Mandé in 1651 and 1652.⁷⁰ In a dissertation on the antiquities of the city, he embellished his history with accounts like this:

As Mr. Bernier was setting to work a few years ago around his house near Saint-Eustache, in his garden he located the foundation of walls that had enclosed the city of Paris and that had probably served in an even older building. It was quite large, as if it had once been that of a temple or a palace, for when it was excavated, it was over two fathoms deep. There, in the gravel at its base, was found a bronze head of a woman, very well sculpted, a little larger than in nature. On her head was a tower, and the eyes had been removed, perhaps having been silver, since that was a relatively common material in ancient sculpture. Having seen such a figure in the library books of M. l'abbé Berrier, I judged by my knowledge of medallions that this could be the head of a goddess who guarded the city of Paris during the pagan period, since several antique Greek medallions had on their reverse the heads of women with towers, and the name of the city.⁷¹

In 1711 the scholarly world was excited by the discovery of the pillar of Nautes, five stone blocks found in the choir of Notre-Dame that were dedicated to the emperor Tiberius by the Nautes, a guild that controlled the river traffic.⁷² The Republic of Letters developed all sorts of interpretations: Leibniz, Baudelot de Dairval, and even Le Roi, in his *Dissertation sur les antiquités celtiques* in 1725, participated. The Parisian past became an object of international speculation, as was related by the comte de Caylus a few decades later:

As a vault was built for the Sepulcher of the Archbishops, it was a great surprise to come across several large square blocks of stone, decorated with bas-reliefs. Almost all antiquarians took an inter-

⁶⁹ Henri Sauval, *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris*, 3 vols. (1724; rpt. Geneva, 1973), preface.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:344.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2:56–57.

⁷² Philippe de Carbonnières, *Lutèce: Paris, ville romaine* (Paris, 1997), 16.

est in this discovery and hastened to explain these monuments, but their interpretations, as usually happens, were contradictory. Père Montfaucon, who appears to me to have gotten closest to the truth, believed that the bas-reliefs represented the ancient Roman divinities. One can see in the collections of the Academy of Belles-Lettres the engravings of these pieces by MM. Mautor and Baudelot, whose explanations differ as much as their drawings. But to have a clear, honest, precise, and plausible idea of this antiquarian art, one should consult the dissertation of M. Le Roi, inserted into the opening of dom Félibien's *Histoire de Paris*: to me, he is the best of the various authors. This little work has as its title *Dissertation sur les monuments celtiques*. M. Le Roi criticizes Leibniz, Mautor, and Baudelot equally. He gives an explanation of the different divinities: he accounts for the monument in itself and makes the *Nautae Parisiaci* understood.⁷³

Around the same time, the state of the baths of the Cluny monastery began to arouse anxiety among a literate Parisian and international audience. The comte de Caylus (1692–1765) published two sketches in his *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines* that became major works of codification of French archaeological practices, based on the model of Italian excavations.⁷⁴ His textual description of the “vestiges” of ancient Lutetia explains that the silence of the Classical sources was the result of distance from the Roman center:

The ancient writers did not lend support to an idea widespread among the Romans in Paris, who could scarcely be believed in their accounts, which must have been very powerful, judging from the monuments that I will illustrate here. In similar scattered passages, in meditating on history, in examining the remaining precious objects of Antiquity, the grandeur of a people too distant from Rome can be known; these monuments did not interest historians, for they were in no way distinguished by great undertakings, or great crimes.⁷⁵

In his desire to establish a science of objects and monuments, Caylus's innovation was to give the image a key role in the restitution of a culture of the past. To do this, he worked with engineers to draw up sectional plans. Archaeology here was no longer merely an affair of the curious, as it had been for Sauval and the possessive collectors of art objects. Rather, the archaeologist relied on an experimental approach, like that of the natural philosopher.⁷⁶ There, moreover, the movement

⁷³ Anne-Claude-Philippe de Caylus, *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1752–67), 2:367.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:367–93.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:369–70.

⁷⁶ See Alain Schnapp, *La conquête du passé: Aux origines de l'archéologie* (Paris, 1993), 238–42;

of the antiquarian from his study to archaeological sites was impelled not by chance but by a desire to incorporate the urban past into the urban space. Learned mobility at work imposed a grid on ancient Paris, permitting the remains of the Gallo-Roman city to emerge in plain sight. Thus mobility spoke to the political project that was to reappear even more prominently after the Revolution with the codification of national antiquities. In 1807, while excavating the Luxembourg Gardens, Claude-Madeleine Grivaud de La Vincelle renewed his interest in ancient relics and committed himself to reclaiming the grandeur of Paris.⁷⁷ As the anthropologist Daniel Fabre has written, “The capital is always divided between the anxiety of exposing its history and that of committing itself audaciously to the future, between museum-like fixation and permanent renewal.”⁷⁸

Philosophical Sites between Exemplarity and Social Anomie

Philosophical mobility participated in the making of urban territory through the local construction of space by borrowing a lexicon of membership that shifted from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. Two figures can help us understand the reconfiguration of the logic of adhesion. At the end of the seventeenth century, accounts of the repatriation of Descartes’s remains to France offer a captivating example of the fabrication of a Christian and Parisian philosopher. As one century gave way to another, it was no longer sufficient to make a Parisian philosopher by inscribing him into the coordinates of a territorialized customary culture, to make of him a marker in the cultural space of the city. And nearly a century later, on the eve of the French Revolution, the use of the term *patriot* in the description of Parisian philosophes illustrated yet another way of imagining society and politics.

The Making of Local Heroes

The philosopher’s Parisian circuits took public form through the construction of the city’s principal sites. At the end of the seventeenth

and Charlotte Guichard, “L’amateur d’art à Paris au XVIIIe siècle” (thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris I, 2005).

⁷⁷ Claude-Madeleine Grivaud de La Vincelle, *Antiquités gauloises et romaines accueillies dans les jardins du Palais du Sénat, pendant les travaux d’embellissement qui y ont été exécutés depuis l’an IX jusqu’à ce jour, pour servir à l’histoire des antiquités de Paris; précédées de recherche sur cette grande capitale* (Paris, 1807).

⁷⁸ Daniel Fabre directs a research program on the politics of archaeology that projects a comparative study of the intervention of archaeology in major European cities (Rome, Paris, Barcelona, London, and Berlin). The cited extract comes from a presentation text on the program’s Internet site: www.lahic.cnrs.fr/article.php3?id_article=20 (accessed Nov. 7, 2005).

century, references to the memorable sites of the capital's intellectual life burst into travel guides and descriptions of Paris. Germain Brice, describing the neighborhood of the university and the church of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont in his *Description nouvelle de la ville de Paris* (1713), did not miss an opportunity to remind the reader of Descartes's epitaph there or to mention the heart of Jacques Rohault, one of his principal Parisian disciples, who is buried there as well. One generation after Descartes's death, the city turned these two contested figures of mid-seventeenth-century French philosophy into local heroes, perfectly representative of Parisian intellectualism. This spectacular, sudden transformation, which successfully diffused the polemical charges against Descartes and his followers, was partially indebted to accounts written in the second half of the seventeenth century about the return of Descartes's remains to Paris, and in particular to the description published by Adrien Baillet.

Baillet's text is marked by a desire to inscribe Descartes's Parisian itinerary into the history of the city. Thus the time the philosopher spent in Paris in 1628, like his trip in 1648, receives abundant attention alongside the moments of his participation in public life. Baillet sought to connect the odds and ends of experiences to the history of the city itself. As the first biography of Descartes that attempted to fill in the blanks of his Parisian experience, Baillet's work aims to link the latter to Parisian space, to establish the philosopher's familiarity with the place. The importance that Baillet accords the conditions of Descartes's stay, its materiality, supports this desire to inscribe Descartes in the memory of the urban space. In the "Addition to the Life of M. Descartes," Baillet sets down his account of the repatriation of the body to the church of Sainte-Geneviève in 1667. This piece of bravura seeks to evoke urban ceremonies in pledging the truth and the verisimilitude of the scene, as attested by the reference to the "register of town criers [*Jurez Crieurs*] on Saturday, June 25, 1667." Baillet's account of a voyage (that of the philosopher's body) closes in a celebration of the universal Parisian and Christian Descartes:

The corpse finally arrived in Paris near the beginning of the month of January of the following year [1667] and was brought to M. d'Alibert, and a few days afterward it was deposited without ceremony in a chapel of the Church of Saint-Paul, and the site of the sepulcher and the arrangements for the ceremony were discussed right away. One possibility was the Church of Sainte-Geneviève-du-Mont, reputed no less as a sanctuary of the sciences than as one of religion. It would have been best to expose the body to all of France on the highest site in the capital, on the heights of the first University of the Kingdom, in order that the mortal remains of this great philosopher

could serve as a trophy to the eternal truth that his spirit had sought on earth and that his soul possesses in the other world, insofar as it is permitted to hope for that from the mercy of God. The Most Reverend Père François Blanchard, Abbé of Sainte-Geneviève and head of the congregation, received the proposal with pleasure, and all the members of the congregation voiced their consent as one. Père Allemand, chancellor of the university, celebrated for a variety of pious publications, long enjoyed by the public, was chosen to compose a funeral oration, and M. Clerselier furnished him with the necessary memoirs to accomplish this. In addition, M. Foucher, cathedral canon of Dijon, who lived outside Paris, took charge at the request of M. Rohault of giving another oration in a place to be chosen later. MM. de Sainte-Geneviève wanted to take care of all the decorations of their church for the funeral, and M. Alibert worked with them on ways of doing this with a flamboyance and magnificence that would leave nothing to be desired.

Everything was prepared for the 24th day of June; the funeral cortege left after sunset from the Rue Beutreillis, where M. d'Alibert resided, for the Church of Saint-Paul, where the corpse was to be exposed. The funeral cortege was composed of the clergy of this great parish, a great number of poor folk, newly clothed in the name of the deceased, carrying torches, and a long line of stagecoaches filled with persons of the highest quality, all the friends of the philosopher who lived in Paris, and a crowd of his followers who had never had the honor of knowing him. It arrived in front of the Church of Sainte-Geneviève a little after matins. The abbé, wearing his pontifical dress and miter and bearing a cross in his hand, accompanied by all the regular monks, each one carrying his candle, went to receive the body at the door of the church and conducted it into the choir, where the vespers of the dead were solemnly sung. The work that the fathers of Sainte-Geneviève had put into the funeral procession and all the ecclesiastical ceremony, which was always very majestic among the monks, grew richer still thanks to the generous imagination of M. d'Alibert. And since the death of the Cardinal de Rochefoucault, the great reformer of their order, no one could remember having seen anything more magnificent in their church. The prayers finished, the coffin was carried to the southern side of the nave and was placed against the wall of the sepulchral vault that had been set aside for it, between the chapel of the denomination of Saint Geneviève and that of Saint Francis. A loud ringing echoed through the city at a moment when the daytime noise had given way to the silence of the night; it excited the curiosity or the devotion of an infinite number of people who gathered at the church the next day, a Saturday, to which the service had been postponed: the result was an even larger crowd than that of the previous evening.⁷⁹

In this passage, several elements join in a narrative construction of a Parisian Descartes. First, the linking of the procession to a reli-

⁷⁹ Adrien Baillet, *La vie de M. Descartes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1691), 2:439–40.

gious and civic ritual is significant. The evocation of the congregation of Saint Geneviève, guardian and patroness of Paris, also articulates the repatriation of philosophical grandeur. Baillet's insistence on keeping the features of the religious ceremony in his account suggests a polemical strategy to render Descartes a figure of Christian philosophy. The display of ritual forms in the ceremony is not simply a token of their cultural efficacy; it is also supposed to overcome the symbolic value of the king's formal interdiction on delivering the funeral oration: "The order was received with respect and was executed with as much submission as if it had not been a surprise." "However," continues Baillet, "the service had the same solemn magnificence as the previous evening."⁸⁰ His account ends with a banquet, a fitting meeting point between the celebrations of the public life of Paris and the ideal form of philosophical sociability. The inscription of this event into the rituals of Parisian civic life is important in understanding how Baillet used a lexicon of local culture. The text, seemingly legible as an archival document, requires more than a strictly intellectual reading. It participates actively, instead, in the project of sanctifying the figure of the French philosopher.

By incorporating into this narrative scene a vision of traditional Parisian society divided into bodies and orders, Baillet indicates his intention to produce a consensus by underscoring the multiplicity of the associations woven around Descartes's membership in Parisian political culture. Against the intervention of royal power, Baillet chooses to herald the urban privileges of Paris, the right to form a procession of city corporations and communities being a central feature of urban culture in the Old Regime.

Thus Cartesian Paris slowly found new legitimacy. Fixing Descartes in a place was one effort among many to leave the philosophical wars behind, to substitute the philosopher rooted in Paris for the figure of the exile. In the principal guides and description of Paris can thus be found a geography of the burial sites of the great Parisian philosophers. At the end of the eighteenth century, the quasi-pilgrimage to Ermenonville and the tomb of Rousseau emerged as an extramural geography of Parisian philosophy. Thus on May 24, 1777, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II, traveling under the name of the Count of Falkenstein, visited the tomb of Rousseau at Ermenonville. Similarly, on June 10, 1782, Grand Duke Paul Petrovitch of Russia and his wife completed the same journey.⁸¹

At the same time, the return of the corporeal remains, like the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:439–40.

⁸¹ *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. R. A. Leigh, 52 vols. (Oxford, 1965–98), 46:56.

visit to the tomb, were inscribed in a complex operation of incarnating the philosophical figure in a concrete space. The link uniting the philosopher with the city was not built as a result of a veritable Parisian experience or of philosophical work Descartes did in Paris. One could conclude that the definition of Cartesian belief played a role in this materialization of the philosopher's presence, forever fixed in stone. The ceremony of repatriation offered the opportunity for an identification with the capital of the kingdom. It aspired, as Baillet wrote, to "expose the body to all of France." It opened a path to the nationalization of the philosopher that would be affirmed in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Paris, "Fatherland of the True Philosopher"

This return of Descartes neither fetishizes locality nor affirms nomadism as a condition of modernity. My hypothesis is that it illuminates in detail the tensions provoked by the intensification of philosophical and scientific mobility in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in an emergent metropolitan culture. A double, contradictory movement can be found therein. First, the scientific practices of inquiry and exchange led to a dynamic of localization, an inscription of urban territory. Next, the increase in flux required the redefinition of ties of belonging in the city less on the basis of an attachment to a parish, or to a common political space, than to a civic patriotism founded on a global understanding of the town's social space. Paris as capital of the kingdom and center of the nation transformed itself into a privileged site to redefine the work of the philosopher. With the advent of spokesmen of the prerevolutionary period, the political interpretation of philosophical mobility framed in the idea of the patriot betrayed a tension between a double register of fatherland-urbanity and fatherland-nation.⁸²

On the eve of the French Revolution, in a chapter of his *Tableau de Paris* (1782–88) titled "Fatherland of the True Philosopher," Louis-Sébastien Mercier describes the situation of philosophy in Paris as follows: "It is in the great cities that the philosopher himself is happy, all the while condemning cities because he hides better there than elsewhere his mediocre fortune; because he is not embarrassed with less; because he lives there more freely, submerged in the crowd; because he

⁸² On this changing political culture, see Jacques Guilhaumou, *L'avènement des portes-parole de la République (1789–1792): Essai de synthèse sur les langages de la Révolution française* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1998); and Jon Cowans, *To Speak for the People: Public Opinion and the Problem of Legitimacy in the French Revolution* (New York, 2001).

finds equality there in the confusions of ranks; because he can choose his own world.” Evoking later the “posterity of the true philosophers,” he adds: “You will not find that rare fame anywhere but in the walls of the capital. By them is hidden a crowd of friendly and learned men who divide their time between the sweetness of the social world and the study, who enjoy all the arts, who live tranquil lives of ingenious leisure. Go see them, go hear them; they possess reason in all of its purity, reason accompanied with propriety.”⁸³ In these extracts one can read a triple claim that spans the century of Enlightenment: to make of Paris a fatherland for philosophy, that is, a universal paradigm; to show that the city is a privileged, philosophical laboratory in which to “think” society; and to herald the new figure of the urban philosopher, divided between studious solitude and worldly sociability. The figure of Rameau’s nephew, invented by Diderot, embodied no longer an ideal of exile or of philosophy imprisoned but instead a form of the wise man, of middling extravagance and melancholy, who returned to a practical philosophy traversed by the typical contradictions of the city. As Karlheinz Stierle has written, “*Rameau’s Nephew* embodies the modern polis, the worldly capital that is the Paris described, in placing himself in the perspective of the social atopia.”⁸⁴ Paris appeared to Mercier as a new agora, a central site of philosophical activity, emblematically attractive in Europe: “A unique point on the globe. Visit London, Amsterdam, Madrid, Vienna, and you will see nothing that compares to it: a prisoner would be able to live in Paris without getting bored or dreaming of liberty for a few years at least.”⁸⁵ The urban space presented itself as a nonplace, an open territory.

To the representation of a Descartes’s classical philosophical space, the eighteenth century added a more variegated description of the metropolis, characterized by a “whirlwind of needs and of passions,” by an incessant movement where flux, social ambiguity, electricity triumphed over a monumental vision of the city.⁸⁶ The classical urban world belonged to a universe of places, to a constructed space. The capital of the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century presented itself as a site where all the instruments of domination, influence, and organization were concentrated. The novel of the second half of the eighteenth century subtly suggested that the secular expression of a monumental philosophical space in Paris silently

⁸³ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam, 1782–88), 1:14, 7:175.

⁸⁴ Karlheinz Stierle, *La capitale des signes: Paris et son discours* (Paris, 2001), 79.

⁸⁵ Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 10:132 (“Palais-Royal”).

⁸⁶ Jêze, *Etat ou Tableau de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1761), aijj.

worked from then on by decentering, mobility, and evanescence.⁸⁷ Hence the appearance of the figure of the *philosophe flâneur*, radically opposed to the streetwalker. In placing the monumental model of intellectual organization in crisis, in doubting a static representation, literature reversed the traditional, patriotic conception of civic humanism. The “fatherland of the true philosopher” that Paris incarnated, according to Mercier, did not return to an ordered vision of the cosmos that the scholar simply invented. It became a ground for experimentation where the experience of the philosopher was put to the test. Social anomie made possible a form of detachment from traditional communities. The figure of the philosopher, like the one that appeared in Mercier, did not speak anymore in the name of Paris or Parisians. He did not define himself by his connection to a local political culture. He spoke for the universal of which Paris was a tribune, “a unique point on the globe.”

All in all, through these different mechanisms, fictional or real, scientific or textual, the representation of Paris as a philosophical fatherland was not a given but remained dependent on the new practices of displacement that appropriated urban space. The survey, the grid, proposed a new way of being fixed in Paris while still remaining united to the cosmopolitan ideal. This apparent contradiction resolved itself in the recognition of Paris as a world capital of philosophy. Philosophical mobility was not without meaning; it reconstituted the political tie linking scholars to an urban territory; it was a good index of the ties between learning and identity.

TRANSLATED BY DAVID BEECHER AND PETER SAHLINS

⁸⁷ Stierle, *Capitale des signes*, 93.