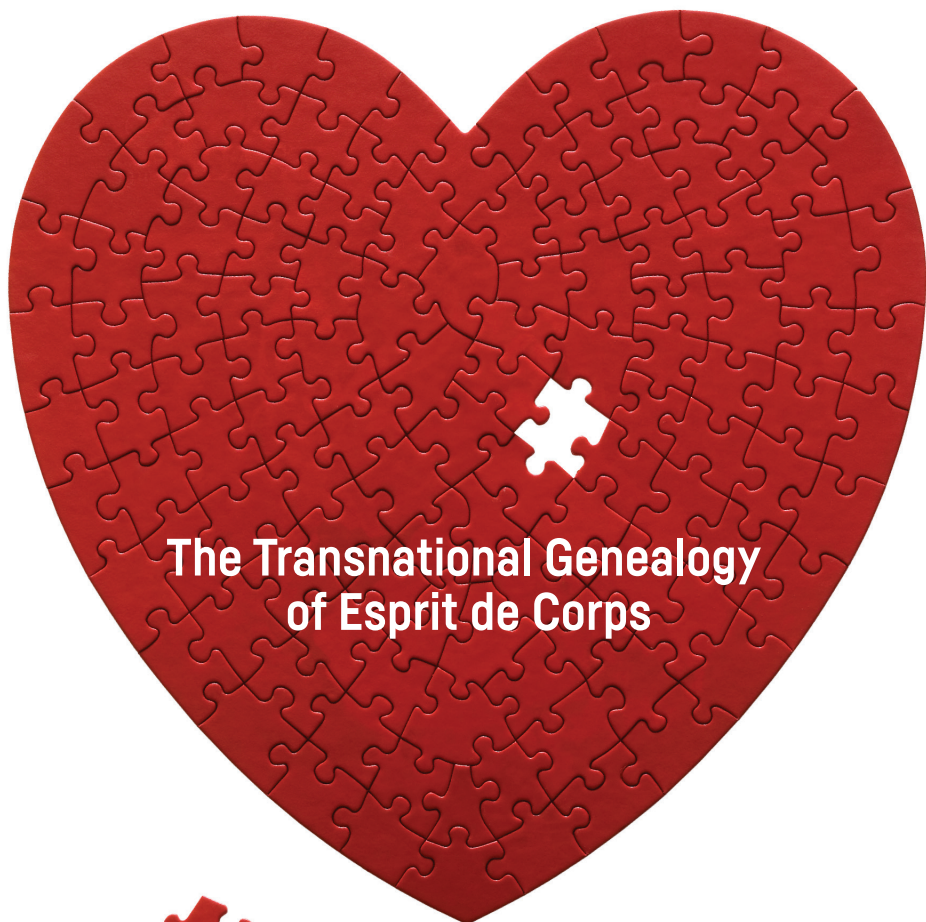


ENSEMBLANCE



Luis de Miranda

Ensemblance

A happy phrase is sometimes coined, so humanly expressive that barriers of language are swept aside and like music it becomes a universal sentiment. To the French we are indebted for such an expression, 'esprit de corps', which our English tongue has adopted and naturalized because it visualizes, as no idiom of our own does, the essence of co-operation [. . .] In proportion as 'esprit de corps' becomes a motivating force in men's lives do they transcend the narrow bounds of selfishness and become social beings, for it brings into action forces potent to lift men's thoughts from their own petty affairs to the contemplation of wider horizons.

John Scofield Rowe, 'Practical Philosophies: Esprit de Corps',
The Monroe Monitor, 9 August 1929

I do not care what methods a philosopher (or anybody else) may use so long as he has an interesting problem, and so long as he is sincerely trying to solve it. Among the many methods which he may use – always depending, of course, on the problem in hand – one method seems to me worth mentioning. It is a variant of the (at present unfashionable) historical method. It consists, simply, in trying to find out what other people have thought and said about the problem in hand: why they had to face it: how they formulated it: how they tried to solve it. This seems to me important because it is part of the general method of rational discussion.

Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*,
Preface to the First English Edition, 1959

Ensemblance
The Transnational Genealogy of
Esprit de Corps

Luis de Miranda

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Acknowledgements

I wish, first, to thank the French language for its suggestive beauty. For as long as I can remember, the word *esprit* has always fascinated me because of its numerous nuances, *mind* being only one possible translation. The body, *corps* in French, is all too often considered as the antonym of mind. To see *esprit* and *corps* united in a globally recognised phrase was intriguing enough for me to spend several years wondering why and how.

My research was facilitated by institutional and human goodwill. My gratitude goes first and foremost to two academic institutions. I was able to conduct this extensive research mostly thanks to generous funding from the University of Edinburgh. I then moved from Scotland to Sweden, where a postdoctoral position at Örebro University offered me the time I needed to finalise the typescript. Thanks to Örebro's funding, the introduction of the present book is accessible as an open resource in partnership with Edinburgh University Press.

Institutions are represented by human beings; at the University of Edinburgh, I felt inspired by the encouraging welcome of Professor Marion Schmid and by regular and piquant Socratic dialogue with Professor Peter Dayan. More recently and at a distance, Professor Robin Howells (University of London) was an attentive reader of these pages, frowning upon a few Gallicisms, though sparing the most obvious one. Professor James Livesey (University of Dundee) cast an encouraging critical eye on the final version of the manuscript. Parts of the introduction and the third chapter have inspired two articles I authored for the journal *Global Intellectual History*: I warmly thank its editor-in-chief Professor Richard Whatmore (University of St Andrews) for accepting these echoes, as well as for his comments on an earlier version of the work.

My research on *esprit de corps* was also, incidentally, a personal reflection on the merits and pitfalls of academic institutionalisation. A typical product of rebellious French individualism, I believed for a long time that institutions could lead to uncreative groupthink: if I was to become an original author – I thought in my twenties and thirties – I had to avoid any kind of affiliation, and so I did for many years of precarious, reckless, consuming but exhilarating independence. I changed my mind in my early forties partly because I felt robust enough to find a good balance between freedom and incorporation. I had written a few

unacademic essays and novels in French and I felt attracted by a new life and new thoughts expressed in a new language – this is the first book I have written directly in English. Because many universities around the world are threatened by the spirit of capitalist managerialism, it is never too late to join the transnational academic body in order to try and defend as far as possible the idealistic ethos of *knowledge for the sake of knowledge*.

I am grateful to Linda Ayres, supportive in many ways in the crucial early stages of this project, and to my young daughter Svea who was kind enough to remind me of how five little monkeys jumping on the bed can dangerously indulge in group entrainment. Learning to be a father during the first years of research that led to this book distracted me from the follies of excessive theoretical speculation.

Finally, my extended warm thanks go to commissioning editor Carol Macdonald at Edinburgh University Press, with whom I had a few inspiring chats around George Square when this book was but a possibility, and to Gerald Moore, Sam Coombes, Jean-Sébastien Hongre, Kirsty Woods, James Dale, Andrew Kirk and the numerous people – including the defunct authors quoted in the following pages – who have led to the slow and patient production of this monograph.

In what follows, the translations from French primary sources are almost always mine, and when not, the translators are gratefully cited – I also wish to thank Edinburgh University Press for allowing me to keep the original French quotations in the endnotes of each chapter for the benefit of francophone readers. Like the writing process leading to it, the genealogy of the notion of *esprit de corps* is a process of correspondences, variations, counter-interpretations, alliances, slippery metamorphoses, fears and dreams – a reflection, via one of the most influential Gallicisms in modern history, of our contemporary worries about identity, dependence and liberation.

Last but not least, and by anticipation, I thank the readers – *mes semblables*, *mes frères!* – for their patient engagement with the text.

Esprit de Corps: A Timeline

All quotations and citations below will be referenced, developed and contextualised in the following chapters.

- 1656–58 Pascal writes *Différence entre l'esprit de géométrie et l'esprit de finesse*.
- 1662 Louis XIV's historiographer René Bary publishes *L'esprit de cour*.
- 1721 Publication of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, in which the author mocks the *esprit du corps* of the Académie française.
- 1732 *Lettres de Nedim Coggia*, by Germain de Saint-Foix, praises the *esprit de corps* of the French musketeers.
- 1752 D'Alembert, in the *Encyclopédie*, criticises the anti-national *esprit du corps* of the Jesuits.
- 1755 Voltaire, in the *Encyclopédie*, distinguishes *esprit de corps* from its supposedly worse version, *esprit de parti*. In the same volume, Diderot, more critical, suggests that the Encyclopaedists must avoid catching the *esprit de corps* by remaining objective.
- 1755 Lord Chesterfield, a friend of Voltaire, introduces 'esprit de corps' into the English language to describe the natural 'biased conduct' and 'inflamed zeal' in closed societies, a fatal aspect of 'human nature'.
- 1762 Rousseau explains in *L'Emile*: 'It is not only in the military that one acquires the *esprit de corps*, and its effects are not always good.'
- 1762 The formerly autonomous management of the French military corps, previously known for their respective *esprit du corps*, is centralised by the royal administration.
- 1764 The Jesuits are banned from France, after a long public campaign in which their *esprit de corps* was often attacked.
- 1765 The Parlement of Metz addresses a remonstrance to the King of France calling for a grand national *esprit de corps*, also called *l'esprit de patriotisme*.
- 1776 In the *Wealth of Nations*, the Scottish philosopher and economist Adam Smith criticises the 'corporation spirit', leading 'every man to consent that his neighbour may neglect his duty, provided he himself is allowed to neglect his own'.

- 1776 The French minister Turgot attempts to eradicate the *corporations* and their esprit de corps in the name of economic laissez-faire.
- 1779 In Calcutta, a local petition is signed by British inhabitants against the 'esprit de corps of the Professors of Law'.
- 1782 The Parisian author Louis-Sébastien Mercier predicts that the individualistic dissolution of esprit de corps in labour guilds might lead to a revolution.
- 1787 Mirabeau criticises 'the esprit de corps of the orders of the state that support despotism'.
- 1787 In America, the convention led by George Washington and the Founding Fathers debates the pros and cons of esprit de corps.
- 1789 Several French revolutionaries, one of whom is the Abbé Sieyès, call for a national esprit de corps to achieve the 'adunation' of France, against particular and local forms of esprit de corps.
- 1789 In the UK, Jeremy Bentham defines esprit de corps as 'professional zeal'.
- 1791 In Revolutionary France, the Le Chapelier law criminalises professional esprit de corps and proclaims that free trade and free working are the new economic standard: 'There are no longer *corporations* in the state, there is only the particular interest of each individual and then the general interest.'
- 1793 The French minister of war Jean-Baptiste Bouchotte strives to 'annihilate the esprit de corps' in military regiments and replace it with a unified army of citizens.
- 1793 In his Königsberg Lectures, Immanuel Kant violently criticises 'separatists and sectarians of every kind' and their immoral esprit de corps.
- 1793 A democratic reform to reduce the esprit de corps in British politics, inspired by the French Revolution, is officially discussed in the House of Commons.
- 1800 Napoleon and his minister of foreign affairs Talleyrand work on the organisation of a national programme of administrative esprit de corps, founded on several *grands corps d'État*.
- 1803 In France, the idea of esprit de corps is popular anew among the elites. Reversing the claims of the Enlightenment, Chateaubriand writes: 'Esprit de corps, which can be bad in the whole, is always good in the part.'
- 1803 US President Thomas Jefferson calls for less esprit de corps in the leadership of banks, via a frequent rotation of directors.
- 1805 Napoleon calls *corps enseignant* the national corporation of teachers and declares that the former esprit de corps of the Jesuits is a model to be revived in education: 'If we do not learn from childhood whether to be republican or monarchical, Catholic or irreligious, etc., the State will not form a nation.'
- 1808 The utopianist Charles Fourier theorises that 'esprit de corps is enough to eradicate the most shocking vices of the civilized populace'.

- 1809 'Esprit de corps' enters the British *Dictionary of Quotations in Most Frequent Use*.
- 1810 Napoleon's *Code pénal* forbids any association of more than twenty people without authorisation from the government.
- 1811 In Scotland, Walter Scott laments the 'cold and pettifogging esprit de corps' that governs most societies.
- 1815 Echoing a general sentiment, the poet and politician François-Auguste de Frénilly criticises the French Revolution for favouring the rise of individualism via its destruction of esprit de corps. In doing so he coins the term 'individuellism'.
- 1820 The German philosopher G. W. F Hegel praises the 'rectitude and esprit de corps of the universal man', servitor of the state.
- 1821 In England, Lord Byron wonders in a letter if one should write *esprit du corps* or *esprit de corps*.
- 1828 The essayist and politician Louis de Bonald writes a popular eulogy of esprit de corps: 'The esprit de corps is the general spirit of the whole body [. . .] The esprit de corps unites and strengthens, and one can say that a body without esprit de corps is a body without a soul.'
- 1833 Labour strikes in France. Some workers demand the right to associate and organise themselves in *syndicats*.
- 1836 The political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville explains to John Stuart Mill and his Westminster friends that French aristocrats lost their esprit de corps in the seventeenth century with Louis XIV, which led to the Revolution. In *Democracy in America*, he laments that democracies hinder both our capacity for esprit de corps and for individuation, which for him are codependent.
- 1850 In the UK, an investigation into the University of Oxford commissioned by Queen Victoria concludes that the lack of esprit de corps in top universities is highly damaging.
- 1863 William de Slane translates Ibn Khaldun's Arabic notion of *asabiyah* into French as *esprit de corps*.
- 1883 The writer Emile Zola defines esprit de corps as an 'instinct'.
- 1884 Labour unions (*syndicats*) become legal in France. In this, according to the politician Hubert Lagardelle, 'the corps of workers is recognised by the legislator as having a personal existence'.
- 1893 Emile Durkheim writes that 'the spirit of ensemble' and the related esprit de corps is a prophylactic form of professional solidarity.
- 1898 In his influential *J'accuse*, Emile Zola condemns the 'foolish' esprit de corps of the French army, which led to the Dreyfus affair.
- 1899 In the USA, James Mark Baldwin, professor at Princeton University, writes that 'national spirit is a form of natural esprit de corps'.
- 1899 The sociologist Gabriel Tarde distinguishes seven useful scales of esprit de corps, from the small family sphere to the large supranational sphere. The Nietzschean philosopher Georges Palante retorts that esprit de corps is but one form of 'social insincerity'.

- 1901 US President Benjamin Harrison celebrates the ‘esprit de corps of the American soldier’.
- 1904 Peter Traub, a US captain of the cavalry, compares esprit de corps to a divine ‘vital force’.
- 1907 The American activist Jane Addams calls for more esprit de corps in factories, defined as a ‘playful and triumphant buoyancy’.
- 1913 Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* is translated into English, celebrating ‘the chronic and despotic esprit de corps and fundamental instinct of a higher dominant race’.
- 1914 In *Training Soldiers for War*, British officer John Fuller writes: ‘What race pride is to the Empire, so should esprit de corps be to the regiment.’
- 1917 The entrepreneur Henri Fayol writes that the legal ‘union of the employees’ is an important principle of management. A mistranslation of Fayol’s principle as ‘esprit de corps’, suppressing the trade union aspect, would become highly popular in English business studies.
- 1920 W. B. Barber, a British military officer, records a ‘cult of esprit de corps’ during the First World War. He adds that in times of peace ‘*esprit de corps* is a very good antidote to Bolshevism’.
- 1921 Publication in the USA of *The Management of Men: A Handbook on the Systematic Development of Morale and the Control of Human Behavior*. In it the phrase ‘esprit de corps’ appears 43 times, defined as ‘a mental state making for cohesion of an organization, as necessary to commercial success as it is to military efficiency’.
- 1922 Nobel Prize laureate Anatole France explains that ‘esprit de corps is the intelligence of those who have none’.
- 1929 A handbook of rhetoric published in Shanghai defines esprit de corps as the ‘spirit of the collective body’.
- 1929 The American businessman John Rowe calls esprit de corps a ‘happy phrase’ and a ‘universal sentiment’, ‘the essence of co-operation’.
- 1930 In his autobiography, Winston Churchill equates esprit de corps with the ethics and ‘honourable behaviour’ he learned when he was young.
- 1931 In *Last and First Men*, British science-fiction writer and Freud reader Olaf Stapledon speculates about the human ‘very special loyalty toward the whole group, a peculiar sexually toned esprit de corps unparalleled in other species’.
- 1932 The philosopher Henri Bergson compares esprit de corps to a ‘feeling of honour’ and a civilisational ‘fabulation’ creative of a ‘virtual instinct’.
- 1934 The future war hero and French president Charles de Gaulle explains how the military can foster a well-organised local and national esprit de corps.
- 1942 The US national Office of Civilian Defense publishes *The Control System of the Citizens’ Defense Corps*, a manual to foster ‘esprit de corps among citizens’, defined as ‘instantaneous and unquestioned obedience’.

- 1943 The USA army advertises in magazines to find new recruits: 'In the army they call it esprit de corps – the stuff that builds champion teams and victorious armies in which each man is doing the job he does best.'
- 1949 The analytic philosopher Gilbert Ryle, in *The Concept of Mind*, insists that esprit de corps is an unreal 'ghost in the machine': 'I do not see whose role it is to exercise *esprit de corps*.'
- 1950 Rex D. Hopper, head of sociology at Brooklyn College, writes in the journal *Social Forces* that 'esprit de corps is a means of social control'.
- 1956 In the USA, the university field of Small-Group Studies publishes quantitative measures of esprit de corps.
- 1956 The Pentagon hires Rex D. Hopper, the academic specialist of 'esprit de corps as social control', to direct a counter-insurgency programme that would interfere in South American politics in the 1960s under the name of 'Project Camelot'.
- 1957 The American entrepreneur Conrad Hilton publishes his autobiography, in which he explains that the success of his chain of hotels is based on the systematic application of the techniques of esprit de corps he learned during the First World War.
- 1958 De Gaulle declares in a public speech: 'We are at the age of effectiveness, efficiency. We are at the time of ensembles.'
- 1961 In *Life* magazine, the author and diplomat Romain Gary compares esprit de corps to a collective 'mystique of self-adoration'.
- 1971 Irving L. Janis publishes an article that coins the term 'groupthink', defined as a collective loss of critical thinking, a perversion of 'amiability and esprit de corps' likely 'to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions directed against outgroups'.
- 1980 The philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari publish a laudatory reappraisal of 'nomadic esprit de corps' in *Mille plateaux*, which they associate with Ibn Khaldun's *asabiyyah*.
- 1989 The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defines esprit de corps as a 'symbolic violence' and compares it to a 'magical possession'.
- 1993 The *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* publishes a paper in which esprit de corps, abbreviated as 'e', is a mathematical variable within a complex equation measuring 'organizational effectiveness'.
- 2002 US President George W. Bush creates the US Freedom Corps initiative to enable civilians to find ways to serve 'their community, their country, or the world'. Citizen Corps is a component of the Freedom Corps that 'creates opportunities for individuals to volunteer and respond to emergencies'.
- 2002 In Canada, Gilles Barbot founds the Groupe Esprit de Corps, a business consulting and team-building corporation.
- 2011 The French nationalist politician Marine Le Pen declares in a public speech: 'I solemnly call for the esprit de corps, the innate sense of duty

and of sacrifice manifested by those who have incorporated the love of the fatherland.'

- 2013 The *Harvard Business Review* recommends that corporations should develop esprit de corps as military-inspired camaraderie-in-arms 'to push for hard work'.
- 2015 A review in the *Wall Street Journal* praises the 'girl power esprit de corps' of the movie *Pitch Perfect*.
- 2015 The future American president Donald Trump declares in a press conference that the USA needs 'spirit, esprit de corps'.
- 2016 David Davis, the future British Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, writes that too much immigration hinders the 'national esprit de corps'.
- 2018 President Donald Trump, in a public speech at the White House, declares: 'There's tremendous spirit in our country right now [. . .] Esprit de corps . . .'

Introduction: A Thousand Platoons – The Enduring Importance of Esprit de Corps

'You need spirit, esprit de corps', presidential candidate Donald Trump responded evasively at a news conference in 2015 when asked about his 'plan to improve race relations' in the USA.¹ In 2018, in a public speech at the White House given during a celebration of the Made in America label, the now President Trump declared:

Every time a new factory opens, every time jobs are returned to our shores, every time we buy a product made by our own American neighbors, we are renewing the bonds of love and loyalty that link us all together as Americans. There's tremendous spirit in our country right now, sometimes you don't see it but there is. And you are producers, you produce like nobody else, and the spirit is incredible. Esprit de corps!²

Why does the US president repetitively insist on this exotic French phrase? The answer is far from superficial, as we will discover by embarking on an eye-opening, three-centuries-long journey. Donald Trump is by no means the first person to invoke the cult of esprit de corps. Since the eighteenth century, sophisticated minds have pondered it: Montesquieu, d'Alembert, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, the Founding Fathers, Sieyès, Mirabeau, Hegel, Tocqueville, Durkheim, Bergson, Churchill, Orwell, Bourdieu, Deleuze and many others.

As we will see, incantations about esprit de corps are never innocent. The signifier 'esprit de corps' is today a leitmotif of meta-military capitalism and managerial discourse, designating the zeal, collective *élan* and quasi-alchemical loyalty that entrepreneurs are looking for among their employees. The US president might be aware that, according to a Gallup study, 'disengagement in American organizations accounts for more than \$450 billion in lost productivity annually', with less than a third of employees 'actively engaged' in their work.³ In 2012, US companies spent \$46 billion on team-building firms, and some observers are speaking of an 'economy of esprit de corps': 'Esprit de corps is a concept powerful enough to make soldiers go into battle knowing their odds of survival are slim: think how powerful it can be if harnessed in your marketing organization!⁴

But Americans have forgotten that team spirit is only one meaning of esprit

de corps among many others, including negative ones. A strong attachment and dedication among the members of a community of practice or a body politic, esprit de corps can be perceived as a beneficial cohesion or a detrimental form of groupthink. As a polemical signifier, the phrase has played a significant role in cultural, political and economic history since the 1700s. It was influential and was debated during the European secularisation of education in the eighteenth century. The *Philosophes* considered esprit de corps to be the fierce enemy of a republic. The Gallicism was uttered passionately in parliamentary debates during the French Revolution. It was an *idée-force* in the process of the United States achieving independence. It became one of the pillar values of the Bonapartist Empire. It was subsequently praised by British colonialists and French sociologists, and emphasised during the world wars. Esprit de corps was instrumental during the rise of administrative nation-states and the triumph of American capitalism. The phrase is today a keyword in the revival of nationalist and protectionist discourses.

Reflecting on the importance of ethics, Winston Churchill wrote in his autobiography that he thought it must mean 'esprit de corps, honourable behaviour, patriotism, and the like'.⁵ Over the last three centuries the phrase has been so influential that one may wonder: is esprit de corps the very engine of history?

Team Spirits: Twenty-First Century Uses of Esprit de Corps

The twenty-first-century ubiquity in English of the originally French phrase *esprit de corps* is the point of departure of this book, a source of the kind of wonder that has long been said to be the impetus of thought.⁶ Indeed, another cause for surprise is the combination in this enduring international phrase of two often opposed and semantically rich words, mind and body. Equally intriguing is the difference in denotation between French and English uses of esprit de corps, the former often pejorative, the latter often laudatory. This in itself would justify a transnational investigation.

The French uses of esprit de corps are often sociopolitical and suggest a form of cognitive uniformity generated by a more or less conscious adherence to a collective body. This idea of the automation – or at least control – by a group of our thoughts, behaviour and emotions is a well-known modern preoccupation and a challenging question for our global, digital and neuro-technological epoch.⁷ Because esprit de corps is a global idea that expresses both our desire for belonging and our fear of being alienated, it is an intriguing metonymy for the question of identity. Moreover, the fact that its negative connotations are often buried under a shiny discourse of team spirit and corporate or national camaraderie is certainly a matter for inquiry. The *élan* of feeling *all for one and one for all* seems sometimes to count for more than any critical understanding about the *one* at stake. Mass-produced individualism and egotism often transform the idea of team spirit into a desirable but ephemeral performance. To reflect on esprit de corps is to consider how contradictory we might be when caught between these two stools: our belonging and our self-importance.

But what exactly is *esprit de corps*? This is a question that we should refrain from answering dogmatically before carefully analysing the different and agonistic uses of the term in recent centuries. *Esprit de corps* is an evolving idea, a web of beliefs in process. The variety and disparity of modern uses of the phrase not only suggest that a prudent approach to a definition is well advised, but also that it would be foolish to try and add yet another definition. In this case as in many others, the game of definitions is not what ultimately matters, but what the historical and intellectual evolution of that game allows us to understand or speculate about our collective and individual destinies. Yet for such speculation to be sound, we do need to look very carefully at the empirical manifestations of an invariant spine made of 13 bones, *e-s-p-r-i-t-d-e-c-o-r-p-s*.

Between 2014 and 2017, I experimented with an 'Esprit de Corps Pointer', which recorded day by day a few hundred online contemporary occurrences of 'esprit de corps' in diverse contexts.⁸ This was a sort of taxonomy, for which my main criteria of selection were any phrase containing explicitly the signifier 'esprit de corps', the variety of intended meanings, the self-definitional quality of the occurrence in its context and importance of the medium by readership audience. This experiment demonstrated that 'esprit de corps' is a thriving expression in several discourses, mostly in English-language contexts. Surveying online uses of 'esprit de corps' during those three years made it easier to sense that the phrase is nowadays much more used in English than in any other language, including French. The alert tool I used might be slightly biased towards more visited online pages,⁹ but it did not exclude less expected sources, for example Indian journals, remote blogs, or niche French-language publications in Africa.

The kind of team spirit suggested in English by the phrase *esprit de corps* is one that can supposedly be reproduced, engineered or standardised, while in French it has durably meant either a distorted partisanship or the particular style of a particular group, indeed something unique and inimitable. The biography of *esprit de corps* in the present book tells the story of the slow vanishing of the French connotation, even in France, and the progressive triumph of a reductive, more customary and reproducible team-spirit connotation. Is it a complete triumph? I don't believe so: other meanings were produced across the centuries which remain somewhat active or dormant until a potential revival, related for example to the idea of collective intelligence or a hive mind. A mystique of *esprit de corps* is in fact still alive: it is a somewhat alchemical ideal, as argued by Deleuze and Guattari in our penultimate chapter.

Before we dive into the past, let's take a closer look at the twenty-first century. To manifest the contemporary diversity of uses of *esprit de corps*, I organised the online Pointer with a menu of categories, such as Nationalism, Religion, Politics, Economics, Military, etc. For example, under the category Nationalism, we find that in April 2016 *The Wall Street Journal* published a reader's opinion piece, 'Obama May Offend on Brexit, but He's Right': the article asserted that 'the Stateless, faceless EU is a weak, ineffectual opponent, lacking the courage and *esprit de corps* that only a national entity and strong, elected leadership can provide'.¹⁰ On this idea of a national *esprit de corps*, we must also quote David

Davis, who, a few months before he was chosen to be the British Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, wrote:

We are proud to be a famously tolerant country. When people arrive in the UK the general response is one of welcome, certainly where those arrivals embrace our national values of freedom under the law and mutual tolerance. Newcomers can be successfully absorbed, but it does take time to build this national 'esprit de corps'. The scale of immigration means that integration doesn't happen. Or it doesn't happen fast enough. And without it, community cohesion suffers. And that feeds the double headed monster of extremism and intolerance.¹¹

This casual association of esprit de corps with national spirit was also made in 2011 by the French Front National leader Marine Le Pen: 'I solemnly call for the esprit de corps, the innate sense of duty and of sacrifice manifested by those who have incorporated the love of the fatherland.'¹² Davis's and Le Pen's nationalist appeals demonstrate blatantly why a thorough transnational genealogy of esprit de corps is needed today. We may ask, without being accused of anti-populism, how many of their followers are aware that the association of the quality of esprit de corps with a nation-state is a denotation that was introduced into political discourse by French philosophers and politicians in the second half of the eighteenth century. How and why this happened, and with what consequences, is one important thread of the present book.

National esprit de corps is but one active meaning of the phrase, among many. Under the category Education of our online Pointer, for example, we are directed to an article published by *Times Higher Education*, in which Craig Brandist, Professor of Cultural Theory and Intellectual History at the University of Sheffield, discussed what he called the current 'risk of Soviet-style managerialism in UK universities':

Something resembling a game of blind man's bluff that would have been recognisable to Soviet workers [. . .] now takes place on a daily basis. Senior management intervenes to ensure that key targets are met [. . .] Members of staff respond by ingratiating themselves with their superiors (*blat*), and cover for each other in order to defend themselves from scrutiny (*krugovaia porukha: esprit de corps*).¹³

At least three brief observations can be made here. First, proof that the term 'esprit de corps' is supposed to be known by at least literate English readers is indicated by the choice of translation from Russian into English solely via the French loan phrase. Secondly, the equation between esprit de corps and corporatism or professional bias (members or workers covering for each other) also became prominent in the second half of eighteenth-century France, as we will see in our first two chapters. Thirdly, this particular usage was well known in British and American English in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,

but became quite rare in the twentieth century, where, once again, *esprit de corps* was dominantly referred to as a form of beneficial group cohesion that employees *should* build, a quality associated with efficiency and productivity. This evolution, and its evolutive contrast with more pejorative French-language meanings, is also examined in depth in the present book.

Some francophone uses can be less pejorative. One interesting contemporary example comes from the newspaper *La Vérité* [Truth], published in the Republic of Madagascar, in which a recent editorial labelled 'Esprit de Groupe' explained that in our global world, 'the power of money slowly undermines the *esprit de corps*'.¹⁴ In this text originally published in one of France's former African colonies, *esprit de corps* was equated with social solidarity and opposed to both individualism and capitalism.

Our introductory survey of the contemporary polysemy of our phrase leads us to discover that in 2016 a *New York Times* article described Morgan Stanley, a global financial company, as 'a firm long unified by a special *esprit de corps*'.¹⁵ The once pleonastic formula 'special *esprit de corps*' confirms that English users are not necessarily aware that the early French origin of the expression, *esprit du corps* (rather than *de*), implied that the *esprit* of a *corps* was a phenomenon that pertained specifically to a given group, like a collective style or manner. Most *corps*, societies or institutions, as we will analyse, were thought by some authors, chief among them the encyclopaedist Jean le Rond d'Alembert, to possess their own unique (good or bad) character: 'Les sociétés ont [. . .] un caractère particulier, qu'on appelle *esprit du corps*'.¹⁶ In a recent English academic translation of the *Encyclopédie*, this is translated by replacing the preposition *du* with the more idiomatic *de*: 'Societies [. . .] have a special quality, sometimes referred to as *esprit de corps*'.¹⁷ Again, this is not superficial and the devil is in the detail: the slip between the two prepositions, *du* and *de*, distinguishes in French a difference between specificity and generality. Nevertheless, the French philosophers, and in particular d'Alembert, are also responsible for the connotations of automation and conformism – as opposed to style and originality – that *esprit de corps* might convey. And, conversely, the current team-spirit anglophone uses of the phrase do not always completely obliterate the idea of a special group identity. *Esprit de corps* is perhaps what the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss called a 'floating signifier',¹⁸ a symbol apt to be charged with almost infinite intentions. This creative polysemy might be explained in part by the fact that the phrase itself combines two opposite or dialectical words, the primary dichotomy between mind and body, spirit and matter. And in English, the baroque strangeness of the Gallicism imbues it with a sense of vague and exquisite ancestral power.

Is there a reason for the notional evolution, in the last three centuries, from *esprit du corps* as designating the specific character of a given group, each well-organised society nurturing a different personality, to a notion of *esprit de corps* as a generic quality of strong body cohesion? In English, 'esprit de corps' is still often used to designate a standard of collective efficiency. A well-driven group, in capitalist discourse, is deemed capable of *creating* *esprit de corps* for itself, usually with the help of a leader: enthusiastic cohesion, effective cooperation, rather

than distinct character or style; emphasis on a nearly mechanical idea of *corps* rather than on the complex aspects of *esprit*. *Esprit de corps* is often mentioned with approval in English, as if it were a familiar alchemy, the reified universal quality of goal-oriented solidarity, a general abstract quality of group dynamics that would apply to any human ensemble. A recent *Fortune* article claimed to reveal ‘the secret to how the best employers can inspire workers’: by ‘put[ting] real work into sustaining environments where people can count on candor, respect and the *esprit de corps* necessary for the open, fruitful exchange of ideas’.¹⁹ This corporate optimism creates a version of *esprit de corps* that is quite at odds with what the notion meant in the eighteenth century: for the *Philosophes*, *esprit de corps* was an antonym of open-mindedness.

Esprit de corps can be used as an unquestioned marketing buzzword within the team-building industry. Even nation-states experience managerial quandaries. In 2016, an article in the *Telegraph* explained what the British Secretary of State for International Trade should do as a team builder:

There are two patterns we could follow. The European Commission’s Directorate General for Trade has staff who expect to spend their career there. They have incredible expertise and *esprit de corps*. In contrast, the Office of the US Trade Representative has a smaller permanent cadre, with more movements between the rest of government and the private sector. We should try for the best of both. We will need core expertise, but should use plenty of outsiders to keep up connections with the world of business.²⁰

This glissando from *corps* to *core* is striking but, as we will see, not unprecedented. The idea of the *esprit de corps* of a given group as being rich in discipline and expertise, but potentially poor in connections with – and openness to – the outside world and its state of perpetual change, is a recurrent pattern in the biography of the notion. The simple question behind it – *is esprit de corps good or bad?* – was central to the rhetorical debates that the phrase engendered across fields and centuries. Sometimes strongly defended, sometimes considered abominable, sometimes seen as a Janus-faced ambivalent phenomenon, *esprit de corps* could be categorised as an ‘essentially contested concept’,²¹ on which more below.

The present book will also demonstrate that *esprit de corps* has an original historical locus in military discourse, although the idea of a single or prototypical origin for a complex notion would be fallacious, and an intellectual genealogy should always speak of origins with precaution, as famously advised by Foucault.²² The venerable martial branch of the phrase is still producing leaves. Recently, for example, a major Canadian newspaper quoted Canada’s defence minister on the advantages of insignias: ‘The restoration of these historical features will encourage the *esprit de corps* of our soldiers.’²³ A *corps* here is a military unit of soldiers. *All for one and one for all*: we will analyse how the adventures of *esprit de corps* are partly rooted in the military organisation of the *Ancien Régime*, although the early modern influence of a more religious or even alchemical discourse is not to be ignored.

In the context of the military, *esprit de corps* is often equated with morale. In the British edition of the *Huffington Post*, a junior doctor compared the National Health Service to a crumbling army:

In military circles, 'morale', or a unit's '*esprit de corps*', is often defined more precisely as the capacity of a group's members to maintain their belief in an institution or goal, particularly in the face of opposition or hardship. If a unit's morale is depleted, they are at risk of cracking and surrendering. An American General by the rather magnificent name of Knickerbocker gave a stirring definition of '*morale*' during the Second World War. Morale was high, he said, 'when a soldier thinks his army is the best in the world, his regiment the best in the army, his company the best in the regiment, his squad the best in the company, and that he himself is the best blankety-blank soldier man in the outfit.'²⁴

Here the connotation of *esprit de corps* as corporatism meets the military meaning to highlight the idea, not only of survival and integrity in the face of hardship, but also pride: *esprit de corps* as a supercilious attachment to a collective, to a task that develops individual self-importance. This is related to what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called an extended 'love of self in others, and in the entire group, favoured by the prolonged gathering of fellows'.²⁵ Is *esprit de corps* about love or *agape* among insiders? If so, it might also be said that hate or indifference for outsiders is never too far away.

Brotherhood or camaraderie are among the frequent quasi-synonyms of *esprit de corps* in corporate metaphors, but also in the discourse of sport. For instance, *The Times* described the Portuguese football team in the following terms: 'It was a display of camaraderie, the *esprit de corps* that had made them champions of Europe – a triumph of the collective over the individual.'²⁶ In the USA, a Colorado newspaper quotes John Wooden, a celebrated basketball player and coach:

The coach sums up team spirit like this: 'A genuine consideration for others. An eagerness to sacrifice personal interests of glory for the welfare of all.' Coach Wooden preferred the use of the word 'eagerness' in place of 'willingness.' He felt that willingness conveyed a sense of obligation and duty, a sense that if it had to be done it would be done. To him, eagerness conveyed a high sense of *esprit de corps*, a spirit of this is how we do it, not how we must do it. It was more cultural and ingrained in the individual.'²⁷

How can a spiritual quality be at the same time more cultural and more ingrained in the individual? This conundrum, to which Tocqueville proposed a solution that we detail in Chapter 5, explains why the modern debate about *esprit de corps* mattered for many intellectuals and still matters at a time of tension between individualism and communitarianism. Nuances between eagerness and willingness, duty and drive might seem abstract, but they are not irrelevant historically and politically.

Esprit de corps is clearly a remarkably enduring Gallicism and transnational idea, occasionally read or heard in a few other languages, such as for example Spanish, but dominantly used in the new lingua franca of globalisation. I will not insist further in this introduction on contemporary examples, since the reader can browse through my online Esprit de Corps Pointer. Despite a tendency to reduce the meaning of the phrase to team spirit and camaraderie, the Pointer demonstrates that the signifier is still active within a rich semantic field of meanings: 'cooperation', 'joint ownership of projects in the workplace', 'togetherness in combat', 'common consciousness', 'common sense of purpose', 'sport's greatest appeal', 'collective genius', 'patriotism', 'anti-cronyism', 'community spirit', 'nepotism', 'shared rituals', 'uniformity', 'commitment to the in-group identity', 'friendship at work', 'goodwill', 'high level of integration', 'joint-decision making', 'insiders' connection', 'commitment to service', 'platoon-like devotion to a cause', 'pillow-fight spirit', 'tradition', 'common trust', 'warrior spirit', 'employees' long-term focus', 'unquantifiable team cohesion', 'sense of inclusion and belonging', 'solidarity', 'obedience', 'girl power', 'corporate culture', 'looking out for one another', 'identification with a collective', 'devotion', 'gratitude to others' and 'being part of something bigger than the self'. It is probable that there is no such thing as a core universal and well-defined ahistorical concept designated by 'esprit de corps', upon which everyone would agree. If there were, it could lead to the formulation of speculative definitions that are abundant in philosophical literature on collective intentionality, social ontology or group agency.

To historicise notions such as esprit de corps is imperative in order to avoid the pitfalls of essentialism regarding the nature of collective consciousness. As I will explain in more detail in what follows, I did not feel that by taking a so-called analytic philosophical perspective on collective intelligence I could contribute with anything less partial or disembodied than the average substance realism. My method is not purely analytical in the sense that I am not trying to isolate a fixed law, privileged definition or universal model of esprit de corps. My method is not purely dialectical in the sense that it would isolate one systematic, historical narrative in which contradictory meanings would be sublated both rationally and agonistically towards the realisation of a higher version of esprit de corps. My perspective was inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's repetitive evocation of esprit de corps in *Mille plateaux*,²⁸ until now understudied. Complex concepts are not produced in a vacuum of mechanical truth but emerge and evolve from a creative multiplicity of virtual and actual experiences, in which a totalising unification is but an asymptotic horizon. My approach to intellectual history could be called 'hyperdialectical'²⁹ or 'crealectical'³⁰ in the sense that, as I will show empirically, it embraces both the analytical care in the distinction of significant parts to manifest a whole, and the dialectical perspective in which negations are moments in a dynamic and processual becoming, to show eventually that a creative overflow cannot be avoided in the unfolding and understanding of social phenomena. Some signifiers, such as esprit de corps, function as a portal or point of projection between virtual and experiential multiplicities or parallel worlds. Here esprit de

corps is not only an object of study, but also a metonymy that evokes processes of emergence and embodiment in which spirit, structure and flesh are constantly changing places.

Knowledge Expansion: Academic Literature on Esprit de Corps

You are reading the first comprehensive intellectual history of esprit de corps. The literature on the idea has until now been scarce, fragmentary and insufficiently aware of the cultural importance of the phrase. In 2015, Cambridge University Press published a volume on the intellectual history of the notion of 'general will' under the title *The General Will: The Evolution of a Concept*.³¹ Although several uses of the notion of esprit de corps pertain to the same semantic field as the idea of general will, the phrase 'esprit de corps' does not appear once in that book. This is not exceptional: esprit de corps is a polemical phrase that has been ignored or neglected as an object of neutral study.

In the chapters that follow I will try to avoid falling into the usual trap of taking sides: is esprit de corps good or bad? Is it necessary or avoidable? Any answer involving human matters is a contextual decision. The present systematic study is a contribution to knowledge and informed decisions. It will also throw light on current debates on agonistic pluralism.³² According to Deleuze and Guattari, autonomous groups need to foster their own esprit de corps following an ancestral and alchemical collective practice, in order to become independent and territorialise their values and ethos.³³ One way of looking at the history of modernity is to observe that the professional spirit of competitiveness has been, over the last three hundred years, *downsized* from groups to individuals, each person becoming potentially the opponent of everyone else on a global capitalist battlefield in which self-development is the last utopia. In the meantime, some forms of communal, corporate, collective personality, group solidarity, labour or craft communities were weakened or perceived as weakened. Even for those who consider that organised groups can create some peace and security, at least internally, the modern narrative of emancipation of the individual from the tyranny of groups is still interpreted as beneficial, a liberation from discipline as coercion, cognitive subjugation and groupthink. The idea of discipline has not played positively over the last, Foucault-inspired academic decades. Historically and psychologically, intellectuals tend to be individualists at heart even when preoccupied with solidarity. The present book will help nuance and re-evaluate the idea of discipline as a liberating collective device. We will see how modernity has been construed as a deep and multifarious debate on group belonging in the name of various discourses (rational individualism, nationalism, socialism, Nietzscheanism, sociologism, capitalism, communism, communitarianism, individualism, etc.).

Despite a few mentions and interesting sketches here and there, political theorists, historians, philosophers and sociologists have never undertaken a comprehensive study of the various aspects of esprit de corps. The few significant contributions in the last decades were all written in French and I will examine

them in detail: first, Bourdieu's *La Noblesse d'État*, in which he deals with a particular aspect of educational esprit de corps; secondly, Deleuze and Guattari's surprising political eulogy of esprit de corps; thirdly, an article published in 2005 by a French economist that I will save for the conclusion;³⁴ and last but not least, *Esprit de corps, démocratie et espace public*, the proceedings of a colloquium on esprit de corps organised in 2003 at the Sorbonne.³⁵ The explicit goal of the latter, a transdisciplinary collection of papers, was to 'shed light on the manifestations, ambiguities and consequences of esprit de corps and its use in social groups'.³⁶ This is the only existing book dedicated to various valences of the notion of esprit de corps, but it remains Franco-French, oblivious of the transnational nature of the phrase. Moreover, it is an interesting but disorganised collection of disparate views which are often sociological, psychological or speculative, but rarely historicised.

The editors start by quoting Émile Durkheim on what is implicitly presented as a definition of the positive outcomes of esprit de corps, taken from the preface of the second edition of *De la division du travail social*:

What we see above all in the professional group is a moral power capable of containing individual egoisms, of maintaining in the workers' hearts a stronger feeling of their common solidarity, of preventing the law of the strongest from applying too brutally to industrial and commercial relations [. . .] When individuals with common interests form an association, it is not only to defend these interests, it is indeed to associate, to no longer feel lost in the midst of adversaries, to feel the pleasure of communion, to form a unity out of many, that is to say, ultimately, to lead together the same moral existence.³⁷

This optimistic conception was essential to Durkheim, as we will examine in Chapter 5. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the French sociologist, partly inspired by his studies on Catholic groups, thought of esprit de corps as a form of solidarity that protected the workers from the violence of economic laissez-faire. For Durkheim, esprit de corps was not only a defensive strategy against the cold spirit of bookkeeping, it was about world-forming and world-keeping, an element of social creation, the ingredient of an industrious and healthy life in a community of practice, an organic form of belonging opposed to distressed and unhealthy isolation.

It is rare to read in French a definition of esprit de corps that does not mention cons along with pros, and the 2003 Sorbonne colloquium was not an exception. Favourable or neutral definitions were less numerous than critical ones: 'The esprit de corps is first of all a nucleus of collective beliefs and repetitive stereotypes that constitute a fund of doctrine and ideals common to members of the same body.'³⁸ The relation between the body politic and esprit de corps is problematic, because the latter can conflict with the ideals of equality and liberty.³⁹ This rhetoric, as we will see, was typical of French revolutionary language in 1789, a year when the signifier *esprit de corps* reached a peak in print. Since then, in France, esprit de corps has sometimes been perceived as creating stable

pockets of social protection, even favouring the intersubjective individuation of each member, a cohesive common life that is 'necessary to bring man to surpass himself'.⁴⁰ But more often than not, Durkheimian optimism is tempered with a Weberian suspicion of the cult of leaders in iron-caged groups, and the fact that self-transcendence or self-improvement can turn into a de-personifying and intolerant fusion with the groupthink: 'The esprit de corps can lead to mistakes, be the source of excluding behaviour inspired by compliance.'⁴¹

In the introduction to *Esprit de corps*, the political theorist Lucien Sfez explains that esprit de corps is 'power in the body', an inner 'code' of conduct:

Inside the group, the esprit de corps is totalitarian. Its empire ends where other bodies begin, where associations, groups can resist, where administrations and parties watch [. . .] Esprit de corps can be effectually criticised by individuals belonging to a body only if they have been placed in political, historical, administrative or technical situations that allow them to read several codes at once.⁴²

We will see in our first chapter how the political meaning of esprit de corps was initiated by d'Alembert, Diderot and Voltaire in the *Encyclopédie*. The *Philosophes* presented themselves as the kind of enlightened interstitial community suggested by Sfez, protected from partisanship by the power of reasoning and by their attachment to the idea of a republican nation. Another idea suggested by Sfez is that, while the critical elite is supposedly gifted with multi-literacy in terms of code-deciphering, there is, in a given nation, a constant antagonism of different groups and plural forms of esprit de corps.⁴³ For example, the eighteenth-century French philosophers rose to prominence in part thanks to their opposition to the Jesuits, who had a monopoly on academic education. This is, as we will see, a striking example of how the three words we are studying worked as a polemical weapon with real social and cultural implications: the supposed esprit de corps of the Society of Jesus led to their banishment and liberated hundreds of teaching jobs at the Sorbonne, to be taken up by the secular bourgeoisie.

Still worthy of note from the *Esprit de corps* symposium of 2003 are the literary ideas of 'communauté seconde' (Georges Bataille) or 'communauté invouable' (Maurice Blanchot),⁴⁴ according to which the members of a group are looking to fulfil collectively a deeply human desire for spiritual eternity:

The group erases arbitrariness from their lives. On the contrary, they exist under the seal of a double legitimation: the individual finds fulfilment in the group which, by welcoming the individual, legitimises its existence. In return, the group is legitimised to the extent that it promotes in everyone what Rousseau called 'the sentiment of existence'.⁴⁵

It is common knowledge that in his *Reveries* Rousseau connects happiness with the Heraclitean feeling of peace generated by the lone contemplation of our

natural being, generally favoured by promenades on islands, or next to lakes, rivers and other entities that cannot talk back. How this sentiment can be felt in a human community is a profound mystery for a modern individual. Democracy creates the psychology of the independence-driven self and at the same time the alterity of other selves who equally aspire to independence, everyone restricting everyone else's independence. Even the idea of the social contract could be seen as an immature desire to fuse all selves into one gigantic uterine ego, and thus eliminate contradiction as in domesticated nature. The dialectical idea that an individual can only blossom within a supporting community has been key to the debate on *esprit de corps* since the eighteenth-century defence of the notion in religious discourse. An organised group can be a social machine producing a form of spiritual health, grounded in what the philosopher Castoriadis called its 'instituting imaginary' [*imaginaire instituant*],⁴⁶ following a process that Bergson called *fabulation*, of which more in Chapter 6.

The metaphor of the machine is slippery. The political theorist Paul Zawadzki considers – thus reproducing a typical Enlightenment discourse – that *esprit de corps* is mostly about mechanical obedience: 'Hyperspecialised or dominated individuals act as puppets, or as mere cogs in a machinery called *esprit de corps*.'⁴⁷ During the French Revolution, Joseph-Antoine Cerutti, a deputy of the *Assemblée nationale législative*, claimed that monastery life in the *Ancien Régime* was not one of brotherhood: 'Cloisters forbid any special friendship; they only wanted members devoted to *esprit de corps*, uncommunicative rows of automata, like Prussian soldiers.'⁴⁸ Is *esprit de corps* a mix of flesh and automation, a kind of collective anthropo-robot or *anthrobot*? We will come back to this timely idea in our conclusion.

The most intriguing and historically minded paper from the *Esprit de corps* Sorbonne symposium is by philosophers of law Thomas Berns and Benoît Frydman, who start by noting that in medieval times, a common juridical term for private or public associations was the Latin word *universitas*:

In the middle of 13th century [. . .], we see Innocent IV assert that a community *figitur una persona*, that it is [as] a person [. . .] This fiction of legal personality makes it possible to evoke the unity of multiplicity in what can henceforth be called a 'mystical body'.⁴⁹

However, according to the authors, these medieval bodies were often incarnated in the figure of a leader:

It is only the idea of incarnation that makes it possible to accomplish the incorporation: the abstraction of the *universitas* takes form and life when it is embodied in a person, the chief, the head, the one who represents it. It is not only a matter of incorporation in the strict sense (association in the hierarchy, association of the various members, subjects and leader in a single body), but it is also and always a matter of incarnation, by which this association is truly personified, and as such cannot suggest the question of *esprit de corps*.⁵⁰

This seems to suggest *a contrario* that esprit de corps is a cohesion without a personified leader. Esprit de corps would only emerge once the group as a whole can be considered as a collective mind. The problem with such a logical schematisation is that historically, as we will see, esprit de corps, even after the eighteenth century, seems rarely to have been a leader-independent phenomenon. Or is it that the human leaders are less influential than it seems? Our current big data profiling of social clusters, which can be said to manifest our invisible group belongings via our digital traces, seems indeed to suggest that inspirational volition is less instrumental than we would like to believe. This is Bourdieu's thesis, addressed in Chapter 6.

In France, continue Berns and Frydman, the idea that absolute sovereign power was embodied by the king – as per Kantorowicz's classic study⁵¹ – remained dominant until the second half of the eighteenth century, when its public questioning became one of the strong pre-revolutionary discursive acts. We will see how revolutionary figures proposed to inflate the feeling of esprit de corps to the limits of the entire nation. To build a *bodyfying* nation, '[qui] fait corps',⁵² became an 'obsession' of the French Revolution.⁵³ Simultaneously, 'the Revolution seems to wish to expel or destroy intermediary bodies by considering them as parasitic or hostile bodies estranged from that of the nation'.⁵⁴ The great sovereign body of the state devoured the traditional social bodies, but did not digest them completely: some subsisted or reappeared in the nineteenth century, but with a different status; in Chapter 4, we will examine Napoleon's building of a national order via the production and regulation of a state-engineered esprit de corps, based on the emulation of military protocol.

Berns and Frydman locate the intellectual prehistory of the partnership between the modern nation and state-controlled esprit de corps in the work of the sixteenth-century political philosopher Jean Bodin.⁵⁵

The sovereignty proper to the political community is defined by the need to be radically different from any other body [. . .] Bodin directly confronts the question of 'whether it is good to eliminate or strengthen bodies and colleges'. In a finalist fashion, the bodies and intermediary societies are justified by the fact that they maintain the friendship which is at the very foundation of the Republic, 'such friendship as can only be maintained by alliances, societies, estates, communities, fellowships, bodies [corps] and colleges'.⁵⁶

Bodin is, of course, not talking about the neoliberal idea of friendship, what we could call, in the vein of Hannah Arendt,⁵⁷ a domestic relationship between binomes of biologised individuals, a micro-solidarity often fetishised as unique, perhaps by analogy with private property. Intermediary bodies were seen by Bodin as socialising circles that produced the necessary collective solidarity that he thought would be difficult to produce at the sole level of the state. On the other hand, and here Bodin anticipated the French Revolution discourse on esprit de corps, 'ill-adjusted communities' [*communautés mal reiglees*] could create monopolies, factions, seditions, and partisanship [*partialitez*] that would endanger

the sovereignty of the nation. A strong state was necessary as a regulator of communities. Such advice is still worthy of consideration in discussing the current politics of communitarianism.

Consistent with Bodin's perspective was Thomas Hobbes's chapter XXII of *Leviathan*, where, following a bodily metaphor, Hobbes defined 'systems' as human groups 'joined in one interest, or one business', which he compared to the 'parts, or muscles of a body natural' that should be 'subordinate to a sovereign power' or 'commonwealth'.⁵⁸ For Hobbes, intermediary societies can sometimes be unlawful, like factions, secret cabals, and then they are akin to 'evil humours' and diseases.⁵⁹ When lawful and regular, they resemble a family – yet even in families, law should be above the power of the patriarch.⁶⁰ Here one could ask: isn't the notion of esprit de corps precisely related to the idea that a strong intermediary group develops its own code of law, an ideological and behavioural uniform in which the national rule of law or the general will may not apply? Such was the main argument of the *Philosophes*, and in this they were followers of Bodin and Hobbes.

But the power of the state itself was not necessarily virtuous. For Berns and Frydman, the biased excesses of the *Terreur* reinforced the idea that the nation itself needed to institutionalise counter-powers to avoid being taken over by a pseudo-nationalist faction. Universal reason could be hijacked. A tempering of power, the attempt to protect the public power from itself and by itself, supposes the institution of a multitude of distinct and specialised bodies, inspired by the British 'checks and balances system'.⁶¹ I will show in detail how the Jacobins' reign was rapidly interpreted as a proof that esprit de corps could neither be eradicated, nor extended to the sole level of national loyalty, an expansion that was one of the Revolution's ideals. If there would always be intermediary forms of esprit de corps, the right question was how docile they were towards the state, and how this docility could be produced and controlled via a system of rewards and promotions, as advocated efficiently by the Bonapartists.

Berns and Frydman's thought-provoking sketch of a genealogy of esprit de corps ignores the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and does not consider English uses of the phrase. Their main thesis is that the idea of esprit de corps appeared when modern intermediary bodies, societies and corporations started to be seen as an artificial problem, when they lost their apparent natural or divine legitimacy:

Contrary to the 'natural' bodies of the *Ancien Régime*, these are only artificial creations, legal or administrative, purely abstract entities [. . .] But if these bodies do not rest on a substratum, on an identifiable component of the population, on a specific solidarity that unites its members, *what is it that will hold them together?* It is precisely here that the question of esprit de corps arises, which, in the modern sense of the term, designates the bond which unites the members of a body or a company.⁶²

Did our occidental modernity start speaking of esprit de corps as a quality we should eradicate or recreate in organisations because social groups lost their

'natural' foundation? This suggests that pre- or early modern societies were more authentic, and that democracy lost something fundamental with regard to human bonding. This serious claim was at the heart of Tocqueville's pessimistic political philosophy. He regretted the loss of *esprit de corps* because this not only undermined our capacity for authentic group belonging, but also jeopardised our capacity to attain real self-realisation, as we will explain.

Berns and Frydman, and all the authors in the Sorbonne conference proceedings, overlooked the military origin of *esprit de corps* and the military or even 'metamilitary'⁶³ discourses on *esprit de corps* of the last three centuries. This is an omission that the present book will rectify.

To complete our overview of the French *Esprit de corps* symposium, it is worth mentioning the sociologist Pierre Ansart, who quotes Voltaire's entry on 'Esprit' in the *Encyclopédie* (1755):

We must not forget here in how many different senses the word *esprit* is employed; it is not a defect of language, it is, on the contrary, an advantage to have roots thus ramifying out into several branches. *Esprit d'un corps*, of a society, to express the uses, the way of thinking, of behaving, the prejudices of a body. *Esprit de parti*, which is to *esprit de corps* what the passions are to ordinary feelings.⁶⁴

Historically, the phrase *esprit de parti* was probably of earlier use than *esprit de corps*. We find it in print as early as 1701, in the gazette *L'Esprit des cours de l'Europe*, with the meaning of bias or partisanship, and in contradistinction from the Cartesian rational ego: 'I say it as I think and without partisanship' [*Je le dis comme je le pense et sans esprit de parti*].⁶⁵ It is possible that the notion of *esprit d'un corps* or *esprit du corps* evolved towards a more idiomatic *esprit de corps* under the influence of the expression *esprit de parti*, combined with the influence of the military use of *esprit de corps*, which, as we will see, predated the publication of the *Encyclopédie*. *Esprit de corps* started to be used in France in the second half of the eighteenth century to designate the *esprit de parti* of the members of a society defending the interests of their group. Voltaire's suggestion that the *esprit de corps* of a group was *ordinaire*, usual and not necessarily negative because not too passionate or extreme, was replaced – for example by Diderot and d'Alembert – by the idea that *esprit de corps* was necessarily abusive, restrictively antagonistic, representing a petty party *against* another. As we will show in our chapter on the early voyage of the phrase from France to the anglophone zone, Voltaire's more moderate view would in the long term, partly thanks to his friend Lord Chesterfield, be more influential in the UK and the USA than the less nuanced revolutionary view.

Abstract Universalism: The Problem of a Philosophical Perspective When Studying *Esprit de Corps*

Consider the above-mentioned book on the intellectual history of general will, subtitled *The Evolution of a Concept*. Is *esprit de corps* a concept? I prefer to speak of notions rather than concepts to designate ideas with unsettled and arguable definitions. While the signifier 'esprit de corps' has remained invariant in the last three centuries and across geo-cultural zones, the ideas that it has designated, its *signifieds*, have differed significantly. It is common knowledge that *signifier* and *signified*, a distinction operated by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, differentiate the material signs serving as vehicle from the meaning itself.⁶⁶ Mark Bevir explains in *The Logic of the History of Ideas*:

Saussure [. . .] argues that the bond between signifiers and signifieds, words and concepts, is an arbitrary one. The bond is set up by social conventions, where the sole constraint on these conventions is that our signifiers must differ from each other.⁶⁷

Bevir speaks of concepts to indicate something that is conceived, but not necessarily precise. Until a definite and consensual signified is globally established for the signifier 'esprit de corps', which seems unlikely, *esprit de corps* is rather an ambiguous *notion* that floats in a field of more or less related ideas. This is not a weakness in terms of thriving. After all, human beings are perhaps the most ambiguous species on earth and also the dominant one. It is the difference between, on the one hand, the transnational, transcultural, translingual and transepocheal invariance of the signifier 'esprit de corps' and, on the other hand, the local, temporal and contextual variability of its connotations that makes its rigorous study possible and fecund.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *esprit de corps* is a 'phraseological combination' that designates 'the regard entertained by the members of a body for the honour and interests of the body as a whole, and of each other as belonging to it'.⁶⁸ This is a somewhat complicated definition that tries to synthesise the individual and the group in a *soi-disant* 'win-win' configuration. The American *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* proposes both a 'simple' and a 'full' definition of *esprit de corps*. The simple one is: 'Feelings of loyalty, enthusiasm, and devotion to a group among people who are members of the group.'⁶⁹ The full definition abandons *loyalty* and replaces it with *honour*: 'The common spirit existing in the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of a group.'⁷⁰ Common spirit, regard, feelings, loyalty, devotion, enthusiasm, honour: a philosopher's unifying perspective could posit that this all equates to a subjective attachment to the unity of a group, to the point that the group itself seems to possess a form of agency. Can we speak of the *honour of a group* as if a social body as a whole could be personified? This question is much debated in philosophy under the labels of 'shared intention', 'joint action', 'the plural subject', 'collective intentionality', 'team agency' etc.⁷¹ Can groups be

persons?⁷² Too often, analytic philosophers omit to consider that such a problem is not devoid of ideological, cultural and historical aspects. For instance, Benito Mussolini wrote in 'The Doctrine of Fascism' (1932) that the state was both a living organism and the 'highest and most powerful form of personality'.⁷³ Is it reasonable to ignore the sociopolitics of such a claim? The influential *Philosophy of Right* proposed by G. W. F. Hegel in the nineteenth century also referred to the state as a superior spirit.⁷⁴ A consequence of this type of view is, of course, that discrete individuals – citizens, inhabitants, immigrants – might be more or less considered to be second-rate persons compared to the super-individual that is the state or the organised society:

The very existence of individual citizens becomes tied into the ends of the group organism. They have no independent lives outside the group. Their very liberty must be defined in terms of the group. [When] the group becomes an end in itself [. . .] a corollary of this is that human units could become means to an end.⁷⁵

Esprit de corps, once again, was often articulated in France in opposition to ideals of individual liberty. A peer-reviewed paper published in 1899 in the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* subscribed to the Enlightenment's general suspicion of biased collectives: 'In our opinion, esprit de corps is a collective egoism, solely concerned with collective ends, and disdainful of the individual and of individual qualities.'⁷⁶ From this perspective, collective intentionality is a monstrosity. In fact, both in the individualist critique and in the praise of collective minds, the shadow of the ideology of laissez-faire capitalism cannot be ignored.

Research on esprit de corps could be tempted to answer questions such as is esprit de corps socially desirable or does individualism produce more harmonious effects in the long term? Is cooperation more effective for civilisational progress than competition? These general questions are interesting, but potentially misleading if they are abstractly universalised rather than contextualised by comparing different historical periods, geographical situations and contexts. To avoid participating in the battlefield of truth-aspiring definitions, polemical notions gain from being historicised in a discursive genealogy rather than generally defined. In this sense, esprit de corps can be compared to contested notions such as freedom or justice:

The idea that it would be possible and meaningful, for example, to seek an adequate concept of justice, or of freedom, is confused. There are societies, human groups that have produced conceptions of justice, but the identity of the vocabulary does not imply the identity of the concepts and does not guarantee that we are talking about the same 'object'.⁷⁷

A pure analytic description of political and social notions might be a chimera:

An analytic proposition cannot be true simply by virtue of definitions and the laws of formal logic since how we define something must depend on our other beliefs, where these other beliefs might alter as a result of further empirical investigations. All of our knowledge arises, therefore, in the context of our particular web of beliefs.⁷⁸

Because there is no clear definition of what esprit de corps is, and, for example, no agreement on the possibility of a collective body manifesting its own personality, a genealogical approach to esprit de corps seems well advised before we engage in wild speculation. Hence the need to look at the uses that have been made of the signifying emblem that is esprit de corps, in what historical, social, discursive and rhetorical contexts, and within which webs of belief. The pertinence of a cultural and sociological notion must be examined as a 'speech act' situated in a certain social 'language context',⁷⁹ even when it points to an all-encompassing truth. Michel Foucault defined genealogy, following Nietzsche's considerations, as a historico-philosophical method that considers discursive utterances as signs in a larger structure or discourse to be unveiled:

Following the complex path of provenance is [...] to maintain what has happened in the dispersion that is peculiar to it: it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or on the contrary the complete reversals – the errors, the mistakes of appreciation, the bad calculations which gave birth to what exists and is valid for us.⁸⁰

Of esprit de corps, we could repeat what David Armitage wrote in his long-term examination of the formula 'civil war': 'It has been reinterpreted and redeployed in multiple contexts for multiple purposes throughout the centuries. It may look descriptive, but it is firmly normative, expressing values and interpretations more than any stable identity.'⁸¹ This does not signify that we should completely abandon the possibility of meta-narrative insights or hypotheses encompassing webs of belief that are interconnected across regions and times. We must avoid a historical and notional relativism – indeed a nihilism – in which general human evolution would be 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'.⁸²

As Far as We Can Tell: A *longue durée* Intellectual History of the Uses of Esprit de Corps

Because of their imprecision and polysemy, a sensible approach to sociopolitical notions is to contextualise them historically. We want to draw lines and connections between different webs of belief and distinguish significant epochal patterns. A mind–body emblem such as the signifier 'esprit de corps' is particularly interesting because it is transcultural or transdiscursive (used in several social fields and normative discourses), transnational (used in several languages and geopolitical zones) and transtemporal (used across centuries). Because esprit de

corps can emblematisé different meanings with laudatory or pejorative valences, it is pertinent to study what strategies are at stake behind the enunciations of the phrase. Looking at history to understand notions goes along with looking at notions to understand history, or, as the historian Richard Whatmore puts it:

Intellectual historians accept that ideas matter as first-order information about social phenomena and as directly revealing facts about our world that cannot be described except by reference to ideas. As such ideas are social forces. They may be shaped by other forces but they themselves, in turn, always influence the human world.⁸³

The notion that ideas are social forces is, of course, not self-evident and has its own polemical history. It does not mean necessarily that ideas have a life of their own, as suggested by Alfred Fouillée's nineteenth-century notion of '*idée-force*', influenced by Darwinism: ideas as active principles that, once formulated, participate in their progressive social realisation through successive embodied approximations.⁸⁴ Despite fascinating attempts to isolate universal unit ideas, it is probably safer to consider that ideas cannot be separated from the argumentative uses that human groups make of them.⁸⁵ At the political and social level, arguments between humans and groups do take at times a turn that influences significant historical events. If something really universal could be said about human nature, it would be that we have been up to now an argumentative species with agonistic worldviews.⁸⁶ In their book *The Enigma of Reason: A New Theory of Human Understanding*, Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber argue that 'reason has two main functions: that of producing reasons for justifying oneself, and that of producing arguments to convince others'.⁸⁷ This seems to justify the orthodox approach to intellectual history and genealogy championed by Quentin Skinner:

There cannot be a history of unit ideas as such, but only a history of the various uses to which they have been put by different agents at different times [. . .] Our concepts not only alter over time, but are incapable of providing us with anything more than a series of changing perspectives on the world in which we live and have our being. Our concepts form part of what we bring to the world in our efforts to understand it [. . .] We need to treat our normative concepts less as statements about the world than as tools and weapons of debate.⁸⁸

This view is representative of what has been called the Cambridge school of intellectual history, according to which 'we need to grasp not merely the meaning of what is said', but also what the enunciation is 'doing'.⁸⁹

Notions are 'language acts' which follow certain 'assumptions', taking place in 'complex normative systems', where 'facts, values and roles and intricately and ambiguously related', and where 'the conveying of information may have complex normative and political consequences'.⁹⁰ Pocock calls these argumentative fields 'languages'. This is related to what Foucault called discourse, a violence that we inflict on things, a practice that we impose on them according to the

rules of a certain society, web of belief, profession or institution.⁹¹ 'In any society, the production of discourse is at the same time controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures.'⁹²

Now, can we challenge the idea that our concepts are incapable of providing us in the long run with anything more than a series of changing perspectives on the world? Under certain conditions, I agree with Armitage that we should not be too reluctant to try and propose an interpretative meta-narrative, one or a few 'big ideas' that encompass meaningfully and coherently the long-term battlefield of ideas.⁹³ Conversely, because a language or discourse is localised in a certain period and a certain sociocultural field, we can wonder if it makes sense to interpret the destiny of a notion over a long period of time. Even if d'Alembert in 1751 and *The Wall Street Journal* in 2016 used the same signifier 'esprit de corps', how do we know that there is a fecund correlation to be found between their signifieds? Can there be a meaningful and robust meta-history of a phrase across different centuries and nations leading to a synthetic discovery? This book is an attempt to answer this type of question, recently revived by the use of digital corpuses.

The term *longue durée* has been used for the historical practice of surveying long periods of time, typically of more – and often much more – than a few decades.⁹⁴ To establish a genealogy of speech acts conveyed by the uses of esprit de corps from the eighteenth century up to the twenty-first is a long-term history that focuses on what we have learned to call modern times, a supposedly coherent occidental epoch.⁹⁵ The question of *longue durée* has been reconsidered recently because we now have access to relatively powerful digital tools that allow one researcher to consider the written use of terms much more exhaustively, with the help of large databases of texts and automatic search engines. This approach is part of what is called *digital humanities*:

The promise of the digital humanities for transforming the work of intellectual historians is immense [. . .] And with ever greater flexibility for searching and recovering contextual information, we can discover more precisely and persuasively moments of rupture as well as stretches of continuity. In short, we now have both the methodological tools and the technological means to overcome most, if not all, of the traditional objections to the marriage of intellectual history with the *longue durée*. We can at last get back to studying big ideas in a big way.⁹⁶

I sympathise with this enthusiasm to a certain extent, although I will explain why I think it is preferable, given the amount of data now at our disposal, to study, rather than 'big ideas in a big way', *small* ideas in a big way, an approach I have called *histosophy*.⁹⁷

David Armitage, in his last opus on the *longue durée* intellectual history of civil war, seems himself reluctant to propose a big unifying idea.⁹⁸ His insistence on the antagonism of interpretations regarding the notion of civil war is closer to Skinner's or Pocock's modesty than might be expected. The reason for this caution, despite the above-mentioned enthusiasm, might be that a satisfactory

practice of *longue-durée* history cannot propose all-encompassing interpretations without becoming somewhat speculative. Provided that one is clear that they pertain to philosophy, even on historical bases, speculative leaps remain interesting precisely because they are rarely fully convincing. Ideally, long-term historical genealogists should not just make a list of different ‘webs of belief’ regarding an idea and completely shy away from the ambition of synthesising these into a significant narrative: a meaningful approach to *longue durée* should avoid becoming a *longue purée*, a mashed potato of disparate enunciations that are put together without a general thread. Nevertheless, the modesty of historians compared to philosophers comes from their sensitivity to discourse and contingency. In the present book I shall advocate a middle way: a rigid argument will not be imposed on the reader, but enough synthetic interpretation will be provided, induced from data, to specify two or three overarching narratives or logics regarding the importance of *esprit de corps* to understanding our times.

Due to my continental philosophical training, I am inclined to share Armitage’s bold aspiration, expressed in the *History Manifesto*, that we should ‘think about the past in order to see the future’.⁹⁹ On another hand, the more data we have, the more interpretation, deduction and narrative synthesis are needed to structure it, which cannot be performed by machines. I believe long-term intellectual historians should dare to reflect on our global problems and challenges by identifying ideological patterns in the study of long, transnational periods, but such an approach should be careful, if possible, to avoid the pitfalls of ‘epochalism’, the reifying speculative tendency to attribute big-picture meanings to large periods of time, and the tendency to believe that these constructions are the real ontology of history.¹⁰⁰ The subsequent chapters will be as ‘neutral’ as possible in presenting the results of the genealogy and the dialectics of *esprit de corps*, in order for the reader to be able to establish her own synthetic reading. But here and there, as well as in the conclusion of this book, modest speculative leaps will be performed.

Surveying Large Issues Within a Small Compass: Digital Genealogy and Histosophy

It is certain that the ‘return to *longue durée*’, if there is such a thing, ‘has a new relationship to the abounding sources of big data available in our time’.¹⁰¹ The current book was written using digital tools to unveil the genealogy of *esprit de corps* in a specific manner. In our century, automated and digitised archives allow us to use computational software to search for a word or phrase in large corpora across centuries and genres. Data mining does not replace the work of analysis, synthesis and interpretation, but it does facilitate a more exhaustive look into available data.

I chose to focus on primary sources, texts and documents that are not necessarily canonical, but that all have a common point: they explicitly contain the signifier ‘*esprit de corps*’. This does not mean that I neglected related notions, such as for instance ‘group feeling’, ‘fellowship’, ‘zeal’, ‘partisanship’, ‘corporatism’, ‘code

of honour', etc. However, for the sake of systematicity, I preferred to encounter them formulated in contexts where *esprit de corps* was explicitly mentioned, instead of assuming the conceptual field *a priori*. This empirical rule proved to be a safe strategy to avoid a personal bias regarding the meaning of *esprit de corps*. *Esprit de corps* is often located in a rich context of metaphors, and it would be ineffective to start by chasing down every analogue to the phrase one could think of; hence the need to focus on evidenced historical discourse regarding the syntactic space as well as the semantic space of *esprit de corps*.

To dig into French texts, I partly used the Frantext database, among other sources.¹⁰² The ARTFL implementation of the database (formerly the *Trésor de la langue française*) 'consists of over 2900 texts, ranging from classic works of French literature to various kinds of non-fiction prose and technical writing. The eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth centuries are about equally represented.'¹⁰³ In English as in French, I also used century-specific databases that will be referenced as the chapters unfold. To conclude this introduction, I will focus briefly on the main search tool I used, known as the Ngram Viewer, in order to offer a general understanding of the procedure I followed.

In 2011, a group of researchers connected with the Harvard Cultural Observatory published an article in *Science* to propose a digital tool that was meant to extend the boundaries of word- or phrase-searching to corpora of millions of books in several languages, a data source produced by Google's effort to digitise as many books as possible in the last decade.¹⁰⁴ In their terminology, a 1-gram is either a word or a punctuation mark. 'Esprit de corps', for example, is a 3-gram. The search engine presents occurrences of the required n-gram in print, chronologically, within a time range that can be adapted manually. It is then often possible to explore the content of each book and read the environing pages in which the n-gram is used in order to understand the context of use. Because I have tried as far as possible to quote from first editions, and because the Ngram Viewer does not systematically offer the possibility of reading all the pages of a chosen book, I also used, as mentioned earlier, other digital archives, for example Gallica (from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France)¹⁰⁵ and the Internet Archive for English books (mostly UK and North America).¹⁰⁶ In other cases I had to look for an edition of a book in a library or in the second-hand market, but in these cases also I was often digitally pointed to such and such a document where I knew I would find the phrase 'esprit de corps'. This approach to the examination of sources is quantitatively more exhaustive compared to what intellectual historians could achieve only a decade ago.

The type of results that the Ngram Viewer retrieves depends on the chosen chronological range. It is, for example, possible to search between 1895 and 1899 in French or English documents, or to choose longer scales. The succession of texts is generally chronological, but not without a relative disorder and sometimes dating mistakes that must be resolved by human analysis. As of October 2015, the number of books scanned by Google Books – to which the Ngram retrieval engine is connected – was 25 million (English, French, Russian, Chinese, Italian, Hebrew and Spanish are represented, which of course reflects a

form of cultural hegemony), while their estimate of all book titles ever published was 130 million.¹⁰⁷

Let us look, for example, at a random retrieved result, the *Compte rendu des débats du Grand Conseil du canton de Vaud sur le projet de loi ecclésiastique* (1839), which contains two occurrences of *esprit de corps*, the first being the following:

I did not mention anyone in particular; I only referred to *esprit de corps* in general. Now, it is in the nature of things and of men that every corporation which deals only with an object seeks to seize it exclusively; it is the propension of bodies [*l'esprit des corps*] to extend their attributions, their power [. . .] It can be said that as soon as a young man has completed his theological studies, he becomes part of a powerful corporation, which, more than any other, possesses an important leverage, the power it exerts over consciences, a weapon stronger than the civil power. Everywhere the priests' corps have had a tendency to rise above the civil authority and to dominate. This is the story of all times [. . .] I have, I repeat, no intention to refer to anyone in particular. I merely recall a historical fact. Nature is in the nineteenth century as it has been everywhere, in the Middle Ages and in all ages.¹⁰⁸

Here the work of the robotic search engine must stop, and human exegesis is needed. We need to look beyond a particular enunciation of 'esprit de corps' in order to understand who the author of the text is, in what context the speech act was uttered, what rhetorical strategy was deployed, and to what other synchronic and diachronic uses it is related. The above example is a generalising consideration of *esprit de corps*, presented as a universal natural law of human groups and human nature. The claim is that whether individuals in the group like it or not, a specialised society or corporation will aspire to form a monopoly and expand at the expense of the outside world. We will in the following chapters meet other examples of such a naturalistic view of *esprit de corps*.

But who is affirming this and according to what rhetorical strategy? The title of the document gives us a clue via the word *ecclésiastique*, and so does its location, a Swiss region under strong historical French influence. Further research revealed the existence of a debate in Switzerland, at that time, regarding the separation of Church and state.¹⁰⁹ The author was a Doctor of Law, the président du Conseil d'État Emmanuel de la Harpe (1782–1842), brother of a former officer in the Napoleonic army.¹¹⁰ This excerpt unfolds as a defence of the balance between the power of the state and the power of the Church. It is a secularist claim for the protection of citizens from an excessive religious authority. It is probable that the author wished to defend the primary power of the state, since he represented the public administration, but he used the tactical mask of an impartial or enlightened philosopher. The *esprit de corps* of the Church is diplomatically presented as dangerous not because it is evil, but because it is hegemonic by nature, as are all forms of organised power. The rhetorical strategy is to assert that this is not a case of *argumentum ad hominem* against such or such representative of the Church, not even against the power of the Church, but a moderate and

benevolent exposition of a universal human law that calls for a counteractive mitigation. Any power must be controlled by counter-powers because the esprit de corps of societies tends to be a conquering force. Religious societies in particular can be overly influential because of their power over conscience. Nowadays this could be recategorised as a debate on 'cultural engineering'.¹¹¹

De la Harpe's argumentation was a pastiche of the Enlightenment discourse, in the style of the *Encyclopédie*. We will see how the *Encyclopédistes* accelerated the use of the esprit de corps notion against religious groups, and how they succeeded in undermining the strong religious and educational power of the Jesuits, while the latter tried to defend themselves by presenting a eulogy of esprit de corps. Notions such as esprit de corps could be called 'combat concepts', as they are polemical notions used as power weapons by different 'cultural-political factions'.¹¹² A critic could argue that, by suggesting that human history is the history of combat notions used by antagonistic groups – as well as the history of the concrete consequences of such arguments – we are perhaps being as essentialising as Emmanuel de la Harpe in the above-mentioned example. But even if history demonstrates that esprit de corps has been universal and central until now, nothing authorises us to posit that a conflictual will to hegemony will forever be the essence of human or group relations, even if common sense or experience suggests that this is likely.

Much more could be said to analyse our prototypical *Canton de Vaud* example. This illustrates both the force and the limitations of my methodology. Its force is that by having access to hundreds of texts from the early eighteenth century to today, in which the signifier 'esprit de corps' can be spotted in context, I was able to operate a horizontal, comparative and diachronic analysis of the uses of the notion to form a long-term, insightful narrative. The limitation is that I will not be able to perform simultaneously, within the space, time and individual authorship of a single book, an exhaustive vertical and synchronic form of intellectual history as an approach that would look in detail at the precise context and micro-history of each enunciation in which esprit de corps has been performative. One could spend much more time trying to understand the nuances of the history of the relationship between Church and state in Switzerland in the 1830s, and there are probably different layers of understanding regarding de la Harpe's above-mentioned speech. However, it is evident that I have tried something different in this book: even had I not excluded selected and simplified micro-histories, the exhaustive vertical or synchronic study of a particular use of esprit de corps in a local context and within a relatively limited period of human history was never my intention. I hope that thorough specialists of such or such a period or of a given author will forgive the occasional schematisation.

Another limitation that calls for further research is that I will be mainly looking at French (mostly from France) and English (mostly from the UK and the USA) uses, although other languages have used the Gallicism 'esprit de corps', and at times (Spanish and German for example) still use it. But I found that the use of the signifier in languages other than English or French is much more sporadic and difficult to trace. The focus on English is justified by the fact that

it is today the language that uses *esprit de corps* globally, and with much more frequency than any other. The choice of French is self-evident, as the language of origin of the phrase. When *esprit de corps* emerged as a signifier, French was the occidental *lingua franca*, a position now occupied by English. Transnational in the present book presupposes a comparative approach to different cultures in more or less intensive correspondence, alternatively local, national and global.

Only organised teamwork could help to expand my results by looking at other languages and at each period in more detail. It would be tempting but too simple to claim that each language carries a specific spirit or intellectual worldview that influences the individuals who use it dominantly, an *esprit de corpus*, so to speak. The dominant transnational force in modern global history, capitalism, is an ideology that changes the valence of human values over time and across borders as it itself evolves.

In the end, the chapters that follow might not be an example of orthodox history, nor are they an exercise in analytic or universalistic philosophy. But failing in 'pure history' and 'pure philosophy' – if purity can ever exist in any discipline – is my conscious premise, since my goal is to contribute to a form of genealogy that could be called *histosophy*, 'the art of surveying large issues within a small compass'.¹¹³ Of course, doing history philosophically or doing philosophy historically is not new,¹¹⁴ and the *histosophical* approach has been practised by others under other labels. The small compass of *esprit de corps* proved to be an effectual notion to study in the long term and across cultures, something I would not have dared with overused notions such as 'freedom' or even 'individualism'. The large issues addressed by the uses of *esprit de corps* are, for example, the political tension between particularism and universalism; the antagonism between freedom of thought and collectivism; questions of group identity, community, collective consciousness, nationalism, self-determination, corporatism, groupthink and freedom of speech; the idea that humans are social automata rather than free-will individuals, or the converse; the notion that history itself is a consequence of antagonisms between communities of interest; the impact of the capitalist ideology on our schemes of thought; the modern avatars of the long human history of disembodiment and contempt towards the bodily realm; and last but not least, what – as an open conclusion to my research on *esprit de corps* – I propose to call *ensembance*, the fact that human ensembles, like all realities, never become totally one, for better or worse. We live in a universe of quasi-unities and quasi-multiplicities. Forgetting that full totality is a myth can be very dangerous, for example historically. Forgetting that full multiplicity is not real can be equally damaging, for instance individually.

But enough said: an answer to the enigma of *esprit de corps* must slowly emerge from the empirical and sympathetic interpretation of the data. And if I appear reluctant, even in my conclusion, to cut the theoretical Gordian knot, the reader might be tempted to borrow my sword.

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37. 'Ce que nous voyons avant tout dans le groupe professionnel, c'est un pouvoir moral capable de contenir les égoïsmes individuels, d'entretenir dans le cœur des travailleurs un plus vif sentiment de leur solidarité commune, d'empêcher la loi du plus fort de s'appliquer aussi brutalement aux relations industrielles et commerciales [...] Quand des individus se trouvant avoir des intérêts communs s'associent, ce n'est pas seulement pour défendre ces intérêts, c'est pour s'associer, pour ne plus se sentir perdus au milieu d'adversaires, pour avoir le plaisir de communier, de ne faire qu'un avec plusieurs, c'est-à-dire, en définitive, pour mener ensemble une même vie morale.' Émile Durkheim, preface to the second edition, *De la division du travail social* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1897), in Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 5.
38. 'L'esprit de corps est tout d'abord constitué par un noyau de croyances collectives et de stéréotypes répétitifs qui constituent un fonds de doctrine et d'idéaux communs aux membres d'un même corps.' Claudine Haroche, 'L'Esprit de corps dans les grands corps de l'État en France', in Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 289.
39. Haroche and Guglielmi, 'Préface', p. 11.
40. 'nécessaire pour amener l'homme à se dépasser lui-même'; Claudine Haroche, 'Modes de comportement et types d'aspiration dans les mouvements de jeunesse en Allemagne (1918–1933)', in Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 53.
41. 'L'esprit de corps peut conduire à des errements, être à la source de comportements d'exclusion inspirés par la conformité.' Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 8.
42. 'Dedans, l'esprit de corps est totalitaire. Il arrête son empire là où d'autres corps existent, là où des associations, des groupes peuvent y résister, où des administrations, des partis veillent [...] L'esprit de corps peut être critiqué avec efficacité par les individus issus d'un corps qui ont été placés dans des situations politiques ou historiques, administratives ou techniques qui leur permettent de lire plusieurs codes à la fois.' Lucien Sfez, 'Introduction', in Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, pp. 22, 23.
43. This is related to Chantal Mouffe's idea of 'agonistic pluralism', developed for example in *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*.
44. Eugène Enriquez, 'Le Ravissement du corps, croyances et mécanismes de défense dans les communautés', in Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 31.
45. 'Le groupe efface l'arbitraire de leur vie. Au contraire, ils existent sous le sceau d'une double légitimation: l'individu trouve son épanouissement dans le groupe qui, en l'accueillant, légitime son existence. En retour, le groupe est légitimé dans la mesure où il favorise chez chacun ce que Rousseau nommait "le sentiment d'existence".' Ibid., p. 32.
46. Ibid., p. 33.
47. 'Des individus supposés hypersocialisés ou dominés agissent comme des marionnettes, ou comme de simples rouages d'une machinerie nommée esprit de corps.' Paul Zawadzki, "'Un homme, ça s'empêche": sentiment moral et dimensions de la désobéissance', in Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 119.

48. 'On interdisait dans les cloîtres toute amitié particulière: on ne voulait que des membres dévoués à l'esprit de corps, des automates serrés et muets entre eux, comme des soldats prussiens.' Joseph-Antoine Cerutti, *Œuvres diverses, ou Recueil de pièces composées avant et depuis la Révolution* (Paris: Desenne, 1792), vol. II, p. 35.
49. 'Dès le milieu du XIII^e siècle [. . .], on voit Innocent IV affirmer que la collectivité *fingitur una persona*, qu'elle est [comme] une personne [. . .] Cette fiction de la personnalité juridique permet de dire l'unité de la multiplicité dans ce qui peut désormais s'appeler un "corps mystique".' Thomas Berns and Benoît Frydman, 'Généalogie de l'esprit de corps', in Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 163.
50. 'C'est seulement l'idée d'incarnation qui permet d'accomplir l'incorporation: l'abstraction de l'*universitas* prend d'abord vie et sens lorsqu'elle est incarnée dans une personne, le chef, la tête, celui qui la représente. Il ne s'agit pas seulement donc d'incorporation au sens strict: association dans la hiérarchie, association des divers membres, des sujets et du chef dans un seul corps, mais toujours aussi d'une incarnation, par laquelle cette association est véritablement personnifiée, et à ce titre ne peut pas poser la question de l'esprit de corps.' Berns and Frydman, 'Généalogie de l'esprit de corps', p. 169.
51. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).
52. Marcel Gauchet, *La Révolution des droits de l'homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), p. xviii.
53. Berns and Frydman, 'Généalogie de l'esprit de corps', p. 177.
54. 'la Révolution semble vouloir expulser ou détruire les corps partiels comme autant de corps étrangers à celui de la nation, parasites ou hostiles'; *ibid.*, p. 159.
55. Jean Bodin, *Les six Livres de la République* (Paris: Jacques du Puys, 1576).
56. 'La souveraineté propre à la communauté politique se définit par la nécessité de se distinguer radicalement de tout autre corps [. . .] Bodin affronte directement la question de savoir "s'il est bon d'oster ou d'endurcir les corps et colleges." De manière finaliste, les corps et collèges se justifient par le fait qu'ils maintiennent l'amitié qui est au fondement même de la République, "laquelle amitié ne peut se maintenir que par alliances, societez, estats, communautez, confrairies, corps et colleges".' Berns and Frydman, 'Généalogie de l'esprit de corps', p. 168.
57. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]).
58. Thomas Hobbes, 'Of Systemes Subject, Political, and Private', in *Leviathan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 171.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–3.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
61. Berns and Frydman, 'Généalogie de l'esprit de corps', p. 178.
62. 'À l'inverse des corps "naturels" de l'Ancien Régime, il ne s'agit que de créations artificielles, juridiques ou administratives, d'entités purement abstraites [. . .] Or si ces corps ne reposent pas sur un substrat, sur une composante identifiable de la population, sur une solidarité spécifique qui unisse ses membres, *qu'est-ce donc qui les tiendra ensemble?* C'est ici précisément que se pose la question de l'esprit de corps, lequel désigne, dans le sens moderne de l'expression, le lien qui unit les membres d'un corps ou d'une compagnie.' *Ibid.*, p. 177.
63. Peter Calvoicoressi, *World Politics Since 1945* (Harlow: Pearson, 2009 [1968]), p. 272.
64. 'Il ne faut pas oublier ici en combien de sens différents le mot d'*esprit* s'emploie; ce

- n'est point un défaut de la langue, c'est au contraire un avantage d'avoir ainsi des racines qui se ramifient en plusieurs branches. *Esprit d'un corps, d'une société*, pour exprimer les usages, la manière de penser, de se conduire, les préjugés d'un corps. *Esprit de parti*, qui est à l'esprit d'un corps ce que sont les passions aux sentiments ordinaires.' Voltaire, 'Esprit (Philos. & Belles-Lettr.)', in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (eds), *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton and Durand, 1751–65), vol. V (1755), p. 975, quoted by Pierre Ansart, 'L'Esprit de corps: réflexions épistémologiques', Guglielmi and Haroche (eds), *Esprit de corps*, p. 119.
65. Nicolas Gueudeville, *L'Esprit des cours de l'Europe* (The Hague: Étienne Foulque, 1701), p. 208.
 66. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1995 [1916]).
 67. Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 56.
 68. 'Esprit de corps, n.', *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/esprit-de-corps>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
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 70. *Ibid.*
 71. Facundo Alonso, 'Shared Intention, Reliance, and Interpersonal Obligations', *Ethics* 119.3 (2009), pp. 444–75; Ulrich Baltzer, 'Joint Action of Large Groups', in George Meggle (ed.), *Social Facts and Intentionality* (Frankfurt: Hänsel-Hohenhausen, 2002), pp. 1–18; Boudewijn de Bruin, 'We and the Plural Subject', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 39 (2009), pp. 235–59; John Searle, 'Collective Intentions and Actions', in Philip R. Cohen, Jerry Morgan and Martha E. Pollack (eds), *Intentions in Communication* (Cambridge: Bradford Books, 1990), pp. 401–16; Natalie Gold and Robert Sugden, 'Collective Intentions and Team Agency', *The Journal of Philosophy* 104.3 (2007), pp. 109–37.
 72. Andrew Vincent, 'Can Groups be Persons?', *Review of Metaphysics* 42 (1989), pp. 687–715; Marie-Hélène Roberge, Qiumei Jane Xu and Denise M. Rousseau, 'Collective Personality Effects on Group Citizenship Behavior?', *Small Group Research* 43.4 (2012), pp. 410–42; Antony Taubman, 'Is There a Right to Collective Personality', *European Intellectual Property Review* 28.9 (2006), pp. 485–92.
 73. Benito Mussolini, 'The Doctrine of Fascism', quoted in Michael J. Oakshott, *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), pp. 164–8.
 74. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971 [1820]), section 321, p. 208.
 75. Vincent, 'Can Groups be Persons?', p. 690.
 76. 'L'esprit de corps est, selon nous, un égoïsme collectif, uniquement préoccupé des fins collectives, et dédaigneux de l'individu et des qualités individuelles.' Georges Palante, 'L'Esprit de corps', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 48 (1899), pp. 135–45 (p. 141).
 77. 'L'idée qu'il serait par exemple possible et doué de sens de chercher une conception adéquate de la justice, ou de la liberté, est confuse. Il y a des sociétés, des groupes humains qui ont produit des conceptions de la justice, mais l'identité du vocabulaire ne signifie pas celle des concepts et ne garantit pas qu'il soit question du même "objet".' Jean-Fabien Spitz, 'Quentin Skinner', *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques* 40 (2014), pp. 347–77.

78. Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, p. 5.
79. John Greville Agard Pocock, 'The History of Political Thought: A Methodological Enquiry', in P. Laslett and W. Runciman (eds), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), pp. 183–202.
80. 'Suivre la filière complexe de la provenance, c'est [. . .] maintenir ce qui s'est passé dans la dispersion qui lui est propre: c'est repérer les accidents, les infimes déviations – ou au contraire les retournements complets – les erreurs, les fautes d'appréciation, les mauvais calculs qui ont donné naissance à ce qui existe et vaut pour nous; c'est découvrir qu'à la racine de ce que nous connaissons et de ce que nous sommes – il n'y a point la vérité et l'être.' Foucault, 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire', p. 152.
81. David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (New York: Knopf, 2017), p. 18.
82. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, Act V, scene v.
83. Richard Whatmore, *What is Intellectual History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), p. 9.
84. Alfred Fouillée, *L'Évolutionisme des idées-forces* (Paris: Alcan, 1890).
85. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A Study in the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936).
86. Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, 'Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for an Argumentative Theory', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 34 (2011), pp. 57–111.
87. Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, *The Enigma of Reason: A New Theory of Human Understanding* (London: Penguin Random House, 2018), p. 8.
88. Quentin Skinner, 'Rhetoric and Conceptual Change', in Margrit Pernau and Dominic Sachsenmaier (eds), *Global Conceptual History, a Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 136–7. Originally published in *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* (Helsinki: SoPhi, 1999).
89. Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *Visions of Politics. Vol. 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 82.
90. John Greville Agard Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. viii, 70.
91. 'une violence que nous faisons aux choses', 'une pratique que nous leur imposons'; Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 50.
92. 'Dans toute société, la production du discours est à la fois contrôlée, sélectionnée, organisée et redistribuée par un certain nombre de procédures.' *Ibid.*, pp. 10–13.
93. David Armitage, 'What's the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the *Longue Durée*', *History of European Ideas* 38.4 (2012), pp. 493–507.
94. Fernand Braudel, 'Histoire et sciences sociales. La longue durée', *Annales* 13.4 (1958), pp. 725–53.
95. Modernity is itself a polemical notion, but this cannot be examined in this book.
96. Armitage, 'What's the Big Idea?', p. 507.
97. Luis de Miranda and Emile Chabal, 'Big Data, Small Concepts: Histosophy as an Approach to *longue-durée* History', *Global Intellectual History* (2019), <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23801883.2019.1592871>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
98. Armitage, *Civil Wars*, p. 18.
99. David Armitage and Jo Guldi, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 4.
100. Fran Osrecki, 'Constructing Epochs: The Argumentative Structures of Sociological Epochalisms', *Cultural Sociology* 9.2 (2015), pp. 131–46.
101. Armitage and Guldi, *The History Manifesto*, p. 9.

102. The ARTFL-Frantext Project, <<https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/artfl-frantext>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
103. The ARTFL-Frantext Project, <<https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/83>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
104. Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., 'Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books', *Science* 311 (2011), pp. 176–82.
105. BNF Gallica, <<http://gallica.bnf.fr>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
106. Internet Archive, <<https://archive.org>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
107. Google Books Search, <<http://blog.google/products/search>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
108. 'Je n'ai parlé de personne en particulier; je n'ai fait allusion qu'à l'esprit de corps en général. Or, il est dans la nature des choses et des hommes que chaque corporation qui ne s'occupe que d'un objet cherche à s'en emparer exclusivement; il est dans l'esprit des corps d'étendre leurs attributions, leur pouvoir [. . .] On peut dire que dès l'instant qu'un jeune homme a achevé ses études théologiques, il fait partie d'une corporation puissante, qui plus qu'aucune autre a un levier immense, le pouvoir qu'il exerce sur les consciences; arme plus forte que le pouvoir civil. Partout les corps de prêtres ont eu une tendance à s'élever au-dessus de l'autorité civile et à dominer. C'est l'histoire de tous les temps.' 'M. de la Harpe, président du Conseil d'État', in *Compte rendu des débats du Grand Conseil du canton de Vaud sur le projet de loi ecclésiastique, ou recueil des discours qui ont été prononcés* (Lausanne: Dépôt Bibliographique, 1839), p. 147.
109. James F. Maclear (ed.), *Church and State in the Modern Age: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 229.
110. Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse, <<http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch>> (accessed 19 September 2019).
111. Magoroh Maruyama, 'Cultural Engineering Toward Mental Health: Individual, Intracultural and Transcultural Solutions', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 90.2 (1965), pp. 282–92.
112. Ian Hunter, 'Secularization: The Birth of a Modern Combat Concept', *Modern Intellectual History* 12.1 (2015), pp. 1–32 (p. 1).
113. Walker, David, 'Holy Virility: The Social Construction of Masculinity', by Emmanuel Reynaud', book review, *Labour History* 48 (1985), p. 121.
114. Robert Piercey, *The Uses of the Past from Heidegger to Rorty: Doing Philosophy Historically* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).