ON THE BRINK

LANGUAGE, TIME, HISTORY, AND POLITICS

WERNER HAMACHER

EDITED BY JAN PLUG

PHILOSOPHICAL PROJECTIONS

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Philosophical Projections

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ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD
INTERNATIONAL

London • New York

Published by Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd.
6 Tinworth Street, London SE11 5AL, United Kingdom
www.rowmaninternational.com

Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd. is an affiliate of
Rowman & Littlefield
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706, USA
With additional offices in Boulder, New York, Toronto (Canada), and London (UK)
www.rowman.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: HB 978-1-78660-391-3
ISBN: PB 978-1-78660-392-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Is Available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020943793

ISBN 978-1-78660-391-3 (cloth: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-78660-392-0 (pbk: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-78660-393-7 (electronic)

 ™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

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Editor's Foreword

In the fall of 2015, I approached Werner Hamacher about the possibility of pulling some of his essays together into a book-length manuscript. He suggested a group of texts—all previously published, some already having appeared in English translation—that I would translate or edit under the tentative title *Brinks: Time, History, Language, Politics*. As we discussed the volume, its table of contents changed a good deal: one essay was substituted for another, a new one was added, some were dropped. By the time of Hamacher's death in 2017, the final list of titles seemed largely finalized, though much else was still in flux. We had promised each other to discuss the title—namely, the possibility of *On the Brink*—and the order in which the essays would appear, as well as their grouping into sections. And then there was the matter of the translation itself, the many questions I anticipated having about particular words, phrases—even punctuation—to say nothing of Hamacher's always demanding thinking. In the process of working on the collection, still more has changed. One major essay has since been published in another volume and so has been omitted here.[1] Other pieces have also fallen out in the interest of the coherence of the volume, although they should without doubt appear elsewhere. It is my hope that they will.

What remains are ten essays on topics ranging from Kant's thinking of time to a sketch for a theory of democracy, all marked by Hamacher's remarkable and characteristic rigor. And what remains is the feeling of loss and absence left by Hamacher's death. That absence registers not least in the fact that the volume is without a foreword or introduction by the author. It has become increasingly clear to me in working on the essays that a more recent word from Hamacher on his thinking of time, history, language, and politics would not only have offered an important note to the topic in the current

historical and political context, but in so doing would also have shed light on the other essays and their situations.

I will make no attempt to fill the space and time of that absence. I simply wish to register it and to allow the essays that follow to speak for themselves, even—especially—when they speak of a language that cannot say what it means and mean what it says. In the place of an introduction from the author, the opening paragraph of the first essay, "Ex Tempore," will serve as the point of entry. That paragraph, after all, is in many ways emblematic of Hamacher's singular ability to summarize an entire philosophical tradition—here from Plato to Kant—in a few sentences. The subsequent essays extend that thinking, beginning with Hegel and moving to the twentieth century, passing through meditations on forms and gestures of language. But whether the ostensible theme of a given essay is Kant's thinking of time in terms of the representation of relation; the distinction—and confusion—between phenomenal and literary events in Hegel and Aristotle, in particular; or, with Hegel again, the declaration of the "end" of art in irony. Whether it is the place of the noncognitive elements of language in translation; how greeting, as a figure for language as such, at once opens a space for the approach of another and denies that approach; or complaint or lament as a form of language that rejects itself and the world even in asserting itself. Or whether it is the call to serve and to work, as in Kafka, a call that cannot properly be answered, for there is no work, at least that does not undo itself; the understanding of work that determines the ideology of National Socialism; or the radical rethinking of the very concept and possibility of democracy today—when "we are, it seems, numbed by democracy." Whatever the topic, always at play in these essays is the "brink"—the edge of a high place, say, a cliff; the bank, as of a river; the threshold of danger; or the point of onset for something.[2]

The topic of each essay, then, is always also to be found in what that essay verges dangerously upon falling into. Better, it is the brink "itself"—if there is one—that (non-)place or time before, between, or beyond time, the very verging upon. . . . Or better still, this is not the *topic* or *thesis* of these essays, what they are about or on, which would reduce the brink to a theme or intention. Rather, like Hebel's Zundelfrieder, of whom Hamacher writes with obvious relish in "Contraductions," the essays in this volume don't much care for the boundaries of time, language, history, politics, except in pushing them to their limits and transgressing them. They speak one language (Polish, the language of time, say), while speaking another (German, the language of politics), and they even take language to the point where one can no longer be certain that it is one or the other that they are speaking or speaking of.

Nowhere is this more the case than in the final text, a meditation reminiscent in its form of Hamacher's work on philology that takes up questions that

preoccupy the other essays in the collection—directly, at least—with but a single mention of time. And yet this text, too, is equally dedicated to, is equally on the brink of, those questions. Indeed, that one mention of time brings it into proximity with place and with the question of relation itself: "It is not only the structure of time that, as Derrida has shown, depends on this With, *hama*; it is also the structure of place that depends on it" (chapter 10 of this volume). It is *not only* the structure of time, which is to say that it is *also* the structure of time that depends on the With. And so here, where Hamacher speaks above all of space and place, these too depend not only on the "With," but also are with—in the parallel construction of the sentence are with not only each but also with time in that time and place depend on the particular relation that is being-with, which conditions their being-with each other.

> But this With is not a localized one: it is the placing of place, and the granting of space, for it is only by virtue of this With, the medium both of discretion and of cohesion, that a place is given. The boundary lies with the boundary—and thus *with* that which marks the difference between, and the unity of, both boundaries, opens up the place. With is thus not a determination of place, a possible answer to the question of where something is; it is the granting of place, and it does not posit it at or together with a place but opens up the place as with and as at. The Together-With of things is a Together-With of their being Together-With with their being Without-Each Other. Place is the With of the With With the Without, the With without With of all bodies—and thus what relates them to each other and what keeps them apart, their *relation*; place carries them and brings them apart and together, a double carrier of the double boundary, an *amphora*. (chapter 10 of this volume)

This is perhaps the brink that occupies all the essays in this volume, the "amphora . . . not as a body," and no doubt not as any of the other terms the subtitle circumscribes—history, politics, or even time or language. And "not even simply as a boundary, but as the outermost boundary of the inner wall of a container whose circumference is equal to that of the thing it contains, which is tied to it and yet detached from it" (chapter 10 of this volume). Though the "boundary" is perhaps pushed even further to its outermost limits, since it is not a matter of a container or thing, no matter how fully put into question, but rather of a history and politics, and time and language, that are always with . . . that clear paths, open the possibility for . . . that are always on the brink.

Hamacher takes us there, to that brink. To that dangerous place where we might fall. And where something is about to begin, always about to. And he refuses to avert his gaze or to step back.

The essays collected here appeared in journals on various themes, were given as talks on various occasions, and have sometimes been reprinted, some-

times, as I have noted above, in translation. It has been my privilege to learn from those remarkable translations. I have edited them lightly for consistency while trying to respect the singularity of the essay's language and occasion—as I have tried, similarly, to do in my own translation of the previously untranslated essays. To speak, once again, of the task of the translator would not be adequate here; it would be better, perhaps, to speak of the honor.

I am grateful to Werner Hamacher for the opportunity to work on the volume and for his example. To Andrew Benjamin, Frankie Mace, and Sarah Campbell for their steadfast support. To Tobias Nagl for an eye-opening suggestion. And to Pascal Michelberger for his many helpful clarifications.

The previously untranslated texts are translated here with permission of the author and Shinu Sara Ottenburger. "(The End of Art with the Mask)" (chapter 3) appeared in Stuart Barnett, ed., *Hegel after Derrida* (London: Routledge, 1998), 105–30. "Uncalled" (chapter 7) appeared in *Reading Ronell*, edited by Diane Davis and copyright 2009 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois and is used with permission of the University of Illinois Press. Chapter 8, "Working Through Working," trans. Matthew Hartman, *Modernism/modernity* 3, no. 1 (1996): 23–56, copyright 1996 by Johns Hopkins University Press, is printed with permission of Johns Hopkins University Press. "Sketches toward a Lecture on Democracy" (chapter 9) originally appeared in *theory@buffalo* 10 (2005): 9–53 and is reproduced with permission of the journal. "Amphora" (chapter 10) appeared as "Amphora (Extracts)" in *Assemblage* 20 (1993): 40–41 and is reproduced with permission from MIT Press.

—Jan Plug

NOTES

1. "Parousia, Stone-Walls," in *Two Studies of Friedrich Hölderlin*, ed. Peter Fenves and Julia Ng (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).
2. "Brink," in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Merriam Webster, 2019).

I

Time, History, Art: Kant and Hegel

Chapter One

Ex Tempore

Time as Representation in Kant

Time is principally thought in the philosophical tradition as relation. For Plato, it is above all an *exaíphnes*—suddenly—that as incommensurable instance flashes between measurable courses of *chronos* is not determined by its measure, but for precisely this reason allows for chronological determinations: a relation without hold on what is held by it. For Aristotle, primordial time is the *nyn*—now—that, as the border separating the past from the future *nyn*, is neither one nor the other, but rather the relation of non-simultaneity between them, a non-simultaneity that allows all the similar now points to cohere into a line only in the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous. For Boe thius, it is the *nunc* that allows continuous time to emerge, the point of origin from which time flows and from which its flow draws its original coherence. For Thomas Aquinas, the *nunc*, as in Aristotle, is the end of a past movement of time and the beginning of a future one, and, as in the Christian conception, is the alpha and omega through which the cycle of time moves. In his most famous analysis of its structure in the "General Observations on the Transcendental Aesthetic" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant characterizes time not only as relation but also as the *relation of representation*. As difficult as the concept of relation is—its inclusion under the categories of pure reason only hints at its complexity by suggesting that it is irresolvable—the concept of the *relation of representation*, in which, for Kant, the form of time is defined, is still more difficult. In this concept, the "Copernican" revolution of time is completed, for it no longer describes a relation that is somehow conditioned but precisely and only that relation that is only opened in the act of *representing* and therefore is not in the first instance a relation *between* representations but one arising *from* representing itself, a relation arising

from a relation, then, and therefore the absolute event of the form of relation itself.

Kant starts out from the assumption that everything in our knowledge pertaining to intuition and to the sensibility guided by intuition *contains nothing but pure relations*.[1] Kant characterizes the form of all these relations as representation. The form of intuition—thus intuition itself as mere form—is accordingly nothing other than a relation, in fact that sensible relation that takes place in a representation without a predetermined represented empirical object. The possibility of such an object can only arise from the form of this representing and only within the horizon of this representation-form. Intuition as pure sensible relation as such, as the form of relation of sensibility and as sense in its mere relational structure, however, is in turn also not available as given or already formed. It is an activity and, as the mere form of intuition, a form-activity. Intuiting is therefore not an indifferent contemplation that would look unmoved at something before it and observe it indifferently; it is also not a "reception" that would be capable of letting the data of the world of the senses, of representation, or of images enter into an empty vessel—whose ontological neutrality would have to remain inexplicable. Intuition, precisely insofar as it functions as the faculty of *receptivity*, is an active relation; it is sensibility as the action of relating, mere sense as the relation-act. With this relational-active intuition, Kant, in the context of his analysis of the constitution of time, thinks the pure form of a self-extension or self-stretching without an object, thus a sensible *intentio* without an object. Only as active, as the act of relation without relatum, and as the establishing of relation without a predetermined object, is intuition able to relate to objects. It can only take something up if, as act of mere intending, it has already established the stretching toward an out-ahead [*Voraus*] as such in which a possible position opposite it can be encountered. Every relation to an object is therefore founded in the extension *into* a possible out-ahead [*Voraus*] and thus in placing-itself-out-ahead [*Sich-Voraus-Stellen*] *toward* a possible position opposite. Intuition, however, does not perform the act of re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] in such a way that intuition could refrain from or replace this act with another one. The act takes place because intuition, in accordance with its mere form, operates only as re-presentation or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*]: sensibility has the structure of internal extension into an out-ahead [*Voraus*].[2] The positing of relation that is the sense of sensibility lies this side not only of the will and of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure; it lies above all this side of every possible predication and can therefore be characterized as the pure act of affection before all logical synthesis. Intuition therefore does not relate to an object of intuition in terms of judgment, determination, or reflection, but rather relates as affect to a possible toward [*Gegen*] as such and only thus constructs the conditions of possibility of an object [*Gegenstandes*] and its constitution in judgment.

Kant describes this transcendental relation of intuition—which makes possible the transcendence toward objects—in the second version of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as follows:

> Now that which, as representation, can precede any act of thinking something is intuition and, if it contains nothing but relations, it is the form of intuition, which, since it does not represent anything except insofar as something is posited in the mind, can be nothing other than the way in which the mind is affected by its own activity, namely, this positing of its representation, thus the way it is affected through itself, i.e., it is an inner sense as far as it regards its form. (*Pure* B 67–68; 189E)

Already in the first version of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant said that time determined "the relation of representations in our inner state" (*Pure* A 33; 180E) and that time in this respect is nothing other than such a *relation of representations*. In the new, more complex discussion in the second version, it is made clear that these representations come about through the mind's *own activity* and that this activity must be a *positing*. Representations of every kind are representations only in that they are placed before the mind—in fact, *before the mind within it*. They are representations in that they are posed, in fact, pro-posed, and in that they are posited, in fact posited in such a way that they are posited-before. Representing [*Vorstellen*] is thus itself essentially a relation, in fact a relation based in an act that, as positing, is at the same time a holding, as *placing*-before [*Vor*-stellen] at the same time a *holding*-before [*Vor*-halten], of the out-ahead [*Voraus*]. In representation, the mind does not first of all hold before itself something objective but rather holds itself before itself and in this holding-before adheres to itself. Insofar as representation is a process of sensibility, it is that relation that characterizes sensibility as pure sensibility, as the form of the sensible insofar as it is sensible: Even before an object or even mere data for the constitution of an object can be encountered, it is that a priori self-relation of representing that grounds the possibility of placing objects of experience opposite one another. If sensibility is the mere relation of representing as such and so is essentially the *relation of representation*, then it is that *manner*, as Kant writes, that mode, that a priori modification, through which sensibility enters into a relation, not to the other first of all but a relation to itself as self. Representation can only be a relation to the other if it is in the first place representation at all, and thus in itself refers to a before [*Vor*] that must not belong to an I, a subject, but instead to a "sense" that is determined as attention, as self-observation, and in this sense as consciousness. The distinction between I and other must be completely foreign to this sense of sensibility, which in its representing is not differentiated from consciousness—for "sense" is essentially a relation within the self, in "the mind," and this self before every difference from the other is, in the constitution of the *relation of representa-*

tion, the movement of an internal alteration that alone delineates the horizon within which its other can appear. Every other is for Kant an other only in the horizon of time as representation and thus only in the horizon of finite "sense." The question regarding something other that does not enter into this horizon of time can, in Kant's theory of representation, only be the question of whether a representation takes place at all, whether it is consistent in itself or rather fails at its own activity and in being out-ahead, is uncatchably and thus for its sense incomprehensibly—out-ahead of itself. This question Kant does not pose in his discussion of the representation-structure of time in the "Transcendental Aesthetic."

As pure form of a relation, representation, each time it is posited, is not only an activity of intuition, but also an activity in intuition. More precisely, it is the activity *in* the *in* of intuition insofar as this *in* each time proceeds toward a before [*Vor*] posited in representing [*Vorstellen*]: an intuition that represents is a *facere ad se ipsum* in which it *is affected by itself*. Intuition is not affected *by itself* as *by* an instrument, but only *through* itself—"*sua sponte*"—in fact, in such a way that in its "*ad-ficere*" it produces nothing other than the *on* of its acting, the *at* of its looking at, the out-ahead [*Voraus*] of its placing. The relation of representation means that representation, in which sensibility functions in the mode of relation to a possible other, is therefore not self-affection in that an already constituted self has effects on itself as somehow different from itself, but first of all only in that, as the relation that the self itself is, it is meant for a relatum in which it can for the first time assume the status of a complete relation of sense. Sense is sense only as relation to a before [*Vor*] in which it can hold onto itself. Time, for Kant, is the movement of re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellens*] into an out-ahead [*Voraus*] and the holding fast of the movement of representing in representation that goes with it.

Auto-affection is therefore not somehow the affection of an already existing mind by a movement that is added to it—but from where?—and thereby changes it. The mind is in itself auto-affection insofar as, as the representing in intuition, it only ever has an effect on the mind itself as affection. Affection is in the literal sense of the word acting *on* something or acting *toward* something and can only therefore be an active relation to an out-ahead. As act of affection—as act of *afficere*, of acting-on—the sensible self is that act of relating that defines it as finite: it establishes a border for itself in its relation to the before [*Vor*] of its representing [*Vorstellen*]. The finite self is therefore nothing but the representing at work in transcendental-sensible auto-affection and thus as relation to itself. (There can be no knowledge of *things in themselves* for Kant, because knowledge under conditions of sensibility is only possible as knowledge in relations as such. The original form of this relation to itself postulated by Kant, which determines all other ways of relating—desire and the knowledge of objects—is representation: a *re-*

praesentare in which the *praesentatio* takes place in itself—the only way possible in sensible beings—and therefore as representing from and toward itself. Transcendence toward something other is for Kant therefore limited to the horizon of the immanence of representing. Time is the pure form of this limitation of transcendence, since it is itself the only possible means of transcending for sensible beings.) Since the relation of re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellens*] and of holding-before [*Vor-haltens*] is an act, and since, as affection, it is the immediate act of the alteration of the sensible self, a relation that stretches apart toward a respective before [*Vor*], this self can never be anything but transcendental, a priori time; it must be the one, irreducible, original temporalization of time as such. The relation of representing—the fundamental structure of finite subjectivity—is temporalization. In that it extends toward a before and thus ad-forms it, representing posits time in itself. Sense as representing posits time. That is why it is called a *sense of time*—not because it is a sense for a time passing outside of it, but because it is time as sense in its very extension. The self is the production of time in that *in* itself it re-presents or places itself *before* itself and, placing itself out-ahead [*voraus*] thus, and pulling itself into its out-ahead [*Voraus*], holds to itself. Since this production of time as *relation of representation* takes place without the activity of thought playing a role in it and as pure transcending within the immanence of sensibility—and more precisely, since temporalization carries out this transcending as making immanent and the latter as active sensibility—Kant names it *internal sense with respect to its form*. Not only the original structure of the finite self but the entire horizon of its possibilities of experience as temporalization are circumscribed in this sense.

Internal sense with respect to its form is time in that it produces time, and the meaning of the being of this sense is the representing that posits and holds in front. The ontology of time that Kant formulates thus is onto-theseology, for in it the being of time is thought as thesis and thetic relation to the thesis. Only within the horizon of positing [*Setzens*] can that modification of position be thought that defines temporalization as pre-position [*Voraus-setzen*] and thus as re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] and auto-affection. Onto-prosthesis is that re-presentation or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] in which what we so vaguely call the mind relates to something that, by means of this pre-position [*Voraus-setzen*], stands in a relationship—an *intentio*—to it, such that this pre-position [*Voraus-setzen*] can only ever follow. The sequence of re-presentations that is experienced as a succession is therefore already contained in the time-atom of mere representing or of the *relation of representation*. Succession is not first of all the sequence of a plurality of acts of positing; it is the following after one another *in* the act of positing carried out by mere re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*]. As re-presentation or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*], positing already has the form of a sequence. That is why Kant can write that time, as "the way in which we

place them [representations] in the mind as a formal condition, already contains relations of succession, of simultaneity, and of that which is simultaneous with succession (of that which persists)" (*Pure* B 67; 188E). And it is why time for Kant is "not something that would subsist for itself or attach to things as an objective determination, and thus remain if one abstracted from all subjective conditions of the intuition of them" (*Pure* A 32; 180E). Time, rather, is precisely that subjectively founded—that is, founded in representing intuition or in sense as representing—condition of every experience of an object and thus the form of appearance as such. Because the original self-relation, the self *as* relation—of sensibility—is a re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*], since it is thetic and, more precisely, pros-thetic and in that respect the form of appearance of possible objects, Kant analyses the experience conditioned by it under the title "Aesthetic." Transcendental aesthetics is transcendental pros-thetics in the horizon of theseology.

Now, representing, insofar as it is an act of the sensible mind in which, within itself, it places itself before itself, is never only a simple thesis without at the same time being an act that connects all the elementary movements of representing in a synthesis. This transcendental synthesis holds the being out-ahead *of* in a representation together with the Erstwhile [*Ehedem*] *from* which it distances itself. Kant thinks these three acts of the constitution of time—protention, turning back, and the preservation of both in the identity of a common movement, each of which is a synthetic act a priori—as the synthesis of apprehension, reproduction, and recognition. Apprehension reaches, in representing, toward the out-ahead [*Voraus*], reproduction holds onto the Erstwhile [*Ehedem*] without which there can be no out-ahead, and recognition combines both of these elements of representing and reproductive auto-affection in one consciousness, so that they belong to the same movement of a single time. All three elementary faculties of knowledge are involved in this transcendental synthesis: intuition in apprehension, imagination in reproduction, and understanding as the conceptual capacity for identification in recognition. (The much-debated difference between the first and second editions of *Critique of Pure Reason* is not decisive for the basic structure of representation-time. The role of understanding and its synthetic feats in the production of time can only be stressed more energetically in the second edition, because concepts of understanding are also representations and because these representations are acts of attention and awareness by which the manifolds of intuition are connected in their own medium. The proposition in §24 of the "Transcendental Deduction," according to which the "inner sense" "is . . . affected" by "the unity of the action" of understanding [*Pure* B 153–54; 257–58E], does not contradict the proposition about the auto-affection of intuition from the "Transcendental Aesthetic" but rather clarifies it. The "inner sense" could never be "affected" by the understanding did the understanding itself not touch "sense" and were it not at work on it in the act

of affecting in the same sensible way. A "transcendental synthesis of the imagination" through understanding is only possible because the understanding is an organ of sensibility that arranges and links the representations it is offered by the activity of the "inner sense.") All of the synthetic acts involved in the constitution of time belong, however, to the synthesis of the "transcendental imagination" and thus to the unifying acts of that faculty that Kant describes as the "faculty of representation." If time originates in representing and itself has the structure of representing, then it is founded in the capacity for forming representations, for reproduction, and for grasping in concepts, and is structured by this faculty of representation, by the imagination itself. The "pure image" of time as the relation that holds together in itself the distance [*Ent-fernung*] between a before and an after and the recognizing repetition of the beforehand in the afterward is made possible by the one imagination that completes representation's acts of positing. Kant's philosophy of the production of time is thus an onto-theseology and a pros-theseology only on the basis of an onto-dynamics—a theory of the possibility, capacity, and power for a representing that produces time. It is thus at the same time a transcendental phenomenology, not merely in the strict sense of the word: a science of the conditions of the production of time, insofar as it is at once the conditions of possibility of phenomena, of appearances, and, more precisely, of images. It is a transcendental phenodynamics: the doctrine of the power, in representing, to temporalize appearances and thus the conditions of objective experience.

Transcendental philosophy is the philosophy of making possible. In Kant, the basic structure of making possible is called *representation*, in Husserl *intentional consciousness*, in Heidegger *understanding* as self-understanding in the anticipation of possibilities. The fundamental conception of all three phenomenologies is that of an inextricable connection between the structure of making possible and the structure of time. Kant finds in the transcendental imagination the ground for all three faculties involved in making possible finite knowledge—intuition, understanding, and empirical imagination—and grounds in this imagination [*Einbildungskraft*], which Schelling rightly understood as the power of forming into oneness [*In-Eins-Bildungskraft*], acts of understanding as well as of intuition. The understanding can only give concepts for something that can be satisfied by intuitions; intuitions, in turn, can only relate to something if they are regulated by concepts. Only the connection between intuition and the concept in the "transcendental schema of the imagination" allows them to determine one another and to offer the grounds for objective, universally valid knowledge. This schema, the "mediating representation" between categories and appearances, is the "transcendental time-determination," because in it is present the formal condition of the connection among all representations (*Pure* A 138–39; 272E). The structure of subjectivity and thus the temporalizing structure—representation—is

in essence a structure of determination, of the determination of objects, and of the self-determination in which the possibility of the unity and totality of the experience of phenomena is to be secured and in which at the same time the activity and operational scope of the capacity for knowledge and action is to be defined.

Now, Kant comes upon a borderland of phenomenology (borderlands are fundamental areas for thinking). In the phenomenology of feelings, he comes upon a structure of the faculty of representation that contains no universally valid determinations of objects and no universally binding conditions for action and that therefore brings about the suspension of the faculty in the state of its being made possible, on the one hand, but, on the other, in the state—in the deficiency—of its being made *im*possible. Namely, feelings are representations that are presented in judgments that are always singular.[3] The judgment of beauty never implies that something is beautiful in general; rather, it is always this one thing—this rose, this arabesque, this green—that is beautiful, and it is not beautiful for everyone but only, first of all, for the person in whom this judgment is formed. Only the particular is given to the singular judgment; the universal, and thus the rule for finding its universal validity, are only assigned for it. But if the universal is never predicated in the singular judgment, nevertheless in it access is gained to that which underlies every universality as its possibility, as universaliz*abil*ity. Since this universalizability—Kant calls it "subjective universal validity" (*Judgment* B 23; 115E)—must precede every objective universality, it is more powerful than every universality with respect to concepts or transcendental schemata; since it does not produce an objective universality but rather remains within the horizon of universality's mere possibility, it can also delimit the border to the impossibility of objective universality, the powerlessness of concepts of understanding, the incapacity of its synthetic capacity, and the breaking down of the categorial structure upon which the doctrine of the constitution of time in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is built.

Now, time under the conditions of the strict subjectivity of the singular judgment of feeling cannot have the same structure as under the conditions of its function in the constitution of objective knowledge. The difference between the two structures of time is in fact of such a kind that one cannot speak of a *time* in the singular judgment in the strict sense. In fact, one can do so neither in the judgment of the beautiful nor in that of the sublime—and in the two for different but related reasons—each of which allows the borders of the structure of representing and of the phenomenon of time produced in it to emerge.

In his examination of the category of relation—purposiveness—that is part of every judgment of taste, Kant writes the following about our relationship to the beautiful: "We *linger* over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself, which is analo-

gous to (yet not identical with) the way in which we linger when a charm in the representation of the object repeatedly attracts attention, where the mind is passive" (*Judgment* B 37; 107E). Dwelling or lingering is the manner of temporalization characteristic of pure aesthetic judgments. Kant distinguishes this lingering from that of attention, which is elicited by a charm, because for him charm characterizes the "matter of satisfaction" (*Judgment* B 38; 108E), which produces an interest in the object of representation—an interest that cannot belong to the mere *feeling* of a representation (or to representation as a feeling), because it is either an interest in the knowledge of the object represented or a desire for its existence. Now, the pleasure in the beautiful, however, is never primarily and essentially an interest in knowledge; it is distinguished from the desire for the existence of an object in that it does not follow from the effort to use it in enjoyment but allows its representation to be valid as mere representation in feeling. The feeling of the beautiful is for Kant essentially a feeling of the preservation or affording of feeling as feeling, of emotion, insofar as it is mere emotion; it does not lie in the intention to satisfy a longing directed at an object. The libido, if we wish to use Freudian language, is directed, in the experience of the beautiful, not toward discharge by acting on an object but only toward itself and its conservation. That is why the feeling that this rose is beautiful does not function as a means in service of other purposes (of knowledge or use) but can only be a means to this means itself and therefore can only be the feeling of the pure mediation of this feeling itself. This im-*med*-iacy could be said to be without transcendence were it not a mere transcending without an objective correlate, transcending without transcendent object. Since now the judgment of taste is not determined by an interest or by desire, it lacks the purpose that might turn it into a teleological judgment—a judgment of the adequacy of means for a purpose. Since, on the other hand, it connects the faculty of representation (as feeling) to the faculty of concepts (understanding) and in this connection produces the synthetic sentence "This rose is beautiful" whenever this judgment is passed, it establishes a free "relation of the powers of representation to each another" (*Judgment* B 34; 102E) that is not governed by any conceptual rule, empirical interest, or concept of reason (of the good). The pure aesthetic judgment "This rose is beautiful" is purposive, therefore—though not for knowledge and not for desire. Rather, it is purposive only for a certain relation of the faculties of knowledge and desire to one another. Consequently, it is purposive for those faculties that ground the representation of purposes as such but themselves follow no determinate purposes.

Purposive without purpose, in the form of a concept without a concept, judgments of the beautiful are judgments concerning the capacity for purposes and concepts as such and concerning the capacity of both to combine in the faculty of feeling. They are therefore judgments concerning judg*ability* and consequently judgments concerning represent*ability* in general as the

founding condition of possibility of all judging and of the representations associated in judging. These judgments determine nothing other than the "determinability" (*Judgment* B LVI; 82E) that is their own condition of possibility. That the power operative in them is called "reflective judgment" in Kant's terminology should therefore not be understood as though an already available quantity or a given ability were bending back toward itself in order to understand itself in judgment. Rather, the initial mode of operation of judgment [*Urteilskraft*], which must precede every limitation to the determination of objects, already "reflects" upon its condition, "reflects" upon the *power* [*Kraft*] to judge, and in re-turning to its own ability is an act not only of self-preservation but also of enlivening itself through auto-affection. In each of its assertions, *reflective judgment* is the making possible of this power itself; it is the making possible of its possibility, immediate self-reproduction, and thus the fundamental movement of the faculty of representation as such. That is why Kant can speak of it and of the pleasure of reflection associated with it as an "enlivening of the cognitive powers" (*Judgment* B 37; 107E, translation modified) of the mind and, since "the mind for itself is entirely life (the principle of life itself)" (*Judgment* B 129; 159E, translation modified), implicitly of an enlivening of life itself.

Thus, when Kant writes, "We *linger* over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself" (*Judgment* B 37; 107E), he does not offer a description of a relation to the beautiful that could be produced empirically but rather the transcendental determination of the fundamental mode of temporalization at work in every reflective judgment. Every contemplation of this kind is a re-enlivening of life, a reproduction and strengthening of the faculties involved in a contemplation as such under the condition of their possible extinguishing. That the life of these faculties is *reproduced* in their lingering by themselves does not now mean, however, that their time is reproduced with them; rather, it means that the faculty of representations at work in the production of time is reproduced with it. The While[4] is not time in the full extent of its concept, for the While distinguishes itself by not advancing in successions but rather preserving, in repetition, "the state of the representation of the mind and the occupation of the cognitive powers without a further aim" (*Judgment* B 37; 107E). For time to be produced, ever newer initiatives of representation would be necessary that go beyond their state once it has been reached and in going beyond to subsequent representations would draw the line of succession. A contemplation that preserves a determinate state—or the state of mere determinability—without any other aim forms, in the While, not the temporal progression of alternating representations but merely the time of the dwelling of representation in its simple relationship to itself. As reproduction, it is therefore reproduction not only, for example, of individual representations, and also not only of the process of representation, but as the reproduction of the

capacity for representation, is reproduction also of the minimal condition of reproduction itself: reproduction of what Kant in the first *Critique* calls "reproducibility" (*Pure* A 101–2; 230E) and thus the founding intra-transcendental act as such. In lingering *with* the contemplation of the *beautiful*, the power of representing remains *with itself* and in reproduction always becomes anew that power that, maintaining and increasing itself, develops the pure relation of the with-itself that inheres in all determinations of relations between representations. Lingering is not lingering *in* time that passes or advances in successions, but a lingering that makes possible passing and advancing in the first place—thus a lingering in the beginning of time that must hold together every succession if this succession is not to dissolve into disparate phases and into nothingness. Time has its fundamental hold in the faculty of representation's holding itself back in lingering. Only in lingering can a succession of time arise in accordance with the precept of the interest in knowledge or practical imperatives; but lingering also remains the ground of all temporal relations in this succession.

As holding to itself and thus holding together the faculties that work together to constitute time, lingering is the ground of the substantiality of time. That time "lasts and does not change" (*Pure* B 225; 300E), lasts and persists despite all change in appearances, that it is the substance of finitude itself, this it owes to the self-repeating holding to its mere possibility as possibility. That is, time as transcendental form of intuition owes its existence to the pause and holding-together-in-itself of re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] as an original gesture of temporalization, lingering. As indisputable as this pause is for the constitution of time from the activity of representation, it also holds back the activity in the mere reproduction of a *state* of representation, holds re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] at a before [Vor] it has arrived at and which cannot be surpassed by any subsequent re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] that would go out ahead of it: the pause in lingering is thus also a holding back before the time of succession and thus before the time of unlimited representing as such.

The necessity of lingering to enliven the faculties of cognition and desire shows that not only the While but also representation-time as a whole, which depends upon it because it is constituted with it, is a restrictive form of time that also limits the possibilities—and these are also the dangers—of representation-time. Representing always has the tendency to become a virtually infinite series of re-representations and super-re-representations and, with the horizon of a representation-*state* that merely reproduces itself, has the tendency to lose its hold on the placing of re-presenting or placing-before and even on its founding acts of positing. The While and the time of representation held together in it protect against the disappearance that threatens representation through the uncontrollable raptus of re-representing and super-representing. The While is a time that guards time from time.

The While is merely the restrictive original form of representation-time. It is granted by a nonhierarchical "free play of the powers of representation" (*Judgment* B 28; 102E), an "agreement" (*Judgment* B 29; 102E) of understanding and imagination that follows no logical rule and that is not subordinated to the law of inner causality. In lingering, the cognitive powers play among themselves. But the freedom of this play and thus its nature as play is confined *to* itself in the tight space of the lingering of the powers of representation, confining the powers to an interplay with one another and to corresponding to one another and thus excluding every overtaxing of one power by another, every disharmony or incommensurability between them. The representation of the beautiful remains within the horizon of representability, and representability is that condition that is produced as the time of representation by representation in its self-containment—in its remaining with itself as a *state* and in the relationship to itself made possible by this. Representation-time as a whole—and not only the one in the passages from the third *Critique* commented upon here—is the time of the beautiful: a beautiful time, a time of play and of always newly stabilized harmony of the powers of representation with one another and with itself. In its positive totality, it belongs to sensibility and to what Kant describes as nature. Now, there is an experience, however, that overwhelms sensibility as mere power of nature. This experience is always had when our imagination encounters phenomena or manifolds of phenomena that it is absolutely incapable of bringing together into the unity of a representation, presentation, or image. This experience, which elicits the feeling of the *sublime* in us, Kant of course exemplifies in the tradition of the philosophical-rhetorical analysis of the *hypsous* and *sublimitas* of overpowering natural events and gigantic constructions. Yet in his words it is an experience whose principle "can be the principle for the most common judgings even though one is not always conscious of it" (*Judgment* 106; 146E). It is not first of all the *tremendum* by which consciousness is shaken that is sublime, but the "most common" experience, which does not have to stand out to consciousness at all.

The most fundamental of these unelevated experiences of the sublime is that of the determination of time in the sense of timekeeping and thus the production of time. In the paragraphs on the "Quality of Delight in the Judgment of the Sublime" in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant describes the apprehension—*apprehensio*—of space as a *progressus* that is virtually infinite and that must therefore be comprehended—*comprehensio*—in the unity of intuition in order to still correspond to the structure of representation. "The unity of intuition" here means that measure by which it is determined whether an intuition can be intuition at all. The unity of representation in intuition is what Kant calls an *instant* [*Augenblick*]. Such an instant could only be arrived at through a *regressus* in which successive moments of time moving in the opposite direction are examined and held together—in the act of repro-

duction and the act of recognition that accompanies it—in such a way that their *simultaneity* as image lies before the eyes. With this *simultaneity*, however, the form of time, succession, that Kant also describes as *time-condition* would be sublated. Kant writes,

> The measurement of a space (as apprehension) is at the same time the description of it, thus an objective movement in the imagination and a progression; by contrast, the comprehension of multiplicity in the unity not of thought but of intuition, hence the comprehension in one instant of that which is successively apprehended, is a regression, which in turn cancels the time-condition in the progression of the imagination and makes simultaneity intuitable. (*Judgment* B 100; 89E, translation modified)

To determine a course of time as such, this suggests, this course gone through in the forward-moving representation must be made present again in a return and must be brought to an intuition that is itself non-successive and thus also not temporal. The comprehension in such an intuition—an *instant*—Kant writes,

> is thus (since temporal succession is a condition of inner sense and of an intuition) a subjective movement of the imagination, by which it does violence to the inner sense, which must be all the more marked the greater the quantum is which the imagination comprehends in one intuition. (*Judgment* B 100; 142E)

The movement of the imagination completed in re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] as the irreducible structure of temporalization suffers violence—this sentence suggests—from precisely this same imagination when it attempts to comprehend the time series of re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellens*], to preserve previous time in the now, the before in the after, and to bring the nonsimultaneous simultaneously, in a single instant, to intuition. This means, on the one hand, that the moments that follow one another in temporal extension can only be grasped in their succession if they are at the same time taken together in the direction opposite to this extension: with this retrogression in progress, however, the imagination does violence to itself, since it actively attempts to stop the formation of time and thus its own activity. On the other hand, Kant's observation moreover suggests that re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] as original temporalization from the pure form of intuition must always turn back against its own sense—against the *sense of time*—it if is to take place at all as re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*]. For time to exist, it must be held up. To the sense of time belongs a counter-sense of time, to temporalization a de-temporalization, to re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*], a putting back [*Zurück-stellen*] to the beforehand [*Zuvar*] and thus a standstill [*Stillstellen*]

that, at the very instant the pure form of intuition becomes effective, suspends precisely this form.

Time, Kant's observation suggests, can only exist at the cost of time: it exists only when it no longer exists. But even this paradoxical existence of time has to remain a mere *effort*, for to make simultaneous the nonsimultaneous yet again takes time. And thus the imagination does violence to itself not only through its regression; it does violence to itself through the progress in its regression and suffers the violence of time—its own—to precisely the extent to which it does violence to time—to itself. Kant continues his train of thought with the following sentence:

> Thus the effort to take up in a single intuition a measure for magnitudes, which requires an appreciable time for its apprehension, is a kind of apprehension which, subjectively considered, is counter-purposive, but which objectively, for the estimation of magnitude, is necessary, hence purposive; in this way, however, the very same violence that is inflicted on the subject by the imagination is judged as purposive *for the whole vocation of the mind*. (*Judgment* B 100; 142E, translation modified)

The *mode of representation* Kant speaks of here is not one mode of representation among others; it is the sole mode in which representation must endeavor to complete itself as intuition when it acts as the auto-affection of the mind and thus as the production of time. Now, it can only produce time by suspending this production, and it cannot take a break from the production of time without requiring a *distinct time* for this suspension. The double violence that not only representing but the faculty of representation, the imagination, suffers in this effort to produce time is unpurposive for the mind, because it must both inhibit itself and drive forward, and because as organ of sensibility and as life force it only enlivens to the extent to which it paralyzes itself and shatters the measure that it can only find in itself.

Time could only be generated as such if it could be stopped. Its suspension remains impossible, however, because the imagination's effort to suspend is overcome by its representing activity. Time is thus "unpurposive" for time, representation "unpurposive" for representation, the imagination, as the faculty of representing and temporalization, "unpurposive" for this faculty [*Vermögen*] itself, because it, time, in the effort to return from it to an Erstwhile, leaps over every before [*Vor*] that is posited to a subsequent one, surpasses representation in representation, and in its ability [*Vermögen*] to do so transcends this en-abling [*Ver-mögen*] itself, its being before [*Vor*] as well as its abling [*Mögen*]. This "unpurposive" transcendence called *time* can only be characterized problematically as a transcendental form of intuition, for it lacks the unity to be a form. It can never become intuition in its progress, because the contraction of this progress into a moment is denied it. And it is not transcendental in the sense of making an objective experience possible,

because this making possible in the faculty of representation must always already have surpassed the horizon of this faculty and, as ultra-transcendental movement, cannot be secured in a faculty at one with itself. Time overwhelms the very faculty of representation from which it arises; and in time, which as representation determines the basic structure of all our faculties, the faculty of representation overwhelms itself. Therefore, the ground for the "synthesis of apprehension in intuition," which in the transcendental deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to ensure the possibility of a pure form of intuition, "time," in *gathering together* the manifold of its moments, is broken apart (*Pure* A 99; 229E). Thus, the synthesis of reproduction, by which the synthesis of apprehension must be accompanied, disintegrates, as does the synthesis of recognition in the concept, which must ensure the unity of the moments of time that have been apprehended and made present again. Thus, the entire fundamental structure of the syntheses necessary for the constitution of time disintegrates. For Kant's philosophy of representation there is absolutely no possibility of a comprehension of the time-series into an instant that is coherent in itself; there is no instant that is not pulled forward and apart by the representation that is itself always re-presented and placed ahead. Time is—if it *is*—precisely this tear in representing. It is the tear of representing from representing. It is *tempus ex tempore*; *tempus ex raptu temporis*: time from out of the tear that tears representation away from itself, from its intuition, concept, and image; time from *out of* the before and as the out-ahead *beyond* every placing of a before and its gathering into a fixed representation. Not a time that could be held in the synthetic structure of representation and in the horizon of positional being.

Now, Kant emphasizes, however, that the failure in every apprehension of the virtually infinite extension of time into the totality of an intuition might be *counter-purposive* for subjective intuition, but it is "purposive *for the whole vocation of the mind*" (*Judgment* B 100; 142E). Thus, the failure of the faculty of intuition is purposive and so too, consequently, is the failure of the faculty of aesthetic judgment and of the faculty of representation in which it is grounded. But this incapacity of the absolutely fundamental capacity for all knowledge, efforts, and feelings can only be purposive if this incapacity can be noticed, if as violence it can be suffered, if it can be felt as displeasure, thus if this failure of the imagination can become an experience—a *reflective*-transcendental experience—of the imagination. Only if the imagination is capable of separating itself from itself and distancing itself from its incapability; only if, therefore, it is other than itself and can represent itself from its otherness; only if it can represent its very *in*ability to represent and consequently *expands* its representation beyond the region of the possibility of representation; only if, in short, it abandons the horizon of categorial "possibility" and, in addition, the horizon of the concepts of understanding altogether is the faculty of representation capable of experiencing its own

failure as displeasure and of connecting this displeasure to a pleasure different from the merely sensible pleasure of the presentation of intuition. The unrepresentability of representation-time is itself representable—but representable only in an instance that is not something represented in representing, but that remains in the mere movement of the out-ahead of all representations. Precisely this, as Kant writes, is *discovered* in the feeling of the sublime, and only thus does the extent to which the failure of the temporal synthesis can be "purposive *with respect to the entire vocation of the mind*" become clear:

> The quality of the feeling of the sublime is that it is a feeling of displeasure concerning the aesthetic faculty of judging an object that is yet at the same time represented as purposive, which is possible because the subject's own incapacity reveals the consciousness of an unlimited capacity of the very same subject, and the mind can aesthetically judge the latter only through the former. (*Judgment* B 100; 142E)

The mind has access to the consciousness of an unlimited capacity, a capacity not limited to the conditions of sensibility and thus to the conditions of the sense of time. This access is opened by a "discovery" to which belong two experiences, more precisely, two feelings: on the one hand, the feeling of the "incapacity" to comprehend time in an intuition; on the other, the feeling that precisely this feeling of incapacity does not present a limitation for the "efforts" at such a comprehension. The fact of this "effort" cannot be denied, even if it fails. For precisely by failing and, in failing, triggering the "shaking" of the mind, its "bewilderment," "embarrassment," and displeasure (*Judgment* B 88; 136E), it becomes indisputable as "effort" and testifies to a capacity for thinking the infinity of time as comprehended in a whole. This capacity to represent that can at no time become an objective representation also cannot, for precisely this reason, be disproven by any failure. Only in the failure of its presentation, however, can it be "revealed," "aroused," or "made sensible" in time (*Judgment* B 105; 121E, translation modified). This capacity expressed in a pleasure beyond every possible displeasure Kant calls the "idea of the absolute whole" of the faculty of reason (*Judgment* B 101; 145E).

The infinite course of time, which eludes all intuition—and all intuition in an aesthetic idea—is represented in this "idea of the absolute whole" as comprehended in a unity. The "impossibility of the absolute totality of an endless progression" (*Judgment* B 94; 139E) has veered, in the idea, into a real representation of this totality. The infinity of representation-time, before which the faculty of representation itself disappears, is, comprehended in the idea, an instant, representation in "absolute unity" that "contains" the manifold of the time series "in one representation" (*Pure* A 99; 229E). The "idea of the absolute whole" is the idea of the instant as an "infinity compre-

hended" (*Judgment* B 94; 139E); this idea, which is not the representation *of* an instant but the instant itself as representation, is an "intellectual comprehension" of the infinity of representation-time, but it is not therefore nonsensible but rather a super-sensible feeling that exceeds every measure of sensibility. Under the influence of this idea, namely, Kant writes, the object "is taken up as sublime with a pleasure that is possible only by means of a displeasure" (*Judgment* B 102; 90E). The unpurposiveness of time is therefore purposive for the idea of the instant, in which the representation "time" is saved. But this saving of time in the idea must be a saving of time from time: it must be the saving of the before [*Vor*] in the sense of that which is merely out-ahead [*Voraus*] and with which representing begins; it must be the saving of a condition of time that itself is unconditioned; and it must be the saving of the time from time in the sense that in the idea time is not preserved as a course in time but rather as time itself.

Unlike the questions Kant discusses under the title of the antinomies of reason, nowhere in the discussion of the sublime is it a matter of the limitation of the sphere of phenomena but rather of ensuring the conditions of phenomenality itself. If these conditions—time and space as pure forms of intuition—cannot be ensured, then the rational idea of the absolute whole must also intervene to ground the possibility of knowledge where the activity of sensibility and the understanding offer it no hold. Now, it turns out that, in the feeling of the sublime, the forms of intuition and understanding, which in the first *Critique* were the basis for all cognitive activities, cannot be combined with that formal unity in which alone they could offer complete transcendental forms of intuition and thus adequate conditions of cognition. While the understanding's concepts of number advance unhindered toward infinity, intuition must fail in its attempt to keep up with mathematical progression and to comprehend its movement in a coherent representation. For the constitution of time, namely, the comprehension of what is apprehended in representation is needed, and for this synthesis in turn "some time" is "required" (*Judgment* B 88; 136E). And this time that is needed to arrive at the original synthesis of the time-representation can only defer this very synthesis *ad infinitum*: in the asymmetry—no matter how small—between representation and the grasping of representation, progression thought in terms of the concept of number and aesthetic comprehension, there appears an asymmetry between sensibility and understanding that breaks apart the representation of "inner sense," stretches time beyond its representability, and thus withdraws the fundamental condition for the cognition of objects. The internal asymmetry in the production of the time that represents prevents not only the fulfillment of the category of unity but also the entire category of quantity through the lack of an intuition corresponding to it: "magnitude that is equal only to itself" (*Judgment* B 84; 134E). Along with the overwhelming of the synthetic capacity of the imagination by the incomprehensible infinity

of the progression of representation, reality and its category, quality, are also made to disappear such that the thingness (*realitas phaenomenon*) of an object (*Pure* A 143; 274–75E) is now only possible in the feeling of the inability to feel a "negative presentation" (*Judgment* B 124; 156E). The category of relation is cancelled in the sublime as the feeling that breaks apart the imagination, and the modalities of the cognition of objects (possibility, existence, necessity) encounter in the constitution of their conditions only that which is "counter-purposive" for such cognition (*Judgment* B 100; 143E, translation modified). With the disintegration of the categories by the overwhelming power of representing over the synthesis of representation, however, the correspondence of intuition and understanding in the production of time breaks down, and the auto-affection of the mind is driven by the infinity of the concept of number to an overwhelming of affection that brings an end to the affectability of the mind. The fact that the feeling of the sublime "surpasses any standard of sensibility" (*Judgment* B 92; 138E) and "exceeds the capacity of the imagination" (*Judgment* B 92; 139E) thus simply suggests that the "transcendental determination of time," contrary to what the first *Critique* demands, cannot function as the "schema of the concepts of understanding" and that time cannot function as a representation that "mediates" between intuition and understanding (*Pure* A 139; 272E). Time cannot be the form of representation that relates to itself and holds itself together by itself, and it cannot, therefore, serve as condition and guarantee of the cognition of objects. Time shows itself as outside all relation to the faculty of sensibility, whose fundamental structure it should be, because in it the representation and comprehension of what is represented in apprehension, reproduction, and recognition do not work together. Time has no hold, because its temporalization exceeds every form of sensibility, as of the understanding, and even overwhelms the *faculty* from which it arises. Since time in itself is dispersed by an excess of counting without intuitions over sensible syntheses, it cannot bring about the mediation of the faculty of cognition in the pure form of the intuition of representing; but since this ability to mediate—the function of schematism—determines the structure of representing itself and decides whether representing is a representing at all, the failure of the formation of time that the feeling of the sublime elicits is at the same time the disintegration of representing in its elementary form of movement, the breaking apart of the original structure of the self.

The production of time takes time. And it takes more than the time produced could ever be. Kant describes this asymmetry in the constitution of time twice: in the passage in which he reflects on the pyramids and on St. Peter's (*Judgment* §26), as well as in the analysis of the attempt to determine time in the face of an infinite space (*Judgment* §27) that I have already commented on. In both cases, he notes that the time of the comprehension of

representations is greater than that of the time-representation comprehended. On the contemplation of the pyramids, he writes,

> The eye requires some time to complete its apprehension from the base level to the apex, but during this time the former always partly fades before the imagination has taken in the latter, and the comprehension is never complete. (*Judgment* B 88; 136E)

In the corresponding passage in the following paragraph it is once again a matter of "tak[ing] appreciable time" to "take up in a single intuition"—an "instant"—"a measure for magnitudes" (*Judgment* B 100; 142E). The fact that the time necessary for the constitution of a self-contained representation of time is called "appreciable" means that it too belongs to the time of representation, although a representation that exceeds the synthetic representation of a particular period of time and precedes [*vorausgeht*] it in every sense of the word. Representation's being out-ahead, however, is *always* greater than the time comprehended in a representation, and it is *always* that magnitude before which all magnitudes, whatever quantity they assume, must appear to be small. Because it is necessary for the constitution of all the magnitudes of time and space, necessary even if these are infinite, this time of representing—in contrast to all represented time—is the only time that presents a temporal index of what Kant says about the mathematical sublime when he defines it as "*absolutely great (absolute, non comparative magnum)*" and ascribes it not a "*quantitas*" but rather a "*magnitudo*" (*Judgment* B 81; 131–32E). The "appreciable time" of representing is itself not the absolutely great, the absolutely whole time that Kant calls the "instant," for to be this it would have to be "infinity comprehended" (*Judgment* B 94; 139E). As the time of comprehension, it exceeds every possible comprehension, is both the condition of possibility of the totality of time and its condition of impossibility. But as condition of impossibility, it can only work because it is active in making possible the synthesis of time, and this very synthesis is its telos—its re-presentation or placing-before [*Vor-stellung*]—from which its *effort* is determined. Consequently, that *effort* to synthesize that takes *appreciable* time, more time than has ever passed, would not exist if the representation of a comprehended time manifold and thus the idea of the instant were not already at work in its anticipation. It is this double structure of temporalization (each time representing a more *of* time and a more than every more, an all *as* time) that elicits the feeling of the sublime. Although Kant does not point to the close connection between the time of representing and the feeling of the sublime in each individual step of his argument, it is clear from his presentation that all the definitions he offers for the sublime proceed from this double structure of temporal-infinity and all-timeness.

What Kant calls "great in every respect (beyond all comparison), i.e., sublime" is such that "one immediately sees that we do not allow a suitable standard for it to be sought outside of it, but merely within it" (*Judgment* B 84; 133–34E). The time of representing is still greater than the greatest representable time, the infinity of every progression and every progressing regression: It is trans-infinite. It is therefore not yet itself an absolute magnitude, for although it is super-infinite, as mere effort at synthesis, it has not caught up to the unity of the instant but for precisely this reason proves that it is determined by the glance back *from* this unity always to come. Since the time of representing is only time in that it exceeds all representations arrived at and exceeds the measure of sense gained from this, and since only in this constant forward movement of *sense* can it provide the temporal conditions of objectivity for everything sensible, the time of representation, which itself belongs to the sensible, must at least be thinkable as always more than the sensible condition of constitution of the sensible: "*That is sublime which even to be able to think of demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses*" (*Judgment* B 85; 134E). Since nature, whether as extensive infinity in appearance or as intensive infinity of the power of this appearance, cannot be brought into a representation that comprehends it, since the movement of this grasping still exceeds every representation grasped, the unrepresentability of nature itself must be thought as the—negative—indication of its representability in an idea. The time of representing necessary for the production of a comprehensive time-representation lasts longer than even the longest thinkable series of time-representation. Since this more-time is logically necessary but cannot be—or ever become—represented, it demands that the unrepresentability of time be thought as the representation of its having been represented in an idea. Hence Kant's further definition of the sublime: "It is an object (of nature) *the representation of which determines the mind to think of the unattainability of nature as a presentation of ideas*" (*Judgment* B 115; 151E). The *idea princeps* of such a presentation is the idea of the absolute whole that we must think subjectively—in the manner of a representation—"without [our] being able to produce this presentation *objectively*" (*Judgment* B 115–16; 98E)—but whose objective unpresentability contains the indication of an effort that can only be directed at intellectual representation, at the idea of a whole of time, the idea of the instant.

The instant is not *in* time. But it is only not *in* time because it is time itself. With this instant of the idea it becomes clear that time is each time a more of time, that it is a time beyond all already elapsed time and thus is sheer progression of representing that cannot be caught up to in a reproduction or held up in a temporal relationship once it has been reached and that therefore cannot be represented. The instant therefore makes clear that time, insofar as it is thought *as* time—and the instant is nothing but time—must

never be thought only as a more of time, but rather always also as the *cancellation of* that virtually infinite more in a temporal whole, that consequently it must be thought as an *absolutum* of time owing to which each representing is itself essentially a cancellation and a triggering. If the "effort" to comprehend the infinite progression of time in the totality of an instant is "in vain" (*Judgment* B 115; 151E, translation modified), this futility is not only the result of continually temporalizing representing. This futility is the abandonment of the infinite time series and the release of the idea-time of the moment. With this futility comes the experience of time constantly stopping in its infinite movement of constitution—its representations "fade," Kant says (*Judgment* B 88; 135E)—and of time, in precisely this stopping, beginning each time anew in its totality. The idea of the *absolute* whole must be the idea of a whole freed of all already established conditions, a detached and autonomous whole, and the faculty of the idea must therefore be the faculty of *independence*, of freedom, and of representing determined only by itself. It must be the faculty of a time that, as the time of representing that it is, is completely free for this representing and thus is time free of all constituted representations, time emerging from the freedom of time. This free time—the time of the idea, of the instant—cannot be thought as the time of succession and its infinite continuation. It must be thought as the time of the unconditionality of a representing that begins without any model other than its own being ahead of itself. This is how we must understand the clarification Kant gives of the last definition I cited of the sublime of ideas:

> Taken literally, and considered logically, ideas cannot be presented. But if we extend our empirical faculty of representation (mathematically or dynamically) for the intuition of nature, then reason inevitably comes in as a *faculty of the independence of the absolute totality*, and produces the effort of the mind, though it is in vain, to make the representation of the senses adequate to that *totality*. (*Judgment* B 115; 151E, emphasis added, translation modified)

In the context of his explanation of the cosmological idea of freedom, Kant in the first *Critique* makes a comment about the idea of time as the idea of the freedom of time that can clarify the argument of the analytic of the sublime in the third *Critique*. There, the *intelligible*—operating under the idea of freedom—character of actions is withdrawn from all conditions of time, though not to deny it its temporal structure, but rather in order to expose its pure temporalizing nature:

> In regard to the intelligible character . . . no before or after applies, and every action, irrespective of the temporal relation in which it stands to other appearances, is the immediate effect of the intelligible character of pure reason; reason therefore acts freely, without being determined dynamically by external

> or internal grounds temporally preceding it in the chain of natural causes. (*Pure* A 553–54; 543E)

Having thus emphasized a free action's independence from the time series, Kant offers this positive definition of its freedom:

> This freedom [must] also [be] indicated positively by a faculty of beginning a series of occurrences from itself [*von selbst*], in such a way that in reason itself nothing begins, but as the unconditioned condition of every voluntary action, it allows of no condition prior to it in time. (*Pure* A 553–54; 543E, translation modified)

(At another point, Kant speaks of freedom as the "power of beginning a state *from itself* [*von selbst*]" [*Pure* A 533; 533E]. In both formulations, the "von selbst" has to be the translation of the "sua sponte" with which Kant also renders the concept of spontaneity.[5]) Time, if it is to be thought as time at all, must be thought as the beginning of time. It must be thought as the beginning of a "series of events" and thus of a time series or series of representations. It must therefore be thought such that, "in it itself"—namely, in an already elapsing time-series—"nothing begins," but rather in beginning, each time spontaneously, a new time series is opened that is not conditioned by any previous one. Time can be nothing other than unconditioned if it is not to be time "in" another time and determined by it, or a time "in" a timelessness that in turn could not be a condition for time. Only as unconditioned can time be a beginning and only as beginning can it be a condition for virtually infinite successions. Time can only begin, therefore, because it is nothing other than beginning and because, in its incipiency, it is absolute and absolutely total: the instant is, each time, the instant of beginning. By beginning, time steps out of all successions that might have come before, is detached from and independent of every representation determining it: It does not follow and is not a series, but rather is the cancellation of the order of consequence, is absolute, and can be its *initium* by virtue of its absoluteness, the opening of potential future consequences, only by virtue of its independence.

As beginning, time is the cancellation of becoming and passing. And as beginning, it is mere re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] without hold in something already becoming or already past. Only in being thought as absolute beginning is time thought as absolute whole, as instant, and thus as that which extends—as unconditioned intuition of *sense* that re-presents or places before—into an unoccupied out-ahead [*Voraus*]. Only as thus beginning *from itself* can time be thought as the auto-affection of sensibility: as an *ad-facere* that is not preceded by any sensible data but rather in which mere sensibility takes place as objectless *intentio* toward its out-ahead [*Voraus*]. This beginning, an unconditioned act free of all intertemporal conditions, is the pure time of freedom. If Kant describes freedom as "fact of reason" and

thus has in mind the finite freedom of a finite reason, then time, as unconditioned beginning, is the fact—the *affectio*—of the reason that begins its finitude. It might be described as a pure transcendental idea to which nothing in experience corresponds, but this non-correspondence is itself the indication of the necessity of thinking this very idea, of preserving its power to develop, and of making it, in terms of thinking, the beginning of another experience. Like every experience, it has to begin in the first instance from a not. Time, as the idea of the independent—the free—instant of *spontaneous* beginning, is *tempus ex nihilo temporis*. It is the *ex tempore* of an extemporality whose conception must not even seek a hold in traditional representations of time if it seeks to think time only from its relation to itself and thus as the *relation of representation*, if it seeks to think it as time and thus as the impossibility of extra-temporality.

Now, Kant describes the beginning of a time-series not only as unconditioned but also as "unconditioned condition" (*Pure* A 554; 543E)—as condition, therefore, for a series that can be nothing other than a succession according to the law of causality (even if freely), and, consequently, as condition for precisely that whose effect suspends the beginning. The capacity for this beginning, reason, Kant writes, "is present to all the actions of human beings in all conditions of time, and is one and the same, but it is not itself in time, and never enters into any new state in which it previously was not; in regard to a new state, reason is *determining* but not *determinable*" (*Pure* A 556; 545E). As time that begins, and thus essentially time, reason can of course not be *in time* and cannot be *determined* by it; but even if one were to interpret the "present" in the expression "present . . . at all times and under all circumstances" to mean, not constant presence, but the continuous initiative for new temporal beginnings, this very continuousness of the unconditioned and the character of *uniformity*, thus the persistence of beginning, is hardly compatible with the conditional nature Kant ascribes to beginning and that he associates with the law of causality. Unconditioned, this pure time of the idea could only be the continuousness of the unconditioned, but never the continuousness of its conditioning. To be sure, a beginning that does not begin something and lead to consequences is unrepresentable; perhaps a beginning without consequences is even unthinkable, but even its unthinkability—in an extension of Kant's argument about sublimity—could be evidence that the beginning of time must be a beginning that cannot stop beginning. But this means that there is no internal causality of time, that it does not proceed according to any rule, admits of no synthesis other than the absolute synthesis of beginning, and can have no consequence, whether for knowledge, practical action, thinking, or feeling, other than the consequence that knowledge and acting, thinking and feeling must each time be an unconditioned beginning (thus a beginning that suspends the very continuity of conse-

quences and repetitions) and that it must be a beginning of other beginnings and of the beginning of others.

Beginning, which is for Kant an unconditioned condition, must always also be able not to be a condition. It must be able to be unconditioned and must therefore always also be able to be unconditioning, indetermining, deconditioning. When Kant defines time as the condition of possibility of knowledge, and action as the unconditional condition of time, he defines the entire project of transcendental idealism as a philosophy of time with regard to its enabling and, more precisely, conditioning character. With the rediscovery of an unconditioned beginning in the mere re-presenting or placing-before [*Vor-stellen*] that temporalizes, however, he discovered its emergence from discontinuity and opened a space in which time must not be a *causa*, condition, or ground, but rather the absolute of the beginning of an always other time, an absolute that is only preserved—to no end—in this beginning. The time of this beginning is also the time of the beginning of a thinking other than transcendental thinking.

—Translated by Jan Plug

NOTES

The commentaries and reflections offered here do not draw upon the entirety of Kant's philosophy of representation-time. Lacking in particular are considerations of the relationship between time and intensity as it is presented in the chapter on the anticipations of perceptions in the "Transcendental Analytic" and of the relationship between time and the categories of the understanding, on the one hand, as well as, on the other, of the time of mediation and of the time of history. I hope to have the opportunity to consider these parts of Kant's philosophy of time, which I have not taken into account here, in another context.

First published in *Politik der Vorstellung*, ed. Joachim Gerstmeier und Nikolaus Müller-Schöll (Munich: Theater der Zeit, 2006), 68–94.

1. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1956). *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Further references will be to these editions and will be made parenthetically, denoted by *Pure* and the page references to the appropriate version, first, and then to the corresponding English translation, denoted by page number and E.

2. Throughout the text, Hamacher plays on a number of prefixes that can also function as prepositions, often substantivizing them in a manner that is unusual in English. Most importantly, he hyphenates *Vor-stellen*, emphasizing that the word means not merely *re-presentation*—which in English, unlike German, suggests repetition—but putting or placing (*stellen*) *before* or *in front*. Thus, to represent is to place before, both temporally and spatially: before or in front of our eyes, say, but also before our minds. I have thus generally adopted "re-presentation or placing-before" when *Vor-stellen* is hyphenated. (In the remarkable translation of "Parousia, Stone-Walls," in *Two Studies of Friedrich Hölderlin*, trans. Julia Ng and Anthony Curtis Adler, ed. Peter Fenves and Julia Ng [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020], 149, *Vor-Stellung* is rendered as re-*pre*-sentation. This is an elegant solution, but for the purposes of the present essay does not adequately capture the sense of being in front.) Similarly, Hamacher will write of a *Vor*, which I have translated as "before," and of a *Voraus*, which I have translated as "out-ahead," and which, like *Vor*, designates being in front of.—JP

3. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. Karl Vorländer (Leipzig: Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1902). *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and

Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Further references will be made parenthetically, denoted by *Judgment* and the page references to the appropriate version, first, and then to the corresponding English translation, denoted by page number and E.

4. The German *Weile* is from the same root as *weilen* and *verweilen*, dwelling and lingering.—JP

5. "Von selbst" means literally "of itself," "by itself," or "from itself" but is also translated as "spontaneously."—JP

Chapter Two

On Some Differences between the History of Literary and the History of Phenomenal Events

. . . for Hegel, however, history came to an end in his writing of it. That it was filed away [*zu den Akten genommen*] and had its file closed by him was literally its final act [*Akt*], completed by its last hero, who thereby proved himself the hero not merely of knowledge but of the deed of knowledge. For through him history was not only to be grasped in thoughts and recorded as a past occurrence in the book of self-conscious spirit; it was not only to be a result. Rather, its philosophical record was itself to be the last, the eschatological historical deed. Itself fundamentally historical, the writing of history was to be completed as the sublation of history in the political form of the free constitutional state and, moreover, in the philosophical form of the speculative system. The writing of history was to take place as the writing of its freedom and consciousness. History for Hegel was the history of that which appears, in fact of knowledge appearing to itself, becoming concrete in the thinking of its becoming.[1] And history for him was the story of a return, of the homecoming and reappropriation of the consciousness that had been released into and become alien in the realm of sensuousness. Knowledge and appearance, structuring language and objective reality, were for him the two dimensions of historical activity, and this activity itself, in its unification of the concept and its efficacy, was to be have been capable of resolving their antagonism. This activity of the concept, this at once historical and cognitive event, was for Hegel the privileged object and the only way of carrying out a philosophical writing of history. To ensure the fundamental analogy that should rule between factual history and the knowledge of history, he—like many after him—drew upon the equivocation in the concept of history and,

as is only fitting for the speculative spirit of the German language, asserted a strict material relation between the possible meanings of the word:

> In our language, *history* unites the objective and the subjective side and means the *historia rerum gestarum* as much as the *res gestae* themselves. It is that which has happened no less than historical narrative. This unity of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere external accident: it must therefore be supposed that historical narrative appeared at the same time as actual historical deeds and events; a common internal foundation brings them forth together.[2]

Matter and its presentation are therefore not unified by external coincidence, economy of language, or lazy differentiation, but by a substantial commonality that presents itself in the unity of the single word *history*. This internal commonality of history and historical narrative, which also proves itself in the historical simultaneity of their appearance, however, is that commonality in which knowledge and what is known, description and what is described, are likewise an *act*: speech act, the act of talking, the act of comprehension. The *historia rerum gestarum* belongs for Hegel to the *res gestae*: all *res gestae* are *historiae*, the accomplishments of knowledge. This fundamental analogy between knowledge and action expressed in the concept of history, as Hegel reads it, is surpassed through its sheer identity when Hegel writes in the "Ground Rules of the Philosophy of Right" (§ 343):

> The history of spirit is its *deed*, for spirit is only what it does, and its deed is to make itself—namely as spirit—the object of its own consciousness, to comprehend itself for itself in its interpretation.[3]

This ergontological interpretation of the concept of history—according to which the being of spirit is its deed, history thus nothing other than this active being, and history comprehended in turn being in its activity as interpretation—this ergontological interpretation of history as the reality and self-knowledge of spirit traces back to the linguistico-ontological assumption of a symmetry between the cognitive and performative character of linguistic utterances that is undisturbed—and that cannot be disturbed—by any "external accidents." Every knowledge would be an action, every action, however inexplicit, knowledge. Hegel depended upon this symmetry, even if he wished to protect the cognitive investments in historical reality from seeping into it irretrievably. In order to ensure the possibility of *apocatastasis* epistemologically, he had to postulate—in accordance with corresponding assumptions in other areas of his theory—that cognitions that have been made objective in actions, decrees, institutions, and processes also remain sublated in them, such that actions, institutions, and processes, in all of their constitutive moments, would have the character of knowledge. Only in a history whose

events are acts of knowledge could consciousness recognize itself as their author and in them as its manifestation in the world of appearances elevate itself to historical self-consciousness. Without the presupposition of the essential homogeneity and reversibility of knowledge and event, there would be no possibility of the reflexive self-relation and processual self-constitution of the subject as substance. If the writing of history is to be historical knowledge—and this assumption is also based on equating different language functions—and if, moreover, its speculative knowledge is to be the final historical act that closes the circle of self-presentation and self-knowledge, brings history to completion, and only thus fulfills its concept; if, then, only the writing of history is to be capable of making history into history in the first instance, then there is history—indeed "world history," as well as all imaginable forms of regional history, including the "history of art" and the "history of literature"—only on the condition that it is the history of consciousness, that it is the history of an appearance that is homologous to consciousness, and that it is the history of the self-knowledge of consciousness in its appearance. There would be no history, however, if event and knowledge, if performative and cognitive language functions were to relate to one another asymmetrically, namely, if there appeared in an utterance something more and other than what was intended by the consciousness of its author, if a legal decree were corrupted in its transmission, if institutions—such as literature, for example, assuming that literature is an institution—operated according to a logic different from that of the subject that installed them (even a collective subject with the name *bourgeoisie* or a politico-economic one like capital). If one conceives of the concept of history as radically ergontologically as Hegel does, history exists only according to the assumption that action and knowledge permeate one another in appearance as their medium of correspondence and through this medium can transform themselves into each other and into themselves. Since the conversion of consciousness from an object into an action—in fact, into an act of *interpretation*—marks the conclusion of its history, however, the completability of history belongs to the presuppositions of its full concept: history only ever exists for Hegel as completed. Those who attempt to harmonize their considerations of the artistic productions of the most recent modernity with the concept of *post-history* would have to consider that they are cutting their coat from a cloth woven for them by none other than Hegel and that this supposedly post-metaphysical *nouveauté* has taken up into itself all the decisive elements of the speculative concept of history. And even those—more conservative—theorists, like Hans Robert Jauss for example, who make the analogy between literary and historical events the basis of their conception of history, might come to the realization that their history, their history of literature, constitutes anything but a provocation were they to remember that already in Hegel the entirely illegitimate combination of acts of positing that have no reference and predications in

need of reference was to have led to the synthesis of facts that have become historical and actual self-knowledge. Like Hegel's, this history is founded upon the homogenization of incompatible functions and, as a history of events, is, again like Hegel's, at the same time the history of the acquisition of human self-knowledge. And like Hegel's, it can be this only because the sphere of events in both society and literature is interpreted without difficulty in aesthetic terms as the sphere of their sensuous appearance, as that of their eye-vent.[4]

In the following, I want to try to make clear that neither social nor literary events are subject to the categories of self-reflection and the phenomenality that grounds it, and that every writing of history founded in these categories, whether consciously or without its knowledge, commits an aestheticizing restriction of its subject.

One of the oldest descriptions handed down of the experience of what can be called history—even if it is a mythical history and is offered in a mythological epic—is found in the eighth book of the *Odyssey*. In the hall of the Phaeacian king, Odysseus has convinced Demodocus to put into song, as it is put, the events before Troy in which he himself partook. But as the singer, as requested, narrates the end of the mythical battle, Odysseus bursts into tears.

> But great Odysseus melted into tears,
> running down from his eyes to wet his cheeks . . .
> as a woman weeps, her arms flung round her darling husband,
> a man who fell in battle, fighting for town and townsmen,
> . . . . . .
> Seeing the man go down, dying, gasping for breath,
> she clings for dear life, screams and shrills—
> but the victors, . . .
> . . . . . .
> drag her off in bondage, yoked to hard labor, pain,
> and the most heartbreaking torment wastes her cheeks.
> So from Odysseus' eyes ran tears of heartbreak now.[5]

Confronted with the history of his own suffering in the narrative of someone else, Odysseus does not weep over his past pains or the loss of his companions, but, as the simile drawn out into an allegory suggests, like a woman over the loss of her husband, who to that point stood by her as protector of her integrity and guard over her house. Thus, Odysseus weeps over the loss of his own story, which is no longer in his power, but rather has become an autonomous epic, one made foreign, torn from him, as it were, by Demodocus's song, leaving him behind as the "widow" of his story. Odysseus does not experience the narrative of his deeds and utterances as the objective confirmation and enrichment of his subjective experience, and he does not

take in the encounter with his past as the reappropriation and internalization of his life, disposed of in the epic—this is how Hegel would interpret the act of historical self-interpretation—but as a hostile attack upon that part of his own person that was meant to ensure the economy of his life and lineage. The narration of history is the robbery of the life of the one to whom it has occurred. What takes place in the narration of history is the departure from history as it is experienced. And only in this way does the experience of historical narrative become the experience of history once again: not as a lived experience that one could find, feel, and empathize one's way into again and that could be reproduced again and again in its presence, but as the departure from life that is always only apparently one's own—and only until it is revoked. This life can only be presented as having taken place in the pain of departure and as experienced in the threat of its loss, thus always only *post festum* and on the condition of its disappearance, and thus never *as such*. What takes place is departure. The narration of Odysseus's history is not the restitution of the past events of his life and does not convey retrospective self-enlightenment about his actions; it does not appropriate a history represented as a possession that had been disposed of or as inheritance, but definitively and irreversibly expropriates it. History, as the metaphor of the tearing apart of the bodies of man and wife puts it, as the tearing of the continuity of life, is grasped in the moment of its passing. But the metaphor that lends the thoroughly obscure process of the loss of one's own history a sensuous correlate and thus reestablishes on the level of formal correspondences the continuity whose destruction it deals with—this metaphor, and with it the analogy between intuition and event, tears apart the moment it produces an excess of images that no longer correspond to the loss thematized in it: The detail that the wife's enemies "just behind her / dig spear-butts into her back and shoulders" and that "the most heartbreaking torment wastes her cheeks" (*Odyssey* 208), no longer corresponds to anything in Odysseus's experience but rather relates to it formally as anacoluthon, as the break in the continuity between the thematic intention and its narrative explication. Homer's much-admired art of digression, the art of resolving static metaphors into stories, is based on nothing other than driving all the lines of correspondence—and that means all cognitive linguistic forms—into anacoluthon, into the field of the non-correspondence between intuition and meaning, phenomenality and substance. History for him, and perhaps not only for him, is that movement in which two different linguistic functions diverge: the representative, which belongs to the sphere of demonstration and of sense made sensible, and the nonintentional thetic function, which exceeds the demonstration of a distinct meaning and in this respect is without cognitive relevance. In the literary text, history thus takes place where language leaves behind the function of correspondence and thus at the same time breaks through its aesthetic and

reflective layer. Where, then, like it, its protagonist can no longer contain himself, he bursts into tears.

This dissociation of different linguistic functions, which makes it so that neither is more transparent to the other than the other anymore, is denounced and proscribed as a technical mistake early on and persistently in Western aesthetics. Had literature cared about Aristotles's verdict, there would be no history in literature and consequently no history of literature. Given their argumentative concision and dogmatic power, the nature of these two relations—the relation of literature to history and the relation of history (including the history of literature) to literature—should be sketched, departing from Aristotles's *Poetics*. The line of thought that culminates in the now famous formulation in chapter 9 of the *Poetics*—that poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history—is introduced in the seventh chapter, which is devoted to determining the form of the plot of tragedy, with a consideration of the totality (*hólon*) of plot as an organism and of the beauty (*kalón*) associated with it.

> Again: to be beautiful, a living creature, and every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts, but also be of a certain definite magnitude. Beauty is a matter of size and order, and therefore impossible either in a very minute creature, since our perception [*theoría*] becomes indistinct as it approaches a size that is no longer discernible [*anaisthetón*]; or in a creature of vast size—one, say, 1,000 miles long—as in that case, instead of the perception [*theoría*] coming all at once [*háma*], the unity and wholeness of it is lost to the perceiver. Just in the same way, then, as a beautiful whole made up of parts, or a beautiful living creature, must be of some size, but a size that is distinct [*eusýnopton*], so a fable [*mythos*] must be of some length, but of a length to be taken in by the memory [*eumnemóneuton*].[6]

Beneath this quantitative argument, which is similar to Kant's reflections on the mathematical sublime in the third *Critique*, is concealed an ontological one: for the categories of distinctness and memorability to which the poetic—in contrast to the historical—work has to correspond do not merely refer to the anthropologically delimited scope of the perception of readers or observers but rather, mediated by this scope, to the organic unity of being in its manifestation. This being, in which all the possibilities of experience and action are contained, does not merely offer itself without further ado as appearance in reality, however, but rather does so only toward a faculty of intuition that repeats—in the form of its theory—the form of the unity and organic totality that it itself describes. That which, as very small or very large, remains *anaisthetón*, ungraspable by means of a perception that makes it present to us, thus belongs to reality, but not to that merely theoretically

possible sphere of necessary reality or of reality that is probable according to the rules of experience that can lay claim to universality and continued existence. Philosophy and poetry are related in different—though closely related—ways to this substantial universality of the real, namely, to the real that is universal in form, and to the real that, through its form, can give rise to a knowledge that perceives, to a *theoría*. But since actual reality is riddled with very small and—potentially—very large objects and events, with things *anaesthetic*, the art of poetry, like every other *techne*, assumes the ontological function, not merely of copying this reality, but of completing it for theory (*Physics* 199a) by giving its substantial form representation in its works. According to Aristotle, therefore, poetry should aestheticize, phenomenalize, and theorize reality by refining its intricate multifariousness—which eludes both knowledge and memory—as well as the contingency and formlessness of its interconnections, into a discernible paradigm that can be known and remembered (*Poetics* 1461b). In the language of poetry, not merely reality—which is dulled by anaesthetizing elements—but the paradigm of reality should be brought into appearance. Poetry should *ideologize* in the strictest sense of the word. Only when it makes the *eidos* of the actions it presents perceptible can it bring about their knowledge in correspondence with this perception. Completely contrary to the language of the non-correspondence of narrative and knowledge that in *The Odyssey* articulated the experience of history, the result of the poetic operation, according to Aristotle, should be a perception that, as cognitive act, comprehends the law of reality and in it, ultimately, its ideal self-production. In the effect of their works, therefore, perception that leads to knowledge and self-sufficient—theoretical as well as political—action should come out even. The whole dignity of poetry is therefore due to its ability to act as propaedeutic for ontology.

Not so the writing of history. According to Aristotle's presentation in the *Poetics*, it is incapable of entering into the sphere of a theory of reality. "The distinction between historian and poet," I quote the ninth chapter, "consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. . . . [Poetry's] statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of poetry are singulars. By a universal statement, I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do" (*Poetics* 1451a39–1451b7). And one can conceive the particular that the writing of history applies to as characterized by a person of a certain type saying or doing certain things in accordance with neither probability nor necessity: this person's behavior, no matter how "real," is bound neither by a universal law of nature nor by ordinary conventions for how one acts. If the proposition "a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility" (*Poetics* 1461b) holds with regard to the phenomenal reality of being that is given appearance in poetry, then, on the other hand, history is the open field of the real that cannot find any self-contained

organic form, because the possibilities realized in it do not have a common telos or, therefore, a form that could be made into a theory. The impossible of poetry thus ranks higher in the ontological hierarchy than the real of history, because the former captures the paradigmatic, by exceeding reality, while the latter, the historical, offers no real guarantee that it can be captured at all, much less that it can be understood. The writing of history could be accused of being non-paradigmizable—which in the form of the very small or very large eludes perception and knowledge—and represents a blind spot for every attempt at theory. But it is not only the immeasurability of the historical field that dooms every theory of history to failure but also that the events attributed to it can never be referred conclusively to a common ground or unified sense. In the twenty-third chapter of the *Poetics*, Aristotle has to note that events pertaining to certain periods of time stand in a purely coincidental relationship (*hetychen*) to one another:

> Just as two events may take place at the same time, e.g., the sea-fight off Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily, without converging to the same end, so too of two consecutive events one may sometimes come after the other with no one end as their common issue. (*Poetics* 1459a)

If the phenomena of history become immeasurable in scope, nothing in their specific composition guarantees that they can even become phenomena in the strict sense, namely, occurrences that appear from themselves. They can just as easily elude the view of the alert observer and thus never appear *as* these phenomena. As potentially anaesthetic phenomena, historical phenomena are always located on the borders of phenomenality. Moreover, if historical events cannot be conceived as connected to one another by a common principle or a guiding representation of a purpose, since they arise either by mere coincidence or relatively independent of intentions—namely, *apò tou automátou kaì tes týches* (*Poetics* 1452a)—then the writing of history cannot offer a systematically organized image of a totality of these events in which their substantially universal nature would be clear. Rather, it can only ever produce a formless aggregate of unconnected individual events. For history does not take place within the boundaries of logic. The course of the world wandering aimlessly in particularities according to the moods of Tyche is, since no necessity is shown in it, incapable of becoming an object of theory and of universal understanding. Harmony between event and knowledge can only be achieved in the aesthetic experience of poetry and in the theoretical experience of philosophy. The incoherence between insight and action in the historical world, which is subject to permanent disruptions through *automatía* and *týche*, could only be resolved by the writing of history on the condition that it changed into poetry but in so doing concealed the specific difference between historiographic and aesthetic language. In the writing of

history, which renounces poetic means of stylization, the discrepancy between understanding and action is repeated as that between experience and knowledge. For the fundamental contingency and particularity of historical events do not allow a universalizable knowledge to be arrived at through these events. They owe their dignity as historical to their unpredictability and unrepeatability, which shatters the laws of nature and thinking, a *theinón*, an immensity that cannot find a place in any aesthetic construction. It finds its literary articulation in works of historiography and of failed poetry, according to Aristotle, where the organic consistency of the presentation is torn apart by fables that have become episodic, namely by digressive fables that are not structured according to the laws of necessity (*Poetics* 1451b). Historiography is episodic; its language is that of strange interjections and interruptions by something heterogeneous. Comparable to the allegory in the scene of Odysseus's weeping, it is an anacoluthon in which language and knowledge are constantly dissociated.

Aristotle did not found a tradition with his distinction between poetry and history, although this distinction would become a recurrent and unequalled topos for later poetological and historiological works. The writing of history before and after Aristotle's theory follows principles of stylization that took it in the direction of epic or tragedy and proceeded according to rules of selection and arrangement that tended to exclude the role of contingency in the events narrated, bringing out the politically or morally propagandistic intention of the historiographers and annalists even more starkly. Despite the irrepressible role of *fortuna*, chance, and accident, which succeeded *týche* and *automatía*, the writing of history, like its theory in general, was subject to an obviously irresistible pull toward the aestheticization and teleologization of its objects and means of presentation. The writing of history increasingly obeyed the law of ideo-logization that Aristotle established for poetry and that he himself of course extended to its history in the proposition that tragedy's development stopped once it "attain[ed] to its natural form [*autes phýsin*]" (*Poetics* 1449a). This movement, in which history becomes the realization of the essence of a matter, and the writing of history the mimesis of its parousia, culminates in the following sentences from Wilhelm von Humboldt's "On the Task of the Historian":

> Historical, like artistic, presentation, is the imitation of nature. The basis of both is the recognition of true form, seeking out the necessary, isolating the accidental.[7]

But if the writing of history "isolate[es] the accidental," it thereby puts itself in the service of the necessary universality of an *eidos* and of an idea, whose "true form" and knowledge can be established only at the cost of denying and

concealing the contingent and thus of a non-ontologizable possibility of the effect of human activity. The teleologizing, ideo-logizing, and aestheticizing of history must keep the scope of its event within the limits of what is necessary by nature, because only within these limits can what has occurred be made to converge with the forms of its knowledge. The writing of history has to become the writing of poetry, history has to become nature for the intent to know to find a solid ground and the belief in the absolute rule of intentional action to gain consistency. Anything that doesn't fit into the "true form" of the course of history risks, broken apart by amorphous and anaesthetic accidents, being disfigured and—since only organic forms can be preserved by memory—forgotten. But since historical contemplation claims to recognize its own form in the paradigmatic forms of what has taken place in order to be able to think itself as grounded, validated, and secured, it must fear that every immersion in historical details that is not grounded by necessity and that cannot be interpreted as elements of the process of self-explanation is an immersion in its own groundlessness and forgetting. The gaze of the historiographer called for by Humboldt must ignore the accident if the historiographer himself is not to be blinded by it. For the admission that there are events that are not grounded in necessity or in necessary knowledge but that nevertheless have very powerful effects, the admission, then, that history could have taken a course completely different from the one it actually took would have to be linked to the admission of the contingency of its historical undertaking and of its own existence. European history—and the history of European literature—would have taken a different form had the Greeks lost to the Persians at Marathon in 490. German literature would look different had Goethe died in an accident at twelve years old or had he emigrated to America with Lili Schönemann. There would be no postwar German literature, among other things, had Hitler succumbed in 1938 to one of the assassination attempts on him. The proposition that in the medium of history we can see the necessity of our own becoming subjects or that we can at least observe the genesis of our lifeworld becomes monstrously improbable if we consider that about 97.5 percent of the texts that we know were written by Greek historiographers have gone missing.[8] Faced with the fact that all eighteen of Aristotle's dialogues have been lost, the possibility that for two thousand years philologists have been able to refer to the preserved first part of the text on poetics to distinguish between literature and history itself becomes sheer improbability. Hypothetical and conjectural-historical considerations can only appear nonsensical, therefore, since they show that the presence of an intact meaning without loss suggested by the aesthetic writing and the theory of history is merely an appearance. If Hegel insists that historical and philosophical knowledge only has the power to grasp what has become factual and always comes too late to rejuvenate, change, or rethink a figure of life that has already grown old, he does so in order to ensure the correspon-

dence between what has been thought and what has taken place. But that knowledge comes too late for action also means that it comes too late for knowledge. Knowledge based on facts can exist only by grasping its own substance in historical action ergontologically. All belatedness separates knowledge from its object, robs knowledge of its truth and action of its claim to logic. As long as the writing of history serves as the prevention of the formlessness of non-intentional or non-functional—and thus non-theorizable—events, it is nothing more than a belated ideo-logization of history and a *post festum* legislating of its own forms.

This holds not merely for crass forms of deterministic historiography but also for the more moderate writing of history as process, which takes the form of social history, the history of functions, forms, or effects. At work in all of these are teleological or archeological—in the worst case, causal-theoretical—representations that defend against the threat of the contingency of historical—and also literary—events in order to ensure the coherence between knowledge and event, indeed the inherence of the event in knowledge. If one wished to interpret critically the representations of process that the history of literature are subject to as regulative fictions that ground the possibility of literature's knowledge and intellectual enjoyment, one would also have to recall, however, that literary texts themselves expose and break through the fictive rules of their cognition *as* fictive. This is what takes place in the scene of Odysseus's crying and, in a different way, in Hölderlin's ode "Tears [*Thränen*]." In it, the apostrophe to a world become historical, to the theoretical world of Greece as the "eyes of the wondrous world" and thus its positing as phenomenal, aesthetic figure, is broken off:

> Himmlische Liebe! zärtliche! wenn ich dein
> Vergäße, wenn ich, o ihr geschiklichen,
> Ihr feur'gen, die voll Asche sind und
> Wüst und vereinsamet ohnediß schon,
>
> Ihr lieben Inseln, Augen der Wunderwelt!
>
> Heavenly love! Tender one! If I should
> Forget you, if I—O you fated ones,
> So fiery and full of ash, so alone
> And desolate so long before this,
>
> O lovely islands, eyes of the wonderous world![9]

The phenomenalizing appeal of the historical world is broken off in an anacoluthon after the second "if I [*wenn ich*]," and in this anacoluthon, therefore itself disfigured by passing away, the poem speaks. In its suspension—which is the forgetting against which the text tries to work—the poem denies the knowledge it has gained. If it nevertheless continues to speak, and even in

apostrophes, it does so no longer in the belief that it can still make the desert of history into an object of theoretical and aesthetic perception, but only in order to preserve a *remainder* of its own theoretical power, no matter how epistemologically ungrounded it is: "Soft tears, don't darken completely / The light in my eyes" (*Ihr waichen Thränen, löschet das Augenlicht / Mir aber nicht ganz aus*). Where in texts like this one the aesthetic *eidos* shatters and the subject of knowledge speaks only as insubstantial fragment, a cesura opens in the realm of phenomenality and logic, one that can no longer be sanctioned by any necessity, organic totality, or intention.

History—namely, aestheticized history—is suspended in literary texts. And these texts articulate their historicality precisely by exposing the form of their speaking and the relation to their own prehistory as contingent. They speak—often enough exclusively—about the fact that they could also have been different and that they could also not have been. They are instances of a reality that does not exhaust itself in the positivity of what exists, and they are breaches in a possibility that is not exhausted in the ideality of necessity. For as long as it has been undertaken, the writing of literary history, through its central categories—process, totality, and meaning—has been closest to the aesthetic form that Aristotle ascribed to poetry; literature, on the other hand, which shatters that aesthetic totality and its cognitive correlates, is close to the episodic heterogeneity that Aristotle presents as particular to history. It is quite possible—and within certain limits inevitable—to control, ideologize, and ultimately to make forgotten the movements of dissociation that are given expression in literature. But controlled literature is no longer literature. There is no history of the historicality articulated in the texts of literature. Literature is the elucidation of the impossibility of the writing of literary history. Whoever ignores it becomes an aesthete or the bureaucratic administrator of historical acts. If literature is a point of rupture, every science of literature that seeks to correspond to it would have to become the point of rupture for the founding categories of the writing of its history: for "function," "development," and "subject."

—Translated by Jan Plug

NOTES

First published in *Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten Kongresses Göttingen* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), 5–15.

1. Throughout, "story" and "history" render the same German word, *Geschichte*.—JP

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 60. Translation modified.—JP

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 372. Translation modified.

4. The author's *Eräugnis* picks up on words for event (*Ereignis*), eye (*Auge*), and to look at (*äugen*).—JP

5. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fogles (New York: Penguin, 1996), 208; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Odyssey*.

6. Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). The translation has been modified to correspond more closely to the German translation cited by the author: *Poetik*, trans. Manfred Fuhrmann (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982). All further references to Aristotle's work will be to this edition and will be made parenthetically.—JP

7. Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über die Aufgabe des Geschichtsschreibers," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1841), 8.

8. H. Strasburger, *Studien zur Alten Geschichte* 3 (New York: Georg Olms, 1990), 178–79.

9. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Odes and Elegies*, ed. and trans. Nick Hoff (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 171.

Chapter Three

(The End of Art with the Mask)

Irony: This is the end of art. Yet if art is the presentation of the substance of the social world and its deity and, consequently, if it is the art of political religion, then the end of art—irony—is also the end of substance, of political, religious society and its god.

At least Hegel would have it so. In a little-read passage from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that is rarely cited in the discussion of the end of art proclaimed by Hegel, he has the "religion of art" end with comedy and its irony.[1] This end of art and "art-religion" is not simply its passing away; it is, rather, above all the limit immanent to art, its aim, its sense, and thus in every sense the determination of art-religion: its task, definition, and determination. Whatever might figure as the presentation of politically organized society is from the very beginning aimed at this end as the goal and fulfillment—and thus as the completion—of this presentation. Art ends with irony, but in this ending art is also to complete itself and in this way to become art for the very first time. It would be neither art nor art-religion—that is, the highest form of the appearance of substance—if art were not, to begin with, already at its end and thus at the point of irony about art-religion, if it were not already the limit of substance and hence the dissolution of its own principle of the production and presentation of something enduring in itself. Any presentation that was not also the presentation of the end, of the utmost limit, of the finitude and fragility of presentation, would be incomplete. Therefore, in order to be art, art cannot simply be itself; it must also be the art of the dissolution of art.

The irony of comedy with which Hegel has art end in the *Phenomenology* is therefore not the sheer disappearance of art and of the celebration of man and God it contains. On the contrary, it is only in the dissolution of its objects, representations, contents, and meanings that art becomes—and relig-

ion becomes—itself. If for Hegel irony marks the end of art, it is only in the teleological and perhaps eschatological sense that the truth of art—namely, the truth that it contains no substantial truth—is realized in this irony. Art ends and culminates in irony because irony is art itself, because it is the self of art and hence the destruction of its substantial contents and forms. Only a completely desubstantializing art—an ironic art—is with itself and "at home." In comedy and its irony about the substantial powers of society, art becomes conscious of itself, thereby becoming self-consciousness itself and proving itself a power absolute even beyond those substances that art itself generates and that therefore it alone has the freedom to dissolve. At its end, in the irony of comedy, art shows itself as the sole subject of substance in its disappearance, shows itself—but only in the disappearance of its showing—as the phenomenon of dephenomenalization, the aesthetic of the anaesthetic. Consequently, comedy is nothing other than the completed subjectivity of society liberating itself from its substance. Comedy is this society itself, disintegrating society that still plays with the disintegrating art form "society."

Just as Hegel, at the end of the second part of his phenomenology of religious spirit (after "natural religion" and at the transition to "revealed religion"), considers comedy not simply as one literary genre among others but as the artistic genre *par excellence*, as the art of all art and hence the dramatic form of the articulation of absolutized social self-consciousness, so too does he consider irony, the characteristic technique of comedy, not merely a rhetorical figure or one communicative procedure among others, but that manner of speaking and acting in which all figures and acts come to their limit—to their end—and hence come to themselves as evacuated substance. To be sure, irony still offers itself as a figure, but it does so as the liminal figure of all figures and only as such as the figure of figurality itself—that is, as one that is itself, subjectivity without substance, only in separating itself from every figure and every essence. Irony—and here, as everywhere, Hegelian prepositions are to be taken seriously—is the figure *an sich*, *at* its limit, in the proximity *to* and thus the distance *from* itself. "What this self-consciousness beholds," the final sentence of the section "The Spiritual Work of Art" in the chapter "Art-Religion" begins, "is that whatever assumes the form of essentiality over against it, is instead dissolved in it—in its thinking, its existence, and its action—and is at its mercy. It is the return of everything universal into the certainty of itself" (*Phenomenology* 452). Art—in its extreme, as irony—discharges itself of all the forms of sensible appearance and is, in this discharge, the recognition and certainty of itself as something equally without appearance and content.

As odd as the identification of irony and self-certainty may sound, it is not a capricious philosophical gesture but a gesture well prepared in the general conception of the *Phenomenology* and emphasized in the presenta-

tion of art-religious consciousness. Yet it remains odd. This identification states that self-consciousness is structurally comic, that its language is irony and its history a comedy. If Hegel's idea of the end of art is to be understood, then it must be understood in precisely this oddness,; that is, precisely as the thought of an estrangement of self-certainty and the wonder at its presentation. For what is consciousness conscious of when it is conscious of *itself*? And how does a self-consciousness that expresses its self intentionally as actual substance speak? What is the language of consciousness and certainty, of self and substance, and how does this language act *on* this substance? What speaks when "Selbstbewußt*sein*," self-conscious-*being*, speaks? And does it speak at all as *being*?

Self-consciousness speaks—thus begins the section "The Spiritual Work of Art," which ends with the presentation of comedy—first of all as the language of the gathering of different peoples, or "national spirits," and thus as the language of "universal human nature," which concentrates itself in a "common act" and therein "embraces the whole of nature, as well as the whole ethical world" (*Phenomenology* 439–40): "Thus it is that the separate beautiful national spirits unite into a pantheon, the element and habitation of which is language" (*Phenomenology* 439). In this phase of its historical constitution, language is the home not of Being, but of the "universal substances" (*Phenomenology* 440). Language is the habitation and temple, the site of the assembly and preservation of the customs and rules of behavior that have become objectified in divine figures; language is this "pantheon" as "the earliest language, the Epic as such" (*Phenomenology* 440). For Hegel, social universals, substances, come together not in the abstraction of thoughts but as external representations, as deities, heroes, and "national spirits" in the pantheon of the epic, presumably *The Iliad*. Those "universal substances" that inhabit the temple of epic language—the social universals of different peoples, on the one hand, and their deities, on the other—do indeed confront each other as discrete powers and individual figures, but are realized in acts in which those people, as well as these deities, are presented. "Consequently, both gods and men have done one and the same thing" (*Phenomenology* 441). The language of the epic, therefore, presents itself as structurally overdetermined and the form of its representation as a duplication and excess. And Hegel leaves no doubt that this excess in the "first language"—which would necessarily make this language itself into a double and excessive beginning—is already under the principle of the final language of the "spiritual work of art," the comic. He writes,

> The seriousness of those divine powers [that is, those universal powers of ethical substance, the gods] is a ridiculous excess, since they [i.e., men] are in fact the power of the individualities performing the action; while the exertions and labor of the latter again is an equally useless effort, since the former

> manage everything. Over-zealous mortals, who are nothing, are at the same time the mighty *self* that brings into subjection the universal beings, offends the gods, and, in general, procures for them reality and an interest in acting. (*Phenomenology* 442)

Hence the gods of epic art-religion are just as ridiculous as the heroes of the Greek epic and their labor is just as useless; that is, just as supernumerary and superfluous: their seriousness is a "ridiculous excess." The language that makes them present is "in point of fact" a language about a nothingness that it turns into something, a vacuous language and an annihilating power that is the creative power of the *self*. Thus it is in this language that the substantial powers of the moral world, the "eternal and resplendent individuals" of the Olympian gods, upon entering into conflict with mortals, necessarily lapse into, as Hegel says, a "comic self-forgetfulness of their eternal nature" (*Phenomenology* 442): They act, solely by *acting*, in contradiction to their substantial being; they abandon and forget their immutable constancy and can do nothing other than perform a pantheological comedy in the conflict between their being and their acting. At the same time, all mortal action against them is merely "an arbitrary showing-off, which at once melts away and transforms the apparent seriousness of the action into a harmless, self-confident play without result or outcome" (*Phenomenology* 442). The language of the epic, the first language of art-religion and the first language of art, is thus the language of a self-démenti in which actual subjects go astray in a futile play "without result or outcome," and in which substance, a superfluous and therefore ridiculous doubling, cannot cease ending up in comic conflicts with itself. Art and art-religion begin in a language that is mere excess, sheer excendence beyond any given statement, a language out of which result a self and a substance whose relation to one another, in turn, cannot be contained in a fixed pair of figures, but makes them into "superfluous" duplicates of one another and "liquidates" them: self and substance, heroic individuals and moral powers of domestic and communal life are, paradoxically, figures of liquidation. Any self emerging in the "first language" of art is already in excess and contingent; any substance is already desubstantialized and empty. In the field of representational language, self-consciousness is possible only in such a way that all positions of the self and consciousness are eliminated in "comic self-forgetfulness."

Whereas the "dispersion of the whole" is completed in the pantheon of epic language and in the "dissolution of the subject" into "contingent and intrinsically external personality" (*Phenomenology* 445–46), the "higher language, the tragedy," organizes the dispersed moments of the substantial and effective world into two opposing groups: into the agents of dramatic action and, opposed to them, the instances of their unknown substantial laws. These groups are no longer, as was still the case in the epic, the objects or contents

of a narration recited diegetically by another voice; rather, they present themselves in "their own person" (*Phenomenology* 444)—present *themselves* by confronting one another in an acting language in which the disparity of their selves is articulated. This second language of art is of necessity dramatic and tragic because in it opens up a difference between the consciousness of subjects and these same subjects as substances incapable of consciousness. This "higher language," the first language of social action, is tragic because as action and communication it miscarries and because in it the constitution of self-consciousness trying to give itself the form of acting speech fails. The drama of self-consciousness takes place in speech acts that refer to a power of which this consciousness itself is unaware, negating its knowledge and thus its acts, but in this negation determining them as well. Hegel writes, "Spirit when *acting* appears as consciousness, over against the object to which its activity is directed and which, consequently, is determined as the *negative* of the knower; the doer finds himself thereby in the opposition of knowing and not-knowing" (*Phenomenology* 446). This opposition—between consciousness and that which is unknown to it, and hence also between acting and its aim—now divides consciousness as well as the objects in which it tries to ascertain itself, such that acting consciousness remains hidden to itself in its aims and, consequently, also in its action. Since consciousness does not yet know what it acts toward (and it cannot know this as long as this aim remains external to it and pre-posited), consciousness must, without knowing what it does, go astray in unconscious actions—and thus not in actions but in fatal contingencies—as well as in a deceitful language—and thus in a language that means something other than what it says, a language that perhaps says nothing and that therefore may not be a language at all. The "higher language" of tragedy is, to be sure, that of an enlightened consciousness, of the conscious investigation of the laws of nature and of the polis; it is the language of the "*Lichtseite*," the "aspect of light," in which the substantial forces of life should be revealed; but it is also the language of concealment, of merely contingent and unconscious actions and of the power "lurking in the background" of this enlightenment: There is no de-concealment that would not emerge from the concealed and not still be retained in this concealment; there is no revelation and no enlightenment that would not still be caught in the darkness of something closed in upon itself; no action that would not still be hampered by the inaction from which it arises. Phoebus, the sun god, as Hegel remarks, is "the god of the Oracle who . . . knows all and reveals all. . . . But the commands of this truth-speaking god and his proclamations of what *is* are really deceptive. For this knowledge is, in its very principle, immediately a not-knowing, because *consciousness* in acting is in itself this opposition" (*Phenomenology* 446). Consciousness in action, which Hegel speaks of here, is caught in the opposition between what consciousness unveils in its objects and aims—but also thereby in its own deter-

mination—and what must remain hidden to consciousness as long as they remain its mere objects and external determinants. Action, including linguistic action, and any performative speech act must encounter something irreducibly unconscious as long as it, as an act, is directed to an aim external to it: in that aim, acting is external to itself, inaccessible, unperformable. Precisely insofar as acting is intentional, the goal of its intentions and thus its own determination as acting must evade it, and the intentional consciousness tied to acting must remain in principle limited and incapable of comprehending itself. When this acting is directed toward moral aims and hence toward the confirmation and verification of its own social capacity for truth, when as linguistic acting it can be called *performative* and therefore equally *verformative* (formative of a *verum*), then this acting language has of necessity already inverted itself—with respect to its unfulfilled intention, to its unfulfilled determination and thus its structural disorientation—and become *perverformative*, an unconscious acting toward aims no longer moral, with no determination or capacity for truth and universality. Whoever speaks without being able to control all the effects of their speech act cannot only not know *what* they are doing, they cannot even know if they are doing anything at all or if they aren't rather the victim of a mechanics of speech acts that in principle deny them any knowledge and turn their language into an unfathomable fate. This internal inversion of acting language and of the language of action, of the "higher language, the tragedy," in which language falls victim to its intention, breaking intention off, is expressed for Hegel in the ambiguous revelations of the sun god, who "speaks truthfully" but whose oracle deceives. The Lethe in the *aletheia* of the "truth-speaking god" renders his statements about what *is* a deceit and renders consciousness of this being a fundamental being-deceived.

For Hegel, the paradigmatic figure in antiquity of a consciousness that tries to conceive of itself in acting, thereby destroying itself, is Oedipus, and in modern times it is Macbeth:

> He who was able to unlock the riddle of the Sphinx, and he who trusted with childlike confidence, are, therefore, both sent to destruction through what the god reveals to them. The priestess through whom the beautiful god speaks is in no way different from the equivocating sisters of fate who, by their promise, drive to crime, and who by the double-tongued character of what they gave out as certainty deceive him who relies upon the obvious meaning. (*Phenomenology* 446)

In turning its language, as it must, toward the object from which it receives its determination, consciousness first of all becomes consciousness of something; but since it does not penetrate the object and its determination as long as it still confronts the object as a something foreign to it, consciousness is essentially the language of deception about the object and itself. Self-

consciousness is self-deception as long as it refers, in its speech and in its acts, to rules and laws, knowledge and structures without being able to recognize itself and its own force in their universality. But it *cannot* recognize itself in the orders of universality—the orders of both *physis* and *polis*—because in its speaking and acting, in its speech-acting, consciousness remains unavoidably singular; and just as unavoidably it refers to a, to *its*, universality. Torn apart by the conflict between these irreconcilable determinations, it must be pulled into equivocation, must be deceived and duped. An action unaware of itself in all its implications and consequences is as blind as an intuition lacking its concept—and is accordingly not an action but a misaction, not praxis but parapraxis. A performative act that posits not exclusively itself but always something else as well—reproducing or only transforming something forced upon it by its context—no longer corresponds to the emphatic concept of the act: It is inactive to the extent that it merely submits itself to pre-posited rules, unconscious to the extent that it does not, in an originary positing, produce its own conventions. Hegel has in mind this insoluble remainder of unconsciousness and inaction in the speech act of the dramatic subject when he remarks of the tragic heroes of antiquity and modernity—Oedipus, Macbeth, and Hamlet—that their "consciousness in acting is inherently" this opposition between knowledge and non-knowledge. This does not mean that consciousness does not conceive this other, the non-knowing and not-acting, but, instead, that consciousness does not conceive its inconceivability and accordingly its own disjuncture. It does not mean that the individual speech act misses its aim and leaves its universal rules unfulfilled; rather, this failure to take up explicitly into its act the lapse of its speech rules, and therewith of the act itself, renders the utterances of consciousness a deception of both the universality and the individuality of its speech act and prevents consciousness from coming to itself in this act and becoming transparent to itself in clear, unmitigated self-consciousness. The speech act of the dramatic subject, and accordingly of the subject of art, is always a speech pact with precisely what hollows out and subverts every act and breaks every pact—an aporetic act of deactivation.

The failure of the universal self, of substance, and of the individual act of consciousness—that is, the structural selflessness and the corresponding structural unconsciousness of action—are not effects of a private mystification or the limitations of the tragic genre, nor do they arise from an epochal delusion of Greek antiquity or dialectically unenlightened mythical thinking. They are the unavoidable effects of the structure of acting in general, of language, and of consciousness. If there is to be any possibility of a self-consciousness that moves beyond its disjuncture and its inherent self-failure, then it could only be a self-consciousness that experiences itself in this disjuncture. In its diremption into itself and its object, consciousness has "forgotten" that it determines this object itself and is in turn determined by it.

This forgetting, which belongs unsublatably to the structure of consciousness, even if it and its objects and aims are thereby impaired, this forgetting is the truth of consciousness. This is why the tragic conflict between the instances of individuality and universality must also find its result, its truth, in forgetting. "The truth, however, of the opposing powers of the content and of consciousness," Hegel writes,

> is the final result that both are equally right, and therefore, in their opposition, which is brought about by action, are equally wrong. The action, in being carried out, demonstrates their unity in the mutual overthrow of both powers and both self-conscious characters. The reconciliation of the opposition with itself is the *Lethe* of the *underworld* in Death—or the *Lethe* of the *upper world* as absolution. . . . Both are *forgetfulness*, the disappearance of the reality and action of the powers of the substance. (*Phenomenology* 448)

Hence just as in the first language of art, the epic, consciousness was divided from itself by an excess and had to be dispersed in the "comic self-forgetfulness" of gods and men, so too is consciousness split in the "higher language" of tragedy, still haunted by this excess, by this overdetermination and determination over and beyond itself, into two rival powers, which, for their part, are determined by a mutual forgetting and are therefore opposed to each other in their injustice, in the untruth about each other and about themselves. The truth (that they are in untruth), the consciousness (that they have no consciousness of one another), is, however, *not* recovered in recollection: there is nothing to remember, for the split between knowing and not knowing, the finitude of consciousness, the forgetting is primary. Truth and consciousness are recovered in the disappearance of both, in oblivion, Lethe: in death or absolution. Like the language of narrative, the epic, the language of acting, the language of the higher art or art-religion, the linguistic drama of tragedy, is the *aletheic* language of disclosure, unveiling, enlightenment, and light. But since language is only the process and the action of this light, of disclosure and revelation, and therefore can never emerge in its entirety from the undisclosed and concealed, it is just as much a *letheic* language, in its structure unsublatably submerged into forgetting. It is, therefore, the language of conscious action only in that it is also the language of fatality and contingency. It is the language of self-consciousness only in that it is, precisely for this reason, also the language of the forgetfulness of self and substance. When Hegel writes, "The reconciliation of the opposition with itself is the *Lethe*," this means that both the truth of consciousness and the truth of its substance lie in their forgetting, that self-consciousness, the reconciliation of subject and substance, lies solely in its being forgotten, and that the truth of linguistic action lies only in its "inactivity" (*Phenomenology* 448–49).[2]

If there is self-consciousness, then it must fall prey to a consciousness of forgetting: the consciousness of deceit in its speech act, the consciousness of a dispersion into the multiplicity of its discrete figures, and the consciousness of its lack of substance. In every one of these phrases, the genitive is to be understood as both subjective and objective: It is the forgetting that has to be thought of as the distinct, most extreme form of consciousness, the form of its disintegration; and it is consciousness that has to recognize this forgetting as the event of its unity with itself and its universal rule, as incompletion, as a breach of its intentions and evacuation of its substance. It is the dispersion of consciousness in which, however, it also has its only possible reality: as dispersed, finite, and always already suffering its end, it is passive consciousness and consciousness issuing from this passivity. Consciousness for Hegel is consciousness out of the experience of its loss; language is the medium in which the ruin of its capacity for cognition, communication, and action is registered. The structural Lethe—forgetting, death, absolution—which, in the language of art, the moral world, and religion—and therefore, in addition, in every language and every linguistic action—submerges into itself both individual subjects and the social laws that should govern their interaction, has for Hegel above all the consequence that all its substantial figures, all the figures in which subjectivity could present its substance, are lost: this Lethe, the extreme and medium of language, "completes the depopulation of Heaven" (*Phenomenology* 449). The deities in which the laws of the natural and social world are manifested show themselves in the tragic process as deceptive representations, as hypostases, semanticizations, and morphologizations of structural elements of social action that must fall prey to Lethe. From this, Hegel draws the conclusion, "The expulsion of such insubstantial representations, which was demanded by the philosophers of antiquity thus already begins in tragedy" (*Phenomenology* 450). The continuation of tragedy and its language of forgetting is carried out in comedy and its irony; the "depopulation of Heaven" begun there is completed in ironic language, in that "actual self-consciousness represents itself as the fate of the gods" (*Phenomenology* 450). Like Feuerbach and after him Marx, Hegel here already assumes that the substantiality of the divine is nothing more than the unreal abstraction of the real conditions of existence for social subjects. Divine figures, precisely by virtue of their abstract individuality, in which each single trait—love, beauty, artistry, revenge—appears isolated from a complex multiplicity of experiences, are for Hegel nothing more than masks. That these masks can be played with, that these abstractions are manipulatable and detachable from every visage, means, however, that the substances represented in them can be consigned to oblivion. The consciousness that plays with these masks is a consciousness that plays with its self as forgetting: *aletheia* of Lethe, the completed depopulation of Heaven, comedy.

Hence Hegel's characterization of the comic play with substance:

> The actual self has no such abstract moment for its substance and content. It, the subject, is therefore raised above such a moment, as above a particular quality, and clothed with this mask expresses the irony of such a property wanting to be something on its own account. The pretentions of the universal essentiality are uncovered in the self; it shows itself to be entangled in an actual existence, and drops the mask just because it wants to be something genuine. The self, appearing here in its significance as something actual, *plays with the mask* which it once puts on in order *to be its own person*; but it breaks out as quickly again from this illusory character and sends forth in its own nakedness and ordinariness, which it shows to be not distinct from the genuine self, the actor, or from the spectator. (*Phenomenology* 450, my italics)[3]

The subject, Hegel writes, the self, plays with the mask. The formulation is decisive for the entire theory of comedy, art, and art-religion developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It indicates not only that the real subject, the actor or the social agent, performs his play masked, and it indicates not only that social subjects act as actors who occasionally set aside and then resume their mark on civic *persona* and thus only play with it. "The self . . . plays with the mask" indicates both at once: that it plays *with* the mask and only *plays* with the mask, that it is essentially a masked subject and nonetheless only plays with its masquerade as though with something inessential and deceptive; it indicates that this self *is* itself a mask or a person, and that it only *plays with* itself, with its self as this mask, with itself as the appearance of abstract substantiality or abstract individuality. That the self plays with the mask thus indicates that it plays with the mask of the self, with the *prosopon* of its being or the *persona* of its universal, political, and religious significance; it indicates that it, the self, plays with itself and plays this self only ever as another. Accordingly, Hegel writes that the spectator of this desubstantializing and desubjectivitizing comedy "is completely at home in what is presented before him and *sees himself playing* it" (*Phenomenology* 452, my italics). To play oneself, however, means to be distinct from the played self to the point that its play can be seen from *without* and can at the same time be a "home" within this seeing, that this "home" itself can be only played, a non-home, and the play can always be the opening up of another within it. Not only the actor specially delegated to do so plays himself, not only the member of the *demos* or participant in the cult, but the self also plays itself in every scene of its realities: The self is the actor and spectator of itself only, and precisely, when it no longer loses itself in the imaginary substances of the political or natural world. Whereas the hero of tragedy was still said to "split up into his mask and the actor, into the person in the play and the actual self" (*Phenomenology* 450), there is no longer any question of such a disjuncture and hence of "*hypocrisy*" in comedy. Hegel writes, "The actual self of the actor coincides with what he impersonates [that is, with his *persona*, the mask]" (*Phenomenology* 452)—but this coincidence, as he specifically

emphasizes, is not the unconscious unity achieved in cults and mysteries; it is the coincidence of an actor with a role that he knows can be set aside. The role is insubstantial and as such, precisely because it is insubstantial and detachable, the actor always plays himself with this role and only ever plays himself as another. The play is the alteration of the self and only as such the event in which the self absolutizes itself, in which it detaches itself from its substance and, precisely in its veil, becomes unveiled sheer substance. Play: the subjectivity of the subject in its absolute alterity.[4]

The self that plays with the mask is thus not simply this or that subject determined in some way or another; rather, it is a subject only insofar as it treats its This or That and *any* imaginable substantial determination as a mask that it can just as well put on as let drop. It is a subject only insofar as it plays with itself, with itself as a mask, loosens itself from the mask, detaches itself through it, donning and discarding the mask and itself at will; it is a self insofar as the mask dissolves itself for the self and into it. It is the "actual self" thus only as the analytic force—"the negative power" (*Phenomenology* 452), Hegel writes—which releases the mask from the appearance of its substantiality, thus releasing the mask from the mask and the self from the self. And only as this detachment and release is it what Hegel calls "this *absolute* power"—that is, the power to detach, complete, and absolutize, the power against all external determinations, the free and independent power to determine from case to case and from assumption to assumption, a power, however, for its part, utterly indeterminate, the power of the absolutized, completed, detached mask. The play of the self with the mask is the form—yet a form no longer determinable by anything else, not even thoroughly determinable by its "self," by its form, and that is thus the trans-form—in which the self plays with itself as though with another, with another as itself, and thus the "form" of the absolutizing and completion of the person of the self. The subject is no longer the agent of this play—it is merely the play's actor—for the position of the agent, absolved, is reduced to a mere element of this play, into which it finds admission only passively. If the subject, because it is *exposed* to this play in every one of its possible determinations, demarcations or maskings, is only ever *played*, then this play is that event that precedes the egologically determined, self-disposing subject identical with and autonomous over "itself" and in which this subject can figure only as a subject forever other, forever detachable. The self that has become mask is the site at which the self as subject can first appear—and can take its leave. It is an open site—the mobile vacancy of a subjectivity without substance and thus without a substantial subject.

Hegel's insistence that the self plays with the mask "in order to be its own person"—that is, in order to be its *persona*, its *prosopon*—and that it sets it aside to emerge again "from this illusory character . . . in its own nakedness and ordinariness" (*Phenomenology* 450) emphasizes not only the capacity of

the subject to realize its being in the mask—the self in the mask *is its* person—but equally emphasizes the complementary capacity to disengage itself from this being of the person: the self is its *prosopon*, but it is this autoprosopon only in that it is both *prosopopoeia* and *prosopolysis*. It can only be *autopoesis* in that it is also *autolysis*. It is the process of the completion of the mask (and) from the mask *Self*. Its performation, closely tied to the tragic one, is *imperformation* and, in every sense that can be conferred upon the word, *impersonation*—the embodiment of another in a role, its denunciation as mere role, and the detachment from it. The subject, which detaches itself from itself in this information or adformation and *afformation*, plays itself with the mask, sees itself play, and does not stop exercising its "absolute power" in the démenti of its substantial reality; this subject, "comic consciousness" (*Phenomenology* 455), is not comic incidentally or for contingent reasons. It is comic because it can experience itself only as exceeding every objectification, even while it recognizes itself in every one of them. Enacting the detachability, fragility, and finitude of its *persona*, the subject is structurally comic. And only this structurally comic or essentially substanceless subject can be the absolute subject, relating freely to itself as something altogether different—the subject without subject, the subject mask, the absolute person.

At the end of its passage through the stations of art-religion, self-consciousness would not be comic self-consciousness liberated from its substantiality if it were not from its very beginning, in its very structure, a comedy. Its language can only be an essentially ironic one, rebounding from its statements as from something inessential, merely apparent and only apparently meaningful. It is the language of the *absolution* (*Freisprechung*) from all linguistic determinations and thus absolute language. The art of this language is to give up every art and every art-religion as a mask over which no *subject* has power because they follow the impulses of a subject-*free* subjectivity alone. The play of this comic language is not a play on the stage, in the state or the world, without first being a play *with* the stage, *with* the state, and *with* the world as its masks. The ontology of this free language of self-consciousness: a *prosopontology* and *prosoponto-theo-logic* in which even the knowledge of the masks "self," "being," "god," and "reason" is a mark in a play not graspable or regulatable by any other, more potent knowledge.

In becoming comedy, self-consciousness shows itself as "absolute essence." To know itself does not mean to muster itself as representational content but to recognize the substantial figures in which consciousness has externalized itself as unavoidable and yet artificial and therefore detachable forms. Knowing itself in this way, the vacant subject becomes in comedy—and only in comedy—power over substance. Hegel calls this movement, ambiguously, "*Leichtsinn*," frivolity or light-hearted folly, and writes, "The

proposition that expresses this levity runs: *The self is absolute essence*. The essence, the substance, for which the self was [only] an accident, has sunk to the level of a predicate" (*Phenomenology* 453).[5] The *Leichtsinn* of the proposition is that essence, substance—and concomitantly precisely the sense the proposition contains—has become something light, a frivolity, and even a vacuity. But this *Leichtsinn* of the "absolute essence" redefines in turn the subject of the proposition, the self, declaring it a "frivolous" self in which its sense and essence evaporate. Nor does Hegel hesitate to claim that in this self-consciousness, "against which there is nothing in the form of essence," spirit "has lost its consciousness" (*Phenomenology* 453). Since in the comedy of self-consciousness, in the comedy that self-consciousness *is*, consciousness is lost—preserved only as forgotten, lost, or vacant, as substance emerging only as a "nothing" or as a powerless "accidental element." The language of tragedy, the language of oblivion, of Lethe and deceit, is heightened and intensified in this comedy. Comedy is comedy only when it performs the comedy of tragedy. It is only comedy in how it exposes the deceit that, in tragedy, two conflicting forms of law exercise upon one another and recalls the self-forgetting out of which this deceit results and in which it is atoned for. At the same time, the comedy of absolute self-consciousness continues to play the epic by staging once again its "ridiculous superfluity" (*Phenomenology* 441) and the "comic self-forgetfulness" of its gods (*Phenomenology* 442). Yet forgetting, deceit, and excess appear in comedy no longer as a fate to which the agents of the action are helplessly subjected but as the ostentatious fiction of a spectacle in which the actors are only masks, the actions only citations from the props of the history of myths and the history of theater, and sense only simulation. Comedy still plays with forgetting, deceit, and excess. It plays with the epic and tragedy, with art and its religion, it plays with the entire history of art-religion as the self plays with the mask. But comedy can play like this only because the structure of self-consciousness is none other than the *Leichtsinn* in which everything that has sedimented as the substance of the subject is cast off, liquidated as something superfluous, denounced as deceit, and pleasurably surrendered to forgetting. The play of self-consciousness is lethal for both consciousness and the substantial self. What survives and enjoys itself is solely the play as the infinitely open form, the opening form in which a self and its consciousness can first appear and disappear.

Not only art but the whole of "formally embodied essence as such" falls prey to the comic play of absolute subjectivity. And nothing is excluded from this "formally embodied essence [*gestalteten Wesenheiten*]": neither nature, nor political communal existence, nor the rational thinking articulated in philosophy. What connection this comic play has with the autonomy of nature—Hegel calls this nature's "essential independence [*Selbstwesenheit*]"—is already evident in the use of natural materials as ornament, abode, and

sustenance: "In the mystery of the bread and wine" celebrated in the cults of Bacchus and Ceres, as Hegel writes, self-consciousness makes natural materials "its very own . . . along with the meaning of the inner essence; and in comedy, it is conscious of the irony of this meaning generally" (*Phenomenology* 450–51)—of the irony, that is, that every natural figure that appears autonomous can be made to serve the purposes of self-consciousness and that its mystery can be betrayed to knowledge. If the irony of the natural shape lies in its dissolution into the purposes of self-consciousness and in the loss of itself as figure, then the irony of communal existence, of the polis, lies in the contrast between its claims to universality and the particular interests it falls victim to—Hegel calls this contrast "ludicrous" and sees in the comedy of democratic politics "the complete emancipation of the purposes of the immediate individuality from the universal order, and the contempt of such an individuality for that order" (*Phenomenology* 451). Thus once again, as immanent contrast, irony shatters the figure—in this case, that of the demos organized in the polis—and liberates its elements, political individuals: they become actors in a political comedy who self-consciously use the masks of the abstract legal person for their own ends. More distinctly than the corrosion of art-products and the transformations of nature, the dissolution of politics reveals what Hegel calls irony, scorn, ridiculousness, and comedy to be an asymmetrical phenomenon: abstract universality, essence, or substance falls victim to its elements. Irony is the process of the disintegration of totalities; comedy is the spectacle of the inconsistency of substance and of the substantial subject. This is true *a fortiori* of the universals of rational thinking. After the gods have been stripped of their anthropomorphic appearance in comedy and philosophy, "all that is left to them as regards their *natural* aspect is the bareness of their immediate existence; they are [as in Aristophanes's *Nephelai*] clouds, an evanescent mist"; but, "having been given the form of *thought*, they have become the *simple* thoughts of the *Beautiful* and the *Good*, which tolerate being filled with any kind of content" (*Phenomenology* 451–52). The highest ideas, successors to the divine substantial universals, pure thoughts in which consciousness is to find its last hold, are necessarily empty precisely because of their universality and can be invested only with contingent particular interests. "The pure thoughts of the Beautiful and the Good," Hegel writes of the highest Platonic Ideas, "thus display a comic spectacle: through their liberation from . . . opinion . . . they have become empty, and, just for that reason, the sport of mere opinion and the caprice of any chance individuality" (*Phenomenology* 452). The pure *eidos*, the *idea*, does indeed offer an ironic spectacle and object of comic speculation, for the universal envisioned with it, the ground and background of every particular design, must represent itself as exactly what it should not be: a contingency and play of individual *designs*. The performance of the comedy in the Platonic domain of Ideas presents the powerlessness of "self-

conscious pure knowing" (*Phenomenology* 451) to think an "embodied essentiality" (*Phenomenology* 451) that would not be ruined by this very thought.

That the figure, and indeed any figure, including the figure "thought"; that the support, including the support that consciousness could offer, dissolves itself, and the ideas turn into "clouds, a passing vapour" just like the gods; that this analytic anamorphosis and anasemiosis liquidates nature, political society, and philosophy, all artistic figures and religious ties into a torrent of contingent and unsupported details; that the only remaining relation is to the dissolution of all relations—this is what Hegel calls comedy, irony, the play with the mask, the end of art. The comedy of nature and art, of politics and philosophy, no longer offers substantial figures but, rather, presents the desubstantialization and defiguration of everything that could be its object. Art—and even the art of politics and philosophy—which had begun as a pantheon is, at the end, its cenotaph.

The end of art in comedy is not merely the end of a figure of consciousness, but the end of consciousness as figure. Like Athenian democracy, like the Platonic theory of Ideas, and like art in its irreligious conclusion, the self-consciousness articulating itself in them also has the structure of comedy. It relates to itself as something detached, put aside, and hence treats itself as its end: its *Lethe*, forgetting, and death. Just as art at its end—and it is only therefore *end*—forgets itself, consciousness forgets itself in self-consciousness. "Here [in comedy], then, the Fate that up to this point lacked consciousness," Hegel writes, "consists in an empty rest and forgetfulness, and separated from self-consciousness, is united with self-consciousness" (*Phenomenology* 452). The lack of self-consciousness, the "forgetfulness" and the "empty rest," is united with self-consciousness. That is, the destitution of self-consciousness is constitutive for consciousness insofar as it is consciousness of its productions, and accordingly, of itself as something departed, dead, and forgotten. It is *self*-consciousness only as the self of an impotent and deadened consciousness. When the self plays with the mask, it plays with its own death, with a death mask. Hegel writes, "The *individual self* is the negative power through which and in which the gods, as also their moments, viz. existent nature and the thoughts of their specific characters, disappear. At the same time, the individual self is not the emptiness of disappearance but, on the contrary, preserves itself in this very nothingness, abides with itself and is the sole actuality" (*Phenomenology* 452). When the self preserves itself in this nothingness as its ruined gods and the corroded thoughts of substance, when it preserves itself as its own disappearance, then it "holds to itself" only by "holding to" its death, and "holds to" its death only by being death's force, "the negative force," itself. The self is its own Lethe. It is autolytically constituted. Self-consciousness is essentially the experience of the finitude of self and consciousness only by being *its* death,

its *own* death, *its* reality, its *own* reality. Likewise art in its lethal conclusion: In its disappearance art exposes itself as *its* end, its *own* end, and "preserves" itself and *can* only "preserve"—receive and hold out—itself because it takes hold of itself as disappearance. Just as "the life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from death, and keeps itself untouched by devastation [*Verwüstung*], but rather the life that endures it and preserves itself in it" (*Phenomenology* 19), so too does art first fully become art when it endures its end and *preserves* itself in its devastation or desertification. Art "preserves" itself in comedy. Comedy is the devastation of art. Only because art at its end, in comedy, is no longer anything but the exhibition of the finitude of art—and indeed of its *own* finitude—can it be called complete. Hegel writes, "The religion of art is consummated in it [the individual self in its disappearance in comedy] and has completely returned into itself" (*Phenomenology* 452). And in the same sense, in the *Aesthetics*, which in many ways follows a strategy different from the *Phenomenology*, he writes, "Yet on this peak [of art] comedy leads at the same time to the dissolution of art altogether."[6] He continues: "But if comedy presents this unity [of idea and appearance] only as its self-destruction," the presence of the absolute "asserts itself only in the negative form of sublating everything that does not correspond to it, and only subjectivity as such shows itself at the same time self-confident and self-assured in this dissolution" (*Aesthetics* 2, 1236E). Only subjectivity as such, we are to understand, is "at the same time" dissolved and assured of itself, assured thus only by virtue of its dissolution and assured only because subjectivity can still conceive of its dissolution as its *own* work—a subjectivity beyond every individual subject and even beyond subjectivity *itself*—and yet a subjectivity that, in this beyond, can still play with its destruction, can play with it as its *own* destruction. The death of art in comedy is thus *assured* death, its *own*, and comedy is accordingly the art that realizes itself in the devastation of art: an art beyond individual arts and beyond art altogether, an art that still plays with its death mask, but only with its *own*. Therefore, Hegel can regard death as an event without terror, without the pain of devastation, but instead, remarkably—because for the first and last time, for the only time—as happiness. At its end—and only therefore can it be called *completion*—art savors its death as its self-appropriation and is happy. It savors—that is, experiences as real and present—the death of the final god of representation, the death of art itself.

Hegel speaks of the "perfectly happy, the comic consciousness" into which "all divine reality goes back" (*Phenomenology* 455) and writes,

> What this self-consciousness beholds is that whatever assumes the form of essentiality as against it, is instead dissolved within it—within its thinking, its existence, and its action—and is at its mercy. It is the return of everything universal into certainty of itself, which, in consequence, is this complete loss

> of fear and essential being on the part of that which is alien. Such self-certainty is a state of spiritual well-being and of repose therein, on the part of consciousness, such as is not to be found anywhere outside of this comedy. (*Phenomenology* 452–53)

And once again in the *Aesthetics* he writes about Aristophanes: "Without having read him, one can scarcely know how damned well-off [*sauwohl*] a person can be" (*Aesthetics* 2, 1221E). In the same sense he says of modern comedy that it restores "what Aristophanes achieved to perfection in the field of the Ancients," that its "keynote" is "cheerfulness, assured exuberance," "inherently and fundamentally blissful foolishness" (*Aesthetics* 2, 1235E). But in these and similar passages, particularly in the discussion of the "bliss and ease of subjectivity" (*Aesthetics* 2, 1200E), has Hegel not forgotten that self-consciousness—that is, precisely this subjectivity—has become one with its emptiness and "forgetfulness" and hence with its death? Has he not forgotten that the self in comedy has "lost its consciousness" (*Phenomenology* 453) and therefore that its experience is not merely an experience of the lack of substance, but is itself without substance and consciousness? If these questions are answerable with the suggestion that the foolishness, the "inherently and fundamentally blissful foolishness," is precisely nothing other than the necessary movement in which consciousness disengages from its hold to a self, giving itself over to its lack of substance—then has Hegel, frivolously, not taken seriously his own formulation of the devastation in which the self "preserves" itself, forgetting that "desertification" that it does not "keep clear" of but instead suffers on itself? It is clear that for Hegel the happiness of the "perfectly happy, the comic consciousness" (*Phenomenology* 455) touches this suffering and thus the seriousness and the pain of the negative. But precisely because the labor of sense in comedy touches on the play of *Leichtsinn* and the dialectic of comedy, the former can, frivolously enough, be forgotten in the latter. At this tangential point between an art that is no longer art and a philosophy that has not yet become substantial, the two are barely distinguishable. But if pain is to be forgotten in happiness, as Hegel will apparently have it, then it is also in order to include this happiness of foolishness in an enclave and keep it pure, to localize it historically and geographically, staving off contamination with anything else and enclosing within limits whatever in this happiness might become dangerous to the seriousness and labor of self-consciousness. Hegel ascribes to comic consciousness a "spiritual well-being and of repose . . . such as is not to be found anywhere outside of this comedy" (*Phenomenology* 450). This claim of exclusivity keeps apart from comedy both the pain and the horror over the annihilation of the "embodied essentiality." The enjoyment of disappearance and the pleasure in the death of all gods is warded off and reserved for Attic comedy, kept from infecting other genres, other epochs, the era of Christian-

ity for example, or even speculative philosophy. The thesis of the end of art in comedy—however radically it may present art as the agent of political and religious, philosophical, and aesthetic disintegration of self-consciousness—this thesis also entails putting an end to the ending of art and limiting the radicality of the experience of finitude and happiness disclosed in it. For end is here conceptualized as a completion and closure that is logical as well as historical in which a praxis or an epoch of consciousness realizes its determination: itself. End for Hegel is a conceptualized end and, accordingly, the privileged mode of self-possession and self-appropriation. If comedy and its irony of the substantial powers puts an end to art, does it play only in the service of dialectical labor? Does its self-loss stand in the service of self-appropriation? Is comedy then exclusively the moment of a dialectic that, for its part, is no longer comic and no longer vulnerable to any comedy?

The protective limit around the happiness of comedy is as porous as the defensive limit against its analytic threat. Where irony turns up again among Hegel's contemporaries, in particular among the misleadingly named Romantics, to compete with speculative dialectic, Hegel, for whom irony to that point was an integral element of comedic language, finds himself obliged to distinguish irony as the formal speech of vanity from true comedy.[7] His most aggressive attacks are directed, as is well known, against Friedrich Schlegel, whom he charges with the vain hubris of the formal, empty I and whose presumptive theory of "absolute self-complacency" he scolds as a "lonely mass of itself."[8] But in 1794, in Schlegel's *Vom ästhetischen Werte der griechischen Komödie* [*On the Aesthetic Value of Greek Comedy*], Hegel might already have read about the "political intermezzo, the parabasis"—the exemplary case of a demystifying play with the mask: "The greatest agility of life must have an effect, must destroy; if it finds nothing beyond itself, it turns back to a beloved object, to itself, its own work; it then injures to stimulate, without destroying."[9] And in 1800, Schlegel's *Über die Unverständlichkeit* [*On Incomprehensibility*] claims that "Socratic irony" was "the freest license, for through it one is moved beyond oneself; and yet the most lawful license, for it is absolutely necessary."[10] Both texts do not celebrate self-complacency but register—in one case historically, in the other structurally—a movement beyond the self that takes place in the ironic interruption of role-playing.[11] What Hegel fears in Schlegel is presumably not so much the hypertrophy of subjectivity but the transport of the analytic force of irony and of the comic into fields that lie beyond the historical and structural limits established by Hegel. What he distorts and attacks as "self-complacency" in Schlegel's texts was a theory of enjoyment that he wanted to reserve for the Attic comedy in his *own* presentation, which he accordingly wanted to reserve for *himself*. And what Hegel may have found unbearable in Schlegel was not only the sustained mobility of the negative force of the dialectic as infinite paradox and "permanent parabasis" instead of their being bound in

the unity of subject and substance, but also that his end, his *own* end, the end *itself*, was thereby contested. However, the end, death, was only as one's *own* end, only as a death *conceptualized* by the self as a force—and, in fact, the force of substantialization—while, as the death of another or as an inconceivably *other* death, it could attest only to the impotence of the concept, always receding, defiguring, distant from the subject and alien to substance. What repelled Hegel in Schlegel was in the end perhaps the onomastic doppelgänger, the echo of his name, the "ridiculous excess" of a meaningless sign that with involuntary irony draws attention to the fact that the limits of person, work, or concept are contingent and mobile like masks.

The end of art in "comic consciousness" shares this mobility of the mask. And this end is mobile above all *as* this mask. If the *prosopon*, the persona, was for tragic consciousness the abstract individuality of substance in which the actual self had to deceive itself and find itself forgotten; if this same *persona* was for comic consciousness only the externalized substance of itself, with which it could play as though with the deceit and forgetting of consciousness—then this same *persona*, the mask, migrates into the Roman "condition of right or law" and "its Leichtsinn refines it into a 'person,' into the abstract universality of right" (*Phenomenology* 454). The *Leichtsinn* of the structurally comic consciousness was the proposition that the self is absolute essence (*Phenomenology* 453), and it is this dispatch of the self from every substantial fulfillment through the "national spirits," through laws, conventions, or the contents of faith that dilute the subject, reduced to its most abstract form, into a "spiritless," "disembodied" "individual person"—to a legal person as the absolute mask that no longer conceals anything and is worn by no one but "fate." The proposition of *leichtsinnigen*, comic consciousness that marks the end of art—that the self is absolute essence—is now given greater precision in the proposition: "The self as such, the abstract person, is absolute essence" (*Phenomenology* 454). This proposition, in one or another of its variations, as the proposition of the comic *persona* and as the proposition of the abstract legal person, has the same content: that the self—whether as *persona* or person—is without content, empty and unreal. It states the mask character of both comic and legal consciousness. Having triumphed over substance, the self retains the mask as a trophy—the armature of past, emptied, and vacuous essence and the insignia of the continuing sovereignty of the self. But with its triumph over substance, the self has won a Pyrrhic victory, for it has defeated only its *own* substance—and from this wears the *persona* as a mark and a mask of its *own* emptiness. The abstract legal person is the mask with which no particular individual plays any longer. But it plays on "by itself." In becoming a formal person, the comic *persona*, frivolously and dialectically unburdened, has exceeded the end of art, has exceeded the end of art *as this end* that it is, and now roams as a mobile vacancy "spiritlessly" in the new, the Roman epoch of the spirit. With this, the mask, the

play-form of comic consciousness, the end of art, under a barely noticeably changed name, under the "mask" of another name for the mask, no longer as "person" (*Phenomenology* 451, 452) but as "person" (*Phenomenology* 453), has become the determining instance of the epoch of formal legal consciousness. With this, the detached form of the detachment from itself, the end of art has abstracted itself and made itself autonomous, has traversed itself, the limit, and exceeded its determination. The end—the mask—in a way other than itself and as an other than its self, migrates. The concept "person" has become a limit to the concept, a conceptual mask that tears itself away from its term, doubles, evacuates, and with its indetermination, contaminates and conterminates [*kontaminiert und konterminiert*] the further history of conceptual knowledge and action.

Even in the last passage of the chapter on art-religion, the ambiguity of the mask—as both *persona* and person, marking both the emptiness of substance and subject—is given an ambiguous formulation: the self "preserves itself in this very nothingness" (*Phenomenology* 452). This means, in its context, that the comic subject and therefore the subject *par excellence* continues to preserve itself as consciousness *in the face of* the nothingness of the substantial figures of its art. And it also means that this subject preserves itself *in* this nothingness and thus only as vacuous, selfless, and consciousless, as a mask. Both of these meanings, which still play off one another in the chapter on art-religion and characterize "comic consciousness" only in their doubling—this double meaning and thus double flexibility of the *persona* itself is now, in the prelude to revealed religion, separated into its two tendencies. "Comic consciousness" is now called the "complete externalization of substance," but also the preservation of knowledge of itself as an empty self—and thus requires the radicalizing complement in another consciousness that has lost not only substance but also the knowledge of this loss. Hegel calls this knowledge, by now completely voided, knowledge without knowledge, the "unhappy consciousness," the "counterpart and complement" of "comic consciousness" (*Phenomenology* 454–55). "Comic consciousness" is thus only complete when it also embraces "unhappy" consciousness; it is the ultra-comic consciousness of the fact that even its knowledge of the loss of its substantiality is lost. It is, as Hegel writes, "this conscious loss of itself and the alienation [*Entäußerung*] of its knowledge about itself." And again: "In the condition of right or law, then, the ethical world and the religion of that world are submerged in the comic consciousness, and the 'unhappy consciousness' is the knowledge of this total loss. It has lost both the worth it attached to its immediate personality and the worth attached to its personality as mediated, as *thought*" (*Phenomenology* 454–55). And once again: "It is consciousness of the loss of all *essential being* in *this certainty of itself*, and of the loss even of this knowledge of self—the loss of substance as well as of self; it is the pain which expresses

itself in the hard saying that 'God is dead'" (*Phenomenology* 455). Comic consciousness knows itself as the loss of its substance; unhappy consciousness still knows itself as the loss of this knowledge and its subject: no longer simply as the death of the gods but of the one God—the knowing subject—in its person. If ironic consciousness could still be expressed in the *leichtsinnigen* proposition of the *docta ignorantia*, "I know that I know nothing," then the lament of utterly unhappy consciousness in its *indocta ignorantia* must go: "I do not know whether anything can be known at all, and thus also do not know whether it is I who knows nothing and does not know that I know nothing." With the evacuation of both knowledge and the self from self-consciousness, however, comedy and its irony, radicalized by its "counterpart and complement," has extended even beyond the end of art into the abstract legal person and its "pure thoughts." Thought and knowledge too are a *persona*, a mask, a dead god—and the escalating comedy of spirit must set aside this mask as well and devastate this thought.

If knowledge can be a mask, it can no longer be known what is mask and what is not mask. The extreme of irony is the devastation or desertification of even the consciousness that it is consciousness of something without substance: it must thrust this consciousness, lethally, into forgetting and unconsciousness. The extreme of the play with the mask is the devastation of the mask—not an unmasking, which would reveal behind it the reality of the subject or the thing itself, or the truth of consciousness—but the exposure of the sheer mask without the suggestion that something other than it exists, that this mask might still be recognized, known, or thought as such. It is the devastation of every conceivable limit and, above all, of the limit apparently reached with the end of art, the devastation of the end that comedy is supposed to mark, the devastation of the end of art.

> The statues set up are only stones from which the living soul has flown, just as the hymns are words from which belief has gone. The tables of the gods provide no spiritual food and drink, and in his games and festivals man no longer recovers the joyful consciousness of his unity with the divine. The works of the muse lack the power of the spirit, which gained its certainty of itself from the crushing [*Zermalmung*] of gods and men. (*Phenomenology* 455)

This characterizes not only the end of art, but the end of the end of art, of comedy: From the play that pursues the "crushing of gods and men," consciousness no longer returns to itself and no self-assurance issues from it. The subjectivity that savored the devastation of substances finds its own consciousness devastated—and does not find itself again. The circle of its self-reflection is broken and falls apart into the disparate fragments of a world equally void of consciousness and objects. But if art is supposed to reach its completion and truth, the stance of absolute subjectivity, in comedy, and if this art, outré, evacuates even subjectivity in the abstract legal person

and its absolute skepticism, then art is the devastation of art and its truth: subjectivity; then it is the play with the mask that devastates this play, the end that devastates the end. Then comedy is, in its extreme, the death of god—the death, namely, of that assurance that could still conceive of the "crushing of gods and men" and by virtue of this concept could survive.

There is thus no end of art, of comedy, of devastation, of atheology. And there is, from the very beginning, nothing other than the end of art, comedy, devastation. The end of art thus does not cease, *malgré soi* and anachronistically, to end. It is a *suspended* end, an endless end, one that can be neither known nor thought, an a priori masked end, an end of art—and without—parentheses. This (end) can no longer simply be the object of a theory, of a conceptualizing intuition, certainly not of a theory of the aesthetic or even of an aesthetic theory, for after its "crushing" there remains of art only dust—Hegel speaks dryly of "specks of dust" (*Phenomenology* 455)—not the appearance of essence, no "embodied essentiality" still sensibly stimulating. From its theory, neither assurance nor knowledge nor belief is to be expected. The (end) is, if it is an end, an outré comedy of the end, an ultra-ironic end, a "ridiculous superfluity" of ending and a "comic self-forgetfulness" that art and its end still plays out against itself, against the very idea of an end. It has ceased to be a known, controlled, *proper* end and the end *itself*.[12]

What remains at the end of art, art-religion, its gods, and its God is a desert. And in this desert (the end of art)—the most extreme and uncontrollable of ironies—is born, not *after* the end of art but *out* of it, the (as Hegel would have it) last religion, "revealed religion." "The self is absolute essence" is the *leichtsinnige* proposition of comic consciousness. That of legal consciousness is more precise: "The abstract person is absolute essence." Now this abstract person, the removed mask into which the subject has gathered itself together, is utterly empty, a mere schema without the force to grasp the complexities of any content, and without the stability that could protect the subject against the attacks of skeptical doubt as to whether it is stable and enduring at all. The pure form of abstract consciousness has cast away the substantial self and presents itself as the death mask of the dead god of art-religion. This god, the last and paradigmatic spectator of comedy, who "is completely at home in what is performed before him and sees himself playing it" (*Phenomenology* 452), of necessity died at the loss of his consciousness, which was relinquished to the mask-self of comedy. Knowledge exists henceforth only as an "externalization of the knowledge of itself," as knowing without knowing and thus merely as its form without content and object. But if self-consciousness is vacant, then the content, without its sustaining form, must in turn be an unsustained tumult of formless elements, conflicting interests, conceptless disparate individuals. Hegel calls them "the desertifying wildness [*verwüstende Wildheit*] of content with its elements set

free" of that abstract legal person (*Phenomenology* 456). This content, now unsustained, is a desert of every immediate, material *this*, non-objective matter, material as the sheer dispersion of unschematized elements.

The god withered into a vacant mask, on the one hand, and the desert, on the other—these are the two extremes of the ultra-comic self-consciousness whose structure is articulated in the proposition that the person is absolute essence. Yet, however far apart they lie, mask and desert—the irreducible minimal forms of subject and substance, person and essence—are joined by a copula that reveals their unity. In that both, as bare concepts without meaning beyond them and without determinate form, with a secret or a horizon, are simply *there* and are *there* as these vacant, wandering *concepts*, they are also already the *same* and mark the unity of language and being in its reduced form. Every individual concept, no matter which, independent of its respective intention, *is there* as sheer, singular, insignificant marking and doesn't need to say that it exists. For Hegel, it is therefore the existence of logos as the real copula of being and language. "The simple unity of the concept is immediate being itself" (*Phenomenology* 458). This unity does not consist in mediating between the concept and a being outside it in the medium of a representing meaning. Rather, the concept simply *is*, immediately, and in itself has an always singular reality. *This*, the *this* pronounced by sense certainty, is the always singular onto-logical revelation itself. It is that revelation in which, for Hegel, substance is revealed as subject once and for all in the bare deixis of the existence of the concept. This revelation, however, can only come about where objects of language—and even language as its own object—have succumbed to their tragic—and their comic—reduction and say nothing more than *that* they say. Only when the concept of mask and its content have become desert is mere showing, the self-manifestation of the being of language, shown, without being able to show anything else. Only these two, mask and desert—a dead, purely formal and therefore contourless consciousness and an amorphous, devastated subject—generate together, "each becoming the other," the mask becoming desert and the desert becoming mask, "actual self-consciousness," the incarnate God, Christ. *Christ* is the offspring of desert and mask, he himself being both of them, sheer marking as existing language, substance itself as consciousness itself. "It may be said," Hegel writes of this self-consciousness, "if we wish to employ relationships derived from the process of natural generation—that has an actual mother but an *an sich*-existing father" (*Phenomenology* 457). The father—this is why he is called "*an sich*"—is dead, a death mask; and the reality of the mother lies in the "desertifying wildness" of all the isolated elements of the material world. Precisely for this reason, however, their sexual-logical copula, which produces the figure of the Christian son of God, is none other than the elementary unity of being and thinking, of self and consciousness, and thus of subject-mask and subject-desert, in self-consciousness: the unity

of a self, unsustained and unstable in its sheer material existence, and a consciousness that has forgotten everything, even itself (*Phenomenology* 461).

It is this unity of the *this*, this unity of the extremes that have become absolute and absolved even of themselves, which the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, even in the chapter on art-religion, envisions throughout as speculative *onto-logic*. As such, that is, as the *thinking* of *being*, this onto-logic legitimizes itself only when, in the sequence of the figures it thinks, it can point to at least one in which thinking is "immediately existence" (*Phenomenology* 461). And this single figure, for Hegel, is Christ, his speculative ontology is the Christian ontology of a self-conscious This, a Christology of linguistic and historical singularity. This is how Hegel, as must be understood from his officious proclamations, understood himself. But even if his Christology is hardly compatible with any church "orthodoxy," he would presumably have thought it blasphemy to admit the comic explicitly into his christo-ontology. He was candid enough, courageous and—ironically—systematic enough, however, to leave in the text of his *Phenomenology* no doubt that only the comic suspension of substance in its union with the unhappy devastation of the subject could produce the one personal God, the God in *persona*, and only therewith could produce the actual concept of subject and substance at all. That, therefore, the "Christian" system of self-conscious singularity proceeds from nothing but the coincidence of mask and desert, vacant subjectivity, and dispersed substance.[13]

Hegel does not state it, but his text clearly propounds that the conjunction of desert and mask—a desert that can be nothing other than a mask, a mask that can be nothing but a desert, both of which, accordingly, can simply be only other than *themselves* and other than being—that this absolute coincidence of the *absoluta* in the revealed God and his onto-logic, and therefore the speculative ontology in its totality is the continuation of this "ontology" of the mask, which is developed in the analysis of comic consciousness, must be an outré *prosopontology* and must be comic. The personal god, the actual concept, and in its wake even absolute spirit is a mask—and the mask *itself*, the mask in being devastated, "existence as the negativity of itself" (*Phenomenology* 461). It remains an open question whether its logic—if it is logic—can be grasped in the concepts of self, being, or concept, or if it *casts off* the ruling concepts of Hegelian doctrine, namely, substance, subject, and their unity.

Hegel thought of the end of art—comedy, irony—only as its completion, as its historical regionalization and domestication, as its self-appropriation and self-possession. The point, however, is to think of the end without the completion of art—that is, to think of art as infinitely finite and as incompletion, as mobile, porous, and *released* from itself and even from the substantiality of the subjectivity of its ending. The point is to think of both art and its

end as a detaching of the mask, as a release of matter without contour and of a thinking without schema, as a dispatch in which *with* art something *other* than art is promised and exposed.

—Translated by Kelly Barry

NOTES

First published in English in *Hegel After Derrida*, ed. Stuart Barnett (London: Routledge, 1998), 105–130. First German publication in *Sprachen des Ernstes, Sprachen der Ironie*, ed. Karlheinz Bohrer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 121–155.

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 452. All further references are to this edition and will be made parenthetically as *Phenomenology*. Translations have been slightly modified throughout the essay. In revising the translation, J. B. Baillie's translation, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), has been consulted and often drawn upon.

2. In the same line in which he speaks of the "forgetfulness" and the "disappearance of the reality and action of the powers of the substance," Hegel writes of the "essence" into which these conflicting powers retreat: "the essence, which . . . is the repose of the whole within itself, the unmoved unity of Fate, the peaceful existence and consequent inactivity and lack of vitality of family and government . . . and the return of their spiritual life and activity into the unitary of Zeus" (*Phenomenology* 448–49).

3. That Hegel here and in other passages of the *Phenomenology* plays with the terms *mask* and *person* is of course unthinkable without the terminological speculations bound up in the philosophical tradition with the determination of what "nature," "person," "substance," and "subsistence" are, and particularly the speculation of Boethius's *Contra Eutychen* in the discussion of the difficult transition from Greek to Latin and, further, to Christian terminology. Boethius writes, "Persona est definitio: 'naturae rationabilis individua substantia.'" *Persona*, this individual substance of a rational nature, is regarded by Boethius as the translation of the Greek *hypostasis*. However, he must concede that *persona* is also the translation of another Greek concept, namely *prosopon*. "The Greeks," he writes, "call these masks πρόσωπα [personas], because they are placed over the face [in facie, πρός ὦπα] and conceal the appearance from the eyes." *Contra Euthychen*, *The Theological Tractates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 87. [The translation is modified to approach the author's German translation.—JP] The tension in the concept of person, which is produced through its double determination as hypostasis and mask, as substance and that which conceals or brings to light, is resolved for Boethius in that "person" even as "mask" is nothing other than "individual substance," for, according to his argument, through these masks (*personis inductis*) in tragedy and comedy the actors represent (*repraesentabant*) individuals (84–88). The best philological presentation of the *prosopon* in Greek antiquity is in Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, *Du masque au visage* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), especially 19–38. On persona in Roman and Christian terminology, see Siegmund Schlossmann, *Persona und prosopon im Recht und im christlichen Dogma* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968). For the attempt at a "social history of the category" of person, see Marcel Mauss, "Eine Kategorie des menschlichen Geistes: Der Begriff der Person und des 'Ich'" (1938), in *Soziologie und Anthropologie*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Verlag, 1978), 221–52. The modern split between person and mask is already completed when Hobbes introduces the distinction in *De homine* between "artificial man" and "true" or "natural man": "What the Greeks called πρόσωπον the Latins sometimes call man's *facies* (face) or *os* (countenance), and sometimes his *persona* (mask): *facies* if they wished to indicate the true man, *persona* if an artificial one, such as comedy and tragedy were accustomed to have in the theatre." Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991), 83; see *Leviathan*, chapter 16: "Of Persons, Authors, and Things Personated" in *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 111–15. Kant, for whom "person" no longer stands as objective substance or as technical product, sees "person" in the recurring phrase "humanity in our person," as the true representa-

tive of freedom, a "factum of reason" to which no empirical appearance can correspond, but which grounds every possibility of empirical experience and praxis. To the question "What origin is there worthy of thee?" the answer for him can only be "personality, i.e., the freedom and independence from the mechanism of nature." Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1956), A 155. [My translation.—KB] Hegel's theory of comic self-consciousness as a play with the mask and the person can be read as a continuation of Kant's philosophy of person and freedom. For Hegel it is no longer a question of the self-positing of the moral law but of the confirmation of the thetic force, even in the sublation of the substantial self.

4. As such, it is related to that play and spectator, which Walter Benjamin in an excursus in his book on the Trauerspiel indicates as the culmination of Baroque theater. He writes of Hamlet, "The secret of his person is contained within the playful, but for that very reason firmly circumscribed, passage through all the stages in this complex of intentions, just as the secret of his fate is contained in an action which, according to this, his way of looking at things, is perfectly homogenous. For the Trauerspiel, Hamlet alone is a spectator by the grace of God; but he cannot find satisfaction in what he sees enacted, only in his own fate." In what Benjamin calls "the silver-glance of self-awareness," Hamlet turns his glance to his own observation, he turns his glance and turns to his glance itself and hence to the intentional form under which the world must appear as mournful. But in his silver glance—in his sidelong glance—precisely this form, the intentionality of the subject, is dissolved and lets the "mournful images transform themselves into a blessed existence." Walter Benjamin, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977), 157–58. However different the playful self-observation of the person in the English tragedy and the Hegelian play with the comic *persona* may be, both have to do with the analysis and dissolution of the subject and with its foundation in a movement or a topography that cannot be reduced to the subject, substantial or intentional. Benjamin is concerned with a similar gesture in his Kafka essay of 1934, where he writes of the "Nature Theater of Oklahoma" in Kafka's *America*: "All that is expected of the applicants is the ability to play themselves. It is no longer within the realm of possibility that they could, if necessary, be what they claim to be. With their roles, these people look for a position in the Nature Theater the way Pirandello's six characters seek an author. For all of them this place is the last refuge, which does not preclude it from being their salvation." Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 804. Whoever plays himself, in Benjamin's account, can for precisely this reason not *be* himself—and has precisely therefore evaded the fixation onto a self and, perhaps, been saved from it. Kafka's Nature Theater does not present a comedy, but very much as in Hegel's theory of comedy, it is about the possibility—and if not the salvation, then the dissolution—of the self and its absolution.

5. With the same sense of *Leichtsinn*, Hegel writes at the beginning of the chapter on "Art-Religion," "The consummation of the ethical life in free self-consciousness, and the fate of the ethical world, are therefore the individuality that has withdrawn into itself, the absolute levity of the ethical spirit which has dissolved itself all the firmly established distinctions of its stable existence and the spheres of its own organically ordered world, and, being perfectly sure of itself, has attained to unrestrained joyfulness and the freest enjoyment of itself" (*Phenomenology* 425–26).

6. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 2, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1236. Translations sometimes modified. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Aesthetics* 2.

7. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 67–68. [Translation modified.]

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Helmut Reichelt (Frankfurt: Ullstein Verlag, 1972), 140.

9. Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 1 (Paderborn, Germany: Schöningh, 1958), 30. [My translation.—KB]

10. *Athenäum*, vol. 2 (Rowohlt Taschenbuch), 243. [My translation.—KB]

11. On Schlegel, see my "Position Exposed" in Werner Hamacher, *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, trans. Peter Fenves (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

12. Adorno's theory of art draws, with the greatest candor and least reserve, one of the consequences of the liberation—that is, the indetermination—of the end. The pertinent text I refer to here is the short essay from 1967 "Is Art Lighthearted?" that discusses, among other things, the possibility of comedy in modernity: "A withering away of the alternative between lightheartedness and seriousness, between the tragic and the comic, almost between life and death, is becoming evident in contemporary art. With this, art negates its whole past, doubtless because the familiar alternative expresses a situation divided between the happiness of survival and the catastrophe that forms the medium for that survival. . . . Art that is beyond lightheartedness and seriousness may be as much a figure of reconciliation as a figure of horror. . . . The art that moves ahead into the unknown, the only art now possible, is neither lighthearted nor serious; the third possibility, however, is cloaked in obscurity, as though embedded in a void the figures of which are traced by advanced works of art." Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 253.

13. The only commentator for whom the connection between comedy and Christianity has not entirely escaped is likely Alexandre Kojève. As capricious and distorting as many of his interpretations turn out to be, particularly his attempts at actualization, his attention to the construction of the system allows him to observe the transition between the end of art-religion and revealed religion. At the same time, his presentation of their relation is symptomatically lax: "It is the same actual life which reflects itself in the comedy that has given birth to Christianity: 'bourgeois' life. Comedy, which has shown the possibility of secular life, sublates itself as comedy; what remains is bourgeois man, who takes himself seriously and lives the life that was presented to him in the comedy: it is the Christian bourgeois man who does Christian theology." Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 255. [My translation.—KB]

II

Gestures of Language

Chapter Four

Contraductions

Among the most delicate problems in the philosophy of language and in philology is the fact that one language can only be translated into another language by this other language itself, not by a third language common to both. There is no rational calculus of language that mediates—if translation is a mediation—between individual languages, no *characteristica universalis*, and no Esperanto, for any comprehensive language would in turn only be an individual language into or from which one would have to translate. The placeholder for that third language that does not exist is translation. Although it cannot be a language above languages or a composite language made by bringing together other individual languages, it is still a linguistic form, and as that form in which languages transmit one another and have the sole criterium of their linguisticality, translation is the language of languages. This language between all languages cannot be replaced by any other language and cannot be surpassed by any additional language. It is a single language, but in a way that is each time singular. If it can work toward a connection between, and even integration of, different languages, it does so only by transforming them and thus by interrupting the continuum that the individual languages appear as. Translation is therefore a paradoxical linguistic form and a paradoxical form of forms: it allows a language to speak in another language by cutting it short in its own language. It is a relation between languages but a relation that withholds from the one language, which is being translated from, the other language, into which it is translating. It thus not only traverses the interstice between languages, but also opens or widens it, not only crosses borders but also displaces and maintains them in their displacement. It is a singular form that presents itself only in an indefinite multitude of transformations, deformations, and unformations, a relationship realized in withdrawals. With the modalities of this special form

of language, language as such shows itself to be a form of the opening, withholding, and misappropriation of forms.

Zundelfrieder, one of Johann Peter Hebel's creations, is a thief who could not care less about the borders of society, decency, or institutions—especially prisons—but also about the borders of nation states and languages. Hebel emphasizes, "Zundelfrieder never steals out of necessity or desire for profit or because he is dissolute but for a love of art and to sharpen his understanding."[1] In one of the short stories that tell of Zundelfrieder, after having "by himself found" his way out of the penitentiary, as it is put, he comes to a border in the evening. When the sentry wants to stop him and asks who he is, what his name is, and what he is up to, Zundelfrieder asks heartily, "Do you speak Polish?" And the sentry responds, "I speak some foreign languages, but I have yet to be acquainted with Polish." "If that's the case," says Frieder, "we'll have trouble making ourselves clear to one other." Under the circumstances, the passing gatekeeper intimates, it would almost be best if he went right through without stopping (297). And Frieder crosses the border without having answered a single question or spoken Polish.

Or has he? That he evades the guard's questions—who he is, what his name is, and what he is up to—is clear. And just as clear is that his evasive maneuver succeeds because he suggests with his question in reply ("Do you speak Polish?") that he himself understands and speaks only Polish, and that if his counterpart cannot speak Polish they won't be able to talk to each other. But the suggestion goes further still and doesn't merely insinuate that he speaks Polish but, more brazenly, that already now, as he is conversing with the sentry and the gatekeeper in German, he is speaking nothing other than Polish. The language spoken *about* has already been transformed into the unknown language *in* which they speak—and no one understands a word anymore. Everyone understands "Polish" and no one understands it. All at once, Zundelfrieder has transformed his interlocutors into *Kannitverstans*[2] who do everything they can to rid themselves as quickly as possible of the person whose language they don't understand and to let him cross the border into the foreign land where "Polish" is spoken.

That someone might pretend to understand a language he doesn't know will come as a surprise to no one. But that two people consider a language they themselves are speaking to be foreign and incomprehensible—therein lies the joke in Hebel's story. Frieder, an artist among thieves—and a thief among language artists—robs the border guards, who have been ordered to protect the territory of the German, by means of a "*sous-entendu*" in their own language, in that he suggests that they heard precisely the Polish that, among their foreign languages, they are not yet *acquainted with*. The linguistic border between the native and the foreign can and should be crossed as quickly as possible, because it has already been crossed on native soil with the mere question "Do you speak Polish?" Not only has Frieder inverted the

relationship of authority between the watch and the watched by posing this question himself instead of allowing himself to be questioned, but with this question he has also moved the foreign, Polish land to within the native, German-speaking one and thus ensured that there will no longer be any German spoken that is not "Polish."

"Polish" is now not only a well-defined national language that, like every other national language, can be learned and understood in another language. It is, in addition, a word used in German for a language that seems absolutely incomprehensible, nonsensical, and unlearnable. Just as, at a time when xenophobia was still expressed through the denunciation of particular foreign languages, one could say without hesitation that this or that was Chinese or Spanish, one also said—and still says—of a completely incomprehensible statement, that it is "Polish," meaning, it lies beyond the border of what we can access through a particular other language. "Polish" is therefore a word for a language that is indeed a language, but an untranslatable one, indeed a foreign language, but one that cannot be translated into a familiar one by any means. "Polish" says that it says nothing. It therefore marks out an area within language that exhausts itself in its mere linguisticality and refuses to serve as mediator. If, as happens in Hebel's story, the mere evocation of this most foreign foreign language already causes one to lose one's own tongue, then this language too becomes that "Polish," becomes incomprehensible and untranslatable into itself. German isn't translated [*übersetzt*] into Polish, Polish into German. Rather, each of these languages is trans*posed* [*ver*-setzt]—or driven—into the one language that communicates nothing other than itself and in which no one can communicate with anyone else. Zundelfrieder, who moves through Hebel's story as the bearer of this language of mere linguisticality, cannot be brought to a stop, made comprehensible, arrested and locked up again in the prison of his national idiom, because all the fixed positions and institutions that serve to specify a particular meaning, a sharing and communication of the meaning of language, have already been made Polish. Once the question "Do you speak Polish?," "Do you speak the language that everyone speaks and yet no one understands?," is posed, it becomes clear that only "Polish" is still spoken, that border guards and gatekeepers are robbed of their function as agents of division and communication, and that everyone who speaks moves about in a domestic foreign land in which no political and national linguistic authority is in force. The foreign language of mere speaking has already stolen into every individual language, and that is why it couldn't care less about them: One idiom isn't *translated* [über*setzt*] into another but rather is *displaced* [ent*setzt*] by a completely unidiomatic speaking; it doesn't change terrain as though it were a currency but rather is robbed of every terrain that could be delimited.

Hebel's story thus teaches, contrary to Walter Benjamin in his "Task of the Translator," that languages do not merely stand in a relation of supple-

mentation to one another but first of all in one of robbery.[3] Translation might regulate the relationship between different historical languages, but at work within this relationship is the tearing down, the dismantling and withdrawal of each particular language. This tearing down is what Zundelfrieder does, not only as thief among language artists but "like a thief in the night" (Hebel wrote a short treatise about this Biblical expression), thus like a "Polish"-Alemannic vice-messiah exposes the messianic tendency in the relationship between languages. The "gracious reader" of Hebel's story has therefore realized that the truth of language—the true, messianic ("Polish") language—makes its presence felt, freed from all individual languages, by not allowing itself to be preserved in any single one, and by never being noticed as such.

Hebel's story "Wie der Zundelfrieder eines Tages aus dem Zuchthaus entwich und glücklich über die Grenze kam [How One Day Zundelfrieder Escaped from Prison and Safely Crossed the Border]" does not deal with the translation of one national language into another but with one language, called "Polish," that can be translated into *no* other, because it itself is not a national idiom. It deals with a resistance to translation and thus with what, even if this sounds "Polish," could be called contra-traduction.[4] If this resistance comes from the most foreign language, the language of mere linguisticality, it must also, however, become perceptible in every individual foreign language; it must announce itself wherever one idiom is to be translated into another, but it must also show itself where an idiom is to be translated into itself. That is always the case when a statement, whether gestural, oral, or written, is to be understood by the addressee—and thus also by the speaker himself. But it is also the case when a language that has become historical—Middle High German, for example—is translated into its more recent variant—for example, New High German—in order to be made comprehensible. In every such translation, the gain in comprehensibility is regularly achieved by phonetic, rhythmic, syntactic, as well as semantic changes that leave more than doubtful whether we can really speak of a gain and whether the comprehensibility of what is intended can help understand the nature of intention.

In view of the danger that poetic works of the past in particular become less accessible and experienceable in their translation into contemporary language than through their aging, Rudolf Borchardt tried to solve the dilemma of translation by reversing it. Instead of translating *Der arme Heinrich* from Middle High German into New High German, in his 1925 version of this "singular poem about which Germans can with a clear mind begin to boast again," approximated Hartmann's twelfth-century German and met Middle High German halfway with his New High German.[5] For him, this translation in the opposite direction—this counter-translation—was explicitly linked with the expectation that anyone who gets used to this language even once will

> in the future protest against the idea that German works could be Germanized into German, into a supposedly more German German than theirs and instead will refresh in the fount of history the diminished, ailing, and colorless idiom he speaks with the gratitude with which the emigrant, returning to the homeland, kneeling kisses the ground in which his better forefathers sleep. (*Heinrich* 341)

The "supposedly more German German" of the twentieth century is for Borchardt really a "diminished, ailing, and colorless idiom" that—hardly different from the figure of poor Heinrich, diminished, ailing, and sick with "leprosy"—can only get back on its feet, regain its health, and get its color back when the "emigrant" and foreigner returns "to the homeland" and touches the ground "in which his better forefathers sleep." Translation, as Borchardt understands and practices it, does not bring past German into current German, but rather returns current German to past German. It attempts to be a repatriation in every sense of the word, a return to forefathers and a homecoming to the land of origin.

One might be tempted to say that Borchardt is going against the grain of history or that he is pursuing a politics of what Jochmann called poetry's steps back, a politics of regression or at least of language conservatism. But the step back that he takes with his translation is a step back into a language that distinguishes itself and is unique, as he emphasizes, in that it restrains language, in that it does not utter a decisive word and, as a "nearly mute and yet powerful instance," remains outside of and above its own figures (*Heinrich* 334). Hartmann's art can be seen, namely, in that it "forbids itself the word" for the motivating and resolving force to which his narrative owes its trajectory, concision, and sincerity. The word *Minne* [love] is not named in the poem, but the feeling of it gives the poem its density and integrity, its thematic coherence and formal robustness. Just as Borchardt discovers a "clever falling silent" in the plot of Hartmann's work, he also finds in its central figures, on whose bodies "a tiny spot is not of horn" (*Heinrich* 341), a "hidden, secret point of sickness of inexplicable weakness" (*Heinrich* 338) and in his language in general an "art of restraint" (*Heinrich* 334) that, instead of making that tiny spot and hidden, secret point the theme of an explicit expression, corresponds to it in a gesture of saying. This gesture of saying is—almost paradoxically—a gesture of the restraint of speaking, of a reticence without coyness, of an inexplicitness that avoids taking hold of the thing meant fantasmatically and thus can show it all the more energetically in how the figures behave and in the course of the action. Borchardt's translation leads toward, rather than back to, this restraint of language in that it exercises it with regard to Hartmann's texts as well as the language of the translator. Borchardt's version of *Der arme Heinrich* does not refuse to translate into a "supposedly more German German" to restore a most German

German of all, but rather in order to approach the "clever falling silent" in Hartmann's poem, its *pudendum* and *secretum*. It is of course a translation of New High German into Middle High German. But more precisely, it is a translation into a Middle High German in which Middle High German itself is concealed. It is a contra-traduction that makes common cause with the original in that, like the original, it holds itself back with language, counters translation with the concealing of its own language, and thus, like the original, practices the "art of restraint." It is a contra-traduction from a language into its refusal, a contraction of different idioms into a common, concealed gesture.

A translation, we learn from Borchardt's Hartmann edition, never translates from a foreign language or from a language that has become foreign into a more familiar—or one's own—language without at the same time translating the latter into the former. Precisely this insight, which was scarcely available for Schleiermacher and Goethe, is expressed by Borchardt's contemporary Rudolf von Pannwitz in a passage of *Krisis der europäischen Kultur* that Benjamin quotes in his "Translator" essay and that he ranks among the best things published in German on the theory of translation. There Pannwitz writes,

> Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a mistaken premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works. ("Task" 261–62)

But even this correction of a false principle shares with it the false premise that translations only aim at what is Hindi, Greek, English, but not at that in a given language which does not correspond to this language itself, which is to say, that in it which corresponds, on the one hand, to no language, and, on the other, to every language. Silence and muteness belong to that which corresponds to no language; its tonal and gestural characteristics belong to that which is proper to every language. Borchardt's Hartmann edition distinguishes itself by making room for the secrecy of Middle High German by restraining New High German. But since, along with the manifest language, he also translates its falling silent, he at the same time preserves its Middle High German tonality, rhythm, and succinctness—the elements, therefore, that Pannwitz does not pay attention to, that do not belong to the semantics of words or the logic of utterances. A translation, as we learn from this, that aims to be more than a commercial compromise between the semantics of two languages cannot merely translate what is said. It must also translate the concealing, what is implied, and the particular style of phatic and rhythmic, syntactic or gestural, expression. It must allow the foreign tone to speak in

the familiar one and therefore run the risk of allowing the semantics of what is said to become re-determinated, re-semanticized, or even de-semanticized by the asemantic or asemic elements of its saying.

For those who encounter a foreign language, its sound or written image is cut off from what it might mean. This experience of cutting the phatic level off from the semantic one seldom leads to the experience of a reduction to mere sounds or to a graphics without iconic or indexical meaning. The perceptible aspect of the unknown or unidentified language appears to be cut off above all only from its meaning in this language, but it thus becomes associated all the more easily with meanings in a known language. The *dérangement* produced by the connection of the sound or written image of one language with the semantic denotations and connotations of another has been made use of in modernity by some translations to make readable in one text other possible texts and to disclose language's free play as such in the movement between texts. This at once exegetical and poetic praxis—described inadequately as phonetic translation, misleadingly as superficial translation—is not characteristic of absurd or nonsense verse, for it produces meanings—just not those guarded over by an "original" meaningful intention. It is not characteristic of the field of aleatoric writing or free association, for it is not less but rather more strictly bound to previously determined guidelines, just not semantic ones. It might appear "experimental" but it is not in the sense of a scientific design in which a hypothetically anticipated result could be achieved through well-known methods. Finally, it also does not constitute an exception to the usual practices of writing or translating, for in every conventional semantic translation some non-semantic translation of given texts or parts of texts is at work or can at least also play a part. Phonetic or spoken language translation does not represent an exception to, but rather an extreme form of, this linguistic practice, and this extreme defines the possibility of translation and thus the structure of language in general.

The structure of the movement of what is very imprecisely called language becomes particularly clear in *Catullus*, which Louis and Celia Zukofsky worked on from 1958 to 1966 and published in 1969. There, Catullus's Latin poems are rendered in English according to their sound, rhythm, and, at least in part, syntax, but not in terms of the meanings of their words and word combinations in English. Catullus's most famous distich—number 85—perhaps the best-known distich in world literature, could be rendered thus:

> I must hate and love. Why must I, you will ask.
> What do I know? I feel crucified, carry it, that's all.[6]

Catullus's Latin text reads:

> Odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
> nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

In the English translation by Celia and Louis Zukofsky, this reads,

> O th' hate I move love. Quarry it fact I am, for that's so re queries.
> Nescience, say th' fiery scent I owe whets crookeder.[7]

Thus, the following correspond to one another: Odi et // O th' hate; amo // I move love [I(m)ove]; quare id faciam // Quarry it fact I am; fortasse // for that's so; requiris // re queries; nescio // Nescience; sed // said th'; fieri // fiery; sentio // scent I owe; et excrucior // whets crookeder. "Odi et" (from the word and thought complex "Odi et amo"—I hate and love—which in the Latin, because of the elision of the *i* in "odi," is pronounced "odet"), the Zukofskys render in English as "O th' hate." The phrase is thus not *translated* according to its meaning. Rather, according to its phonetic stock, which is preserved with a light Anglo-Saxon coloring, a meaning is *added* that, despite the lack of any etymological connection—and therein lies the astonishing thing about the Zukofskys' rendering—is most closely related to the meaning of the Latin word *odi*. Accordingly, the phonetic translation is not a translation by which the meanings of words are preserved or obtained anew in the other language but rather one in which a series of homophonetic but semantically heterogeneous words are generated. These allosemes—such as, "O th' hate" and "odi et"—correspond to the English synonyms of the Latin case by case and yet obviously not by accident. If "amo" is transformed into "I move," this phenomenon is repeated and intensified in the addition of "love," which might look like a belated compromise with a semantic translation but can also be read as a graphic rhyme with "I move." For the "I" is transformed, in connection with the "ove" of "move," into the graphically similar *l* and together with it yields precisely that "love" that corresponds to the meaning of "amo." If "love" is a graphic reprisal of "I (m)ove" and the two together are a graphonetic expansion of "amo," then the structure of the Zukofskys' rendering of Catullus is not a *translation* [*Übersetzung*] but an *accretion* [*Ansetzung*], the addition of the other language to the one rendered, the expansion and growth of the one language in the other. One wording adds wordings and phrasings of the other language, is expanded by these and their semantics, and grows beyond the lexical and historical borders of one language into another. This process of addition or accretion can only get underway, however, if the authority of semantics is suspended in the first place and if the representation of the availability of a synonymics of the lexical elements of different languages is abandoned. Only if the translation is not oriented toward correspondences in meaning can the semantic convergence of the allosemes appear from the sound context as free correspondence. Every turn of phrase in this rendering is a homophony or homography—more precisely, a paronomasia or parographia—of Catullus's words, parts of words, or combinations of words. As in the case of "love" and "I move," it is a parographia within the rendering itself. But since this process does not

merely repeat sound and written elements but generates changed meanings and new syntagmatic combinations, the rendering is really an addition, the translation an overloading by parasemata. The movement between the Latin and the Anglo-American text as a whole is structured as hypernomia—overnaming—and hypergraphonia—overwriting, overwording. Every word of the reprisal brings another word, and yet another, to each in Catullus's text, gives them sound and meaning and thereby shows his text to be a hypertext and the Zukofskys' version one of its hypertextual branches and shoots. A text, in fact every text, says more than it can ever have meant.

Now, since Catullus's verses are preserved—with minimal variations—as phonotext and—in many of their details—as semotext, it is in principle not possible to differentiate strictly between a Latin and an American text. As American as it might be, the Zukofskys' version speaks Latin. It speaks a foreign language in its own language and speaks its own language as foreign. In it, at least two languages are contracted, drawn or brought together. It is traduction only as con-traduction, and since it counteracts the semantic specification of one language with the other and disrupts the tradition of the translation of meaning, it speaks at once as contra-traduction and contraduction. But if a movement between languages of this type is possible in all cases, then every language, and language as such, is not a system of coded signs with fixed meanings, but rather a movement and—more precisely—a clearing or con(tra)duct that opens at least two—but really a virtually infinite number of—different semantic positings that are connected by nothing but fleeting sounds and their hardly less fleeting graphic traces of meaning. Every language is multilingual. And every language follows the drift of its hypersemantic contraduction because there is no *one* language and no one *language*.

The cross between two languages makes it doubtful whether with them we are dealing with languages at all in the conventional sense. Catullus's text doesn't "speak." For non-Latin ears, it merely announces; it "shows" nothing to non-Latin eyes. And it remains a largely incomprehensible arrangement of graphemes, phonemes, and syntagmas even in the "phonetic translation" into American English, whose authors have commented on their process with the greatest coyness. In "Poet's Preface," the first of the two prefaces they offered with the publication of three of their texts in the journal *Kulchur*, they write: "This version of Catullus aims at rendition of his sound. By reading his lips, that is while pronouncing the Latin words, the translation—as his lips shape—tries to breathe with him."[8] And the second, the "Translator's Preface," reads: "This translation of Catullus follows the sound, rhythm, and syntax of his Latin—tries, as it is said, to breathe the 'literal' meaning with him."[9] Calling translation reading lips, the Zukofskys say that Catullus's text is soundless, that Catullus speaks mutely, that only the translation helps him make a sound and breathes "with him"—together with him, but also with the

help of his lips. "While pronouncing the Latin words, the translation—as his lips shape—tries to breathe with him." This suggests that only Latin words are uttered, including by the translation. The translation lends them nothing but breath, the (in quotation marks) literal, thus *un*translated, meaning. Put differently, the translation does not translate; it gives breath to the mute poem, which as it is spoken still remains Latin and mute. A cross between mute and eloquent, a dead and a living language, *Catullus* is a cross between a language and none. It "speaks" only in the medium of its muteness, and where it becomes comprehensible, comprehensibility remains open to the incomprehensibility of the movements of lips, which can show different virtual languages but also something other than languages, namely, merely the gestures of these soundless and meaningless lip movements themselves. These movements are mute [*stumm*]; but they are at the same time the stem [*Stamm*] of all saying; they stammer [*stammeln*]. They do not describe something but rather only offer the possibility of reading them as signs; they are not signifiers with which a particular signified is meant, but rather gestures that can be interpreted as semiotic material. But they resist complete semiotizing and especially unambiguous semanticizing, since they remain the lip movements of a dead language even when they are given breath by the phonemes and semes of a living one. The aphonia of Catullus's text insists even in its phoneticization by translation, its asemia even in its semanticizing.

What is called "language" and is defined as the regulated semiotic system of the correlation of signifiers and signifieds—in which different subsystems are delimited from one another by well-defined lines of demarcation but, according to the rule of correlation, should be transformable into one another—shows itself to be a loose structure of allosemes that are linked to asemantic gestures not according to rules that hold without exception but in initiatives that are always unprogrammable. The resistance of these gestures to semantic translation is shown in the fact that the phonetic translation in turn cannot be translated into semantically coherent statements of its own or of another language: the colon "quarry it fact I am" has no conventional meaning. Every language's resistance to meaning, communication, and language is realized in the at least partial incomprehensibility of phonetic translation. To correspond to it, every translation, together with what is translatable, must render the resistance to translation of one into another. A translation, in order to be a translation, must combat its own tendency to connect and integrate languages. But as counter-translation it discloses in language language's counter-linguistic pull, its asemantic, asyntactic, and even aphonic resistance to every communication and mediation. What is imprecisely called language, "lingua," or "logos" is identified a bit more precisely as counter-language, "allingua," "allologos."

What is translated from the lip movements of a language is translated from that which belongs to no language but only to the gestural residue of its speaking. This means that every translation must be read not only as that of a particular individual language but always also as the translation of the withdrawal of language in every language. It also means that every language translates the restraint of language in its proper and, *a limine*, its completely improper speaking, that every linguistic utterance in a particular idiom must be realized not only as the—idiomatic—use of this idiom but, at the same time, as the translation of the unidiomatic language vacancy of this idiom, as of every other one. Every utterance produces and adds to that in every idiom which transcends and deviates from every idiom. This phonetic or graphic, rhythmic or syntactic, deviation, this displacement of the idiomatic elements of a given language, undoes the authority of its instances of meaning by forging alliances with other meanings, with contrary, contingent, unrelated meanings, and with the sheer absence of meanings. Not only is no language immune to such displacements and breakdowns, every language also moves only in their medium. Language is an event that can be universally governed by neither semantic nor formal criteria. In the logic of utterances that guards against ambiguities and, even more, contradictions, this event is suppressed in favor of pure semiotic relations, but every *bon mot*, every rhyme, every rhetorical figure, and the semantic indeterminations of these bear witness to an anarchic language event in which speaking, even formally and logically domesticated speaking, can exceed the border of the semiotic regime and be transformed into ambiguous, absurd, or nonsensical gestures. That these are not marginal phenomena, slips, or breakdowns but rather genuinely linguistic movements—namely, movements of gestural language—can be seen most clearly from the fact that no single element of language is a fixed or indivisible signifying unity. Rather, every element can be segmented. Every element is changeable and open to the intrusion of other linguistic markings. Only the morphologic indetermination in and between language elements makes possible their morphogenesis and their metamorphosis and anamorphosis.

Heine's famous *bon mot* "famillionär," which Freud analyzes in his book on jokes, can only come to be because the components of the two words *familiär* [familiar] and *Millionär* [millionaire] can be isolated and recombined, thus because there is a morphologically and semantically vacant field around these elements that allows them to move freely out of their conventional combinations and to enter into other unconventional ones.[10] In this way, not only is the extension of *familiär* with an *on* and its alloying with *Millionär* possible, this extension of the scope of the sound and meaning can also turn aggressively against the behavior described thus, that of a banker related to Heine's family and, what is more—perhaps above all—against the economy of a semantically regulated use of language in general. In short,

only indetermination allows for determinations, only formal indeterminacy for the production of forms and of the meanings correlated with them, only asemia for semantic definitions. Lewis Carroll's portmanteau words—for example, *snark*, in which *snail* and *shark* can be thought as contracted, but in which the *h* in *shark* can simply be shortened into an *n*—follow the same procedure as Heine's *famillionär* of a suspension of the authority of the morpheme and of the semantic determinations that can go along with it. These words also register in their polymorphous reorganization the indeterminacy of whether it is even a matter of a meaningful word or a word from a language that describes and communicates. Every translation operates within the scope of this morphological-semantic indeterminacy and thus overdetermination. The task of translation is therefore to circumscribe what is indeterminate in the so-called target language through the determinations of the source language: Translation does not merely traverse a space without language between languages; like each of the languages it connects, it also remains reliant upon this interstice and carries it into those languages into which it translates.

The entirety of *Finnegans Wake* speaks from and plays within this interstice. It displaces and translates languages into an element in which they dissolve into free-floating morphemes whose definition is open, and it exposes the movements of its metamorphoses, which are relatively fixed in form, to that which guards against restoring them to well-defined idioms. At the end of the first chapter of Book 2, after the curtain has fallen amid thunderous applause for the children's performance of the play *The Mime of Mick, Nick, and the Maggies*, the *Götterdämmerung* [twilight of the gods] starts at twilight [*Dämmerung*]: "gttrdmmrung" is written without vowels, as though the Icelandic saga could only be put into words in an unvocalized, Hebrew translation, the most extreme Northwest only in the language of the farthest Southeast, and as though the languages of the world, at least in the European tradition, were brewed and assembled, in this one vowelless word for decline, into the one tower of the one language of Babel.[11] This language is one, and only a single one, because it is the language of the translation of all languages into one another and because it is the language between and above all languages that guarantees their linguisticality. The falling silent in this one language is explained by the departure, dispatch, and *exitus* of the heart of words, vowels: "The timid hearts of words all exeomnosunt" (*exeunt omnes*) (*Wake* 258). A bit later, the line from Genesis 11:4 in which the construction of Babel is planned ("Go to, let us build a city and a tower") is satirized: "Go to, let us extol Azrael [the angel of death, but also Israel] with our harks, by our brews . . . , in his gaits" (after *St. James's Gate* to the Guinness brewery) (*Wake* 258). And the text continues: "And shall not Babel be with Lebab? And he war" (*Wake* 258).[12] *Lebhabh* in Hebrew means "heart," like those timid hearts of words that were earlier said to have with-

drawn and died; but "Lebab" is also the metathesis—the transformation and translation—the anagrammatic reversal, of *Babel*. The question, "And shall not Babel be with Lebab?" therefore also implies: Shall not Babel be with the counter-sense of Babel? Shall it not be with that which is lacking and silent in Babel? Must a language that contracts all languages in itself—as the language of *Finnegans Wake* does—not allow its breakdown, fall, and demise also to speak and to fall silent? Must not the con-traduction of languages into a single language also include in itself the opposite of language, its silent contra-traduction? Will the one language not have to speak *with* its becoming silent? Will the language of all languages not be the one that unspeaks itself? Must not the one language of Babel, is thus asked, be accompanied by its retraction, which speaks in the opposite direction from "Babel," not from left to right but as "Lebab" speaks in Hebrew, from right to left? Must it not be thwarted and, as counter-Babel, retort "Babel" and erase, together with Babel, the one language of the translatability of all languages? If the response to this question is "And he war," then with it not only is the dispersal of the one language confirmed as it is established, not only is the future—"shall not"—of falling silent declared a matter of the past with the "war" (understood in the German sense as "was"). It describes the countermovement between language and muteness in *war* (understood in the English sense) as a war between them and thus as a war—as Ba/"bellum"—between translation and de-translation. And since in "he war"—corresponding to the reversal of "Babel" in "Lebab"—the reversal of Yahweh is brought about, what is expressed is not only the erasure of the one language but thus also the exitus of the one God. The monolingualism of Babel, whose unity should secure the linguisticality of language and therefore the universal translatability of languages into one another, is the monotheism of the one God, the mono-logo-theism of the divinity of God and of all gods. With "gtterdmmrng" and its transformation of different languages into a single one, however, the linguisticality of language and God's divinity are made to disappear. They have already disappeared from the beginning in the "he war" of the reversal of the one God in his quarrel, the reversal of the *ens perfectissimum* into an imperfect tense, of his presence into a preterit. Atheism has always been at work in monotheism, alogism in monologuism, aphasia in monophonism.

What is testified to in this disposition of language and, more precisely, of the linguisticality of language, is the permanently self-reproducing countermeaning of a language that tries to assert and name itself as such, but that in its naming must depart from itself, fall behind itself, and collapse. By manifesting itself as the One, it breaks apart and breaks off. The agent of this self-contravention of language, of this break in its contract with itself, is translation. Through minimal variations in its stock of sounds and letters, Joyce's text transforms languages into one another. But where it gives expression to

this transformation itself and "thematizes" it, as it is put—this takes place more or less manifestly everywhere—there, as in the Babel passage, the reversion of speaking into falling silent and the scattering of the one language into a plurality of half-, barely, and counter-languages is articulated. So it is with the phrase that introduces the tower building in Babel: "Go to, let us extol Azrael." And then, "And let Nek Nekulon extol Mak Makal" (*Wake* 258). And, further, "Go to, let us extell Makal, yea, let us exceedingly extell" (*Wake* 258). With the slight displacement from "extol" to "extell," from "praise" to "un-speak," "speak to the utmost end and beyond the limit of language," with this displacement from the building to the fall of the tower, language, almost intact, has slipped from its highest unity to its delanguaging. This ex-pression and un-speaking in "extell," however, is the gesture of translation, of speaking across not only the borders of historical idioms but also across the border of language as such. "Exceedingly" "extold," un-spoken beyond all speaking, this ultra-perfect and imperfect language does not allow for itself to be either spoken or heard and understood. For this reason alone must the "Lord," here addressed as "Loud"—as sound [*Laut*], maker of sound [*Lauter*], and louse [*Laus*]—be implored to hear: "Loud, hear us! / Loud, graciously hear us!" (*Wake* 258). But that which is loud cannot hear, it can only be heard. And if it must be asked in particular that this "Loud" might hear, then he does not yet hear and has not yet heard—even if the prayer itself is supposed to be this "Loud." In his inaudible and at the same time unignorable call to be heard, "Loud," as *Deus tonans*, himself has spoken—as the one God Loud who, like the unity of the language of Babel, is shattered in his sounding.

> For the Clearer of the Air from on high has spoken in tumbuldum tambaldam to his tembledim tombaldoom worrild and, moguphonoised by that phonemanon, the unhappitents of the earth have terrerumbled from fimament unto fundament and from tweedledeedumms down to twiddledeedees. (*Wake* 258)

"Moguphonoised" are the "unhappitents," the unhappy inhabitants of the earth, by "that phonemanon" of their "Loud." They are filled with sound by his mogulphonia and megaphonia. But this *phonia* is not only a "noise," a mere sound, a racket without meaning, but, moreover, as "mog-u," is a "mock you," an aping and misleading, a deception, ridiculing, and destroying. As "moguph," heard as French, it is a "mot gaffe," a "faux pas" that represents a "faux mot," a mistake, a linguistic blunder, an embarrassing gaffe. And as "mo-gupho," it is a word that bursts out as "guffaw," mad laughter. What we hear there can only make us mis-hear. In the one language of Babelian utterance there might be a symphony of all languages, but it remains a dis- and miss-phony that communicates nothing, except that every communication will be undone by its own structure, that its sense of direction

will be thwarted, and that its addressees—"terreumbled"—will be made to fall to earth. As the inversion of every possible "phenomenon," the "phonemanon" of the one God "Loud" of the one language into which all languages are translated is at the same time the contestation of that phenomenon: It is a "phonem ma non," a phoneme, but not one, a sound that falls, or even remains, silent in being said, an appearance that immediately goes out and can never determine the structure of language as appearance but rather only as its withdrawal.

Joyce's *Wake*—not only a "Finnegans" but a "Phainegans" and "Phonegains" *Wake*—is the practical phenomenology of the aphenomenal and aphonic. In the passages—like the "Babel" and "Lebab" passage—in which it thematizes its own process of translation, of unifying, contracting, and contraducting several words from several languages into one, it highlights at once the self-thematizing and the self-withdrawal of language, at once its contraction and retraction, at once the translation and trans-posing of all positings and possibilities of translation. Speaking is itself the way in which to un-speak oneself, to speak beyond oneself and to something other, to change oneself and in one's transition to be neither oneself nor a particular other but always anew a counter-other or other-than-other. Speaking is translating, but not without impeding, confusing, and dispersing translating. Even the translation of a language into this language itself—like that of its "inhabitants" into "unhappitents"—is accompanied by its failure and shows language, like translation, to be a structural self-failing, self-forgery, and self-felling. Every language speaks a broken version of another language. That is why the desire that children in the post-phenomenal world read in a book, even about Babel in the Bible, is not in vain:

> That thy children may read in the book of the opening of the mind to light and err not in the darkness which is the afterthought of thy nomatter by the guardiance of those guards which are thy bodemen. (*Wake* 258)

This desire is only not in vain if that "nomatter" thought about by the watchmen and gatekeepers, angels and messengers, conveyors and guardians of language who remain as writing after the catastrophe of Babel is also read. What remains as "afterthought," as the thinking after and the thinking behind the one language as the medium of universal translatability, after it falls into ruin and is dispersed, can—as "nomatter"—only be any non-matter whatsoever. It, this immaterial writing, is—like its god—a "nomade," a nomad, not a nominal unity that is strictly defined by means of its localization and grammatico-pragmatic context, but a wanderword, a language in the process of becoming other. And since it has consumed each of its names (as "nom atter / eater"), it is without matter, aphonic, agraphic, immaterial, and nevertheless—if this perhaps not entirely intentional interpretation of this multi-

word is permitted—as "nomatter," a *nom à terre*, a name on earth, an immaterial earthly name. The language of language has no language that could secure its unity and continued existence. The name of the name is without name. But while it is unnameable and, as "no matter," has no weight, does not matter, and says nothing, it leaves all names, namings, and mis-namings the possibility of moving about the earth nomadically and of being translated from one language to another, from one de-languaging to the next.

The ultimate structure of this language is indicated in a word used in another passage from *Finnegans Wake*: "The most holy recitatandas *ffff* for my varsatile examinations in the ologies, to be a coach on the Fukien mission" (*Wake* 468). This passage speaks of the experiments the *Wake* carries out on "language," but more precisely on "the ologies." Language, as it is called, thought, and abused in this word, is a theologoumenon of a particular sort. As "the ologies," it is a *plurale tantum* composed of an English article and the malformation of a Greek compound, in which a central concept in the tradition of European thought is separated into two disparate pieces that together preserve this concept—"theologies"—but by dividing it also translate it into another one, allowing it to accumulate further meanings, but also meaninglessness. "The ologies" means not only the "sciences of God"—and of a God torn apart—and not only, as "the all-logies," the sciences and discourses of All and Each. As "the o-" and "zero-logies," it also means the logics of the null, the nothing, and the no one. And as "o-logies," it means the elegiac lament over these as well as—as "the eulogies"—their praising and extolling. This translation of the one word for the knowing discourse of the highest being into four other words for the discourse of all and nothing and for the affective utterances about its experience is only possible and only becomes real, here, in that it opens a gap, finds a hiatus, frees up a vacancy in the traditional word *theologies*. The translation is brought about by—and is—a dividing, first and foremost only that dividing that opens the thick mass of signs, representations, and representatives onto an emptiness that belongs to no language but without which there would be no language or linguistic diversity. The vacancy of phenomena and of the *logos*, the evacuation of even the highest of all phenomena—God—and of all the statements about him that are possible and subject to debate, this blank space, this place devoid of sound, writing, figure, and meaning, is the gap, it is the "contrée," the region, in which every translation, every contra-traduction and con-traduction moves. As long as it moves in this gap in sound, figure, and meaning and, in order to be able to move in it, always opens it up again, its emptiness accompanies all of its positings, additions, and overloadings [*Setzungen*, *Ansetzungen*, and *Überbesetzungen*].

With this vacancy, the language of languages, which is called translation, speaks. With this vacancy, which does not speak, or only restrainedly, barely speaks or confusedly, the language of languages exceeds what can be heard

and seen, as well as what can signify, which arises from it. It opens, always with restraint, the form of language to other forms and to the other than forms, and speaks—affirmatively—for the immaterially earthly, as "coach on the Fukien mission."

—Translated by Jan Plug

NOTES

First published in Georg Mein, ed., *Transmission: Übersetzung, Übertragung, Vermittlung* (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2010), 13–34.

1. Johann Peter Hebel, *Die Kalendergeschichten*, ed. Hannelore Schlaffer and Harald Zils (Munich: Hanser, 1999), 431. All further references are to this edition and will be made parenthetically by page number.

2. *Kannitverstans*, formed from "kann," "nicht," and "verstehen," registers "can't understand it" or "can't understand anything" or "doesn't get it."—JP

3. Walter Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedeman and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. 4.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 13. "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 257. Further references will be made parenthetically, denoted by "Task" and the page(s) cited.

4. The word is also "foreign" in the original German: *Kontra-traduction*. *Traduction* is French for *translation*.—Trans.

5. *Der arme Heinrich*, in Rudolf Borchardt, *Prosa II*, ed. Marie Luise Borchardt and Ernst Zinn (Stuttgart: Klett, 1959), 341. Further references will be made parenthetically, denoted by *Heinrich* and the page(s) cited.

6. W. H. quotes the translation by Carl Fischer: "Hassen und lieben muß ich. Warum ich das muß, wirst du fragen. / Weiß ich's? Ich fühle, so ist, trag es, gekreuzigt zu sein," in *Sämtliche Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1995), 184. The poem has been translated variously in English: "I hate and love. You ask, 'How can this be?' / God knows! What wretchedness! What loathsome misery!" *Catullus: The Complete Poems for American Readers*, trans. Reney Myers and Robert J. Ormsby (New York: Dutton, 1970), 153. "I hate her and I love her. Don't ask me why. / It's the way I feel, that's all, and it hurts." *Selected Poems of Catullus*, trans. Carl Sesar (New York: Mason & Lipscomb, 1974). The English translation offered here is meant to approach the German cited by the author.—JP

7. Louis Zukofsky, *Complete Short Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 310.

8. Louis and Celia Zukofsky, "Translating Catullus," *Kulchur* 2, no. 5 (1962): 47.

9. Louis and Celia Zukofsky, "Translating Catullus," *Kulchur* 2, no. 5 (1962): 47.

10. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 8, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1960), 16–20.

11. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Viking, 1975). All further references are to this edition and will be made parenthetically as *Wake*.

12. These two "sentences" especially have been commented upon in the most impressive manner in Jacques Derrida, "Deux Mots pour Joyce," in *Ulysse Gramophone* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), in English as "Two Words for Joyce," in *Derrida and Joyce: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Andrew J. Mitchell and Sam Slote (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013). Garrett Stewart's *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) contains stimulating references to these sentences, though ones that are in part based upon astonishing misunderstandings of Derrida's text. The reading sketched here follows neither Derrida nor Stewart, but rather follows a path suggested by the broader context of this passage of the *Wake* and by the motif of contraduction discussed here. Roland McHugh's notes in *Annotations to*

Finnegans Wake (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) were helpful in this regard.

Chapter Five

Notes on Greeting

"*Chapeau!*": This is what one is supposed to have said, when such a piece of clothing or ornamentation—the *chapeau haute forme*—still existed, in order to signal, when not wearing it, that one would have lifted it out of deep admiration for another's accomplishment, to attest to one's respect, esteem, or wonder. To attest to or show. The hat was the measure, the witness, of a regard shown by one equal to another, a regard revealed in a gesture of belittlement, depreciation, and diminution. Lifting one's hat didn't have to, but could also, be a gesture of humility and a humbling. But even then it took place in terms of substitution, wasn't a decapitation but merely baring one's head, removing armor, reducing the defensive and protective behavior that was put on along with the headwear. To raise one's hat was to distance distancing. "Chapeau!" one said, and the word was the deed. And so it continued to be said long after the *chapeau haute forme* went out of fashion, recalling its era in a code of remembered conduct that was as strict as it was elegant, less to greet a person than their rank, their material rank, so to speak. Even this citation of a gesture was also a gesture, and even the memory of greeting a greeting. What becomes of a gesture that goes astray, of a greeting that gets lost? What becomes of baring oneself? Can these be collected, in the sense that Benjamin said Kafka's work was a collection, indeed a codex, of forgotten gestures in which humankind could recognize itself?

Today, every word costs money, and not only in the so-called business world and in the world of electronic media programmed to cut costs. Language, even the language of gestures, is a risky investment. Even the smallest rituals are done according to the principle of maximizing profit. Not only time is money, words are money.[1] Today, greetings are often dispensed with: In e-mail messages, if they include a form of address at all, even the mere name of the person to whom they are addressed is rarely placed where the

greeting goes. If, recalling Benjamin's thought, we understand greeting as one of the gestures in which "humankind" recognizes itself, must we not conclude from this abbreviation and the ensuing erasure that "humankind" no longer recognizes itself—or that it has recognized itself so much that it no longer needs to signal its recognition? It might be, instead, that greeting can only go through such profound changes because it cannot be reduced to signalling but rather enters into language itself and because this language—not the special language of greeting, then, but rather the greeting of language—is never simply an instrument of recognition or acknowledgment without also being a medium of their refusal.

Herbert Spencer constructed the genealogy of greeting as a geology of layers, at the surface of which are salutation and shaking hands, at the deeper levels the submission to a superior, and at the bottom—in the primitive rocks of greeting, as it were—mimicry of corpses. According to this construction, every greeting rests upon a scene of killing and signifies—across all the historical layers of its civilizing—murder, which is said to have been the first form of encounter between people and the only one capable of bringing about a definitive order among them: the order between the living and the dead. The scene of greeting that we still perform today—"ritually," as we put it—would thus be the diminished form of a struggle for life and death from which "the fittest" emerges as survivor. Perhaps unaware of Spencer's reflections, Freud shared this assessment. For him too, to lift one's hat was to remove a substitute for the head, a civilized decapitation, a "symbolic" self-castration. Whoever greets disarms himself, puts down not only the instruments of a possible attack but also the last, the very last, means of a possible resistance. Whoever greets gives up his life.

If we inquire into the social and economic conditions of such interpretations, we can easily diagnose them as those of a competitive society. But this doesn't explain much, as long as one has to assume that there has never been anything but competitive societies, and as long as one may suspect that such an interpretation would in turn belong to the gestures of competition. For interpretations are also gestures, gestures of judgment or condemnation, gestures of consolation or threat, gestures of welcome, rejection, recognition. And interpretations, too, cannot go without greeting. Perhaps they are nothing other than greetings meant to reduce the foreignness of an experience, to allow a thing, a statement, or a person to approach and become familiar. An interpretation must always also be a greeting. And a greeting an interpretation. But then, both greeting and interpretation, even before they elevate or diminish, even before they enter into the agonic game of competition and thus before something like a greeting takes place, are a gesture of contact. Greeting and interpretation are the contact *before* contact, they are touches *before* it comes to touching, approaches in which the possibility of proximity

is tested and, in trial cases, small—the very smallest—doses of dealing with foreigners are "sampled," as Freud might say. Whoever greets moves into the proximity of another to test whether that proximity should be increased or decreased, or whether one should remain in the strange, the distant, proximity of greeting. The hypothesis of competition—according to which we already find ourselves, in greeting, in a fight for a place in the social and, ultimately, biological hierarchy—is based upon the assumption that we have always already been placed in a biosocial relation that forces such a struggle, that we have at our disposal a contact that regulates the decision between subjugation and triumph. According to this hypothesis, the coded confirmation of this coded contact is greeting, greeting a struggle, and the struggle at its most basic level a life or death duel. But should "life" and "death," which in the final instance are what are in question, no longer be "coded"? The sociological semiotics that gives life and death struggle as the ultimate grounds for explaining the relation to others and merely veils these final grounds—instead of "life," it speaks of "power," instead of "death," "powerlessness"—stops analyzing social phenomena as forms of communication and regresses to a science of matter. For this semiotics, there is a life before its language, a death before its experience, and social communication exists for it only where it abdicates before the superiority of death. This semiotics refuses to consider that death might be an experience mediated by language. But even in refusing this thought, sociological naturalism must touch upon it: it assumes that greeting is the way in which the greeter presents himself to the greeted, gives himself to him, and makes his subservience known. For social semiotics, mimicry of the dead is a gesture in which one's own body is used as a means to signify one's distancing, debasing, or erasure, and in which death is not "real" death but rather is shown, presented, staged, "symbolic" and thus "social," a pretend death, a death in language. Even if death is not to be understood as merely signified—thus as a semantic phenomenon—but rather as a regulative form of indication freed of semantic indicators—as grammar—it must still hold that the social fact of communication, and therefore greeting, is not to be thought within the borders of life and death but rather the other way around, life and death within, or on the borders of, language. Life and death do not determine the borders of greeting; rather, greeting is the horizon of death as of life.

Only when death enters into the greeting is it death. And life is only born in being greeted. Life and death are not final dates to which social relations and designations could be traced back and through which greeting could be explained. Only through greeting do these become guests of language and social facts, for only greeting opens the possibility of society. Only within the scope of greeting can others appear and with these others the possibilities of turning toward and turning away, of power and powerlessness, of life and death. First greeting greets life, then life lives, greets death, then death dies.

For only greeting enters into a relation—always precariously, always too soon or too late, in anticipation or belatedly, rushed or fatigued—with something other, something unfamiliar, uncontrolled, that can become a *socius*, a social other. It enters into a relation—and always precariously—with something other, which is to say, something other that must not be able to exist in the manner of the greeter, not even in that of the greeting. Greeting can be characterized in a particular analytical language that imposes itself in this context—perhaps because it comes up against its limits there—as that mediation that alone allows what it brings into relation to emerge. In a different theoretical language, it can be characterized as the manner of the primordial being-with other Dasein. But both characterizations, the Hegelianizing and the Heideggerianizing, assume that both the "with" [*Mit*] and the middle [*Mitte*] posited between two or more beings are secure; and both think the being-with [*Mitsein*] in communication [*Mitteilung*] or mediation [*Vermittlung*] as taking place in the medium of sameness, not in the medium of possible change. But greeting cannot be a mere practice of consolidation that applies available instruments of language to a situation that is known in principle and translates them into another, in principle easily understandable, variant of the same situation. And what applies to greeting applies to every linguistic or linguistically oriented manner of behaving toward something other: if it is certain, foreseeable, and calculable that it will reach its addressee, then it is a mechanical ritual and not language, not greeting. Whoever greets runs the risk of not being heard, not being understood, not by the one the greeting is intended for. A greeting, no matter how fully expressed, can always not be carried out, not by all the parties. It can always be the greeting of someone not really greeting—in which case, it is a pretext, a social routine, or scorn. And it can also always miss the one it is intended for and thus miss its destination and with it itself. Being determined to open access to someone else in no way guarantees reaching this person; if something new and unforeseeable is to be able to begin, the greeting may not even be obligated to reach the other person with certainty in all circumstances. Just as greeting cannot be sure—*certe et distincte*—so too must it be so surprising, extra-ordinary, and unforeseeable that it cannot even be completed by the greeter. For, opening that it is, the gateway to language with others, if it is to be a greeting and not merely a function in a higher calculation, cannot be passed through and left behind by the greeter. It is a matter of reaching this opening; it is a matter of moving in its unreachability—for an opening is not an object. It is a matter of moving in greeting as the dis-stance [*Ent-fernung*] from the other, as the possible proximity to the other. (I have still not greeted enough, have not yet begun to greet: This is one possible motto for all greeting and speaking.)

The form in which greeting proceeds is described as follows in a note from Lichtenberg's *Waste Books*: "Now, dearest, your hand.—Your mouth—soon, more. Live well."[2] The path from hand to mouth, from handshake to kiss, is the path of growing intimacy, all the way to announcing its continuation in a sexual act. The sequence of intensification is stopped, however, at the announcement that "soon, more" will follow, thus deferring the more to the future of a subsequent encounter and tactfully suspending the intensification from the touching of hands to that of mouths at the point where the touching could culminate in sexual consummation. What Lichtenberg describes would not be a greeting if the sequence word/hand/kiss were not directed toward the utmost intimacy—sexual intimacy. And it would not be a greeting if precisely this maximum of intimacy were not located in an ellipsis and deferred to a "soon." Every greeting is part of such a sequence of intimacy and, in the suspension of its end, is infinite: it can only promise to continue the sequence of intimacy and repeat this promise every time they meet again. This is why the farewell—"soon, more. Live well."—is part of the greeting. Greeting only promises to intensify the contact sought in it, postponing its realization to the next—the very next—time. It bids farewell to itself for the sake of the possibility of this intensification and thus for the sake of the possibility of a further greeting. Greeting is its own ellipsis. It is the farewell to greeting. Its goal is not stated; consciousness is spared directing its attention to it, but this sparing of consciousness to the point of comical abbreviation describes what is comical in every language, and not only the language of greeting: however much it sets out toward sexual contact, it is a sexual abstraction, a resistance to contact, a self-resistance, an ellipsis in consciousness and being. Every greeting interrupts the sexual touching it seeks—and that has been reduced to the verbal—and opens a zone of the unspoken, unconscious, not-yet-existing, and never-ever-existing that is merely circumscribed again with every subsequent word and merely maintained in other ways with that word. Only when it interrupts itself and holds out the prospect of its resumption and continuation for a next time does greeting approach that in the other which must remain a *pudendum et secretum* and, therefore, its own secret. Every greeting is an ellipsis whose second focal point lies—unreachable, unapproachable, ungreetable—in the infinite.

The refusal of greeting as an unwanted approach by the person greeted is both an everyday experience and one laid bare in literature, as Lichtenberg's formalization of its sexual and thus threatening content bears out.

> Faust: Mein schönes Fräulein, darf ich wagen,
> Meinen Arm und Geleit ihr anzutragen?
> Margarete: Bin weder Fräulein, weder schön,
> Kann ungeleitet nach Hause gehn.
> (Sie macht sich los und ab.)

Faust: My fair young lady, may I make free,
To offer you my arm and company?
Margarete: I'm neither fair nor lady, pray,
Can unescorted find my way.
(She frees herself and exits).[3]

This first encounter between Faust and Gretchen, whose trajectories will be traced in the drama to follow, also contains a microtheory of greeting, what one might call the covetous idealization in Faust's address deflected by Gretchen's matter-of-fact self-estimation and completely unnaïve understanding of Faust's intentions. But this only intensifies the idealization, leading to the disastrous consequences we are all well aware of. This social and aesthetic idealization of the chance acquaintance on the street finds its commentary in Faust's fetishism: "Bring me," he orders Mephisto, "a bosom-cloth, a garter! / Some token for my love to barter!" (*Faust* 72). Faust's greeting—"My fair young lady"—to she who, according to social codes, can be called neither a young lady nor fair, for him has a function similar to the bosom-cloth and garter in which he hopes to find what is denied him in reality. The excess of idealization, the hyperbole of perfection that the greeting attributes to the greeted, however, is not a pathological disfiguration that in some cases and from another world, as it were—the world of unrefined longings, of erotic exaltation, of the male drive to dominate—would bring the greeting under its power. Lichtenberg's formalization is sexually explicit, but it departs from a female instance—"Now dearest"—and is of the most desirable, that is, the most cunning, refinement. Faust is no different. He is not guilty of violating that code of conduct, and yet he is rejected for good reason and does not feel stung by the rejection. Idealization, whether sexual or colored in some other way, belongs to the structure of greeting, which in every instance represents an excess over what is appropriate—but according to what measure?—and over what is normal—according to what standard? Every greeting must present itself as excessive because it is directed toward another and approaches another who in the moment of greeting must have left behind all norms and codes; otherwise he would not be someone new, unnormalized, to whom alone a greeting can be made. The task of greeting is therefore double: to standardize and to destandardize; to establish a norm of orientation and at the same time to set aside all norms and orientations that might stand in the way of access to the other; to welcome the other in his unpredictable otherness and to lead him to a terrain where this welcome must not be withheld from him. What we call idealization is the opening delimited, the gate, which the greeter offers in order to let the other in and to announce to him the manner in which he in turn is prepared to be let in. This idealization, the gate, marks at once the opening and a border, a maximum for the greeter, that for the one greeted will be suspected is a minimum. The ideal-

ization could only be interpreted as the excess of desire over the real if the one greeted were an object of knowledge without its own claims, without the potential for movement, and without fundamental resistances to being known and manipulated. Where the possibilities for objectification are in principle minimal, however—for example, in all encounters between those who can be assumed to be unknown—there idealization is an element in a primary sociation that should allow the other to enter into relation with the greeter by making room for an optimum of conditions of contact.

Moreover, whatever the "pathological" traits of idealization and fetishization, whichever "normal example" they relate to individually or in a meaningful average, in greeting and in every opening up of a relation to others, they fulfill the task of offering conditions of opening that impose on the other a minimum of constraints and grant a maximum of room to move. In greeting, language is the address to an other who could be divine or animal, plant or dust. The one greeted can take up the greeting. He can respond to it with a similar gesture. But he can also understand it as a provocation, as an enemy would, shake it off like a burden, or ignore it, as though he were not being addressed. But to allow even the slightest chance that the one greeted take up the contact offered in it, the greeting must be offered to another in such a way that he cannot be thought as either bigger, friendlier, and more gracious, but also more dangerous, deaf, or indifferent. Every greeting therefore carries something like an ontological proof of the existence of God only if it at the same time contains the suspicion of the impossibility of his existence. This is why it is susceptible to the banality of convention, as well as to the sacredness of the address to one different from every other who could be represented, thought, apostrophized. And it is why every greeting can be refused, every exaltation rejected: "I am neither fair nor lady, pray / Can unescorted find my way."

To receive a greeting: To be, not the greeter, first of all, but the greeted, is the experience with which a new life and a new poetry begin for Dante. "Incipit vita nova" stands over the part of the book of his memory that opens with the greeting of Beatrice and can only come to a close in the blissful contemplation of God, of the "lord of courtesy [*sire de la cortesia*]" (58, translation modified)—in the contemplation, the context suggests, of the Lord of greeting.[4] Beatrice greets him with "ineffable courtesy [*ineffabile cortesia*]" (*Vita* 4, translation modified), Dante writes in *Vita Nova*, which is entirely dedicated to this incipit, this greeting: "passing along a street [*passando per una via*]," "she greeted me with such power that then and there I seemed to see to the farthest reaches of beatitude [*mi salutoe molto virtuosamente, tanto che me parve allora vedere tutti li termini de la beatitudine*]" (*Vita* 4). When Dante thereafter leaves the crowd—"partio da le genti" (*Vita* 4)—and seeks out the solitude of his room, he does so only once again to meet there the

"donna de la salute" who in a terrifying dream hesitantly devours his heart. Dream and nightmare, the visions in which the lady of greeting, who is also the lady of salvation [*Heil*], threatens with the most dreadful evil [*Unheil*], encompass not only the whole scope of bliss within their "termini," but in these delimitations of borders always also touch upon what exceeds them: Greeting sheds the light of an "unbearably powerful bliss [*intollerabile beatitudine*]" and bestows an "almost excessive delight [*soverchio di dolcezza*]" (*Vita* 12); since it is an absolute *novum*, it can only be received as an excess or as an experience that exceeds every habit, every expectation. Already in the hope for this greeting, which is "mirabile," a miracle, no one is an enemy any longer; everyone is seized by love for their neighbor, "caritade." The greeting need only approach, "propinqua al salutare," and the spirit of love destroys all sensibility and exceeds all of the I's capabilities—not the capabilities of the I already spoken to, grasped, and engulfed by greeting, but the capabilities of the I that is merely awaiting, hoping for, sensing the mere approach of the greeting. Greeting is therefore not experienced as having arrived, it is experienced in its arriving. But what will be received in the arrival, in the future of the greeting, is a love that surpasses the capacity to love. "Clearly then my bliss depended on her salutation; it was a bliss that many times surpassed and overflowed my capacity to contain it [*Le sue salute abitava la mia beatitudine, la quale molte volte passava e redundava la mia capacitade*]" (*Vita* 12). Bliss inhabits the greeting. It is not blissful in itself. Its place is not its own, but rather a guest house offered by the future of greeting. Bliss is the guest of the future of a greeting that is greater than this bliss, which in turn is greater than the ability of the I to achieve bliss. A bliss that is greater than the ability to achieve bliss, not emerging from a capacity, ability, or understanding, but merely offering itself to this capacity and ability, exceeding and destroying it, a bliss at the sheer exceeding of ability and even desire: this im-possible bliss is the bliss from the future of greeting. "Molte volte passava e redundava la mia capacitade." The I, the self, in whose categories the arrival of the messianic greeting cannot be conceived, is therefore never the subject of greeting, never its agent, but, before every possible act and thus before every possible distinction between activity and passivity, the event of a passion that becomes apparent in the trembling of perception and its organs. "And whoever wanted to know love could do so simply by looking into my tremulous eyes [*E chi avesse voluto conoscere Amore, fare lo potea mirando la tremare de li occhi miei*]" (*Vita* 12).

Only those who have suffered this "tremare" of the passion of "Amore" and who have had the experience of an unbearable bliss—the experience of the inability to experience—can "themselves" greet in turn and greet only from that experience. The first poem to issue from the "vita nova" and its paradoxical experience, the sonnet "To all besotted souls [*A ciascun' alma presa*]" (*Vita* 5), the first of the "dolce stil novo," which shows the "almost

excessive delight [soverchio di dolcezza]" (*Vita* 12) is a greeting: "greetings in Love, the lord of open hearts [*salute in lor segnor, cioè Amore*]" (*Vita* 5). And it is a greeting that recalls the suddenness—the unpredictability, the absolute unconventionality, the incomprehensibility—and the horror that another's greeting struck him with: "when Love appeared before me without warning. / I shudder thinking what his presence stirred [*quando m'apparve Amor subitamente, / cui essenza membrar mi dà orrore*]" (*Vita* 5). The greeting is the greeting from the memory of a greeting that was received without having corresponded to the capacity for such reception, to the receptivity of the one receiving it. That the greeting of *Amor* not only rhymes with but is *horror* only appears to its proper extent if it is clear that the love greeting, for Dante as for the Scholastic tradition he follows, is the greeting of the Christian messiah and, through him, of God. Alain de Lille writes in his *Liber in distinctionibus*, "salutare" is "proprie Christus per quem salus"—but if it is proper to the redeemer, then in every greeting Christ, and with him, God, presents himself. Receiving it only with horror and only in such a way that this receiving itself is not mastered but felt as "intollerabile beatitudine" makes the one greeted the victim of a god who paralyzes both reason and sensibility and risks shaking or making tremble his very divinity in what is shaken by him. Amor, the god of greeting, leaves in tears after having the heart of the one greeted be consumed: "Then, as he turned to leave, I saw him weeping [*appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo*]" (*Vita* 12).

In the wake of this greeting only one thing is possible: to confess one's inability to receive it, the inability to be the greeted, the inability to accept the greeting *as* greeting and thus as the greeting of a particular other, of a particular greeter, and to transmit it in the medium of the poem as the language that is overwhelmed, incapacitated, and that is trembling between inability and barely making able this inability.

Whoever greets recalls the greeting he received without being able to grasp it. He does not greet because he can but rather because he cannot grasp the greeting of another. It is not he who greets, therefore, for, beside himself, he is no longer himself but once again allows the overwhelmingly foreign greeting "in his Lord, love" to continue speaking. It is not he who speaks, and he does not speak in the name of love or as its representative; rather, he speaks "in lor segnor, cioè Amore," *in* him and thus from him and with his language. This is not the language of the I nor the language of another that would in turn be an I, if an alter-ego. But this is precisely why it is also not a language addressed to a you, a well-defined, finite, creaturely you in egological terms, but rather a language that goes from a more-and-other-than-I to a more-and-other-than-you, a language of decreation that takes back the creation of distinct worlds of experience, a language before creation that affects everything creaturely as trauma, everything finite as infinitizing, and perhaps even the infinitizing of trauma. This language of decreation—which is at the

same time a language that surpasses every possible creation—is the only one that can be a language of beginning, thus of an other beginning, thus of greeting. (It speaks, no less vehemently, but perhaps a bit more explicitly than in Dante's *Vita Nova*, in the lines from Yeats's "A Woman Young and Old": "I'm looking for the face I had / Before the world was made."[5]) This speaking in the traumatic greeting of beginning is the new life of poetry, the newness of poetry, and poetry, the new. Ever since, since this incipit, literature has no longer spoken as act or speech act—if it ever did, as some of its theorizations maintain—but as the passion of another language that is beginning and that pulls back to before its beginning, as the passion of the disrupting reduction to an *initium* and as the *passio* of an ungraspable greeting.

More precisely: literature *allows* this passion, which exceeds its powers, to speak and is only the witness of this speaking, allowing the unbearableness, the non-arriving, the horror and fortune of greeting to pass through it.

And more precisely still: not of greeting but of the greeting that is not received, that is more than receivable, of the greeting that is more and other than a greeting and that appears "subitamente"—unannounced and without greeting.

Salut

Rien, cette écume, vierge vers
À ne désigner que la coupe;
Telle loin se noie une troupe
De sirènes maintes à l'envers.

Nous naviguons, ô mes divers
Amis, moi déjà sur la poupe
Vous l'avant fastueux qui coupe
Le flot de foudres et d'hivers;

Une ivresse belle m'engage
Sans craindre même son tangage
De porter debout ce salut

Solitude, récif, étoile
À n'importe ce que valut
Le blanc souci de notre toile.

Salutation

Nothing, this foam, virgin verse
Only to designate the cup:
Thus, far off, drowns a Siren troop;
Many, upended, are immersed.

We navigate, O my diverse
Friends, myself already on the poop,
You the sumptuous prow to cut
Through winter wave and lightning burst;

A lovely drunkenness enlists
Me to raise, though the vessel lists,
This toast on high and without fear

Solitude, rocky shoal, bright star
To whatsoever may be worth
Our sheet's white care in setting forth.[6]

Mallarmé's "Salutation" is the opening poem of his *Poésies*. It might well be a greeting to his readers, one no less ambiguous than the one that welcomes the readers of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*. But it is certainly the greeting from this poem to those following it and to what follows this "Salutation" itself: to the poem that opens with "Salutation," to the poem of this title, a *Salutation* to "Salutation." (How does what we are used to regarding as the "title" change when it is understood as greeting or address? For example, *À la recherche du temps perdu*.) "Salutation" greets and is nothing but greeting, absolute greeting. It greets, and it greets the greeting itself. It apostrophizes the *Salutation* that the poem, which speaks about greeting as poem, is. And it greets it in the context of the comparison between a ship's voyage, life's journey, and poetry as "Nothing, this foam, virgin verse [*Rien, cette écume, vierge vers*]": as pure poetry, as nothing, as foam that, whether on the bow or stern, whether welcoming or bidding farewell, designates nothing but *la coupe*: nothing but the cut through the polar sea of divisions, the cut through these divisions—the cut through the cut, then—and as the cup out of which these cuts rise up as foam. The foam—the poem—the greeting—designates the cut out of which it emerges. It designates a nothing—and designates it in such a way that it itself (foam, poetry, greeting) is a nothing. Nothing designates—"Nothing . . . only to designate the cup [*Rien . . . à ne désigner que la coupe*]"—a "nothing" that designates its own emergence and passing, a nothing that designates the erasure of its sign, a "nothing" designating (*à dé-signer*) itself, destroying and invalidating "itself," nothing between the word *nothing* and the nothing before the word, between the opening of the poem with "Nothing [*Rien*]" and the "nothing [*rien*]" that precedes it, between the greeting and that in every greeting which precedes the greeting and follows it. "Salutation," this absolute minimum of designation, this nothing turned toward nothing and no one, is the marking of its mere existence, but as such is already a cut in its surroundings, a cut that separates it from nothing and allows it to speak *with* the nothing.

"Nothing . . . to designate" also, and *in extremis*, means that it is in each instance a nothing that designates. It is a sign only insofar as it penetrates the continuum of a context or lack of context and opens in it the nothing of this continuum. Every designation is the nothing of what is designated in it. Every designation starts out from its absence or brings that absence about. And no designation could be a designation in the integral presence of what is designated. A sign leaves absent what is designated in it. Only by way of this absence can the presence of what is designated emerge. Just as what is designated would not exist without a nothing, so too does what is designated exist—and only all the more clearly—if nothing itself is what is designated, as in the first word of "Salutation," "nothing"—so too does what is designated exist, then, only as that which, under the impetus of the designation, foams up airy, porous, and void, and is extinguished. What is shown is only the keel-trace or stern-trace of its designation. Every beginning is the beginning of its extinguishing, every opening an erasure of what it opens onto. Every designation, every naming, is therefore the greeting with which the sign finds the thing or person, isolates it from its context or lack of context, and exposes it in its nothing.

Whatever greets is always a nothing.

And it is always a nothing that is greeted, greeted by a nothing on which its—and every—nothing dissolves, greeted by a nothing of nothing, a foam trace, which is at once opening, welcome, and gathering in a cup (*coupe*) and departure, cut (*coupe*), and disappearance.

And, more precisely, "is" not but rather "greets": every greeting greets the departure, greets it in the greeting itself, and thus is in advance of its departing.

The intensity of the greeting that Mallarmé concentrates on the acute angle between language and non-language, between "nothing" and the not of language, is not reduced by his explanation of this contraction into the gestural in the visual scene of a ship's voyage, his friends at the bow, himself at the stern, offering, unhindered by the frenzy—*tangage langage*—his greeting, his "salutation," there. For bow and stern, front and back, inside and outside are brought together in the greeting itself, as in the incipit of every language, at their border. And this border is split in itself: the "salutation" inscribed in "Salutation" is bigger and smaller than itself, is different from itself precisely where it repeats and emphasizes itself. The greeting he proposes is characterized in an asyndeton as

solitude, récif, étoile,

and thus as the linguistic form of solitude, of a rocky shoal, of a star. But it is not only what a greeting is in terms of its form that is described in these unconnected definitions—the speech of someone isolated, a resistance to the one runs into him as an other, harder element and in so doing sees a light with which to orient himself. The triple characterization also indicates the

content of the greeting, one of the most astonishing ones the language of literature has ever confronted its readers with. For if the structure of greeting, like what is wished in it, is solitude, then the one greeted by it will not only be kept at a distance, so to speak, but will be banished to a distance that allows no access to him. If "rocky shoal" is what is wished in a greeting, then the greeting itself is the rocky shoal on which every possible answer is smashed. And if "star" is the content of the greeting, the one greeted will indeed be attributed a guiding radiance, but one that comes from a distance and isolation that cannot be overcome. The three definitions of greeting named in the poem make it the linguistic a priori of unapproachability. The first thing that leads to proximity, greeting, relegates to the distance. That which brings about a connection cuts it off. That which opens up community permits it only in the medium of a greeting that comes from, and leads into, solitude.

Since the greeting Mallarmé proposes is and wishes for solitude, while, as greeting, it is also the fragment of a dialogue and the initiation of a conversation, one might be tempted to see in it an aporetic formula. But it articulates an aporia less than it presents the medium of all aporias. A fundamental, irreducible linguistic gesture, it is the element that gives rise to a connection between two parties but only ever brings this connection about in such a way that precisely this connection is dissolved. Greeting is therefore the medium thanks to which a relation—whether of agreement or opposition between different parties—can emerge in the first instance, but it is this as a medium that is not subject to this alternative but rather holds back from it by holding to it. Greeting reserves the possibility of a common language for its absolute isolation; it embeds the possibility of connection in its distance. It is therefore the medium in which mediation is made possible, the mere *possibility* of mediation, not being mediated and not the actual taking place of a mediation. And greeting can only remain the medium of such a making possible if it does not leave the space of the making possible, does not exhaust itself in any reality, and does not give itself over, in a mediation, to an in-between between two given quantities. As such a medium, greeting is also not an act—thus not what is commonly called a speech act—in which a stable consciousness relinquishes itself in order to return to itself heightened in the echo of recognition. Rather—"A lovely drunkenness enlists / Me to raise, though the vessel lists, / This toast on high and without fear [*Une ivresse belle m'engage* / *Sans craindre même son tangage* / *De porter debout ce salut*]"—a drunken subject, a subject stumbling from drunkenness, a subject exposed to the frenzy of greeting, carries it as something foreign to it, carries and endures it in the passion of a greeting that it relinquishes to an isolation from which it itself does not return. The medium, not the controlled act, the medium of making possible, and not the actual communication, the medium of speaking *to* another, greeting must leave this other in the distance of its difference if it

does not want to domesticate it into an annex or effect of its own speech and thus into something ungreetable. To be this medium of making possible, greeting must give up its mediating power and release the speaker as well as the one spoken to into their isolation, a resistance—"récif"—even to itself, in order before itself to be an "étoile," "notre toile," the brilliance that orients and the burden of another. Greeting is the difference from greeting—from everything that might be greeting "itself" or the ritual rhetoric of greeting.

Every greeting is a farewell and a farewell to greeting. Only because it is greeting is there what we call a social bond and the relata that have their source in this bond. But only because greeting is the farewell to greeting does it leave greeter and greeted—and greeting itself—free to greet once again and differently, or to continue greeting. As medium, greeting is therefore not a substance that subsists or a conventional act in an already demarcated schema of ways in which language functions but that element that in the first instance frees up possible agents and their functions and allows them to define and make indefinite themselves and their functioning. Greeting is such a medium—and thus the medium of all mediums—only because it is never simply a greeting and because it never simply *is* but rather detaches itself from itself, from greeting, from its continuing existence or ritual function, and, greeting itself, bids farewell to itself.

Greeting is the medium of mediat*ability*, therefore, because it holds itself back before itself as the medium of the *im*possibility of mediation: always in advance of—and always behind—itself, and only thus *itself*, *greeting*, a "Salutation," that it greets itself as other, bids itself welcome and says farewell, entering its isolation and singularity. Greeting is the language of language, language itself and as such, in that it is a mere event of opening, an offer, a claim in which nothing programs its answer, its correspondence, fulfillment, or closure. To be sure, those utterances that can be defined semantically or formally as greeting can be isolated from all utterances, but there is no single, strict criterium for the definition of greeting as the event of opening that would not also hold for all other linguistic utterances. Greeting is not a special language and has no semantics or grammar that is particular to it. It is not confined to the field of meanings of blessing, the expression of goodwill, wish, or praise. Even when "Table" is said, as in Ponge, this mere apostrophe can be a greeting.[7] When I hear, "You've overlooked me once again," I can understand this sentence as a friendly or humorous greeting. And "Incredible! Unbelievable!" can be the emphatic greeting of something unexpected. As in the first word of Mallarmé's "Salutation"—"Nothing"—greeting describes the acute angle between language and non-language, between formal determination and indetermination of the gestural substratum of language, opens the possibility of further speaking and speaking-with-one-another, and leaves everything else open. But it also leaves open—in fact, for the sake of greeting—whether it is a matter of greeting at all or rather of nothing. It is

only greeting because it could also not be one. And the linguisticality of language presents itself only in that it offers itself to its nothing, offers itself from its nothing to its nothing, in order to be a beginning and a possibility for something further, something other, that surpasses the possibilities of mere greeting.

Whoever speaks greets. All language is the language of greeting, and in every greeting, every language, that which exceeds the power of greeting is greeted. Every sentence, every word, is a "Salutation Nothing," and in each the nothing of greeting is addressed: the unanticipatable reality of the greeted, his freedom, his potential muteness, his absence. Because language as such has the structure of greeting, it is not elliptical only in certain cases but rather structurally: open to what it is not. Because language, not so much *like* greeting as *as* greeting, must hold open in itself a formally and semantically unoccupied place to receive that other, it opens and preserves a nothing that could become the ground for something. Only in its greeting—however trivial it itself might be—is nothing offered, and with it the possibility of something. The elliptical syntax of the greeting—of the "Salutation Nothing," of the "Salutation // Solitude, rocky shoal, bright star"—is the syntax of a *nihil* before and beyond every nihilism. For its nothing is the ecstasy of the language directed toward the other, the mere opening, the exposure to receiving what cannot yet be said, what can only *not* be said.

Toward the end of Willem Frederik Hermans's novel *Beyond Sleep*, a young woman bids farewell to the narrator. In the bus she is leaving on, a movement can be seen. "Waving? Blowing a kiss? There's also the possibility that seeing me framed by the window reminded her of a shape chalked on a blackboard, and that she was wiping me out, so to speak. That would be by far the best for her."[8]

Twenty years later, in *Prisoner in Love*, Jean Genet describes the Fedayyins' farewell upon leaving for battle to those remaining in the camp for a little longer: "Both groups waving their hands in front of their faces as a sign of farewell, of effacement. Like the writing on the board and the steam on the window, all their faces disappear, and the landscape, all its tears wiped away, is restored to itself."[9] Waving, a gesture of farewell more than of welcoming, is a wiping, a washing away of the image and of the face of greeters and greeted. "The childish 'bye-bye'" (*Prisoner* 326) brings to the forefront what lies beyond, the bare landscape, the desert.

Earlier, on a long flight from Hamburg to Japan by way of Copenhagen and Frankfurt, terrified by the possibility of a crash, exhausted by the length of the flight, tormented by the long night, the echo of the Japanese greeting "Sayonara," spoken as "Sayonala," with an *l* instead of an *r*, comes to Genet's rescue:

> The word made me feel my body being stripped bit by bit of a thick black layer of Judeo-Christian morality, until it was left naked and white. I was amazed at my own passiveness. I was a mere witness of the operation, conscious of the well-being it produced without taking part in the process. I knew I had to be careful: the thing would only be a complete success if I didn't interfere. The relief I felt was rather a cheat. Perhaps someone else was watching me. I'd fought so long against that morality my struggle had become grotesque. But it was vain. Yet a word of Japanese spoken in the fluent voice of a girl had been enough to trigger off the operation. . . . A little while later it seemed to me that "Sayonara" . . . was the first touch of cottonwool that was going to cleanse my wretched body, accordingly, as I said, leaving me white and naked. (*Prisoner* 44, translation modified)

The greeting, which he receives absolutely passively, exposes Genet and leaves him naked and white, "blanc" like the "blanc" in Mallarmé's "Salutation," the white of the page, allows him to come to Tokyo cleansed of the black makeup of morality, of images, faces, written signs, "naked, smiling, quick, capable of decapitating just like that the first, the second customs officer, or of not giving a damn."

—Translated by Jan Plug

NOTES

First published in German in *Hilsen. En bok til Arne Melberg in anledning 60-ardsdagen* (Oslo: Gylendal, 2002), 371–392.

1. "Time is money" and "words are money" are in English in the original.—JP
2. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Sudelbücher*, vol. 1 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 136.
3. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, in *Werke*, vol. 3, ed. Erich Trunz (Hamburg: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996), 84. The translation is from *Faust*, trans. Walter Arndt, ed. Cyrus Hamlin (New York: Norton, 2001), 71. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Faust*.
4. Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova*, trans. Andrew Frisardi (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 5. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Vita*.
5. W. B. Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 270.
6. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 27; *Collected Poems*, trans. Henry Weinfield (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3.
7. See Francis Ponge, *The Table*, trans. Colombina Zamponi (Cambridge, MA: Wakefield Press, 2017).
8. Willem Frederik Hermans, *Beyond Sleep*, trans. Ina Rilke (London: Harvill Secker, 2006), 284.
9. Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. Barbara Bray (London: Picador, 1989), 326. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Prisoner*.

Chapter Six

Remarks on Complaint

1) COMPLAINING

We complain about everything, about personal and communal misfortune, about the general state of the world and the course of history, about the outcome of elections and the weather, about indispositions, illnesses, wars, about maliciousness and evil, about the fact that others—and we ourselves—complain. We complain about "everything under the sun." There is hardly a more common and intelligible form of speech than complaint. And yet complaints, unguarded revelations of oneself that they are, constantly face the threat of being dismissed, whether in the form of a complaint about complaining or through ridicule, irony, deliberate indifference, or awkward silence—and it should give us pause that irony, sarcasm, even humor, and often remaining or falling silent can be ways of complaining. Complaining is unquestionably, if also lamentably, one of the forms in which we relate to one another. Yet it is one of our strangest ways of relating, for in certain spheres, conventions justify and even impose it, in others make it taboo, but it is structured in such a way that an answer to it is not always desired and for the most part seems impossible. The irritation that comes from complaining can perhaps be seen most clearly from the fact that we have countless versions and registers of complaint but we very seldom talk *about* complaining. Perhaps this reticence in the face of this everyday and yet extreme phenomenon can be at least partly explained by the fact that every analytic discourse about complaining easily gives the impression that it is a continuation of complaining in disguise.

To make clear and interpretable the embarrassment of those who hear and seek answers to complaining, we do well to consider not only the easily, all too easily, pathologizable forms complaining can take, not only the chronic

griping and grumbling that go along with a certain compulsive negativity—and which in our societies is professionalized with astonishing ease as a "critical" attitude—not only, therefore, what are pejoratively called "jeremiads" and which have a very long artistic, ritual, and religious tradition that plays a part in defining our entire culture. We do well to consider not only these but also complaining as such and the "as such" of complaining, which far exceeds the borders of everyday conversation, day-to-day contacts, and attempts at communication, as well as all areas of social practice (especially of the so-called law), of political organization (which should always give an answer to the questions: Who is allowed to complain? And how?), of historical consciousness, the arts, and religions.

For there is absolutely nothing whose perfection could not be doubted, nothing whose dubiousness could not be complained about. But if there is nothing that could not also be the object of a complaint, that means that nothing can offer a firm basis for a communicative system, a firm ground for understanding each other, a universal bond among speakers, except complaining itself. But if complaining is always and everywhere possible, and if it can refer to anything, then everything is ruined by it in some vague, barely more definable way. Complaint is that language that does not allow any meaning, significance, value, interest, belief, or any of the consequences of these, to be grounded in it. Everywhere it points to deficiencies and gaps in utterances, relationships, and attitudes, to damages, mistakes, and transgressions, and it attacks them for being the cause of inadequacy, misfortune, or suffering. But it acts not merely as the complainant but also as the witness of the accusation, speaking before a court of law that in turn cannot be safe from its complaint and testimony. What is lamented and attested to by complaining is always that which does *not* work, is *not* at one's disposal, is *not* there. The object of the complaint, therefore, is always a loss or lack, an absence, an estrangement, or a decline. The object of complaint is a ruin, and with the complaint that presents it, ruin enters into language and thus into the whole world of experience and thought, into all sociable or societal relations, into speaking- and living-together. The language of complaint is the language of a destruction that is in principle limitless.

One might therefore consider talking about complaint as the appearance of the death drive in language. For complaint, everything is empty, indifferent, over. That everything is empty and indifferent and past is the formula for the nihilism for which Nietzsche made Zarathustra his mouthpiece. In complaint, we are therefore exposed to a phenomenon that is as universal as it is uncanny, whether we want to be or merely notice—or don't notice—it clearly, to the phenomenon of a language that can only lament itself and its loss, itself as its loss. "I'm at a loss for words," "I'm speechless": These phrases of lament imply that they express nothing other than the powerlessness of language; they imply, therefore, that they say nothing, and that the only lan-

guage they can lend complaint to is that of a contradictory formulaic expression. The language of complaint no more corresponds to a bad state of affairs or an incongruity than it does to the capacity for understanding of the one to whom it is directed. It is always also the complaint that it lacks an adequate addressee. In one of the most famous songs of lament in our history, Jeremiah's lamentations, we find the words, "Though I call and cry for help, / he shuts out my prayer."[1] The subject here is God, the addressee who absolutely cannot be missed, he whom one should be able to assume is there all the time, his ear constantly attuned to all invocations, hymns of praise, as well as lamentations. He appears to close himself off to these complaints. And as it is at the beginning of the tradition of complaint, to which we still belong *nolens volens*, so it is at its end. In one of the best-known elegies in modern literature, Rilke's first *Duino Elegy*, the opening question reads, "Who, if I cried out, would hear me then."[2] That is, even if I cried out, no one, presumably, would be able to hear me. Even less than I am heard when I speak, and still less when I whisper, and less again when I sigh. I talk, but this talk is not directed at someone I could assume will receive it. Complaint is therefore more or less clearly also the complaint that it cannot be heard and that it becomes a complaint in the first place in being heard. Along with its nature as complaint, it at the same time disputes its linguisticality.

Whoever complains complains about not being able to be certain *what* they are doing and *if* they are doing anything at all. Complaint is therefore an extreme, a borderline, form of language by which everyone must in some way feel spoken to, even though, or precisely because, it disputes that it can gain a hearing. But who, then, is this Everyone who must feel appealed to if nobody hears this complaint, as Jeremiah's songs and Rilke's elegies affirm? If everyone feels spoken to by the complaint to no one, then there must be in everyone the possibility of being precisely this Nobody, the one who can be affected by the destruction of language in the complaint and erased as addressee. Every complaint says, "You don't hear me. You, to whom this complaint is directed, are not there. You are not you." Yet precisely because we are spoken to in the complaint as those who are absent, we turn our attention to the complaint. We turn our attention to the possibility that we ourselves are not there, the possibility of being denied, forgotten, or destroyed. As I have indicated, that can even happen to a god—and, first among all gods, to God. In the monotheistic tradition, there are in fact lamentations in which it is God who laments—for example, the disobedience of his people or the destruction of his Temple. The scope and weight of complaint, therefore, cannot be limited in any way. Complaint traces an infinity of losses and absences. It disputes, implicitly or explicitly, through its structure or its semantic content, its ability to find an answer that would not in turn be another complaint. It does not merely deny the possibility of an answer, it contests the word as such. It is the paradigm of a language against language, of a

turning toward itself that is at the same time a turning away from itself and that, in the more than merely paradoxical connection between connection and the dissolution of all connections, discloses the constitutive deconstitutive structure of what we call its linguisticality.

The question—and the question can also be a mode of complaint—we should pose in the face of the structural traumatization of speaking is: How, nevertheless, to answer complaints? How to answer a language that rejects every answer? And how to answer, such that the complaint is not treated in a psychologizing manner as the mere symptom of an avoidable mourning sickness, as an abnormality and accident?

Since complaint has the strange ability to dispute every linguistic connection as well as the connection to itself and thus its own consistency and continuity, it also erases time. Not only is it monotonous; and not only does it, through its monotony, bring about the eternal return of the always same of complaint, which excludes any change in time. Through its monochronism it destroys time given that this time is a time of change, of the not-yet, a time of the realization of the future that has not yet been thought. Since it relates to the whole extent of time and to the possibilities opened with it, with every gesture in which it reveals itself, it leads to the borders of time and leaps out of its monochronism into anachronism. But it behaves anachronistically not only within a given, measurable time, but toward every time, not only toward time past—which can be lamented as past—but to the time to come—which, as still ahead, is lacking and therefore can also be lamented—and also toward present time, which can be hollowed out by complaint and therefore can only be void. As much as complaint is engaged in the perpetual passing of the world, therefore, as much as it turns every world into a "merely" temporal one and in such a way that it is itself the time of the linguistic world, so too is it, as this event of temporalization, also already at the utmost edge, and outside of, all time. Whatever is present, becoming, or absent is exposed by complaint to an un-time that is neither present nor to be expected, neither empty nor fulfilled, neither past nor eternal, but not time and as not time also incapable of temporal description. Complaint scans the time of the linguistic world by erasing every *is*. It insists that this time of this world cannot be predicated and that, regardless of all the possible utterances about it, it is *ineffable* in the most vehement sense of the word. It itself is first to profess this ineffability and attests to it by emphasizing its own lack of an object or addressee, its groundlessness and its futility, and in every way undermines, deforms, and destroys the formal, semantic, and pragmatic conventions of its articulation. Nothing that can be said, nothing about which an *is* can be said, would not be damaged by it. Since it denies that there could be an end to complaint and insists upon finding every limiting answer lamentable, indictable, and pitiful, for it there is no future—which means, first of all, no future of language—that would not have to be rejected by it in turn. There is no

return and no infinity of complaint that it would not have to reject. In each of its moments, therefore, complaint is on the way out of language, community, the world, and time. It runs through the movement to atrophy, anachronism, asociality, and is therefore the most sincere witness of what is *a limine* unworldly and inhuman in every language. It can only be this, however, because in itself it contests language and speech in its constitutive forms and elements and disputes the substantiality, the persistence, and thus the responsiveness of all those it addresses. It is the language of difference and of the very difference *from* language and *in* it.

Complaints do not confine themselves to presenting clearly reasoned accusations with a defined goal. Accusations as a general rule relate to circumstances that are debatable and open to question, that can become subjects of a conversation, debate, or juridical process. One can file a complaint in court for damages as defined by the legal system, but these damages are considered reparable, at least to a certain extent. In this case, the complaint is finite; the parties in dispute can "straighten things out" if they agree to social conventions and to the institutions that ensure them. That so seldom happens, however, that even after a conflict is settled, whether it was a legal dispute or a mere "difference of opinion," the parties involved don't stop complaining, often ever. Complaints whose scope and intensity are difficult to ascertain legally, since in addition to what is presented openly they also include unacknowledged, disavowed, hidden, and unconscious complaints and their long echo, transcend every finite accusation confined to a determinate object and circumscribable situation. The borders of complaint—always a particular case [*Fall*] or falling out [*Ausfall*]—are only there to be exceeded, in the particular case [*Fall*] in order to complain about the fall [*Fall*] of everything and to extend complaint infinitely: we speak disdainfully of garrulousness. No statutes or limits over complaints can stop them, for in principle they cover everything, and they always complain, about everything, that it is *not* everything, *not* whole, *not* complete, *not* there. They therefore not only come up against a not, they seek it out; they not only discover it but open it and search in it for that which, as nothing, exceeds every particular and limited lack. Even the in-finite cannot satisfy the structure of complaint, therefore; it would merely be the rejection of the borders that in the course of this rejection could always be drawn—and erased—anew. But complaint does not merely continue in its rejection of all particularities and delimitations; it also rejects its continuation, its continuity, its *progressus ad infinitum* precisely because it affords no saturation and thus, as absolute complaint, also *continues* the continuation of complaint and *dis*continues it. Since it must be infinite [*un-endlich*], as well as un-infinite [*un-unendlich*], it can only be this *un* and only in the ontologically incomprehensible manner of *Un*being. Complaint is not a potential theme of ontology.

To bring to language that which, *without* being present, nonetheless emphatically "is there"—that is the wish that drives complaint. It does not try to speak *about* nothingness, as philosophy has done since Parmenides, merely in order to exclude it from the sphere of what can be thought and said; it tries to bring *nothingness* to language, whether the particular nothingness of the person speaking or the nothingness that is barely distinguishable from this, which must accompany all speaking provided that it is speaking of what is absent. Not to say nothing, but rather to say nothingness: this is the wish that complaint pursues. Were it to succeed, then nothingness would become language—language without meaning and without object or addressee, but language and as such present, if also not unbroken. Then, however, this language would at the same time also be nothing and as such absent, although not without remainder. The work of complaint would therefore consist in laying out in a discrete sequence the impossible simultaneity of language and nothingness and in attempting, each time anew, to bring the absolutely absent into presence. Consequently, complaint would be that path to the beginning of language that, even *before* this language, leads back to a time without language. Contrary to every impression of a logical and psychic abnormality that it has long aroused, especially from formal logic and psychology, it would be the most sincere language of the beginning of language imaginable: of its beginning and event. Its greatest danger would lie in indulging in complaints about complaint, denouncing itself as futile, and thus misjudging its nature as event.

2) EXPRESSION

Speech act theory attempts to describe the range and structure of complaint in terms of the act, more precisely, of locutionary acts. Without entering further into the tension and even incompatibility between the concepts of act and of expression, it defines complaint as an act of expression. J. L. Austin assigns it to the group of statements of emotional reactions he calls *behabitives*.[3] Since acts, from the point of view of this theory, are only considered acts within an already given convention and can only take place on the condition that they follow this convention, the expression they are supposed to give an affect to is always defined as the expression of an interior that has been preformed by conventions, a feeling that can be agreed upon, and an in principle socialized language of affect. An act that does not meet these conditions cannot be "successful" or "felicitous" in Austin's terms; as such, it is unknowable, unrecognizable, and unanswerable (12–24). Complaints *about* "infelicitous" and "unsuccessful" speech acts can of course be "felicitous" and "successful," but only if they in turn conform to the conventions of complaint. They are only "felicitous"—socially acceptable and successful—

complaints if and when they are not complaints but agreements, if they do not break out of an established pattern of behavior but rather confirm it. Speech act theory, in short, banishes from its system both complaint and every other affect or expression of affect in order to ensure action, and it banishes action from its system in order to ensure the systematics of action, the synthesis of actions, and the prestabilized harmony between them. If, for speech act theory, action functions according to conventions, then formally it is nothing other than the confirmation of those conventions and thus, paradoxically, both an action that satisfies its universal form and a nonaction that refrains from all active influence upon its form. The term "speech act," as it is used by speech act theory, is therefore an antonym: it describes neither an act nor a speech act but merely a mechanics of behavior according to a presupposed program of functions.

Since acts of conformity can only be "felicitous" because they are not acts at all, their definition also delimits those "infelicitous" acts excluded by speech act theory, acts that at the very least have the chance to alter the conditions of conformity under which they might become effective and thus in fact to assume the character of an act. These acts can only be undertaken independently of the norms of speech acts, in advance of them, and without regard to their fulfillment. They can therefore only be unconventional; they do not build upon any consensus; and they correspond to neither rituals nor routines. But this means that "acts of complaint" must not only be complaints without regard for being heard or having an effect, complaints without intention or addressee. They must in every sense be "infelicitous" speech acts: namely, first, speech acts that give rise to misfortune; second, that miss their intention; third, that do not conform to any rule of comprehensibility. They are too shrill, too subdued, too brutal, too desperate, not linguistic enough, or excessively active. Since they do not share a rule with the expectations attached to such expressions and thus are not assured to begin with that they will be recognized *as* complaints, they must essentially appear anomic, asocial, or anti-social. It should therefore not even be accepted as certain that they can be included in the field of language—whether a particular idiom or human language as such. Only if they are expressed absolutely without condition and without a predetermined horizon, therefore, or if they avoid being expressed, are these complaints complaints at all. They are complaints only if they undermine the parameters of their determination and thus every language by which they could be identified as what they are. That stones screech is not a poetic metaphor. That extreme emotions are expressed in an animal's language is not a physiological discovery. That all of nature would rise up in lament if it were given language, as Benjamin writes,[4] is not the metaphysical hyperbole of a melancholic but rather the objective definition of the horizonlessness of what are called language and linguistic activity without conventionalistic norms of recognition. Like every speech, complaint, too,

must be capable of failure in all its dimensions—as verbalizing, thematizing, addressing, communication, and effect—if it is to be able to be complaint, linguistic "act," language. It is only on the basis of this extreme possibility—the necessary and therefore always already operative possibility of its impossibility—that language and its extreme, complaint, can be thought.

Speech act theory's restriction of complaint to an "expressive" act thus not only commits a methodological error, it does not do justice to the phenomenon of complaint, since it does not recognize its withdrawal into the aphenomenal as a constitutive trait of this phenomenon. We do well, then, to drop this restriction and to turn, in the analysis of complaint, to that in it which breaks through the borders of linguistic conventions, the borders of its commonality, of its place in human language, and perhaps of its linguisticality as such. To understand complaint as an act of breaking rules and even of shattering its nature as act, to understand it as anti-act and as anti-social, as anti-pact and as passion, we have to take the expression "silent complaint" seriously and relate the endless series of complaints about everything and anything to an always unvoiced, implicit, and inexpressible complaint. In the complaint that goes unexpressed is intimated that it is a complaint over language itself, an indictment of speaking, a silent revolt against talking.

If the person complaining could describe precisely what he is feeling, he wouldn't be complaining but rather describing, comprehending, and bringing under his control the object of his complaint, ruined and ruinous though it be. Complaint, however, is not a theoretical, predicative discourse of the definition of objects and relations, but the complaint about the failure of all control over the matter and over the language that might grasp it. It is not a mere relation but rather a relation to the failure of precisely those relations that it attempts to bring about, a relation to the absence of homeostasis between inside and outside, to the lack of correspondence between what can be felt and what can be said, to the continuity that never materializes between the phases of feeling, between feeling and unfeelingness, between utterance and meaning. In each instance, it is what is denied that is lamented. But what is denied the person complaining is any kind of relation that might offer coherence and constancy, conformity and consistency. His complaint is a relation to the relationless. Complaints are therefore repeatedly judged with the ambiguous term "excessive." They know no limits, no stopping, no borders, because they constantly refer to what is not there. But since complaint is ceaseless and limitless, it also cannot be restricted to an interior; since it is not given a "private language" of interiority that could be carried outside by being made into sound, through facial expressions or gestures, it has no interior that could be "expressed." It is not because it cannot find an adequate medium for its utterance that complaint is devoid of expression; it is devoid of expression because it has and is nothing upon which a stable interior could be constituted and distinguished from an exterior. It is without expression

because it runs through the movement of sheer being outside-the-self—the movement, not of the separation of an inner language from an outer one, not of one world from a second one, but the movement of the separation of the world from the world, of language from language, and thus of movement itself from every movement. What takes place in complaint, in the silent or unexpressed complaint, what takes place in pain, is a tear through the world of language as a whole—and thus its opening onto *what* the world of language is not and onto the fact *that* it "is" not.

Complaint is in the extreme unexpressed, unarticulated, and silent, because it is the movement back *before* a world of language, before a common, consistent, physical and mental world into a relation to what has no hold, in which nothing can be understood any longer except the fact that it "is there," without it being a something and without this "that" presenting itself as anything other than the withdrawal of every possibility of a statement of existence. At its most extreme, and thus through and through, complaint is the language of the refusal of language. This is why it can be described as the event of the separation and departure from itself as language and as complaint. Since the tear that is opened with it constitutes the fundamental event of what is called language, it becomes clear from it that language is not merely an open structure made up of namings and utterances, indicative acts and their modifications, agreements and contestations, but rather, first of all—and therefore, if still imperceptibly, in every way—an experience with being-without-language and being-without-world, with aphasia and aphanisis. Complaint, and thus language as a whole, is *mutation*: movement with its silencing. Since it is this silencing in which it divides itself and communicates with the other, it is *com-mutation* before and in every communication.

The community of those who speak is always also the community of those who do not speak with one another: who are able not to speak, do not need to speak, who say nothing, are quiet or remain silent. Just as their language is not without pauses or silent areas, so too their shared talking and talking with one another repeatedly breaks off and makes room for that which is not—at least not manifestly—language. This does not mean that falling silent and muteness are social phenomena that are the same as, or even merely comparable to, talking and the segments of it that are delimited by pauses. This is so far from the case that even minimal expansions in these pauses, silent fermata, or increases in the interval between the utterances of different speakers can suggest the possibility of complete absences, of an inability to speak, and of the loss of the world. Even the most coherent representations in language—and perhaps precisely these—can be walls around something unsaid, about which one can't say whether it is a meaningful silence or a meaningless muteness. The pauses constitutive for every communication occupy the threshold between talk that communicates—for they can be interpreted as irony, as a manifestation of doubt, or as com-

plaint—and an absence of communication in which one does not fall silent with and for others, since there is no relation to others in it, but only a relation to another as other, to an un-other and its muteness, a relation to what is incapable of relation. Complaint occupies this threshold when it is a complaint about not being heard, not being able to reach an addressee, not speaking a common language with others and therefore not being capable of either silence or communication.

A remark by Hegel about the connection between lament and song suggests that, in its emphasis and expressivity, music surpasses language and thus leaves behind every determination that might confine it within the realm of finitude. Music is the insistent infinitization of the experience of finitude. If this is so, however, then lament does not simply have a social dimension, as if it were embedded in a social network that can be managed and regulated, a network that regulates, a mere thread in a securing social nexus. If lament is an irreducible possibility—in the sense of an indissoluble structural trait—of every language, then even in the language of communication something that cannot be made common, something undialogical and without language, is at work that dissolves social connections, undoes their fabric, destroys their threads. Lament is isolated right into the tiny, disappearing point where it can no longer be counted as a lament and where it cannot be placed beside a second or third. It is infra-singular and super-general, incomprehensible as category, a language not of determination but of the absence of determination, goal, intention, and, *a limine*, also of voice. That it can be heard in conversations and also, again and again, in choral music might suggest that communities lament, first and foremost, their own disintegration and that they restore themselves in this lament. But it might also indicate that in their lamenting—as in Job's dialogues and in tragic choruses—a language *before* every community, *before* every social or even political idiom, and *before* every conceptual generality is opened up and, as the opening of an *other* language, opposes every known language.

This also affects form. Pain cannot simply be given form, because every form can in turn elicit pain and be broken by it. What would form be if it could not be torn apart by pain? What would pain be if it did not distort every form? The movement of pain, which always demands forms and always destroys them again, undermines every form, rite, and pattern of relation that should avert pain and brings about their collapse. It is once again instructive to remind ourselves of Hegel in this context, since he claims that his philosophy is a philosophy of Christianity and, more precisely, of the truly Christian spirit of Christianity, which he thinks as a religion of pain and its *sublation*: of the pain of finitude, which, felt as such and articulated in the form befitting it, should also already be modified, relativized, and relieved. The Christian tradition that culminates in Hegel's comments is a tradition of making social, of universalizing and spiritualizing, but also, therefore, of the denial

of pain. Understood as the *pain of the negative*, it is always also the *work of the negative*. As this work, it is productive. And as productive pain it is only that pain that does its destructive work as the work of transformation into always new figures of spirit, and, finally, into the one, utmost, figure of absolute spirit containing itself and thus into the form of all forms. This latter, the absolute idea, as pain *itself*, would at the same time have to be its relief; it would have to be pain as sublated, preserved, dissociated from and eased by itself. Yet the pain that has been sublated in this sense, pain understood and made spirit—Hegel is right—is no longer pain. It might have been relieved *as* pain, but there is unrelieved pain precisely in the fact that it does not do its work of destruction *as such* a pain, as the possible object of a concept, as a pain that is productive and that produces figures, but rather as that pain that works outside all concepts and therefore this side of all figuration and spiritualization. It is pain that is always incomprehensible, absolutely without spirit and sense, pain that cannot take form. But it is not only without *sense* and subject to no teleology; it is also that pain that attacks the *senses*, paralyzes them, and robs them of their ability to orient. Someone "out of their senses" is "overwhelmed" by pain or so "dazed" by it that the whole sphere of sensibility is concentrated on this pain, absorbed by and pulled together in it. Pain is sheer sensibility and therefore is also already no longer a sensibility that could be contained, that could be led to an intended purpose or form.

If there were a form "adequate" to pain, it could only be one that arises from pain itself. Pain would have to continue to be at work in it and to deform it through every instance that would differ from it. Even expressions of pathos, as these are categorized by rationalistic psychology and physiognomy, therefore do not exhibit forms so much as they do their distortion, ellipses, and hyperboles of form, deformations and the collapse of forming. Pain has no measure, no standard, and no limits—it has no dimension—that might allow it to be understood in an integral figure, to be "sublated" and made bearable by being neutralized. It is therefore more than doubtful whether paintings such as Grünewald's *Crucifixion* or Holbein's *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* can be considered Christian paintings in the sense of Hegel's definition of Christianity. In these pictorial laments, the formless is drawn in from the extreme limits of formal conventions, breaks in form—the glaring disharmony of the incarnadine, the excess or withdrawal of compositional gestures, the dramatic rigidity even of what is unstable—break through the defense against pain, which could only be ensured through figuration, and make the image explosive, in one instance, and worn out, in the other. In the image's disfigurations, the representation of decomposition, together with what is represented, deteriorates. Not-painting is painted, the speechless speaks. Hence the traumatic hyperrealism of these lamenting images. If there is nevertheless a "sublation"—a preservation and neutraliza-

tion—of pain, this is only in the lamentlessness with which they stand behind and beyond every determinate measure of lament. For if pain and complaint exceed all measure, then they also exceed "themselves," and they do so in such a way that lamentlessness speaks in every lament, apathy in every pathos, the inability to bear pain in every pain. The medium of their communication is not a mediation; it is that which cannot be mediated, the measureless, which afflicts language and with it all measure.

3) COMPLAINT NOT A NEGATION

Every complaint can be understood as a request, or even a prayer, for help, at least for an answer. Yet the relation to help, like all of complaint's relations, is paradoxical. In that it affects the whole sphere of what can be addressed, thought, and interpreted, complaint empties the world, creates a *tabula rasa* and can therefore never be done with whatever—like every *tabula*—belongs to the world and to all possible worlds. Because it could only be the object of a complaint, an answer to complaint cannot be expected from a future world. Thus, if complaint is the request for an answer, it is only one that rejects every answer, one that revokes itself. Complaint means the end-lessness of complaint; end-lessness means the dissolving of all the limits that might check complaint; and the ceaselessness of complaint means that in each of its movements it brings itself before nothingness. The gesture of complaint is therefore described inadequately if it is characterized as the rejection of everything that encounters it as object or counter-discourse, as answer or resistance. It also directs itself against itself and, as the complaint against complaining, is always also a resistance to itself and its rejection of itself and the world. It complains about the rejection that it itself engages in; it pushes forward with it and fortifies itself as resistance against it. In all of its modalities, it is an auto-apotropaism.

Complaining is therefore characterized by a double gesture: it presents a "not" and rejects it. Complaint is the first linguistic form—the form of the detachment from every form—that allows what is called "not" and "nothing" to emerge. Before it there was none, and without it there would be none. Complaint over what is *not*, what is *not* adequate, *not* whole, and *not* real brings out this "not" and this "nothing" in the first place. It has—this is always its latest message—nothing good to relay, nothing new to report, nothing useful to say. It is the messenger of failure, the language of that which says nothing or not enough. It does not, thematizing theoretically, negate a state of affairs that is already there before it—a nothing is not "objectively" given, nor is it a state of affairs. It is what first gives rise to and makes manifest its nothingness by lamenting it. It, complaint, and not first of all the logical negation in which it is at once formalized and constrained, is

the movement—the movement of language but also emotion—that clears the path to nothingness. It is therefore one of the movements that opens the first of all philosophical problems, the problem of fundamental ontology as such. It lies not in *creatio ex nihilo* but in *creatio nihili*. It also remains a problem in complaint in the strict sense of the word, for complaint opens the nothingness of the world about which it speaks merely in speaking against it. Whoever complains shows a nothingness to the world or the nothingness of the world and at the same time rejects it with their complaint. This double gesture of showing and rejecting makes complaint an irresolvable complexion of *creatio* and *decreatio nihili*. Only with it is the ambiguous path opened to the creation of what is said "to be."

Complaint does not destroy what is already there before it or what can be foreseen in its future. Rather, it *voids* in the sense that it first of all exposes something absent, missing, and lacking, and also in the sense that it rejects it as absence, and in the third sense that it preserves it in its rejection. In all three meanings, it is not a mere observation, and also not a negation, but rather the event of the disclosure of a lack or lapse, of a harm, or simply of something not there. *As* this disclosure, it is the affirmation—in fact the first affirmation—of what is not missing "in itself" but rather of what *it* is missing. Its not is the affirmation of a not. Only in this affirmation, no matter how concealed or mute it might remain, does it become a potential object of the intention to do away with this not, this refusal of a something, and to annihilate it. Showing it does not precede the rejection of the not, however, for it is only disclosed as rejected or to be rejected: disclosed in that it can be rejected. Given that complaint itself is therefore also disclosed as lacking, as soon as it announces its presence, however implicitly, it extends to its own occurrence, once again in the double turn of a not to its not. It is therefore the constant negating of a negating, its first affirmation along with the rejection of what is affirmed in it: a yes to a no that is disclosed in that yes as something to be said no to.

This makes clear, however, that complaint is more powerful than every nothingness it exposes, that it is the scope of nothingness and its rejection, and that it also remains this scope if it shows itself to be deficient and as such rejects itself. Therefore, complaint's powerfulness does not consist in having the power to grasp the nothingness that it has uncovered and to delimit it conceptually or affectively. Rather, complaint is at the mercy of nothingness as that by which it itself is constituted. The complaint over the powerlessness of complaint belongs to the structure of complaint no less than it does to the series of causes of complaint. "Who, if I cried out, would hear me then": this is how every complaint complains about its lack of scope, its lack of an addressee, the absence of an answer that corresponds to it, the absence of a language in which it could be expressed. More powerful than the nothingness it uncovers, complaint is not therefore capable of a power of its own but only

as showing its powerlessness. It is merely the power of *allowing* for powerlessness, of surrender to it, and of the opening for nothingness that it provides in itself. As destructive as complaints might be, they are first of all the awareness and the allowance for what is experienced as indestructible vacancy, as the absence of any possibility of taking effect, and the loss of ability altogether. In this sense, every complaint stands *before* nothingness and *outside* it from *within*. It is in itself the transcending into what is not and never was. And as this crossing over, it is the event of this very non-being and not-having-been, in-capacity and non-becoming.

If it must be said that complaint is the event of the nothing that it discovers, rejects, and preserves in its being rejected, then it must also be said that—as this event—it is a not-nothing. Complaint is thus not a not to nothing in the sense of the logical negation that negates a presupposed nothing and thus gets caught in self-contradiction. And it is not a not to nothing in the sense of a logical limitation that confines the presupposed nothing by denying it determinate predicates and judging it, for example, to be *un*thinkable, *un*productive, or *in*complete. This negation of a determinate predicate of nothingness always determines the logical subject in a single point—unthinkability, unproductivity, or incompletion—but leaves it indeterminate in its relation to the infinity of other predicates. Although this limiting judgment depends upon its infinite continuation—and is therefore described as "infinite judgment"—there is no positive determination in the always unique point that it describes through its negation as a not-nothing, but rather the determination of determin*ability*. This not-nothing has thus proven itself to be something that can be determined and therefore to be a being that through further—if infinitely many—determinations can in principle be taken to its logical determination.

Hermann Cohen, whom we have to thank for the rediscovery, following Kant and against Hegel, of infinite judgment, placed it—as "judgment of the origin"—at the beginning of his *Logic of Pure Knowledge* [*Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*] because it is the origin of the purely logical determinability of objects in general.[5] Gershom Scholem's important treatise "On Lament and Lamentation" ("*Über Klage und Klagelied*") is oriented toward this logic of the not-nothing;[6] the outline of Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* (*Stern der Erlösung*)[7] follows it; and significant parts of Benjamin's linguistico-philosophical and historico-philosophical conceptions, transformed from a logic into a history of the origin, developed from it. Without entering into it further here, one can say in particular that the logic of the origin as Cohen presents it and as Rosenzweig develops it further at the beginning of *Star* makes a presupposition of the nothing, positions this presupposition as negatable, and uses this negatable presupposition as a means for producing a not-nothing and thus a something. Not only is this nothing merely logical, but as logical presupposition for knowledge, it is in no way nothing but rather the instru-

ment for the production of something. Cohen therefore speaks explicitly of a "methodological" recourse (*Logic* 92ff.) to the *creatio ab nihilo*, Rosenzweig of an indispensable "presupposition" for the knowledge of divine infinite being, Benjamin, in his "Theological-Political Fragment," of a "method . . . called nihilism."[8] In his study, Scholem comes to the conclusion that lament is "the language of annihilation" and, at its utmost limit, causes the revelation of God ("Lament" 129). But where it is used as a means to construct or attain something, not only is nothingness not nothing, it is already the defense against it concealed in its opposite concept. Yet precisely this defense is no more thought in the logic of the origin specifically as defense than is the instrumentalization and methodologization, the disaffecting, of nothingness. Completely missed in this logical construction, however, is the nature of the opening and affirmation of nothingness as event. Moreover, since within logic nothingness can only assume an ambiguous status, insofar as, on the one hand, it is a nothing, and, on the other, it is named and therefore not-nothing, the discourse of infinite progress in determining this nothing also remains ambiguous and, furthermore, undermines unnoticed the thinking of the infinity of God and his revelation. This infinity too, instead of being the saturation of an emptiness, must be thought as traversed by precisely this emptiness. Thought from the leaky ground of the logical limitation of a logical nothing, Being can only be a posited, concrete, incomplete being progressing in differential degrees toward preestablished purposes. It can only indicate the "object" of complaint, not that complaint's beginning and not its event.

No matter how linguistic it is, complaint is not "logical." It does not speak in utterances, and it cannot be translated into "positive" or "negative," "true" or "untrue," accurate or inaccurate utterances without ceasing to be a complaint. It always hits its mark, for it only reveals what it laments and discloses the defects of its showing, as well as the defects of what it shows. It always hits its mark, because it always encounters a not and encounters it as insufficiently rejected by it and as always insufficiently shown by it. It is always at once "true" and "untrue," because the only criterium for both is the lamentableness from which it cannot except itself. If it condemns, it does not condemn what is but rather that which in it is not: it does not condemn on the basis of something positive but with regard to what is lacking in every positive and its position.

Yet as unlimited as the field of complaint is, it remains restricted to what it can thematize—albeit inadequately—and does not include the event of its thematizing. Since no event can be made the object of a presentation without thereby ceasing to be an event, the course of every event must remain unpresentable and irrefutable. To put this in logically formalizing terms, complaint is unable to negate the unnegatability of its negations. This side of all positing, complaint—as the disclosure of a nothingness of the world and of it-

self—is the affirmation of its own unnegatability and thus also of the unnegatability of its event. It is therefore above all the complaint that it is—indeed irrefutably—an event. Even if it rejects everything and itself, *that* it rejects it and takes place in this rejection remains irrefutable for it. But it also remains indemonstrable. Consequently, that which, in it, is the event of the disclosure of its—and every—nothing also remains indemonstrable for complaint. While complaint may also lament itself, in doing so it reveals and dismisses itself only as theme, while the event of lamenting, its presentation and rejection, must elude it. What escapes complaint structurally, its own event, however, the absolutely unlamentable.

To make the fundamental traits of the movement of complaint more precise: its transcending into what *is* not in the sense of a given object or content of representation cannot be an existing process, nor can it be totally itself and as such present to itself. Since it moves toward a not, its very course must be determined by this not; it must be in-determined in every sense. But what characterizes every movement is only made clear in the extreme movement of complaint, for every movement, insofar as it is movement, must move toward what it is not, must be the transition into its non-being and, as such a transition, cannot be absolutely present to itself. Precisely because complaint crosses over into that which is not, therefore, it must be the event of a non-event and must be the event of the non-presencing of this event. As transcending into nothingness, it can only be a transcending into non-transcending, it must be transcending without transcendence and, as the transition into what it is not, transcending without immanence. Linguistic movement, and *in extremis* the movement of complaint, understood precisely, is ad-transcending and atranscending. Only as the event that is not thematically present to itself is complaint finite. It can only be turned away from its finitude, its non-self-presence, its inaccessibility to itself, and its lack of self-foundation. In contrast, it can only be turned toward the in-finite repetition of its self-thematization, in which it never stops missing itself. The movement of complaint—the movement of the opening of what is in no way objective and present, the movement of the opening of language—this movement of complaint pushes up against an unsurpassable border within itself, where, unpresentable and unnegatable, it slips away from itself as event.

4) COMPLAINT AND ANSWER

The answer to complaint can only make clear what eludes complaint itself. It is not an answer as long as it presents itself as the object for further complaints. This implies that it is only an answer if it does not present an opinion, judgment, or explanation in which the motives for complaining, its consequences, or its implications are thematized, but rather only when this answer

itself has the character of an event. This event, if it is to be an answer, cannot have the character of an action that follows the intention of acting upon complaint consciously, in controlled fashion, and with definite goals—defense or mitigation—for every intention can be outdone, rejected, and lamented. Therefore, it is not the kind of answer that complaint demands. It can only be an answer if it hits the mark without judgment or intention and if it hits complaint where it cannot be expected, anticipated, and defended against. Since the horizon of complaint is always a world, and this world is defined by the presentations and refusals of a nothingness to what constitutes it, the answer must be not only an irrefutable event, it must be the event not only of another world but also of another *as* a world. It cannot, therefore, be the event of an overworld, hinterworld, or deeper—in whatever sense—world that has an answer to offer lament. Every innerworldly and every outer- or over-worldly other can only present himself as the theme of a complaint and must be rejected as incapable of answering. When Scholem writes in his treatise on lament, "There is no answer to lament; that is, there is only one: falling silent" ("Lament" 130), he at once captures and blurs the problem of the lack of an answer. For lament is always also a lament about the muteness it encounters, and thus muteness cannot be a response to it. But when Scholem continues, writing, "Only one being can answer lament: God himself" ("Lament" 130), he overlooks the fact that God can also be lamented and that this one being himself also laments and in his lament splits himself in two. No instance and no attitude, least of all that of a supreme power, can offer an answer that could not be shown to be insufficient and that could not be rejected as non-answer.

Lament can only encounter an irrefutable answer in an event that, as event of language and of the linguistic world of its emergence, would at the same time be the emergence of the not or not-yet of this world. The answer can only be a beginning or pre-beginning of the world; it must come from the place that lament leads back to since it shows the deficiencies of the world, its failures, and its non-being. But since lament eludes the fact that, as the opening of that nothingness, it itself is an event and thus a beginning and a pre-beginning, the only answer adequate to it would make clear that it is precisely that event which eludes itself and thus cannot be negated or lamented. Only that in the lament which denies the lament can be given access to it by the answer: that it is in every sense ahead of this answer and of itself.

For what is expressed above all in lament is the desire to return to before oneself. This becomes clear in the famous chorus from *Oedipus at Colonus* that says, "Not to be born surpasses thought and speech. / The second best is to have seen the light / and then to go back quickly whence we came."[9] And it becomes clear in the first line in which Job delivers his laments. In those lines, he curses the day he was born and the night he was conceived: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, 'There is a man-

child conceived.' . . . Lo, let the night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein" (Job 3:7). What Job demands here is that this demand itself be revoked. By wishing he didn't exist he wishes he didn't have this wish. He speaks against his own speech, he *contra*dicts his speech, in that he laments and thus works toward the revocation of creation, works not toward another, happier creation, but toward none. The first and only desire driving his lament is the return to before creation, to something that would be different from an *other* world and different from a *world*. This wish of all wishes—to have no wishes—this nonsensical and yet undeniable wish that strives to refuse the wish and is therefore more powerful than any refusal, which is nothing but a wish and nothing but the event of wishing, since it turns back to even before its own manifest existence, this wish with no other goal than its own non-being and never-having-been does not merely propel lament; as the irreducible event of wishing, it is the event of lament itself. This one wish is thus the only one that cannot be the object of lament. While the wish to have a wish, which is no less aporetic than the wish not to have one, is only a wish for its own existence and enhancement, but with this existence and enhancement enters into the circle of an infinite lament, the wish not to be is in itself different from what it aims at: it is the yes to the nothing it opens onto and, as the event of this yes, is spared every complaint. Only as wish without world, however, is it open to an answer that makes clear that it is a wish, that as such, it is an event, and that as event, it is at the beginning of a world and even in advance of this beginning.

Creation is not an answer to lament; it gives the impetus for it. The one who laments was not there with his wish at the moment of creation. Job is made aware of this by Yahweh's answer to his laments. This answer is not given in the form of a statement about a state of affairs; it is given as a question. It is one of the first in a long catalogue of questions and goes, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding" (Job 38:4). This not only suggests that Job does not "have understanding" and cannot answer Yahweh's question, it also suggests that he had no place at the "foundation" of the earth and that before this "foundation" his laments were without foundation, as was his wish to return to before creation. What, moreover, can be said, or at least hinted at, however, is that with his creation Yahweh created a wish that exceeds every creation because it returns to before it. That Job's wish not to be and not to wish is more powerful than God's wish to found a world, that sheer wishing frees itself from its creatureliness and turns against all acts of foundation and all foundations toward unfounding—this allows it to become an event that is still this side of the world of well-founded and causal sequences of events and thus to become an event without foundation and without a God thought onto-theo-logically, a God who founds.

The question posed by Yahweh's answer does not merely suggest that Job has no grounds for complaint. It also indicates that his lament makes itself independent of Yahweh's act of foundation, that it turns to Yahweh *before* his creation, to a god even before he was one, therefore that it turns to no one and nothing and asks for an answer from nothing and no one. That he was not present at creation does not merely imply that he is a creature; it implies, moreover, that his wish not to be created spares him from creation and its disappointments and makes all help by way of an answer unnecessary. That is why Yahweh's answer is a question. And it is why it is unanswerable—for there is nowhere where Job would have dwelled before creation—and, as rhetorical question, dispenses with any answer. It concedes that Job, in his lamenting as in his wish never to have existed, is free of creation and its God, and so of everything that can be lamented. It concedes that that wish, as nonsensical and unfulfillable as it might be, while of course an event within and on the basis of creation, is at the same time an unfounded event that abandons the horizon of what has been created and needs no hold in it. An event without foundation, this wish is the event of nothing, and the life led by the wish is a life before its beginning, at the utmost border of time, of space, and of the language of a world. It is life free of itself. This implies that Job lives without foundation and thus without the compulsion to live. While he does not not exist, he is—transitively—his nothingness. And it implies that since Job's laments and Job's wish are the laments and the wish of the world, with them this world also turns back to before its creation and is an irrefutable, unlamentable event free of the founding of the world and thus of itself. When Job has understood this implication of Yahweh's question and thus the movement of his own wish, he finds no more grounds for lament.

He has understood that Yahweh's answer tells him nothing that could belong to the order of knowledge or cognition. Job can only answer in turn, "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3). Lament and answer refer to each other not as objects of knowledge but as the addressees of mutual renunciation. Yahweh absolves Job of responsibility for creation; Job, Yahweh of responsibility for his sorrows. They tell each other only that they are talking to each other and that this talking to each other is how they release each other from their connection.

Lament is the detachment of the event of the world from the world. The only compelling answer to it can only make clear *that* it is this and can only release it in that it too, this answer, detaches itself from all relations of foundation. It is the answer of a creator who thinks back to before his creation, and it pertains to a lament that does not follow the laws of this creation. Lament and the answer to it do not meet up in a common world but in the thought that there is no world. They speak to each other not by knowingly corresponding to each other but by *contra*dicting their—and every—

language. If a conversation does more than maintain conventions, it is on the way back to before the beginning of language.

—Translated by Jan Plug

NOTES

Throughout the chapter, "complaint" and "lament" translate the same German word, *Klage*, which in certain contexts can also mean "charge" or "indictment" and is closely related to *Anklage* (accusation) and *Klagelied* (lamentation). Forced to choose between the English terms, the translation tries to hew close to the texts and contexts under discussion, though it should be kept in mind that *Klage* invokes both, just as *complaint*, for example, means both an expression of grief or pain and a statement of dissatisfaction.

Published in German in *Lament in Jewish Thought*, ed. Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 89–110.

1. The Lamentations of Jeremiah, 3:8. *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Edition*, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).
2. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Werke in drei Bände*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1966), 441.
3. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 159–60. All further references are to this edition and will be made parenthetically.
4. Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 72.
5. Hermann Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, in *Werke*, vol. 6, ed. Helmut Holzhey (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1977), 84–89. Further references will be to this edition and will be made parenthetically as *Logic*.
6. Gershom Scholem, "Über Klage und Klagelied," in *Tagebücher nebst Aufsätzen und Entwürfen bis 1923*, ed. Karlfried Gründer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 128–33. Hereafter cited parenthetically as "Lament."
7. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 25–36.
8. Walter Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 306.
9. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 202.

III

Sketches: Work, Democracy

Chapter Seven

Uncalled

A Commentary on Kafka's "The Test"

The philosophical and religious texts of the European tradition know only a world that follows a call, a world called forth and called on to do something, in which everything has a vocation and everything is addressed as that which it is. They declare, either explicitly or implicitly, every other world to be impossible. A short text by Franz Kafka from "Convolute 1920" with notes from the fall of that year, published by Max Brod under the title "The Test," can be read as an investigation of a world without call—without determination or function, without profession or vocation and without work, without goal, and without guiding, claiming, or approval-granting authority. This text, nothing in which indicates that it reaches a "conclusion" and nothing that it is a "fragment," begins with the sentence: "I am a servant, but there is no work for me." It ends with the lines: "That was only a test. He who does not answer the questions has passed the test."[1]

The *I* who introduces himself as a *servant* in Kafka's study suggests many "causes" for there being no work for him. "I am anxious and don't push myself forward, indeed I don't even push myself into a line with the others, but that is only one reason for my inoccupation, it's also possible that it has nothing at all to do with my inoccupation, the main cause in any case is that I am not called upon to serve" ("Test" 207). As the first *cause* for his *inoccupation*, the servant names his anxiousness, which prevents him from competing with the others, but he immediately concedes, "It is also possible that it has nothing at all to do with my inoccupation" ("Test" 207). Thus, not only is the servant without work, without employment, and inactive, the *cause* that he names for this possibly also has "nothing at all to do" with his inactivity. A cause that—if only possibly—does nothing, has nothing to do, does not

affect the "effect" that it should ground; such a cause not only does not have the explanatory function, it also does not have the foundational meaning of a cause. It is, of course, still called "cause," "but there is no work for it." A cause without foundational force, it is merely a possibility that is possibly none at all and therefore ceases to be in force as a possibility. A cause, which might not be one; a possibility, which perhaps does not offer the possibility of a foundation of reality; a vocation, which is not linked to any activity, occupation, or function—Kafka's text speaks of a de-causalized world by speaking a de-causalized language. This language seems to withdraw the ground tendentially from all its statements and attests that it perhaps "has nothing at all to do" with that which it says and nothing to do with the fact that it says it. Walter Benjamin remarked that the law in Kafka's writings is a mere decoy [*Attrappe*],[2] but each individual word in these writings is used as a trap for an attention that can find no support in the word. None of these words designates a "thing," a "cause," or an object, and none presents itself as an objectively justified statement. If it is a vacancy of causality that speaks in Kafka's text, then the *I* with which it begins also cannot be the subject that grounds the construction of a secure linguistic world. The *I* does not speak as the representative of an authority that this *I* would help to express; the *I* is a helper who helps no one, a *servant* without *work*, without its own voice and without the voice of an other, for whom it could serve as a mediator. Neither master over itself nor servant of a master, the *I* is the figure of a speaking without task and thus not a figure of something that could claim, either behind or above it, a secured authority, be it of sense or of function. *I* is a word without the task, without the capacity, and without the *work* to speak in the name of an other, a personal pronoun, but only as the pro- of a *persona* without noun and without a tone that could ring forth through it. An anonymous formula, a decoy, a *scandalon*, in whose trap nothing is contained or held.

Whatever the derivative and secondary causes for the lack of work may be, it is said: "The main cause in any case is that I am not called upon to serve"—thus it lies in the fact that a cause is lacking. Work is not there because the call to it, which alone could be its cause, is missing. The existence of work—but just as much of a working language that works out its own meaningfulness, and of a subject that could communicate itself in this language—would be being-called, being-called-to-serve. Where there is no call to work, there is no work; for work would be—this is implied as obvious—work for a call that demands, claims, and guides it. The call—whatever its content, form, and register may be—would be that which could induce service, namely service on this call. The call would give work. It would lead toward a goal, provide a meaning and a sense of direction, and the work would lie in hearing the call, in answering it, and in corresponding to its paradigm [*Vorgabe*]. The call would be the gift pure and simple: paradigm

[*Vorgabe*], task [*Aufgabe*], gift of meaning [*Sinngabe*]. Being-called would be being. And being-at-call—the hearing, to which the call gives itself and through which the call would come back to itself—would be service on call. Whoever hears the call serves it and works. Calling always means calling-to-work. Even before it is a call to a particular activity, the call is the first, the proper, the appropriating employer [*Arbeit-Geber*]: the giver of work as being-to-the-call.

The call would thus be the unavoidable condition of a world held together by meaningfulness and work, a linguistic world that determines itself as working world. Where no call, no demand, neither an appeal nor a request or invitation, is heard, there may still be a world—and perhaps none other than this world—but it is not there as given, not as given by something other or by someone other, and not as a world ordered by a founding claim and the work corresponding to it. Kafka's world is such an un-given, un-conditioned world, a world in its absolute worldliness. It is a world in which not even the possibility of transcendence through language and work is secured but that, precisely because of this, knows the wish—admittedly only the intermittent, inconstant, and for itself non-constitutive wish—for this. It is characterized by Kafka as a world that very well may wish to hear, but hears only that it does not hear: "Others have been called and have not applied themselves to it more than I, indeed have perhaps not even once had the wish to be called, while I at least have it sometimes very strongly" ("Test" 207).

Not to be called—that means not to belong to the receivers of a message, which, simply by virtue of being a message, would be a joyous one. The call would be the gospel for a being whose sense is work. This call would be not only messianic; it would be the Messiah himself. It becomes clear through an allusion to the Christian Gospel that the call, whose failure Kafka's text speaks of, is in the horizon of a salvational history directed toward the kingdom of heaven, its householder, and the messianic call emitted by him. In the sentence speaking of the "main cause" of uncalledness, the sententious formula "others were called" evokes—whether it was consciously cited by Kafka or whether it merely imposed itself upon him—the maxim from the Gospel of Matthew: "For many be called but few chosen."[3] This maxim concludes the parable of the workers in the vineyard with which Jesus answers a morose remark by Peter. The parable begins with the sentence: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder [*oíkodespótes*, *pater familias*] who went out early in the morning to hire laborers [*èrgátas, operarios*] for his vineyard" (Matth. 20:1). Those standing idle are hired as day laborers. Because they begin their work in the vineyard at different times, thus working for different durations, but all receiving the same payment, they complain at the end of the day about the injustice of the householder. He insists that the payment is just, because it was agreed upon with each individual worker, with the first as well as the last to come: "So the last will be first, and the first

last" (Matth. 20:16). They are all equal in a time that is not the comparative time of private interests but the time—the time of work—of a kingdom of heaven that is common to all of them, even if in a manner particular to each. The last quoted sentence is then followed by the one that resonates in Kafka's text: "For many be called [*kletoi, vocati*], but few chosen [*èklektoi, electi*]" (Matth. 20:16). The elliptical, and incidentally dubious for editorial philologists, conclusion to the parable allows for multiple interpretations of the maxim; the one most plausible for the context may be that many are called [*kletoi*]—namely all those to whom the householder offers work in the vineyard—but that among these, only a few are chosen [*èklektoi*] to begin their work early. But all of them, thus the many called as well as the few chosen among them, receive the same wage from the householder, the kingdom of heaven. For no distinction shall be tolerated between the first and the last, the called and the chosen. Therein lies the, not comparative, but absolute justice of this householder who grants his wages equally to all.

Divine justice will of course be granted to all, but only to all those who are called. Godly, kingly, or householderly justice does not reach the uncalled. Kafka's prose, however, dwells on the uncalled. It speaks of those who receive no call, not of those who, according to the representation of the Biblical texts, are condemned or turned away by it. The Gospel of Matthew offers, not far from the parable of the vineyard, another parable in which the maxim of the many called and few chosen is repeated in a hardly Christian sense. In this parable, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a king who has the guests called [*kalésai*] to his son's wedding celebration. Because the called refuse the invitation—they have to work—he lets those who are found idle on the streets be called to the feast; however, he examines those who have come and expels from the house one who has appeared at the feast without festive clothing: "'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called [*kletoi*], but few are chosen [*èklektoi*]" (Matth. 22:13–14). The difference between the called and the chosen, which is denied in the vineyard parable, stands in the center of the wedding parable: Although they are called not to work but to celebrate, not only the chosen belong to the called; also called is the one who is ultimately bound and cast into the outermost darkness. He did receive the call; but since he is not commensurate with it, he remains within the bounds of the call, excluded from its enjoyment.

The joyous message in both parables is the message of the message itself; it is the message of the call that extends to the inactive, the idle, the unemployed and unoccupied on the street; it calls them from the street into the house or into the cultivated field, under the rule of an *oíkodespótes* or *basileus*, and offers the idlers either work or a feast, both of which would follow the same script. The parable of the Christian Messiah doesn't only concern this call; the parable is itself a call and an appeal to the idlers to follow it to

work or to the feast of the kingdom of God. A call to the call itself that speaks of nothing other than the call, the Gospel presents itself as theology of the *klēsis*, as *kleseological*—and only therefore ecclesiological—theology, as kleseo-tautology and theo-tautology; it calls to the call as the sole guarantor of its truth, the truth of its *klēsis*, its *logos*, its *theos*. The messianism of the Gospels knows only the call and the called who serve the call; it knows only those called by the call to work on the call and among them the chosen and the cast away, both of whom hear it equally and answer it, even if in different ways. This messianism does not know the uncalled.[4]

The messianism of the Old Testament writings functions no differently. Kafka's intensive study of Kierkegaard, from at least 1918 on, has been documented, in particular with respect to the interpretation Kierkegaard develops in *Fear and Trembling* of the founding episode of Israel, the test of Abraham through the demand that he sacrifice his son. The relevant Biblical text begins with a call of Elohim, a call that has been the topic since Genesis 1.3, where it is said that Elohim called [*wayyomer*], "Let there be light," called [*wayyomer*], "Let there be a firmament," and carried on the whole process of creation through a sequence of calls of becoming, dividing, and naming. The text introduces Abraham's test as follows: "After these things God tested [*nissa*] Abraham, and called [*wayyomer*] to him, 'Abraham!' And he called [*wayyomer*], 'Here am I.' He called [*wayyomer*], 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mori'ah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you'" (Gen. 22:1–2). Abraham follows this call of his God without the slightest hesitation and becomes, after he has passed the test in this way, the father of an endless line of future generations, the father of the future and of the Messiah who is supposed to approach with this future. Kafka remarked in June 1921—thus two years after beginning his reading of Kierkegaard and approximately a half year after the composition of "The Test"—in a highly polemical letter to Robert Klopstock that this Biblical Abraham follows the demand to sacrifice "ready to serve like a waiter." His reflections on "another Abraham" culminate in the following observation:

> But another Abraham. One who quite wants to sacrifice correctly . . . but cannot believe that he is intended. . . . He fears that although he will ride out as Abraham with his son, he will be transformed on the way into Don Quixote. The world would have been shocked then about Abraham if it had watched, but this one fears that the world would laugh itself to death at the sight of him. . . . An Abraham who comes uncalled! It is as if at the end of the year, the best pupil were to receive a prize and in the expectant silence the worst pupil, because he misheard, came forward from his dirty, last bench and the whole class burst out laughing. And it is perhaps not even a mishearing, his name was really named, the reward of the best was supposed to be, the teacher intended, at the same time a punishment of the worst.[5]

An Abraham who comes uncalled or one who cannot believe that he and no other is intended by the godly call, but follows the call nonetheless and thereby becomes the ridiculous erring knight: For such an Abraham, the call of God has divided into a demand that reaches him and another demand that is not meant for him, or not for him in the sense of an award, appointment, or choosing. The call that Abraham answers like an echo in the Biblical text, and which only thereby forges the bond between Elohim and Abraham, has divided for Kafka into a call and a faux call emptied of its intention and therefore, at best, only claiming to call. A call that does not call, if only because it is missing the correlate of a faithful hearing—a call that is not a call but only pretends to be one, can, however, be only the tale, only the legend, the fiction, or the rumor of a call, a call-decoy, which, pretending to be absolutely powerful, is powerless to ground or put to work a bond, whether a linguistic bond or a bond of faith, and powerless to give a promise for the future. Unlike the call of Elohim in the Biblical story of Abraham, the unheard call devised by Kafka is nothing other than a parody of itself, its self-erasure, and the de-powering of the claim that it raises. No one is called by it, the uncalled call. "Another Abraham" comes—even if to no predetermined place—"uncalled."[6]

Kafka's hypothesis of an uncalled Abraham is not, above all, a blasphemous fabulation about the unsoundness of the Jewish foundational story, of the religion of the covenant and of monotheism, but the sober demonstration of the internal decomposition of the structure of the call in general. If Abraham, the one called *kat exochen*, he whose essence lies in being called, in hearing his call, and in corresponding to it in the work of sacrifice; if this Abraham, among all the called, is the one whom Kafka can assume is not called, then it is only because the call itself—and, that is, each call insofar as it is a call—includes the possibility of being directed to another than to the one who hears it, and can never exclude the possibility of not being heard by the one to whom it is offered and not being heard *as* call by the one who hears it. The structure of the call always implies the possibility of never being that which it is itself called upon to be. The call is to be thought not from the call "itself" but from the split in the call—from that which is uncalled within it. The thought of an uncalled Abraham is the thought of someone not called in the call itself: the thought that every call, even the highest, must be able, through its mere relation to an other, to one called by it, to distance itself from itself without mediation and therefore at the same time from this very relation and therefore to be exposed to the possibility not to be a call. The structural depotentiation of every call—not its self-*re*vocation from its power over itself, but its *de*vocation from its powerlessness to be itself—opens the space within it for that which must remain uncalled by it. This uncalled is not that other that does not yet stand—or no longer stands—in the call-relation; it is not the recipient of a diminished call or of a call in a deficient mode, but

that which cannot stand in any relation to a call because structurally a call must be exposed to that which does not belong to its intention, that which does not hear it, or which does not hear it as call. The uncalled is the irrelational in the call-relation itself and thereby the opening in the call onto that which can neither belong to it nor hear or fulfill it. It is other than that other to the call that could be its answer; other than that which could be its revocation or its refusal; the uncalled in the call is not *its* other; it "is" that other-than-the-other in which the call suspends itself, in which it does not merely signify silently and therefore misapprehensibly signify, but in which it falls silent, incapable of signification. While the foundational stories of messianic religions and religions of the covenant suggest the internal coherence of the call and its pre-stabilized consonance with every answer of every possible other, Kafka turns in his letter and his notes to the one who cannot be reached by their call and who cannot answer it, to the uncalled.

Kafka's prose speaks of—and is spoken by—those whom no message, neither happy nor unhappy, reaches. It speaks of the uninvited, the unbidden, and the not-even-discarded who do not come into question for service or feast; it speaks of the unaddressed, those forgotten by the messianic religions, by their call, by their language, their *logos*, and its parables. It speaks of those to whom God and his Messiah cannot turn with a call—it speaks of an incapacity in God. Kafka's text cannot, however, be understood for this reason as counter-parable of a counter-Gospel from which, upon the right occasion, a new religion, more encompassing than those previously announced, could arise. In his great essay on Kafka, Benjamin made the observation that Kafka "was not tempted to become the founder of a religion"[7]—this temptation must have remained foreign to him precisely because he had dedicated himself to an experience that must on systematic grounds be foreclosed by religions of whatever type. For the minimal condition of every religion lies in a relation—in the, it is believed, most common, most presuppositionless, and indestructible relation—between an addressor and an addressee in which both simultaneously acknowledge and recognize each other. Kafka's text flatly states that this absolute minimum is missing: That indeed an *I* may be posited that hears but that the call remains absent through which this *I* could become a real hearer, one who knows itself to be called and in knowing professes to have a vocation. Kafka's language is that of the unaddressed; it is irreligious. It is not antireligious; it contests no God, no householder, and not even the possibility of a theological economy for others; it least of all contests the wish—a wish that *sometimes* appears, if only irregularly—for such an economy, such a law of the house, of the householder and his call; but this language remains with the wish as mere wish, with the uncalledness of this wish—its unserviceability, unrelatedness, and unconditionality. It remains with a wish that does not itself have the messianic power to create or to hear what is wished for, an extra-messianic wish that knows no

expectation or even simple waiting. Nowhere in Kafka's text is waiting mentioned: Even waiting would be in the service of the expected, and an attentional tension is, like every other intentional relation, impossible outside of stable salvational economies; every salvational economy is, however, an economy of calling and vocation. The coming of the messianic—of the call, of vocation, of work, of exchange, of recognition in the medium of language—is not anticipated by a single word in Kafka's text and not announced by any promise: A promise would already be an answer to a call; it would be the authentic labor of language.

Kafka's linguistic world is not messianic in any traditional sense: it is absolutely a-messianic. "The main cause in any case is that I am not called upon to serve" ("Test" 207)—thus it is stated in a grammatical present that stretches into the past as well as the future, a diffuse present that does not wait in view of another time and therefore is not in any conventional sense time at all—not a time of protention, production, or work, but also not a time of celebration, collection, recollection, or retention—but the idleness of time, fallow time. In the present tense of "that I am not called upon to serve" the unusedness, perhaps the unusableness, of time spreads throughout all its dimensions. This unusedness is just as much forgotten by philosophy, which is devoted to that which is used in knowledge and action and is in its service, as the uncalled must be forgotten by religion. The un-time of Kafka's story is that of the surplus, the unutilizable remnant that has never lain within the realm or the calling range of a philosophy or religion. Fallow time, fallow language, it lies outside the course of history, not on a path and especially not on a high road of the experience of reason, which is always a reason of hearing a call and always a reason of the use and usefulness, in principle, of time, language, and world. This reason lies fallow in Kafka. It is not redeemed from its unappointedness and is not employed by his texts for any cognitive, moral, or even aesthetic use but presented as the primary fact of an experience—laid bare—with which nothing can begin and cannot end. Kafka's prose does not only speak from a world promising redemption to nothing but also from a non-world into which no call of creation reaches. It is therefore prosaic like no other—a prose of bare lying—horizontal without a horizon, evocative without voice—a description of that which absorbs every writing.

"So I lie on the plank bed in the servants' hall, stare at the beams in the ceiling, fall asleep, wake up and soon fall asleep again. Sometimes I walk over to the tavern where a sour beer is served, sometimes I have even poured out a glass in disgust, but then I drink it again" ("Test" 207).

The rhythm of naming and negation, evocation and devocation, which begins with the first sentence of Kafka's text and keeps the following ones in motion, is the rhythm of the evacuation of functional language through its defunctionalization, of the language of action through its deactivation; it is,

however, also the rhythm in which the emptying out of language is still brought to language—to a neither working nor celebratory language. This aporetic motion toward motionlessness leads from call-lessness into call-lessness; it leads—also where it encounters an other, whether a glass of beer or a likewise unemployed servant—back to itself, a *vox inanis*. This reduction to itself, itself a *reductio inanis*, is made clear in the sole narrative passage of the text. "Once" it says there, "when I arrived at the tavern, a guest was sitting at my observation post. I did not dare look at him closely and was about to turn around and leave. The guest, however, called me over, and it turned out that he too was a servant whom I had once seen somewhere before, but without having spoken to him" ("Test" 208). The site where this meeting takes place is a site neither of work nor of celebration but of inaction and observation, thus the same site spoken of in the whole text. The call—"the guest called me over [*der Gast rief mich zu sich*]"—is the call of a substitute of the *I*—"he was sitting at my observation post"—of a doppelgänger and usurper, not the call of a master but of a servant and guest—and even of a guest of the guest who takes on with his invitation the role of a host. It is a call from servant to servant, from one idler to another, from an uncalled to an uncalled. The change of positions between guest and host, inviter and invitee, as well as the verbal exchange between them, happens in the milieu and in the medium of servicelessness, of call-lessness. The call of the second workless *servant* is thus the call not only of one who is uncalled to another; it is a call into uncalledness and out of it. The call in the Elohistic story of Abraham and the evangelical call of the parables of the Christian Messiah moves in a vertical direction from a master, king, or householder to those who are unpropertied and idle; the call in Kafka's story moves horizontally from an uncalled servant to a second, and nothing suggests that a task would thereby be fulfilled or a message delivered from a higher authority. This call exists only among the inactive and unpropertied whose position can be occupied by others at any time, because they have nothing that they could pass along and nothing whose communication would pay, enrich, or return a profit. What belongs to the one, if only out of banal custom, belongs just as much to the other, because it is proper to neither. And in the same way, they hear each other and adhere to each other: as those who belong to no one, who are in no one's service, who are needed by no one.

The communication among those who find no acknowledgment in the call, no support or address [*Zuspruch*] in language, and no use in work to which they appear, however, to be appointed, is the communication among those who do not even possess a common medium of communication: "He asked me several things, but I couldn't answer, indeed I didn't even understand the questions."[8] The question and questioning, in the philosophical as well as the literary tradition from antiquity (Oedipus, Plato) through the most recent modernity (Heidegger, Levinas), is not only the dominant figure of the

opening and directing of conversations but the very beginning of thought, the form of the investigation of the uncertain, the ground of cognition and of action directed by knowledge. All movements of searching—of *quaerere*—are initiated in this tradition by explicit or implicit questions and are maintained by them. What one understands by cognition and practical action follows the guiding thread of the question in order thereby to reach the goal of the answer. In the beginning is the call of the question, at the end is supposed to be the symmetrically corresponding answer. Whether in the form of *quaestiones*, with the help of juridical inquisition, technical and pedagogical testing, or police investigation, it is always questioning that is supposed to lead from unclear or dilemmatic relations in philosophical, religious, or political clarity. However open a question may be, it is always also an instrument of binding, of framing and fitting of something hitherto unknown or elusive into controllable contexts. The triviality that questioning is not understood as such or that its content remains incomprehensible is, of course, familiar to everyone, but this could only detract from the philosophical and institutional privilege of questioning where the power of the quotidian and of its institutions was suspended anyway: Only in literature—even in the literatures of *quests* for an answer, for a grail, a ground, or a self—is the question not the first and not the last word of thought and of action. Kafka's *I* abrogates the pathos for questioning a whole culture in the most laconic manner; it poses no questions but reports what "someone . . . once, without my having asked him, said"; it does not oppose the appeal of questions, does not evade it, asks nothing back, is fascinated neither by questioning nor by its own inability to correspond to it. And this *I* remarks, disengaged as from the absent call, that it has not understood and cannot answer. The claim, plea, or appeal of the question may be made, but since it cannot be understood, the one who is asked also cannot understand himself as the one intended by the appeal. Kafka's prosaic handling of the question differs most starkly in its very capacity not to find itself intended from Kant's manner of dealing with the question. Kant begins the *Critique of Pure Reason* with the remark, "Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they exceed every capacity of human reason."[9] Kafka's prose abrogates the critical task of the self-limitation of reason in finding the questions that force themselves upon it merely incomprehensible—and therefore hardly "given to it through the nature of reason itself." Of course, there are questions, but there are none that could say something to the one questioned—and thus no questions for him. Of course there may be a call, but no one who would be called—and thus no call, which could mean something to him as call. Of course a servant, but not one who concerns himself with the Oedipal work of solving riddles—and therefore not one who serves. If the questioner, guest and host of the *I*,

encounters the *I* only as the reverse and double [*Doublette*] of himself, then the *I* does not understand itself in the questioner; it is for itself an indifferent someone, a redundant third whose call presents to him nothing other than the meaninglessness of the call. Kafka's prose inconspicuously and unassumingly lays bare that the unintelligible cannot be reduced or retraced to an intelligible substratum, where it would find its cause, its reason, and justification. It spells out the experience of being left—and left free—from all possibilities of invocation, convocation, and vocation, and therein the experience of transcendence into a world that is divested of all conditions transcendent to it. No care about the call of care. No *I* that would be master in his house or even only an occupied servant in it. No dialectic of master and slave. No hierarchy, no economy, no kleseonomy.

"So I said: 'Perhaps you are sorry now that you invited me, then I'll go' and I was about to get up. But he stretched his hand out over the table and pressed me down. 'Stay,' he said, 'that was only a test. He who does not answer the questions has passed the test'" ("Test" 209). One may see in this sentence, with which the text breaks off or concludes, a paradox, for it is not the one who answers the questions who passes the test but the one who does not even understand them. The one who fails passes the test. But what appears as an inversion of the norm and therefore as paradoxical is only the consequence of its never being beyond doubt that there can be a call—a questioning call or a question that calls for an answer. A question is always an appeal to answer it, but it is a call only for one who recognizes himself as intended, and in fact as recognized, in this question and, as both recognizing and recognized, holds himself already in the horizon of the call. The parable of the workers in the vineyard lets the call reach only those who are thereby already chosen and who fulfill the call. There is no servant who is not put to work by the call, no idler who has not, by following or refusing the call, already submitted to its power and, having become a *subjectum*, fulfilled its intention. Whoever has heard and understood a call has already, like the Biblical Abraham, confirmed it as call and closed its horizon. For the religions of the call, thus for all religions, a hearer without understanding is mere nonsense, because call and the one called are the same for them and only in this sameness fulfill their sense—and the sense of every possible sense. The only question that is an actual question in this tradition is one that is understood as a question and precisely thereby is answered, whether correctly or incorrectly; the only call that is a call is one that through its understanding leads back into itself and comes to self-understanding. And like the Elohimian and the Paulinian, so too the call of conscience for Heidegger: as call of care, it is the summoning of *Dasein* to its ownmost, unsurpassable possibility, call from uncanniness to the uncanniness of *Dasein* and thus the call to the call itself. While Kafka speaks, probably following upon Kierkegaard, of "anxiousness" as one possible *cause* of uncalledness, in *Being and Time*,

Heidegger—also with Kierkegaard as a starting point—characterizes the call as one of silence from its connection with anxiety: "The call discourses in the uncanny mode of keeping silent. . . . The 'it calls me' [*es ruft mich*] is a distinct kind of discourse for Dasein. The call whose mood has been attuned by anxiety is what makes it possible first and foremost for Dasein to project itself upon its ownmost *potentiality-for-Being*."[10] But must it, as call into uncanniness, not also be a call into the uncalledness of the call. And must it not therefore cease even to speak in the *mode* of keeping silent as a *distinctive* kind of discourse? Can being-there as being-to-the-uncanniness-of-being still retain the distinction between silence and muteness, between *distinctive discourse* and none at all? Must it not be *un*attuned and must not being-there, if it is truly uncanny, be exposed to its being-mute? And can that to which it is called still be termed its *ownmost potentiality-for-Being*? Despite the dramatic differences between the Biblical and the existential-ontological call-structure, the call, in the purview of the tradition between both of these extremes, is always that which leads from the same into the same and in the economy of its circularity ensures that the call is saturated in those who hear it. A call that is not issued to one's own [*an das Seine*] and least of all to one's own self is unexperiencable in this structure of the call. In it, there is only a call that fulfills itself—and therefore none that could leave itself and the sphere of the self. Yet precisely because it always already fulfills itself in those who are called and in its fulfillment is annulled, can it, in its barren self-sufficiency, only become noticeable for those for whom it remains foreign in its incomprehensibility? Their position, their exoklesical exposition, is adopted by Kafka's prose.

In it, the uncalled understands only that he does not understand, hears only that he is not called, and experiences that he is exposed to the experience of the inexperiencability of a call. He speaks out of this experience, and he only communicates within it. Like his hearing, his speaking is a passage into what remains impassable and nevertheless unavoidable: transcending into the transcendencelessness of a world without *causa* and grounding claim. If he passes the test to which he is submitted, then it is because it is a test of his uncallability [*Unrufbarkeit*] and his untestability. It is the initiation into a world *ante initionem*, an absolutely an-archic world, before the beginning of the world of the call. The anarchistic joke of this text lies in the fact that it bespeaks a world before that world that could be reached by a call of creation, election, or redemption: It denies the fundamental—the fundamental logical and the fundamental ontological—claim that there is only a world that originates from a claim—from the claim to be a claim at all, however sublime or banal it might be, in the final instance, from the determining claim of language—and from the claim that there is only such a world as satisfies this claim of language. Kafka's prose is just as little an *ancilla theologiae* as an *ancilla vocationis*; it is, however, also not an *ancilla linguae*, which would

be concerned with the meaningfulness or even only the logical coherence of that which is said in it. Whatever is said to be call or question, certainty or judgment, turns in this prose to an uncertainty about which no judgment is possible and which makes none. It may in any event still be a servant—but a servant without work for language and without any calling other than to uncalledness. It is, in a rigorously critical sense, mere means without end. It can therefore not be interpreted but only clarified.

Now, the objection could be made to Kafka's text that it contests the evident fact that the experience of something is articulated in it—the experience of a particular historical, psychical, social, or linguistic situation—and that it contests with its discourse of the uncalledness of its protagonist that it may itself already represent the answer to a demand, a question, or a call. This reservation is understandable, but it employs a shortcut. Namely, it narrows the horizon of experience that it calls upon to a given world, while for Kafka the horizon of the world and the manner of its givenness themselves are in question. This is clearer in the following both chronologically and thematically closely related note than it is in the text of "The Test": "It is a mandate. I can by my nature only take up a mandate that no one has given to me. In this contradiction, always only in a contradiction, can I live. But probably everyone, for one dies living and lives dying."[11] If it is said here of the mandate—of a given, given to the hand—that "no one has given" it, then it is because life is not a given, but rather that which is withdrawn from death, and death in turn not a given, but the very withdrawal of givenness; both thus stand in *contradiction* with one another and with themselves insofar as they refuse themselves to that which they should be. The mandate is therefore not only given by *no one*, it is not given at all, but merely the acceptance of that which refuses every acceptation. In the same sense as there is for the mandate no mandator, so there is for the servant no call. What he could possibly receive, hear, and understand would have to present itself to him within a horizon of givenness and as a self-given horizon; since, however, such a horizon never presents itself without withdrawing in this presentation; since it always only presents itself in a *contradiction*, and indeed in a contradiction of language with itself, only the un-given allows itself to be received and only the contradictory [*das Widersprachliche*], the mute, allows itself to be heard. The horizon of the "obviously" given is for Kafka a-horizontal. Therefore, only a servant without work and a hearing without call can be "given." And therefore even their givenness must adopt the character of a contradictory mandate. In Kafka's prose, there is hearing without something heard, and speaking without something said. It does not move within a given horizon, but circumscribes the structure of withdrawal of every horizon that could be given. Only thus does it do justice to hearing and speaking. For if the mandate of hearing is taken seriously, then it cannot be implemented as a well-rehearsed routine but as a hearing of that which was never before to be

heard. Whoever begins to hear has not yet heard, and, in order to remain a hearer, cannot stop not being able to hear. Not hearing is thus not a preliminary stage to hearing but its unconditioned—ungiven—precondition and accompaniment. A call can in turn only be made if it does not speak as the repetition or variation of a preceding one but begins where there was none before it; a call is always made *ex nihilo vocationis* and thus out of that which remains, as uncalled and uncallable, the resistance against which it must detach itself.

A reflection of Kafka's, which may have been written a short time after the text about the impossible test, counters the objection that a call comes from that which it was not to that which is entirely itself and that hearing leaves non-hearing behind it in order to be entirely hearing. In this reflection is stated, "I can swim like the others, only I have a better memory than the others, I have not forgotten the erstwhile not-being-able-to-swim. Since I have, however, not forgotten it, the being-able-to-swim does not help me at all, and I still cannot swim."[12] If the former not-being-able-to remains unforgotten, then so too does the former not-being-able-to-hear and the not-being-called; so too does the former not-being.[13] The better memory of Kafka's prose brings back this forgotten pre-world of the non-given, of not-being-able-to and not-being. It can speak like the others, but this does not help at all; since it has emerged out of the not-being-able-to-speak, it still cannot speak, and it says only that it cannot. As the swimmer swims his not-being-able-to-swim, so the hearer hears his not-being-able-to-hear and speaks his not-being-able-to-speak. Whoever is, is his not-being-able-to. "The word '*Sein*' [*to be*]," according to a succinct note that was important enough to Kafka for him to write it down twice, "means in German both: being-there and belonging-to-him. [*Das Wort 'sein' bedeutet im Deutschen beides: Dasein und Ihm-gehören*]."[14] The one who does not hear, however, adheres to no *him*, and he no more stands in a possessive relation to someone who calls him into his service than being-there can be ascribed to him. Being would be being-there in the call, a possessive relation to a caller that expresses itself as work and reproduces itself through work, an ergo-ontological, a kleseo-ontological relation—because the call is absent, so is work; because work is absent, so is the relation of possession, and so is *being*. If there is still work, it is in the not-being-able-to-work; if something is still heard and adheres, it is in the not-adhering of a not-being.

Kafka repeatedly took up and then abandoned his reflections on work, on the anxiety of working, the inhibition regarding work, and the incapacity to work, which were closely connected to his function as a lawyer for the Prague Workers' Accident Insurance Institute, but even more closely to his interest in a syndicalistic reform of labor. These reflections do not culminate in his sketch titled "The Propertyless Workers" where the following is planned: "Possess or accept no money, no valuables. Only the following

property is permitted: the most simple dress . . . , what is necessary for work, books, groceries for one's own use. Everything else belongs to the poor."[15] This almost Franciscan reform for the propertylessness of the workers is far surpassed by the Franciskafkian reform for call-lessness and unemployment sketched in his text on the impossible test. In a countermove to the Protestant Reformation, which promulgated the absolute ethos of vocation and work of all those called and elected to faith, this is a reform toward an unchosenness, an uncalledness and vocationlessness that precedes every form of work and every form of religious or secular organization, but that must accompany—for a better memory—every such form as its pre-world [*Vor-Welt*]. Kafka's text, however, is no more a socio-technical declaration than a playful fabulation on unoccupied workers. It is the investigation of a language of the call, of the claim, of the address and demand, and of the simple naming that leads to the demonstration that these minima of the world of language, work, and life are nothing other than the forms of articulation of its insistent lack: of a lack that cannot cease distorting, making indeterminate, and anarchizing the forms of linguistic life and with them the forms of societal work. The ideal of Kafka's prose is the empty page before writing: *lingua rasa*. The world out of which it speaks—one that is anything but ideal—is that in which only the not-being-able-to-speak is spoken, the not-being-able-to-hear is heard, and the not-being-able-to-work is done: *opus inanis*. With this, the ground of every language and of its world is disclosed: *factum infactum* of a not-being-able to be.

The Old Testament, like the apostolic and evangelical writings and the Koran—"Koran" means "Call"—knows no one who is not called. Adam and Abraham are called; Moses and Jonah, the idlers, are called, and even Lazarus answers to "*veni foras*." They are all used and put to work and to serve in order to correspond to a call that leads back through all resistances and rejections into itself. This call is the telos of all actions and expectations in history since that time. In this Abrahamic tradition, the Messiah—whether he is introduced as political, historical, or intimately personal—is, therefore, not only the caller and the called; he is also, publicly announced or silently sensed, the call itself. Even for Benjamin, the "weak messianic power" that "is given with us" lies in the "claim [*Anspruch*]" that the past has on us and in the "secret agreement" between past races and ours.[16] Not so for Kafka. Just as he conceives of the father of messianism as an "uncalled Abraham" so he thinks of the Messiah as an uncalled Messiah. In Kafka's world without call, the coming of the Messiah is neither an eschatological nor a kleseological event. Kafka notes about him: "The Messiah will only come when he is no longer necessary, he will only come after his arrival, he will not come on the last day, but on the very last."[17] A Messiah who would come when he was needed would be a necessitated Messiah, a needed and used, a working, functional, and instrumental Messiah; he would be the Messiah of the

circumstances in which he intervenes, a Messiah of the call that summoned him, a Messiah who would be homogenous with the well-rehearsed and named world of the call and of work and therefore would be without the slightest chance to bring about a world of justice and peace. Only he who or that which "will no longer be necessary," not needed, not used and not called, can come as Messiah. He can only be one without work, belonging to no one, and even dispossessed of every *being*. And thus one who could never be named as himself, never be hoped for or expected under his name, neither corresponding to his call nor to his *being*. This one who is uncalled, unused, and belongs to no one could only "come after his arrival," for he would have to miss, like his "self," also his "own" time: it would be solely the not-being-able-to-come that comes in him.

The Messiah can only be the one for whom there is no Messiah. The Messiah is, in this sense and thus in every sense, un-savable. He is the most desolate of all figures who have been conceived by religions and their appended philosophies, and he is the most uncalled-for and unclaimed figure, who could never be conceived by them. Kafka's uncalled servant, forgotten by every historical messianism, is the sole possible Messiah, the unnecessary, un-arriving, unable, impossible. It is he who, in the prose of the after-last and the pre-first day writes: "I am a servant, but there is no work for me."

—Translated by Catharine Diehl

NOTES

First published in German in *Neue Rundschau* 118.2 (2007): 132–53, and in English in *Reading Ronell*, ed. Diane Davis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 74–93.

1. [Franz Kafka, "The Test," in *Description of a Struggle*, trans. Tania and James Stern (New York: Schocken Books, 1958), 207–9; hereafter cited parenthetically as "Test." In what follows, I will cite published English translations of the texts whenever possible. The translations I provide in the text have been modified and often differ significantly from the published versions.—CD] Concerning Kafka's text, there are, as far as I see, two commentaries worth mentioning: the first is "Phénoménologie de Kafka" by Bernhard Groethuysens in his *Mythes et Portraits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 147–59; the other is Avital Ronell's *The Test Drive* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 71–74.

2. Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and T. W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 463.

3. Translation from the *King James Version*, Matthew 20:16. This line is not found in the Revised Standard Version. Where not otherwise noted, English translations will be taken from the Revised Standard Version.—CD

4. In the third chapter, "Luther's Conception of the Calling" of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, published for the first time in 1905 (thus about fifteen years before the writing of Kafka's text) in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Max Weber traces the history of translations of the concepts *klēsis* and *vocatio* and the history of development of the New High German concept *Beruf*—compare this, in particular, to the short disquisition contained in the third footnote of this study. Max Weber, *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge Classics, 2001), 158–63. Kafka was, so far as I know, not familiar with the reflections of Weber; he knew, however, the

essay published in 1917 by Ernst Troeltsch in the second volume of the *Neue Rundschau* with the title "Luther und der Protestantismus" [Luther and Protestantism], which displays clearly enough the ethos of the calling, vocation, and chosenness in Protestantism. Ernst Troeltsch, "Luther und der Protestantismus," *Neue Rundschau* 2 (March 1917): 1297–325.

In *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), Jean-Louis Chrétien has provided a rich survey of the theology and philosophy of *klēsis* between Plato, Heidegger, and Levinas, which, however, itself remains committed in every regard to the founding premises of kleseology. Giorgio Agamben has attempted, in his commentary on the Letter to the Romans, *The Time That Remains*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), to make more precise the concept of *klēsis* through the Paulinian *hos me* interpreted as revocation. The interpretation of Paulinian messianism he proposes seems to remain equally within the boundaries of a logic of the call that is suspended by Kafka's prose.

5. Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (London: John Calder, 1958), 285–86.

6. In a text that I only encountered after composing these reflections, Jacques Derrida writes, under the title "Abraham, l'autre," about the passage from Kafka's letter to Robert Klopstock discussed here that the structure of the call is of a kind that a decision whether it really takes place or not is absolutely impossible: "It is possible that I have not been called, me, and it is not even excluded that no one, no One, nobody, ever called any One." Bettina Bergo, Joseph Cohen, and Raphael Zagury-Orly, eds., *Judéités—Questions for Jacques Derrida*, trans. Bettina Bergo and Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 46. Precisely this is, in fact, possible. But the Abraham conceived by Kafka is not only *possibly* not called; he is not an Abraham who *doubts* his call, who could still cherish the hope to be called; he is, as Kafka writes, "an Abraham who comes uncalled"! And he comes "uncalled" because the suspension of the call can only be seriously considered a suspension if it succeeds as the epoché of calledness without the *reservatio phaenomenologica* that it is on this account not yet the epoché of callability.

7. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 806.

8. Kafka, *Description of a Struggle*, 209.

9. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 99.

10. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 322. "Der Ruf redet im unheimlichen Modus des Schweigens. . . . Das 'es ruft mich' ist eine ausgezeichnete Rede des Daseins. Der durch die Angst gestimmte Ruf ermöglicht dem Dasein allererst den Entwurf seiner selbst auf sein eigenstes Seinkönnen." Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), 277.

11. Franz Kafka, *Wedding Preparations in the Country, and Other Posthumous Prose Writings*, notes by Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), 296–97. "Es ist ein Mandat. Ich kann meiner Natur nach nur ein Mandat übernehmen, das niemand mir gegeben hat. In diesem Widerspruch, immer nur in einem Widerspruch kann ich leben. Aber wohl jeder, denn lebend stirbt man, sterbend lebt man." *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente*, vol. 2, ed. Jost Schillemeit (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1992), 321.

12. Kafka, *Wedding Preparations in the Country*, 326. This note can be read as the condensed continuation of the text that begins with the words: "The great swimmer!" It reads: "Honored festival guests! I have, admittedly, a world record. . . . Actually, I can't even swim. I've always wanted to learn, but no opportunity has presented itself." Immediately afterward, the world record holder and Olympic winner affirms—as the unoccupied servant does—that he does not understand a word spoken by those to whom he speaks: "And despite great exertion I don't understand a single word of what is spoken here. . . . : It doesn't disturb me very much that I don't understand you, and it also appears not to disturb you very much that you don't understand me. From the speech of the honored previous speaker, I believe I know only that it was inconsolably sad, but this knowledge is not only enough for me; it is even too much for me." Kafka, *Wedding Preparations in the Country*, 316. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer

to the "great swimmer" in order to demonstrate that the foundational structure of Kafka's texts is that of life in a foreign language and to characterize their strategy as the displacement away from centers of power that determine what one can say and what one cannot—a displacement whose point of convergence is what they designate as "absolute deterritorialization." *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 26. They do not mention in this context that the world champion in swimming cannot even swim and that therefore the deterritorialization is continued in a de-aquatization. Its absolute, however, is the de-potentialization asserted in the note cited here.

13. In his chapter "The Reading Box" from *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, Walter Benjamin pays homage to Kafka's deliberation by paraphrasing it in his concluding reflection—without naming Kafka, who admittedly does not only play an important role in this part of his memoirs. After a discussion of learning to read and write, it says: "Thus I can dream of the way I once learned to walk. But that doesn't help me. Now I can walk; no longer learn to walk." Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 142. While the "But that doesn't help me" is taken over almost word-for-word from Kafka's note, the deliberation, to which it lends its particular accent, is astonishingly weakened in Benjamin's text: Benjamin "can walk; no longer learn to walk." Kafka's swimmer, however, "can, however, not swim." He has forgotten nothing of the pre-world, and for him there can therefore be no world that would not be hampered in its most elementary performances. He cannot forget—that means that he can do nothing of that which he is able to do.

14. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge: Exact Change, 1991), 28, 90.

15. Kafka, *Wedding Preparations in the Country*, 119.

16. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 390.

17. Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 28.

Chapter Eight

Working Through Working

Rabota jest rabota,
rabota jest vsegda.

—Bulat Okutschawa

Of all that has worked toward, furthered, and offered its services to National Socialism; of all that made it what it was; and of all that survives it short of the most immediate horror, the most normal and thus most inconspicuous and easily forgotten could also be the most effective. It is something that cannot primarily and in every instance be considered "fascistic," and still less human, something that has a very long and, many would say, venerable, mythological, theological, and philosophical prehistory; and in this history, especially in its most recent segment, it is what has been conceived of as a determination of man's essence.

This banal, self-evident factor that is still today widely presumed to be human is work. Work did not only organize what in National Socialism was crude violence and authority. The wish for work did not only aid Hitler's party in its ascent to power. This party did not only present itself as a labor party. Nor was it only capital (according to Marx's handy formula, "money that breeds itself," this self-producing and self-working capital) that paved the way for the Nazi clique. The call to work—to work on the land, work in industry, to work *on* the people and for the people of workers, to work on arms, to work "with fist and brow"—this call to work determined the entire ideological, social, and political organization of the fascist epoch. And, in turn, work—working out, working through, and working off [*Verarbeitung*, *Durcharbeitung*, *Aufarbeitung*]—became the watchword for the atonement of guilt and the settlement of debts. "Work," finally, comes to define what is expected from congresses for enlightenment and demystification of the past.

However, under no circumstances, of course, does the meaning of this enlightenment and demystification, lie, in the end and perhaps first and foremost, in simply *not* working and carrying on fascistically determined work. It lies rather in stopping or, at least, repeatedly interrupting work, *this* work, working off its pre- and post-history, the history of this work, and history itself insofar as it determines itself as work. It lies in working out what was—and is still—called work, what it still means and demands. It lies in the imperative of work and in clarifying the work of this imperative and thus opening up and disclosing a dimension in which this work is ex-posed.

As long as we do not clarify what work means for fascism and what fascism as a political institution of work means, we cannot understand what this work is beyond a political and ideological phenomenon of a past—yet how and to what extent "past"?—epoch. Nor can we clarify what work *against* fascism means and what we, for example, do—and whether "we" in fact "do" it—when we analyze some elements of this institution.

The question about the work of fascism and about the endogenous fascism of work should not be posed solely for the sake of historical clarity. It is not only a historical question. It is also a question about the structure of history, especially about the structure of what, from the perspective of work, the past and the future might mean and demand. Thus it is also a political question, one that, in principle, concerns the structure of current and future institutions—political, economic, juridical, and scientific. In his lecture "What Does It Mean: Working off the Past?" ["*Was heisst: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?*"], a lecture that to this day, twenty-five years after its publication, is not obsolete, Adorno aired the suspicion that the formula of "working off" tended to serve the "unconscious, but not all that unconscious, defense against guilt" and, consequently, to perpetuate injustice.[1] The defense function is thus designated as one of the constitutive elements of work in general. The historical continuity of National Socialism, made possible by this defensive work, forms the basis of one of the decisive considerations of Adorno's brief talk: "I regard the afterlife of National Socialism *in* democracy as potentially more threatening than the afterlife of fascist tendencies *against* democracy" ("Working" 126). With this remark, Adorno has his eye partly on the "comeback" of shady figures, but also, and here he does not leave the slightest doubt, on the systemic continuity between fascism and a certain praxis of democracy. If working off the past—not coincidentally but, rather, precisely because it is work—always simultaneously entails a defense against and disavowal of this past, then work itself is a form of history that produces continuity in the semblance of change and survival in the guise of overcoming. History itself is work, while work was that above and beyond which work as working off was supposed to lead. The threat that issues from the National Socialism *within* democracy issues from it as the work of historicizing. It is essentially—and this means before every particular content—

homogenization and formation but thus also the exclusion, the disavowal, and the—tendential or real—extermination of the nonhomogeneous, the nonassimilable, and the formless. Work is the form in which fascism, *especially* fascism, survives, because, on the one hand, it was the form of survival privileged by fascism, and, on the other, because it was survival in the manner of formation. The "afterlife" of fascism *in* democracy, in short, belongs to the "life" of fascism itself—and may, moreover, belong to that specific form of democracy that defines itself through and as the democracy of work, as ergocracy.

Wherever its concept or praxis happens to show up, work (this for the most part still hypothetical thought could be extended) is work against vanishing, against death, or the work *on* death. As the form of counterdeath, as organized defense against finitude and as the phantasmatic institution of immortality, it must—whether it seems to be connected to manifestly political, cultic, or discursive forms—meet at least two, and indeed two mutually exclusive, demands. On the one hand, it must entertain the closest imaginable affinity to precisely that death against which it is meant to guard. On the other hand, it must assert the claim that it is more powerful than this death, far above it and itself immortal, indestructible, and infinite. If the system of fascism—and, in general, every totalitarian political system—defines itself as a system of work, then, according to this hypothesis, it also defines itself as a system that outlives its "own," infinitely appropriable death. Work and its politico-economic, social, and discursive system would thus be the praxis of a virtually infinite survival, the survival of its "own" death, the praxis of outliving itself. In this sense, we would do well to attend to a further remark by Adorno:

> National Socialism lives on, and even today we still do not know whether it lives on merely as the ghost of something so monstrous that it has not yet died of its own death or whether it never died in the first place; whether the readiness for the unspeakable lives on in men as it does in the circumstances that enclose them. ("Working" 126)

National Socialism does not lie behind us as a historically surmounted phenomenon. It may even be utterly insurmountable and resistant to attempts at working through it, because, as a form of work, it is nothing but the production of its own afterlife and survival, and thus it continuously produces itself as *specter*—not as a chimera and mere illusion but, rather, as a reality worse than death: namely, the sheer *positivity* of life, dead life, living death. In a very precise and yet-to-be-determined sense, National Socialism was work; for this reason it is very difficult, if not impossible, to bring its conscious, political, and historical working through to a close.

The question that might help us apprehend fascism as both a historical phenomenon and as a principle for the organization of survival, a question that may at the same time alter the terms in which fascism is analytically treated, might run as follows: What does "work" mean in fascist ideology and, insofar as this ideology is an integral moment of the fascist system, what does "work" mean as a fascist institution? In order to sketch an answer to this question—and anything more than a sketch cannot be attempted here—I shall refer to three authors and to three motifs that gave shape to the system of work under fascism: one mytho-theological, one ontological, and one morphological. These motifs can obviously not be separated from one another; rather, only in their interweaving do they characterize the structure of what—in this particular historical segment and at its borders and thus also beyond them—is called "work."

As "productive work [*schaffende Arbeit*]," work was for Hitler a distinguished and distinguishing form of battle, hailed as the struggle that would overcome class war and achieve the unity of "fellow countrymen and -women." In his address of 1 May 1933, he celebrates Labor Day in a natural-mystical sense as the "day of life's becoming" and of "awakening nature," and thereby at the same time, as the "day of winning back our proper force and strength."[2] As the day of return [*Wiederkehr*], of coming back [*Rückkehr*], of recovery, repetition, and winning back, as the day of restitution and reinstitution of this "natural" and "proper" "force," May Day is for Hitler "thereby also and at the same time" the day of "that productive work that knows no narrow limits, that is not bound to the trade union, to the factory and the office—the day of a work that we want to recognize and advance wherever it is executed in the good sense for the being and life of our people" (*Reden* 259). The fusion of life, nature, and work, the naturalization of work and the ergotization of nature and of life, is not the only rhetorical—and not only rhetorical but also ontological—trick the agitator deploys here in his effort to conjure accord, harmony, and agreement. The work he means is not work *on* nature but the work *of* nature; that is, the work of *our proper* nature, "of our proper force and strength," and only as such is it work for "the being and life of our people." Vitalistic and dynamistic, work becomes the form for the appropriation of "the being and life of our people," the form of the self-appropriation of a force that is both natural and societal, that is natural-social. It is the form of the self-production of the "proper," of the "ours," of the "we": the form of autochthonous self-socialization and the form of winning back one's proper history, the form of self-presentation. Work is auto-fusion. It is thus not as if the chief ideologue attributes to his spellbound public a firm egological substratum, as though it were a self-sufficient given. Instead, he suggests that the community he imagines is one of self-production and self-generation through work. The *egologically* understood society is self-producing and, in thus producing itself, a society that

returns to itself, an *ergological* society. The subject is its process of production: the "people" is substantially work. For this reason, he speaks of work exclusively as constructive, and in terms that imply elevation, "raising up," a vocabulary that follows the verticalism of his ontology of the "being . . . of our people" (*Reden* 259). The conjuring of the "collective and harmonious work of all" (*Reden* 260), in which society should understand and take hold of itself and in which the people should once again become properly a people, is directed, in its domestic and ideological politics, against the class-war politics of the trade unions. And Hitler, psychopompous, makes no secret of this. "The people," he says, interpreting their "unconscious," "the people feel, unconsciously, in their interior [!], that those ceremonies of the Marxist kind were at variance with the dawning spring. They did not want hate; they did not want struggle: they wanted to rise!" (*Reden* 261). Yet in Hitler's address (and in others by him as well), this rising—"*Erhebung*" here connotes "erection" more than "insurrection"—in which the self-presentation, self-production, and self-positing of the people are accomplished through work, bears resemblance to a curious Christian theologeme: the idea of the "resurrection of our people" (*Reden* 261).[3] The people that rises up through work to itself, to its proper "being and life," presents itself as a mytho-theological figure, the divine savior, the hero, the redeemer and the self-redeemer, as the figure of the resurrected Christ. The people is Christ, the *hic et nunc* resurrecting, insofar as it rises from the dead by the power of its work. The invocation of, and identification with, this theological figure assumes, however, that in the first place this people has been degraded and insulted (Hitler makes this assumption quite explicit, once again using the language of psycho-biotechnology to speak of an "inferiority complex" that has been "artificially inbred" [*Reden* 261]). It further assumes that this people has died and has become a corpse: "the world persecutes us . . . it will not recognize our right to life" (*Reden* 263). From the "spell" of humiliation and the denied right to life, from the "spell" of class conflict and death by lack of recognition—"we want redemption from this spell" (*Reden* 261). "We," the working people, want to redeem ourselves, this murdered and lifeless people. Work is the redemption of the inferior and from the inferior. It is the raising of the degraded to ranks of the chosen, the self-elected; and as self-elected, it is the resurrection of the dead in the radiant, spectral body—in the *specter*, to recall Adorno's remark.

In his ergological restitution of the Christological myth, Hitler remains true to at least one motif of Christian dogma: this Christ that is the "German people" is not redeemed by a superior power. Rather, he redeems himself and rises by his own strength from the grave: "We know that all human work must in the end be vain if the blessing of Providence does not shine above it. But," he continues, "we do not belong to those who comfortably await the hereafter. We are given nothing. . . . We ask not of the Almighty, 'Lord make

us free!' We want to be active, to work" (*Reden* 263–64). Thus, we alone, the unfree, make ourselves free: we *make* ourselves, we *work* ourselves, and we *liberate* and redeem ourselves through our own proper work. For the chief ideologue of the National Socialist German Labor Party and the chancellor of the Reich, work is—on Labor Day, 1 May 1933—the form of Christological self-redemption, self-erection [*Selbsterhebung*], and the resurrection from the death of the Weimar Republic. It is the self-appropriation of the people in its self-production. Work is the mythical form of liberation, self-deification. The National Socialism that Hitler conjured up and practiced in this conjuring is a political mytho-theology of work. But this work is first of all nothing other than a suggestion—in fact, the suggestion of auto-suggestion, the suggestion that there could exist an autonomous, self-enacting, self-producing, and self-resurrecting I. The real presence suggested here is a citation from a theology become propaganda. It is a staged presence, and the work through which it seeks to become a reality consists in nothing other than the reproduction of a mythological schema. It consists thus in the work of the refusal to work. The transfigured political body of the people, "Christ," is not the spirit of Hitler's so-called spiritual people but rather its phantom, the specter of a specter.[4]

Resurrected through "productive work" in its Christo-mythological phantom body, this "people" is robbed of its trade unions the next day, on 2 May 1933, and one year later, on 24 October 1934, it is surrounded by the "German Worker's Front [*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*]," the "Organization of Productive Germans of the Brow and Fist." Its goal is the "formation [*Bildung*]" of a community of people as a community of performance, the "performing community" of all Germans.[5] A few years later, the slogan *Arbeit macht frei*,[6] which could have come from Hitler's May Day address, will stand above the entrance to the so-called concentration camp Auschwitz.[7] In this sentence, we are to understand that work as the form of the self-appropriation of the "being and life" of a people is simultaneously the form of its liberation from everything that is not itself, that is not proper to it—that is improper, foreign, and, at the same time, debased, unfree, and dead. The sentence "Work makes free" is the resurrection formula of the national-Christian, necro-vitalistic mythology of fascism. It defines Auschwitz as workplace: a workplace where the nonproper, the nonworking—and, it is thus insinuated, the already dead—are once more put to death, in order that the proper, the society of work, can emerge as the product of its own labor. It defines murder as the work of life on itself. It defines Jews as the unredeemed; it defines Communists as the dualists of class conflict; it defines Gypsies as the homeless and propertyless; it defines homosexuals as the un(re)productive: it defines them all as material for work, as work materials—namely, as the always already former, as the dead, unproductive people—and it defines work, on the one hand, as the production of corpses, and, on the other, as the production of the

"gleaming," spectral body. "Work makes free" is not an arbitrary or cynical slogan. It is rather the *name* of Auschwitz and thus the name of National Socialist Germany. It does not deceive about the reality of work but, rather, pronounces its truth: the system of liberation through work and, consequently, the system of self-production—the production of the *figure* of the self—is the system of Auschwitz. The unreality that cleaves to this slogan, as well as to the reality of the work it defines, and that can seduce one into understanding it as mere cynicism does not lack objectivity. For this work deemed to make free consists essentially in the rejection of a structurally irreducible moment of work itself, namely, in the rejection of that in work which exposes it to something foreign, to something that does not define itself as work, that is inappropriable and that does not permit of being included within the defining borders of a univocal concept, form, or idea. Work, as it determines the system of National Socialism, defines itself as the rejection of what is foreign to work and of the foreignness of work "itself" through murder: the practical condemnation and extermination of that in work which does not correspond to an egological figure and thus does not conform to the process of figuration, of that in work which is not itself and does not come back to itself.

I turn to the second of the three motifs that define the concept of work under National Socialism, the ontological motif, which is closely related to the Christological one. This ontological motif was stressed most energetically by Heidegger in 1933 and 1934 and represents a peculiar reinterpretation—but also interpretation—of his existential analytic of Dasein. Of course, my concern in this short sketch of Heidegger's relevant remarks is not to reconstruct the many complications attending his concept of work and still less to discuss these complications in the context of his thinking and its metamorphoses. What is important to me here is that, in his Rectorship philosophy, Heidegger conceived of the essence of Dasein—of finite being oneself [*Selbstsein*]—as work and that he placed this determination of the humanity of man in the service of National Socialist propaganda. On 22 October 1933, in the largest lecture hall of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger delivered a speech in front of six hundred unemployed persons slated to be put to work by the "Work Procurement Program [*Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm*]." After having greeted them as "fellow German countrymen! German workers!" summoned to "communal work," and having explained that work procurement is properly—and this "properly" is what matters here—"erection and construction in the new future of our people," he says that the decisive characteristic in the creation of work lies in the fact that it must "first and foremost make one again fit for Dasein [*daseinsfähig*] in the state and for the state and thereby for the whole of the people."[8] The procurement of work makes one "fit for Dasein." In this, work is not only characterized as ego enhancement (though Heidegger also suggests as much when he

states that the unemployed "should, *before himself*, win back the dignity and footing that is fitting and, *before his fellow countrymen*, earn for himself the security and determination that is fitting" ["Procurement" 199]).[9] In this, it is above all postulated that Dasein itself is essentially work: The creation of employment "creates" the capacity for Dasein, and since Dasein "in the first place and above all" lies in this fitness, in its capacity and possibility, it "creates," along with work, immediately also Dasein. Dasein is work, and—according to the ideology of the reconciliation of classes and social strata—it is the work of the "fist" no less than that of the "brow." Since work, in itself, must already be knowledge if it is at all to be properly work, the creation of work must complete itself organically—thus runs Heidegger's argument—through the creation of knowledge. Heidegger deduces the necessary consequence from this program of deprivileging when he says,

> "The worker" and a person in possession of scientific knowledge are not opposites. Every worker is each in his own way knowledgeable [*ein Wissender*], and only as one with such knowledge can he work at all. The animal is denied the prerogative of work, and inversely, everyone who knowingly [*wissentlich*] acts and everyone who scientifically [*wissenschaftlich*] decides *is a worker*. ("Procurement" 202)

With this, as the (poorly founded) opposition to "the animal" well indicates, the essence of Dasein in general, its *humanity*, is once again located in conscious, knowing, and volitional work. "All work *as work* [is] something spiritual [*Geistiges*], for it grounds itself on . . . proper knowledge" ("Procurement" 202).

For Heidegger, Dasein is characterized as the work of knowledge and thus, essentially, as technology. This characterization is made for the most part independently of the politics of class appeasement and against the background of *techne*, from the lexicon of Greek philosophy, that is to say, understood above all as practical know-how and knowledgeable praxis. Heidegger postulates the identity of work and knowledge as *techne* in his Rectorship Address, written five months prior to his Work Procurement speech. In connection with the Aeschylus citation, "knowledge" ("*Wissen*" is Heidegger's shorthand translation for *techne*) "is much more impotent than necessity." Heidegger characterizes this "creative impotence [*Unkraft*] of knowledge"—and thus of the work of knowledge, of work in general, and of *techne*—as "the ultimate form of man's ἐνέργεια, the ultimate way of man's Being-at-work [*am-Werke-Sein*]."[10] Accordingly, he characterizes "theory itself as the ultimate realization of the true praxis" (Rectorship 12). *Techne*, in the double sense of knowledge and work, is thus for the Heidegger of the Rectorship Address "the ultimate realization" of Dasein; and ἐνέργεια, as "Being-at-work," is Dasein itself. Like the questioning of the philosopher, this work is not a prelude to something else but is "itself the ultimate form of

knowledge" (Rectorship 13). It is, I repeat, "form," and as this "ultimate form," it is the "ultimate actualization" and therefore the actuality of Dasein. This means, however (and Heidegger deduces this consequence with the precision of a logician), that Dasein—determined as work, τέχνη, ἐνέργεια—*creates* not only itself but also (in contrast to the conception of *Being and Time*) its world. Heidegger writes, "If we want the essence of science in the sense of a questioning, unprotected steadfastness amid the uncertainty of beings as a whole, then this will to essence will *create* for our people their world of most interior and exterior danger, that is, their truly spiritual world" ("Procurement" 203).[11] The "form" of work as the "essence" of science as well as of Dasein allows for "steadfastness" in the world of danger. But to the extent that "form" willfully withstands this danger in work and knowledge, Heidegger argues à la Hegel, it is not passively exposed to but is itself agent, mover, creator of this world and this danger. Dasein, therefore, is essentially constituted as *auto-techne*, and it is as such doubled in itself, polemically different from itself: it is the steadfast "form" of work and, at the same time, the working out [*Erarbeitung*] of danger—self-assertion and self-endangerment in one, creating and "creative impotence," ἐνέργεια, which as such exposes itself to the ἀνέργον it worked for and itself created. In clear contrast to Hitler's paranoid dissociation of what is properly one's own and what is foreign, Heidegger insists that in the work of Dasein itself there is something at play that remains utterly irreducible to this work. If Dasein is work, then it is work only because it is exposed in itself to something other than itself. And yet, the Rectorship Address leaves no doubt that the work of Dasein ought not be work *with* or *on* this other but, rather, work *against* it. It should be work *against* what in this work itself stands out as "uncertain" (Rectorship 13, 14), "constant world uncertainty" (Rectorship 14), as "hidden" (Rectorship 11), as "madness" (Rectorship 19), "cessation" (Rectorship 10), and "nonbeing" (Rectorship 10)—in short, against what stands out as foreign to work, against what is out of work and unemployable. Dasein is ergontologically constituted. But, for precisely this reason, it cannot contest the necessary existence of what is foreign to work, of the other, without simultaneously entering into battle with itself as an other that is not yet itself. As work, Dasein, being-there, is being-there-in-danger [*Da-in-der-Gefahr*], and, as such, it is being-there-with-the-other [*Da-beim-Anderen-Sein*]. Its ἐνέργεια exists only to the extent that it remains in itself exposed to an ἀνέργον. The option of thinking work as defined *against* this other, which Heidegger decided in favor of in 1933, is not a philosophical but a political (indeed, a national-political and ego-political) option—one with which the self of Dasein in the egological form of the *proper* people was meant to stand its ground and be hypostatized as an ergopolitical state of the self.

Despite its recognition of the "uncertain," "questionable," aletheically "hidden" and therefore irreducibly other, the ontology of work in Heideg-

ger's Rectorship Address remains an ontology of the "questionability of proper Dasein [*Fragwürdigkeit des eigenen Daseins*]" (Rectorship 15). It is an ontology of a particular "people" philosophically and politico-historically privileged in its work, an ontology of *proper* work and of work itself as inalienable and unexposed *propriety*. Very concretely, this means: first, that work is the essential form of socialization; second, that the society of work is always the only *proper* society—the "people"; third, that it can be a society only of aggressive appropriation, one that must "advance" and "march forward" into the uncertain (Rectorship 14); and fourth, that this work-society must be voluntaristically organized, must be a work-state and leader-state. Heidegger declares in his Work Procurement speech that "worker and work, as National Socialism understands these words, divides not into classes but binds and unifies fellow countrymen and social stations into the one great will of the state" ("Procurement" 202). Work is the "will *of* the state"—that is, *genetivus subjectivus*, work is always already that which the state wills. But, that also means that all work, to the extent that it is work, is also already a will for the state and the work of the state and on the state. Heidegger, along with Ernst Jünger, calls the state of Dasein the "work-state [*Arbeitsstaat*]" ("Procurement" 202); it is the state toward which the work of the self-enacting and self-instituting Dasein that wills itself as state strives. This "work-state" is Dasein itself; more precisely, it is the self of Dasein as institution. Understood as work and technology, Dasein is immediately its own proper instatement, its nationalization [*Verstaatlichung*]. It is—in a turn of phrase that Heidegger soon thereafter, in the Nietzsche Lectures, denounces as the last figure of the occidental metaphysics of subjectivity—the will to power as state. And because work is the "ultimate form" ("Procurement" 202) of man, it must subject itself to the principle of form and follow a leader in whom the "will of the state" ("Procurement" 202) embodies itself. In what the will to work wills, Heidegger can accordingly conclude, "*We follow only* the preeminent volition of our leader. To become a follower indeed means: . . . incessantly willing that the German people, as a people of work, . . . as a work-state, secure its longevity and greatness" ("Procurement" 202; my emphasis). Just as Heidegger insists at the end of the Rectorship Address that "our" decision for "ourselves" has "already been decided" by the "young and newest force of the people" (Rectorship 19) and that our decision is, therefore, only a decision for the "force" and "form" of the decision, he supposes here, at the end of the Work Procurement speech, that the will of the "we" is "already" "surpassed" by the will of the "leader" and, thus, by a will to what has "already" been willed. Dasein, the will to power as state, can first come into its own, according to this logic of self-appropriation, self-forging, and self-formation, only in the figure of the "leader [*Führer*]." It thereby adheres to a logic of the historical present thought as restitution and reinstitution. In willing the already willed and in deciding for

the already decided, Dasein comes *back* to its proper future as a past in which all that can be has "already" been willed and all that must be has "already" been decided. In this circular self-comprehension of the will in the form of the state, "work-state" and leader-state, Dasein, thought and promulgated as work, achieves presence and denies, indeed disavows in its *incessant* [*unausgesetzten*] willing, that it must itself in the first place be experienced as *exposedness* [*Ausgesetztheit*], if indeed it is to be able to determine itself as work. "Work—presence" is the formula Heidegger uses in his Logic Lectures of the summer semester of 1934.[12] The presence of which he speaks here is understood to be eminently historial, namely, productive of history. But it is auto-historical; in a steadfast form attuned to "longevity and greatness," it is history as the self-appropriation of work: monumentalization of the autonomy of the self at the cost of all *others*. As with Hitler, the Christological feature of self-presentation and self-historicization is not lacking in Heidegger's treatment of the leader-state monument of work: "God is dead," Heidegger proclaims—citing the pronouncement of Nietzsche, the "last German philosopher"—and suggests that he himself, as the very last "German philosopher," can proclaim the finite resurrection of this dead God, the restitution and return of finite Dasein in the form of the technological "work-state."

Dasein is no longer a temporalizing projection into the unrepresentable and unbounded open as it was in *Being and Time*. It is also not ex-position and exile into the unembodiable, as in Heidegger's later philosophy. Dasein is here, in the political fundamental ontology of the Rectorship period, work as installment and installation, as the putting-to-work of the truth of its present decision for its "ownmost possibilities" in the form of the "work-state" and its "leader." And this Dasein is the self-production of the finite subject only to the extent that it is the reproduction of the previously posited Christological paradigm of reproduction. It is ex-position not into the unpositable but into positing—activism of positivity. Here, the question is no longer one of the openness of Being and thus of being-other but of the arrest and internment of Being in what already is. Heidegger's political ergontology and morphontology during the Rectorship period was the ethical and political collapse of his philosophy because it was a collapse of philosophical differentiation: the collapse, namely, of ontological difference. It was in many respects an unavoidable collapse, for Heidegger never ceased to think Being, even where he thinks it from the perspective of ontological difference, as the Being *of* beings and *of* Dasein.

With this, I turn to the third determination of work, the morphological, and to the third author, Jünger. Though published before the National Socialists came to power in October of 1932 and denounced by Hitler as National Bolshevist, internationalistic, and "dangerous to the public," Jünger's book, *The Worker* [*Der Arbeiter*], is the protofascist manifesto *par excellence*.

Jünger himself had dedicated a presentation copy of *Fire and Blood* in 1926 to "the national leader Adolf Hitler!"[13] but after 1932 disdained all contact with the "shooting-gallery figure."[14] Much later, he time and again defended *The Worker* as a nonpartisan diagnosis and answered his critics with the charge, "after the earthquake, one smashes up the seismographs."[15] This sententious defense is symptomatic in its dishonesty. In the first place, fascism was not a natural event—but this is exactly how Jünger, in a way that we will have to discuss, conceptualizes it. In the second place, after an earthquake one smashes up only the seismographs that *failed* to register the quaking. In the third place, the diagnostician of political catastrophes is, in fact, reproachable for not having taken steps to prevent them. Even in his muddled allegory *Auf den Marmorklippen* [*On the Mable Cliffs*], Jünger did not so much as lift a finger or utter a word against National Socialism. That he maintained a distance between himself and his protagonists was a matter of intellectual *dégoût*. That he later condemned them, he himself repeatedly attributed to his contempt for their technical incompetence. In his conciliatory but nonetheless devastating critique of Jünger, "Zur Seinsfrage [On the Question of Being]"—a text that can also be read as a self-critique of his Rectorship philosophy—Heidegger is less disingenuous, both politically and theoretically more precise, when he recalls that a small circle of university instructors, for whom he had elucidated *The Worker* in the winter semester of 1938–1939, were not surprised that the discussion had been "monitored and ultimately broken up." "For," explains Heidegger, "it belongs to the essence of the will to power not to let the actual that it empowers appear in actuality as what it itself is."[16] Translated, this means: The Nazis—the actualized will to power—wanted to prevent the truth about themselves from being told. And this means further: *The Worker* offers a phenomenology—but the most apologetic one imaginable—of the National Socialist system.

Jünger concludes *The Worker* with the sentence, "Here, to partake and render service: that is the task that is expected of us."[17] Like nearly everything else he has written, this not only pompously but also wretchedly formulated imperative, this "task that is expected of us," dictates "the steeling of arms and hearts." Evoking Max Weber's metaphor about the "steel-hard casing" required by the "rational way of life" and borne by "the spirit of Christian asceticism," Jünger does not of course reiterate Weber's culture-pessimistic alienation thesis but, rather, formulates the martial program of a constructivism that will bring "pure existence into view," "pure existence" as "form," in the unity of the "dominion and form" of the worker (*Worker* 246). From the first to the very last pages of his treatise, Jünger leaves no doubt that he is not concerned merely with a limited sociological phenomenon—the preponderance of the "lower classes," the ever-increasing pervasiveness of its "lifestyle," the planetarization of the "workshop-landscape." His theme is, more grandly, the "ultimate existence" (*Worker* 36), the "fullness" of "Be-

ing" "in the force of a shaping that only just began" (*Worker* 45). *The Worker* lays claim to being nothing less than an ontology—not an ontology of work (a task reserved until much later for the restorative attempts, Marxist in orientation, of Lukács[18]) but rather an ontology of the "form" of its "bearer," a morphontology. Jünger's book presents itself not only as the diagnosis of a transformation of class structure, not only as a prognosis of the planetary uniformation of society, time- and space-experience in a "plan-state" and "plan-scape" of monumental proportion, but above all the vision of an organic as well as technical paradigm that—exempt from all fluctuations, movements, and developments—persists as the transhistorical ground of all figures. "Thus the figure of the worker," Jünger writes, "is more deeply and statically embedded in Being than all the likenesses and orders with which it confirms itself, deeper than constitutions and works, than man and his communities, which are like the changing expression on a face whose fundamental character persists unchanged" (*Worker* 45). The name *worker* is neither a professional title nor a reference to human individuals or masses. Individuals and masses, according to Jünger, are bourgeois and thus obsolete categories. Rather, "worker" is the title of a "new type of man," a type in which the "figure of the worker" is embodied (*Worker* 311)[19]—the "figure" in its historical and yet unchanging permanence.

In its onto-morpho-logical conception, *The Worker* not only exhibits that *disposition* for totality whose loss had been bemoaned by left-wing as well as right-wing intellectuals of the Weimar Republic. It also "embodies" and "represents" this totality founded in the "figure" of an indelible "Being." And to this "figure" corresponds the totality of the world—a correspondence Jünger never tires of stressing, the totality of a world that increasingly assumes the character of a "work world," without niches, refuges, or vestiges of nature. The convergence of "total work character," which appears as the "mobilization of matter" in the "totality of technical space," with the "totality of the type," which sketches itself in the "mobilization of man"—this convergence of power and world "expresses itself," Jünger writes, "in the fusion of the difference between the organic and the mechanical world; its symbol is the organic construction" (*Worker* 177). The fusion anticipated by Jünger between the work type and the work world, between organic and mechanical mobilization, is thus guaranteed by a kind of preestablished harmony. Here, they coexist in the transcendent "Being" of the "figure," which becomes visible in its symbol, the "organic construction" (*Worker* 177). This "organic construction," this "symbol" of "static Being," is, however, nothing other than technology (*Worker* 309). It represents "form," whether in the means of production, from the wheel to electricity, or in "lifestyle," from the uniform gesture to cultural orders. And conversely, technology is, as Jünger understands it, symbol. "Technology," he writes, "is meaningful only because it is the way in which the figure of the worker mobilizes the world. This fact

endows it with the status of a symbol" (*Worker* 200; cf. 196 and 311). Technology is symbol or representative or representation of Being. The "total mobilization" of matter and man through technology is the symbol or representative or incarnation of this static form. "The type . . . possesses rank in the degree to which it embodies the figure of the worker" (*Worker* 311). The "work-state" and its "plan-scape," the workshop-landscape and its "work-armies [*Arbeitsheere*]"—or anything else that becomes an object of the physiognomic and political visions of Jünger—is embodiment, representation, expression, radiance, crystallization, appearance, symbol or—time and again—"representation" of "presence." And this holds *a fortiori* for work. It is always work in the strongest sense and has meaning as work exclusively to the degree that it is the work of signification, of symbolization, and of the representation of "the worker," of his "figure," of his, and thus of its, *proper* "presence." It is *properly* work only as a return to what does not work, work only as the annulment of work to the benefit of the epiphany of "static Being" (*Worker* 309).

It goes without saying that this conception of work, interpretation, language, politics, and being is anything but "revolutionary." Or, it is "revolutionary" only insofar as it is the restitution of a classical morphology, of an idealistic semiology—a symbology—the restitution of a classical, metaphysical ontology of work. What distinguishes Jünger's conception from these, however, is his taste for undifferentiated uniformity, his obsession with the formalism of the "total." As a result, he promulgates not a national or international socialism but a planetary socialism without society—not a worker's state, but a "work-plan-state" under the "will to total dictatorship" (*Worker* 45). This may prevent him from being a vulgar racist, but it causes him to be a techno-racist, who glimpses the burgeoning of a "new race" of "consummate stamp" (*Worker* 245), with "racelike quality" (*Worker* 212), from the "native soil of the people" (*Worker* 307). His fanatical fixation on the total permits him to consign to oblivion bourgeois museum culture and the "so-called cultural assets" whose conservation it serves. But, at the same time, it forces him not only to generalize art as the "representation of the form of the worker" (*Worker* 217) but also to render it "absolute" (*Worker* 215)—and, thus rendering it absolute, to conserve it. Jünger's totalism permits him to recognize that the universalization of technology—the "mobilization of the world through the form of the worker"—will result in the wholesale destruction of cult powers; his totalism also permits him to recognize in this universalization "the most decisive anti-Christian power" (*Worker* 161). But this same totalism causes him, in turn, to assign "cultic significance" (*Worker* 246; cf. 46) to the "form of the worker." In short, Jünger's gestures are dictated by a repetition compulsion. Not only does he time and again repeat one and the same argument—his argument is itself fundamentally one of repetition, restitution, reinstitution: the cults must be destroyed in order for

the one cult to be erected; the feeble arts of civil society must be swept away and room made for absolute art as the representation of the generative "elementary forces" (*Worker* 207); races are obsolete, but in their place rises a techno-race of precision and violence. Nation states are wasting away in the anarchy of competition. They will be replaced by the planetary dictatorship of a peerless order. The destruction of the particular is always at the service of its resurrection in the general; the dissolution of the manifold, at the service of the re-creation of its one model; the breakup of forms and movements, at the service of the reconstruction of the one static form. Jünger's system is not National Socialist for the sole reason that it represents the latter's hypertrophy—and thus, quite simply, its principle. His system is the system of the planetary techno-morpho-logical archi-fascism. It is the system of "total mobilization" to the point of the immobility of the form (*Worker* 220), the system of the planetary performance of form, of pure positivity.

"The task of total mobilization is the transformation of life into energy. . . . Thus, it draws on the potency of life, while formation gives expression to Being and must avail itself not of a language of movement but, rather, of a language of forms" (*Worker* 220). The identity of energy and form, of a language of movement and one of forms, culminates in that "mathematically factual style," that "precise, univocal language" in the "univocal space" (*Worker* 279) of a "univocal and rigid work world" (*Worker* 277), whose "organ" is the press. The univocity of the language of work, which affords just as little latitude to other meanings as to other languages and fulfills itself every instant in the actualization of its ideal of discourse, finds its perfectly suited counterpart in the "changed way in which one today reads the newspaper." Jünger finds,

> Even reading is no longer compatible with the concept of leisure; it appears far more with the markings of the special work-character. . . . One wants to feel that the world changes as one reads, yet, at the same time, this change is constant in the sense of a monotone alternation of the colorful signals one scurries past [in public transportation]. (*Worker* 277)

The constant change at which the act, the "work-act [*Arbeitsakt*]" of reading, aims, according to Jünger, is a "change" exclusively within the static conditions of the one, final, "univocal world of work." It is the constant recurrence of the same, of the "monotone alternation" of traffic signals. The "total mobilization" of signal language and of its immediate correspondent signal reading is nothing other than the mobilization to the static form of "Being." In this totally mobilized language, the world changes instantaneously when it is spoken or read. It is a "happening" that "distinguishes itself through . . . presence" (*Worker* 277), through the presence, namely, of a form that lies in the generalized auto-performance as the automatic identity of stating and

understanding, of mobilization and constancy, of act and meaning, addresser and addressee. It is in this perfect collapse of all pragmatic, semantic, grammatical, and rhetorical dimensions of language that its "special work-character" takes shape. In this collapse, performativism and formalism, monosemantism and autotropism collaborate in the uniformed universe of the figure of the worker. The archi-fascism that presents itself in this figure is nothing less than the system of socio- and linguistico-technically installed presence.

"Work in the highest sense," so writes Jünger, "means representation of the worker" (*Worker* 212). But this means self-representation of presence, representation of what does not work; accordingly, work in the "highest sense" means the annulment of work. The consequence is compelling, and Jünger never ceased to repeat it in every imaginable variation. He thereby delivered the formula of the National Socialist ideology of work. For all three models of work discussed here—the mytho-theological, the ontological, and the morphological—work is, seemingly paradoxically, exactly what does *not* work. For Hitler, work is the propagandistic citation of the myth of resurrection and self-appropriation. It directs itself against everything that is other as the already dead and terminates political work in murder. For the Heidegger of the Rectorship philosophy, work is the structure of Dasein insofar as it does not just direct itself *to* but *against* the other and only thus assists in the establishment of one's proper "form." For Jünger, it is the representation of "form" and stilling of movement into constancy. Defined as self-appropriation, self-restitution, and self-institution, work is always the technology, or symbol, of what does not work. It is stasis, order, mythically immobile form, or historically transcendent Being. It is thus the always already proper that should always already be belonging and conforming to itself. In work, all three models promise freedom from work. That means, however, that they promise freedom from the other. They are models of self-resurrection insofar as they are models of the destruction of the other. The work that they propagate is actually resistance *to* work. For, however much it may still be a project of appropriation and formation, *work* that is not fascistically organized is always exposed to an other irreducible to the form of the self and inaccessible to its appropriations. It is always also that project that remains open to the other, to nonwork, to what is foreign to work, to an ἀνέργον.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to work through the fascistic obsession is that it is an obsession that consists in the systematic disavowal of work. The institutions of National Socialism did not want to be open projects but, rather, immediate realizations of a phantasm. The institutions wanted to immobilize history itself into a monumental form, and it is thus difficult, if not impossible, to integrate them into what is called, in the language of the optimism of progress, its "course." If they can be "worked through," then this working through must not confine itself to a recognition and arrangement in a techno-economic or psycho-social causal series of their murderous atroc-

ities. What has to be worked through is the resistance to work and to working through, to the resistance that was there from its start and that determined its political theories as well as its praxis. The work of National Socialism—the work of the "redeemer," of "form," of "Being"—was determined from the outset to produce *nothing*: nothing but its self, nothing but the form of its being, nothing but the self, and thus *nothing*. It was work as the work of the extermination of work and as the work of self-extermination.[20]

How does one work through *nothing*? How does one work though *extermination*? Working through them does not only mean mourning *over* the victims of the fascists and thus *for* the fascists—namely, *instead* of them—but also *over* and *for us*: mourning over what in our work is mere integration, assimilation, appropriation, self-assertion, and self-production and not also alteration, othering [*Veränderung*], mourning over what is merely work and not also what in work itself is not and never can be work. The ideology of work, still dominant today, its concealment in sociological theories of ideal intersubjectivity or interdiscursivity, its systematic idealization and its practical tyranny, we ourselves, to the extent that we are subject to, or take part in, it—all belongs to what makes up the arsenal of resistance against the working through of fascistic systems of work. We cannot allow ourselves to be contented with any theory of work, of production, or of positing that repeats the old morpho- and ergontologisms, even if only implicitly, in the guise of the new, without opening them through attention for the amorphic and anamorphic, the anergic, unstable, and destabilizing, for the workless and for those who strike. Working through only has a chance when work itself is worked through and opened to what is not work, which is never static form, state, or statue, and never pure performance or pure figure. Under conditions other than those of the ἀνέργον, of *affirmation* and *affiguration*, there is no other future.

23 September 1994

Parerga

After having written in "Leisure and Idleness" in *The Gay Science* about the "breathless haste" of work as the proper "vice of the new world," Nietzsche continues—and with not only America but also Europe in mind:

> Even now one is ashamed of resting, and prolonged reflection almost gives people a bad conscience. One thinks with a watch in one's hand, even as one eats one's midday meal while reading the latest news of the stock market; one lives as if one always "might miss out on something." . . . More and more, work enlists all good conscience on its side; the desire for joy already calls itself a "need to recuperate" and is beginning to be ashamed of itself. "One owes it to one's health"—that is what people say when they are caught on an excursion into the country. Soon we may well reach the point where people can no longer give in to the desire for a *vita contemplativa* (that is, taking a walk with ideas and friends) without self-contempt and a bad conscience.[21]

Regardless of whatever else it might have been, National Socialism could be all that it was only because it was a system of work. International capital-socialism, in this respect, does not lag behind. It is the perpetuation of that system with scarcely altered means. One will have to, when confronted with both—and we all are, with no exceptions, confronted with both—one will have to ask oneself what in the structure of work and in the joints, rifts, and rejections of its system permits of another work and perhaps something other than work, to ask oneself what its Parerga and Anerga and what "taking a walk with ideas and friends" allows. One will have to inquire into a conduct and a language—and, doubtless, not only inquire—that do not work, that cannot be deployed as a means, and that serve neither those systems nor like systems to come.

One will have to work in such a way that the work of fascism, the fascism of work, cannot live off it and continue to work. Otherwise, the talk about working off the past is a feeble reclamation—to whose address? It must, however, have a sense that does not allow itself to be dominated by this past—or by any of the other pasts—but, rather, one that lays it bare and renders it analyzable under the very sober light of a still unimaginable future and of what in this future is more and other than future.

One will have to work in such a way that one bids farewell to the heroic redemption and damnation schemes of mythic provenience, which always and always *still* ally themselves with the concept and experience of work (and also with experience *as* work). One will have to work in such a way that one takes one's leave and goes where the heroism of redemption [*Erlösung*], of dissolution—the solution [*Lösung*], "final solution" [*Endlösung*], immanent to work and discourse—and the fatalism of damnation, of the cursed earth, of work as socage, as punishment and humiliation, *break off*.

Working through the past always runs the risk of falling under the law of vengeance. It runs the risk thus of falling under the law of exchange, the *quid pro quo*, the symmetry of the tooth for a tooth and between one eye and another and ergo under the law of the repetition and perpetuation of the past. If this working through is to have a chance of breaking free from the vicious circle of vengeance, then it must break free from the circle of work determined as vengeance. In this work, something more than work, something other than vengeance, and something, with respect to the past, new must occur. From this excess, this excendence, of work something suggests itself in the concept of "working through": on the one hand, it indicates the traversal of a traumatic event and its transformation into a conscious experience. Thus it indicates that process in which what has remained unconscious or preconscious and what persists in the form of phantasmatic reproductions is revealed to consciousness and becomes available for processing [*Verarbei-*

tung]. In this sense, working through concerns the repetition compulsion that threatens to block work. Work itself, however, can be subject to repetition compulsion and, consequently, can itself constitute a blockage to work and to working through. In the pure mechanics of obsessive activities, it can be the unconscious execution of a traumatic command, the subservient fulfillment of a dictatorial scheme, the always identical reproduction of an always identical injury and its defense. Working through would mean, then, making this injury accessible in a gradual process, *gaining* access to the inaccessible, passing the impassable. On the other hand, however, "working through" must mean further that one *works through* [*hindurch arbeiten*] that trauma and this over-and-over-again *retraumatizing* work, that one does not stick to the work on trauma and the trauma of work but, rather, that one can *pass through* and *over and above* its permanent restitution and reinstitution. This working through and working one's way out of work can no longer be achieved *through* work, according to its scheme, its concept, and its ideal. It must far more pass through this scheme, this concept, and this ideal and pass over and above it. It must, as working through, be more and other than work. Or it must, in accordance with its tendency, at very least go at this more and this other, *approach* them.

Prepared long in advance, totalitarianisms have made work a trauma. They have laid it to waste. The history of capitalist work, which culminated in the fascist and Stalinist economies of terror and which, *far from over*, continues in the politics of exploitation and self-exploitation, of impoverishment and self-impoverishment, in not only the "developed" but also and especially in "underdeveloped" countries—this history of work, in the establishment of its absolute, that is to say, murderous and suicidal standard, has reached its end. We are not living *after* the end of this history; we are living *at* its end. We are living—if we can simply call this "living"—*on* the border of history determined as work, in its *epoché* more than its epoch: there, thus, where this history no longer simply makes progress but, rather, where the scheme of this history, its historicity, the scheme of work—sheer auto-performance—opens itself. In this opening, the possibility of an other history or of something other than "history," the possibility of an *other* work or of something other than "work," announces itself. But this is not a promise (the promise belongs—albeit ambiguously—to the order of the history of work) that gives cause to hope. Hopes are oriented toward the future, toward what is to come, toward what comes forth and, working, produces itself, or what is produced through work. We now touch on—and have already for some time, and perhaps have already as long as "there is" time—the end of work-time. We touch it (I merely note these two examples) with the hyperstable apparatuses and the machines produced by machines that remove themselves further and further from "human" labor and leave a vacuum where this "human" labor

was. We touch it, on the other hand, in the finitude of "natural" resources: both times, in that we touch the border of classical work and work materials and thus touch upon something out of work.

If the "figure of the worker" constitutes a fusion in which the tendencies of the past join forces with the new instruments of technology in order to forge an autonomous type, or even the type of types, and if this figure should represent a "destiny" whose historical emergence breaks through even history itself, then the question is, what does *not* fall under the precinct of the auto-morphosis, of this self-production of the figure of work?

What is an *anergon*?

And *is* it? And in what sense? And in what sense is it *not*? (In what sense of "not"?)

Are the working conditions completely [*restlos*] produced by work? Are they the products of work? Or are they exclusively working material? What do "completely [*restlos*]" and "remainder [*Rest*]" mean here?

What does not show itself, what does not work its way out, what *is* not, as work?

What is the meta-horizon of the horizon, the other side of the horizon, that gives contour to the figure of the worker? It is first the other side of the horizon that makes it possible for this figure to erect itself; but does it fall on this other side?

What is the space—*is* it and is it *something*—in which the worker sets up his workshop?

What does not conform to this figure, without, however, resisting it? And what resists it without itself being an object?

And, is it a what, a something, at all that does not work there? Is it not in the absence of the substantial and its modalities, in the absence of its "being" and its being-real, being possible, and being-necessary much more a non-modalizable, a withholding that eludes all modalities, all types and manners, all forms and measures, all procedures and means? But one that is not its opposite but its possibility and even the possibility of its being-possible. It is also not simply *a*modal but rather *admodal* (an *ad* to modes and only working *toward* them endlessly) and therefore *ammodal*.

What relation does the ammodel entertain with the model? I shall translate to prevent misunderstandings: What relation does the *admodel* (the outer horizon that first gives way to the possibility of a model and, thus, is itself not a model, but an *amodel*) entertain with the model? And, does it *entertain* a relation at all? Can this relation of relation and irrelation be *maintained*?

The *ammodalization*. Ammodelation: inauguration and suspension of the model, modus, and modernity, the so-called postmodern included. (Modernity and postmodernity are historical concepts. Wherever it is a question of the structure of history and not of intrahistorical epochs, one will have to test

out the "concept" of *ammodernization*, of that event whose rhythm gives contour to particular historical epochs, modes, and figures, to particular historical developments and concepts, and even to the concept of history "as such," without itself assuming a historical form but not without taking something away from their form.)

The worker is the figure of planetary performativity: in him it is therefore no longer possible to separate reality from theater. He deploys himself, repeats himself, and changes himself: iteration and alteration dictate the ratio of the transformation of his figure; they are his figuration, his morphosis. By dint of its alteration, however, formation must always have at least one element that carries on its monstrous nonessence [*Unwesen*], that does not let itself be reduced to form and to the process of formation. It must always have something unformed from which the form departs, something to which it owes itself and through which it is impeded. There must be at least this one element that is other than the form and other than the form of genesis of the form: an afform, an afformative. In it, the domain of the possible positing of forms is inaugurated—in this, it is an ad-formative—and in it, the sovereign authority of this domain as well as each and every one of its manifestations, each and every one of its positings, is de-posed, suspended, disarrayed—in this, this afformative is an a-formative. In every parergon an anergon, in every morphosis an anamorphosis or amorphosis, in every figuration and transformation an ad-, an a-, an affiguration, must impart itself.

This affiguration, this afformation, which does not posit but ex-poses, is not something and "is" other than Being.

(Austin thought speech act theory, the theory of performatives, as an element in a general theory of action. But he represented acting as fulfilling a norm of action defined by convention and, consequently, reduced actions to norms. The doctrine of types of linguistic acts that results from this procedure cannot give an account of the genesis of those norms nor can it think acts through which it could arrive at norms (or conventions) in the first place. This theory does not describe how something takes place through language but rather how something that does not take place—namely, rules—is fulfilled. There is therefore still no theory of linguistic action; at most, there are attempts at a description of the "pragmatic" rules that are followed by speech acts that are derivative and thus not inaugurative, that do not *found* conventions and rules. To the theory of speech acts—a better name for it would be theory of speech events—belongs a theory of its constitutive anomie, its singularity, and its freedom. It cannot be a theory of performatives, but rather would have to be one of afformatives.

One must distinguish between action and work. But between them, there is a point of indifference in which they are merely the fulfillment of a social

function scheme and in that respect neither action nor work but rather their denial in the ideal. Actions for which the analyses of acts and interactions tending toward—I suspect Calvinist—normative traditions are intended are essentially acts of denial, their speech act linguistic denials.)

The historian posturing as a border patrolman: He attempts to secure the borders between the past, the present, and the future, to regulate traffic, and will grant passage only to what can present its marks of identification and recognition. Hollywood did not invent the "time cop." He already existed as "history cop." Yet what comes to pass with that which smuggles itself in under another name, with a marked card, a marked mark? *What comes to pass with the passage itself?* Does it come to pass, or does it not? Where in history does the counterpart to no-man's-land—no-man's-time—lie?

Since National Socialism, all concepts are ruins. They are not merely stigmatized, not merely damaged: they are rubble. This holds no less for the concept of the past than for the concept of recollection, no less for the concept of historical progress than for that of work. And it holds, moreover, for that of working through. Even for Freud, the ideal of working through lay in the cure and thus in nearing a condition of relative normalcy. This ideal of normalcy entertains too many close affinities to the norm implemented by means of coercion by the totalitarian regimes of this century not to have exhausted its viability. It can no longer serve as a means of orientation. We do, indeed, need criteria, but we do not have a single criterion at our disposal that would not be in ruins and not a single one that would not harbor the danger of becoming murderous. Idealizations are, indeed, structurally unavoidable, but every inherited and every imaginable idealization contains a threat. When in a book entitled *Representing the Holocaust* someone calls for the development of a "social ritual" that would make the work of mourning and the process of working through into an institution, when in the same context someone goes so far as to attribute a "ritual dimension" to historiography and ultimately asserts that a language adequate to the Shoah depends "on ritual as well as aesthetic criteria," then one will certainly not be able to deny one's empathy with this hair-raising naïveté. However, one will ask oneself with horror in what way the program of this aesthetic ritual should structurally differ from the program of exactly that ritual—that sacrificial ritual—whose working through it is meant to promote. The confusionism that here, with an appeal to the notorious ideal of critique and critical judgment, exhibits its distressing incapacity for critique would have to be understood, for better or for worse, as a symptom of the misunderstood ambivalence of institutionalized ideals—including, of course, the ideal of critique. Every ritualization of working through would be exempted from working through. There is no "adequate" language for the mass murder of Jews,

Communists, homosexuals, Gypsies, and the ill. There is no adequate concept and no adequate aesthetic form for that which could respond to the generalized terror under totalitarian regimes. There are only, once more, demolished concepts, ruined rituals, shattered forms of representation. The "aesthetic rituals" of which *Representing the Holocaust* dreams, would, of course, be just as harmless as they are naïve if they were not in principle of a kind with the politics of belittlement, harmonization, standardization, and idealization—of the idealization and aestheticization of the Holocaust.

It is also not enough to speak of the ruin of forms and their ruinous effects. One has to ask oneself what, *exactly*, remains of the standards, the ideals, the schemes of thought and action that organized totalitarianism, and one has to ask further what in the remains of the terror of work has been spared and may even be rescued from the danger of relapse. Little. The minimal structure of work: to relate to something other than it itself can ever become.

The conceptual remainder that has survived work—and, accordingly, must have preceded its rule—this reef in the concept [*Riff im Begriff*] on which the work of destruction and the self-destruction of work must founder, this undestructed and unprocessed (I am attempting to render this formal minimal structure of work more precise) is, in the first place, nothing but its surplus, its excess, its excendence out of the domain of positive, positing, and producing violence. This surplus, in any case, has the character of a transference [*Übertragung*]—not, of course, in the sense of a substitution of a past form, or its representation, with its natural or artificial substitute, but rather a transference to an other that cannot be anticipated in a model or grasped according to the scheme of a form. In this transference that knows no transferential object, the scope of work (as well as, in particular, the scope of what can be called working through) is opened. In this transference without object and without end, without secure trajectory and without recourse, in this *exfert*, working takes place as the sheer project. Relating to an other, outside the field of work and irreducible to this field, transference—a transference to an other and a trans-ference that is more than the carrying (the "ference") of something bearable, something tolerable, or some gain—is what remains of work: the play, the open rift in which it moves, and the absolute premise under which alone working and working through is possible.

Freud's understanding of the psychoanalytic notion of working through has assumed this *direction*. Thus understood, working through is possible only in the principally open horizon of transference and relies in all its effects on this horizon and its possible opening. All resistance against working through is a resistance against transference, against addressing the other, against a reference in which the speaking subject gives in to a movement in which it constitutes itself just as much as it deconstitutes itself. Working

through is transference. And just as working through is *above all* a working through virtually the entire complex of work, so the transference in question would be above all a carrying, a "ference" [*Tragen*] beyond every carrying. Its aim cannot be determined in any nominal unity, in any scheme of syntagmatization, or in any conventional performance. Since, however, in order to "succeed," every discursive movement, every transmission, every transference must not only go above and beyond its objects and means but, at the same time, must also avail itself of certain means, objects, and addressees, a structurally unavoidable resistance brings itself to bear in the transference against the transference and in working through against working through. The resistance to transference lies in the transference insofar as it is directed toward a particular object, a particular person, a form, a type, an ideal. The resistance to working through lies in working through itself insofar as it follows a particular scheme of work with predetermined, schematic, conventionalized ends or contents.

In his "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power," Lacan noted without further commentary: "transference work (*Durcharbeiten*)."[22] "Working through"—he translates it as *perlaborer*—designates for him simply the work of transference. In "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," where he confirms "it really is work" and not without irony recalls that one tends even to grant this work a certain "formative value" that in the end may succeed in producing a skilled worker, Lacan presents something like a formula of orientation for what happens in this work of transference. The subject, he writes, "in the work he does to reconstruct it [to reconstruct the imaginary work that is its being] *for another*, he encounters anew the fundamental alienation that made him construct it *like* another, and that has always destined it to be taken away from him *by another*."[23] The work of the subject, its being and its ego, is constituted as another. As another it is rediscovered anew in its reconstruction for another—the analyst—and from the very beginning (*toujours*), it, this subject, this other-than-itself, is destined (*destinée*) to be taken away *by* another. The play of the prepositions and genera of the other that Lacan opens up in his formula of working through proceeds relatively unproblematically as long as it is an issue of "for another" and "by another." It becomes uncontrollable and completes the turn toward a play in which the player loses himself as soon as "as another" is in question. For *as another*, the work of the subject, the image by way of which this subject constructs its identity and out of which it makes a Being for, and by grace of, others—*as* such an other the subject is both constructed and reconstructed. Yet, it would have to be reconstructed in such a way that the latter, *as another*, in its turn offers itself *as another* other—not, however, *as such* and not *as itself*. The space of working through and of the work of transference would have to be such that in it the

as another sets itself apart *as another* other and detaches itself from the construction and its repetition in the reconstruction. It would have to be the space and the time-space of detachment and thus the opening up of a time and a space in the first place. It could not be the restituting and resaturating renewal of the construction of the subject *for others*; rather, it would have to be the ex-struction of this *for others* in an unconstructed and unconstructible time-space interval, in which it is for *other* others and perhaps for another *for*, other than *for* and other than *as*.

Thus, it is said, in passing through Lacan's leading formula and presumably a bit beyond it, that the work of transference comes to pass as the release of *one* other from an *other* other, of one *as* from an *other*, one *for* and one *from* from an other *for* and *from*. It comes to pass, that is to say, as the work of a differential re-petition of the scheme of work and thus as the opening of a difference, of a time-space and a movement one could provisionally designate as *alteralteration*: the change of that relation to the other through which the subject constitutes itself and the change of that other that is built according to precisely the ratio of this relation. Within the margin of free play between a *for others* and an other *for others*—and this margin of free play is not coextensive with the difference between Lacan's two *a*'s, the small and the large—occurs what transference, the work of transference and working through, designates. It takes place in this margin of *free play*, mind you, that opens up as an unoccupied field already *before* the constitution of subject and object, I and other, thus already *before* the work of its fixation to a figure, an ideal, or a work. Thus, it offers itself as a space neither of work, idealization, or oeuvre. This interspace, then, should not be misunderstood as the empty space of lost or absent objects, to which what Freud calls the "work of mourning" might apply. Nor should it be misunderstood as the space of displacement or substitution, by way of which what he calls "dream work" renders unconscious representations accessible to consciousness or at least capable of being made conscious.

Working through allows the mechanisms and contents of dream work to become recognizable. It takes part in the work of mourning, but it cannot be reduced to it, providing that this work is not merely a question of the formation and reformation of subjects and objects but, rather, of precisely that domain in which it might have a chance, at all, of forming and transforming itself. Since, however, the imaginary, idealizing, forming, and fixating relation to the other is the work and "oeuvre" (as Lacan writes) of the subject and the subject as work, there could be no (as Lacan does *not* write) working through and no work of transference that would not *in extremis* launch itself as inter-ruption [*Aus-setzung*] and ex-position [*Ent-setzung*] of work and thus (I take up a word from Blanchot) as "*desoeuvrement*." For the sake of exactness—and, more still, of *exaction*—working through would have to be thought—and, more than merely thought, experienced—not as "perlabora-

tion" (as Lacan translates it) but as *allaboration*: as the opening up of possible work (*adlaborare*) in which the figures of work and the work of figuration are abandoned (*a-laborare*).[24]

And further, since it is first this traversal of work that gives way to a worklessness in work and also to the history-space and time-space of alteration—of alteralteration—there is history first and only when the figures of space, time, and history are worked off and open [*auf- und offengearbeitet*], when they too, as figures of work, are exposed to something other than work. There is no history without work, but there is no work without its—and perhaps endless—end (without an end that is not *its* end). The "infinite analysis" of which Freud speaks in his later work, the infinite working through and transference, is the process in which this other history, this history no longer related to any figure, any oeuvre, or any work, opens. That it can be nothing but infinite means also that its agents and objects are finite. This concept of infinite analysis and of infinite transference needs to be won for politics.

In his small study of 1914, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," Freud hints, toward the end of his deliberations, at how the change from one other to an *other* other, from the one addressee of speech to that other, might look, that change without which the process of working through cannot do. The hint is given far more *despite* than *by* Freud. It has the character of an anecdote and stands in his text without metapsychological commentary or theoretical formalization. In psychoanalytic work, Freud recalls, the process of "overcoming [*Überwindung*]" resistances is initiated by naming them to the patient. But this "naming" does not immediately effect the removal of the resistances. The effect of the ineffectiveness of naming does not, however, show itself principally in the analysand but, rather, in the analyst, whose conception of the power of naming, interpreting, and analytic words is considerably compromised. Freud writes,

> I have often been asked to advise upon cases in which the doctor complained that he had pointed out his resistance to the patient and that nevertheless no change had set in; indeed, the resistance had become all the stronger, and the whole situation was more obscure than ever. The treatment seemed to make no headway.[25]

In this situation, it is thus the doctor who complains; it is the doctor, and not the patient, who suffers. It is the analyst who needs an analyst and who turns to this other analyst for advice. This almost inconspicuous turn in which the doctor steps out of the "psychoanalytic situation" in order to safeguard it from without redefines not just this "situation" but the concept of work that can be performed in it. In this decisive phase—the phase to which Freud

entrusted "the work which effects the greatest changes" ("Remembering" 155) and in which it is precisely a question of working through resistances—the "situation" ceases to be the dialogical dyad in which an active analyst confronts a passive patient or an active patient confronts a passive attentive and understanding analyst and these two work together as a duo, reflecting their representations one in the other (Freud says that the doctor "represents the resistance to the analysand [*seinen Widerstand vorgestellt*]"), and define their work, however implicitly, as that of the pair, the reflexivity and specularity of a narcissism à deux. According to the expectations of the analyst, psychoanalytic work consists in the synthesis of representations and must in every regard accommodate the ideal of cooperation if the analytic "pact" is not to be broken—which means, if the ego ideal of the analyst is not to be wounded. Now, the doctor's complaint is above all a complaint about this injury of the Ideal-I and the Work-Ideal that in his estimation the treatment should conduct. With the complaint of the analyst directed at another, at the analyst of the analyst, the dialogical dyad, the definition of work as one of normalization and idealization and the interpretation of the analysis as the work of identificatory naming, is left behind and abandoned in favor of a principally open, a no longer simply naming, a transidealizing and virtually interminable polylogical process.

The condition of every transformation is a "trans" of formation as well as of form.

The other, whose memory and speech are in the hands of the analyst, is himself referred to another, to an *other* other, the analyst is referred to an ana-analyst. With the introduction of the hyperbole of the addresses and presentations of the other, with this hyperbole of the figure of the specularly defined other, with this alteralteration, work itself sets out for an *other* work and something other than work: it ex-poses itself—stalls, seems "to make no headway." It abandons the scheme of work that stipulates the instantaneous effectivity of the dialogical—or, equally, self-reflexive—word, turns to an other than *its* other and only thus becomes working through.

"This gloomy foreboding," Freud continues, in his report on the doctor's complaint that the treatment did not seem to be making any headway,

> this gloomy foreboding always proved mistaken. The treatment was as a rule progressing most satisfactorily. The analyst had merely forgotten that giving the resistance a name could not result in its immediate cessation. One must allow the patient time to become more conversant with this resistance with which he has now become acquainted, to work through, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work according to the fundamental rule of analysis. Only when the resistance is at its height can the analyst, working in common with his patient, discover the repressed instinctual impulses which are feeding the resistance; and it is this kind of experience which convinces the patient of the existence and power of such impulses. The doctor

> has nothing else to do than to wait and let things take their course, a course which cannot be avoided nor always hastened. ("Remembering" 135–36)

"Allow time," "wait," "let things take their course"—this allowing, giving time, and waiting, this unavoidability and inaccessibility to the action of the analyst characterizes an entirely new comportment in contrast to the analytic dialogue. For it distinguishes itself not by way of question and answer, action and reaction—and thus not by way of discursive interaction or interdiscursivity—but, rather, by way of an extraordinary inactivity, an actlessness and speech-actlessness, in which the analyst is no longer the addressee and conversation partner of the analysand but, rather, of an other analyst, a third or fourth and, in the end, uncountable one. It is an inactivity in which the analysand, in his turn, does nothing else but address his resistance—resistance, that is to say, delay, time given, the giving of time. He addresses thus that incalculable and chronometrically unlocatable other of the *other* and in him the withdrawal of the address, the reduced effectiveness of the word, and the suspension of work. To work through is to submerge oneself in resistance, in the ex-position of work, in the allowing of time, in another beyond of a representable, definable, and measurable other. It happens where this other has no form but, rather, lets forms—of time, of space, of language, or of action—simply take their course. And it takes place thus, not in the time-space of figures but in the rhythm of *affiguration*, as *anamorphosis* and *amorphosis*. Not as action or speech act, not as work or the work of speech, in the precinct of interdiscursivity and its ideals but, rather, as the *allowing* of actions, works, performances: as *afformation*, as the speaking of not-speaking and the action of inaction.[26]

Freud writes, "to immerse" oneself in resistance, "to *work through*, to overcome it." As its preparation by "immersion" and its continuation by "overcoming" shows, he couples the concept of working through not only with the idea of a "through" but also with the idea of a "going through above and beyond" thus of a detachment from what, in the first place, must be traversed, of a perforation of resistance, which opposes itself to work (as the earth opposes itself to the mole insofar as it digs through the earth in order to enter, or exit, its hollow). Since idealizing—or, simply, conventionalizing—work accompanies working through, it is always work that constitutes a resistance to working through. However, work is not the first and final resistance. For since it is the form of the production of world consistency according to the ideals of discourse, it remains, in principle, susceptible to reworking in each and all of its posts. That resistance that it is unable to adapt to its model derives from the only field in which this form of production can possibly occur: from what, without itself being work, allows this work. From the open

space of allowing, without which there would be no production, no discourse, ideals, formations and without which there would be no history.

If Adorno privileges the concept of "working off [*Aufarbeitung*]," then, surely, it is in order to place the accent on two semantic values that stand out from the conception of "overcoming" implicit in the concept of "working through": what must be "worked off" has not even been an object of work; it must be worked on retrospectively, like a trauma that strikes a body, psychical or political, so quickly that it has no time to mobilize its reserves, its defensive or integrative mechanisms. Moreover, in the "off [*auf*]" of "working off [*Aufarbeiten*]," one can also hear "open [*offen*]," and, accordingly, understand "working off" as an opening [*Öffnen*], slackening, as the destabilization of a closed, contracted, monolithic complex, as a laying free by way of which what was and what still comprehends and arrests the present in the past is unlocked. As catching up [*Nacharbeiten*], working off [*Aufarbeiten*] operates the integration of the past and its remnants into the precinct of objectifying consciousness. As working open [*Offen-arbeiten*], it goes over and above its idealizing, formative, and repressive borders.

By way of its paramorphemes—through and off [*Durch und Auf*]—working is absolved from its fixation on its auto-teleological, auto-eschatological, process. It does not refer to itself, to the ideal or the standard of the self-determined as work, and, therefore, it cannot be trimmed back to the morphological scheme of self-reflection, as Habermas, Hegelianizing, recommends in his (otherwise likable) reiteration of Adorno, "What Does 'Working Off the Past' Mean Today? [*Was bedeutet 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' heute?*"]."[27] Working through and working off refer to something other than the self and *its* other; they refer, as all work ought, to an other that cannot be reduced to the self and its work and thus to the "figure of the worker."

In the work-break between our historical and our possible forms, as their possibility and their transformation into other forms and something other than form, in forms that are no longer *ours* and perhaps no longer forms, we—or "we"—work *off* the form of work.

Of the intellectuals who supported National Socialism with their theories and in their administrative functions, Heidegger is perhaps the only one in whose later writings one can read something of the working off of work here in question. The author of the sentence "Work is the presence of historial man" did not just change his mind and opportunistically exchange his former opinion with a more accommodating, liberal-democratic one. Rather, he traced the implication of this sentence—that, namely, work is the essence of existence [*Dasein*]—back to its ontological and, more precisely, techno-ontological tradition. When in "On the Question of Being [*Zur Seinsfrage*]" he points out to his former prompter, Ernst Jünger, that the metaphysics of work

(which Jünger presents in *The Worker* with the subtitle *Dominion and Form*) is nothing more than the thoroughgoing perpetuation of the metaphysics of the will to power, that "work" becomes identical with "Being," and that "form" belongs essentially in the domain of what Heidegger calls the "Ge-Stell,"[28] this is, on the one hand, nothing less than a massive critique of exactly that technology and ergontology Heidegger advocated in 1933 and 1934 in Jünger's and Hitler's entourage and, on the other hand, it is anything but an ingratiating gesture toward the doctrines of 1955—for theirs was just this ideology of work. Heidegger undertakes the working off of the ontology of work—he prefers to speak of its "*Verwindung*"—from the perspective of the "history of Being," since for him it determines not the character of a particular historical political system but the character of the entirety of modern thought. The "Letter on Humanism" of 1946 leaves no doubt in its equivocal apology for Marxist materialism that also in it Heidegger sees a "destiny within the history of being" behind which the question concerning Being must reach:[29]

> The essence of materialism does not consist in the assertion that everything is simply matter but rather in a metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor. The modern metaphysical essence of labor is anticipated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the self-establishing process of unconditioned production, which is the objectification of the actual, through man experienced as subjectivity. The essence of materialism is concealed in the essence of technology. ("Humanism" 243–44)

Thus, the essence of work, one could paraphrase, conceals itself in the essence of self-production, the unconditioned auto-performance that presents itself as subjectivity. With this sentence, Heidegger withdraws from the position he had assumed in the assertion—in the self-assertion—"Work is the presence of historical man." For work is no longer thought as self-presencing and self-execution but, for its part, as involved in a movement (Heidegger calls it, verbally, "essencing" [*Wesen*]) that is not absorbed in work and cannot be absorbed by it. From the thought on the essence of technology Heidegger can go on to the determination of work as ekstasis [*Entrücktheit*] or "exposedness into being [*Ausgesetztheit in das Seiende*]," which already in the 1934 Logic Lectures differed markedly from the Jüngerian doctrine of the planetary dominion of the figure of the worker.[30] It is this "ex-posedness [*Ausgesetztheit*]," under the more precise name of "release [*Gelassenheit*]" and without the direction toward a domain of possible objectifications, that allows for a resituation of work. In one of Heidegger's "field-path-conversations [*Feldweg-Gespräche*]" that dates from the end of the war, entitled "Evening Conversation in a Prison Camp in Russia [*Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager in Rußland*]," work, in the context of a critique of nationalism and internationalism, is denounced as the form of a disastrous

collective subjectivity: This subjectivity transacts the "business of devastation, that is, of work, on account of the heightened potential of work."[31] And in "Αγχιβασιη—A Three-Way Conversation on a Field-Path between a Researcher, a Scholar and a Wise Man," he who eleven years earlier had not hesitated to characterize work as the essence of Dasein and the juncture of Being straightaway doubts "whether work and output are actually appropriate measures [*gemäße Maße*] for the essence of man." And the "wise man" continues: "Assuming, however, that they are not, then one day the entirety of modern humanity, its much-praised creative accomplishments included, would have to collapse in the emptiness of its rebellious self-forgetfulness."[32] This breakdown of the world of work would be the result not so much of the "negation of leisure, of the neg-otium," but, rather, of something "more negative still," namely, the "refusal of rest" (69) of release [*Gelassenheit*] as the reference to what before all work and in work is open to what itself cannot be work.

> We all work. Always have. Always will. It's a state of mind. So you keep moving. And you celebrate all of your moods. You take in a deep breath and let out a scream that says, "Yes, I can." (Advertisement for clothes by Anne Klein II)[33]

> Work as the form of life that has been paid for, of life made to the paid for: "If the working class would thoroughly banish from mind the vice that rules them . . . and rise up in their formidable strength not in order to demand the illustrious *human rights* that are only the rights of capitalist exploitation, not in order to demand the *right to work* that is only a right to suffering but, rather, in order to forge a brazen law that would forbid everyone to work more than three hours a day, then the old world, trembling with joy, would feel in its core the stirring of a new world . . . yet how can one demand a virile resolution from a proletariat who has been corrupted through the capitalist moral!
>
> "O Laziness, have mercy upon the endless suffering!" (Paul Lafargue)[34]

> *I was about to conclude: "Perhaps I, I too work . . ."—At what? No one would be able to object, admitting, because of the accountants, the occupation, transferred from the arms to the head. At what—silences, in consciousness alone, an echo—at least, that could be of service amid the general exchange. Sadness that my occupation remains, to these ones, by essence, like the clouds at twilight or stars, vain.* (Stéphane Mallarmé)[35]

[To be continued]

23 August 1995
—Translated by Matthew Hartman

NOTES

The first part of these reflections was written for the conference "Fascism and the Institution of Literature" at the University of Virginia, 2 October 1994. The "Parerga" were added for the first publication of the text in the journal *Modernism/modernity* 3.1 (1996): 23–55. First published in German in *Archäologie der Arbeit*, ed. Dirk Baecker (Berlin: Kadmos, 2002), 155–200.

1. Theodor W. Adorno, "Was heisst: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?" *Eingriffe: Neun kritische Modelle* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), 126; hereafter cited parenthetically as "Working."

2. Adolf Hitler, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen (1932–1945)*, ed. Max Domarus (Neustadt: Verlagsdruckerei Schmidt, 1962), 1:259; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Reden*.

3. In a lucid essay, Éric Michaud has brought out further traits of the "Christlikeness" of the National Socialist "people" and its "leader"; see his "Un Sauveur: Adolf Hitler ou la tyrannie du visible," *Nouvelle Revue de psychanalyse* 49 (Spring 1994): 119–32.

4. In the paragraphs headed "The Evaluation of Work" in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler already in the 1920s follows the scheme of argumentation and suggestion integral to his address of May 1933 when he founds the differentiation between the "material" and "ideal" value of work in connection with a discussion of the "spiritual pliancy," the "spiritual levels" (*Reden* 481), and "spiritual leadership" (*Reden* 482), and in view of an "ideal Reich" (*Reden* 487). The value of work is esteemed "ideal" where it is measured, mystico-naturalistically, both as an "offering of nature"—and thus of "birth"—and as gift of the "community of the people," and where this value as "sacrifice" is restored to the community and its nature, to this nature and natal community. With the sacrifice of "ideal" work to its indigenous idea, to the "spirit" of the "community of the people," work departs from the domain of rationality, isolation, and contingency and enters the "Reich" of its necessity, organicity, and intimate communality. It is thus "essentially" a return to its origin, a return to its provenance, to its natural community, to itself and to its concept and, therein, "ideal," "spiritual."

I will cite a long passage from this complex of suggestions in which Hitler's rhetoric of naturalist ideality becomes apparent:

> Pure material value stands in opposition to that of the ideal. It does not rest on the significance of executed work measured materially but, rather, on its *necessity in itself*. [This] work goes on the account of its birth as well as on the thereby engendered formation [*Ausbildung*], which it receives from the people at large. . . . The form of the contribution [to the upkeep of the cultural community and state] is determined by nature; it falls to him merely to give back to the community of the people with diligence and uprightness what it itself has given him. Whoever does this merits the highest esteem [*Wertschätzung*] and the highest respect . . . ; the ideal [wage], however, must lie in the esteem [*Wertschätzung*] to which all can lay claim who consecrate the strength nature endows and to which the community of the people gives form to the service of his nationhood. [Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1942), 483–84; my emphasis; hereafter abbreviated *Kampf*.]

From this nature-spiritual cycle, which work as "necessity in itself" runs through, issues its definition as sacrifice and the muddled formulation of "the will to sacrifice for the deployment of personal labor" (*Kampf* 235) "in him [the Aryan], the drive for self-preservation has achieved its most noble form in that he willfully subordinates his proper I to the life of the whole and, when the hour demands, sacrifices it" (*Kampf* 326). "The most wonderful elucidation of this state of mind is proffered by the word *work*, which, for him, in no way designates the action of sustaining a livelihood but, rather, only a creating in harmony with the interests of the people" (*Kampf* 326). Precisely this "correct understanding of the concept of work" is, however, what "the Jew" is charged with lacking. In contrast to "the Aryan," for whom work is sacrifice to the natural idea of the community of the people, "the Jew" does not work. He gives nothing back and fails to receive himself in return—but, since he lacks all ethnic, and thus

ethical, "ties," his egotistical work is uncreative and robbery. Hitler's anti-Semitism establishes itself here as an anti-Semitism of work, of self-engenderment, of the nature-spiritual circulation of the sacrifice to one's proper people. "The Jew" does not dispose of the right, the altruistic, the ethical, concept of work, because he (but who, then, is "he"?) does not dispose of any ethnicity, thus not of any nature or of any spirit.

5. The text of Hitler's decree is reprinted in Walther Hofer, ed., *Der Nationalsozialismus: Dokumente, 1933–45* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1957), 87.

6. Literally, the sentence translates as "work makes free," more idiomatically as "work sets you free."—Editor's note.

7. In his chapter "The Third Reich and Labor," in *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966), David Schoenbaum draws attention to the possibility that this formula, *Arbeit macht frei*, which he calls "*grotesque*" (80), may not at all have been meant cynically, at least not on the part of Höss, the commanding officer at Auschwitz, who himself had spent years in prison during the Weimar Republic. On the work system in the camps, see Wolfgang Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors: Das Konzentrationslager* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993).

8. Heidegger's speech, first published—and, it might be noted, hardly without his consent—on 1 February 1934 in *Der Alemanne: Kampfblatt der Nationalsozialisten Oberbadens*, is included in *Nachlese zu Heidegger: Dokumente aus seinem Leben und Denken*, ed. Guido Schneeberger (Bern: Selbstverlag, 1962), 199; hereafter cited parenthetically as "Procurement." (The word *daseinsfähig* is italicized in this publication, most probably by Heidegger. The concept is also used in the 1934 Logic Lectures; see note 12.)

9. "For that reason, one is correct in saying," Heidegger says, "that unemployment is . . . a mental shattering—not because the lack of work thrusts the human back to the individualized isolated I, but because the lack of work leaves empty the being-transported into things. Because work carries out the relation to beings, therefore unemployment is an emptying of this relation to being. The relation remains, to be sure, but it is unfulfilled. . . . Therefore, unemployment is impotent being-exposed. Work is correspondingly a transporting into the jointures and forms of the beings that surround us." So claim Heidegger's Logic Lectures from the summer semester of 1934 (Martin Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, trans. Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009]. Translations lightly modified. Hereafter abbreviated *Logic*). In this determination of work, there are three points worth noting: (1) Heidegger speaks here of a "mental shattering"—in his existential-ontological deliberations on the concept of work, he thus does not hesitate to employ an anthropological and, more nearly, psychological concept of deficiency; (2) he determines unemployment negatively as an unfulfilled relation to being and characterizes it thus as a mere deficit of work; (3) while work, for its part, is determined as fulfillment of the relation to things [*Dingbezug*] and, despite its structure as transported, as "fitted in" in beings. This is as much as to say that work should constitute just such a form of expropriation by virtue of which Dasein fits itself into thingly being, accommodates itself to it and, at the same time, fills out its open site, its *gap*. The world of things is thus just as complementary as it itself, as relation and happening, is complemented by it. For Heidegger, work is thus the constitutive way by which Dasein arrives at its own consistency and the consistency of world: it is *consistation.* Accordingly, the pain that in Heidegger's late thought marks the proper experience in the ontological difference (cf. Martin Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter [New York: Harper & Row, 1971], 187–210), can here be characterized as only the deficit of just this experience, as the deficit of work: it is "an impotent being-exposed" (*Logic* 127). Work, however, is power, power is the being-exposed of Dasein, thus being-exposed as power. Heidegger's philosophy of the possible here shows itself to be a philosophy of power.

10. Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* [Self-Assertation of the German University] (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983), 11; hereafter cited parenthetically as Rectorship. The Aeschylus citation is to be found on page 11.

11. I have deleted Heidegger's italics in this sentence; the italicization of "*create*" is mine.

12. In his Logic Lectures, Heidegger's determination of work stands in the context of the determination of "determination": work *is* the privileged determination of determination, its determinateness. To the question, "What does 'determination' mean?" (*Logic* 105), Heidegger

sets forth its "threefold meaning in [a] more *originary* unity" (*Logic* 106). He places stress on the first as "determination to" and thus as "being-carried-forward in the mission" (*Logic* 106) and thereupon continues:

> To effect our determination, to set to work and to bring to work, in each case, according to the sphere of the creating—that means *to work*. . . . Work is here the determination that has become the determinateness of our essence, the form and the jointure of the execution of our mission. . . . Work is the *present* of the historical human being, in such a manner that in work and through it the work comes to presence and to actuality for us. . . . Historical present arises as work out of mission and mandate, and thus the present arises out of future and beenness. (*Logic* 107)

Of this manifold of the determinations of work, I underline only two aspects. On the one hand, work is located on the median between past and future, tradition and project, commission and mission, and thus exactly on that systematic site that in *Being and Time* is occupied by the moment—that is always the moment of decision for the (at any given time) proper possibilities of Dasein. And, on the other hand, just as this moment is the historical present, so work is pure "performance" [*Vollzug*] (that is, decision and, thereby, the determination of determination): it is the median of time and the median of history as pure execution. When Heidegger in the same context designates time as the "great and only jointure [*Fuge*] of our being as a historical one," and when this jointure is prescribed [*verfügt*] by work, then time is jointure and enactment of work as a performance in the fullness of which nothing lacks and which itself, unlike the "Dictum of Anaximander" (*Spruch des Anaximander* from 1946), knows no gap [*Un-fuge*]: no gap, no void, no work-lessness [*Arbeits-losigkeit*], and no interruption of execution. After a dreadful discussion of "blood" and "mood" [*Geblüt und Gemüt*], Heidegger prudently continues,

> To that also belongs the spirituality of our Dasein, which happens as work. . . . We characterized work as the present. That shall not mean that work is that which is respectively present at the time. Work, according to its spirituality, is present, insofar as it transposes our being in the binding appropriate to work, in the liberation of beings themselves. . . . Work—present, respectively, moment. . . . as worker, the human being is transported into the manifestness of beings and their jointure. . . . This transportedness into things belongs to our constitution. (*Logic* 127)

In this further determination of the determination that is work, its character as transportedness (elsewhere it is called "exposedness" [*Ausgesetztheit*] or "displacement") warrants emphasis as precisely that feature in which work is *open* to something other than proper Dasein or to this Dasein as a possible other. But this movement of opening, which even in this lecture Heidegger does not relinquish to the ideology of Nazism, is massively curtailed as soon as the reference to this openness is defined as "a liberation of beings" and "appropriate to work." As appropriate to work, the liberation already stands under the guardianship of the work. The opening is already one of the modalities according to which Dasein as work closes ranks with itself. Only in this way is work *presence*, so that "the making-present of beings," as Heidegger writes, happens in it. Only in this way does coming-into-being = making and, thereby, once more, does coming-into-being = auto-execution and the establishment of the figure set into work. No strike interrupts the essence of this work; no pain of unemployment darkens the joy of self-effectuation. "That is why," Heidegger writes, "the enjoyment of work is so important. . . . Joy as a fundamental mood is the ground of genuine work. Only in its completion does man become capable of Dasein" (*Logic* 128). (Here once again, therefore, is the word *daseinsfähig* from the Work Procurement speech.) With this postulate, Heidegger's fundamental ergontology succeeds not only in linking up with Henri de Man's psychology of work, *The Struggle for the Joy of Work* (1927), but also with that Nazi slogan that promises "Strength through joy" (*Kraft durch Freude*).

13. Ernst Jünger, quoted in Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist: Politik und Zeitkritik Ernst Jüngers* (Freiburg, Germany: Rombach, 1962), 117; for Hitler's assessment of *The Worker*, see 117–18, cited from Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler* (New York: Europa Verlag, 1940).

14. Ernst Jünger, 16 July 1944, in *Strahlungen* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1979), 2:286.

15. Ernst Jünger, foreword to *Strahlungen* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1979), 1:11.

16. Martin Heidegger, "Zur Seinsfrage," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), 218.

17. Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 307; hereafter abbreviated *Worker*.

18. See Georg Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins: "Die Arbeit"* (Neuwied, Germany: Luchterhand, 1973).

19. The concept "onto-typo-logy" used by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (see his "Typographie," in *Mimesis des Articulations* [Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1975]) does not adequately account for the Jüngerian construction. Lacoue-Labarthe orients himself on Heidegger's answer to Jünger in "Zur Seinsfrage." Lacoue-Labarthe paraphrases its deliberation and follows it in tracing Jünger's "type" back to the Platonic *eidos* and "idea." This last move enables him to situate the origin of Jünger's "type" in the "typos" of the *eidos* and "idea" and to infer the onto-typo-logical constitution of ontology in general. Whatever this constitution may be, the "Being" of the "figure" is thought by Jünger, in the wake of Goethe's morphology, as "figure." The "type" is merely its embodiment or representation. Thus, I use here the concept "morphontology," or *ontomorphology*, in order to designate Jünger's most fundamental notion.

20. Hitler was not the first to consciously and systematically practice this politics of self-extermination in 1945. Jünger, in 1932, drew up the formula of its system in the opening pages of *The Worker*. He writes there of the "motor," the symbol of our times: "It is the audacious plaything of a breed of men that can blast itself into the air and still glimpse in this act confirmation of order" (*Worker* 37). Jünger calls this "posture," which is a "blast," "heroic realism." But just as Jünger's objectivity is that of the *universalia in re*, so is his "heroic realism" without risk, since he can always trust that, in the event of a loss of reality, he would still gain its concrete universal: a "nothing" that serves to confirm "Being." The obsession with work—not only in fascism, of course—is the obstruction of work. It can only be understood in the context of what is described as the nihilism of work.

21. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 259–60.

22. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 630. The English translation is from *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 526.

23. Lacan, "Fonction de champ de la parole et du langage" (*Écrits* 248, 249; in the English, 207–8). A footnote to this paragraph notes that in 1966 it was "*récrit*," rewritten or reworked.

24. This word formation, as one says rather appropriately in English, "doesn't quite work." It doesn't "function" properly, just as most of the "words" in *Finnegans Wake* do not "function" properly yet allow something to happen for precisely that reason. In Latin, the word *allabor* does not exist, though *allaborare* (working, striving, toward something) does. *Allabere*, a derivation of *lapsus*, on the other hand, exists in the sense of "to slide toward, land, and unintentionally end up somewhere." Likewise, *labor* means "I slide, swing, fall, sink," just as the homophone *labor* (tottering under a burden) means "work, effort, oeuvre, need," and "torment." In the "word" *allaboration* (which conforms to the coincidences and conventions of the Latin language as little as do *affirmative* and *affiguration*), *lapsus* should likewise be heard: the tottering, sliding, sinking, or falling, from which *labor* derives.

25. Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1962), 12:155; hereafter abbreviated "Remembering."

26. In exactly this sense, it seems to me, Kafka speaks of the wish, in an aphorism from *He* (Franz Kafka, *Er* [1920; reprint, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965]): To hammer together a table, "and in so doing, to do nothing at the same time. But to do nothing not in such a way that one could say: 'to him, hammering is nothing,' but rather 'to him, hammering is an actual

hammering and, at the same time, also nothing,' whereby, no doubt, hammering would have become more audacious, more decisive, more real, and, if you will, crazier" (212).

27. Jürgen Habermas, *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 21.

28. Heidegger, "Zur Seinsfrage," 227–28.

29. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 243; hereafter cited parenthetically as "Humanism."

30. See notes 9 and 12 above.

31. See Martin Heidegger, "Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager in Rußland," in *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944–45)*, vol. 77 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995), 236.

32. Martin Heidegger, "Αγχιβασιη—A Three-Way Conversation on a Field-Path between a Researcher, a Scholar and a Wise Man," in *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944–45)*, vol. 77 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995), 71.

33. Advertisement for Anne Klein II, in *Elle*, American ed., no. 121, September 1995.

34. Paul Lafargue, *Das Recht auf Faulheit—Widerlegung des "Rechts auf Arbeit" von 1848* (Paris: Oriol, 1883); reprinted as *Das Recht auf Faulheit und andere Satiren* (Berlin: Stattbuch Verlag, 1991), 48.

35. Stéphane Mallarmé, "Conflit," in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 358.

Chapter Nine

Sketches toward a Lecture on Democracy

1.

We are, it seems, numbed by democracy.

We are numbed by a thing accessible to us through hardly more than its so-called "public" representation in the media and through "universal" and "secret" elections. We are numbed by the thing called democracy because we—at least in many respects and at least in the numbered "majority"—feel ourselves to be a part or a *parti pris* of the so mediated democracy or democratic project.

And we are numbed by the concept, which even today is a conceptual weapon not only against totalitarian regimes but also against the feudal and later absolutist constitutions of the past, since the totalitarianisms of our more immediate past and present appear to us as their anachronistic relics, resurrections, or reformations. Due to a love of freedom and a hope for justice, we are prejudiced toward a constitution whose principles of generality and equality promise to grant us a maximum of universality. But beyond these rational principles, we are also affectively numbed by it in a double sense: We are hypnotized by the suggestion that these principles of universality might be at least virtually in force, if they are not yet actually so; and we are paralyzed by the suggestion that these principles cannot be surpassed or questioned since they are the ultimate principles of political organization.

We are, as one says so clearly in American English, "under the influence" of a drug called democracy that clouds our vision and limits our capacity for action. Whoever is numbed by a thing cannot attend to it with sober senses, cannot participate in it carefully, and cannot have it completely under control.

But if we are, as I suppose, really numbed by democracy or the suggestion of democracy, the supposition of this numbed condition must be accompanied by the other supposition that these two—this suspicion and this numbness—belong to the structure of the democratic project, that democratic principles cannot function without this numbness and suspicion, and that it is democratic to be suspicious of democracy and to be caught in this suspicion.

Therefore, under the conditions of this ultimate political principle and the corresponding principle of suspicion, two hypotheses force themselves upon us immediately. These hypotheses may throw a certain amount of light on some of the most virulent phenomena of democratic politics. And if they do so not as *scientific*—that is, not as sociological, historical, political, or politico-economic—hypotheses, but rather as sketches of *possible* hypotheses and as mere outlines of *self-imposing* figures of explanation, then they might have the advantage of provoking the obligatory democratic suspicion always piously devoted to knowledge and science and, thus, provide an occasion for what is called "discussion" in this democratic age. For scientific propositions are either indifferent to democracy and, consequently, in principle irrelevant for it, or they uphold the disposition to democratic discussion and, therefore, have the status of suppositions that can be refuted at any time. The following observations were written from the perspective of their possible refutation, but as questions concerning the historical structure of theses, hypotheses, and axioms, as questions concerning the structure of faith, doctrine, and opinion, and finally as questions concerning the very premises of discussion, they bring these very terms within the perspective of their instable validity: they put discussion itself up for discussion.

The first supposition concerns the finalism of the concepts of democracy. Since Herodotus (in whom the word occurred for the first time), it has been supposed that the *plethos archon* is one of the two extreme possibilities of the constitution of the polis. The other extreme is monarchy, and the two are mediated, separated, and connected through the compromise of oligarchy. This triad of constitutions—differentiated and theoretically founded by Aristotle and Plato—remained valid until this century as a rough scheme of orientation on the playground of political constitutions and represents a three-step scale ranging from the smallest to the greatest quantity: from the one of monarchy, through the few of oligarchy, to the many of democracy. But the two extreme positions must have in common that they always embrace extreme unities. Democracy, embracing all full citizens, is the unity of those endowed with the right of political decisions and, therefore, comprises a totality that cannot be surpassed. Accordingly, Cicero speaks of the *civitas popularis* in the following terms: "Illa autem est civitas popularis, in qua in populo sunt omnia" (And that in which everything is in the hands of the people is a "popular" state).[1] The totality of citizens or of the "people" secures the pure immanence of political practice, its *autarkía*, its self-

sufficiency, and the possibility of a political practice that contains in itself its own purpose and remains free from all determinations that exceed it or are derived from it. Only animals, gods, and idiots live outside the *polis*. (The supposition suggests itself that this statement would only be right if it were reversed: only animals, gods, and idiots live *inside* the polis; all attempts at political constitution should be directed at *them*.) Because ever since the seventeenth century those kept away from the instances of political deliberation and decision making (women, children, those without property, and "aliens") have only gradually and partially been defined as being capable of politics, it was historically only *very* recently that the universal imperative of the democratic principle, without ever achieving it, at least approached its fulfillment. This historical circumstance makes especially clear (and not only in abstract terms) the historicity, transformability, and expandability of the democratic *plethos*, and perhaps even the substitutability of the idea of democracy. Moreover, it also shows that the general problem of democracy lies precisely in the concept and matter of *generality*, in the flexibility of its definition, in the mobility of its borders, and in its precarious relation to a possible *Unity*. Democratic systems are quantitative systems for all those legally endorsed privileged individuals who orient themselves toward the one of monarchy through numeric relations and find their model in the personal presence of the One Ruler, the monarch. Just like the *politie*, the *demos* must also be a unity (as one) in order to be able to practice its *autarkía* effectively as a political corporation. Autarchy is monarchical even where the *autós* of the *demos* or the *politie* rules. The ruling instance is never the *people* but *one* people and, in this *one* people, never heteronomous economic or hedonistic interests but the selfhood and selfsameness, or even the *autós*, of this people *itself*. The one rules in its selfsameness and, through this selfsameness, its Good—the Good—is defined as the One that determines the unity of the people. But where the borders of unity are not fixed but movable and perhaps even infinitely expandable, the concept of the *demos* and its selfhood, along with the concept and matter of its rule, will be precarious.

The disagreement between Plato and the sophists as to whether the source of unity (which is first and foremost the unity of law) stems from *physis* or *techne* was settled by Aristotle's theorem of the auto-technicity of *physis*. In the age of the wars of Reformation, the question was settled by Thomas Hobbes through the idea of the *Imposition* of a One. The latter founds the unity of the Common-wealth and the unity of the sovereign (be that an abstraction like the "common good" or something concrete like the Parliament or the King) in order to put an end to the conflict of desires and interests as well as war with its lethal consequences. Only the one of the sovereign can withstand death, and only with the unity of the Common-wealth will war yield to peace. Like Bodin before him and Rousseau after him, Hobbes considered the ground of all empirical sovereignty capable of action to be the

people. But unlike his forerunner or his successor in political philosophy, Hobbes recognized more clearly that a people can only become *one* people through its own resolution, if it first formed a unity capable of making decisions. He found the ingenious solution to the problem of a multitude that is not *one* multitude in a *hysteron proteron*. The multitude from which unity emerges is only belatedly produced from the unity: "A Multitude of men, are made *One* Person, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented; so that it be done with the consent of every one of that Multitude in particular. For it is the *Unity* of the Representer, not the *Unity* of the Represented, that maketh the Person *One*. And it is the Representer that bareth the Person, and but one Person: And *Unity*, cannot otherwise be understood in Multitude."[2] Only the unity of the Representer engenders the unity of the Represented and transforms the multitude of conflicting singularities straining against each other into *one* consistent multitude under the *prosopon* of the single person of the Leviathan, the Common-wealth, the sovereign (be that the democratically self-governing people or the monarch). This "person"—as a mask, a visor, a substitute, a custodian, or an actor—is without any substance, content, or essence. It is a pure numeric function that not only brings unity to what it represents, but at the same time brings the represented into being and sustains it. Only representation makes the people into *one* people, and only the rule of representation through the One makes the people into a political corporation capable of rule. Since then, every democracy presents itself as a mono-democracy or a demonocracy and as the "cracy" of the *monas*. The common element is always the one. But the *monas* is the *imposed* One and not the reproduction of a naturally given unity: for Hobbes, the "natural" is what nature destroys. As imposed unity, the political corporation is essentially an *axiom*—a judgment, a belief, a doctrine, a principle, and foundation of all political order and of all sovereign use of power. Democracy is monocracy; the *monas* is *axiom*; the monarchy of the people in Hobbes's Commonwealth is the axiomatic outline of what is called a Community or a People, or what is called power.

At least since this first codification of the modern state by Hobbes, politics is not an arbitrary management based on experiential facts. It is as little founded on what is simply self-given as in Newton's *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (published some thirty years after *Leviathan*) nature still presents itself as a simple phenomenon. As in Galileo's *Discorsi* (which was published thirteen years before Hobbes's work), politics is built upon a *mente concipere*, a mathematical plan that exceeds and unites phenomena and secures their unity in order to guarantee their knowability and manipulability.[3] The unity of the community or of the people—and with this unity also this *self*—is a principle of decision and organization for politics. It is an imposition [*Setzung*] rather than a presupposition [*Voraussetzung*]. To be more precise: The axiomatic marking of a one is the pre-position [*Voraus-*

Setzung] necessary for politics to exist at all. The function of the one lies in the generation of a third force capable of bringing together two or more conflicting forces on neutral ground, of suspending the civil war, of preventing the impending fratricide, of protecting and preserving the life of rival parties. While Aristotle's Athenian *autarkía* could still be understood as the form of self-sufficient praxis and the form of the highest good, the *One Person* of the Hobbesian sovereign can no longer hold claim to the status of being the substantiality of the political community. The task of the Common-wealth and the modern democracy that it made possible is a neutralization that divests its individual elements of their "natural" impulses, their desires, their individual interests and, *a limine*, their bodily existence, and reduces them to elements of an arithmetic calculus through which the axiom of unity can be applied in all political processes. Consequently, the decisive second law of nature that Hobbes formulates in *Leviathan* declares, "*That a man be willing, when others are so too . . . , to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself*" (*Leviathan* 92, emphasis in original). This fundamental political law, as an initial gesture for the modern (democratic) state, describes the renunciation of all rights of the individual with the single exception of the right of resistance for the sake of self-preservation. If all rights must be ceded in order for the democratic state to come about, then individuals, groups, factions, parties must all be neutralized, so that they can cohabit the homogeneous, neuter *one* of the state. The politics of the axiomatically operating democracy is that of neutralization—even to the degree that politics itself is neutralized and becomes a politics of de-politicization. The unity of the one of the Common-wealth is no longer the self of the ousiologically conceived *autarkía* of the *demos*. Rather, it is the unity of the ascetically self-less, who only secure their pure individual existence against each other. The one of the sovereign state is moved into the position of the *ne ulter*, the neutral Third, whose only role is to guarantee the formal distance separating every One from every single other in order to secure the mere insistence of their existence. The only right that is secured for the singularities is that of resisting their representation through the One. At the same time, however, the axiom of the One is also secured, which—as an initial representation—can destroy all resistance. The antagonism between these two certainties permeates Hobbesian politics as well as democratic politics even today.

The formal concept of peace and of the state that Hobbes presented in 1651 was already formulated almost a century earlier by French jurists who were called *les Politiques* due to their politics of neutrality in relation to the fighting religious parties, as well as in Michel de l'Hôpital's memorandum from 1568 addressed to the king: The king gives to those who remain loyal to his laws and refrain from the political pursuit of the truth claims of their religious communities "liberty of conscience, or rather he leaves their con-

science at liberty."[4] Freedom of conscience, opinion, and religion are therefore only possible within the sphere of the state, which in principle must be free from all expressions of conscience, opinion, and religion, and must not be politically determined by these—in this sense, the state must remain neutral. As neutrality in this context is not a category of the suspension of the *civilitas* but of the suspension of the *guerre civile*, it is a function of the suspension of religious *wars* and not that of the religions themselves or the religious communities in which it articulates itself. The structure of democracy is the structure of the rendering possible of rival religious communities, churches, and parties. It is the political structure of the most diverse possible religious sects, heresies, *enthusiasms*, and idiotisms. As such, it is the structure of expansion and intensification of the religious within a political medium that subjects their free development to the single formal law of mutual toleration. The neutrality of politics in relation to individuals demands that they do not form a closed substantial community, only a constitutional society of individuals, individual groups, or communities, which therefore, under the conditions of a religious civil war, does *not* mean at all de-theologization, the dissolution of religious associations, properties, and matters of faith. To the contrary, it means the implantation of the religious impetus in the social constitution, the massing of the presence of the religious, and an equally intensive and extensive universalization of the primacy of religious preoccupations. The axiom of the neutral One, under whose aegis the religious parties are pacified and preserved, is not an irreligious or even anti-theological axiom. It is the axiom of the one heavenly "*Fiat, or let us make man*, pronounced by God in the Creation" (*Leviathan* 10) that creates the "Artificial Man" (*Leviathan* 9), the state, as the unity of God and man.

Contrary to what Max Weber and his school, as well as Carl Schmitt, claimed, the politics of neutralization that characterized early modernity, especially since the religious wars, is *not* a politics of secularization—it is a politics of theologization. As the age of religious wars was also the age of the first large-scale, lasting hegemonic phase of democratization, it seems evident that the structural theologization of politics corresponded to the principle of Protestantism (the principle of the one God of the faithful individual who is also a neutral God) and therefore assumed the form of a democratization.

Hence the formula (and this is the first declared supposition, the first suspicion): Axiomatization = Neutralization = Protestantization = Democratization.

This formula could only be substantiated through a work of the same caliber as Weber's study of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism and, as its counterpart, it could bear the title "Protestant Religion and the Spirit of Democracy." However, we must be careful to avoid one of Weber's methodologically and factually unjustified suppositions: he spoke of capital-

ism as a religiously *conditioned* and a morally and theologically *motivated* formation that during its development broke away from its conditions and motivations. Following Walter Benjamin, however, who in a very important fragment from 1921, "Capitalism as Religion," spoke of the "religious structure of capitalism" as an "essentially religious phenomenon,"[5] we would have to outline here *the religious structure of democratic politics* and explain that in the case of democracy we are dealing with *an essentially religious, Christian and, more precisely, Protestant phenomenon*, which rules even the smallest details of everyday life and the most insignificant intellectual gestures of political life in the neo-Biblical cultures of the West and its colonies.

This hypothesis is supported by a countless number of pamphlets, speeches, tracts, as well as the structural specificities of the political history of the last five hundred years, and it can also rely on the works of philosophers, writers, politicians, and historians. Nevertheless, as far as I can see, it has never been explicitly formulated as a thesis, a statement, or a diagnosis, not to mention being elaborated in a comprehensive examination. This state of affairs could have two explanations, if we discard the third, namely that the hypothesis is false. First of all, according to the criteria and practices that provided the standards of historiography ever since the eighteenth century, it might appear to be an excessively formal thesis without sufficient content. This reservation, however, could be transformed into a reservation against precisely those categories and practices of historiography that neglected fundamental lines of force in favor of a cloud of *petits faits* and *petits faitalisms*. The second possible explanation takes the insight into these very relations one step further: The silence surrounding the essential identity of democratic politics and Protestant religiosity could be explained by the claim that this identity regulates the discourse on itself and for this very reason can no longer be expressed. It could only be thematized by risking the danger that the axiomatic validity of this identity and everything that stands under its law—and, therefore, also the axiomatic of all those statements that would question this law—would automatically be undermined, damaged, disqualified. If all the gestures we are capable of within the theo-polito-logical complex in which we have been living for half a millennium are tainted, then so are also the formalizing, historiographic, political gestures with which we attempt to circumvent this complex. The hypothesis in question would then encounter a structural resistance, since it redoubles its object and, through this reduplication, simultaneously affirms and threatens its claim to unity and closure. At the same time, the hypothesis of the structural unity of Christianity and democratic politics (as well as capitalism) would be traversed by this split in such a manner that it could only be a divided, self-splitting, and self-discrediting hypothesis.

In short, the very structure of the hypothetical is at stake in this hypothesis. It does not only concern the axiom of unity in the constitution of the

political, the neutralizing function of this unity, or the intensification and growing intimacy of the religious that this unity makes possible. It is concerned with the status of the foundational axioms, the axiomaticity of these axioms, with the principle of belief, and with doctrine as the foundational principle and foundational act of the democratic operation in general, with the *actus fidei* and its *auto-da-fé*. The opinion and belief character of the democratic-Christian axiom, however, questions scientificity itself, which—since Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, and Newton—has become axiomatic, and therefore also raises the questions of whether and how doctrines could become objects of deliberation and discussion. Consequently, it is questionable whether the above outlined hypothesis could establish itself and whether it could submit itself to a democratic-neutralizing discussion. No hypothesis or suspicion could mark the highpoint of democracy if it did not question the possibility of "discussing" this suspicion.

This hypothesis has at least two powerful, if also ambiguous, supporters. The first is Hegel, the second is Tocqueville. The following discussion, for the sake of the brevity of presentation, is restricted to Hegel. He speaks about the identity of Protestantism and democratic politics in Europe with the severity of the glorious party member, while the Catholic French aristocrat soberly describes the advantages of American democracy and weighs them against its dangers.

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, in the chapter entitled "The Relationship of Religion to the State," Hegel apodictically acknowledges, "Universally speaking, religion and the foundation of the state are one and the same—they are implicitly and explicitly [*an und für sich*] identical. . . . There is *one* concept of freedom in religion and state. This one concept is the highest concept that human beings have, and it is made real by them. A people that has a bad concept of God has also a bad state, bad government, and bad laws."[6] Hegel builds his historical findings on this basic principle of the unity of religion and state: "In the patriarchal relationship and in the Jewish theocracy, the two are not yet distinguished and are still outwardly identical" (*Religion* 452). Religion and state first separate from each other in the Christian religions, but only to tie themselves to each other, since the Reformation, in the subsequent moments of Protestantization under the principle of a theologically conceived and politically constituted freedom: "This relationship has come about in Protestant states and it can occur only in such states, for in them the unity of religion and the state is present. The laws of the state have both a rational and a divine validity due to this presupposed original harmony, and religion does not have its own principles that conflict with those that are valid in the state" (*Religion* 453). The unity of religion and state, however, can only mean for Hegel that the state finds its foundation in the kind of unity that religion posits in the concept of God and, therefore, "the State rests on Religion."[7] If "the conception of God, therefore,

constitutes the general basis of a people" (*History* 50), its concepts of truth and freedom and therefore the general foundation of its constitution, then the highest concept of God must define the highest, unsurpassable concept of state constitution. But the highest (and therefore final and infinite) absolute concept of God implies that in him the universality and unity of pure thought is united with its reality in the individuality of all consciousnesses. In religion Spirit is its own object, and being bound to itself, it is the universal Spirit in the unity of the Self. In his Jena lectures, Hegel writes, "Absolute religion is this knowledge—that God is the depth of self-certain Spirit—thereby the Self of all. . . . He is a *Person* having a common spatial and temporal existence—and this individual [this individual person, as the Self of all, is no longer the merely thought but the real God] is what all individuals are. The divine nature is not other than the human."[8]

Therefore, all political ontology is onto-theology; absolute onto-theology is the anthropo-theology of the self-knowing Self that knows itself as consciousness and conscience; it is the theology of God incarnated in each individual Self and in the politically constituted community of this Self; it is political onto-Christology. As such, it may no longer put its faith in institutions of external authority, as it must assert its determination, its inexpressible interiority, and the interiority of its unlimited universality against all authorities of the church or state that try to dictate to the inner self as to an other. As the attestation of the godly inner self and the resistance against its subjugation by the merely external authority of the *ecclesia*, the Christian religion of the God present in every individual is essentially Protestantism. It is not in Roman Catholicism but Lutheran Reformation that absolute religion and the absolute God first manifest themselves through the principle of substantial individuality and individual morality. As Hegel writes in *The Philosophy of History*, "The Catholic confession, although sharing the Christian name with the Protestant, does not concede to the State an inherent Justice and Morality—a concession which in the Protestant principle is fundamental" (*History* 52). Already in the early text, "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" from 1795/1796, Hegel considers "the great foundation of Protestant freedom, the Palladium of the Protestant Church" that "it would contradict the very nature of religious opinions to decide them by majority vote, and because everyone has the right to settle for himself what his faith is. Thus the faith of every individual Protestant must be his faith because it is his, not because it is the church's. . . . All the rights which the church has over him rest solely on the fact that its faith is also his faith."[9]

The Reformation is a revolution that reverses the relation of the universal and the individual: It turns faith, which for Catholicism was faith in institutional authorities, into the ground of these authorities; and it turns the godliness of the individual self into the foundation upon which the community will be erected. Only with Protestantism, as Hegel defines it, does the faith in

the ecclesiastically organized community (as the faith in the other) become faith in God within the individual self and, thereby, faith as such in the first place as the absolute form of (self-)knowledge without objective correlate. Protestant society is the society of believers—in other words, the society of those who do not believe in society. Faith does not mean that one believes in something as in an object, a rule, a law, or an institution, since anything that occupies the position of an object, an objective relation, or a representation, as object, can only be an object of a knowledge and, therefore, never that of the Absolute, of Self-Knowledge, and so never the object of faith. Faith finds its ground in itself—which actually means that it has no ground in the sense of a *causa* or an *aitíon*, no motive, which could be arbitrarily replaced by another. The one who believes cannot name the reasons for his faith and neither can he refer to others as all the others in their turn had to believe first. Whoever believes does not believe in a fact, but performs faith and in this performance, and only in this performance, he is alone and singularly himself, the self-believer. Faith is unjustifiable, unsurpassable, absolutely certain, and temporally indefinite. Therefore, faith is, in every sense, the absolute relation to itself, but *not* as a relation to an object, but to itself as performance. This is why we can say that faith is the ab-solute relation as such: the relation of redemption from all facts, from all that is given and imposed, from all objectivity, superiority, representation, and from all structures marked by the prefix "pre-." It is, therefore, the relation of the absorption of all that is given *in* this redemption of absolution. As absolute faith, however, it is not the faith *in* a God that exists outside faith. Belief cannot be a striving outward of itself onto God, since in faith the believer is *by* God, *with* God and—as the peak of all blasphemies that is the ground of all religion—is *himself* God *himself*: the absolute God, the one and only, the *monotheos*, who does not allow itself to be duplicated, represented, imitated, not even *signified as* one without becoming a fetish. The community of believers is therefore not only the community of those who do not believe in the community, but also those who do not believe in the externality of God: it is the community of believers *within* God, the community *within faith*, and therefore, in principle, the community of the absolute isolation of the self.

Therefore, democracy would be in fact demonocracy and monotheocracy. It would not be just one among the many theo-political constitutions known by Hegel—neither the Jewish "patriarchal" theocracy of the authority of law, nor the "religion of art" of the Greek polis, which manifests its substance in beautiful forms and festivals, nor the Catholic religion of authoritative decrees and dogmas. Democracy would be the only genuine monotheistic religion since it does not represent the oneness and unity of God as something given and prescribed, and thus shattered, but performs it as the universal One of isolated individuals. Democracy would be an essentially religious, absolutely monotheistic, and fundamentally Protestant praxis. It would be the

prosaic reality of the permanent prayer of the isolated "I" addressed to itself as to the Christian, already arrived and forever arriving, Messiah, and therefore to itself as the universality of language. Democracy would be the state of realized pure reason, the transcendental political constitution of the faith grounded in itself, of the absolute I=I, a republic of Messiahs gathered in God.

Hegel leaves no room for doubt that with this Christian, this Lutheran Christian freedom, "the new, the latest standard was discovered around which the peoples rally—the banner of *Free Spirit*, present to itself, though finding its life in the Truth, and present to itself only in it." He calls this "latest standard," this *eschaton* of freedom for substantial subjectivity "the banner under which we serve, and which we bear. Time, since that epoch,"—until our time, here and now, from Luther to the second decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century—"has had no other work to do than the formal imbuing of the world with this principle, in bringing the Reconciliation implicit [in Christianity] into objective and explicit realization" (*History* 416; translation slightly modified). With the world-historical establishment of the principle of subjectivity and its incorporation within the state (since this is how we should understand this last statement), a form of state is realized that must be realized ceaselessly, and that turns every Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, and Catholic within its world-historical sphere structurally into a democrat and thereby also a Protestant. That the "people gather themselves" around the eschatological Christian and Protestant standard of the pure interiority of faith means that the Lutheran principle became historically the latest and world-historically the last principle of religion *and* thought *as well as* of politics. It means that with this highest principle the first all-inclusive "gathering" of peoples into the unity of a world comprised of the worlds of peoples is accomplished. And it means that through this becoming-one-world, with this "mondialization," the Catholic "mondialatinization" (that Derrida speaks of in his important essay "Faith and Knowledge") completes, cancels, and sublates itself through a *mondialutherization* that in turn—since it is the "latest standard"—cannot be completed, cancelled, and sublated.[10] Whoever enters this final stage of world history and grasps the principle of reformation and of the revolutions in its wake (whether he intends it or not and whatever he might call it) enters the world of Protestantism and the gathering of democrats. Hegel insists on this point: Once you enter this world, there is no way out of it, since it is the only world and the only gathering, the first as well as the last, the arche-eschatological gathering in the freedom of the universal self. But the one who belongs to it—that is, the one who belongs to the gathering of those who do not belong to the gathering of others—is numbed by it. He is self-numbed. He is taken and taken in by the gathering of the self because he cannot escape his own principle; and he is numbed by it because he only knows where he

stands with regard to himself and the self of others, but not where else beyond it or what other places he could go. With this final constitution he is at the beginning.

This democracy—the modern democracy of the individual that finds the principle of community and universality in its self—has existed since the Reformation. This, however, does not mean for Hegel that history is over, only that with it the history of democratization has begun. According to him, essentially two "ruptures" oppose its objective realization. It is the resistance of these "ruptures" against progress in the effective reality of freedom that makes it possible to grasp more precisely the inner structure of Christian democracy. If these "ruptures" run through democracy, then they also run through the theo-anthropologically constituted self and the axiom in which it defines itself: they are "ruptures" in the axiom of faith, the axiom of axioms, that provides the basis of the system of democratic operations and organizations. In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel writes the following about the latest phase of democratization, his own present: "There remains, on the one hand, the rupture occasioned by the Catholic principle, on the other hand, that occasioned by the subjective will" (*History* 451–52; translation slightly modified).

First Rupture: It begins when the principle of the unity of faith breaks away from the law of the church and its ally, God's mercy. It took place in an especially prominent way in England with the uprising of Protestants against Catholic monarchy. While the king claimed the privilege of being "a direct revelation of God," the Protestant insurgents held it against him that nobody—neither priest, nor layman—is exclusively entitled to such a privilege, since by virtue of his faith every individual has godly authority at his disposal. "Thus there arose in England a Protestant sect that asserted that the way a government must be conducted was imparted to it by revelation; following such inspiration of the Lord, they incited a revolution and beheaded their king" (*History* 454). The execution of Charles I is a historical fact, but precisely for this reason it is also a structural moment of Protestant democratic politics, which does not claim to be the principle of *each* individual without reducing the *individual* individual to the measure of all the others, the measure of the self. Whenever an individual demands a privilege against all the others and claims to be more than they, the *one* individual (that Hegel calls the particular, isolated from universality) must be made equal with the *other* for the sake of individuality. He must be shorn of his prerogatives and, as an individual, he must be adjusted to the common or communal measure, the measure of commonality: he must be decapitated. The equality of all individuals is not only indebted to the death of the unequal individual, it also defines itself through this death of an unequal self. With the monarch, particularity is executed in order to establish the commensurability of democrats and the axiom of their unity.

Therefore, three interrelated propositions emerge here:

- The democrat is he who decapitates the monarch.
- The democrat is the decapitated monarch.
- Only sui-regi-cide is democratic.

Furthermore, a fourth proposition also emerges:

- Democracy is the spirit of the decapitated king, with his head under his arm.

(For the time being, it must remain undecided whether "spirit"—following Derrida's important distinctions—means phantom, ghost, or *esprit*.) Therefore, he is the spirit of numbness, the spirit of astonishment [*Entgeisterung*] and of homogenization.

Consequently, democracy is not merely the politically constituted society of individuals who renounce the prerogatives of society but also of those who renounce the prerogatives of the individual individual. Its formula is: the one is the ones. To put it differently: the one only exists as its immanent and immediate multiplication. In still other words: the one is the possibility of its multiplication. In democracy, as the irreducible minimal structure of protestant democracy, the unity of the individual *recapitulates* itself as the spirit of always repeatable monarchization: Since all democratization is the re-democratization of monarchy, all monarchization is re-monarchization of democracy made possible by the structure of the one that multiplies itself; but this multiplication is only possible if it counts the many as unities and holds them together as *one* multiplicity.

The theological model of the democratic structure—which Hegel does not explain anywhere in this context although he uses it everywhere as his basis—is obviously that of the Trinity. With the monarch the claim of exclusive godly authority, the "direct revelation of God," and God himself were also killed; the murdered God is Christ, who dies *as* an individual *in* every individual, but resurrects in the spectral body of the unity of Rex and regicide and survives in the Christian spiritual community. In protestant democratization, along with the doctrine of the Trinity, the Christian salvation-history is also restaged and continued. Democratic society is the society of spirits in which the father-God murdered in the Son of Man survives. It is therefore neither simply theocracy or anthropocracy but both as *pneumatocracy*. The form of Trinity is legible in Gregory of Nazianzus's sentence quoted in Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology II*: "*To Hen stasiaston pros heauton.*"[11] It can be translated, on the one hand, as "The one always rebels against itself," and on the other hand, as "The one is always at peace with itself"—and the two

opposing meanings of *stasis* can be combined in the assertion that rebellion is rebellion against rebellion, and therefore it is the peace of the one.

(The mythical model of the survival of this conflict is King Oedipus, who blinded himself—Oedipus at Colonos is a democrat. But he is, contrary to what theoreticians of democracy always thought, the dispossessed, the exile, wandering in foreign lands who has to rely on the hospitality of others; he is not the autocrat, but the democrat who *mourns* all past and still possible autocracies, the monarchic as well as the monodemocratic. Whoever contemplates democracy will find the best material for it in Oedipus at Colonos. If Gregory's Christian formula were applicable here, instead of the uprising against the uprising, it would have to speak of the exile of the one in itself, of their *ekstasis*, of the wandering of the one in the other and the reliance of the one on an *infidel* and *incommensurable* other.)

In less formal terms, this means that democracy is essentially a cult—and not only the universal cult of faith as the principle of political institutions, but more precisely a cult of mourning or melancholy devoted to a past sovereign, and the cult of the awaiting of a future sovereign. And even more precisely: mourning or melancholy over something that is *still* there and *already* imminent, and the awaiting of what is *again* there and is already disappearing; therefore, it is a phantom-mourning and phantom-awaiting of sovereignty. The spirit of democracy, torn between these two extremes and the split itself between them, is the last, incurable, universal derangement of spirit without antithesis—although Hegel speaks of the English rebels and the peasants of Münster around Thomas Münzer as fanatics (*History* 435), he must acknowledge them as significant agents of the world spirit. Democracy is structurally an inter-regnum, historically always between two monarchies, in its constitution regularly a bureaucratic compromise between anarchy and dictatorship—Hegel calls the German small state after the Peace of Westphalia "a *constituted anarchy*" (*History* 436). Thus, from Milton and Locke, Montesquieu and Tocqueville, to our own days, its theory has been a theory of the separation and balance of powers, a theory of the in-between, the balance of extremes, of mediation and reconciliation between warring parties or rival interests—the theory of inter-regnum between one death and another. Its motive is easy to identify: founded in the relation between the self-knowing of the individual and his universality, between God and his death, between the sovereignty of conscience and the sovereignty of states, democracy is the political form and not the synthesis of potentially clashing powers, but rather the form of their vague, always corruptible neutralization. Democracy must be able to be *neutrum* before it can be an *uterque* and an *unum*. It is, however, not the one nor the other, nor the third. Hegel, therefore, describes it as a frenzy between its extremes. This frenzy, which sometimes involves the most brutal violence, this trembling of democracy in its inter-regnum, might be the

only form in which the reign of the one and its singularly ungrounded and unbearable sovereignty between two sovereigns can realize itself.

The English "fanatics," writes Hegel, "wanted to govern the State directly by the fear of God; the soldiery sharing the same fanatical views prayed while they fought for the cause they had espoused. But a military leader now has the physical force of the country and consequently the government in his hands: for in the State there must be government, and Cromwell knew what governing is. He, therefore, made himself ruler, and sent that praying parliament about their business" (*History* 435). With Cromwell's death and the restoration of the old dynasty after his death, the movement of interiority once again suddenly shifts to the extreme externality of the Catholic immediacy of God, and only with the French Revolution—the complement of the German Reformation—can it regain power. But, as in a compulsion to repeat, the same scene repeats itself one more time: "The principle of the Freedom of the Will, therefore, asserted itself against existing Right" (*History* 446); "Suspicion . . . brought to the scaffold the Monarch, whose subjective will was in fact the religious conscience of a Catholic" (*History* 450); "Never since the sun had stood in the firmament . . . had it been perceived that man's existence centres in his head, i.e., in Thought, inspired by which he builds up the world of reality . . . a spiritual enthusiasm thrilled through the world, as if the reconciliation between the Divine and the Secular was now first accomplished" (*History* 447). Again, like Cromwell, Napoleon establishes himself as an "individual will at the head of the State"; and the religious, Catholic disposition of the people again overthrows this "colossus"; and again the "farce" (*History* 451) of a decadent Catholic monarchy is erected that opposes itself to the newly established laws of reason based on the Protestant spirit, so it will be overthrown by them. And so on, and so forth.

This etcetera of the shift from the Protestant principle of individual reason to the Catholic principle of positivity, from the "individual will" at the top to the institutional common will, from free singularity to objective coercion, could be seen as a propagandistic scheme in Hegel's crusade against a particular reactionary Catholicism in favor of a progressive Protestantism. But the diagnostic qualities of this construction are obviously not yet fully exhausted for the democracies of the twentieth century: for the presidential and chancellor democracies, the prime minister democracies, and especially those which, like the Weimar or Bolshevik forms, turned into dictatorships, the so-called party-dictatorships. In all of these, especially in American mediocracy, the "farce" of the objective universality of reason continues with the sometimes monstrous risks connected to it. The constitutional monarchies are "farces"—all, without exception: the party-monarchies, media-monarchies, presidential-monarchies—because in them the state's power of decision is actually empty and functions as a mere instrument in service of partial inter-

ests, as a rule, in service of the interests of capital. The state as the instrument of techno- and ideo-economic interests is thereby in constant danger, and mostly it is exposed to the danger of becoming the instrument of these interests in a civil war against the "citizens." We should not have any illusions: This civil war exists; it is a world civil war and a war against world citizenship, which carries on its business by all possible means—through internal and external colonization, political mass murder, disguised and open exploitation, violent subjugation and pauperization, the concentration of and deprivation from work, and through the no-less-violent though less-noticeable means of mass manipulation and delusion, even among political intellectuals, neutralists, liberals, or professional moralists. All this, in the name of democracy and under its protection.

Against such instrumentalization through economic or ideo-economic ratio, the system of constitutional hereditary monarchy favored by Hegel, at least at one point, attempts to assert the rights of a singularity capable of universalization in order to bring the "farce" to an end. *At the same time*, however, he *de facto* provides the formula of the frenzy of the democratic system. A famous, much-discussed passage of the *Philosophy of Right* describes the monarch as a concrete individual, a natural and reasonable person, who simply adds his decisive "Yes," "I want," and his signature to the resolutions reached by the Parliament: "He has only to say 'yes' and dot the 'i,' because the throne should be such that the significant thing in its holder is not his particular make-up."[12] The monarch is *this* individual, abstracted from all other determinations, and therefore an unmediated singularity. As such, he is groundless will and groundless existence, grounded only in himself, free from all determinations and particular purposes, and to this extent universal, mere nature and mere spirit in one. He is—since all these determinations unite in this one—*faith* in person. As a positing grounded only in itself, free from all external determinations in a unity contracted in a "this," the monarch is the politically concrete axiom, the axiom of the axiomaticity of faith, the in-itself one and simple, indivisible affirmation. The state of all individuals can have its unity in him, as the democratic principle that the ruler must be one with the ruled is realized in him. The monarch—*this* individual—is the ideal democrat. In him, democracy sits on his throne, itself brought into existence by the extreme instance of this disappearing throne. But the monarch has only *formal* existence. His decision—and the whole existence of his will is only decision—can always only be "Yes" and "Amen," whose content depends on the decisions of parliaments, committees, councils, pressure groups, the interests and desires of parties, estates, classes. The monarchic democrat dots the "i"—and while there is no "i" without a dot, the dot that he puts there and that he himself *is*, can only be a dot if it is separated from the "i," if it is the ab-solute, detached, separated, and decapitated head of the King. In English: *The axiom axed*.

The idea of the Hegelian state is that of a democracy of monarchs—*after* the Protestant English revolution and *after* the Calvinist-rationalist French revolution—a democracy of monarchs without heads, of monarchs without monarchy, of surviving Spirit-monarchs. All citizens of a state and, at least in principle, *all* states of the world are brought together in the body of the king separated through a light cut—but they also fall apart in him. Since the point of the king is not only a "Yes" to all, to the totality and infinity of the freedom of the individual, but also a "Yes" *for* all, it is also a toy and a tool of the majority of the moment. In his *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right,"* as a commentary on the passage discussed here, Marx claimed correctly, it appears to me, that "democracy is the truth of monarchy," but incorrectly, it appears to me, that "monarchy is not the truth of democracy."[13] Maybe it *should not* be, but it is, in direct contrast to Marx's here still Rousseauistic conception of the *demos*: The principle of monarchy and of democracy cannot be separated from each other; the split runs through both, through the structure of universal selfhood common to both, and asserts itself as the Catholic resistance in the Protestant principle—thus, as a split in principle. The monarchic democrat is only the *form* of a self and the *form* of a will without an object, content, or interest, and this is why it can only be the empty place of civil war and, like every place and every body, it can become at any moment a weapon in this war. Such is, it seems to me, the "rupture" that stems from the "Catholic principle" of heteronomy, which still traverses the system of speculative democracy in which it was supposedly sublated. If the principle of the democratic state is only a principle of association in that it is at the same time a principle of dissociation (and as dissociation of association, the dissociation of the principle itself), then democracy is always—even if only latently—a form of depoliticization and denationalization and, therefore, a de-democratization. Its enemies over the past centuries were right: Democracy is anarchization, but only if it is based on an excess and a recess of the self in which it is founded.

Second Rupture: Hegel calls it that of the "subjective will" and describes it as the "main feature of incompatibility," which presents itself "in the requirement that the ideal general will should also be the *empirically* general—i.e., that the units of the State [*Einzelnen*], in their individual capacity, should rule, or at any rate take part in the government" (*History* 452). What Hegel calls *liberalism* and describes as a formal and abstract concept of freedom rests upon the same principle that the Protestant Reformation and French Revolution set in motion and what can be found at the basis and the head of Hegel's constitutional monarchy. According to Hegel, this principle has a disastrous consequence: "The will of the many expels the Ministry from power, and those who had formed the Opposition fill the vacant places; but the latter having now become the government, meet with hostility from the Many, and share the same fate. Thus agitation and unrest are perpetuat-

ed" (*History* 452). This unrest is the unrest of permanent planetary civil war. It results from the relation of the one to the many; that is, from the arithmetic-demographic relation upon which all representative political systems are based. Universality, as an abstraction of all particularity, can recognize itself in the one and recognize its substantial identity with it only because the one, in its turn, is essentially an abstraction. The many, on the other hand, are all the *others*—this is why the relation of the one to the many is not one that it maintains with *itself*, but a broken and ruptured relation—a relation to an irrelation and so the devastation of relation itself. There is no relation of representation that would not be a relation of deadly violence. Hegel leaves no doubt about this fact of democratic politics: "The few supposedly represent [*vertreten*] the many, but all too often they only crush them [*zertreten*]" (*History* 448; translation modified). The same is true of the rule of the majority over the minority. Hegel calls it an "inconsistency," just as he calls the whole of the system of representation a "monstrous inconsistency" (*History* 448) and considers the two to be "the collision of subjective wills" (*History* 449). The collision is possible only because these wills are not simply the plural forms of *one* will, but because the will is not one in itself: It is composed of *the possibility of universalization* and the *resistance to universalization*—it is assembled from that which resists assemblage. The democratic collision of wills is the collision of the will with its resistance to itself, the collision of the will with what does not allow itself to be reduced to *one* will or to one *will* and, therefore, to the ground structure of subjectivity. The principle of democratic constructions—if it can still be called a "principle"—could be described as *self-resistance* and *resistance to the self*, as *antistasis pros heauton*: the resistance of the self to its universality, to its intelligibility, resistance to its unity and its countability as less or more—to the one and to the axiom of the one. But inasmuch as this resistance is resistance to number and arithmetic relation and therefore attests to something uncountable and irrelational; inasmuch as in its resistance it is always the attestation of an other, which does not join itself to the unity (not even the complex dialectical unity) of the will, of self-knowledge in faith, or to the unity of the self; and inasmuch as this attestation (or even only its trace) does not refer to a *determinate* other, to *one* other, or to the *unity* of an other, this self-resistance could be called more precisely a *self-protestation*. The "collision of subjective wills" and with it the democratic collision *par excellence* would not be possible without the protest of an *un-unified* and *un-universalizable* other *within* the will, in every *single* will and in the will as such. It would not be possible without a counter-will within the will. The structure of democracy, the structure of the democratic self, is its protestability, which is no longer its *own*.

Whatever is believed, willed, decided, or done can be doubted, transformed, or dismissed, either by what supports faith, will, decision, or a deed

as an I, or by another I or something other than the I. This possibility belongs to the conditions under which a faith, a will, a decision, an action can be accomplished as such, since the possibility of contradiction, transformation, or dismissal is not merely an accidental determination of such an accomplishment, but rather must be able to accompany every single deed if it is the accomplishment of precisely this and no other faith, will, or action. This is also true of faith itself. Since, according to its Hegelian description, faith knows no ground outside its self, for the very same reason it does not know any outside and therefore can be doubted or suspected by what remains closed off for it. The self-enclosure of faith turns it into the object of a suspicion that the self can turn against itself. And the same goes for all thought and all action: In principle, reservations, objections, oppositions against them are possible because the relation to an other that is not contained and, therefore, not enclosed in them belongs to their structure. What is believed, thought, or done can be *protested*—first of all, in the sense that it is capable of an attestation (*pro-testari*), it is offered and exposed to such an attestation; furthermore, also in the sense that this attestation must be able to assume the form of a resistance, an opposition, a refusal. As such, protestability is the structure of all possible expression. In order to be an expression, it not only must be answered, questioned, and doubted, it must be possible to suspend it not only in its validity but also to suspend, abolish, and obliterate it in its very existence, since it is exposed to some other in all its components for which it is enclosed and impenetrable. Whatever is said might contain evidence, but this evidence is missing from it inasmuch as it is said to another—even to the other in the self. And as every word is open to a counter-word, in order to *remain* open, exposable, and accessible for others, it must preserve its protestability, it must control itself and be un-attestable, unanswerable, and irrefutable. What is protestable must be improtestable, not due to accidental motives but to the very structure of protestability.

This duality of expression—of faith, thought, decision, and action—marks its "Protestant," Cartesian, and democratic moment.

Faith—which is authority in itself and authority of the self and as such the a priori of democracy—is a priori exposed to suspicion.

To the extent that what I think can be doubted, it can also be doubted that it is I who am thinking it; and, to the same extent, thinking presents itself as the movement of doubt concerning itself: the only thing that cannot be grasped by this doubt is its own ability to be exposed to doubt. Thought might direct against itself an infinite suspicion and thereby suspend all its determinations, forms, and tendencies, but in suspicion thought remains withdrawn from all further suspension and remains the hardest resistance to all further reduction. As suspicion cannot effectively turn against itself without finding itself confirmed in this turn, it is an extreme structure of thinking in which the latter presents itself as pure resistance to itself, as self-resis-

tance, impenetrable for itself. Its protestability is protest-stability: stability of protest against all protests that could turn against it, impenetrability of an attestation for all others, the impossibility of sublating suspicion. Protestability is improtestable. It is the impossibility of shaking up trembling itself, and what is sucked in by its movement—convictions, opinions, attitudes, and interests—will become a part of an unsolvable and often destructive conflict.

This Cartesian trembling—in which all predication and every content is destroyed and only the movement of trembling itself is preserved as the *fundamentum inconcussum*—is the form of democracy. It has no determination that it could not shake off, open to all and indifferent to all, it is merely the *form* of possible determinations.

The "collision of subjective wills" that, according to Hegel's description, characterizes the system of democracy is the collision of those who insist on the selfhood of the will and the sameness of all wills, but at the same time also on the particularity of their always ownmost "subjective" wills. It is therefore a collision within the will itself as simultaneously the instance of its universalization and resistance to this universalization, its attestation as well as the impossibility of its attestation, its law founding violence as well as its anarchic immediacy. In willing, it is always a particularity that protests against its own universality. It is always some other that protests and this other can never be reduced with certainty to a self, a will, or a self-knowing: it is never that which under all circumstances rightly protests. It is not only the protest of the many against the few who rule them that is democratic. It is not only the protest of the minority against the majority and, therefore, against those in power that is democratic. In principle, it is the protest of everyone against all others—even if this other is itself—that is democratic. The faith of the inner self in Protestantism (considered by Hegel to be the source of the modern democratic movement whose structure ever since has been the ground of all democratically founded constitutions)—that is, the faith of the individual that he possesses truth in himself and that he can turn this isolated truth into the criterion of all the resolutions of society, in other words, a faith that knows no other, only its own, and therefore excludes all *other* others—turns out to be, during the second great democratic revolution (the French Revolution), a Catholic residue that provokes "absolute distrust" and absolute protest. The regime of virtue and republican disposition follows the same law as the regime of faith: as the latter is only founded in itself and denies the validity of all external facts, the democratic disposition "can only be recognized and judged by disposition" (*History* 450). Where faith, disposition, and virtue rule as the principle of democratic decision, the suspicion also rules that it might not be true faith, the right disposition, real virtue. As soon as they are suspected, they are also judged and excluded from the community. Hegel writes, "For Subjective Virtue, whose sway is based on disposition only, brings with it the most fearful tyranny. It exercises its

power without legal formalities, and the punishment it inflicts is equally simple—*Death*" (*History* 450–51). The principle of the subjective interiority of faith or of thought that escapes all control by the community finds its only community in universal suspicion and death. Suspicion and death define the politics of the democrats who, like Robespierre, take politics seriously.

Suspicion and the *terreur* of suspicion, this Fury of abstraction, is the form of democratic universality. It ruled over the birth of democracy during the French Revolution and still dictates, although more latently, the law of democratic societies. And it certainly does so in a manner that is right, in order to establish and preserve that which is right, to protect rights, your own as well as others', to promote the rule of law and to stabilize the state of law along with the securities that it guarantees, to be certain of itself and of the others, of its own and of the others' socioeconomic status and "psychic identity," as well as of its political possibilities of action and choices related to lifestyle. For all this, the essentially democratic and essentially right-democratic suspicion (as it is practiced daily and hourly by all the organs of jurisdiction and executive power, up to and including the police) is certainly indispensable. Even the timid, always egalitarian and compromise-oriented association of democrats with each other, which shuns all suspicion, bears witness to the presence of the internalized police, as the politeness of civilized behavior bears witness to the violence of suspicion that should be neutralized by it. Democratic politics—even in the most insignificant (and perhaps only for this reason insignificant) gestures and perhaps even in the thoughts one forms of it—is based on the police technique of suspicion. Death, so-called social or psychic death, as in the time of *terreur*, is among its consequences (whether in educational or cultural institutions, in offices or factories, in committees, parties, or parliaments), but nevertheless a death under the democratic principle of a final control of the individual by other individuals who pretend to a community that is only operational in the structures of suspicion, distrust, condemnation, or contempt.

(For this democracy of the "collision of subjective wills," for this Christian community of the *collusion* of *subjectivizing* wills, for whom the *communio* in *Christus* became the political-policing form of communication *par excellence*, Maurice Blanchot in his short story "The Madness of the Day" brought the Biblical formula of the Two, in whose middle He is the Third, into a context that still dictates the order of the day: "Of course neither of them was the chief of police. But because there were two of them, there were three."[14] And his friend, Emmanuel Levinas comments, "It suffices for there to be two for the powers to be served. To tell a story, to speak, is already to make a police report."[15])

This suspicion concerning authorities and traditions has become the schema of democratization, and it *remained* the schema of a social technique and a politics that submits the authority of the particular to an unreserved formal-

ization in faith, will, and self-consciousness. Suspicion has always been the agent of civil legislation and still is the moving force behind the correction, protection, and expansion of the rights guaranteed by law. But through these rights and the social rites supporting them, suspicion leads to a system of conformism under which every emotion, thought, and attitude must prove to be deficient. Since democracy can only constitute itself as a mere *form* of political society under the rule of suspicion if it cancels all determinations of content, the evidence for conformity in each particular case lies in the fact that the particular presents itself as nonconform and, therefore, owing [*schuldig*] conformity. Where the form of lack rules, every particular predicate of lack is not only suspicious but guilty [*schuldig*]: "*Being suspected*, therefore, takes the place, or has the significance and effect, of *being guilty*; and the external reaction against this reality that lies in the simple inwardness of intention, consists in the cold, matter-of-fact annihilation of this existent self, from which nothing else can be taken away but its mere being."[16] Suspicion, the democratic form of thought, makes one guilty, and the verdict is already its own execution. The universality of the self is the guillotine (*le peuple est "chacun son dépeupleur"*). But the guillotine—along with the social and psychic, discursive and non-discursive instances that prepared and continued its business—does not only work in the service of the Reformation, it is not merely its instrument or agent, it also *is* and (as Hegel would say) it also *completes* the work of the Reformation. It is the work of the *formation* of the self as universal and therefore the work of *re*-formation as a self united in its universality.

If the absolute terror of the French Revolution passes over into the sober order of the moral state, this move does not leave the *terreur* behind, but rather makes it into a decisive moment of the morality of the state as the fear of the "absolute master," the sovereign death. This fear, and along with it suspicion and guilt, defines the form of what subsists as society. Guilt is the form of the democratic relation.

Democracy is not only essentially identical with the reformed Christian church, it is itself, just like the latter, essentially a religion of guilt. Democracy is a cult of guilt, of making guilty, of being thought, sentenced, and judged guilty. Like capitalism, which accompanies and promotes it, democracy is a cult without atonement for guilt, a cult for which even the thought of a God who could redeem us from guilt is only possible as the suspicious thought of a God who is guilty and guilty in himself. Walter Benjamin, whose judgments hardly ever converge with those of Hegel, writes in the sketch "Capitalism as Religion," "A vast sense of guilt [*Schuldbewußtsein*] that is unable to find relief seizes on the cult, not to atone for this guilt but to make it universal, to hammer it into the conscious mind, so as once and for all to include God in the system of guilt and thereby awaken in Him an interest in the process of atonement. This atonement cannot then be expected from the

cult itself" (288–89). Benjamin's sentences about capitalism are also valid for democracy without reservations. As an *aitíakratie*, it always owes something to itself and therefore also to some other. This is why it *needs* a future in which it can pay off its debts, but for this it *owes itself* a future and remains itself to this future, as long as it remains outstanding, structurally in all its elements indebted.

But is this *owed* [*geschuldete*] future, this form of time specific to democracy, still a form of *time* at all? Is it not rather the form of the axiomatically defined figure of an imagined, ideal return into itself, and therefore the form of the self that through its own design returns to itself and always *must* return to itself? Is this *owed* time not the time of the subject that represents itself as *giving* itself and *crediting* itself with time? And is it not only because this subject defines itself as being *prognostic* that it can be *awaited*? If these conjectures are correct, then this *owed* future is nothing but return and its representation is a defense against that other time that comes without first being projected by a subject. This non-axiomatic, coming time is the dimension in which the *owed* future tries to maintain itself, but by which it is constantly brought into movement, unsettled, and opened. The "ruptures" in the democratic project identified by Hegel—the "Catholic principle" of insubstantial authority and the collision of "subjective wills" in the Reformation—could be understood as invasions by this other future. In them the self does not coincide with itself, but goes beyond or back behind itself as something alien: as mere arbitrary will, contingence, or as the infinity and indefiniteness of a guilty debt that it cannot atone for by itself. The concept of an infinite, unredeemable guilt, like that of an owed future, is aporetic and designates a "rupture" in the structure of the subject: "Thus agitation and unrest are perpetuated. This collision, this nodus, this problem is that with which history is now occupied, and whose solution it has to work out in the future" (*History* 452). But it will not undo this knot if it remains merely the history of the *self* and of the consciousness of *its* freedom.

The question arises whether such matters can be "discussed" at all. Discussion would mean exchanging and weighing arguments that submit to a common criterion, or more precisely, to the criterion of commonality. If this commonality, which is that of the consensus, lies in the faith in the self and, even more radically, in the faith that *is* the self, then this commonality can only be the terroristic suspicion of all against all, the sovereign society of the guilty sentence *à la mort*, and the linguistic community of the *speech ax* (the speech acts of ultimate axiomatization): "In this flat commonplace monosyllable syllable [*death*] is contained the wisdom of the government, the abstract intelligence of the universal will, in the fulfilling of itself" (*Phenomenology* 360). Such an insight could still form the ultimate wisdom of a discussion, an open, parliamentary, or scientific discussion. It would be the wisdom of a

conformism that considers itself to be the universal form of neutrality, but in reality serves partial political interests.

Therefore, we would have to have a discussion about the very form of the discussion. It belongs together with the formalism of democracy, with the axiomatic positing of social unity, with the hypothesis of structural identity of Protestantism and democratic politics, but also with the aporetic structure of faith, attestation, suspicion, guilt, and with what, in the aporias of autocracy, escapes all faith, all axiomatization, and all form.

We might be numbed by democracy and the discussions that take place within it and about it, and we might well believe that it is still democracy in which and of which we are speaking, but even this supposition is worth a second thought. The hypothesis of being numbed is not possible without the concession that things could be otherwise.

July 2002

2. NOTES TOWARD THE CLARIFICATION AND CONTINUATION OF "SKETCHES TOWARD A LECTURE ON DEMOCRACY"

Whence the urge to write a sketch? A sketch is not a fragment. It is a preliminary work, a project, a first test of the possibilities of composition, of accentuation, and of the arrangements of lines of force, of surfaces, and of colors, often with one or more details treated more precisely—probings and soundings. But the sketch has its own structure that makes it independent of its function. It is not only preliminary work on, and the projection of, a fully elaborated work. It is not only a first "step," as art and text historians say, always fantasizing steps leading up and down. The art of the sketch is the art of *détachement*—of redemption (also from its function for a coming work); of the parting of water, of surfaces, of space; of the relinquishing of the self to a phenomenon; of probing into dangerous zones; the art of animated attention and so also of restraint. It allows double perspectives, double and triple accents, blurs, deletions, and the omission of parts that in other contexts would be indispensable. As such, the sketch is precisely what the "elaborated work" is not: it is a first attack with open fields of retreat. A mobile outline. Every stroke in the sketched field suggests that it could be otherwise. The art of contingency and the art of contact with otherness.

The sketch is the form of the opening of a form—hardly a form, merely disclosure of form. It is the beginning of a form, ad-formative, affirmative, where it touches upon mere possibilities of form, not fixed, not stabilized, hurriedly touched upon as when someone glances at another, accidentally or deliberately brushes against a dress or mentions a theme.

Even where it is a *brouillon*, it must be clear in this one respect: something that remains distant must emerge from it, must surge forward in it, and must be imminent in it. Something must announce itself in it. The sketch is the ear, the fish trap, the net, in which this announcement takes hold of itself without ever being caught.

The phenomenon *plays around* the sketch and the sketch around the phenomenon.

No sketch that is not *fresh*. This freshness is the sign that something announces itself here whose ripeness is still to come. In the sketch something bursts open.

This is why it carries all the marks of speed. Its rapidity must correspond to the frenzy with which the evasive phenomenon could again distance itself.

What if . . . ? An exercise in conjectural analysis. What if democracy were constituted like such a sketch?

If the principle of organization of democracy corresponded to the formal principle of the sketch, the alternatives to a given constitution would always have to play into this constitution; possibilities of other decisions and legislation would have to leave their traces or announce themselves in what was chosen. The results of a decision should always make other decisions possible.

This, however, is not to be confused with the politics of party compromise; parties are already fixed instruments of organization and no longer show any signs that they themselves stem from compromises. The structural model would not be the generalized compromise (but what is a compromise?) between already defined powers but rather the compromise that leaves room for still undefined "powers."

Therefore, an *advocatorial* democracy that (1) stands for the right of every individual to have a voice—the right to a *votum* and a *vox* (regardless of origin, nation, faith, and therefore, more precisely, regardless of *language*); (2) stands for and commits itself to the expansion of the right to have a voice to all those who have none, whose voice is restricted, taken away, withheld, or only conditionally granted (women, prisoners, the sick, refugees, guests, the underaged, etc.); (3) stands up as an advocate for those who still do not, no longer, or do not at all possess a voice (children, the dead, animals, living and inorganic "nature"); (4) stands up even for that for which it is impossible to do so; through its advocacy it does not silence the speechless *for* and in whose favor it speaks; it opens up a space not only for the helpless, but also *for helplessness as such*.

This advocatory and ultra-advocatory democracy would always side with the plurality of all singular possibilities of power (it is not clear how, with what right, even the most extreme forces could be excluded, even if they threaten plurality itself), and it would even side with powerlessness. It would

be a democracy that risks its own progressive deprivation from power—and, therefore, it would offer the strongest resistance against every attempt by all possible forms of power to colonize its growing vacuum of power.

(If this resistance against power belongs to the structure of democracy the same way as its openness to the power of others "in" and "outside" it; if it belongs to what we called here *protestability*, then this resistance to power and the attempts at overpowering are not simply the achievements of a particular constitution, corporation, association, and not the achievements of a vague and sanctified "We, the democrats." Rather, it is the function of that *in*-determinability that distinguishes the structure of democracy itself. Democracy means that the one is [*for* each conceivable individual and therefore *as* this individual] *individuality itself* and the *as such* of individuality. If democracy means the rule of all in their individuality, then it must be thought—which also means practiced—as impossible to define *through* the other, since it must be thought as in itself determined *as* other and, consequently, as the self that is in itself other and other than *is*: the happening of the transcendence of totality in all its elements, alteration in itself. As it does not have the ground of its determination either inside or outside itself, it is the indeterminable as such: it is indifferent to sovereignty. It is neither a fact, nor *dabile*, but a simple perception and, as such, it is that which cannot be taken in, the unacceptable. The state of exception. This state of exception, which would be real democracy, has not yet arrived. What rules is the state of exception proclaimed every day anew by the axiomatizing, normalizing, and capitalizing powers. Benjamin against Schmitt.)

Brecht's Mr. Keuner, in the short story "Measures against Violence"[17]—Keuner as Nobody, as *utis*, Odysseus; and Keuner as *koinós*, universal. The universal is nobody, the undetermined that lets all determinations and powers run through it. It is letting itself. The measures against violence considered by Keuner amount to the deprivation of violence from its power through the withdrawal of counter-violence. Violence is only violence if it overpowers a power opposing it, if it encounters a smaller violence. If this resistance is reduced to an absolute minimum, violence loses itself along with its object. What violence makes possible, it also allows to perish. This letting-come-about is therefore not so much the accomplice of violence, since it is more powerful than violence; it is a violence above all violence, since it first opens up the field of violence: a field that does not offer it a hold, not even the smallest, upon which it could form itself as what it is. This letting is at the same time an allowing, a dismissal, and a desertion. Brecht's Keuner calls the protagonists of his story *Egge* (harrows), which comes from *Ecke* (corner), with the "ck" softened to "gg." The measures against (and *gegen* is also *eggen*) violence consist in an elusive softening. That which gives way in the face of violence clears a space for it, but also softens it up. One could also

read *Egge* as softened *Icke* in Berliner dialect and thus read it as *Ich*, as I. The subjectivity of the subject against violence is not that of the Ego but that of an *Egge*.

To the question "What is democracy?," no one will hear as an answer what it perhaps really is, what it could become, or what it should be. Essential questions demand essential answers. But if, rather than an "iron cage" (Max Weber), we understand democracy as a *medium* in which the identity of the "ruler and the ruled" can realize itself, then it must be grasped (1) as *historical* and consequently as never closed off; (2) as open to the demands of the ruled, who on the basis of historical obstacles and structural resistances to reorganization do not yet participate in power; (3) as open to the demands of those from whom it cannot be expected that they could ever raise empirical demands on power (children, future generations, etc.), whose in principle nonempirical and in no way *mature* demands (again with respect to democracy as a *historical* form of organization) still require to be heard. Every piece of knowledge concerning what democracy *is* must comprise knowledge about what it *was*, what it is *still to be* and still *can* be. (Democratic politics is conjectural.) Thereby, democracy would be characterized as a *medium* that is determined by the undetermined and the merely determin*able*, which always finds itself *de*-termined [ent-*stimmt*] from its determin*ability*. Its effective reality would be to determine itself based on its—past as well as future—possibilities, in order to concern itself with the unfolding of these possibilities and with the making possible of further possibilities. The determination of the essence of democracy could then be found in the determination of its possibilities. But as the latter implies in the most extreme case, the possibility of its absolute indeterminacy (namely, of the future) and thereby the possibility of powerlessness, advocatory democracy in its extreme form would have to be avocatory (*avocare*: to recall, to withdraw; *avocatio*: distraction).

The question "What is democracy?" remains in a democratic fashion (in this and in all other respects) open to what is to come. To be more precise: open to the fact *that* something can come, and open to its coming as such (a future that can always come from what has been and from what was missed in the has-been). This coming is the indetermination of the existence of the now and all of its objective elements; it is a stripping away of all of its attributes and predicates. What remains is *that* it gives in the now the openness of the now. The future is the *epoché* of worldly validity *without* an egological residue. (In this respect, Heidegger's considerations of the *epoché* radicalized Husserl's conceptions in his *Ideas*, but still not sufficiently so.) The future of democracy is the *epoché* of the validity of democracy *without* an egological or communal residue. What remains is, *hic et nunc*, its existence *out of the other*: its now already other existence, its existence *as* other.

In this sense, the coming of the future—as long as it exists [*es gibt*]—is democracy.

Democracy is only democracy if it is democracy *for* an other.
Democracy is its *for*.
And in this for, it is itself other.
(*For* as mere mediality.)

A politics that implies the *apolis*: *plitic*. (It does not concern the "pole" but the folds in it. Leibniz)

One of Rabbi Yitzhak's sayings about the coming of the messiah is preserved in *Tractate Sanhedrin* of the Talmud (97a): "The son of David will not come until the entire kingdom turns to heresy."[18] Rava quotes verse 13.13 of Leviticus as evidence: "It is all turned white; he is clean" (*Tractate* 7). This passage discusses a sick man whose skin is covered with white leprosy. We have to be very careful with the parallelization of the two quoted sentences. As the first sentence claims, the messiah will come only when and only after the whole kingdom turns to heresy. In the second sentence, however, there is no mention of a temporal sequence; therefore, it does not allow us to understand purity as a supplement, an addendum, to the whiteness of the whole body. It says that purity—and the messianic—is to be found in this whiteness itself. The messiah does not come after, around the time of the outbreak of his illness, in order to cure the kingdom of its heresy. The messiah does not come as an illness either. He comes as the completion of the illness, as the illness *itself*, mere whiteness. In him, the world will be reduced to what provides the bare ground of appearances as such without itself being able to appear. What comes and that it comes is not a phenomenon but the impossibility of the phenomenon, the unconditioned condition of possible phenomena, the suspension of all positing. If the messiah came to join what is and therefore came after it, then he would come as a determined historical figure still within the horizon of religious utopias of salvation, still bound to a time. His utopia is topicity itself, his coming is temporality, his only figure—the figure of singularity—is worldliness: without place, time, or qualities.

When Wittgenstein writes in 6.432 of *Tractatus* that "God does not reveal himself *in* the world,"[19] he is not speaking of God's transcendence, which would exclude such a revelation. He is speaking of the revealed state of the world. This revelation does not know any instances that would *not* belong to it, and therefore none that would be in the position to form (meta-worldly or meta-linguistic) statements *about* it that could be meaningful *in* it. The revelation of the world is *sans phrase*. It *shows* itself without showing anything. Therefore, since it only shows itself but not that it shows, this revelation of the world is not a particular language or an aggregate of languages. It is linguisticality. We cannot talk *about* it, since all such talk *about* it is the

continuation of a talk *within* it. This silence about it dwells in every sentence of language that can be spoken. The revelation of the world is linguisticality *sans phrase*, *lingua rasa*.

Crater. *Kratér*: vase, "coupe." (See Mallarmé's poem "Salutation": "Nothing, this foam, virgin verse / Only to designate the cup"—"*Rien, cette écume, vierge vers / À ne désigner que la coupe.*"[20])

The philosophies of the democratic era are transcendental philosophies. Could we also say—as Schlegel in his essay on republicanism, Hegel in his *Philosophy of Right*, and Marx in his critique of Hegel suggest—that democracy is the transcendental constitution of politics? Based on the works of these authors (and others as well: Rousseau, Tocqueville, Thoreau, Bakunin, Luxemburg, Benjamin), it could be shown that democracy is not a form, not a constitution, but the opening of form and a letting-come-about. Until the Protestant rediscovery of the idea of democracy, politics was a ruling based on the necessary: it was the politics of natural rights and of God's mercy. Since then, there has been a politics of the possible prepared by the grand theories and experiences of contingency and singularity. Since the democratic revolutions, the regimes and forms of political organization have been considered to be provisional and capable of being perfected, therefore—according to the logic of perfectibility—they can give way to other temporary measures. The experience that forms of government are transitional led in the eighteenth century by Vico to a classicizing cyclical model, and in the nineteenth century by Marx to a prognostic developmental model that supposedly led from bourgeois democracy, to socialism, and then to communism. These and other programs turned out to be so ineffective or disastrous in their consequences that they give us a clear image of the experience that constitutions are flexible and artificial, functions of interests and automatisms, which upset all constitutional stases. In the meantime, democracies became the organs of a mobilization that—even if it hardly touched the standard institutions of representation and parliamentarism—strives to implement advocatory principles with the ambiguous support of the press and other media. In this process, parties become a farce, since democracy itself must become a party, the party of the political, which protects the rights of politics against the interests of an economy increasingly independent of rights and of technology immune to rights. With the disintegration of politics and economy, it becomes clearly visible to what extent political tasks were neglected until now under economic pressure. The possibilities—and dangers—of the political are increasing, and it appears that one of the most decisive tasks of democratic politics is to make politics itself possible. In this sense, democratic politics has in fact long, and with ever-growing clarity, been transcendental politics: it secures the conditions of possibility of politics

as such. It can, however, achieve that goal as historical action only if it is not bound by fixed constitutional forms, or if these forms are submitted to constant redefinition. Moreover, it can only do this if it keeps itself open as form for still undefined demands, if it is capable of resisting limitations and usurpations threatening to eliminate the realm of the political. Therefore, it can only define itself as *adtranscendental* politics—and, as such, certainly not as the counterpart of a form of *l'art pour l'art*, which has nothing better to be concerned with than itself. Based on these two reasons, for the sake of the un-programmability of the future and for the sake of the achievement of what is better (which is the goal of politics as such and which from Plato to Benjamin was called "happiness"), a place must be kept open in democracy, in its constitutional forms and its decisions, for that "whiteness" that the Sanhedrin talked about.

"Poetry is republican speech: a speech which is its own law and end unto itself, and in which all the parts are free citizens and have the right to vote [*mitstimmen dürfen*]."[21] Where are the limits of this law that is its *own*, the limits of its *own* purpose? Under what circumstances can there be such limits? In what sense can we still talk about *parts*? Does the being of the "parts" of speech restrict itself to being a *citizen*? Why does Schlegel say that they "*have the right* to vote"? Are we allowed to use these terms when it comes to voting and agreement? What does *free* mean here? Is this aphorism, without being *poetry*, itself republican speech? Or a *part* of it?

Stabilization and monopolization are attempts at mastery over a threatening and evasive reality, which take their first clue from the structure of idealities (preferably mathematical idealities), since these promise a certainty of orientation beyond sensible certainties, a constant, steady, universal measure, gained through an iterable position indifferent to time, sanctioned by technical guarantees and practical use. These first grand gestures of mastery in the axiom of numeric and figural idealities are tightly bound to the philosophical sciences. (Plato put the saying above the entry of his academy that no one may enter who does not do mathematics.) These first gestures of abstraction imbued with power already contain theological implications and standards for behavioral techniques, which under increased necessity for protection combine to form a complex of norm-breeding norms that can last a long time. The result of these gestures of mastery would be the death of civilizations that came from them; but the avoidance of these gestures would likewise deliver these civilizations to death. The only hope lies in their internal contradictions: mastery is always overpowering *and* management, attack *and* protection. The expansion of capital and bureaucracy are its exponents. (Explain how the two come in each other's ways. How the juristic delimitation of this terrain must satisfy itself with contradictory double imperatives: re-axiomat-

izations of the algebra of rights, re-semantizations between the two fronts of interests of protection and colonization, etc.) But: this movement, which calculates every possibility, *cannot account* for the "external" resistance of those who should become objects of these masteries. This resistance is incalculable since it comes from that which is not yet and perhaps never will be defined, and therefore, not yet and perhaps never will be in the position of an object. It is the non-axiomatizable, the non-definable, non-semantizable. And so neither re-semantizable. (It is that which is devoid of the axiomatizable.)

Insert—according to the logic of the *sudden idea*, where the *occasion* offers itself as an *à propos*—figures of such an opening and figures of the informal from texts that do not prove anything, yet through which something still allows itself to be *shown*.

(The pathos of democracy, in spite of its alliances with bureaucracy, is the pathos of the informal.)

References to Schlegel, Melville, Whitman, Mallarmé, Valéry, Stevens, Beckett, Celan. The grand tendency of literature, even in its passing alliances with the agents of the police and religion, is the tendency toward democracy—beyond all the forms that its constitution ever assumed. Literary existence is democratic existence. Since the beginning of *literature* its protest against literature, therefore its movement into the blue, its *pas au-delà*, its "vagance" as well as its extravagance, the furor and the melancholy of its progress in composition, in the sentence, in the arrangement of voices and that which has no voice.

In literature, music, painting, sculpture, theater, cinema, architecture, "the question of organization poses itself"—and in all of their works they offer attempted orders that do not answer the question but keep it in motion. The domain of art is the politics and resistance against this question—*hypsípolis*, *ápolis*. It is, in every sense I have touched upon here, protest, protestability, and the distancing from it. (Even in the sense of "aut *prodesse* aut delectare," although again not in an etymological sense.) This question of organization, often through *the way* it is posed, already closes the question concerning the *possibility* of protest. Here too, it is less a question of form than of the opening of form, the opening of the form of organization. And so of the infinitesimal excess in the gesture that attests and confirms something and thereby turns itself to some other and invites this other (always in another way).

Maxims for democrats: Write in such a way that you invite the other—to speak with, to speak against, to speak of the other, to begin speaking, to speak with speaking—*with* it and not only *about* or *concerning* it. But it is an *invitation* that must leave the invited the freedom not to follow it. (This is still about the "method" of "sketching.")

Henry David Thoreau: "I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose, if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men."[22]

The thought of neighborliness that serves as the basis of Thoreau's ideas about the state and civil disobedience relates all the elements and institutions of constituted society to a space. Those who recall the discussions in the relevant writings of Plato and Aristotle devoted to the position of the polis can have a concept of how far removed the considerations of this great thinker of American democracy are from the theories of the classics. The Greek *pólis* possesses a border and reduces itself in all its functions to one point: it is the *pólos*, the pole, the axis, on which and around which the world of its citizens turns. The space of the polis is the concentric (or spherical) space whose points refer to its center for the maintenance of communal life and define themselves through this center. The Roman myth of foundation, as it was told by Livy, begins the *urbs* and *orbis* with the drawing of a border, with the division between inside and outside, and with the orientation of all republican interests around a center of decisions, which defines the political as monopol-political space. Politics, especially the so-called politics of expansion of an *imperium*, consists of the reduction of space to a point. (It is therefore to the same extent a politics of idealization and a politics of power.)

Thoreau's space is not a *political* space in this classical sense. If I am not mistaken, nor does he favor what, in an exclusively political realm, is called "polarization." When Thoreau conceives of a state that can allow itself to treat the individual with respect as a *neighbor*—as his neighbor—and allows the latter to live removed from the state ("aloof") and not surrounded by it ("nor embraced"), then he is not thinking of a relation of subordination, nor the enclosure, orientation, and definition of the individual by a state that represents him and, therefore, establishes him as an individual presence in the first place. Rather, he is thinking of a relation of coordination, the side-by-side and the by-each-other of individuals and between the individual and the state: not the *political reduction of space*, but the *civilian extension to space*. Neighborliness is for him the proximity of those who live together without their places having been assigned by a central authority. Distancing—which is impossible in the political contraction of space to a point—first opens itself in the proximity of the neighbor. It is the *spatium* that grants them the possibility to be together as individuals. Distanced from the state and unaffected—and, therefore, *not numbed*—by its politics, without having to get involved in it and without having to disturb its peace (repose), the individuals are not the individuals *of* the state or individuals *through* it. They are not subjects but *neighbors* of the state, which is itself a neighbor among neighbors.

Society—in the proximity of the distance that neighborliness makes possible—does not concentrate itself in a sovereign self in which the universality of the individual wills could be represented but maintains the distance to the self, the universal, and representation: It is only a society thanks to the distance of the side-by-side, that comes *from* its "beside" and proximity, from the "by" of a by-each-other, that must precede all representation and turns it into an unrepresentable society. This practically organized society, since it is its *para*, *ad*, *at*, *by*, and *next to*, and thereby the space of its proximity itself, could be called in a non-Hegelian sense society *an sich*: not *in* itself but *next to* or *close to* itself. It is the closeness of its "there" and thus its very possibility. Its *ousía* is *para-ousía*; its essence is presence as being-toward [*An-wesen*]. Its form comes from the *anamorphé* of affirmation. Thoreau can attach to it the idea of justice and "the duties of neighbors and fellow-men," since the closeness thought by him is *eggytes*, which is the ethical itself: the possibility of being-by-each-other and being-by-itself.

(This space of proximity neighbors on the mere whiteness that the Sanhedrin speaks of; and, again, the closeness that Hölderlin's poems speak about: "Near is / And difficult to grasp, the God"—"Nah ist / Und schwer zu fassen der Gott."[23])

Charles Olson devotes the opening sentences of *Call Me Ishmael*, his book about Melville's *Moby Dick*, the white whale, to space: "I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy."[24] This space, the space of American ethos and of a new possibility of what we still call democracy, is without mercy (without appeal and improtestable), since it opens up the possibility of appeals, testimonies, and protests. This space, for some time now, has been about to close itself.

March 2003
—Translated by Roland Végső

NOTES

First published in English translation in *theory@buffalo* 10 (2005): 9–53.

[In the opening sentence, Hamacher uses the German term *benommen* (and, later, *Benommenheit*) whose semantic field also includes such meanings as "bemused," "dazed," and "muzzy." Furthermore, through its connotation with *nehmen*, it could also be translated as "taken."—RV]

1. Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and on the Laws*, ed. James E. G. Zetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19.

2. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 114; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Leviathan*.

3. For more about the *mente concipere* as a foundational gesture of axiomatizing modern science, compare with Heidegger's *The Question Concerning the Thing*, trans. W. B. Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967).

4. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *State, Society, and Liberty: Studies in Political Theory and Constitutional Law* (New York: Berg, 1991), 36.

5. Walter Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion," in *Selected Writings: 1913–1926*, vol. 1, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 288.

6. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1., ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 452; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Religion*.

7. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 51; hereafter cited parenthetically as *History*.

8. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805–6)*, trans. Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 175–76.

9. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 121.

10. Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 67.

11. Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie II: Die Legende von der Erledigung jeder politischen Theologie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1970).

12. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 289 (addition to §280).

13. Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right,"* ed. Joseph O'Malley, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 29.

14. Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day*, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1981), 18.

15. Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 179.

16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 360; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Phenomenology*.

17. Bertolt Brecht, *Stories of Mr. Keuner*, trans. Martin Chalmers (San Francisco: City Lights, 2001), 3–4.

18. *Tractate Sanhedrin, Part VII*, in *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition*, vol. 21 (New York: Random House, 1999), 6; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Tractate*.

19. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922), 187.

20. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, trans. Henry Weinfield (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3.

21. Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 65.

22. Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," in *Thoreau: The Major Essays*, ed. Jeffrey L. Duncan (New York: Dutton, 1972), 129.

23. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, ed. Jeremy Adler, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Penguin, 1998), 231.

24. Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947), 11.

IV

Afterword

Chapter Ten

Amphora

:: The two canonical determinations of space—that it is extended and that it is divisible—are erroneous: space is extending and dividing.

:: Propositions about space give off the appearance of being independent of it, as of something foreign which can be said to have or lack properties without itself being involved, as if its play were not thereby affected. But every proposition is a proposition in—or at—a space; and every proposition opens a space (or closes it).

:: The concept of extension gives rise to misunderstandings: space presupposes no interior that could then, by extending it or spreading it apart, be progressively made into an exterior. The notion of extension sets out from a compact *origo* and then from an ego that supposedly relates to an "outside world" and experiences this relation as its expansion. But extension thus understood as an expansion of an interior never attains space as something without interior and without an opposite. It remains merely an externalized center of cogitation or perception.

:: Freud's remark about spatiality participates in this misunderstanding: "Spatiality may be the projection of the extension of the psychic apparatus. No other derivation likely. Instead of Kant's a priori conditions of our psychic apparatus. Psyche is extended, knows nothing of it."[1] The concept of projection, one of the most problematic in psychoanalytic theory, suggests a genealogical and spatial distance between the "extension" of the psyche and the spatiality of our perceptions—a distance that is traversed by projection and that supposedly permits the psyche to regard the image it has layed out, or the form of the image that is drawn from itself, as the outside world. Only,

the distance traversed by projection is already spatial, an extension that cannot be qualitatively distinct from the one which is supposed to characterize psyche itself. Thus, projection cannot traverse this distance; rather it must first project it itself. "Projection projects spatiality" would then mean: projection is the psychic mechanism that first opens up spaces—both intrapsychic spaces and those between the psyche and the outside world. If the psyche is extended, it is because projection is the process of its extension, the psyche of psyche, a spacing in the sense of a topical differentiation that first opens up a place for psyche itself and for its correlates. Since we must abandon the notions of a genealogical succession or of a derivative distinction between psychic space and external space, we may also not speak of a projection. It is a jection, a throw that extends and, without *origo* or orientation, spaces. (There is no thrower that is not itself already thrown and in the throw.)

:: Space must be thought as spacing: as granting-space and thus as an allowance of a space and as clearing-out, and thus as allowing the emptiness of space.

:: Space is not simply extended; it is not the asunder of discrete parts of a space or a place. To be in any way asunder would at the very least include the possibility of an interior, a contraction, or a condensation that is no longer extended: yet any interior—whether it be called ideality, cogito, or psyche—is in its turn spatial. Hegel's formulation that space is *die Außerlichkeit an ihm selbst* [externality in itself] corrects the massive and wholly unfounded privilege given to the exterior by way of its seemingly inconspicuous *an*: space is—and thus *is* not—not exteriority, but atteriority, laterality (and, non-geocentrically, aterrality).

:: The Thing *an* itself (*Ding an sich*). Space. Parataxis.

:: Space is not an object, it is not a being among or beside other beings. If one can only say of a being that it is, then space cannot be. (Hence the controversy over the "reality" of space and of the outside world, as they are discussed in philosophical texts since Plato at the latest.) Space lies by and beside itself, differentiated from itself, near itself. (It distances and dis-stances [itself].)

:: Space: the opportunity [*Gelegenheit*] of all that is.

:: Space means: without *origo* and without orientation.

:: Space is not extension, but tension, tensions, elongations, separations, accents. (Ictus, diaeresis, syncope, colon, *trema*, circumflex, grave, lenis, H, etc., according to Democritic rhythm.)

:: Space is not divisible, does not consist of parts, and is itself not a part of a whole—so much so that the formula *partes extra partes*, by which every discrete space may relate itself to others as closed totalities, is unsuited to the task of its definition. The concept of the whole is formed through that of the organic, the functional body. It is incompatible with that of space. And thus also with that of the part and the parts.

:: Space is not an object.

:: It has no boundary to isolate it from another space or from non-space.

:: If space had a boundary, this boundary would be drawn in or against a space, which in its turn would have to have such a boundary, which would also have to run in a space, and so on. Space *has* no boundary—if it had one, that boundary would *a limine* be one against non-space, one that would determine space and determine it as non-space—it allows its boundary to be *drawn*. Space allowing the boundary to be drawn means that it doesn't draw that boundary itself; that it doesn't hold to the boundary; that it lets it draw and withdraw itself; and that it, by allowing this, withdraws from the drawing and the withdrawal of its own determination. In this sense there is no definition of space that does not include its infinition. (To continue to draw the boundary around space, its "and-so-on," is not a being-at-a-loss [*Verlegenheit*] that impedes the attempt to think space "from the outside"; it belongs to space as much as to the thinking of space.)

:: Space is the being-at-a-loss of thinking, its spatialization. Thinking means to be at a loss in space.

:: It is not finite, it finites itself. It is nothing but its infinite finitization.

:: "*Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie* [The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me]"—this is how someone must speak who wants to reserve finitude for himself.

:: Space is without dimensions. There would be spatial dimensions only if there were an *origo* of its measurements that would itself be spatial. (Aristotle distinguishes two ways of counting the dimensions of things: six in relation to the spectator—up, down, right and left, front and back—three without relation to the spectator—height, length, and breadth. While the center point of the construction is in the first case the human figure in geocentric space, in the other case it is the geophysical *origo* of falling, climbing, and expansion; in both cases the construction of dimensions is oriented toward one point

that, as point and thus as non-dimensional, can belong neither to things nor to place. The transition from point to line, from line to space would be a transition from out of spacelessness; thus space would itself be pure transition into space: it would be—Hegel recognized this consequence—sensuous unsensuousness [*sinnliche Unsinnlichkeit*], the space of the concept.) Dimensional space, the kind constructed from a geometrical center point, a non-spatial point, is therefore despatialized, non-dimensional space par excellence, the space of a point.

:: The treatise on "place" (*topos, khora*) in Aristotle's *Physics* rejects three assumptions about the "essence" (*ousia*) of place: it is neither the form nor the matter of a thing, nor is it the space between two things. In the first case it would be in the same place as the thing and thus two places would be in one and the same place, and there would have to be a place of place; in the first and second cases it would be affixed to the thing, but while each thing is capable of motion, place—as long as it is the place of the thing—must remain constant; the third case confuses the spatial interval between two boundaries with air: air is a body like any other and thus, defined by form and matter, cannot be the place of the thing. If place is then not form, not matter, and not the spatial interval or distance between two limits, it must be a fourth thing, that is, what is in each case the nearest surrounding (*periekhontos proton*) that encompasses form, matter, and distance without itself being one of them and without being, like them, capable of motion. This fourth thing, the surrounding, would be place and would as an external boundary provide all things and parts of things with their place. Thus, place is not the boundary of things—that would be its *eidos*—but the boundary of that boundary.

:: Place is the horizon of bodies. Not their concept, not their appearance and not the surrounding of other bodies, in relation to which they localize themselves, but what is outermost in these other bodies, the outermost surroundings, *eskhato tou periekhontas* (211a30).[2] As surrounding, place is a vessel, a vase, a jug, an amphora (209b25; 210a30, 210b10, 210b15); but the amphora is considered not as a body, and not even simply as a boundary, but as the outermost boundary of the inner wall of a container whose circumference is equal to that of the thing it contains, which is tied to it and yet detached from it. Thus, everything and every part of a thing is contained in its surrounding, at its place, as in an amphora. Place thus lies at the outermost boundary of things, where it touches the outermost boundary of the things that surround it—and the expression "outermost or first boundary" (*peras proton*) indicates that each of these boundaries is thought by Aristotle to be not a mathematical line but something that is differentiated within itself. . . . If the boundaries of the surrounding and the surrounded were merely separated from one another,

then they would constitute only the form of discrete things; but if they were one boundary, they would be the formal boundaries of a single thing—and in either case they would not be determinations of the place of things. Place can coincide neither with the form of a thing, nor with that of its surrounding; by the same token, it cannot be simply distinguished from either of them—: it must therefore be the "boundary" between their two boundaries and thus must be that which both divides and binds them. Detached from each other and still linked to each other (*dieremenon e kai haptomenon*, 211a30), the two boundaries—that of the surrounding and that of the surrounded—cohere (*sunekhes*, 211a35). The one is, detached from the other, also in it (*dieremenon de en ekeino*, 211a35); they are even both in the same (*en tauto*); yet, they are two boundaries not of the same (*ampho perata, all'ou tou autou*, 211b10). The contact between two boundaries and a "boundary" between boundaries, place is the "boundary" that is detached from itself, split, and cohering only in its split—and it holds together not at a place, but holds itself together in its division as this place. Place is the holding-together not only of what is different, it is the holding-together also of its difference and of its indifference and thus the event of carrying-apart and carrying-together.

:: For Aristotle, place is marked by two traits (*de topos ampho*, 212a1): by the fact that it is separate from the thing, and by the fact that it is its surrounding; i.e., by the fact that it participates in a boundary with it, and by the fact that it parts this boundary. Place is thus the im-parting [*Mit-Teilung*] of the boundary of things and in this sense the medium of things themselves. It is the With (*hama*) of the boundary: *Eti hama to pragmati o topos, hama gar to peperasmeno ta perata* (212a25–30)—"The place is with the thing, the boundary is with the bounded." It is not only the structure of time that, as Derrida has shown, depends on this With, *hama*; it is also the structure of place that depends on it. But this With is not a localized one: it is the placing of place, and the granting of space, for it is only by virtue of this With, the medium both of discretion and of cohesion, that a place is given. The boundary lies with the boundary—and thus *with* that which marks the difference between, and the unity of, both boundaries, opens up the place. With is thus not a determination of place, a possible answer to the question of where something is; it is the granting of place, and it does not posit it at or together with a place but opens up the place as with and as at. The Together-With of things is a Together-With of their being Together-With with their being Without-Each Other. Place is the With of the With with the Without, the With without With of all bodies—and thus what relates them to each other and what keeps them apart, their *relation*; place carries them and brings them apart and together, a double carrier of the double boundary, an *amphora*.

:: Place is the jointure [*Fuge*] of things. (The German word *Fuge* is itself a *Fuge*, a place: it means a cleft and a juncture and joins and divides juncture and cleft.) It is their aura, as Benjamin determines aura: "a remoteness no matter how near," their remotenearness, their dis-stance.[3]

:: Here: is a jointure of places.

:: The Aristotelian framing of place is dictated by at least two requirements: first that place be located only with bodies, and with bodies in the sense of matter formed into an appearance (*eidos*); and second, that emptiness be excluded. As a result of the first restriction, Aristotle must on the one hand make the boundary, and thus appearance and phenomenon, into the criterion of the placeness of place; but on the other hand, must, without admitting it, give up just this criterion of phenomenality in the definition of place: and with the *eidos* he must also give up the *ousia*. The second assumption, that there is no emptiness, is likewise dictated by the premise that all beings are compacted into fulfilled forms that present themselves to theoretical contemplation. This physicalist assumption, too, is disavowed by Aristotle's analysis of place as the site of an irreducible ambiguity of the boundary. For place cannot do without the implication of emptiness, so long as it is understood as the complexion of two boundaries that must be together and still divided and must therefore leave a free place, an empty gap, an opening. This opening "in" the boundary can, according to the premises of the Aristotelian analysis, itself be neither body, nor form, nor formed matter, nor a spatial interval, and thus not the object of a theory.

:: Aristotle's treatise does not explain why it is not a closed vessel, but an open one—*aggeion*, *amphoreus*—which has been chosen as the metaphor for place. But the opening is inscribed into the very structure of place: place is open because it must keep apart the two boundaries at the same time as it holds them together; that is, it must give way to an emptiness that is neither a thing nor an interval. By virtue of its amphoric, double structure, the vessel—place—is open. And it is only by being open that place gives way to boundaries in their differentiatedness. Its emptiness is the movement of the discretion by which these boundaries detach themselves from each other. Place is thus the giving-way of boundaries and thus of bodies. With this place the boundaries part from one another and impart themselves to one another. This imparting, place, is the giving of things.

:: In his 1950 lecture *Das Ding* Heidegger claimed emptiness for his jug.[4] Without mentioning Aristotle and without justifying his choice of the jug as the thing par excellence (he cites Aristotle's discussion of place only in 1969 in "Die Kunst und der Raum"), Heidegger rejects the Aristotelian exclusion

of emptiness as an act of physico-technical violence and insists that one must allow the emptiness of the jug its emptiness. Only by this emptiness is the jug able to gather the "fourfold [*Geviert*]" of "earth and sky, divinities and mortals," to reserve something and to pour something out, to give. (Only by virtue of its emptiness is the jug able not only to give but, as Heidegger insists, to hold back with giving itself, to reserve it for itself, while discharging its gift. "There is, it gives [*es gibt*] space," understood as "it, emptiness, gives," means the giving of emptiness. This giving is granting-space, the giving-way to space. Because it holds back with giving and thus with what is given, this granting-space can impart its emptiness to places and spaces without letting it disappear. This is the retention, the discretion of emptiness: that it remains emptiness no matter how much it expends itself. (All spaces are held in the emptiness of their giving.)

:: Place is not only something discrete, it is discretion itself.

:: (They all speak of the opening of place, of the discretion of its giving, and the indiscretion of its gifts: Shakespeare's caskets, the crates, suitcases, tins in Goethe, the jars of Kleist, of Simmel, Bloch, and Adorno, Keats's urn, Kierkegaard's drawers and secretaries, Mallarme's *cineraire amphore*, E. T. A. Hoffmann's golden pot and Henry James's golden bowl, casket [and castration] in Freud, geodes and jars in Rilke and Celan, *la valise* and *la cruche* in Ponge, Kafka's suitcase, Beckett's ashbins, *la vase* in Lacan, *el cantaro roto* of Octavio Paz, Aladdin's lamp. Likewise all archives, books, libraries. [And all brackets and parentheses.] They are the topos of literature, *l'espace litteraire*, and that of graphic art, of painting, sculpture, architecture. And of music. In them the spaces of our languages present themselves.)

:: There: is a jointure of places. A flight of stairs, of rooms. (Agoraphobia.)

:: If places touch each other, then they become one in their point of contact (*en tauto*, Aristotle might write). They become indiscrete, but nevertheless remain divorced from one another, discrete. It is only this double movement—discretion: in-discretion—that makes them into places.

:: If space is a jointure of places, then there is no space continuum; but there is a space contiguum. (Space is a metonymic series of places.)

:: There is no closed space (just as there is no private language); there are spaces that open each other.

:: Space is a jointure of anacolutha.

:: In the jointure of places and spaces emptinesses are imparted.

:: To the extent that spaces draw into each other, they withdraw from one another.

:: Spaces consume one another. They clear each other out. They de-space each other.

:: Spaces and places are finite. Because they are spaces, they fade. Independent of all "external" violence and even before their ruin, they are in decay by the violence of their sheer adjacence.

:: Spaces: ends.

Mach den Ort aus, machs Wort aus.
Lösch. Miß.[5]

:: *Ausmachen* means to determine something by measuring, to determine a place or a site; and it means to extinguish something, a fire, a light, a phenomenon. If to determine a place, to measure it, or "make it out," is at the same time to put it out, then the place is eradicated, then measuring is at the same time the loss of measure, and the word that dictates this measuring, that posits the measure—and that is thus itself the measure of measure—becomes "de-worded" through its own ambiguity, through its amphiboly, and thus through its implicit spatiality. Of place [*Ort*] and of word [*Wort*], of the spatial and of the linguistic topos, there remain only the remains of a fire, extinguished ash. (*Aschen-Helle*, *Aschen-Elle* the poem continues, and it is Antschel, Celan's name, which here in its transposition shines and measures, is extinguished and loses its measure.) De-placing and de-wording are not happenings that assault place and word from the outside; they go together with the granting of places and with the apparition of words. Celan—Antschel—continues in "Deine Augen im Arm":

Vermessen, entmessen, verortet, entwortet

entwo

:: Whoever speaks, whoever makes and puts himself out, whoever determines his name, place, or word—(is) *entwo*.

—Translated by Dana Hollander

NOTES

First published in English in *assemblage 20—a critical journal of architecture and design culture*, ed. Mark Wigley (April 1993): 40–41. First German publication (with an accompanying Swedish translation) in *Triptyk* (Ett arrangemang av material och Magaretha Äsberg) *Moderna Dansteatem* 1/9 och 2/9 (1993): 8–15. Published again in German in *Wanda Golonka—Tanz Ensemble Modell*, ed. Elisabeth Schweger (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 29–35.

1. Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 17 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), 152.
2. All references to Aristotle's works refer to Immanuel Bekker's 1831 edition of Aristotle and refer to the page number, column letter, and line number.
3. Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. 1.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 479.
4. Martin Heidegger, "Das Ding," in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).
5. Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 123.

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