

**Žižek and Heidegger - IJŽS Vol 1.4****WHY HEIDEGGER MADE THE RIGHT STEP<sup>1</sup> IN 1933***Hiding the tree in a forest*

When, in G.K. Chesterton's "The Sign of the Broken Sword" (a story from *The Innocence of Father Brown*)<sup>2</sup>, Father Brown explains the mystery to his companion Flambeau, he begins with "what everybody knows": "Arthur St. Clare was a great and successful English general. Everybody knows that after splendid yet careful campaigns both in India and Africa he was in command against Brazil when the great Brazilian patriot Olivier issued his ultimatum. Everybody knows that on that occasion St. Clare with a very small force attacked Olivier with a very large one, and was captured after heroic resistance. And everybody knows that after his capture, and to the abhorrence of the civilised world, St. Clare was hanged on the nearest tree. He was found swinging there after the Brazilians had retired, with his broken sword hung round his neck." However, Father Brown notices that something doesn't fit in this story that everybody knows: St. Clare, who was always a prudent commander, more for duty than for dash, made a foolish attack which ended in disaster; Olivier, who was magnanimous to the point of knight errantry and always set free prisoners, cruelly killed St. Clare. To account for this mystery, Father Brown evokes a metaphor: "'Where does a wise man hide a leaf? In the forest. But what does he do if there is no forest? He grows a forest to hide it in," said the priest in an obscure voice. "A fearful sin. /.../ And if a man had to hide a dead body, he would make a field of dead bodies to hide it in.'" The denouement relies on the hypothesis of the dark corrupted side of the English hero: Sir Arthur St. Clare

was a man who read his Bible. That was what was the matter with him. When will people understand that it is useless for a man to read his Bible unless he also reads everybody else's Bible? A printer reads a Bible for misprints. A Mormon reads his Bible, and finds polygamy; a Christian Scientist reads his, and finds we have no arms and legs. St. Clare was an old Anglo-Indian Protestant soldier. /.../ Of course, he found in the Old Testament anything that he wanted - lust, tyranny, treason. Oh, I dare say he was honest, as you call it. But what is the good of a man being honest in his worship of dishonesty?

In the Brazilian jungle, just before the fatal battle, the General encountered an

unexpected problem: his accompanying younger officer, Major Murray, somehow had guessed the hideous truth; and when they walked slowly in the jungle, he killed Murray with his sabre. What should he now do with the body difficult to account for? "He could make the corpse less unaccountable. He could create a hill of corpses to cover this one. In twenty minutes eight hundred English soldiers were marching down to their death." Here, however, things went wrong for the general: the surviving English soldiers somehow guessed what he did – it was them who killed the General, not Olivier. Olivier (to whom the survivors surrendered) generously set them free and withdrew with his troops; the surviving soldiers then tried St. Clare and hanged him, and then, in order to save the glory of the English army, covered up their act by the story that Olivier had him killed.

The story ends in the spirit of John Ford's westerns which prefer heroic legend to truth (recall John Wayne's final speech to the journalists about the ruthless General played by Henry Fonda, from *Fort Apache*): "Millions who never knew him shall love him like a father - this man whom the last few that knew him dealt with like dung. He shall be a saint; and the truth shall never be told of him, because I have made up my mind at last." Which, then, is the Hegelian lesson of this story? Is it that the simple cynical-denunciatory reading should be rejected? Is it that the gaze which reduces the General's corruption to the truth of his personality is itself mean and base? Hegel described long ago this trap as that of the Beautiful Soul whose gaze reduces all great heroic deeds to the private base motifs of their perpetrators:

No hero is a hero to his valet, not, however, because the hero is not a hero, but because the valet is — the valet, with whom the hero has to do, not as a hero, but as a man who eats, drinks, and dresses, who, in short, appears as a private individual with certain personal wants and ideas of his own. In the same way, there is no act in which that process of judgment cannot oppose the personal aspect of the individuality to the universal aspect of the act, and play the part of the 'moral' valet towards the agent<sup>3</sup>.

Is, then, Father Brown, if not this kind of "moral valet" to the General, then, at least, a cynic who knows that the unpleasant truth has to be covered up on behalf of the public Good? Chesterton's theological finesse is discernible in the way he allocates the responsibility for the General's gradual downfall: it is not the General's betrayal of Christian faith because of his moral corruption due to the predominance of base materialist motifs. Chesterton is wise enough to depict the cause of the General's moral downfall as inherent to Christianity: the General "was a man who read his Bible. That was what was the matter with him." It was the particular – Protestant, in this case – reading that is to be held responsible. And can one not say the same about Heidegger's (but also Adorno and Horkheimer's, Agamben's even) attempt to put the blame for the ethico-political catastrophes of the XXth century on the entire tradition of "Western metaphysics" with its instrumental Reason, etc., leading in a straight line "from Plato to Nato" (or, rather, gulag)? Sloterdijk wrote about the Leftist global problematizing of "Western civilization":

Through the boundless forms of cultural criticism – say, the reduction of Auschwitz back to Luther and Plato, or the criminalization of the Western civilization in its entirety - one tries to blur the traces which betray how close to a class-genocidal system we ourselves were standing.<sup>4</sup>

The only thing one should add here is that the same goes also for Heidegger and other ex-Fascists: they also hid their Nazi corpse in the mountain of corpses called Western metaphysics... And should one not reject in the same way, as a too hasty generalization, the liberal common wisdom according to which philosophers in politics stand for a catastrophic misfortune? Starting with Plato, they either miserably fail or succeed... in supporting tyrants. The reason, so the story goes on, is that philosophers try to impose their Notion on reality, violating it - no wonder that, from Plato to Heidegger, they are resolutely anti-democratic (with the exception of some empiricists and pragmatists), dismissing the crowd of "people" as the victim of sophists, at the mercy of contingent plurality... So when the common wisdom hears of Marxists who defend Marx, claiming that his ideas were not faithfully realized in Stalinism, they reply: thank God! It would have been even worse to fully realize them! Heidegger at least was willing to draw consequences of his catastrophic experience and conceded that those who think ontologically have to err ontically, that the gap is irreducible, that there is no "philosophical politics" proper. It thus seems that G.K.Chesterton was fully justified in his ironic proposal to install a "special corps of policemen, policemen who are also philosophers":

It is their business to watch the beginnings of this conspiracy, not merely in a criminal but in a controversial sense. /.../ The work of the philosophical policeman /.../ is at once bolder and more subtle than that of the ordinary detective. The ordinary detective goes to pot-houses to arrest thieves; we go to artistic tea-parties to detect pessimists. The ordinary detective discovers from a ledger or a diary that a crime has been committed. We discover from a book of sonnets that a crime will be committed. We have to trace the origin of those dreadful thoughts that drive men on at last to intellectual fanaticism and intellectual crime.<sup>5</sup>

Would not thinkers as different as Popper, Adorno and Levinas, also subscribe to a slightly changed version of this idea, where actual political crime is called "totalitarianism" and the philosophical crime is condensed in the notion of "totality"? A straight road leads from the philosophical notion of totality to political totalitarianism, and the task of "philosophical police" is to discover from a book of Plato's dialogues or a treatise on social contract by Rousseau that a political crime will be committed. The ordinary political policeman goes to secret organizations to arrest revolutionaries; the philosophical policeman goes to philosophical symposia to detect proponents of totality. The ordinary anti-terrorist policeman tries to detect those preparing to blow up buildings and bridges; the philosophical policeman tries to detect those about to deconstruct the religious and moral foundation of our societies...<sup>6</sup>

This position is that of "wisdom": a wise man knows that one should not "enforce" reality, that a little bit of corruption is the best defense against big corruption... Christianity is in this sense anti-wisdom *par excellence*: a crazy wager on Truth, in contrast to paganism which, ultimately, counts on wisdom ("everything returns to dust, the Wheel of Life goes on forever..."). The fateful limitation of this stance of wisdom resides in the formalism that pertains to the notion of balance, of avoiding the extremes. When one hears formulas like "we need neither total state control nor totally non-regulated liberalism/individualism, but the right measure between these two extremes," the problem that immediately pops up is *the measure of this measure* – the point of

balance is always silently presupposed. Say, what if somebody says: “We need neither too much respect for Jews, nor the Nazi holocaust, but the right measure in between, some quotas for universities and prohibition of public offices for the Jews to prevent their excessive influence,” one cannot really answer him at a purely formal level. Here we have the formalism of wisdom: the true task is to transform the measure itself, not only to oscillate between the extremes of the measure.

In his otherwise admirable *Holy Terror*, Terry Eagleton seems to fall into the same trap when he deploys the *pharmakos* dialectic of the excess of the Sacred, of the Holy Terror as the excess of the Real which should be respected, satisfied, but kept at distance. The Real is simultaneously generative and destructive: destructive if given free rein, but also destructive if denied (Euripides, Bacchantes – no wonder that women kill the king, such a Thing is ultimately feminine...), since its very denial unleashes a fury which imitates it – opposites coincide. Eagleton here perceives also Freedom as such a *pharmakos*, destructive when unleashed... Is, however, this not all too close to a conservative Wisdom? Is it not the supreme irony here that Eagleton, arguably the sharpest and most perspicuous critic of postmodernism, displays here his own secret postmodern bias, endorsing one of the great postmodern motifs, that of the Real Thing towards which one should maintain a proper distance? No wonder Eagleton professes his sympathy for conservatives like Burke and his critique of French Revolution: not that it was unjust, etc., but that it exposed the founding excessive violence of the legal order, bringing to light and re-enacting what should be at all costs concealed – this is the function of traditional myths. Rejection of these myths, reliance on pure Reason critical of tradition, thereby necessarily ends up in the madness and destructive orgy of Unreason.<sup>7</sup>

Where does Lacan stand with regard to this complex topic covered by the boring and stupid designation “the social role of intellectuals”? Lacan’s theory, of course, can be used to throw a new light on numerous politico-ideological phenomena, bringing to the light the hidden libidinal economy that sustains them; but we are asking here a more basic and naïve question: does Lacan’s theory imply a precise political stance? Some Lacanians (and not only Lacanians) endeavor to demonstrate that the Lacanian theory directly grounds democratic politics (say, Yannis Stavrakakis). The terms are well-known: “there is no big Other” means the socio-symbolic order is inconsistent, no ultimate guarantee, and democracy is the way to integrate into the edifice of power this lack of ultimate foundation. Insofar as all organic visions of a harmonious Whole of society rely on a fantasy, democracy thus appears to offer a political stance which “traverses fantasy,” i.e., which renounces the impossible ideal of non-antagonistic Society.

The political theorist who serves as a key reference here is Claude Lefort, who was himself influenced by Lacan and uses Lacanian terms in his definition of democracy: democracy admits the gap between symbolic (the empty place of power) and real (the agent who occupies this place), postulating that no empirical agent “naturally” fits the empty place of power. Other systems are incomplete, they have to engage in compromises, in occasional shake-ups, to function; democracy elevates incompleteness in principle, it institutionalizes the regular shake-up in the guise of elections. In short, S(barred A) is the signifier of democracy. Democracy goes here further than the common “realistic” wisdom according to which, in order to actualize a certain political vision, one should allow for concrete unpredictable circumstances and be ready to make compromises, to leave the space open for people’s vices and

imperfections – democracy turns imperfection itself into a notion. However, one should bear in mind that the democratic subject, which emerges through a violent abstraction from all its particular roots and determinations, is the Lacanian barred subject, \$, which is as such foreign to, incompatible with, enjoyment:

Democracy as empty place means for us: the subject of democracy is a barred subject. Our small algebra enables us to grasp immediately that this leaves out the small (*a*). That is to say: all that hinges on the particularity of enjoyments. The empty barred subject of democracy finds it difficult to link itself to all that goes on, forms itself, trembles, in all that we designate with this comfortable small letter, the small (*a*). / We are told: once there is the empty place, everybody, if he respects the laws, can bring in his traditions and his values. /.../ However, what we know is that, effectively, the more democracy is empty, the more it is a desert of enjoyment, and, correlatively, the more enjoyment condenses itself in certain elements. /.../ the more the signifier is 'disaffected,' as others put it, the more the signifier is purified, the more it imposes itself in the pure form of law, of egalitarian democracy, of the globalization of the market, /.../ the more passion augments itself, the more hatred intensifies, integrisms multiply, destruction extends itself, massacres without precedents are accomplished, and unheard-of catastrophes occur.<sup>8</sup>

What this means is that the democratic empty place and the discourse of totalitarian fullness are strictly correlative, the two sides of the same coin: it is meaningless to play one against the other and advocate a "radical" democracy which would avoid this unpleasant supplement. So when Leftists deplore the fact that today only the Right has the passion, is able to propose a new mobilizing imaginary, and that the Left only administers, what they do not see is the structural necessity of what they perceive as a mere tactical weakness of the Left. No wonder that the European project which is widely debated today fails to engage, to raise passions: it is ultimately a project of administration, not of ideological passion. The only passion is that of the Rightist defense of Europe – all the Leftist attempts to infuse the notion of united Europe with political passion (like the Habermas-Derrida initiative of the Summer of 2003) fail to gain momentum. The reason of this failure is that the "fundamentalist" attachment to *jouissance* is *the obverse, the fantasmatic supplement, of democracy itself*.

What, then, to do once one draws the consequences of this *Unbehagen* in democracy? Some Lacanians (and not exclusively Lacanians) endeavor to attribute to Lacan the position of an internal critic of democracy, a *provocateur* who raises unpleasant questions without proposing his own positive political project. Politics as such is here devalued as a domain of imaginary and symbolic identifications, as self by definition involves a misrecognition, a self-blinding. Lacan is a provocateur, in the line from Socrates to Kierkegaard, he discerns democracy's illusions and hidden metaphysical presuppositions. The outstanding case of developing this second position is Wendy Brown who, although not Lacanian, deploys an extremely important and perspicuous Nietzschean critique of the Politically Correct politics of victimization, of basing one's identity on injury.

## *A Domestication of Nietzsche*

Brown<sup>9</sup> reads the post-modern politics of identity based on the wrongs committed to special groups (the sex-gender-race line) as an expression of the ambiguous relationship one entertains towards the good old liberal-democratic egalitarian frame of human rights: one feels betrayed by it (with regard to women, blacks, gays... the universalist liberal rhetoric didn't deliver, it masks continuous exclusion and exploitation), while one nonetheless remains deeply attached to these liberal ideals. In a refined analysis, Brown demonstrates how the sense of moral outrage emerges in order to find a precarious compromise between a host of inconsistent and opposed attitudes (sadism and masochism, attachment and rejection, blaming the other and feeling one's own guilt). She reads moralizing politics "not only as a sign of stubborn clinging to a certain equation of truth with powerlessness, or as the acting out of an injured will, but as a symptom of a broken historical narrative to which we have not yet forged alternatives"(22-23): "It is when the telos of the good vanishes but the yearning for it remains that morality appears to devolve into moralism in politics."(28) After the disintegration of the large, all-encompassing, Leftist narratives of progress, when political activity dissolved into a multitude of identity-issues, the excess over this particular struggles can only find an outlet in impotent moralistic outrage.

However, Brown makes here a crucial step further and deploys all the paradoxes of democracy to the end, more radically than Chantal Mouffe with her "democratic paradox." Already with Spinoza and Tocqueville, it becomes clear that democracy is in itself inchoate-empty, lacking a firm principle – it needs anti-democratic content to fill in its form; as such, it really is constitutively "formal." This anti-democratic content is provided by philosophy, ideology, theory – no wonder most of the great philosophers, from Plato to Heidegger, were distrustful towards democracy, if not directly anti-democratic:

What if democratic politics, the most untheoretical of all political forms, paradoxically requires theory, requires an antithesis to itself in both the form and substance of theory, if it is to satisfy its ambition to produce a free and egalitarian order?(122)

Brown deploys all the paradoxes from this fact that "democracy requires for its health a nondemocratic element": a democracy needs a permanent influx of anti-democratic self-questioning *in order to remain a living democracy*, - the cure for democracy's ills is homeopathic:

If, as the musings of Spinoza and Tocqueville suggest, democracies tend towards cathexis onto principles antithetical to democracy, then critical scrutiny of these principles and of the political formations animated by them is crucial to the project of refounding or recovering democracy. (128)

Brown defines the tension between politics and theory as the tension between the political necessity to fixate meaning, to "suture" the textual drift in a formal principle which can only arise between action, and theory's permanent "deconstruction" which cannot ever be recuperated in a new positive program:

Among human practices, politics is peculiarly untheoretical because the bids for power that constitute it are necessarily at odds with the theoretical project of opening up meaning, of 'making meaning slide,' in Stuart Hall's words. Discursive power functions by concealing the terms of its fabrication and hence its malleability and contingency; discourse fixes meaning by naturalizing it, or else ceases to have sway as discourse. This fixing or naturalizing of meanings is the necessary idiom in which politics takes place. Even the politics of deconstructive displacement implicates such normativity, at least provisionally. (122-123)

Theoretical analyses which unearth the contingent and inconsistent nature and lack of ultimate foundation of all normative constructs and political projects, "are anti-political endeavors insofar as each destabilizes meaning without proposing alternative codes or institutions. Yet each may also be essential in sustaining an existing democratic regime by rejuvenating it."(128) It is thus as if Brown is proposing a kind of Kantian "critique of the deconstructive (anti-democratic) reason," distinguishing between its legitimate and illegitimate use: it is legitimate to use it as a negatively-regulative corrective, a provocation, etc., but it is illegitimate to use it as a constitutive principle to be directly applied to reality as a political program or project. Brown discerns the same ambiguous link in the relationship between state and people: in the same way democracy needs anti-democracy to rejuvenate itself, the state needs people's resistance to rejuvenate itself:

Only through the state are the people constituted as a people; only in resistance to the state do the people remain a people. Thus, just as democracy requires antidemocratic critique in order to remain democratic, so too the democratic state may require democratic resistance rather than fealty if it is not to become the death of democracy. Similarly, democracy may require theory's provision of unlivable critiques and unreachable ideals. (137)

Here, however, in this parallel between the two couples of democracy/antidemocracy and state/people, Brown's argumentation as it were gets caught in a strange symptomatic dynamic of reversals: while democracy needs antidemocratic critique to remain alive, to shake its false certainties, the democratic *state* needs democratic resistance of the people, *not* antidemocratic resistance. Does Brown not confound here two (or, rather, a whole series of) resistances to democratic state: the antidemocratic "elitist" theoretician's resistance (Plato-Nietzsche-Heidegger), the popular democratic resistance against the insufficiently democratic character of the state, etc.? Furthermore, is not each of these two resistances not accompanied by its dark shadowy double: the brutal cynical elitism that justifies those in power; the violent outbursts of a rabble. And what if the two join hands, what if we have *anti-democratic resistance of the people themselves* ("authoritarian populism")?

Furthermore, does Brown not dismiss all too lightly anti-democratic theorists like Nietzsche as proposing "unlivable" critiques of democracy? What if nonetheless a regime comes that endeavors to "live" them, like Nazism? Is it not too simple to relieve Nietzsche of responsibility by claiming that the Nazis distorted his thought? Of course they did, but so did Stalinism distort Marx, so did every theory change (was "betrayed") in its practico-political application, and a Hegelian point to be made here is that, in such cases, the "truth" is not simply on the side of theory – what if the attempt to actualize a

theory renders visible the objective content of this theory, concealed from the gaze of the theorist itself?

The weakness of Brown's description is perhaps that she locates the undemocratic ingredient that keeps democracy alive only in "crazy" theoreticians questioning its foundations from "unlivable" premises – but what about the very REAL undemocratic elements that sustain democracy? Does therein not reside the major premise of Foucault's (Brown's major reference) analyses of modern power: democratic power has to be sustained by a complex network of controlling and regulating mechanisms? In his *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*, T.S.Eliot, this archetypal "noble conservative," convincingly argued that a strong aristocratic class is a necessary ingredient of a feasible democracy: the highest cultural values can only thrive if they are transmitted through a complex and continuous familial and group background. So when Brown claims that "democracy requires antidemocratic critique in order to remain democratic," a liberal conservative would deeply agree in their warnings against "deMOREcracy": there should be a tension in the opposition between state and democracy, a state should not simply be dissolved in democracy, it should retain the excess of unconditional power OVER the people, a firm rule of law, to prevent its own dissolution. If the state, democratic as it is, is not sustained by this specter of the unconditional exercise of power, it does not have the authority to function: power is by definition in excess, otherwise it is not power.

The question here is: who is supplementing whom? Is democracy a supplement to the fundamentally non-democratic state power, or is undemocratic theory a supplement to democracy? At what point does here the predicate reverse into subject? Furthermore, apropos "stopping the sliding of meaning," does non-democratic theory as a rule not articulate its horror at democracy precisely because it perceives it as too "sophistic" (for Plato...), too involved in sliding of meaning, so that theory, far from reproaching democracy for the fixity of meaning, it desperately wants to impose a stable order on social life? And, furthermore, is this "incessant sliding of meaning" not something that is already a feature of capitalist economy itself which, in its contemporary dynamics, raises to a new degree Marx's old motto of dissolving all fixed identities?

The "homeopathic" logic evoked by Brown is thus ambiguous. On the one hand, the remedy against ossified state democracy is external theoretical antidemocratic critique which shatters its certainties and rejuvenates it; however, at the same time, there is the opposite homeopathy: as the saying goes, the only true remedy against the obvious democratic ills is more of democracy itself. This defense of democracy is a variation of Churchill's old quip on how it is the worst of all systems, the only problem being that there is none better: the democratic project is inconsistent, in its very notion an "unfinished project," but its very "paradox" is its strength, a guarantee against totalitarian temptation. Democracy includes its imperfection in its very notion, which is why the only cure against democratic deficiencies is more democracy.

And all dangers that lurk in democracy can be developed as grounded in these constitutive inconsistencies of the democratic project, as ways of dealing with these inconsistencies, with the price that, in trying to get rid of the imperfections of democracy, of its non-democratic ingredients, we inadvertently lose democracy itself – recall just how the populist appeal to a direct expression of the people's general Will, by-passing all particular interests and petty conflicts, ends up stifling democratic life itself. In a Hegelian mode, one is thus tempted to classify Brown's version as the extreme aggravation of the "democratic paradox" to its direct self-inconsistency. What, then, would have been the (re)solution of this opposition between "thesis" (Lacan as a theorist of democracy) and

“antithesis” (Lacan as its internal critic)? The risky but necessary gesture of rendering problematic the very notion of “democracy,” of moving elsewhere – of taking the risk of elaborating a positive *livable* project “beyond democracy.”

Is Brown not all too un-Nietzschean in her reduction – domestication even - of “Nietzsche” to a provocative correction to democracy which, through his exaggeration, renders visible the inconsistencies and weaknesses of the democratic project? When she proclaims Nietzsche’s implicit (and also explicit) anti-democratic project “unlivable,” does she not thereby all too glibly pass over the fact that there were very real political projects which directly referred to Nietzsche, up to Nazism, and that Nietzsche himself did refer constantly to actual political events around him – say, the “slave rebellion” that shattered him was the Paris Commune.<sup>10</sup> Brown thus accomplishes a *domestication* of Nietzsche, the transformation of his theory into an exercise in “inherent transgression”: provocations which are not really “meant seriously,” but aim, through their “provocative” character, to awaken us from the democratic-dogmatic slumber and thus contribute to the revitalization of democracy itself... This is how the establishment likes “subversive” theorists to be: turned into harmless gadflies who bite us and thus awaken us to inconsistencies and imperfection of our democratic enterprise – God forbid to take their project seriously and try to live them...

#### *Michel Foucault and the Iranian Event*

One of the main anti-totalitarian clichés is that of “intellectuals” (in the infamous Paul Johnson’s sense of the term) seduced by the “authentic” touch of violent spectacles and outbursts, in love with ruthless exercise of power which supplements their wimpy existence – the long line from Plato and Rousseau to Heidegger, not to mention the standard list of the dupes of Stalinism (Brecht, Sartre...). The easy Lacanian defence against this charge would have been to point out how the least one can say about Lacanian psychoanalysis is that it renders us immune to such “totalitarian temptations”: no Lacanian ever committed a similar political blunder of being seduced by a mirage of totalitarian revolution...

However, instead of such an easy way out, one should rather heroically assume this “white intellectual’s burden.” Let us approach it at its most problematic. The contours of the debate about the status of Heidegger’s Nazi engagement (was it just a passing mistake of no theoretical significance or was it grounded in his thought itself; did it contribute to the turn Heidegger’s thought took afterwards) are strangely reminiscent of Michel Foucault’s brief engagement on behalf of the Iranian revolution.<sup>11</sup> How could the following lines -

Many scholars of Foucault view these writings /on Iran/ as aberrant or the product of a political mistake. We suggest that Foucault’s writings on Iran were in fact closely related to his general theoretical writings on the discourse of power and the hazards of modernity. We also argue that Foucault’s experience in Iran left a lasting impact on his subsequent oeuvre and that one cannot understand the sudden turn in Foucault’s writings in the 1980s without recognizing the significance of the Iranian episode and his more general preoccupation with the Orient.<sup>12</sup>

- not evoke a striking parallel with Heidegger? In both cases, one should invert the standard narrative according to which, the erroneous engagement awakened the thinker

to the limitations of his previous theoretical position and compelled him to radicalize his thought, to enact a “turn” that would prevent such mistakes to occur again (Heidegger’s shift to *Gelassenheit*, Foucault’s to the aesthetic of the Self): Foucault’s Iranian engagement, like Heidegger’s Nazi engagement, was in itself (in its form) a proper gesture, the best thing he did, the only problem being that it was (as to its content) an engagement in the wrong direction.

Rather than reproach Foucault for his “blunder,” one should read his turn to Kant a couple of years later as his response to this failed engagement. Foucault is interested in the notion of enthusiasm as Kant deploys it apropos the French revolution (in his *Conflict of Faculties*): its true significance does not reside in what actually went on in Paris – many things there were terrifying, outbursts of murderous passions - but in the enthusiastic response that the events in Paris generated in the eyes of the sympathetic observers all around Europe... Did Foucault thereby not propose a kind of meta-theory of his own enthusiasm about the Iranian revolution of 1978-9? What matters is not the miserable reality that ensued the upheavals, the bloody confrontations, the new oppressive measure, etc., but the enthusiasm that the events in Iran gave rise to in the external (Western) observer, confirming his hope into the possibility of a new form of spiritualized political collective.

Was Iran then for Foucault the object of “interpassive authenticity,” the mythic Other Place where the authentic happens – Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia today... and for which Western intellectuals have an inexhaustible need? – And, incidentally, one could redeem in the same way not only the enthusiasm evoked by Stalinist Russia in many Western intellectuals and artists in the 1930s and 1940s, but even the enthusiasm evoked in those who were otherwise bitter critics of Stalinism by the Maoist Cultural Revolution: what matters is not the brutal violence and terror in China, but the enthusiasm generated by this spectacle in its Western observers... (And, why not, one could redeem also the fascination by some Western observers by the Nazi Germany in the first four years of Hitler’s rule when unemployment fell rapidly, etc.!)

However, the problem with this reading of Foucault is that, in his interpretation of the Iranian events, Foucault turns this perspective around and opposes the enthusiasm of those engaged in the event to the cold view of the external observer who discerns the larger causal context, the interplay of classes and their interests, etc. This shift of the enthusiasm aroused in an external observer to the enthusiasm of those caught in the events is crucial - how are we to *think* the link of these two locations of enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of direct participants and the enthusiasm of external and disengaged (disinterested) observers? The only solution is to “deconstruct” the very immediacy of the lived experience of the direct participants: what if this immediacy is already staged for an observer, for an imagined Other’s gaze? What if, in their innermost lived experience, they already imagine themselves being observed? Along these lines, in his last text on Iran (“Is It Useless to Revolt?”, from May 1979), Foucault opposes the historical reality of a complex process of social, cultural, economic, political, etc., transformations to the magic event of the revolt which somehow suspends the cobweb of historical causality – it is irreducible to it:

The man in revolt is ultimately inexplicable. There must be an uprooting that interrupts the unfolding of history, and its long series of reasons why, for a man ‘really’ to prefer the risk of death over the certainty of having to obey.<sup>13</sup>

One should be aware of the Kantian connotation of these propositions: revolt is an act of freedom which momentarily suspends the nexus of historical causality, i.e., in revolt, the noumenal dimension transpires. The paradox, of course, is that this noumenal dimension coincides with its opposite, with the pure surface of a phenomenon: the noumenon not only appears, the noumenal is what is, in a phenomenon, irreducible to the causal network of reality that generated this phenomenon - in short, *noumenon* is *phenomenon qua phenomenon*. There is a clear link between this irreducible character of the phenomenon and Deleuze's notion of event as the flux of becoming, as a surface emergence that cannot be reduced to its "bodily" causes.

His reply to the conservative critics who denounce the miserable and even terrifying actual results of a revolutionary upheaval is that they remain blind to the dimension of becoming:

It is fashionable these days to condemn the horrors of revolution. It's nothing new; English Romanticism is permeated by reflections on Cromwell very similar to present-day reflections on Stalin. They say revolutions turn out badly. But they're constantly confusing two different things, the way revolutions turn out historically and people's revolutionary becoming. These relate to two different sets of people. Men's only hope lies in a revolutionary becoming: the only way of casting off their shame or responding to what is intolerable.<sup>14</sup>

Deleuze refers here to revolutionary explosions in a way which is strictly parallel to Foucault's:

The Iranian movement did not experience the 'law' of revolutions that would, some say, make the tyranny that already secretly inhabited them reappear underneath the blind enthusiasm of the masses. What constituted the most internal and the most intensely lived part of the uprising touched, in an unmediated fashion, on an already overcrowded political chessboard, but such contact is not identity. The spirituality of those who were going to their deaths has no similarity whatsoever with the bloody government of a fundamentalist clergy. The Iranian clerics want to authenticate their regime through the significations that the uprising had. It is no different to discredit the fact of the uprising on the grounds that there is today a government of mullahs. In both cases, there is 'fear,' fear of what just happened last Fall in Iran, something of which the world had not seen an example for a long time.<sup>15</sup>

Foucault is here effectively Deleuzian: what interests him are not the Iranian events at the level of actual social reality and its causal interactions, but the eventual surface, the pure virtuality of the "spark of life" which only accounts for the uniqueness of the Event. What took place in Iran in the interstice of two epochs of social reality was not the explosion of the People as a substantial entity with a set of properties, but the event of becoming-People.

The point is thus not the shift in relations of power and domination between actual socio-political agents, the redistribution of social control, etc., but the very fact of transcending – or, rather, momentarily canceling - this very domain, of the emergence of a totally different domain of "collective will" as a pure Sense-Event in which all differences are obliterated, rendered irrelevant. Such an event is not only new with regard to what was going on before, it is new "in itself" and thus forever remains new.<sup>16</sup> –

However, here, at their most sublime, things start to get complicated. Foucault has to concede that this division was internal to the engaged individuals themselves:

Let's take the activist in some political group. When he was taking part in one of those demonstrations, he was double: he had his political calculation, which was this or that, and at the same time he was an individual caught up in that revolutionary movement, or rather that Iranian who had risen up against the king. And the two things did not come into contact, he did not rise up against the king because his party had made this or that calculation.<sup>17</sup>

And the same division cuts across the entire social body: at the level of reality, there were, of course, multiple agents, complex interactions of classes, overdetermination of incompatible struggles; however, at the level of the revolutionary event proper, all this was "sublated" into "an absolutely collective will" that united the entire social body against the king and his clique. There was no division within the social body, no "class struggle," all – from poor farmers to students, from clergy to disappointed capitalists – wanted the same:

The collective will is a political myth with which jurists and philosophers try to analyze or to justify institutions, etc. It's a theoretical tool: nobody has ever seen the 'collective will' and, personally, I thought that the collective will was like God, like the soul, something one would never encounter. I don't know whether you agree with me, but we met, in Tehran and throughout Iran, the collective will of a people.<sup>18</sup>

Foucault opposes here revolt and revolution: »revolution« (in the modern European sense) designates the reinscription of a revolt into the process of strategic-political calculation: revolution is a process by means of which the revolt is "colonized by *realpolitik*":

'Revolution' gave these uprisings a legitimacy, sorted out their good and bad forms, and defined their laws of development. /.../ Even the profession of revolutionary was defined. By thus repatriating revolt into the discourse of revolution, it was said, the uprising would appear in all its truth and continue to its true conclusion.<sup>19</sup>

No wonder Foucault compares the appearing of a collective will with two of Kant's noumenal things (God, soul). When the noumenal appears, it is in the guise of ultimate horror – Foucault is aware of it:

At this stage, the most important and the most atrocious mingle – the extraordinary hope of remaking Islam into a great living civilization and various forms of virulent xenophobia, as well as the global stakes and the regional rivalries. And the problem of imperialisms. And the subjugation of women, and so on."<sup>20</sup> / "What has given the Iranian movement its intensity has been a double register. On the one hand, a collective will that has been very strongly expressed politically and, on the other hand, the desire for a radical change in ordinary life. But this double affirmation can only be based on traditions, institutions that carry a charge of chauvinism, nationalism, exclusiveness, which have a very powerful attraction for

individuals. To confront so fearsome an armed power, one mustn't feel alone, nor begin with nothing.<sup>21</sup>

The picture thus gets complicated. First, Foucault withdraws from the overall support of the Iranian revolt (sustained by a hope that an entirely different society will emerge out of it, breaking out of the space of European modernity and its deadlocks) to asserting only the enthusiastic moment of revolt itself: the European liberals who want to discredit the Iranian revolt because it ended up in an oppressive regime of clergy move at the same level as this clergy itself which is reclaiming the revolt in order to justify its rule – they both attempt to reduce the Event to a factor in a political struggle of strategic interests. - Then, in a more subtle and surprising move, Foucault discerns *another* ambiguity which cannot be reduced to the difference between the level of pure revolt and the level of multiple socio-political interplay: “chauvinism,” “virulent xenophobia,” the “subjugation of women,” etc., are not signs of the contamination of the Event by the socio-political reality, they are an inherent support of the Event itself, i.e., their mobilization gave the Event the strength to oppose itself to the oppressive political regime and to avoid getting caught in the game of political calculations. It is this very reliance on the “lowest” racist, anti-feminist, etc. motifs that gave the Iranian revolution the strength to move beyond a mere pragmatic power-struggle. To put it in Badiouian terms, authentic Event thus becomes indistinguishable from a pseudo-Event.

Are we not dealing here with a kind of Hegelian triad in which the external opposition is gradually internalized, reflected into itself. First, the external opposition of the Iranian revolution in itself (a unique event) and the way it appears to Europeans is internalized into the two aspects of the events themselves: their pragmatic struggle-for-power side, and their side of a unique politico-spiritual Event. Finally, these two aspects are identified as the form and content of the same event: the oppressive misogynist ideology, anti-Semitism, etc., is the only ideological stuff at the disposition of the Iranians that can sustain the properly metaphysical elation of the Event – Event turns into a purely formal feature, indifferent towards its specific historic content. In other words, Foucault ends up at a point at which one should effectively raise the question usually addressed at Badiou: why is then Hitler's Nazi revolution not also an Event? Does it not share the very features attributed by Foucault to the Iranian revolution? Did we not have there also the spiritual unity of people, undivided into particular sub-groups separated by interests, a unity for which individuals were ready to sacrifice themselves? And was, as in the case of Iran, this spirit of unity not sustained by the “lowest” elements of tradition (racism, etc.)?

At this point, the only move that remains is to drop this form itself - no wonder, then, that, after his Iran experience, Foucault withdraw to the topic of the Care of the Self, of the aesthetics of existence (and, politically, to supporting different human rights initiatives, which makes him in France a darling of the neoliberal-humanitarian New Philosophers). Here, one can only venture the hypothesis that the conceptual root of this Foucault's deadlock is his key notion of “dispositif.” In a first approach, it may appear that Lacan's big Other is the poorer cousin of what Foucault renders through the notion of “dispositif,” which is much more productive for social analysis. However, there is the deadlock of dispositif with regard to the status of the subject: first (in his history of madness), Foucault tended to exclude from it the resisting core of subjectivity; then, he shifted his position to its opposite, to the radical inclusion of the resisting subjectivity into the dispositif (power itself generates resistance, etc. – the themes of his *Discipline and Punish*); finally, he tried to outline the space of the “care of the self” that allows the

subject to articulate through self-relating his own “mode of life” within a *dispositif*, and thus to regain a minimum of distance towards it. Subject is here always a curve, a disturbance, of the *dispositif*, the proverbial dust of grain that disturbs its smooth running. With Lacan’s “big Other,” the perspective is the opposite one: the very “positing” of the big Other is a subjective gesture, i.e., the “big Other” is a virtual entity that exists only through subject’s presup-position (this moment is missing in Althusser’s notion of Ideological State Apparatuses with its emphasis on the “materiality” of the big Other, its material existence in ideological institutions and ritualized practices – Lacan’s big Other is, on the contrary, ultimately virtual and as such, in its most basic dimension, “immaterial”).

However, back to Iran, Foucault’s blunder in no way implies that the Iranian revolution was a pseudo-Event (in a Badiouian sense) comparable to the Nazi revolution: it was an authentic Event, a momentary *opening* that unleashed unheard-of forces of social transformation, a moment in which “everything seemed possible.” To detect this dimension, it is enough to follow closely the shifts and reversals of the Iranian events, the gradual closing of the multiple modes of self-organizing of the protesting crowd through the take-over by the new Islam clergy political power. There was nothing comparable to the effervescent first months after the Shah’s fall – the constant frantic activity, debates, utopian plans, etc. – in Germany after the Nazi takeover (although there was something comparable going on in the first years after the October revolution). One should not take this qualitative difference as something that concerns only the formal level of events (or, even worse, the group-psychological level, as if the Iranian explosion was more “sincere” than the Nazi one) – its crucial dimension was that of socio-political content: what makes the Iranian explosion an Event was the momentary emergence of something New that pertained to the struggle to formulate an alternative outside the existing options of Western liberal democracy or a return to premodern tradition. The Nazi “revolution” was *never* “open” in this authentic sense.

Foucault was also fully justified in emphasizing in *Shia* Islam the potential to serve as the ideological vehicle for a democratic-egalitarian movement: the opposition *Sunni* versus *Shia* is, in political terms, the one of the hierarchic state organization versus the egalitarian opening of the event. In contrast to both Judaism and Christianity, the two other religions of the Book, Islam excludes God from the domain of the paternal logic: Allah is not a father, not even a symbolic one – God as One is neither born nor does he give birth to creatures: *there is no place for a Holy Family in Islam*. This is why Islam emphasizes so much the fact that Muhammad himself was an orphan; this is why, in Islam, God intervenes precisely at the moments of the suspension, withdrawal, failure, “black-out,” of the paternal function (when the mother or the child are abandoned or ignored by the biological father). What this means is that God remains thoroughly in the domain of impossible-Real: he is the impossible-Real outside father, so that there is a “genealogical desert between man and God.”<sup>22</sup> (This was the problem with Islam for Freud, since his entire theory of religion is based on the parallel of God with father.) More importantly even, this inscribes politics into the very heart of Islam, since the “genealogical desert” renders it impossible to ground a community in the structures of parenthood or other blood-links: “the desert between God and Father is the place where the political institutes itself.”<sup>23</sup> With Islam, it is no longer possible to ground a community in the mode of *Totem and Taboo*, through the murder of the father and the ensuing guilt as bringing brothers together – thence Islam’s unexpected actuality. This problem is in the very heart of the (in)famous *umma*, the Muslim “community of believers”; it accounts for the overlapping of the religious and the political (the community should be grounded

directly in God's word), as well as for the fact that Islam is "at its best" when it grounds the formation of a community "out of nowhere," in the genealogical desert, as the egalitarian revolutionary fraternity - no wonder Islam succeeds when young men find themselves deprived of traditional family safety network.

This, also, compels us to qualify and limit the homology between Foucault's Iranian engagement and Heidegger's Nazi engagement: Foucault was *right* in engaging himself, he *correctly* detected the emancipatory potential in the events; all insinuations of liberal critics that his engagement is yet another chapter in the sad saga of Western radical intellectuals projecting their fantasies into an exotic foreign upheaval which allows them to satisfy *simultaneously* their emancipatory desires *and* their secret "masochistic" longing for harsh discipline and oppression, totally misses the point. So where was his mistake? One can claim that he did the right thing for the wrong reason: the way he theorized and justified his engagement is misleading. The frame within which Foucault operates in his analysis of the Iranian situation is the opposition between the revolutionary Event, the sublime enthusiasm of the united people where all internal differences are momentarily suspended, and the pragmatic domain of the politics of interests, strategic power calculations, etc. – the opposition which, as we have already seen, directly evokes Kant's distinction between the noumenal (or, more precisely, the sublime which evokes the noumenal dimension) and the phenomenal. Our thesis is here a very precise one: this general frame is too "abstract" to account for different modalities of collective enthusiasm – between, say, the Nazi enthusiasm of the people united in its rejection of (whose effects were undoubtedly real), the enthusiasm of the people united against the stagnating Communist regime, or the properly revolutionary enthusiasm. The difference is simply that the first two are not Events, merely pseudo-Events, because they were lacking the moment of properly utopian opening. This difference is strictly immanent to enthusiastic unity: only in the last case, the common denominator of this unity was the "part of no-part," the "downtrodden," those included in society with no proper place within it and, as such, functioning as the "universal singularity," directly embodying the universal dimension.

This is why, also, the opposition between noumenal enthusiasm and particular strategic interests does not cover the entire field – if it were so, then we would remain stuck forever in the opposition between emancipatory outbursts and the sobering "day after" when life returns to its pragmatic normal run. From this constrained perspective, every attempt to avoid and/or postpone this sobering return to the normal run of things amounts to terror, to the reversal of enthusiasm into monstrosity. What if, however, *this* is what is truly at stake in a true emancipatory process: in Jacques Ranciere's terms, how to unite the political and the police, how to transpose the political emancipatory outburst into the concrete regulation of policing. What can be more sublime than the creation of a new "liberated territory," of a positive order of being which escapes the grasp of the existing order?

This is why Badiou is right in denying to the enthusiastic events of the collapse of the Communist regimes the status of an Event. When, in the last months of 2001, the Milosevic regime in Serbia was finally toppled, many Marxists in the West raised the question: "What about the coal miners whose strike led to the disruption of the electricity supply and thus effectively brought Milosevic down? Was that not a genuine workers' movement, which was then manipulated by the politicians, who were nationalist or corrupted by the CIA?" The same symptomatic point emerges apropos of every new social upheaval (like the disintegration of the Real Socialism 10 years ago): in each of these cases, they identify some working class movement which allegedly displayed a

true revolutionary or, at least, Socialist potential, but was first exploited and then betrayed by the procapitalist and/or nationalist forces. This way, one can continue to dream that Revolution is round the corner: all we need is the authentic leadership which would be able to organize the workers' revolutionary potentials. If one is to believe them, Solidarnosc was originally a worker's democratic-socialist movement, later "betrayed" by being its leadership which was corrupted by the Church and the CIA... There is, of course, a moment of truth in this approach: the ultimate irony of the disintegration of Communism was that the great revolts (GDR in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Solidarity in Poland) were originally *workers'* uprisings which only later paved the way for the standard "anti-Communist" movements - before succumbing to the "external" enemy, the regime got a message about its falsity from those whom these "workers' and peasants' states" evoked as their own social base. However, this very fact also demonstrates how the workers' revolt lacked any substantial socialist commitment: in all cases, once the movement exploded, it was smoothly hegemonized by the standard "bourgeois" ideology (political freedom, private property, national sovereignty, etc.).

### *The trouble with Heidegger*

How, then, do things stand with Heidegger's engagement? Was it, in contrast to Foucault's, really not only a clear mistake, but a mistake grounded in his philosophy? There is something profoundly symptomatic in the compulsion of many liberal-democratic critics of Heidegger to demonstrate that Heidegger's Nazi engagement was not a mere temporary blunder, but in consonance with the very fundamentals of his thought: it is as if this consonance allows us to dismiss Heidegger as theoretically irrelevant and thus to avoid the effort to *think* with and through Heidegger, to confront the uneasy questions he raised against such basic tenets of modernity as "humanism," "democracy," "progress," etc. Once Heidegger disappears from the picture, we can safely go on with our common concerns about the ethical problems opened up by biogenetics, about how to accommodate the capitalist globalization to a meaningful communal life – in short, we can safely avoid confronting what is really New in globalization and biogenetic discoveries, and continue to measure these phenomena with old standards, with the wild hope of a synthesis that would us to keep the best of both worlds.

This, of course, in no way aims at rehabilitating the defense of Heidegger's Nazi-episode, which, not surprisingly, follows yet again the borrowed-kettle formula: (1) Heidegger was never really a Nazi, he just made some superficial compromises in order to save whatever could have been saved from the university's autonomy; when he learned that the game doesn't work, he consequently stepped down and withdrew from public life. (2) Heidegger was for a limited period a sincerely engaged Nazi; however, not only did he withdrew once he become aware of his blunder, but the acquaintance with the Nazi power exercise precisely enabled him to gain insight into the nihilism of modern technology as the deployment of the unconditional will-to-power. (3) Heidegger was a Nazi, and there is nothing to reproach him for this choice: in the circumstances of the early 1930s, it was a fully legitimate and understandable choice. This is Ernst Nolte's position: it is worth to recall here his book on Heidegger, which brought fresh wind into the eternal debate on "Heidegger and the political" – it did this on the very account of its "unacceptable" option: far from excusing Heidegger's infamous political choice in 1933, it

justifies it – or, at least, it de-demonizes it, rendering it as a viable and meaningful choice.

Against the standard defenders of Heidegger whose mantra is that Heidegger's Nazi engagement was a personal mistake of no fundamental consequences for his thought, Nolte accepts the basic claim of Heidegger's critics that his Nazi choice is inscribed into his thought – but with a twist: instead of problematizing his thought, Nolte justifies his political choice as a viable option in the situation of late 1920s and early 1930s with the economic chaos and Communist threat:

Insofar as Heidegger resisted the attempt at the /Communist/ solution, he, like countless others, was historically right /.../ In committing himself to the /National Socialist/ solution perhaps he became a 'fascist.' But in no way did that make him historically wrong from the outset.<sup>24</sup>

And here is Mark Wrathall's model formulation of the second position:

Heidegger's work after the war did go some way towards overcoming the political naivete that led to his disastrous involvement with National Socialism. He did this by, first, getting much clearer than he had been about the dangers of the modern world – the dangers which led him to think we need a new world disclosure. Once he was able to articulate the danger of modernity in terms of technology, it became clear that National Socialism was just another modern technological movement (even if it employed technology for reactionary goals).<sup>25</sup>

This passage tells much more than it may appear at first glance – the key words in it are the innocuous “just another”: is the underlying premise not “even the best of political projects, the most radical attempt to oppose nihilism, remained just another nihilistic movement caught in technology”? There is no horror of Nazism here, Nazism is “just another” in the series, the difference is ontologically insignificant (which is why, for Heidegger, the Allied victory in the World War II really decided nothing). Here Heidegger's reference to Hölderlin's famous lines enters: “where the danger is rising, that which can save us - *das Rettende* – also grows...” – in order to overcome the danger, one has to go to the extreme in it – in short, in order to arrive at the ontological truth, Heidegger had to err ontically. So when Wrathall writes apropos Heidegger's Nazi engagement: “It is disconcerting, to say the least, that Heidegger, who purported to have a unique insight into the movement of world history, proved to be so terribly blind to the significance of the events that played out before his eyes.”<sup>26</sup> – a Heideggerian could have easily turned this argument around: the “ontic” blindness for the truth of the Nazi regime was a positive condition of his “ontological” insight.

However, when defenders of Heidegger claim that the acquaintance with the Nazi power exercise precisely enabled him to gain insight into the nihilism of modern technology as the deployment of the unconditional will-to-power, does this line of defense not sound a little bit like the attitude of the proverbial prostitute-turned-preacher who, after her conversion, is ferociously attacking carnal sins, claiming that she knows from her own experience how destructive they are? So when Steve Fuller writes:

Ironically, Heidegger's intellectual stature may even have been *helped* by the time-honored practice of 'learning from the opponent' in which victors indulge after a war. In this respect, Heidegger's political 'genius' may lie in having stuck with the

Nazis long enough for the Americans to discover him during de-Nazification without ending up being judged an untouchable war criminal whose works had to be banned. As committed anti-Nazis ensconced in Allied countries, Heidegger's existentialist rivals never underwent such intense scrutiny nor subsequently acquired such a mystique for depth and danger.<sup>27</sup>

- there is truth in these lines, but a more complex one that a mere luck in Heidegger's striking the right balance in the depth of his Nazi engagement: the difficult truth to admit is that Heidegger is "great" *not in spite of, but because of* his Nazi engagement, that this engagement is a key constituent of his "greatness." Imagine a Heidegger without this engagement, or a Heidegger who, after the World War II, were to do what many colleagues expected of him: publicly renounce his Nazi engagement and apologize for it – would this not somehow impede on the radicality his insight? Would it not constrain him to humanitarian political concerns which he so bitterly despised?

Michel de Beistegui makes a perspicuous observation on the fundamental ambiguity of Heidegger's disillusionment with Nazism: it was his "resignation and his disillusionment with what, until the end of his life, and with a touch of regret at not having seen it develop its potential, he referred to as 'the movement'."<sup>28</sup> Is, however, this not the reason why Heidegger's later withdrawal from political engagement also cannot be conceived only in the terms of his insight into the nihilism of contemporary politics? De Beistegui concludes his book with the statement that Heidegger

will not be caught at /a belief in the redemptive power of political engagement/ twice: having burned his fingers in politics, and lost his illusions in the failure of Nazism to carry out a project of onto-destinal significance, his hopes will turn to the hidden resources of thought, art and poetry, all deemed to carry a historical and destinal power far greater than that of politics.<sup>29</sup>

But is Heidegger's refusal to be caught twice at the political engagement and thus to burn his fingers again not a negative mode of his continuing melancholic attachment to the Nazi "movement"? (His refusal to engage again in politics was thus similar to a disappointed lover who, after the failure of his relationship, rejects love as such and avoids all further relationships, thereby confirming in a negative way his lasting attachment to the failed relationship.) Is the premise of this refusal not that, to the end of his life, for Heidegger the Nazi engagement remained the only political engagement which at least tried to address the right problem, so that the failure of Nazism is the failure of the political as such? It never entered Heidegger's mind to propose – say, in a liberal mode – that the failure of the Nazi engagement is merely the failure of a certain kind of engagement which conferred on the political the task of carrying out "a project of onto-destinal significance," so that the lesson of it could be simply a more *modest* political engagement? In other words, what if one concludes from the failure of Heidegger's political engagement that what one should renounce is the expectance that a political engagement will have destinal ontological consequences and engage in "merely ontic" politics which, far from obfuscating the need for a deeper ontological reflection, precisely opens up a space for it? What if even the very last Heidegger, when he expresses his doubt that democracy is the political order which best fits the essence of modern technology, still did not learn the ultimate lesson of his Nazi engagement, since he continues to cling to the hope of finding an (ontic) political engagement which would fit (be at the level of) the ontological project of modern technology? (Our premise,

of course, is that the liberal engagement is not the only alternative: Heidegger was right in his doubt about liberal democracy; what he refused to consider was a radical Leftist engagement.)

Therein resides the importance of the link between Heidegger and Hannah Arendt: what is at stake in the difficult relationship between Heidegger and Arendt is Heidegger's much-decried aversion to liberalism and (liberal) democracy, which he continuously, to his end, rejected as "inauthentic," not the idiosyncrasies of their personal liaisons. Arendt was not only opposed to Heidegger along the double axis of woman versus man and a "worldly" Jew versus a "provincial" German, she was (which is much more important) *the first liberal Heideggerian*, the first who tried to reunite Heidegger's insights with the liberal-democratic universe. In a closer reading, of course, it is easy to discern what enabled Arendt to support liberalism while maintaining her basic fidelity to Heidegger's insights: her anti-bourgeois stance, her critical dismissal of politics as "interest groups" politics, as the expression of the competitive and acquisitive society of the bourgeoisie. She shared the great conservatives' dissatisfaction with the lack of heroism and the pragmatic-utilitarian orientation of the bourgeois society:

Simply to brand as outbursts of nihilism this violent dissatisfaction with the prewar age and subsequent attempts at restoring it (from Nietzsche to Sorel to Pareto, from Rimbaud and T.E. Lawrence to Juenger, Brecht and Malraux, from Bakunin and Nechayev to Aleksander Blok) is to overlook how justified disgust can be in a society wholly permeated with the ideological outlook and moral standards of the bourgeoisie.<sup>30</sup>

The opposition Arendt mobilizes here is the one between *citoyen* and *bourgeois*: the first lives in the political sphere of public engagement for the common good, of the participation in running public affairs, while the second is the egotistic utilitarian fully immersed in the production process and reducing all other dimensions of life to their role in enabling the smooth running of this process. In Aristotelian terms, this opposition is the one between *praxis* and *poiesis*, between the "high" exercise of virtues in public life, and the "low" instrumentality of labor – the opposition whose echoes reverberate not only in Habermas's distinction between communicative action and instrumental activity, but even in Badiou's notion of Event (and in his concomitant denial that an Event can take place in the domain of production).

Recall how Arendt describes, in Badiouian terms, the suspension of temporality as the defining ontological characteristic of ontic political action: acting, as men's capacity to begin something new, "out of nothing," not reducible to a calculated strategic reaction to a given situation, takes place in the non-temporal *gap* between past and future, in the hiatus between the end of the old order and the beginning of the new which in history is precisely the moment of revolution.<sup>31</sup> Such an opposition, of course, raises a fundamental question formulated by Robert Pippin:

how can Arendt separate out what she admires in bourgeois culture – its constitutionalism, its assertion of fundamental human rights, its equality before the law, its insistence on a private zone in human life, exempt from the political, its religious tolerance – and condemn what she disagrees with – its secularism, its cynical assumption of the pervasiveness of self-interest, the perverting influence of money on human value, its depoliticizing tendencies, and the menace it poses for tradition and a sense of place?<sup>32</sup>

In other words, are these two sides not the two sides of the same phenomenon? No wonder then, that, when Arendt is pressed to provide the outline of the authentic “care of the world” as a political practice that would not be contaminated by utilitarian pragmatic calculation of interests, all she can evoke are self-organizations in revolutionary situations, from the early American tradition of town-hall meetings of all citizens to revolutionary councils in the German revolution. Not that she is not politically justified in evoking these examples – the problem is that they are “utopian,” that they cannot be reconciled with the liberal-democratic political order to which she remains faithful. In other words, is Arendt with regard to liberal democracy not the victim of the same illusion as the democratic Communists who, within the Really Existing Socialism, were fighting for its truly democratic version? Arendt is also right when (implicitly against Heidegger) she points out that Fascism, although a reaction to bourgeois banality, remains its inherent negation, i.e., within the horizon of bourgeois society: the true problem of Nazism is not that it “went too far” in its subjectivist-nihilist hubris of exerting total power, but that it did *not* go far enough, i.e., that its violence was an impotent acting out which, ultimately, remained in the service of the very order it despised. (However, Heidegger would also have been right in rejecting Arendt’s Aristotelian politics as not radical enough to break out of the nihilist space of European modernity.)

Arendt would thus have been justified in countering Pippin’s all too easy version of a contemporary political Hegelianism; his basic claim is that while, of course, from today’s experience, Hegel’s notion of a rational state no longer works, its limitations are evident, these very limitations should be addressed in a Hegelian way:

In some fairly obvious sense and in the historical terms he would have to accept as relevant to his own philosophy, he was wrong. None of these institutional realizations now looks as stable, as rational, or even as responsive to the claims of free subjects as Hegel has claimed, even though such criticisms are often themselves made in the name of such freedom. But the nature of that wrong is, I am arguing, also Hegelian, a matter of being incomplete, not wholly wrong-headed.<sup>33</sup>

In short, it is a matter of *Aufhebung*, of the immanent self-critique and self-overcoming, of these solutions, not of their outright rejection... However, what cannot but strike the eye is the “formalist” character of this Pippin’s formula: he does not provide any concrete examples that would render it operative.

The question is, of course, how far do we have to go in this *Aufhebung* if we are to bring Hegel’s project of a rational state of freedom up today’s conditions – how “deep” is irrationality inscribed into today’s bourgeois society so that its critique can still be formulated as a defence of bourgeois society? Do we have to stay within capitalism or risk a move outside? These, however, are not Heidegger’s concerns: his fundamental move apropos our critical historical moment is to emphasize the underlying sameness of the (ideological, political, economic...) choices we are confronting:

from the point of view of their onto-historical origin, there is no *real* or *fundamental* difference between the Christian doctrine and Bolshevism, between the biologism and imperialism of Nazism and the forces of capital (which, today, have permeated all spheres of life), and between vitalism and spiritualism. This, I believe, is at once the strength, and the extraordinary weakness and limitation of Heidegger’s

position. For on the one hand it allows us to establish continuities and complicities where we thought there were incompatibilities, and to shift the weight of difference to a different terrain (that of the 'meaning' or the 'truth' of being). On the other hand, though, by revealing such differences as pseudo-differences, he also neutralizes the decisions and choices they often call for, thereby erasing the traditional space of politics and ethics.<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, de Beistegui's solution to this deadlock remains all too commonsensical – a balanced approach which takes into account the legitimate demands of both levels:

whatever our commitments to the deconstruction of metaphysics, and to the struggle for new possibilities of thought and action beyond it, or perhaps on its margins, we continue to live within the metaphysical, technical framework, and so must remain committed to taking seriously, and discriminating between, the many differences, choices and situations we are faced with at the historical, political, religious and artistic level. /.../ The free relation to technology Heidegger advocates may, after all, also involve an active participation in intra-metaphysical processes, and not just a meditation of its essence. For within technology, there are differences that matter, and to which we cannot – and must not – remain blind. With one critical eye, and the other deconstructive, we may be better equipped to navigate the often treacherous waters of our time.<sup>35</sup>

But what if there is a fundamental discord between the ontological and the ontic, so that, as Heidegger put it, those who reach ontological truth have to err in the ontic? What if, if we are to see with the ontological eye, our ontic eye has to be blinded?

### *Ontological difference*

When Heidegger speaks of the untruth-concealedness-withdrawal as inherent to the truth-event itself, he has in mind two different levels:

- On the one hand, the way a man, when engaged in inner-worldly affairs, forgets the horizon of meaning within which he dwells, and even forgets this forgetting itself (exemplary is here the "regression" of Greek thought that occurs with the rise of Sophists: what was the confrontation with the very foundation of our Being turns into a trifling play with different lines of argumentation with no inherent relation to Truth).

- On the other hand, the way this horizon of meaning itself, insofar as it is an epochal Event, arises against the background of - and thereby conceals - the imponderable Mystery of its emergence, in the same way a clearing in the midst of a forest is surrounded by the dark thickness of the woods.

The same ambiguity repeats itself apropos Earth as that which resists, remains forever obscure and unfathomable: "There always is something resisting and supporting our practices, and that something is very real."<sup>36</sup> So, on the one hand, Earth designates what resists to the meaningful totality of a historical world:

As a world strives to grow back into the earth, it encounters resistance. In the process, the earth appears in a determinate way in terms of the resistance that the world encounters. In building the cathedral, we discover particular ways in which

our practices are limited and constrained. /.../ Our worlds, and consequently our meaningful relations to things, are always based in something that can't be explained in terms of the prevailing intelligible structure of the world.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, however, what is most impenetrable is *the basic structure of the world itself*. For example, when we argue that the modernization of Japan was desirable because it brought a higher gross domestic product and per capita income, one should raise the more fundamental question:

But why one should have just those preferences is precisely what is at issue – if one would prefer the pace and style of premodern Japanese life to an increase of per capita income, then the argument that Japan should modernize in order to increase average income will not be persuasive. /.../ So it seems that the strength of the drive to establish a new world and destroy the old depends on something withdrawing from view – that is becoming so self-evident that it is no longer open to question: namely, the desirability of the new world itself. This desirability is an earthly thing: it withdraws and shelters the world it supports. /.../ Our world is supported by our most basic preferences – a taste for efficiency and flexibility – having largely withdrawn from view.<sup>38</sup>

Earth is thus either the impenetrable abyss of the ontic which withdraws ontological disclosure, or the horizon of this disclosure itself, invisible on account of its excessive self-evidence itself – we do not see it as such because it is the very medium through which we see everything. One should make the properly Hegelian move of identifying the two levels: the Beyond and the obstacle-screen that distorts our access to Beyond. So this is not simply Heidegger's mistake or confusion (to be resolved or corrected by introducing a further notional distinction: one term for the Earth as the darkness of what resists disclosure, another for the invisibility of the very horizon of disclosure). The oscillation between the two levels is what defines Earth.

What this also means is that ontological difference is not "maximal," between all beings, the highest genus, and something else/more/beyond, but, rather, "minimal," the bare minimum of a difference not between beings but between the minimum of an entity and the void, nothing. Insofar as it is grounded in the finitude of humans, ontological difference is that which makes a totalization of "All of beings" impossible - ontological difference means that the field of reality is finite. Ontological difference is in this precise sense "real/impossible": to use Ernesto Laclau's determination of antagonism, in it, *external difference overlaps with internal difference*. The difference between beings and their Being is simultaneously a difference within beings themselves; that is to say, the difference between beings/entities and their Opening, their horizon of Meaning, always also cuts into the field of beings themselves, making it incomplete/finite. Therein resides the paradox: *the difference between beings in their totality and their Being precisely "misses the difference" and reduces Being to another "higher" Entity*. The parallel between Kant's antinomies and Heidegger's ontological difference resides in the fact that, in both cases, the gap (phenomenal/noumenal; ontic/ontological) is to be referred to the non-All of the phenomenal-ontic domain itself. However, the limitation of Kant was that he was not able to fully assume this paradox of finitude as constitutive of the ontological horizon: ultimately, he reduced transcendental horizon to a way reality appears to a finite being (man), with all of it located into a wider encompassing realm of noumenal reality.

Here the link offers itself with the Lacanian Real which, at its most radical level, is the disavowed X on account of which our vision of reality is anamorphically distorted: it is simultaneously the Thing to which direct access is not possible *and* the obstacle which prevents this direct access, the Thing which eludes our grasp *and* the distorting screen which makes us miss the Thing. More precisely, the Real is ultimately the very shift of perspective from the first to the second standpoint. Recall the old well-known Adorno's analysis of the antagonistic character of the notion of society: in a first approach, the split between the two notions of society (Anglo-Saxon individualistic-nominalistic and Durkheimian organicist notion of society as a totality which preexists individuals) seems irreducible, we seem to be dealing with a true Kantian antinomy which cannot be resolved via a higher "dialectical synthesis," and which elevates society into an inaccessible Thing-in-itself; however, in a second approach, one should merely take note of how this radical antinomy which seems to preclude our access to the Thing *already is the thing itself* – the fundamental feature of today's society IS the irreconcilable antagonism between Totality and the individual. What this means is that, ultimately, the status of the Real is purely parallaxic and, as such, non-substantial: it has no substantial density in itself, it is just a gap between two points of perspective, perceptible only in the shift from the one to the other. The parallax Real is thus opposed to the standard (Lacanian) notion of the Real as that which "always returns at its place," i.e., as that which remains the same in all possible (symbolic) universes: the parallax Real is rather that which accounts for the very *multiplicity* of appearances of the same underlying Real – it is not the hard core which persists as the Same, but the hard bone of contention which pulverizes the sameness into the multitude of appearances. In a first move, the Real is the impossible hard core which we cannot confront directly, but only through the lenses of a multitude of symbolic fictions, virtual formations. In a second move, this very hard core is purely virtual, actually non-existing, an X which can be reconstructed only retroactively, from the multitude of symbolic formations which are "all that there actually is."

It seems that Heidegger was not ready to draw all the consequences from this necessary double meaning of "unconcealedness," which, to put it bluntly, would have compelled him to accept that "ontological difference" is ultimately nothing but a rift in the ontic order (incidentally, in the exact parallel to Badiou's key admission that the Event is ultimately nothing but a torsion in the order of Being). This limitation of Heidegger has a series of philosophical and ethico-political consequences. Philosophically, it leads to Heidegger's notion of historical destiny which delivers different horizons of the disclosure of being, destiny which cannot and should not be in any way influenced by or dependent on ontic occurrences. Ethico-politically, it accounts for Heidegger's (not simply ethical, but properly ontological) indifference towards holocaust, its leveling to just another case of the technological disposal of life (in the infamous passage from the conference on technique): to acknowledge holocaust's extraordinary/exceptional status would equal recognizing in it a trauma that shatters the very ontological coordinates of being. Does this indifference make him a Nazi?

### *Heidegger's smoking gun?*

There are two Heidegger's seminars which clearly disturb the official picture of a Heidegger who only externally accommodated himself to the Nazi regime in order to save whatever could be saved of the university's autonomy: *Ueber Wesen und Begriff von Natur, Geschichte und Staat* (*On the Essence and Notion of Nature, History, and*

*State*, Winter 1933-34, protocol conserved in Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar); *Hegel, ueber den Staat* (*Hegel, on the State*, Winter 1934-35, protocol also conserved in DLA). Significantly, the first of the two is not included in the official *Gesamtausgabe* by Klostermann Verlag – a fact that renders problematic its designation as “complete edition.”<sup>39</sup> These two seminars are the closest one can get to the proverbial smoking gun, since they enact precisely what, according to the official Heideggerian doxa, did not, could not, and should not have taken place: the full-pledged support of Nazism formulated and grounded in Heidegger’s innermost philosophical project. (It is nonetheless wrong for a philosopher to put too much into finding smoking guns: they only confirm what is already there in the formal structure of a thought.) However, one shouldn’t lose nerves too fast here and let oneself go to the standard liberal condemnation: Heidegger’s failure is not as easy to locate as it may appear. The atmosphere of Heidegger’s political references in his texts and courses from the 1930s (the examples he uses, etc.) is, as expected, ominous – suffice it to recall the beginning of the paragraph which questions the being of a state: “A state – it is. In what consists its being? In that the state police arrests a suspect /.../?”<sup>40</sup> The very example he uses to illustrate what Hegel means by his claim about the speculative identity of the rational and the actual is, again, ominous: “The treaty of Versailles is actual, but not rational.”(358)

Heidegger’s starting point is a defense of Hegel against the famous proclamation by Carl Schmitt (the “one” who proclaimed that Hegel died in 1933, when Hitler took over): “It was said that Hegel died in 1933; quite on the contrary: he only began to live.”(333) Why, then, did Hegel only begin to live in 1933? Heidegger endorses Hegel’s thesis on state as the highest form of social existence: “The highest actualization of human being occurs in state.”(247) He even directly “ontologizes” state, defining the relationship between the people and its state in the terms of ontological difference: “The people, the existing, has a fully determined relationship towards its being, towards state.”(217)

However, in what follows, it soon becomes clear that Heidegger only needs Hegel in order to assert the emerging Nazi “total state” against the liberal notion of state as a means to regulate the interaction of civil society; he approvingly refers to Hegel’s deployment of the limitation of the “external” state, the “state of necessity,” the “state of Understanding,” the system of civil society(382): “/.../ we cannot grasp what Hegel understands as freedom, if we take it as an essential determination of a singular I. /.../ Freedom is only actual where there is a community of I’s, of subjects.”(367) But Hegel understands under “freedom” *also* this: he insists on the “modern” principle of the individual’s “infinite right.” For Hegel, civil society is *the* great modern achievement, the condition of actual freedom, the “material base” of mutual recognition, and his problem is precisely how to *unite* the unity of the State and the dynamic mediation of the civil society without curtailing the rights of the civil society. The young Hegel, especially in his *System der Sittlichkeit*, was still fascinated by the Greek *polis* as the organic unity of individual and society: here, social substance does not yet stand opposed to individuals as a cold abstract objective legality imposed from outside, but as the living unity of “customs,” of a collective ethical life in which individuals are “at home,” recognizing it as their own substance. From this perspective, cold universal legality is a regression from the organic unity of customs – the regression from Greece to Roman empire. Although Hegel soon accepted that the subjective freedom of modernity has to be accepted, that the organic unity of *polis* is forever lost, he nonetheless insisted on a need to some kind of return to renewed organic unity, to a new *polis* that would counter offer individuals a

deeper sense of social solidarity and organic unity above the “mechanistic” interaction and individualist competition of civil society.

Hegel’s crucial step towards maturity occurs when he really “abandons the paradigm of *polis*”<sup>41</sup> by way of reconceptualizing the role of civil society. First, civil society is for Hegel the “State of Understanding,” state reduced to the police-apparatus regulating the chaotic interaction of individuals each of whom is pursuing his egotistic interests – such individualistic-atomistic notion of freedom and the notion of legal order as imposed on individuals as the external limitation of their freedom are strictly correlative. The need thus arises to pass from this “state of Understanding” to the true “state of Reason,” in which the individuals’ subjective dispositions are harmonized with the social Whole, in which individuals recognize social substance as their own. The crucial step occurs when Hegel fully develops the mediating role of the civil society: the “system of multilateral dependence” whose ultimate modern form is the market economy, this system in which particular and universal are separated and opposed, in which every individual pursues only his private goals, in which organic social unity decomposes into external mechanic interaction, is in itself already the reconciliation of the particular and the universal in the guise of the famous “invisible hand” of the market, on account of which, by pursuing private interests at the expense of others, every individual contributes to the welfare of all. It is thus not simply that one has to “overcome” the mechanic/external interaction of civil society in a higher organic unity: civil society and its disintegration plays a crucial mediating role, so that the true reconciliation (the one which does not abolish modern subjective freedom) should recognize how this disintegration is in itself already its opposite, a force of integration. Reconciliation is thus radically *immanent*: it implies a shift of perspective on what first appear as disintegration. In other words, insofar as civil society is the sphere of alienation, of the separation between subjectivity persisting in its abstract individuality and the objective social order opposing it as an external necessity that curtails its freedom, the resources of reconciliation should be found *in this very sphere (in what, in this sphere, appears “at first sight, as the least spiritual, as the most alienating: the system of needs”<sup>42</sup>)*, not in the passage to another “higher” sphere. The structure of this reconciliation in mature Hegel is, again, that of the joke on Rabinovich: “There are two reasons modern society is reconciled with itself. The first is the interaction of civil society...” “But the civil society interaction is a constant strife, the very mechanism of disintegration, of ruthless competition!” “Well, this is the second reason, since this very strife and competition makes individuals thoroughly interdependent and thus generates the ultimate social link...”

The whole perspective thus changes: it is no longer that the organic *Sittlichkeit* of *polis* disintegrates under the corrosive influence of modern abstract individuality in its multiple modes (market economy, Protestantism, etc.), and that this unity should somehow be restored at a higher level: the point of Hegel’s analyses of antiquity, best exemplified by his repeated readings of *Antigone*, is that the Greek *polis* itself was already marked, cut through, by fatal immanent antagonisms (public-private, masculine-feminine, human-divine, free-slaves, etc.) which belie its organic unity. The abstract universal individualism (Christianity), far from causing the disintegration of the Greek organic unity, was, on the contrary, the necessary first step towards true reconciliation. With regard to market, far from being simply a corrosive force, it is the market interaction which provides the mediating process which forms the base of true reconciliation between the universal and the singular: market competition brings people really together, while organic order divides them.

The best indication of this shift in the mature Hegel concerns the opposition of customs and law: for the early Hegel, the transformation of customs into institutionalized law is a regressive move from organic unity to alienation (the norm is not longer experienced as part of my substantial ethical nature, but as an external force that constrains my freedom), while for the mature Hegel, this transformation is a crucial step forward, opening up and sustaining the space of modern subjective freedom.<sup>43</sup> It is in total opposition to these insights of Hegel's that Heidegger deploys his notion of a "total state":

We are well talking about a total state. This state is not a particular domain (among others), it is not an apparatus which is here to protect society (from the state itself), a domain with which only some people have to deal."(376) ".../ the people thus wills and loves the state as its own way and manner to be as people. The people is dominated by the striving, by eros, for the state.(221)

This Eros, of course, implies personification: love is always love for the One, Leader:

The Fuehrer-State – the one we have – means the accomplishment of the historical development: the actualization of the people in Fuehrer."(247) "It is only the leader's will which makes others into its followers, and community arises out of this followship. The follower's sacrifice and service originate in this living connection, not in their obedience to the constraint of institutions."(240) "Leader has something to do with the people's will; this will is not the sum of singular wills, but a Whole of a primordial properliness. The question of the consciousness-of-the-will of a community is a problem in all democracies, which can only be resolved in a fruitful way when one recognizes leader's will and people's will in their essentiality. Our task today is to arrange the founding relationship of our communal being in the direction of this actuality of people and leader, where, as its actuality, the two cannot be separated. Only when this basic scheme is asserted in its essential aspect through its application, is a true leadership possible.(238)

This, of course, is again totally opposed to Hegel, for whom the head of a rational State should not be a Leader, but a King – why? Let us take a look at Hegel's (in)famous deduction of the rational necessity of hereditary monarchy: the bureaucratic chain of knowledge has to be supplemented by the King's decision as the "completely concrete objectivity of the will" which

reabsorbs all particularity into its single self, cuts short the weighing of pros and cons between which it lets itself oscillate perpetually now this way and now that, and by saying 'I will' makes its decision and so inaugurates all activity and actuality.<sup>44</sup>

This is why "the conception of the monarch" is "of all conceptions the hardest for ratiocination, i.e. for the method of reflection employed by the Understanding."<sup>45</sup> In the next paragraph, Hegel further elaborates this speculative necessity of the monarch:

This ultimate self in which the will of the state is concentrated is, when thus taken in abstraction, a single self and therefore is immediate individuality. Hence its 'natural' character is implied in its very conception. The monarch, therefore, is

essentially characterized as this individual, in abstraction from all his other characteristics, and this individual is raised to the dignity of monarchy in an immediate, natural, fashion, i.e. through his birth in the course of nature.<sup>46</sup>

The speculative moment that Understanding cannot grasp is “the transition of the concept of pure self-determination into the immediacy of being and so into the realm of nature.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, while Understanding can well grasp the universal mediation of a living totality, what it cannot grasp is that *this totality, in order to actualize itself, has to acquire actual existence in the guise of an immediate “natural” singularity.*<sup>48</sup> The term “natural” should be given its full weight here: in the same way that, at the end of *Logic*, the Idea’s completed self-mediation releases from itself Nature, collapses into the external immediacy of Nature, the State’s rational self-mediation has to acquire actual existence in a will which is determined as directly natural, unmediated, *stricto sensu* “irrational.”

While observing Napoleon on a horse in the streets of Jena after the battle of 1807, Hegel remarked that it was as if he saw there the World Spirit riding a horse. The Christological implications of this remark are obvious: what happened in the case of Christ is that God himself, the creator of our entire universe, was walking out there as a common individual. This mystery of incarnation is discernible at different levels, up to the parent’s speculative judgment apropos a child “Out there our love is walking!”, which stands for the Hegelian reversal of determinate reflexion into reflexive determination – the same as with a king, when his subject sees him walking around: “Out there our state is walking.” Marx’s evocation of reflexive determination (in his famous footnote in Chapter 1 of *Capital*) also falls short here: individuals think they treat a person as a king because he is a king in himself, while, effectively, he is a king only because they treat him as one. However, the crucial point is that this “reification” of a social relation in a person cannot be dismissed as a simple “fetishist misperception”; what such a dismissal itself misses is something that, perhaps, could be designated as the “Hegelian performative”: of course a king is “in himself” a miserable individual, of course he is a king only insofar as his subjects treat him like one; however, the point is that the “fetishist illusion” which sustains our veneration of a king has in itself a performative dimension – *the very unity of our state, that which the king “embodies,” actualizes itself only in the person of a king.* Which is why it is not enough to insist on the need to avoid the “fetishist trap” and to distinguish between the contingent person of a king and what he stands for: what the king stands for only comes to be in his person, the same as with a couple’s love which (at least within a certain traditional perspective) only becomes actual in their offspring.

So far, Hegel seems to say the same thing as Heidegger; there is, however, a key difference, made clear in the Addition to the Paragraph 280:

*Addition:* It is often alleged against monarchy that it makes the welfare of the state dependent on chance, for, it is urged, the monarch may be ill-educated, he may perhaps be unworthy of the highest position in the state, and it is senseless that such a state of affairs should exist because it is supposed to be rational. But all this rests on a presupposition which is nugatory, namely that everything depends on the monarch’s particular character. In a completely organized state, it is only a question of the culminating point of formal decision (and a natural bulwark against passion. It is wrong therefore to demand objective qualities in a monarch); 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. /.../ In a well-organized monarchy, the objective aspect belongs to law alone, and the monarch's part is merely to set to the law the subjective 'I will'.<sup>49</sup>

What is missing in Heidegger is this reduction of the function of the Monarch to the purely formal function of "dotting the i's," i.e., the separation between what, today, we would have called the "constative" and the "performative" aspect (or, in Lacan's terms, the chain of knowledge and the Master-Signifier): the "objective aspect" of governing a State, the content of laws and measures (which is the business of the expert bureaucracy), and its transformation into a "subjective" decision of the State that is to be enacted. Heidegger's concept of Leader confounds precisely the two dimensions Hegel strives to keep apart. The further paradox of Hegel's notion of monarchy is that the King is the constitutive exception which, as such, guarantees the universal legal equality of all other subjects; no wonder that, in contrast to Hegel, Heidegger explicitly rejects equality in favor of a "hierarchy of grades" enforced by the Leader:

To domination belongs power, which creates a hierarchy of grades through the imposition of the will of the one who rules, insofar as he is actually powerful, i.e., insofar as he disposes those under his rule.(239)

Heidegger – in contrast to those who accuse him of leaving out of consideration the "cruel" aspects of the Ancient Greek life (slavery, etc.) – openly draws attention to how "rank and dominance" are directly grounded in a disclosure of being, thereby providing a direct ontological grounding to social relations of domination:

If people today from time to time are going to busy themselves rather too eagerly with the polis of the Greeks, they should not suppress this side of it; otherwise the concept of the polis easily becomes innocuous and sentimental. What is higher in rank is what is stronger. Thus Being, logos, as the gathered harmony, is not easily available for every man at the same price, but is concealed, as opposed to that harmony which is always mere equalizing, the elimination of tension, leveling.<sup>50</sup>

Who, then, is the enemy of such a hierarchic order? The Janus-head of non-hierarchic egalitarianism with its two faces, bourgeois-liberal individualism and Communist egalitarianism, grounded in the "Judeo-Christian" spirituality, which is thus the common source and foundation of both opposed strands of modern politics, the liberal-democratic individualism and the Communist egalitarianism: "In accordance to its mode, the *Jewish-Christian* domination plays a double game, taking simultaneously the side of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and the side of the liberal-democratic cultural striving; for some time, this double game will continue to conceal our already-present loss of roots and inability to take essential decisions."(457) And Heidegger goes even a step further here against the liberal-democratic doxa: in the alternative between Communism and liberalism, the "English" democratic liberalism is the more dangerous one: "The bourgeois-Christian form of the English 'Bolshevism' is the most dangerous one. Without its annihilation, the modern era will continue to be maintained."(467)

The distrust of democracy is a constant feature of Heidegger's thought, even after the *Kehre*; we find it in his Nietzsche-lectures from 1936-7 (where he wrote that "Europe always wants to cling to 'democracy' and does not want to see that this would be a fateful death for it"<sup>51</sup>), as well as in his posthumously published *Spiegel* interview

where he expressed his doubt that democracy is the political form that fits best modern technology.

### *Repetition and the New*

So we are back at Chesterton's notion of concealing a body in a pile of corpses: when one condemns Heidegger's entire philosophical edifice as "Fascist," one masks one's inability to identify a (*one*) corpse – the singular ideological feature which gave a Fascist touch to all others - by constructing a *pile* of corpses called "Heidegger's Fascist thought." In this way, one concedes too much to the enemy: there is nothing "inherently Fascist" in the notions of de-cision, repetition, assuming one's destiny, etc. (or, closer to "ordinary" politics, in the notions of mass discipline, sacrifice for the collective, etc.). In short, one should not allow the enemy to define the terrain of the battle and its stakes, so that we end up abstractly opposing him, supporting a negative copy of what he wants. To be clear and brutal to the end, there is a lesson to be learned from Hermann Goering's reply, in the early 1940s, to some fanatical Nazi who asked him why did he protect a well-known Jew from deportation: "In this city, I decide who is a Jew!" (The answer, incidentally, attributed already to many other German figures who protected their privileged Jews, from Bismarck to Karl Lueger.) In this city, it is us who decided what is Left, so we should just ignore liberal accusations of our "inconsistency." For example, in his review of the Guevara-film *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Paul Berman critically claimed that

the entire movie, in its concept and tone, exudes a Christological cult of martyrdom, a cult of adoration for the spiritually superior person who is veering toward death — precisely the kind of adoration that Latin America's Catholic Church promoted for several centuries, with miserable consequences. The rebellion against reactionary Catholicism in this movie is itself an expression of reactionary Catholicism. The traditional churches of Latin America are full of statues of gruesome bleeding saints. And the masochistic allure of those statues is precisely what you see in the movie's many depictions of young Che coughing out his lungs from asthma and testing himself by swimming in cold water.<sup>52</sup>

To this, one should simply answer: true, but – so what? Why should not revolutionary politics take over the Catholic cult of martyrdom? And one should not be afraid to go to (what for many liberals would be) the end and to say the same about Leni Riefenstahl. Her seems to lend itself to a teleological reading, progressing towards its dark conclusion. It began with *Bergfilme* which celebrated heroism and bodily effort in the extreme conditions of mountain climbing; it went on to her two Nazi documentaries, celebrating the political and sport bodily discipline, concentration and strength of will; then, after World War II, in her photo albums, she rediscovered her ideal of bodily beauty and graceful self-mastery in the Nubi African tribe; finally, in the last decades, she learned the difficult art of deep sea diving and started shooting documentaries about the strange life in the dark depths of the sea.

We thus seem to obtain a clear trajectory from the top to the bottom: we begin with the individuals struggling at the mountain tops and gradually descent, till we reach the amorphous thriving of Life itself at the bottom of the sea - is not what she encountered down there her ultimate object, the obscene and irresistibly thriving eternal

Life itself, what she was searching for all along? And does this not apply also to her personality? It effectively seems that the fear of those who are fascinated by Leni is no longer »When will she die?«, but »Will she EVER die?« - although we rationally knew she will soon die, we somehow didn't really believe it, secretly convinced that she will go on forever, so her death was a genuine surprise.

This continuity is usually given a »proto-Fascist« twist, as is exemplarily the case in the famous Susan Sontag essay on Leni »Fascinating Fascism«. The idea is that even her pre- and post-Nazi films articulate the vision of life which is »proto-Fascist«: Leni's Fascism is deeper than her direct celebration of the Nazi politics, it resides already in her pre-political aesthetics of *Life*, in her fascination with the beautiful bodies displaying their disciplined movements... Perhaps, it is time to problematize this topos. Let us take *Das blaue Licht*: is it not possible to read the film also in exactly the opposite way? Is Junta, the lone and wild mountain girl, not an outcast who almost becomes the victim of a pogrom by the villagers – a pogrom which cannot but remind us of the anti-Semitic pogroms? Perhaps, it is not an accident that Bela Balasy, Leni's lover at that time who co-wrote the scenario with her, was a Marxist...

The problem is here much more general, it goes far beyond Leni. Let us take the very opposite of Leni, Arnold Schoenberg: in the second part of *Harmonielehre*, his major theoretical manifesto from 1911, he develops his opposition to tonal music in terms which, superficially, almost recall later Nazi anti-Semitic tracts: the tonal music has become a »diseased,« »degenerated« world in need of a cleansing solution; the tonal system has given in to »inbreeding and incest«; romantic chords such as the diminished seventh are »hermaphroditic,« »vagrant« and »cosmopolitan«... nothing easier than to claim that such a messianic-apocalyptic attitude is part of the same »spiritual situation« which gave birth to the Nazi »final solution.« This, however, is precisely the conclusion one should AVOID: what makes Nazism repulsive is not the rhetoric of final solution AS SUCH, but the concrete twist it gives to it.

Another popular topic of this kind of analysis, closer to Leni, is the allegedly »proto-Fascist« character of the mass choreography displaying disciplined movements of thousands of bodies (parades, mass performances on the stadiums, etc.); if one finds it also in Socialism, one immediately draws the conclusion about a »deeper solidarity« between the two »totalitarianisms.« Such a procedure, the very prototype of ideological liberalism, misses the point: not only are such mass performances not inherently Fascist; they are not even »neutral,« waiting to be appropriated by Left or Right - it was Nazism who stole them and appropriated them from the workers' movement, their original site of birth. None of the »proto-Fascist« elements is *per se* Fascist, what makes them »Fascist« is only their specific articulation – or, to put it in Stephen Jay Gould's terms, all these elements are »ex-apted« by Fascism. In other words, there is no »Fascism *avant la lettre*,« because it is the letter itself (the nomination) which makes out of the bundle of elements Fascism proper.

Along the same lines, one should radically reject the notion that discipline (from self-control to bodily training) is a »proto-Fascist« feature - the very predicate »proto-Fascist« should be abandoned: it is the exemplary case of a pseudo-concept whose function is to block conceptual analysis. When we say that the organized spectacle of thousands of bodies (or, say, the admiration of sports which demand high effort and self-control like mountain climbing) is »proto-Fascist,« we say strictly nothing, we just express a vague association which masks our ignorance. So when, three decades ago, Kung Fu films were popular (Bruce Lee etc.), was it not obvious that we were dealing with a genuine working class ideology of youngsters whose only means of success was

the disciplinary training of their only possession, their bodies? Spontaneity and the »let it go« attitude of indulging in excessive freedoms belong to those who have the means to afford it – those who have nothing have only their discipline. The »bad« bodily discipline, if there is one, is not the collective training, but, rather, jogging and body-building as part of the New Age myth of the realization of the Self's inner potentials – no wonder that the obsession with one's body is an almost obligatory part of the passage of ex-Leftist radicals into the »maturity« of pragmatic politics: from Jane Fonda to Joschka Fischer, the »period of latency« between the two phases was marked by the focus on one's own body.

So, back to Leni, what this means is not that one should dismiss her Nazi engagement as a limited unfortunate episode. The true problem is to sustain the tension which cuts through her work: the tension between the artistic perfection of her procedures and the ideological project which »co-opted« them. Why should her case be different from that of Ezra Pound, W.B. Yates, and other modernists with Fascist tendencies who long ago became part of our artistic canon? Perhaps, the search for the »true ideological identity« of Leni is a misleading one: there is no such identity, she was genuinely thrown around, inconsistent, caught in a cobweb of conflicting forces. So, back to Heidegger – in his Nazi engagement, he was not "totally wrong" – the tragedy is that he was *almost right*, deploying the structure of a revolutionary act and then distorting it by giving it a Fascist twist. Heidegger was closest to truth precisely where he erred most, in his writings from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s. Our task thus is to *repeat* Heidegger and retrieve this lost dimension/potential of his thought. In 1937/8, Heidegger wrote:

What is conservative remains bogged down in the historiographical; only what is revolutionary attains the depth of history. Revolution does not mean here mere subversion and destruction but an upheaval and recreating of the customary so that the beginning might be restructured. And because the original belongs to the beginning, the restructuring of the beginning is never the poor imitation of what was earlier; it is entirely other and nevertheless the same.<sup>53</sup>

In itself, is this not a wholly pertinent description of the revolution along Benjamin's lines? Recall the old example provided by Walter Benjamin: the October Revolution repeated the French Revolution, redeeming its failure, unearthing and repeating the same impulse. Already for Kierkegaard, repetition is »inverted memory,« a movement forward, the production of the New, and not the reproduction of the Old. »There is nothing new under the sun« is the strongest contrast to the movement of repetition. So, it is not only that repetition is (one of the modes of) the emergence of the New – *the New can ONLY emerge through repetition*. The key to this paradox is, of course, what Deleuze designates as the difference between the Virtual and the Actual (and which – why not? – one can also determine as the difference between Spirit and Letter). Let us take a great philosopher like Kant – there are two modes to repeat him: either one sticks to his letter and further elaborates or changes his system, as neo-Kantians (up to Habermas and Luc Ferry) are doing; or, one tries to regain the creative impulse that Kant himself betrayed in the actualization of his system (i.e., to connect to what was already »in Kant more than Kant himself,« more than his explicit system, its excessive core).

There are, accordingly, two modes of betraying the past. The true betrayal is an ethico-theoretical act of the highest fidelity: one has to betray the letter of Kant in order

to remain faithful to (and repeat) the »spirit« of his thought. It is precisely when one remains faithful to the letter of Kant that one really betrays the core of his thought, the creative impulse underlying it. One should bring this paradox to its conclusion: it is not only that one can remain really faithful to an author by way of betraying him (the actual letter of his thought); at a more radical level, the inverse statement holds even more - one can only truly betray an author by way of repeating him, by way of remaining faithful to the core of his thought. If one does not repeat an author (in the authentic Kierkegaardian sense of the term), but merely »criticizes« him, moves elsewhere, turns him around, etc., this effectively means that one unknowingly remains within his horizon, his conceptual field.<sup>54</sup> When G.K. Chesterton describes his conversion to Christianity, he claims that he »tried to be some ten minutes in advance of the truth. And I found that I was eighteen years behind it.«<sup>55</sup> Does the same not hold even more for those who, today, desperately try to catch up with the New by way of following the latest »post-« fashion, and are thus condemned to remain forever eighteen years behind the truly New?

In his ironic comments on the French Revolution, Marx opposes revolutionary enthusiasm to the sobering effect of the »morning after«: the actual result of the sublime revolutionary explosion, of the Event of freedom, equality, and brotherhood, is the miserable utilitarian/egotistic universe of market calculations. (And, incidentally, is not this gap even wider in the case of the October Revolution?) However, one should not simplify Marx: his point is not the rather commonsensical insight into how the vulgar reality of commerce is the »truth« of the theater of revolutionary enthusiasm, »what all the fuss really was about.« In the revolutionary explosion as an Event, another utopian dimension shines through, the dimension of universal emancipation which, precisely, is the excess betrayed by the market reality which takes over »the day after« – as such, this excess is not simply abolished, dismissed as irrelevant, but, as it were, *transposed into the virtual state*, continuing to haunt the emancipatory imaginary as a dream waiting to be realized. The excess of revolutionary enthusiasm over its own »actual social base« or substance is thus literally that of an attribute-effect over its own substantial cause, a ghost-like Event waiting for its proper embodiment.

Only repetition brings out pure difference. When, in his famous analysis in *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes the ex-static structure of *Dasein's* temporality as the circular movement which goes from future through the past to the present, it is not enough to understand this as a movement in which I, starting from the future (the possibilities opened to me, my projects, etc.), go back to the past (analyze the texture of the historical situation into which I was "thrown," in which I find myself), and, from it, engage in my present in order to realize my projects. When Heidegger characterizes future itself as "having-been */gesewene/*" or, more precisely, something that "is as having-been */gewesende/*," he locates future itself into the past - not, of course, in the sense that we live in a closed universe in which every future possibility is already contained in the past, so that we can only repeat, realize, what already IS there in the inherited texture, but in the much more radical sense of the "openness" of the past itself: the past itself is not simply "what there was," it contains hidden, non-realized potentials, and the authentic future is the repetition/retrieval of *this* past, not of the past as it was, but of that in the past which the past itself, in its reality, betrayed, stifled, failed to realize. It is in this sense that one should today "repeat Lenin": choosing Lenin as one's hero (to paraphrase Heidegger) not in order to follow him and do the same today, but to repeat/retrieve him in the precise sense of bringing out the non-realized potentials of Leninism.

And one should not be afraid to conceive in these terms the very touchy topic of Heidegger's relation to Nazism. Although it is true that, in contrast to the "Really-Existing Socialism," one does not talk about the "Really-Existing Fascism" (since one did not experience the "actual" Fascism as the betrayal of its inherent emancipatory potentials), there is nonetheless a philosopher who *did* engage in a kind of critique of the "Really-Existing Nazism" on behalf of its true potentials (its "inner greatness") betrayed by its racist-technological nihilistic reality – none other than Heidegger, of course. After his much-debated disappointment with the reality of the Nazi regime in 1934, Heidegger's effort throughout the 1930s was effectively to salvage this betrayed "inner greatness," the world-historic potential, of the Nazi movement – therein resides the ultimate political wager of Heidegger's endless variations on the topic of Hölderlin and the fate of Germany.<sup>56</sup>

What Heidegger was looking for in Nazism (to avoid a misunderstanding: not only due to an accidental error in his personal judgment, but due to the flaws of his theoretical edifice itself) was a revolutionary Event, so that even some measures he imposed on the Freiburg university during his brief tenure as its rector bear witness to his intention to enact there a kind of "cultural revolution" (bringing together students with workers and soldiers – which, in itself, is not a Fascist measure, but something Maoists tried to do in their Cultural Revolution). One is thus tempted to apply to Heidegger André Gide's sarcastic comment on Théophile Gautier: in 1933, he played a crucial role in German academic politics, only he was not up to this role.

### *From Heidegger to Drive*

Although Heidegger's almost phobic oversensitivity to morality can be easily accounted for as an implicit admission of his own ethically repulsive behaviour and lack of elementary ethical attitudes, his opponent's insistence on these same features of Heidegger as a person is also false – as if, by demonstrating Heidegger's personal lack of elementary ethical standards, one can avoid the hard task of confronting the issues posed by Heidegger's thought. There is nonetheless something disturbing in Heidegger's proverbial allergy against any mention of moral considerations; in his reading of Plato in the 1931-32 seminar, he even tries to purify the Platonic *to agathon* from all links with moral goodness through a skilful reference to one of the everyday uses of the exclamation "Good!": "good!" means: It will be done! It is decided! It has nothing to do with the meaning of *moral* goodness; ethics has ruined the grounding meaning of this word." One can thus easily imagine, at the conclusion of the Wahnsee conference, Heydrich exclaiming: "Good!", using the term in the "authentic" Platonic sense ("It will be done! It is decided!")... The fact that there is a real philosophical problem we are dealing with here can be demonstrated by a close reading of Heidegger's seminar on Schelling's "Treatise on Freedom," in which Heidegger has to admit a dimension of radical Evil which cannot be historicized, i.e., reduced to the nihilism of modern technology. It is the merit of Bret Davis to analyse in detail this deadlock of Heidegger's thought.

In his close reading of Heidegger, Derrida tried to demonstrate how "Spirit /*Geist*" is the undeconstructed symptomatic point in Heidegger's edifice<sup>57</sup>; Bret Davis did the same thing for the notion of the Will.<sup>58</sup> A consensus is gradually emerging in Heidegger studies that there are not two, but, rather, three distinct phases of his thought: the early phase of the analytic of *Dasein* (*Sein und Zeit*); the middle phase of the

assertion of heroic historicity (from the conference “What is Metaphysics?” to the manuscript *Vom Ereignis* – the key published text *Introduction to Metaphysics*); and the last phase of the withdrawal from technological nihilism into poetry and thought, under the sign of *Gelassenheit*. In his first phase, Heidegger ignores the phenomenon of the Will; in the second phase, it is forcefully asserted, and well beyond Heidegger’s Nazi engagement (in *Vom Ereignis* manuscript, which is usually read as the beginning of late Heidegger, he still speaks of the “will to *Ereignis*”); in the last phase, as the result of Heidegger’s confrontation with Nietzsche, Will is, on the contrary, posited as the very core of modern subjectivity, and thus as that which has to be overcome if mankind is to leave behind the nihilism that threatens its very essence. Through a detailed perspicuous analysis, Davis shows how this tripartite division is not clear: although not explicitly thematized, Will is not only lurking in the background already in the first phase; much more crucial, it persists to the end, mysteriously popping up in unexpected ways.

Where we disagree with Davis is in how to interpret this strange persistence of the Will, which continues to haunt Heidegger even when its overcoming becomes the very focus of his thought. Under the clear influence of his in-depth knowledge of Japanese Zen Buddhism, Davis reads this persistence as a sign of “*Gelassenheit* as an unfinished project”: it basically indicates that Heidegger did not succeed in thoroughly “deconstructing” the Will, so that it is up to us, who continue in his path, to accomplish the job and draw all the consequences from *Gelassenheit*. Our wager is, however, that the persistence of the Will even in the latest Heidegger, so brilliantly discerned by Davis, rather demonstrates the insufficiency of Heidegger’s critical analysis of modern subjectivity – not in the sense that “Heidegger didn’t go far enough, and thus remained himself marked by subjectivity,” but in the sense that he overlooked a non-metaphysical core of modern subjectivity itself: the most fundamental dimension of the abyss of subjectivity cannot be grasped through the lenses of the notion of subjectivity as the attitude of technological domination.<sup>59</sup> In other words, it is the *symptom of Gelassenheit*, an indication of the limitation of this notion itself, not only of our failure to fully develop its potentials.<sup>60</sup>

Davis proposes the distinction “between (1) what Heidegger calls ‘the will’ of subjectivity, a fundamental (dis)attunement that has risen up and prevailed in a particular epochal history of metaphysics, and (2) what we have (interpretively supplementing Heidegger) called ‘ur-willing,’ a non-historical dissonant excess which haunts the proper essence of non-willing” (303). Heidegger directly approaches this point in his reading of a fragment of Anaximander on order and disorder, where he considers the possibility that an entity

may even insist */bestehen/* upon its while solely to remain more present, in the sense of perduring */Bestaendigen/*. That which lingers persists */beharrt/* in its presencing. In this way it extricates itself from its transitory while. It strikes the wilful pose of persistence, no longer concerning itself with whatever else is present. It stiffens – as if this were the only way to linger – and aims solely for continuance and subsistence.<sup>61</sup>

Davis’s thesis is that this “rebellious whiling” refers to a non-historical ur-willing, a willing which is not limited to the epoch of modern subjectivity and its will to power, but belongs to the core of Being itself. This is also why Davis is right in dismissing Hannah Arendt’s reading of this “craving to persist” which reduces it to the traditional theological notion of a “wilful rebellion against the ‘order’ of Creation as such”<sup>62</sup>: this ur-willing is not the

egotistic withdrawal-into-itself of a particular creature from the global Order, it is a “perversion” inscribed into this Order itself:

Is there not a problem of ‘willing’ that is an ineradicable aspect of man’s ineradicable finitude? Would not a problem of ‘willing’ – even if not that of its specific historical determinations/exacerbations in the epochs of metaphysics – remain even in the other beginning?(282)

What Heidegger clearly saw is what great mystics in the Rhein tradition (Eckhart, Bohme) also saw: the formula of Evil as the distance or Fall from divine Goodness is not enough; the question to be raised is: how can this distance occur? The only consequent answer is: there has to be an “inversion” in God himself, a struggle, dissonance, already in the very heart of the divine Origin. In the same way, Heidegger grounds the excess of subjectivity, its nihilistic forgetfulness of Being, in a strife/discord at the very heart of Being. - Davis draws the same conclusion from Heidegger’s oscillations in his reading of Schelling’s *Treatise on Freedom*: radical Evil is most brutally exposed

not in the *faceless defacing* technology of the extermination camps, but rather in the fact that it is possible /.../ for a person to look another person in the face and, clearly sensing the withdrawal of interiority, wilfully pull the trigger, or point a finger in the direction of the gas chambers. The wickedness of *this face-to-face defacement* - this wicked will to power that wills the murder of the Other as *Other*, in other words, that wills to maintain a recognition of the Other precisely in order to take diabolical pleasure in annihilating his or her otherness – radically exceeds the evil of the calculating machinations of technology.

/.../ The thoughtless reduction of the Other to a cog in the wheel of technological machination is not yet the wicked will to power that maintains a recognition of the alterity of the Other precisely in order to take diabolical pleasure in conquering her resistance and witnessing her pain. This terrible fact of evil cannot be explained technologically.

Heidegger’s history of metaphysics, which proceeds to culminate in the technological will to will /.../, passes by the abyss of this wicked will to power. After Heidegger therefore, we must step back to think the originary dissonant excess of ur-willing as the root potential, not just of the faceless defacing technological will to will, but also of this wicked face-to-face defacing will to power. Moreover, insofar as human freedom could not be detached from a responsibility with regard to this non-technological evil will to power, a limit in Heidegger’s thinking of evil would also mark a limit in his thinking of human freedom.(297-298)

This, then, is where Heidegger was wrong in his infamous insertion of the Holocaust in the same series as agricultural exploitation of nature: “What is ‘scandalously inadequate’ here is that Heidegger’s thought appears unable to mark an essential difference between the reduction of vegetables to standing-reserve for the production and consumption of foodstuffs and the lining up of persons to be systematically murdered”(297). So what about the counter-argument in Heidegger’s defence according to which, it is not Heidegger but modern technology itself which reduces at the same level of available/disposable objects vegetables and humans? The answer is clear: Heidegger is simply (and crucially) *wrong* in reducing Holocaust to a technological production of corpses; there is in events like the Holocaust a crucial element of the will to

humiliate and hurt the other. The victim is treated as an object in a reflexive way, in order to humiliate him further, in clear contrast to the industrially produced vegetable, where this intention to hurt is absent – in industrialized agriculture, a vegetable simply *is* reduced to an object of technological manipulation.

This is also why the notion of trauma has no place in his universe: does, in Heideggerian terms, the concept of trauma, of a traumatic encounter, not designate precisely the unthinkable point at which an ontic intrusion gets so excessively powerful that it shatters the very ontological horizon which provides the coordinates within which reality is disclosed to us? This is why a traumatic encounter entails a “loss of reality” which has to be understood in the strong philosophical sense of the loss of ontological horizon - in trauma, we are momentarily exposed to the “raw” ontic thing not yet covered/screened by the ontological horizon. This, of course, is what happens when we witness something like the Holocaust: the eclipse of the World itself. One has to take this statement at its most literal: an act of thorough Evil threatens the very World-disclosure.

Davis’s solution - to “clearly distinguish /.../ between the ontological necessity of errancy and the inordinate excess of ‘letting oneself be led astray’”(299) - comes dangerously close to the all too simple distinction between the ontologically necessary “normal” level of Evil and the ontic “excess” over this “normal” level (something akin to old Herbert Marcuse’s distinction between “necessary” libidinal repression and the unnecessary excessive repression). The problem with this solution is that it doubly misses the point. First, it obviously misses Heidegger’s point, which is, on the opposite, that the true excess is the ontological “evil” of technological nihilism – compared with it, “ontic” excesses are a minor mishap, so that one might even risk a tasteless Heideggerian paraphrase of Brecht: “What is a slaughter of thousands of enemies compared to the technological reduction of man itself to an object of technological manipulation!” Second, it misses a dimension isolated already by German mystics from Eckhart onwards: the very non-historical “excessive” basic human evil (the intention to hurt and humiliate the other) is not a simple fall-off from man’s ontological essence, but has to be grounded in this ontological essence.

Two further (interconnected) questions are to be raised here. The first one, naïve but necessary: does this not ultimately absolve man from responsibility for concrete Evil, when Evil is grounded in the convolutions of Being itself? In other words, the question is “whether Heidegger, in ascribing the origin of evil to a negativity in being itself, implicitly justifies evil as an ontologically necessitated errancy”(289). The second one, more fundamental-ontological: is this strife in the heart of Being part of its Harmony itself, in the sense that Being is the very hidden concord of the struggling poles, or is it a more radical discord, something which derails the very Harmony of Being? Or, as Davis puts it: “Is being a fugue into which all dissonance is in the end necessarily harmonized? Or does evil haunt the gift of being as its non-sublatable dissonant excess?”(294) However, against Davis’s claim that the first option “pulls Heidegger’s thought back towards the systematicity of idealism”(294), one should insist that it is, on the contrary, the pre-modern (pre-idealist) “paganism” whose ultimate horizon is the higher harmony of the struggling forces, and that “subjectivity” at its most fundamental designates precisely a “dissonant excess” which cannot be co-opted into a higher harmony of the substantial order of Being.

To answer these questions, it is not enough to think “with Heidegger against Heidegger,” i.e., to bring the “unfinished Heidegger project” to its end. In other words, immanent critique is not enough here; one has to abandon Heidegger’s basic premise of a diabolical inversion of the “fugue of Being”; let us go back to Heidegger’s reading to

Anaximander. For anyone minimally versed in Freud and Lacan, Heidegger's reading of Anaximander's "disorder" cannot but evoke the Freudian *drive*: his formulation renders perfectly the "stuckness," fixation, of the drive onto a certain impossible point around which it circulates, obeying a "compulsion to repeat." At its most elementary, drive is a "rebellious willing" which derails the "natural" flow. So what if there is *stricto sensu* no world, no disclosure of being, prior to this "stuckness"? What if there is no *Gelassenheit* which is disturbed by the excess of willing, what if it is this very excess-stuckness which opens up the space for *Gelassenheit*? What if it is only against the background of this stuckness that a human being can experience itself as finite/mortal, in contrast to an animal which simply is mortal.

The primordial fact is thus not the fugue of Being (or the inner peace of *Gelassenheit*), which can then be disturbed/perverted by the rise of ur-willing; the primordial fact is this ur-willing itself, its disturbance of the "natural" fugue. To put it in yet another way: in order for a human being to be able to withdraw itself from the full immersion into its life-environs into the inner peace of *Gelassenheit*, this immersion has first to be broken through the excessive "stuckness" of the drive.

Two further consequences should be drawn from this. First, that human finitude strictly equals infinity: the obscene "immortality"/infinity of drive which insists "beyond life and death." Second: the name of this diabolical excess of willing which "perverts" the order of Being is subject. Subject thus cannot be reduced to an epoch of Being, to the modern subjectivity bent on technological domination – there is, underlying it, a "non-historical" subject.

### *Heidegger's "divine violence"*

If there is a proposition against which our entire reading is aimed, it is the notion that "Heidegger abandoned his romantic infatuation with struggle, and mythical political deeds and sacrifices in favor of a more gentle and receptive form of openness to the earth and sky, mortals and divinities."<sup>63</sup> A subtitle to the present chapter could well have been: "Beware of gentle openness!"

What this means with regard to the three phases of Heidegger's thought is that there is a potential breakthrough towards another dimension in phase 2, which gets lost in phase 3: where Heidegger erred most (his Nazi engagement), he came closest to truth. Far from resolving the inconsistencies of phase 2, phase 3 proposes a new paradigm which makes them invisible. In contrast to this assertion of the late green-*Gelassenheit* Heidegger, one should therefore explore for new openings the very Heidegger of violence, political deeds and sacrifices. At the level of textual analysis, Gregory Fried<sup>64</sup> already did a lot of work in his deeply pertinent reading of Heidegger's entire opus through the interpretive lenses of his reference to Heraclitus' *polemos* (struggle – in German, *Krieg*, *Kampf*, or, predominantly in Heidegger, *Auseinandersetzung*) from the latter's famous Fragment 53: "War is both father of all and king of all: it reveals the gods on the one hand and humans on the other, makes slaves on the one hand, the free on the other."<sup>65</sup>

As every interpreter of Heraclitus knows, this fragment is to be read as the inversion of the religious vision of the universe as generated and ruled by a divine potency: for someone like Hesiod, God (Zeus) "the father and king of all is"! If we replace Zeus with struggle (war), we get a totally different overall map of the universe: not a hierarchic Whole whose local tensions and struggles are controlled by the paternal force

of the overwhelming divine One, but the ongoing process of struggle itself as the ultimate reality, as the process out of which all entities as well as their (temporary) order emerge. It is not only that the stable identity of each entity is only temporary, that they all sooner or later disappear, disintegrate, return back to the primordial chaos; their (temporary) identity itself emerges through struggle, i.e., stable identity is something one should gain through the ordeal of struggle, one asserts in confrontation with the other(s)... sounds familiar? One can bet it does - when Heidegger, in his reading of the fragment, insists on how the “struggle meant here is ordinary struggle, for it allows those who struggle to originate as such in the first place,”<sup>66</sup> do we not get here not so much the usual *Heidegger avec Hitler*, but, rather, the unexpected *Heidegger avec Staline*? For Stalin also, nature and history are a big ongoing process of eternal “struggle between the opposites”:

Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics holds that internal contradictions are inherent in all things and phenomena of nature, for they all have their negative and positive sides, a past and a future, something dying away and something developing; and that the struggle between these opposites, the struggle between the old and the new, between that which is dying away and that which is being born, between that which is disappearing and that which is developing, constitutes the internal content of the process of development, the internal content of the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative changes.

The dialectical method therefore holds that the process of development from the lower to the higher takes place not as a harmonious unfolding of phenomena, but as a disclosure of the contradictions inherent in things and phenomena, as a ‘struggle’ of opposite tendencies which operate on the basis of these contradictions.<sup>67</sup>

Even the “class struggle” is already there in Heraclitus, in the guise of the struggle which “makes slaves on the one hand, the free on the other”... According to some sources, a visitor to Heidegger in the last years of the World War II was surprised to see on his working table some books on Marxist philosophy; he replied that, since the Soviet Union will win the war, he is getting ready to play his role in a new society... apocryphal or not, we can see the inner logic of this anecdote, which resides in the unexpected reverberation between the highest and the lowest, the terse poetic beauty and precision of Heraclitus’ ancient wisdom, and the simple brutality of Stalin’s dialectical-materialist “world-view.”

The other key Greek passage on violence to which Heidegger repeatedly returns is the famous Chorus from *Antigone* on the “uncanny/demonic” character of man. In his reading of this Chorus in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger deploys the notion of “ontological” violence that pertains to every founding gesture of the new communal World of a people, accomplished by poets, thinkers and statesmen:

Violence is usually seen in terms of the domain in which concurring compromise and mutual assistance set the standard for Dasein, and accordingly all violence is necessarily deemed only a disturbance and an offense. /.../ The violent one, the creative one who sets forth into the unsaid, who breaks into the unthought, who compels what has never happened and makes appear what is unseen – this violent one stands at all times in daring. /.../ Therefore the violence-doer knows no kindness and conciliation (in the ordinary sense), no appeasement and mollification

by success or prestige and by their confirmation. /.../ For such a one, disaster is the deepest and broadest Yes to the Overwhelming. /.../ Essential de-cision, when it is carried out and when it resists the constantly pressing ensnarement in the everyday and the customary, has to use violence. This act of violence, this decided setting out upon the way to the Being of beings, moves humanity out of the hominess of what is most directly nearby and what is usual.<sup>68</sup>

As such, the Creator is “*hupsipolis apolis*” (*Antigone*, line 370): he stands outside and above *polis* and its ethos, he is unbound by any rules of “morality” (which are only a degenerative form of *ethos*); only as such can he ground a new form of *ethos*, of communal Being in a *polis*... - of course, what reverberates here is the topic an “illegal” violence that founds the rule of the law itself, deployed at the same time in different forms by Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt. (In a standard move, Heidegger, of course, hastens to add how the first victim of this violence is the Creator itself who has to be erased with the advent of the new Order that he grounded; this erasure can take different forms, from physical destruction – from Moses and Julius Caesar onwards, we know that the founding figure has to be killed – to relapse into madness, as in the case of Hölderlin.) What accounts for the chilling character of these passages is that, here, Heidegger does not merely provide a new variation on his standard rhetorical figure of inversion (“The essence of violence has nothing to do with ontic violence, suffering, war, destruction, etc.; the essence of violence resides in the violent character of the very imposition/founding of the new mode of the Essence – disclosure of communal Being – itself.”); here, Heidegger (implicitly, but clearly) reads this essential violence as something that grounds – or, at least, opens up the space for – the explosions of ontic violence itself... Liberal critics of Heidegger like to dwell on these lines, emphasizing how, in suspending even the minimal moral criteria, Heidegger legitimizes the most brutal “ontic” violence of the Statesman-Creator, and thus paves the way for his own Nazi engagement and support for Hitler as such a Statesman-Creator who, standing outside and above the communal space of the moribund Weimar Republic, fearlessly shattered its coordinates and thus violently grounded a new communal Being, that of the Germany reawakened in the Nationalist-Socialist revolution...

However, what one is tempted to add here is that, in the very case of Nazism (and Fascism in general), the constellation of violence is rather the opposite one: crazy, tasteless even, as it may sound, the problem with Hitler was that *he was not violent enough*, that his violence was not “essential” enough. Nazism was not radical enough, it did not dare to disturb the basic structure of the modern capitalist social space (which is why it had to invent and focus on destroying an external enemy, Jews). This is why one should oppose the fascination with Hitler according to which Hitler was, of course, a bad guy, responsible for the death of millions – but he definitely had balls, he pursued with iron will what he wanted... This point is not only ethically repulsive, but simply *wrong*: no, Hitler did *not* “have the balls” to really change things; he did *not* really act, all his actions were fundamentally *reactions*, i.e., he acted so that nothing would really change, he stages a big spectacle of Revolution so that the capitalist order could survive. If one really wants to name an act which was truly daring, for which one truly had to “have the balls” to try the impossible, but which was simultaneously a horrible act, an act causing suffering beyond comprehension, it was Stalin’s forced collectivization at the end of 1920s in the Soviet Union – but even here, the same reproach holds: the paradox of the 1928 »Stalinist revolution« was rather that, in all its brutal radicality, *it was not radical enough* in effectively transforming the social substance. Its brutal destructiveness has to

be read as an impotent *passage a l'acte*. Far from simply standing for a total forcing of the unnamable Real on behalf of the Truth, the Stalinist "totalitarianism" rather designates the attitude of absolutely ruthless "pragmatism," of manipulating and sacrificing all "principles" on behalf of maintaining power.

From this perspective, the irony of Hitler was that his grand gestures of despising the bourgeois self-complacency, etc., were ultimately in the service of enabling this complacency to continue: far from effectively disturbing the much despised "decadent" bourgeois order, far from awakening the Germans from the immersion into its complacency, Nazism was a dream which enabled them to go in it and postpone awakening - Germany really awakened only in the defeat of 1945. The worry that Badiou's notion of "courage" (which one needs in order to practice the fidelity to the Event) raises in liberal minds is: but how are we to distinguish "good" (properly eventual) courage from "bad" courage – say, were the Nazis who defended Berlin in the winter of 1944-45 or the Muslim terrorists who explode themselves when they perform the suicidal attack also not truly courageous? One should nonetheless insist that there is no "bad courage": bad courage is always a form of cowardice. The "courage" of the Nazis was sustained by their cowardice to attack the key feature of their society, the capitalist relations of production; the "courage" of the terrorists relies on the "big Other" as whose instruments they perceive themselves. The true courage of an act is always the courage to accept the inexistence of the big Other, i.e., to attack the existing order at the point of its symptomal knot.

And, back to Heidegger, what this means is that Hitler's violence, even at its most terrifying (murdering millions of Jews), was all too "ontic," i.e., an impotent *passage a l'acte* that betrayed the inability of the Nazi movement to be really "*apolis*," to question-confront-shatter the basic coordinates of the bourgeois communal Being. And what if Heidegger's own Nazi-engagement is also to be read as a *passage a l'acte*: a violent outburst that bears witness to Heidegger's inability to resolve the theoretical deadlock he found himself in? The question of how does Heidegger's Nazi engagement relate to his philosophy should thus be recast: it is no longer a question of *adequatio* (correspondence) between Heidegger's thought and his political acts, but of an inherent theoretical deadlock (which, in itself, has nothing to do with Nazism), and the violent *passage* as the only way to escape it.

This is how one should also recast the old dilemma: was at the beginning the Word or the Act? Logically, it all began with the Word; the act that followed was an impotent outburst that bore witness to the deadlock of the Word. And the same goes for the act par excellence, the divine act of creation: it also signals the impasse of God's ratiocinations. In short, here, also, the negative aspect of the ontological proof holds: the fact that God created the world does not display his omnipotence and excess of goodness, but his debilitating limitation.

- <sup>1</sup> Albeit in the wrong direction.
- <sup>2</sup> Available online at [books.eserver.org/fiction/innocence/brokensword.html](http://books.eserver.org/fiction/innocence/brokensword.html).
- <sup>3</sup> Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977, p. 404.
- <sup>4</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Zorn und Zeit*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2006, p. 260.
- <sup>5</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1986, p. 44-45.
- <sup>6</sup> The same insight was already formulated by Heinrich Heine in his *History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* from 1834, although as a positive, admirable fact: "Mark you this, you proud men of action, you are nothing but the unconscious henchmen of intellectuals, who, often in the humblest seclusion, have meticulously plotted your every deed." (Quoted from Dan Hind, *The Threat to Reason*, London: Verso Books 2007, p. 1)
- <sup>7</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005, p. 50-51.
- <sup>8</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, *Le Neveu de Lacan*, Verdier 2003, p. 146-147.
- <sup>9</sup> In this subdivision, numbers in brackets refer to the pages in Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001.
- <sup>10</sup> Nietzsche is as a rule strangely decontextualized/dehistoricized, by the same authors who are otherwise so eager to contextualize/historicize Lacan and others to demonstrate their metaphysical and repressive bias: in Deleuze's paradigmatic reading of Nietzsche, this dimension totally disappears. (While, typically, often the same authors go into great details about Wagner's – Nietzsche's great oponent's – anti-Semitism, locating it into its historical context...)
- <sup>11</sup> This parallel, of course, has its limits, the most obvious being that Foucault's Iran engagement was perceived as a lone idiosyncratic gesture, out of sync with the hegemonic liberal-democratic consensus, while Heidegger's Nazi engagement followed the dominant trend among German radical-conservative intellectuals.
- <sup>12</sup> Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2005, p. 3-4.
- <sup>13</sup> Afary and Anderson, op.cit., p. 263.
- <sup>14</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, New York: Columbia University Press 1995, op.cit., p. 171.
- <sup>15</sup> Afary and Anderson, op.cit., p. 265.
- <sup>16</sup> Is, however, this magic moment of enthusiastic unity of a collective will not an exemplary case of what Lacan refers to as imaginary identification? It is here, apropos this case, that one can observe at its purest the shift in Lacan's teaching: while Lacan of the 1950s would undoubtedly dismiss this enthusiastic unity as the imaginary misrecognition of symbolic overdetermination, the late Lacan would discern in it the eruption of the Real.
- <sup>17</sup> Afary and Anderson, op.cit., p. 256.
- <sup>18</sup> Op.cit., p. 253.
- <sup>19</sup> Op.cit., p. 264.
- <sup>20</sup> Op.cit., p. 265.
- <sup>21</sup> Op.cit., p. 260.
- <sup>22</sup> Fethi Benslama, *La psychanalyse a l'épreuve de l'Islam*, Paris: Aubier 2002, p. 320.
- <sup>23</sup> Benslama, op.cit., ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ernst Nolte, *Martin Heidegger - Politik und Geschichte im Leben und Denken*, Berlin: Propylaen Verlag 1992, p. 296. Incidentally, the same line of defense of Heidegger's Nazi engagement was already proposed by Jean Beaufret in a letter published in 1963 (see Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger. L'introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie*, Paris: Albin Michel 2005, p. 502; all numbers in brackets that follow refer to the pages of this book).
- <sup>25</sup> Mark Wrathall's *How to Read Heidegger*, London, Granta Books 2005, p. 87.
- <sup>26</sup> Wrathall, op.cit., p. 86.
- <sup>27</sup> Steve Fuller, *Kuhn vs. Popper*, Cambridge: Icon Books 2006, p. 191.
- <sup>28</sup> Michel de Beistegui, *The New Heidegger*, London: Continuum 2005, p. 7.
- <sup>29</sup> De Beistegui, op.cit., p. 175-6.
- <sup>30</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1973, p. 328.
- <sup>31</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, London: Penguin Books 1990, p. 205.
- <sup>32</sup> Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity*, Cambridge (Ma): Cambridge University Press 2005, op.cit., p. 165.
- <sup>33</sup> Pippin, op.cit., p. 22.
- <sup>34</sup> De Beistegui, op.cit., p. 182.

<sup>35</sup> De Beistegui, op.cit., p. 182.

<sup>36</sup> Wrathall, op.cit., p. 82.

<sup>37</sup> Wrathall, op.cit., p. 79-80.

<sup>38</sup> Wrathall, op.cit., p. 81-82.

<sup>39</sup> All references to and passages from these two seminars are taken from Emmanuel Faye, op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, New Haven: Yale University Press 2000, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Jean-Francois Kervegan, "La vie éthique perdue dans ses extrêmes...". In *Lectures de Hegel*, sous la direction de Olivier Tinland, Paris: Livre de Poche 2005, p. 283.

<sup>42</sup> Kervegan, op.cit., p. 291.

<sup>43</sup> The problem is here, of course: does the market dynamic really provide what it promises? Does it not generate permanent destabilization of the social body, especially by way of increasing class distinctions and giving rise to "mob" deprived of basic conditions of life? Hegel's solution was here very pragmatic – he opted for secondary palliative measures like colonial expansion and, especially, the mediating role of estates (*Stände*). And Hegel's dilemma is still ours today, two hundred years later.

The clearest indication of this Hegel's historical limit is his double use of the same term *Sitten* (customs, social ethical order): it stands for the immediate organic unity that has to be left behind (the Ancient Greek ideal), and for the higher organic unity which should be enacted in a modern state.

<sup>44</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, Par. 279.

<sup>45</sup> Hegel, op.cit., *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Hegel, op.cit., Par. 280.

<sup>47</sup> Op.cit., *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Did the Marxists who mocked Hegel here not paid the price for this negligence in the guise of the Leader who, again, not only directly embodied the rational totality, but embodied it fully, as a figure of full Knowledge, not only as the idiotic point of dotting the i's. In other words, a Stalinist Leader is *not* a monarch, which makes him much worse...

<sup>49</sup> Hegel, op.cit., Par. 280, Addition.

<sup>50</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Band 43: Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*, Frankfurt: Klostermann 1985, p. 193.

<sup>52</sup> Available online at [www.slate.com/id/2107100](http://www.slate.com/id/2107100).

<sup>53</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Band 45: Grundprobleme der Philosophie*, Frankfurt. Klostermann 1984, p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> Authentic fidelity is the fidelity to the void itself - to the very act of loss, of abandoning/erasing the object. Why should the dead be the object of attachment in the first place? The name for this fidelity is death drive. In the terms of dealing with the dead, one should, perhaps, - against the work of mourning as well as against the melancholic attachment to the dead who return as ghosts - assert the Christian motto "let the dead bury their dead." The obvious reproach to this motto is: what are we to do when, precisely, the dead do not accept to stay dead, but continue to live in us, haunting us by their spectral presence? Here, one is tempted to claim that the most radical dimension of the Freudian death drive provides the key to how are we to read the Christian "let the dead bury their dead": what death drive tries to obliterate is not the biological life, but the very afterlife - it endeavors to kill the lost object the second time, not in the sense of mourning (accepting the loss through symbolization), but in a more radical sense of obliterating the very symbolic texture, the letter in which the spirit of the dead survives.

<sup>55</sup> G.K.Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1995, p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> So what about Heidegger's insistence on his ethnic roots? Although he always emphasized his Germanness as well as the unique role of the German language, he in a way had to betray his roots: his entire thought is marked by the tension between the Greek and the German. The German roots had to be referred to the Greek roots; the two cannot be simply united into a linear story of the development of Western metaphysics. German roots have their own content, irreducible to Greek roots (see, for example, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, his analysis of *Geist* (spirit) as "a flame that ignites itself," paving the way for the German Idealist notion of the self-positing subjectivity – Heidegger points out that we do *not* find this notion of Spirit in Greek); and the Greek nonetheless remains a *foreign* language to be deciphered.

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<sup>57</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1991.

<sup>58</sup> See Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2007. (All numbers in brackets in this subdivision refer to the pages of Davis's book.)

<sup>59</sup> See Chapter 1 of Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, London: Verso Books 1999.

<sup>60</sup> In order to avoid the impression that we neglect the way the notion of the Will sustains not only the technological thrust to control and domination, but also the militaristic spirit of struggle and sacrifice, let us recall how *Gelassenheit* in no way protects us from the most devastating technological and military engagement – the fate of Zen Buddhism in Japan is more than indicative here.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Band 5: Holzwege*, Frankfurt: Klostermann 1977, p. 355.

<sup>62</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace 1978, p. 194.

<sup>63</sup> Wrathall, op.cit., p. 87.

<sup>64</sup> See Gregory Fried, *Heidegger's Polemos: From Being to Politics*, New Haven: Yale University Press 2000.

<sup>65</sup> Incidentally, the very beginning of the fragment, in Greek, with the verb at the end (as Greeks do it), strangely recalls what every lover of popular culture today knows as the way Yoda, this Heraclitean gnome, talks in *Star Wars*, pronouncing profound sentences with the verb at the end – so the beginning (*polemos panton men pater esti*) should be translated in yodaese “War father of all is...”.

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<sup>66</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 47.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Stalin, “Dialectical and Historical Materialism (September 1938),” available online at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1938/09.htm>.

<sup>68</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 115-128.