TELOS

NATURE AND TERROR

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

REVIEWS

Introduction

Classical figures of thought endure. A long-standing image of the health of nature contrasts the bucolic landscape with the corruption of the city, where violence abounds. The only security is a natural way of life, far from the brutal metropolis—until nature turns out to be a threat, and we succumb to the uncontrollable fear named for that destructive god: panic. The state of nature is the homeland of violence, its only law the law of the jungle, as we scurry back to the city to find security—until it morphs into the security state. Critical Theory described this dynamic as a sometimes too narrow narrative of domination: the human mastery of nature, in the interest of self-preservation, turns into the mastery of humanity by an encompassing machinery of control. This is an old story, but it comes to us anew in this political season, in which nature and terror—the anxieties about the environment and fear of terrorism, as well as the reaction to it—haunt us, in public and in private.

The essays collected here trace an orbit around these focal points, beginning with two accounts of contemporary environmentalism. Tim Luke opens with a profile of Edward Abbey, icon of the ecology movement, but whom Luke defends against his supporters: Abbey's work is too complex and theoretically important, even or especially as literature, to be shoehorned into a party line. "Cactus Ed" emerges as a figure of resistance and negativity, and therefore all the more productive. Eileen Crist turns to the broader movement to demonstrate how the focus on anthropogenic climate change, while no longer merely hypothetical, may in fact exacerbate the planetary predicament through a narrow focus on a single issue which attracts technological and administrative solutions—precisely the source of the problem. The climate change discourse eclipses the ongoing loss of biodiversity, and this dynamic that pushes toward technocratic management, including greater state control, is compounded by the fatalism and apocalyptic imagery that abound around mainstream environmentalism.

Nature and Terror are twins in Dan Edelstein's investigation of the definition of the enemy in the legal and political categories of the French Revolution, which resound uncannily in our contemporary debates over the status of opponents: enemies of humanity, enemies of the people, enemy combatants. These debates too often become terrorist in their simplification. Edelstein shows how the original terror of western modernity drew on an understanding of natural law, imbued with the emancipatory agenda of the Enlightenment—the simplicity and purity of nature against the corruption of the court—but reverting to violence: back to nature and therefore to the guillotine. Edelstein not only provides an

overview of the conceptual history leading to the Terror, but he also presents an introduction and a translation of the Law of 22 Prairial, adopted by the National Convention on June 10, 1794, which ushered in the culmination of the violence. In its wake, some 1,400 victims were put to death in the name of nature. Timothy Martinez continues the discussion of terror in an analysis of Badiou's account of evil, which involves an extended meditation on Nazism and Stalinism. In contrast to the Jacobin discourse of natural law, Martinez traces Badiou's treatment of evil in multiple permutations: as a simulacrum of truth, as a betrayal of truth, and as the disaster of truth. At stake here is the dialectical insight that terrorist violence does not come (solely) from the outside but emerges from a transformation of normative discourse, what Arendt called the "logicality" of totalitarianism, a compulsive thinking that allows no latitude and therefore ceases to think. Reason becomes unreason.

Can we forestall the violence of this dialectical collapse? Wolfram Malte Fues explores the simultaneity and difference between historical event and historical narrative, between (so to speak) history and story. By way of Goethe at Valmy and Rilke's tenth Duino Elegy, he interrogates the search for a "true story," by insisting on the interplay of factuality and fictionality as an open tension at the decentering center of the humanities but equally definitive of an "occidental culture." Terror starts, it could follow, with a naturalistic reduction, which makes the poetic language of indeterminacy a condition of freedom. It is all the more important, as he points in conclusion, for cultural studies to rethink its own self-understanding. The critique of reductionism underlies Jonathan Blair's survey of the political element in Derrida's work, which, for Blair, is not restricted to the later writings, deriving instead from the 1971 conference paper "Signature, Event, Context," which, as Badiou would later underscore, rejects historicism as a "temporalization of context." Naturalism and historicism—as Husserl pointed out long ago—represent parallel degradations of thought. For Blair, Derrida's writing resists reduction and therefore maintains an open space, which is the political (not unlike, one is tempted to muse, the open space of the Southwest for Abbey, outside the sprawl of suburbanization). Victoria Fareld examines Taylor's different difference, the combination of self-expression (by way of the biological and natural metaphor of epigenesis) and recognition. Defending Taylor against critiques of essentialism, she nonetheless sheds important light on his limits: by retreating from more emphatic notions of alterity, he falls back on a model of autonomy that he had hoped to escape. The issue concludes with two short pieces: John Zerzan's note on "Second Life," where nature has become virtual, as civilization emerges triumphant, and a review of Matthias Küntzel's sobering genealogy of Islamist terror.

Russell A. Berman

A Harsh and Hostile Land: Edward Abbey's Politics and the Great American Desert

Tim Luke

Much of contemporary American environmental thought, implicitly or explicitly, circles around the literary corpus of Edward Abbey in search of its most radical aesthetic, ethical, and political perspectives. Whether this inspiration is drawn from *Abbey's Road*, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, *A Fool's Progress*, *Desert Solitaire*, *Good News*, *Down the River*, *Black Sun*, or *Hayduke Lives!* Abbey's fictional work holds the collective life of modern suburban America up against the discipline of surviving alone in the desert. In the extremes of that harsh and hostile land, he finds sublime inspiration rather than bleak desolation. Consciously anarchistic, extremist, and individualistic in his vision, Abbey propounds an aesthetic vision of "the desert" that implies a certain ethics and politics.

Yet, these implications have divergent interpretations. Whether it is Sierra Club conservationism, Wilderness Society preservationism, or Earth First! activism, the tropes and tones of the Southwestern American desert in Abbey's texts have motivated many to join environmental causes in the United States. Some see him as the patron saint of an "ecological antimodernism," which leads, in turn, to allegedly radical forms of resistance against industrial life as we know it.[1] However, Abbey's thought is far more complex, nuanced, and clever than this caricature. It would be fair to say that he has, first, "abmodernist" impulses, or a desire to simply be away and apart from industrialism, especially when he decries the edifices of the Glen Canyon Dam or the sprawl around Phoenix, Arizona, as cancerous growths on the land. Yet, at the end of the day, he also has, second, an "anamodernist" side with a fresh vision for another more satisfying

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1. Arthur Versluis, "Antimodernism," *Telos* 137 (Winter 2006): 96–130.

modern way of life, since he admits to enjoying immensely a cold beer, a good ethics book, a reliable pick-up truck, and an accurate handgun. His thoughts, then, clearly are more "altermodernist" musings, meant to make modernity better by letting humanity become greater.[2] This study begins to explore Abbey's complicated and conflicted musings about wastelands and deserts in order to outline his unique evocation of another way of being, and then asks how his aesthetic accounts of harsh and hostile land are meant to reshape everyday Americans' subjectivity and identity for pursuing strategies of political change.[3]

I. Abbey's Road

Since the details of his life are not widely known, it is worth recounting them, if only briefly. Edward Abbey was born January 29, 1927, near Indiana, Pennsylvania, deep in Appalachia, and died March 14, 1989, near Oracle, Arizona, at a place called Fort Llatikcuf. In between, he lived his life in a fashion that perhaps only Appalachian hollow living mountaineers and Arizona desert rats might ever truly understand, namely, one grounded in ways of thinking and acting that too many describe inadequately as "anarchism." After growing up amid the demands of hardscrabble rural life in his improbably named hometown of Home, Pennsylvania, Abbey rode the rails out west in 1944, where he became fascinated by the spaces of its land and sky.

Graduating high school in 1945, he spent two years in the U.S. Army, serving in Alabama, Italy, and New Jersey. At 20, he enrolled at the University of New Mexico on the G.I. Bill, and worked at becoming a writer. His first novel, *Jonathan Troy*, was published in 1954. His first commercially successful novel, *The Brave Cowboy*, came out in 1956, and he continued writing until his death in 1989. His nonfictional work, *Desert Solitaire*, firmly anchored his reputation as a writer, since that book has come to

    2. Tim Luke, "Alterity or Antimodernism: A Response to Versluis," *Telos* 137 (Winter 2006): 131–42.
    3. For additional views of Abbey, see Ann Ronald, *The New West of Edward Abbey* (Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 1988); Walter H. Clark, "Aesthetics and the Lived-in," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 23 (1989): 99–103; Daniel G. Payne, "Talking Freely Around the Campfire: The Influence of Nature Writing on American Environmental Policy," *Society & Natural Resources* 12 (1999): 39–48; and Jonathan Levin, "Coordinates and Connections: Self, Language, and World in Edward Abbey and William Least Heat-Moon," *Contemporary Literature* 41 (2000): 214–51.

be regarded as a classic work in "American nature writing."[4] *The Monkey Wrench Gang* from 1975, about a cadre of eco-saboteurs creating chaos in the Four Corners region, became another classic Abbey novel as well as an inspiration for the ethics and politics of Earth First! and then ELF, ALF, and other eco-activists for the past three decades.[5] Since the early 1970s, these works also earned him the odd nickname of "Cactus Ed" and the reputation of being the ultimate "Southwestern writer."

Over thirty-five years, he published a tremendous range of work that some regard as classic, others as polemic, and still others as dyspeptic. Abbey himself often characterized his work as just plain comic. He admitted that a bit of it was erotic, some of it melodramatic, but much of it also can be read as tragic. His novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* probably best sums up these contradictions, in that Abbey admitted he wrote the book to "entertain and amuse," but it also depicts the unrelenting despoliation of the Four Corners region in the Southwest by automobile tourism, federal bureaucrats, land development, and coal companies. Dubbed "the desert anarchist," Abbey did love the desert, and he had a wide and deep anarchist streak.[6] Yet, no label easily defines his life or work: it is often what this anarchist moniker connotes, but it also remains far more than words can define.

On February 7, 2007, about forty years after its writing, Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* (1968) had sales figures on Amazon.com that ranked it at 3,105 out of all the website's books; Amazon.com also noted that 94 percent of those who viewed that sales page for *Desert Solitaire* bought either "the item," or the January 12, 1985, Ballantine reissue edition of Abbey's classic 1968 book. Nearly four decades later, then, many still cannot resist the compelling first three sentences of *Desert Solitaire*:

> This is the most beautiful place on Earth. There are many such places.
> Every man, every woman, carries in heart and mind the image of the

4. See Timothy W. Luke, *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997).

5. See Tim Luke, "The Dreams of Deep Ecology," *Telos* 76 (Summer 1988): 65–92; Rick Scarce, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement* (Chicago: Noble Press, 1990); L. J. Pickering, *The Earth Liberation Front: 1997–2002* (New York: Arissa Publications, 2002); and Charles Rosebraugh, *Burning Rage of a Dying Planet: Speaking for the Earth Liberation Front* (New York: Lantern Books, 2004).

6. James Bishop, Jr., *Epitaph for a Desert Anarchist: The Life and Legacy of Edward Abbey* (New York: Atheneum, 1994).

ideal place, the right place, the one true home, known or unknown, actual or visionary.[7]

Once hooked, the writer teases the reader with glimpses of this yet unknown image, which the next 350-plus pages sketch out:

> For myself, I'll take Moab, Utah. I don't mean the town, of course, but the country that surrounds it—the canyon lands. The Slick Rock Desert. The red dust and burnt cliffs and the lonely sky—all that lies beyond the end of the roads.[8]

Here irony and metaphor mingle. Abbey writes in a desert to exalt its beauty, and tout its ultimate expression of *Heimat* for himself and others, while spinning up this apparent reverie about Nature into an aggressive critique of Society.

The fantasy of living footloose and free in the desert is another part of the Abbey myth, but it is an obvious feint. The material realities of Abbey's road in the American Southwest are always on the page and frequently discussed by Abbey, but few readers see its hard truth. That is, he neither lived from the desert nor appreciated how rich its ecology actually was for those who could. When out in the desert, Abbey typically was just passing through, on temporary assignment, under a retainer or supplied from without by his writing, a federal job, local government work, or day labor tied to the apparatus of industrial tourism.[9] Always a drifter, occasionally a tenant, never a native, Abbey did not truly tie himself to living in, by, and from the desert until late in his life. He wistfully speculates about those Native Americans who did, whether they are the Anasazi, Navajos, Hopi, or Utes, and he grudgingly admires old Mormon towns, whose daily life stays close to Nature itself as their residents earn their daily bread from farming, ranching, or timbering. The realities of scratching out a living in the desert were obscured in the dust of his dreams, because Abbey goes searching the desert for "life" and evading "death," but always on some idiosyncratic *haj*, still tethered materially to the "contemporary techno-industrial greed-and-power culture" that he decries.[10]

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7. Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (New York: Ballantine, 1968), p. 1.

8. Ibid.

9. Edward Abbey, *One Life at a Time, Please* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988).

10. Edward Abbey, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. xiii.

While gaggles of greens today continue to clutch their copies of *Desert Solitaire*, convinced that Abbey is a fervent fellow-traveler, as the Ecology Hall of Fame website attests, Abbey himself foreswore pious political allegiances.[11] Many ecological crusaders have seized upon his writings because both booksellers and local activists pigeon-hole Abbey as the quintessential "Western Environmentalist Writer," but Abbey shrugged off their devotion.[12] He only wished to write, and then attain beyond any doubt the status of "an artist." As he admitted to James Hepworth in February 1977, in an interview at the University of Arizona, "I never wanted to be an environmental crusader, an environmental journalist. I wanted to be a fiction writer, a novelist."[13] Abbey's politics and ethics flow from his aesthetics; yet, his aesthetics are not "about the desert." They instead are impressionistic, evocative, or alluring forays in, from, and around the spaces around many desert cities in the American Southwest.[14] Even though many environmentalists hear environmentalism in his words,[15] Abbey did not shrink from exclaiming "I am not an Environmentalist." Facing these facts is important, because Abbey's writing should not be sent away to the taxidermy shop of literary theory, only to return as America's finest "Western Environmentalist Writer" when so much of his art addresses more than just the American West, the desert environment, and nature writing.

II. Space: Shadows from the Black Sun

The thinking of Henri Lefebvre can be invaluable when approaching Edward Abbey's writing. Both Lefebvre and Abbey recognize that spatiality should not be left to be discovered, preserved, or safeguarded as if it could be seen as a pre-existent externality always unknown or untrammeled apart from human action. On the contrary, space must be recognized, as Lefebvre asserts, as "social." Whether it is "the American Southwest,"

11. See the Ecology Hall of Fame website, http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/.
12. See Mark Mossman, "The Rhetoric of a Nature Writer: Subversion, Persuasion, and Ambiguity in the Writings of Edward Abbey," *Journal of American Culture* 20 (1997): 79–85; and Nathanael Dresser, "Cultivating Wilderness: The Place of Land in the Fiction of Ed Abbey and Wendell Berry," *Growth and Change* 26 (1998): 350–64.
13. James Hepworth and Gregory McNamee, eds.. *Resist Much, Obey Little: Some Notes on Edward Abbey* (Salt Lake City, UT: Dream Gardens Press, 1985), p. 37.
14. See James I. McClintock, "Edward Abbey's 'Antidotes to Despair'," *Critique* 31 (1989): 41–54.
15. See Frances K. Foster, "Recommended: Edward Abbey," *The English Journal* 70 (1989): 65–66; Reed F. Noss, "Sustainability and Wilderness," *Conservation Biology* 5 (1991): 120–22; and Michael D. Yates, "The Ghosts of Karl Marx and Edward Abbey," *Monthly Review* 56 (2005).

our "environment," "locality," or "community," space always "manifests itself as the realization of a general practical schema" rooted in socially-fabricated orders of homogeneity, fragmentality, and hierarchy that give rise "to multiple tactical operations directed towards an overall result."[16] These problematic realities begin with historical appearances, conceptual frameworks, or mental maps. As Lefebvre suggests, few critical works, and even those on environmental resistance, recognize:

> At this moment, a representation of space—which is by no means innocent, since it involves and contains a strategy—is passed off as disinterested positive knowledge. It is projected objectively; it is affected materially, through practical means. There is thus no real space or authentic space, only spaces produced in accordance with certain schemas developed by some particular groups within the general framework of a society (that is to say, a mode of production).[17]

Despite whatever well-meaning mystifications are wrapped around the deliberative projects of collaborative governance, collective self-management, or communal eco-resistance, today, those tactics always remain entangled in the stealthy schematics of homogenized, fragmented, and hierarchical spatial practices of contemporary capitalism.

Therefore, as a product, space still "is made in accordance with an operating instrument in the hands of a group of experts, technocrats who are themselves representative of particular interests but at the same time of a mode of production, conceived not as a completed reality or an abstract totality, but as a set of possibilities in the process of being realized."[18] Here it is important to ask: who sets the possibilities, what is the realm of the possible imagined to be, and how are they to be realized? Abbey's works plainly use the American Southwest to question these modernizing conditions in spatial constructs.

Spatiality, as a social product of sites, settings, and symbols, is still charged with coded meanings no matter how integrated into operational systems they become. In many ways, it is this place-based space of being,

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16. Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 3, *From Modernity to Modernism: Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1981), p. 134.

17. Ibid., p. 135.

18. Ibid., p. 134.

as Abbey asserts, that must be recovered. To focus upon the environment, ecology, or Earth, as Abbey's writing does, is to preoccupy oneself with specific spaces and all the particular aspects, elements, and moments of relevant social practice associated with their social practices.[19] Discursive appropriations of desert spaces, for example, have particular implications inasmuch as thinking about and/or acting with the American Southwest in the late twentieth century is a grounded practice. For Abbey, as it is for Lefebvre, it is one in which:

1. it represents the political (in the case of the West, the "neocapital-ist") use of knowledge. Remember that knowledge under this system is integrated in a more or less "immediate" way into the forces of production, and in a "mediate" way into the social relations of production.

2. it implies an ideology designed to conceal that use, along with the conflicts intrinsic to the highly interested employment of a suppos-edly disinterested knowledge. This ideology carries no flag, and for those who accept the practice of which it is a part it is indistinguish-able from knowledge.

3. it embodies at best a technological utopia, a sort of computer simula-tion of the future, or of the possible, within the framework of the real—the framework of the existing mode of production. The start-ing-point here is a knowledge which is at once integrated into, and integrative with respect to, the mode of production. The technological utopia in question is a common feature not just of many science-fic-tion novels, but also of all kinds of projects concerned with space, be they those of architecture, urbanism, or social planning.[20]

Each of these spatial disjunctures can be found in American environmental politics today, and their real effects, which are only partly explicit, are troubling enough to anchor much of Abbey's literary project. That "every-day life in the U.S.A." can implicitly constitute a technological utopia, a biased ideology, and a quite destructive political economy simply as

19. See Paul Lindholdt, "Writing From a Sense of Place," *Journal of Environmental Education* 30 (1999): 4–10; and Belden C. Lane, "The Desert Imagination of Edward Abbey," *The Christian Century* 102 (1989).

20. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 8–9.

spatiality, are realities that Abbey's writings acknowledge but never accept as necessary.

The ethical impulses driving many environmental political programs today are said to be grounded in spaces of Nature, even though they are disappearing into a diverse array of professional discourses, developments, and disciplines. Despite many ecologists' obsession with Nature's alleged moral privilege, as Lefebvre notes, "everyone wants to protect and save nature; nobody wants to stand in the way of an attempt to retrieve its authenticity. Yet at the same time everything conspires to harm it."[21] Abbey's defense of "the Desert" sees, and then questions, the multiple senses of spatiality that American politics, economics, and cultures give to it. Southwestern spaces are social products, and all that conspires to acclaim their authenticity, or needlessly harm them, is entangled in conventional illusions about Nature's opacity and transparency.

Spatiality as both social production and a social product can be gauged in its fullest particularity only by indicating "the extent that it ceases to be indistinguishable from mental space (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of 'nature') on the other."[22] Even though it is a social product, space is not a collection of things, an aggregation of sense data, an emptiness packed with things, or a formless veil draped over phenomena, events, or sites. Its creation as social product operates instead through "a double illusion, each side of which refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides the other," creating simultaneously "the illusion of transparency" and "the illusion of opacity."[23] Abbey's meditations on the rivers of the Southwest, the desert itself, and tourists loving the West to death play on these twin illusions.

A great deal of rational preparation must transpire to create the illusion of transparency in which "space appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free rein," even as the illusion of opacity veils most analyses of the environment "chiefly because of its appeal to naturalness, to substantiality."[24] Devotees of spatial transparency regard what happens in space as giving "a miraculous quality to thought, which becomes incarnate by means of a *design* (in both senses of the word). The design serves as

21. Ibid., pp. 30–31.
22. Ibid., p. 27.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.

a mediator—itself of great fidelity—between mental activity (invention) and social activity (realization); and it is deployed in space. The illusion of transparency goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places. Anything hidden or dissimulated—and hence dangerous—is antagonistic to transparency, under whose reign everything can be taken in by a single glance from that mental eye which illuminates whatever it contemplates."[25] On the one hand, Abbey's cautious reflections about deserts, and what they should mean to us, supports this analysis.

On the other hand, the illusion of opacity is rooted in epistemic conventions about realist essences "from which the proper and adequate word for each thing or 'object' may be picked," and thus "substantiality, naturalness, and spatial opacity nurtures its own mythology."[26] Here, of course, Abbey would eschew his "Cactus Ed" persona: the desert is always far more than *Desert Solitaire* ever could portray. The sober realism of social analysis, therefore, adduces both its substantive foci and its transparent frames for their examination in spatial investigations. Ironically, "each illusion embodies and nourishes the other. . . . The rational is thus naturalized, while nature cloaks itself in nostalgias which supplant rationality."[27]

The explicit, or sometimes merely implicit, problem of too many environmentalists, intent upon making concrete in practice their "defending the desert" discourse, is their acceptance of some "basic sophistry whereby the philosophico-epistemological notion of space is fetishized and the mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones."[28] That some concrete mediation between these two realms is needed to demystify this fetishism, and that one cannot move back-and-forth between the mental and social at will, are the conceptual caution signs that one easily finds in most of Abbey's writings.

Lefebvre claims the analysis of space must scrutinize all "spatial practice," because this process "secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction," and in today's neocapitalist order, spatial practice "embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks that which link up the spaces set aside for work, 'private'

25. Ibid., p. 28.
26. Ibid., p. 30.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 5.

life and leisure)."[29] Arguably, with technonature/technoculture, these materialities are foundational in each one of Abbey's discussions of the desert. As Lefebvre claims, these connections embrace

> production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*.[30]

Urban technostructures, both propounded and presupposed in the secretion of such space, will work only if urbanized people are accustomed to performing rightly or wrongly in them. Cities are an environment in which urbanity's amicable compliance is derived from individual competence and collective performance at particular locations with certain spatial settings. None of these projects can be changed without remaking spatial practices.

Lefebvre is right about cities. They generate strong normative agendas through everyday spatial codes, like liberal amicality or modern convenience, because metropolitan life, especially as Abbey sees it at work in "the New West," is much more than a means of interpreting space and its practices. It is simultaneously a site of living in this space and a strategy for concretizing the means of living beyond that space, making it difficult to always be clear about how to understand it. Every engineered system of embedded materiality that now services America's accidental normality, then, is concretized normativity.[31] Whether it is leveraged daily as an element for governance actions, either where it sits or when it is deployed to other sites, spatial formations are the ongoing "in-formationalization," and/or "de-formation" of the conventions for social practices in action. This fact is true of material structures as well as any agents that serve as their caretakers, managers, or vendors.

Living in societies of bureaucratically controlled consumption on a transnational scale, as Lefebvre suggests, can disclose that consumption is a normative cluster of conduct. It directly enables modes of bureaucratic

29. Ibid., p. 38.
30. Ibid., p. 33.
31. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2003).

control and control by corporate, government, and technoscientific bureau-cracies. To examine "everyday life in the modern world" is to realize how much "the modern world" is an imagined, embedded, and engineered community that normatively delimits, defines, and directs "everyday life" as a mode of global governance via technified space. This reality is ignored by far too many, but Abbey finds this trail in all of his writings. His ruminations about desert mesas, flooded canyons, and river running call these occluded systems and their dangers to our attention, lest this destructive urban revolution spread out to every last butte and box canyon in the American Southwest.

For Abbey, "the Desert" recedes as "the Southwest" expands, and this leads only to the growth of real "Wastelands." On this point, he too would have little use for the materiality of today's global "Empire." That is, "certainly we continue to have," as Hardt and Negri argue, "crickets and thunderstorms…and we continue to understand our psyches as driven by natural instincts and passions; but we have no nature in the sense that these forces and phenomena are no longer understood as outside, that is, they are not seen as original and independent of the civil order."[32] Abbey's thinking concurs with Hardt and Negri, but he does it far more caustically.

As he writes of what lies beyond "the end of the road," he rips into all that rests behind and beside where the road begins as it winds out into the spaces of his "most beautiful place on Earth." Amazon.com, in the site's "Editorial Review" of *Desert Solitaire*, misses these subtleties, like so many others before it, remarking: "With language as colorful as a Canyonlands sunset and a perspective as pointed as prickly pear, Cactus Ed captures the heat, mystery and surprising bounty of desert life. *Desert Solitaire* is a meditation on the stark landscapes of the red-rock west, a passionate vote for wilderness, and a howling lament for the commercial-ization of the American outback."[33] The book is this "in part," but only in a very small part. Why it is, how it is, when it is, where it is, and what it is remain caught in the ironies of displacement and diversion split forth as Abbey depicts the heat, mystery, and surprising bounty of desert life in *Desert Solitaire*'s pages. Writing in this desert about its beauty, however, also gets the reader thinking how much the book really is about another

32. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003), p. 187.
33. See the Amazon.com website, http://www.amazon.com.

desert whose harsh and hostile lands lie not at the end, but rather at the start, of the roads leading to Moab, Utah.

Clearly, the American Southwest in Abbey's writing evolves into an excellent example of absolute space found, fixed, and finalized as a fragment of potential transcendence by the grids of abstract spatial practices. As Lefebvre asserts:

> The cradle of absolute space—its origin, if we are to use that term—is a fragment of agro-pastoral space, a set of places named and exploited by peasants, or by nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists. A moment comes when, through the actions of masters or conquerors, a part of this space is assigned a new role, and henceforward appears as transcendent, as sacred (i.e. inhabited by divine forces), as magical and cosmic. The paradox here, however, is that it continues to be perceived as part of nature. Much more than that, its mystery and its sacred (or cursed) character are attributed to the forces of nature, even though it is the exercise of political power therein which has in fact wrenched the area from it natural context, and even though its new meaning is entirely predicated on that action.[34]

Such clusters of contingencies sit in absolute space, and their dependence on abstract space for natural givenness and historical significance come together well in Abbey's celebration of America's Southwestern deserts. Abbey's work also tussles close to the ground with a personal subjectivity in which "time contained the spatial code" suddenly faces absolute spaces, and those moments in which the modern industrial tourist makes day trips into the edges of deserts for "'reading' or 'decoding' the prospect before him in terms of his feelings, knowledge, religion, or nationality."[35]

Many episodes in Abbey's work illustrate this tension. However, one from *Black Sun* is quite suggestive. Will Gatlin, the book's main character, works as a fire lookout at the Grand Canyon. He becomes defined by his conscious awareness of the time spent hiking in the wilds of the Canyon as the space itself spent as time itself:

> The sun, touching the horizon, burned for a few minutes directly into his face. He paused to rest, turning his back on the glare, and gazed with weary, aching, blood-flecked eyes at the world of the canyon. He

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34. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 234.
35. Ibid., p. 241.

was alone in one of the loneliest places on earth. Above him rose tier after tier of cliffs, the edge of the forest barely apparent on the rim of the uppermost wall; around him the gray desert platform where nothing grew but scrub brush and cactus sloped toward the brink of the inner gorge and the unseen river. From the river to forest an ascent of over five thousand feet; from rim to rim ten miles by airline at the most narrow point; from canyon head to canyon mouth two hundred and eighty-five miles by the course of the river. In all this region was nothing human that he could see, no sign of man or of man's work. No sign, no trace, no path, no clue, no person but himself.[36]

This unity of absolute space pervades Abbey's description of Gatlin's daily routine, place of work, and site of shelter in the desert highlands. His fire lookout tower is a human construct, the national forest he oversees from it is also constructed by humans, but the spatiality Abbey celebrates is that of timeless essential organic being:

This world is very quiet. Almost silent. The clear song of the hermit thrush exaggerates the stillness, makes it seem only more stark. If he were listening the man could hear the murmur of the fire in the stove, the creak of the metal roof expanding slightly in the first sunlight, the fall of a spruce cone on the ground outside. But nothing else. Later in the season—soon enough—will come other sounds: the thunder of lightning splitting the sky, spiraling like a snake in flame down the trunk of a tree, driving a cannonball of fire through the forest's carpet of dust, duff, debris—the sigh of burning trees, the roar of chaos. But now nothing. . . .

The tower is surrounded by the forest. In all directions lies the sea of treetops, a seemingly unbroken canopy of aspen and conifer rolling toward deserts in the dawn, toward snow-covered mountains far to the south and west, and on the remaining side toward something strange, a great cleft dividing the plateau from end to end, an abyss where the pale limestone walls of the rim fall of into a haze of shadows, and the shadows down into a deeper darkness.[37]

The river, the canyons, and the desert for Abbey explode the age-old colonization of *habitus* and *intuitus* by *intellectus*. It is difficult, but in the badlands of the Southwest, and on its rivers of life cutting through their

36. Edward Abbey, *Black Sun* (New York: Avon, 1982), p. 150.
37. Ibid., pp. 12–13.

rocks of death, Abbey suggests, like Lefebvre, as long as "time and space remain inseparable, the meaning of each was to be found in the other, and this immediately (i.e., without intellectual mediation)."[38] Augustine's claim that "mundus est immundus" again makes some sense in this context.

Abbey's West, then, is one of a certain monumentality, but it is a popular monumentality for America—one in which this nation is still regarded as a rich collective project full of real individual possibility. Clabbering around the hoo-doo rock of the canyonlands or hiking at mid-day in desert barrens combines Abbey's aesthetic appreciation for spatiality with lived existential fulfillment. Desert lands, as monumental spaces, collect "the perceived, the conceived, and the lived, representations of space and representational spaces; the spaces proper to each faculty, from the sense of smell to speech; the gestural and the symbolic.…[they offer] each member of a society an image or that membership, an image of his or her social visage."[39] Still, unlike so many other celebrants of the Southwest, Abbey does not make his representation of space a basis for reducing lived experience to a primordial imperative. Instead, his art is a series of qualified, and then qualifying, forays into the desert to explore and then exult "the fragmented and uncertain connection" between representations of space and representational spaces as objects that imply and explain to subjects a finer array of spatial practices, as that ideal subject confronts "the desert" and becomes "a *subject*—that subject in whom lived, perceived, and conceived (known) come together within a spatial practice."[40] While Nature may not have made the Southwest so expressive, it is the sign of Abbey's art that he can recast Nature as being capable of becoming so communicative.

III. Politics, Ethics, Aesthetics: Down the River

With regard to politics, Abbey's playful anarchistic writings have inspired countless wilderness lovers to engage in low-level sabotage long enough to provoke serious counterreactions from local, state, and federal authorities. Monkey-wrenching activities typically are instances of property crime, ranging from disabling construction equipment, destroying billboard signs, and disrupting suburban development, to burning ski lodges, breaking power transformers, and busting livestock corrals. While playful,

38. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 241.
39. Ibid., p. 220.
40. Ibid., p. 230.

they were also felonious in nature, serious in monetary damage, and obvious in their intent.

Consequently, the followers of "Cactus Ed," whether they were freelancing saboteurs or dedicated Earth First!ers, were classified as "eco-terrorists" as early as the 1980s. FBI infiltrators, state authorities, and local officers continuously sweep the backroads and survey the wild canyons on watch against monkey-wrenching crime. *Desert Solitaire*, ironically, documents how a U.S. government park ranger acted as a truly public servant in the late 1950s, working as a handyman, nature guide, and occasional constable in the pursuit of simply conserving the Arches National Monument outside of Moab, Utah.

Since America itself has changed in the past fifty years, a national security state mentality now prepares park rangers for riot control, anti-terrorist strikes, and SWAT sweeps as much as it does their traditional service as nature guides, land curators, or just plain old park custodians. Politically, "the authorities" would argue such preparations actually were made necessary by Abbey and other "monkey wrenchers" preparing for, and then continuously conducting, a low-intensity guerrilla war against "the American way of life" in the Southwest as it manifests itself as industrial tourism as well as suburban sprawl. Abbey's influence, of course, has not been this pervasive or profound, but his writings and antics do provide a more than suitable scapegoat for justifying a quasi-military mobilization in the nation's wildernesses and wastelands since the 1970s.

Otherwise, Abbey's political influence arguably has been quite negligible. Few immigrants to the New West agree with his cantankerous protests against their presence, and fewer still are those native Westerners still remaining who might join together in any common cause inspired by his writings. Abbey has been gone from the scene for nearly two decades, and no one has taken his place as a voice for the American West. A few Earth First! activists have become even more hard-core ELF cadres, but they mostly do not much more than burn a Ford Excursion here and there or a trophy log home now and then. George Hayduke would approve.[41] Still, these actions alone have enabled the FBI to classify the ELF, ALF, and Earth First! leftovers as the most serious threat to America's domestic tranquility next to Al Qaeda. Such counterreactions are both absurd and authoritarian, but quite real.

41. Edward Abbey, *Hayduke Lives! A Novel* (Boston: Little Brown, 1990).

Ultimately, the super-excessive growth of Southwest suburbanism in the 1970s and 80s has morphed into the hyper-growth of the 1990s and 2000s. Abbey's dystopian tract, *Good News*, might prove prophetic in another decade or sooner, particularly as the realities of peak oil and climate change make Sun Belt living more and more untenable in the Southwest.[42] In the meantime, however, Abbey's political impact is more theoretical than tangible. Such influence is not insignificant. As Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* showed with Russia's *narodniki*, novels can have political influence. Nothing of this magnitude, however, is building now in the United States—especially with the DHS, the FBI, and other police forces constantly on the lookout for "eco-terrorists" across the nation.

Abbey in this respect is not unlike many anti-industrial critics before him. His entertaining romances of rural wilderness center upon sketching an alluring alternative to urban settlement as his ecological transformation. What is right with America for Abbey is its Southwestern deserts, but ironically what is wrong with America are, first, its desert Southwesterners and, second, the larger articulated apparatus of techno-industrial culture in which most Southwesterners are simply the most proximate, destructive, and unappreciative bunch of unthinking agents in a corrupted system. Abbey carefully cultivated his image as the cantankerous "Cactus Ed," the sage philosopher of desert wilderness, because, in large part, most of this figure's preoccupations actually are those of an even more elusive "Concrete Ed," the savage prophet of industrial collapse.

Ann Ronald's *The New West of Edward Abbey* (1988) captures, and then concentrates, this wrong-headed exotic reading of Abbey. Strangely, her work is still the only sustained analysis of Abbey's writings, and it is now nearly twenty-five years old. In her view, "entering Edward Abbey's world, the reader steps inside a western landscape carefully reshaped and repainted by a master.... Foremost among Southwest writers, this observant, articulate author paints a vivid scene."[43] Even though Ronald is astute about Abbey's commitment to picturing "a world painstakingly designed to expose contemporary values in conflict," she gets trapped by the tropes of Abbey's writing that pose "questions crucial to anyone who has seen the frontier shrink and the American dream begin to fade."[44]

42. Edward Abbey, *Good News* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980).
43. Ronald, *The New West of Edward Abbey*, p. 1.
44. Ibid., pp. 1–2.

Abbey, in fact, is far more ironic than her depiction of him as "Cactus Ed," the anarchist romantic writer of America's New West. Abbey writes from his Southwestern desert homes about the desert, and many read only within this frame. Yet, he does this work to write on what occurs beyond the Southwest, beside the desert, and behind the New West, in order to express his wrath about more tragic misdeeds elsewhere that are ruining the world in general and the Southwest in particular. This preoccupation directly runs against how Abbey has been typecast by so many readers, but it is the real core of his writing.[45]

Indeed, this counterintuitive current streaks through Abbey's fiction, from *The Brave Cowboy* to *Hayduke Lives!* At the end of his life, in *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, which he finished two weeks before his death in March 1989, Abbey cuts to the chase in the book's introduction:

> The *Deserto* in the title, therefore, denotes not the regions of dry climate and low rain fall on our pillaged planet but, rather, the arid wastes of our contemporary techno-industrial greed-and-power culture; not the clean outback lands of sand, rock, cactus, buzzard, and scorpion, but, rather, the barren neon wilderness and asphalt jungle of the modern urbanized nightmare in which New Age man, eyes hooded, ears plugged, nerves drugged, cannot even get a decent night's sleep.[46]

Seconding this thought continuously throughout the book, Abbey took pains to praise the civilization often found in urbane cultures, but he does not equate the urban with the urbane. As he observes about America's fifth largest city, "Phoenix, Arizona: an oasis of ugliness in the midst of a beautiful wasteland."[47]

In making these judgments about contemporary America, Abbey can be equally dyspeptic about major world cities and minor wide spots in the road. Whether it is New York ("New Yorkers like to boast that if you can survive in New York, you can survive anywhere. But if you can survive anywhere, why live in New York?") or Page, Arizona ("Shithead capital of Coconino County: any town with thirteen churches and only four bars has got an incipient social problem. That town is looking for trouble."), as he rages against the urbanizing chaos of techno-industrial life, Abbey

45. Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, "Should Environmentalists Reject the Enlightenment," *Review of Politics* 63 (2001): 663–92.

46. Abbey, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, p. xiii.

47. Ibid., p. 97.

assumes the role of curmudgeon.[48] It is a position he loves as well as one he believes too many others are unwilling to play. Hence, Abbey turns his gaze to the nonurbanized, nonindustrialized, nonmechanized spaces of the Earth to find meaning and value: "I come more and more to the conclusion that wilderness, in America or anywhere else, is the only thing left that is worth saving."[49]

Behind his hotly hyped public persona, Edward Abbey also was more aware than most writers that he did not exist as he came to be, and still remains, known by his readers. As so many bloviators who boost his books have blurbed, Abbey *was* "the Thoreau of the American West" (Larry McMurtry), "the original fly in the ointment" (Thomas McGuane), and "the next literary guru to the nation's campus readers" (*New York Times*). Arguably, one can claim that Abbey was, and was not, these figures as well as the many other characters that his readerly texts permitted him to appear as. At the end of the day, however, Abbey was quite certain about the nature of his "author" function: "I write to entertain my friends and to exasperate our enemies. To unfold the folded lie, to record the truth of our time, and, of course, to promote esthetic bliss."[50] When those friends or enemies read his work, or read other writings about his work, he still knew that he could never exist as he was read, or written about, as "Cactus Ed," because the author always is "an imaginary person who writes real books."[51]

In this regard, Abbey also recognized that he wrote books "classified by librarians as 'nature books,' [but] they belong [to him] to the category of personal history rather than natural history."[52] Disdaining with wise-cracks the title of "naturalist," "sportsman," and "nature writer"—"so much for the mantle and britches of Thoreau and Muir. Let Annie Dillard wear them now"—he admits that he was merely a displaced person, a wanderer, a redneck, a loafer, and an anarchist.[53] Very few liberal environ-mentalists who have embraced Abbey as their truest hero, believing that he is a soulful Western blend of Thoreau and Dillard, actually would have liked him. He liked women but detested feminists; he loved guns but gave up on hunting; he enjoyed Mexico but thought Mexicans should stay home

48. Ibid., pp. 110 and 107.
49. Ibid., p. 82.
50. Ibid., p. 65.
51. Ibid.
52. Edward Abbey, *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977), p. xiii.
53. Ibid.

behind a big, high border fence; he developed a learned and critical mind, but he had little use for university academics and literacy critics; he realized that many regarded him as an authentic Western hero, but he admitted that he was an immigrant Appalachian redneck.

Not too surprisingly, he shocked, repelled, and threatened those admirers who got close enough to see him in action, because he was very plain-spoken about his root disposition, namely, "extreme intransigence . . . because I am—really am—an extremist, one who lives and loves by choice far out on the very verge of things, on the edge of the abyss, where this world falls off into the depths of another."[54] While Abbey lived life that way, few of his admirers truly do, or even ever would, take up this way of living. Abbey is no Annie Dillard. On the contrary, he took pride in tending "to go off in a more or less random direction myself, half-baked, half-assed, half-cocked, and half-ripped."[55] Abbey admirers will admit that their dear "Cactus Ed" also was, or at least could seem to be, a male chauvinist, a gun nut, a crude drunk, a serious racist, a crazy survivalist, or a nasty clown. Some call all of this ecological antimodernism, but it could just as easily be seen as green modernism.

As the mythic author of *Desert Solitaire* recounts, that book was written on the run, completed in a Nevada whorehouse, failed to sell as a hardback, but found great legs as a paperback as it was widely read by college students in the 1970s. The author's comment on "the real book" is that "I haven't had to turn my hand to an honest day's work since 1972. . . . I don't much like the book myself . . . but as to that, who cares but the author himself? Let the poor scrivening wretch sink ever deeper into his delusions."[56] Obviously, the writer of the real book does seem to be far more interesting than its now highly imaginary author, but his loyal readers prefer Abbey mythologies. Even his final acrid words of epigrammatic musing bear these blots, as the publisher opines to its readers on the last page that Edward Abbey

> worked for a time as a forest ranger and was a committed naturalist and a fierce environmentalist; such was his anger, eloquence, and action on the subject that he has become a heroic, almost mythic figure to a whole host of environment groups and literally millions of readers.[57]

54. Ibid., p. xiv.
55. Ibid., pp. 17–18.
56. Edward Abbey, *Down the River* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1982), p. xiii.
57. Abbey, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, p. 111.

Anyone who actually reads one or two of Abbey's books should recognize that such posthumous puffery would make him cringe. Still, like the ending in the film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, one must remember that in the commercial culture that Abbey despised, when faced with reporting the truth or repeating the legend, one always runs the legend.

The legend, of course, has been fascinating enough for thousands, as the politics of Earth First! or the ELF attest. Nevertheless, the real clincher with Abbey is the extent to which the actual truth of his writing is so much more interesting. For those hectoring environmentalists intent upon proving themselves greener than thou, Abbey admits:

> I love America because it is a confused, chaotic mess—and I hope we can keep it this way for at least another thousand years....Who gave us permission to live this way? Nobody did. WE did. And that is the way it should be—only more so. The best cure for democracy is more democracy.[58]

Abbey plainly is more than a wilderness lover for the sake of wilderness with its many intriguing species of flora and fauna. Wild places count for him as the ultimate site for the democratic pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness by human beings. His wilderness love is fundamentally anthropocentric, on the one hand, and unabashedly libertarian on the other. Abbey knows that wilderness areas are out-and-out human constructs, but such bureaucratic constructions are vital: "once inside that line you discover the artificiality beginning to drop away; and the deeper you go, the longer you stay, the more interesting things get—sometimes fatally interesting....To be alive is to take risks; to be always safe and secure is death."[59] Most importantly, then, wilderness is a site where death can await people, and Abbey regarded a rigorous test against death as the most humanizing experience that each person can face. In every sense of the word, he was a humanist rather than a naturalist. In *Desert Solitaire*, he makes his stance plain: "I am a humanist; I'd rather kill a man than a snake."[60]

His pointed defense of liberty also is anchored to wilderness because of his anarchist political leanings, which were plain and simple. Ultimately,

58. Abbey, *The Journey Home*, p. 230.

59. Ibid. See also Edward Abbey, *Beyond the Wall: Essays from the Outside* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1984); *Down the River* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1982); *Abbey's Road* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979); *Cactus Country* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1973).

60. Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, p. 20.

he doubted that Americans as individuals and as a people could survive without wilderness. He is quite somber on this point:

> As I see it, our own nation is not free from the danger of dictatorship. And I refer to internal as well as external threats to our liberties.... some of us may need what little wilderness remains as a place of refuge, as a hideout, as a base from which to carry on guerrilla warfare against the totalitarianism of my nightmares.... Could I survive in the wilderness? I don't know—but I do know I could never survive in prison.[61]

Abbey, the mythic environmental hero, is, in many ways, also the realistic revolutionary strategist. He is no postanthropocentric green; he instead dreams of some undefined steady-state economy with a democratic, wide-open community. Abbey had a hard-nosed tactical attitude here:

> I see the preservation of wilderness as one sector of the front in the war against the encroaching industrial state. Every square mile of range and desert saved from the strip miners, every river saved from the dam builders, every forest saved from loggers, every swamp saved from the land speculators means another square mile saved for the play of human freedom. All of this may seem utopian, impossibly idealistic. No matter. There comes a point at every crisis in human affairs when the ideal must become real—or nothing.[62]

IV. Conclusion: Beyond the Wall

Those first affected by Abbey, but then driven further out into Nature to become today's "nature writers," still attempt to fill his shoes as authors. Unfortunately, they are all too often "the naturalists" that Abbey was not, and they never rise to the level of astute political observation that he could not avoid. Whether it is Craig Childs reporting on *The Secret Knowledge of Water*, *Desert Cries*, and *Soul of Nowhere*, or Terry Tempest Williams rhapsodizing about *Red*: *Passion and Patience in the Desert*, *Desert Quartet*, and *An Unspoken Hunger*: *Stories from the Field*, there is no one writing about the American desert who equals the intensity of Abbey. In part, his imitators lack his philosophical acumen, social outrage, and ironic disposition about what "the desert" really is. And, in part, they are content simply churning out red-rock romances to valorize what once made the Southwest

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61. Abbey, *The Journey Home*, p. 232.
62. Ibid., p. 236.

so alluring to all those millions who were lured there only to despoil the attractions that these scribblers now romanticize as naturalists.

Their work, however, is not insignificant. In fact, its readers openly or tacitly, are heeding Abbey's "Survival Hint #1 on the Great American Desert," which is:

> Stay out of there. Don't go. Stay home and read a good book, this one for example. The Great American Desert is an awful place. People get hurt, get sick, get lost out there. Even if you survive, which is not certain, you will have a miserable time. The desert is for movies and God-intoxicated mystics, not family recreation.[63]

Childs and Williams, then, are useful to the degree that they provide riveting entertainment, or at least enough edifying diversion, to get millions more to stay home, keep out the badlands, and enjoy their desert walkabouts vicariously.

Irony always suffuses Abbey's writings about America's desert. Having become so identified with the hot, empty spaces of the Southwest, he came to the end of his life as the persona of a *vox clamantis in deserto*. In his small book about this role, he asserts: "[M]y sole purpose has been a private and egocentric one. I have no thought of serving others; such ambition is beyond both my intention and my powers. I am myself the substance of the book."[64] The ruse of the curmudgeon, passing his days as a desert rat spitting sarcasm, continued to serve him well in this text. His *vox clamantis in deserto* echoes from Fort Llatikcuf, Arizona, on the edge of the Sonoran Desert, but it actually cries in the wilderness about the cancerous sprawl of Sun Belt suburbia, on the behalf of the truly barren emptiness of wild lands that its malls, power lines, cul-de-sacs, freeways, and canals were ruining. Far south of Phoenix, and north enough of Tucson, he saw the starlit desert skies washing out in the nighttime glow of those vacuous urban wastelands. The voice really cries here about the deadening desert of Phoenix/Tucson/Mesa/Glendale/Peoria, and what this dead zone is doing to the living wilds of Arizona. Having such freedom of speech was a meaningful privilege to Abbey, and he knew he had to "make the most of it or betray both thy neighbors and thyself."[65]

63. Ibid., p. 13.
64. Abbey, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, p. xiv.
65. Ibid.

Of course, the figure of "Cactus Ed," a.k.a. Edward Abbey, is revered by millions as an ardent environmentalist and true advocate of a postanthropocentric biocentrism open to the survival of all beings. While this belief is not entirely false, its spare truth value obscures the real center of Abbey the thinker and man. In *The Journey Home*, which he regarded as a much better book than *Desert Solitaire*, he speaks plainly:

> Science is not sufficient. "Ecology" is a word I first read in H. G. Wells twenty years ago and I still don't know what it means. Or seriously much care. Nor am I primarily concerned with nature as living museum, the preservation of spontaneous plants and wild animals. The wildest animal you know is you, gentle reader, with this helpless book clutched in your claws. No, there are better reasons for keeping the wild, wild, the wilderness open, the trees up and the river free, and canyons uncluttered with dams. We need wilderness because we are wild animals. Every man needs a place where he can go crazy in peace.…Because we need brutality and raw adventure, because men and women first learned to love in, under, and all around trees, because we need every pair of feet and legs about ten leagues of naked nature, crags to leap from, mountains to measure by, deserts to finally die in when the heart fails.[66]

Such thoughts are not those of a pale Dillard-reading pilgrim coming to the banks of Tinker Creek thirsting for communion with Nature's trees, bees, and rippling water as "Otherness" for its own sake. They are those of an intense ethico-political partisan of "humanity," placing heavy anthropocentric claims on the wild to help make humanity more civilized. He is a radical, but he is hardly an ecological antimodernist. To reduce his work to the simplicities of ALF or ELF activists does both a severe disservice.

At the end of the day, "Cactus Ed" was not an ecologist, not much of an environmentalist, and surely not even close to being a green. Abbey is instead "Ed the Cactus"—a hard, spiny, tough, sharp critic of all those odd green hypocrites that revere red-rock canyons and desert sunsets by driving out across them in huge 4x4 trucks polluting the pure skies in pursuit of Western fantasies that he sadly recognizes he continuously fueled with his literary work—either unintentionally or intentionally, in slick coffeetable books about "the West."

66. Abbey, *The Journey Home*, pp. 228–29.

Abbey loves the West; but, as he admits on page 1 of *Desert Solitaire*, the most beautiful place on Earth is not Moab, Utah (the town that now serves as a back-country boutique for outdoors enthusiasts of every stripe, with all of their high-tech apparatus for machinic leisure), but it is the wild land around it. Although not an Aldo Leopold follower by profession, he implicitly espouses a credo for citizenship of the land, for the land, and by the land's limits against all those who would stand in the land, against the land, and beyond the land's qualities. In this stance, Edward Abbey worked as a real writer, and with this work, the fictional guerrilla movements of eco-activists, which he romantically invented to recount in his novels and short stories, can live on as long as the desert-defending spirit of George Hayduke, or another Abbey persona, lives.

Abbey is a critic of modern industrial society, but to reduce the richness of his writing to "ecological antimodernism" is far too simplistic. Industrial products, industrial processes, and industrial production, he realizes, are a complex system of conducting conduct by managing fear, insecurity, and desire. The New West of Edward Abbey is far from natural, but it is not yet wholly artificial. Rather "the Southwest" is a manifold of engineered, embedded, and imagined spaces in which the quality, pace, substance, and opportunity that define material and mental life derive from decisions made elsewhere by unknown others without popular participation, deliberation, or even awareness. Abbey simply protests these exploitative acts against society and its spaces much more, artfully than most. In other words, as the perceived, conceived, and lived spaces of the Great American Desert unfold as an accidental normality, Abbey artfully decries how America's spatiality has become an economic and political order founded upon purposeful abnormality; and then he calls for its "monkey wrenching" to make it more open, free, and satisfying for those who endure its corruptions.

Beyond the Climate Crisis:
A Critique of Climate Change Discourse

Eileen Crist

The Dominant Framing of Climate Change

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, breakthroughs in climate-change science and modeling, coupled with observable and measurable climate effects, have shifted the understanding of anthropogenic climate change into a solid epistemic and experiential terrain. There is no longer even a semblance of a debate about the reality of global warming, its causes, and the climate change it has effected and portends.[1]

But even as climate change has exited the realm of hypothesis and entered that of fact, uncertainties about its potential consequences are legion. As political scientist Karen Litfin notes, "uncertainties revolve around the *timing* and the *degree* of anticipated climate [change], not *whether* climate change will occur."[2] Indeed, proposed predictions in scientific

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1. Regarding scientific consensus about climate change, see Naomi Oreskes's 2004 landmark study, "Beyond the Ivory Tower: The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change," *Science* 306, no. 1686 (December 3, 2004). See also a popular article by Bill McKibben, "The Debate is Over: No Serious Scientist Doubts that Humans are Warming Up the Planet," *Rolling Stone*, November 3, 2005. Virtually every issue of *Science* and *Nature* in the last two years has contained an article about global warming. Scientific publications no longer defend the reality of anthropogenic climate change but, taking it for granted, report on its different dimensions. For an analysis of the persistent disconnect between the American public's perception of a "debate" and the factual status of climate change for scientists, see Eugene Linden's "The Tides of Public Opinion," chap. 18 of *Winds of Change: Climate, Weather, and the Destruction of Civilizations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), pp. 219–29.

2. Karen Litfin, "Environment, Wealth, and Authority: Global Climate Change and Emerging Modes of Legitimation," *International Studies Review* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 136 (emphasis in original).

papers, policy reports, and popular books are largely rendered with quali-
fiers of possibility or probability. Consider, for example, the sizable ranges
of anticipated (say, by the year 2050) rates of carbon dioxide increase,
average temperature increase, sea-level rise, frequency of hurricanes,
changes in ocean acidity, or shifts in precipitation patterns.[3] The intrica-
cies of forecasting climate and weather patterns, coupled with difficulties
of foreseeing how humanity will respond in the next decade and beyond,
have generated climate-change scenarios that range from the controllable
to the catastrophic.

Beneath numerous uncertainties lies a huge unknown: somewhere
between manageable and calamitous climate change, there exist "tipping
points," which no one can pinpoint with certainty or promise that we have
not already crossed. Tipping points refer to climate-forcing thresholds
beyond which changes are unleashed (such as extreme heating, rising sea
levels, and others) that we would be unable to resist or reverse.[4] Science

3. For an up-to-date summary of climate-change science data, see the 2007 Intergov-
ernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, "Climate Change 2007: The Physical
Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers," available online at the IPCC website, http://
www.ipcc.ch/. I will not cite quantitative data in this paper, as they are not directly relevant
to my argument. Tim Flannery does an excellent job of integrating quantitative predic-
tions in *The Weather Makers: How Man is Changing the Climate and What it Means for
Life on Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2005), arguably the most comprehensive work
on climate change yet. A lot of recent discussions and controversy dwells on sea-level
rise predictions; see, for example, Richard Kerr, "A Worrying Trend of Less Ice, Higher
Seas," *Science* 311, no. 5768 (March 24, 2006): 1698–1701; and Stefan Rahmstorf, "A
Semi-Empirical Approach to Projecting Future Sea-Level Rise," *Science* 315, no. 5810
(January 19, 2007): 368–70. James Hansen has challenged IPCC 2007 projections of sea-
level rise as potential underestimates that will "encourage a predictable public response
that projected sea level change is moderate" and warns of the "danger in excessive caution"
in the forecasts of climate-change science. Hansen, "Scientific Reticence and Sea Level
Rise," *Environmental Research Letters* 2 (April–June 2007): 1, 4.

4. The concept of the tipping point is connected with the emergent understanding of
the non-linear nature of climate forcings, which implies that once a threshold (or thresh-
olds) is (are) overstepped, conditions jump to (possibly hostile) new states after a period
of chaos or upheaval. The "tipping point" largely involves one causal variable: namely, an
(unspecifiable) threshold of carbon-loading the atmosphere, beyond which gigantic and
unstoppable consequences ensue. There is no shortage of such potential consequences
emerging from climate models or informed speculation. The possible shutting down of the
"thermohaline circulation" (a portion of which is better known as the Gulf Stream), and
when that might occur, receive extensive attention. Unmanageable sea-level rise and run-
away heating are also possible consequences of exceeding tipping points. More recently,
the destruction of the Amazonian rainforest has been predicted as a potential outcome of

writer Eugene Linden uses the metaphor of the "switch" to convey the idea of the tipping point. "While we've tended to comfort ourselves by thinking that climate change is like turning a dial," he explains, "the reality is that shifts in climate are more like flicking a switch."[5]

Looming tipping points have taken hold of the minds of those knowledgeable enough to understand that the consequences of overstepping them—such as the maps of the world being redrawn or large-scale societal collapse—are real possibilities that demand preemptive action.[6] The fact that events are happening faster than anticipated (for example, glaciers and ice sheets melting, and forests and permafrost releasing carbon) has only added shrillness to pleas of urgency. The longer that greenhouse gases continue to be unloaded into the atmosphere, the more likely that worst-case scenarios become. This inference is based on the best science available about climate change—especially what is known about the correlation between carbon dioxide levels and temperature, and what has been gleaned from the geological record about previous episodes of climatic upheaval. It is, therefore, not surprising that writings on climate change, as well as a growing campaign to slow it down, exhibit a tone of urgency that exceeds even the dire forecasts of the "limits-to-growth" environmental thinking of the 1970s. While the limits-to-growth paradigm warned of a world doomed to collapse by exhausting needed resources of human livelihood, climate-change discourse anticipates large-scale breakdown from overfilled sinks unable to absorb the by-products of industrial civilization.[7]

climate change. In her *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), Elizabeth Kolbert quotes a glaciologist who captures the tipping point with a poignant image: "You can tip and then you'll just go back. You can tip it and just go back. And then you tip it and you get to the other stable state, which is upside down" (p. 34).

5. Linden, *Winds of Change*, p. 31.

6. "If we push the climate system hard enough, it can obtain a momentum," Hansen warns, "it can pass tipping points, such that climate changes continue, out of our control. Unless we begin to slow down the human-made forcings, there is the danger that we will create a different planet, one far outside the range that has existed in the course of human history." James Hansen, "Political Interference with Government Climate Change Science," testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, March 19, 2007, p. 10, available online at http://oversight.house.gov/documents/20070319105800-43018.pdf.

7. Classic limits-to-growth works are Donella Meadows et al., *Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972), and Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine, 1971), which predicted that the events of catastrophic exhaustion of nonrenewable resources and

The increasing probability of worst-case scenarios materializing—as long as the proverbial business-as-usual is maintained—has bolstered a particular framing of climate change: its identification as *the most urgent environmental problem of our time*. Consider some high-profile examples in the literature. In a widely read essay, Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus proclaimed "the death of environmentalism" on grounds that the environmental movement and its professional representatives were unable to avert "the world's most serious ecological crisis," global warming.[8] In her manifesto of individualist activism, *The Solution is You*, Laurie David claims that "global warming is threatening that fragile shell [i.e., the atmosphere] and has now become the most urgent problem of our lifetime."[9] "We are at the end of our tether, and the rope, whose weave defines our fate, is about to break," James Lovelock warns in his latest work. "Humanity," he tells us about climate change, "faces its greatest trial."[10] Throughout this work, Lovelock maintains that "global heating" (as he prefers to call global warming) is threatening civilization itself.

Tim Flannery agrees with him. "If humans pursue a business-as-usual course for the first half century," he is willing to state, "I believe the collapse of civilization due to climate change becomes inevitable."[11] Ross Gelbspan gave the same forecast earlier yet: "[T]he intricate fabric of interrelationships that constitute society would be ravaged in proportion to the magnitude of the disruptions. . . . [S]uch a blow to our highly complex institutions . . . would mean that everything our civilization has accomplished to this point would become basically meaningless."[12] In a similar vein, Al Gore issues "dire warnings of the worst potential catastrophe in

human population exceeding carrying capacity were decades away. The emergence of ozone depletion and global warming in the 1980s and 90s contributed to shifting environmental discourse away from fears of overshooting the resource base to consequences of global waste products exceeding the planet's sinks, resulting in the breakdown or disequilibrium of the Earth system.

8. Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, "The Death of Environmentalism," September 29, 2004, p. 6, available online at the Heartland Institute website, http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=16188.

9. Laurie David, *The Solution is You! An Activist's Guide* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2006), p. 2.

10. James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate in Crisis and the Fate of Humanity* (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 146, 6.

11. Flannery, *The Weather Makers*, p. 209.

12. Ross Gelbspan, *The Heat is On: The Climate Crisis, the Cover-Up, the Prescription* (Reading, MA: Perseus, 1998), p. 173.

the history of human civilization: a global climate crisis that is deepening and rapidly becoming more dangerous than anything we have ever faced."[13] In his latest book, Bill McKibben echoes the dominant framing of climate change as *the* major issue of our time, calling it "the biggest problem the world faces."[14] NASA scientist James Hansen strikes a similar note throughout his writings, as when he writes: "The crystallizing scientific story [of global warming] reveals an imminent planetary emergency. We are at a planetary tipping point."[15]

Liabilities of the Dominant Frame

While the dangers of climate change are real, I argue that there are even greater dangers in representing it as the most urgent problem we face. Framing climate change in such a manner deserves to be challenged for two reasons: it encourages the restriction of proposed solutions to the technical realm, by powerfully insinuating that the needed approaches are those that directly address the problem; and it detracts attention from the planet's ecological predicament as a whole, by virtue of claiming the limelight for the one issue that trumps all others.

Identifying climate change as the biggest threat to civilization, and ushering it into center stage as the highest priority problem, has bolstered the proliferation of technical proposals that address the specific challenge. The race is on for figuring out what technologies, or portfolio thereof, will solve "the problem." Whether the call is for reviving nuclear power, boosting the installation of wind turbines, using a variety of renewable energy sources, increasing the efficiency of fossil-fuel use, developing carbon-sequestering technologies, or placing mirrors in space to deflect the sun's rays, the narrow character of such proposals is evident: confront the problem of greenhouse gas emissions by technologically phasing them out, superseding them, capturing them, or mitigating their heating effects.

In his *The Revenge of Gaia*, for example, Lovelock briefly mentions the need to face climate change by "changing our whole style of living."[16]

13. Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale, 2006), p. 10.

14. Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* (New York: Times Books, 2007), p. 20.

15. James Hansen, "State of the Wild: Perspective of a Climatologist," forthcoming, available online at http://www.giss.nasa.gov/~jhansen/preprints/Wild.070410.pdf.

16. Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia*, p. 11.

But the thrust of this work, what readers and policy-makers come away with, is his repeated and strident call for investing in nuclear energy as, in his words, "the one lifeline we can use immediately."[17] In the policy realm, the first step toward the technological fix for global warming is often identified with implementing the Kyoto protocol. Biologist Tim Flannery agitates for the treaty, comparing the need for its successful endorsement to that of the Montreal protocol that phased out the ozone-depleting CFCs. "The Montreal protocol," he submits, "marks a signal moment in human societal development, representing the first ever victory by humanity over a global pollution problem."[18] He hopes for a similar victory for the global climate-change problem.

Yet the deepening realization of the threat of climate change, virtually in the wake of stratospheric ozone depletion, also suggests that dealing with global problems treaty-by-treaty is no solution to the planet's predicament. Just as the risks of unanticipated ozone depletion have been followed by the dangers of a long underappreciated climate crisis, so it would be naïve not to anticipate another (perhaps even entirely unforeseeable) catastrophe arising after the (hoped-for) resolution of the above two. Furthermore, if greenhouse gases were restricted successfully by means of technological shifts and innovations, the root cause of the ecological crisis as a whole would remain unaddressed. The destructive patterns of production, trade, extraction, land-use, waste proliferation, and consumption, coupled with population growth, would go unchallenged, continuing to run down the integrity, beauty, and biological richness of the Earth.

Industrial-consumer civilization has entrenched a form of life that admits virtually no limits to its expansiveness within, and perceived entitlement to, the entire planet.[19] But questioning this civilization is by

17. Ibid.
18. Flannery, *The Weather Makers*, p. 220.
19. I use the conceptual shorthand "industrial-consumer civilization" as the target of social critique throughout this paper. This term reflects the influence on my thinking of the Frankfurt School, especially critical theorists Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. These thinkers substantively elaborated and revised Marx's analysis of capitalism as mode of production, by adding the dimension of capitalism as culture, as way of life. Capitalist production, alongside socio-cultural patterns and ideologies of consumerism, are complicit in the destruction of nature and the alienation of social relations. Production and consumption, in other words, constitute a single, literally totalitarian form of life, in which a social division of groups into "rulers" and "ruled," "perpetrators" and "victims," has become shaky if not vacuous. As Marcuse noted in his more timely than

and large sidestepped in climate-change discourse, with its single-minded quest for a global-warming techno-fix.[20] Instead of confronting the forms of social organization that are causing the climate crisis—among numerous other catastrophes—climate-change literature often focuses on how global warming is endangering *the culprit*, and agonizes over what technological means can *save it* from impending tipping points.[21]

The dominant frame of climate change funnels cognitive and pragmatic work toward specifically addressing global warming, while muting a host of equally monumental issues. Climate change looms so huge

ever 1964 work, an entire socio-cultural-economic life—from (actual or aspired to) ways of eating and lodging, transportation, entertainment, or emoting and thinking—"binds the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole." Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1991), p. 12. Horkheimer and Adorno traced the origins of the collective's participation in its own domination to the "historical" moment that magical control over nature (and over the deities of nature) was relinquished to a specific elite or clique in exchange for self and social preservation. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), pp. 21–22. After the decisive turn when the social body became implicated in its own domination, "what is done to all by the few, always occurs as the subjection of individuals by the many: social repression always exhibits the masks of repression by a collective" (ibid.). And elsewhere: "The misplaced love of the common people for the wrong which is done them is a greater force than the cunning of the authorities" (ibid., p. 134). In light of such astute observations offered by critical theorists, neo-Marxist and anarchist analyses that indict corporate and/or state power for the troubled natural and social worlds are, at best, only partially true.

20. More than thirty years ago, environmental philosopher Arne Naess articulated the influential distinction between "shallow" and "deep" ecology, characterized by the focus on symptoms of the environmental crisis, on the one hand, versus critical attention to underlying causes of problems, on the other. Notwithstanding its unfortunate elitist overtones—implying that some environmental thinkers are capable of reflecting deeply, while others flounder with superficialities—the shallow-deep distinction has been significant for two compelling reasons. One, it clarified how "symptomology" leads merely to technical piecemeal solutions; and two, it showed how underlying causes, left unaddressed, eventually generate more nasty symptoms. In other words, shallow ecological thinking is technical and narrow: when we think about climate change as "the problem"—as opposed to confronting the limitless expansionism of the capitalist enterprise as the problem—we arguably become shallow in our thinking. Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements," in George Sessions, ed., *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (1973; Boston: Shambhala, 1995), pp. 151–55.

21. As environmental writer Derrick Jensen notes about this kind of reasoning, it ends up "fighting over techniques to salvage civilization, not ways to save the planet." *Endgame*, vol. 2, *Resistance* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006), p. 757.

on the environmental and political agenda today that it has contributed to downplaying other facets of the ecological crisis: mass extinction of species, the devastation of the oceans by industrial fishing, continued old-growth deforestation, topsoil losses and desertification, endocrine disruption, incessant development, and so on, are made to appear secondary and more forgiving by comparison with "dangerous anthropogenic interference" with the climate system.

In what follows, I will focus specifically on how climate-change discourse encourages the continued marginalization of the biodiversity crisis—a crisis that has been soberly described as a holocaust,[22] and which despite decades of scientific and environmentalist pleas remains a virtual non-topic in society, the mass media, and humanistic and other academic literatures. Several works on climate change (though by no means all) extensively examine the consequences of global warming for biodiversity,[23] but rarely is it mentioned that biodepletion predates dangerous greenhouse-gas buildup by decades, centuries, or longer, and will not be stopped by a technological resolution of global warming. Climate change is poised to exacerbate species and ecosystem losses—indeed, is doing so already. But while technologically preempting the worst of climate change may temporarily avert some of those losses, such a resolution of the climate quandary will not put an end to—will barely address—the ongoing destruction of life on Earth.

Excursus into the Climate-Change-Independent Unraveling of Biodiversity

The diminishment of life's richness began with the exodus of hunters and gatherers from Africa thousands of years ago, and deepened with the

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22. E. O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life* (New York: Norton, 1999), p. 259.

23. I am referring here to general writings on climate change that include substantial sections about biodiversity, not works that focus *specifically* on biodiversity in connection to climate change. In *The Weather Makers*, Flannery examines the impact of global warming on life. In his prescient work, McKibben also devoted considerable attention to the fate of species and ecosystems in connection to global warming. See Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 1989). In his *Laboratory Earth: The Planetary Gamble We Can't Afford to Lose* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), climatologist Stephen Schneider has a chapter on climate-change effects on biodiversity. Recently, Hansen and colleagues provided two criteria of "dangerous climate change": rising sea levels and extermination of species. See James Hansen et al., "Global Temperature Change," *PNAS* 103, no. 39 (September 26, 2006): 14288–93. For the most up-to-date volume dealing specifically with the impact of climate change on biodiversity, see Thomas Lovejoy and Lee Hannah, eds., *Climate Change and Biodiversity* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2005).

invention of agriculture and cities, the development of warfare, and the advent of the European voyages.[24] But biodepletion accelerated enormously after the emergence of industrial civilization, and particularly since the mid-twentieth century, with billions of people not only doubling every few decades, but inclining—by force, choice, or delusion—toward a consumer culture founded on overproduction and global trade. Overproduction and global trade, in turn, require the ceaseless conversion of living beings and natural systems into dead objects, "resources," and humanized landscapes and seascapes.[25]

The significance of human-driven extinction can never be overstated, because it means not only the death of species but the end of their evolutionary destinies as well—of the life-forms they would or might have eventually originated. Present-day extinction is not about species blinking out sporadically; it is a global and escalating spasm of *en masse* losses that, the geological record reveals, is an infrequent event in Earth's natural history. Notwithstanding circulating shallow sophistry that proclaims extinction to be "natural" or "normal," anthropogenic extinction is neither natural (for countless species are disappearing from targeted onslaught or pressures far exceeding their capacity to adapt) nor normal (for this level of losses occurs rarely as a consequence of a catastrophic event).

Yet, as tragic as extinction is, species are also being devastated without being annihilated: losses of distinct populations and plunges in population numbers are a blow to the vigor, ecological contributions and connectedness, and evolutionary potential of species. Today, drops of 70, 80, 90 percent, or more, of wild plants and animals, on land and in oceans, are common. Such declines mean that species hang on as relics, with shortened lifespans or committed to extinction, no longer able to play significant ecological and evolutionary roles.

The nosedive of wild-animal and plant abundance foregrounds yet another facet of biodepletion: the simplification of ecosystems. From a

24. See David Burney and Tim Flannery, "Fifty millennia of catastrophic extinctions after human contact," *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 20, no. 7 (July 2005): 395–401; Dave Foreman, *Rewilding North America: A Vision for Conservation in the 21st Century* (Washington DC: Island, 2004); E. O. Wilson, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* (New York: Norton, 2006); Wilson, *The Future of Life* (New York: Knopf, 2002); and Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*.

25. See Derrick Jensen, *Endgame*, vol. 1, *The Problem of Civilization* (New York: Seven Stories, 2006); Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* (Nova Scotia: Fernwood, 2002); and Andy Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2002).

landscape perspective, the decline of numbers and geographic races of wild organisms signifies constrictions of their former ranges. As populations blink out from diverse places, their place-bound contributions are lost; the losses cascade through the communities of organisms to which the extinguished populations belonged, leaving behind degraded ecosystems. While the simplification of ecosystems is often dramatically visible, it can also unfold as an incremental, barely noticeable process. And it is not that ecosystems, here and there, are occasionally suffering simplification by losing constituent locals. The biosphere is experiencing gross decline or elimination of areas that are, in certain cases, centers of diversification—most notably, tropical forests, wetlands, mangrove forests, and coral reefs everywhere.

The whittling down of ecological complexity has been a global trend proceeding from the conversion of ecosystems for intensive human uses, the aforementioned population depletions, and the invasion of nonnative species. Nonnative species are the generalists hitching rides in the bustle of globalization—from the climate-change-favored fungus that is killing frogs, to millions of domestic cats preying on birds, to innumerable more.[26] Human-facilitated invasions, coupled with the disappearance of natives, lead to places losing the constellation of life-forms that once uniquely constituted them. The inevitable outcome of extinction, plummeting populations, lost and simplified ecosystems, and a bio-homogenized world is not only the global demolition of wild nature, but also the halting of speciation of much complex life. The conditions for the birth of new species within a wide band of life, especially of large-bodied species that reproduce slowly, are being suspended.[27]

26. The global proliferation of nonnatives moved David Quammen to write a seminal essay aptly titled "The Weeds Shall Inherit the Earth," *The Independent*, November 22, 1998.

27. Recent writings on the state of biodiversity include: Wilson, *The Future of Life*; Sharon Guynup, ed., *2006 State of the Wild: A Global Portrait of Wildlife, Wildlands, and Oceans* (Washington, DC: Island, 2005); Burney and Flannery, "Fifty millennia of catastrophic extinctions"; Foreman, *Rewilding North America*; Michael J. Novacek, ed., *The Biodiversity Crisis: Losing What Counts* (New York: The New Press, 2001); Norman Myers and Andrew Knoll, "The Biotic Crisis and the Future of Evolution," *PNAS* 98, no. 10 (May 8, 2001): 5389–92; Norman Myers "Conservation of Biodiversity: How are We Doing?" *The Environmentalist* 23, no. 1 (March 2003): 9–15; Paul Ehrlich, "Intervening in Evolution: Ethics and Actions," *PNAS* 98, no. 10 (May 8, 2001): 5477–80; David Quammen, *The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions* (New York: Scribner, 1996).

All these interconnected dimensions constitute what conservation biologists call *the biodiversity crisis*—a term that to the postmodernist rings of rhetoric, while to the broad public (insofar as it has heard anything about it) involves a largely illiterate and vague understanding of "extinction."[28] Academic frivolity and public ignorance aside, the biodiversity crisis heralds a biospheric impoverishment that will be the condition and experience of all future human generations: it requires 5 to 10 million years for biodiversity to recover after a mass extinction of the current scope. In light of this fact, I submit that unless global warming unleashes appalling penalties—in which case, the climate crisis and biodepletion will merge into one devastating event for virtually all life[29]—the implications of humanity's impact on biodiversity are so far-reaching that they may, in reality, dwarf the repercussions of climate change.

And yet, the current framing of climate change as *the* urgent issue encourages regarding the unwinding of biodiversity as a less critical matter than the forthcoming repercussions of global warming. Attention to the long-standing ruination of biodiversity underway is subverted in two ways in climate-change discourse: either it gets elided through a focus on anthropocentric anxieties about how climate change will specifically affect people and nations; or biodepletion is presented as a corollary of climate change in writings that closely consider how global warming will cause biodiversity losses. Climate change is undoubtedly speeding up the unraveling of life's interconnectedness and variety. But if global warming has such potential to afflict the natural world, it is because the latter's "immunity" has been severely compromised. It is on *an already profoundly wounded natural world* that global warming is delivering its blow. Focusing on the added blow of climate change is important, but this focus should not come at the expense of erasing from view the prior, ongoing, and climate-change-independent wounding of life on Earth.

Through the Looking-Glass of Climate Change

Rather than focusing on global warming as a driver of more biodiversity losses, climate change can be considered as a mirror that reflects how

28. For a critique of the postmodern approach to environmental issues, see Eileen Crist, "Against the Social Construction of Nature and Wilderness," *Environmental Ethics* 26, no. 1 (2004): 5–24.

29. All life, with the likely exception of the toughest of generalists (which may well include humans) and much of the microbial kingdom.

wild nature's ability to adapt to climate change has been seriously under-mined. In other words, beyond escalating the destruction of nature, climate change is bringing into high relief the violence that has already been per-petrated. There is a point to looking *through* climate change rather than *at* it: the point is that climate change is not "the problem." The problem is a sprawling civilization that is destroying the biosphere, and will continue to do so even after it (somehow or other) deals with a major glitch in the machine—the consequences of accumulating greenhouse gases.

The biosphere has been hemorrhaging from habitat conversion and destruction, ecosystem simplification, landscape fragmentation, the mas-sive killing of wild animals, industrial fishing, invasion of nonnative species, and chemical pollution. Climate change, as the most recent factor, is about to deliver a whole new level of consequences.[30] For most species and ecosystems that are being and will be affected, climate change is less an additional factor than it is a *synergistic driver* of biodepletion. Scientist Camilo Mora and his colleagues, for example, studied the adverse impact of synergistic stresses on life. They argue that habitat fragmentation, har-vesting, and warming, taken separately, cause "deleterious effects," but that synergies between these causes put species "under higher risks of extinction than those anticipated from single threat analyses."[31]

The intrinsic resilience of life in the face of environmental challenges—including severe ones such as climatic upheaval—has been so weakened that many species have been divested of their ability to cope. According to conservation biologist Reed Noss, species can adjust to climate change in three ways: migration to suitable sites, phenotypic plasticity or acclimati-zation, and evolving adaptive traits. "The only other alternative," he notes, "is decline and ultimately extinction."[32] The human impact has gravely

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30. In his latest plea for the conservation of life, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, E. O. Wilson classifies the impact of climate change on biodiversity as a form of "habitat destruction" (p. 81). Flannery highlights the same idea when he notes of the golden toad's departure (the first documented climate-change extinction) that we destroyed the species with coal-fired power plants and SUVs as surely as if we had bulldozed its habitat. Flannery, *The Weather Makers*, p. 119.

31. Camilo Mora, Rebekka Metzger, Audrey Rollo, and Ransom Myers, "Experi-mental simulations about the effects of overexploitation and habitat fragmentation on populations facing environmental warming," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 274 (2007): 1023–28; here, p. 1027.

32. Reed Noss, "Beyond Kyoto: Forest Management in a Time of Rapid Climate Change," *Conservation Biology* 15, no. 3 (June 2001): 578–90; here, p. 581.

weakened the three coping mechanisms of species in response to climate change.

While species and ecosystems have faced climate shifts during life's long tenure, species and ecosystems have never faced climate change on a planet dominated by *Homo sapiens*. The geological record reveals that life has been capable of handling climatic shifts within the (current) range of the present one.[33] One crucial difference is that life then, in contrast to now, had many more degrees of freedom in which to move. Paleoecologists studying species' reactions to previous climate change have found that range shifts are their prominent response; different species move at different rates and in different directions, attempting to track their preferred climate regimes. The key information from the fossil record is that species tend to move as individuals, rather than as ecosystem groupings, since species have different "climatic envelopes" (i.e., climate-related needs and tolerances). Ecosystems disassemble as communities of species are torn apart, eventually aggregating elsewhere in new configurations.

Discovering this pattern has been eye-opening for the scientific understanding of present-day trends and for anticipating how things will unfold in this century and beyond. Today, the movement of species is blocked by cities, suburbs, rural settlements, agro-industrial landscapes, fences, highways and roads, airports, malls, and other constructed environments. As species attempt to track needed climate regimes by moving—the trend scientists are seeing today[34]—there are fewer places for them to go and no shortage of obstacles on their paths. Such is the synergy of climate change

33. But if the rate of temperature increases as swiftly, over the next century, as forecasted (that is, if we do not act to stabilize the climate), it will exceed the "average rates experienced during the last 120,000 years" and paleoclimatic conditions will no longer serve as "near analogs for a rapidly changing anthropogenically warmed world." Lee Hannah, Thomas Lovejoy, and Stephen Schneider, "Biodiversity and Climate Change in Context," in Lovejoy and Hannah, *Climate Change and Biodiversity*, p. 5. See also Anthony Barnosky, "Effect of Climate Change on Terrestrial Vertebrate Biodiversity," in A. D. Barnosky, ed., *Biodiversity Response to Climate Change in the Middle Pleistocene: The Porcupine Cave Fauna from Colorado* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2004), pp. 341–45.
34. Gian-Reto Walther et al., "Ecological Responses to Recent Climate Change," *Nature* 416, no. 28 (March 28, 2002): 389–95; Camille Parmesan and Gary Yohe, "A Globally Coherent Fingerprint of Climate Change Impacts Across Natural Systems," *Nature* 421, no. 2 (January 2, 2003): 37–42; Camille Parmesan and John Matthews, "Biological Impacts of Climate Change," in Martha J. Groom et al., eds., *Principles of Conservation Biology*, 3rd ed (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc., 2005), pp. 333–74.

in a world of converted and fragmented landscapes. Severe limitations in the ability of species to disperse and assemble new ecologies are foreboding for biodiversity. Thus, while scientists have not found evidence for large-scale extinctions in the substantial transitions between glacial and interglacial periods, a spasm of losses is the predicted aftermath of anthropogenic global warming—with potentially one million species slated for climate-change-driven extinction within the twenty-first century[35]—because of the interactive effect between a rapidly changing climate and unavailable or broken-up habitat.

The looking-glass of global climate change starkly reflects the extent to which wilderness has been quashed or constricted, especially in the last few centuries. Productive and accessible wildlands and waterways have rarely been spared conversion or exploitation. Wilderness has been allowed to persist in areas that are difficult to access, like mountain ranges; in places too cold and desolate for human extensive habitation, like tundra and the poles; in the deepest seas, as long as they remain forbidding; and in protected natural areas placed off limits to intensive human activity.[36]

Enter climate change: *every one of them has become endangered or threatened*. Regarding mountains, Flannery notes that "nothing in the predictive climate science is more certain than the extinction of many of the world's mountain dwelling species."[37] Mountain ecosystems are not

35. In their report on extinction estimates as a consequence of climate change, Chris Thomas and his colleagues maintain that "anthropogenic warming at least ranks alongside other recognized threats to global biodiversity . . . [and] it is likely to be the greatest threat in many if not most regions. Furthermore, many of the severe impacts of climate change are likely to stem from interactions between threats . . . rather than from climate acting in isolation." Chris Thomas et al., "Extinction risk from climate change," *Nature* 427 (January 8, 2004): 147. An earlier review piece similarly noted that "habitat fragmentation in conjunction with climate change sets the stage for an even larger wave of extinction than previously imagined." Maarten Kappelle et al., "Effects of Climate Change on Biodiversity: A Review and Identification of Key Research Issues," *Biodiversity and Conservation* 8, no. 10 (October 1999): 1383–97. See also Parmesan and Matthews, "Biological Impacts of Climate Change"; Noss, "Beyond Kyoto."

36. I am not using "wilderness" to mean pristine, but to refer to areas that have become the last large-scale refuges for wild animals, plants, and ecosystems. It is an environmental commonplace that no place on Earth can any longer be called pristine. For example, the degree of accumulated pollution in the deep sea, one of the most inaccessible places on Earth (to visit, but not to dump in), is shocking. See Tony Konslow, *The Silent Deep: The Discovery, Ecology, and Conservation of the Deep Sea*, chap. 7, "Dumping and Pollution" (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007).

37. Flannery, *The Weather Makers*, p. 172.

only unique in their own right, but they also have served species as refugia out of overexploited valleys. But mountain life is in trouble, for as species move upslope in response to climate change, they can only go so far before they run out of territory.[38] The Arctic and the Antarctic are also among the last stands of wilderness, and their landscapes and wildlife are being run down by civilization's smokestacks and tailpipes.[39] The ocean deep may harbor the wildest remaining places on the planet, with their virtually unexplored menagerie of creatures, but even the forbidding depths are not guaranteed to escape this climatic shift.[40] The fate of parks and reserves worldwide is similar,[41] with protected areas losing, or in danger of losing, species and habitat. The borders of natural parks cannot ward off the new climate: animals and plants seeking to move are likely to find that the boundaries drawn around their homes do not delineate sanctuaries but traps.

What remains of wilderness has been either too inaccessible for human makeover or set aside as a token of nature's free condition. In 1990, philosopher Tom Birch wrote an essay entitled "The Incarceration of Wildness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons," in which he described protected natural reserves as akin to reservations in which colonizers corral indigenous people. Beyond theoretically startling, this argument is proving empirically prescient.[42] In its guise as "Dr. Jekyll," society has conceded some havens for the wild, and yet, in the very same project, "Mr. Hyde" has

38. See Flannery, "Leveling the Mountains," chap. 18 of *The Weather Makers*; Stephen Williams, Elizabeth Bolitho, and Samantha Fox, "Climate change in Australian tropical rainforests: an impending environmental catastrophe," *Proceedings of The Royal Society B* 270, no. 1527 (September 22, 2003): 1887–92.

39. John Roach, "Penguin Decline in Antarctica Linked with Climate Change," *National Geographic News*, May 9, 2001; Andrew Derocher et al., "Polar Bears in a Warming Climate," *Integrative and Comparative Biology* 44, no. 2 (April 2004): 163–76.

40. See Flannery, "Boiling the Abyss," chap. 20 of *The Weather Makers*; Koslow, "Climate Change," chap. 9 of *The Silent Deep*.

41. Lee Hannah et al., "Conservation of Biodiversity in a Changing Climate," *Conservation Biology* 16, no. 1 (February 2002): 264–68; G. F. Midgley et al., "Assessing the Vulnerability of Species Richness to Anthropogenic Climate Change in a Biodiversity Hotspot," *Global Ecology and Biogeography* 11, no. 6 (November 2002): 445–51; J. Alan Pounds et al., "Case Study: Responses of Natural Communities to Climate Change in a Highland Tropical Forest," in Lovejoy and Hannah, *Climate Change and Biodiversity*, pp. 70–74.

42. Tom Birch, "The Incarceration of Wildness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons," in J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1998), pp. 443–70.

been busy incarcerating life. Both the nonhuman world and we ourselves are about to pay the cost of the oxymoronic enterprise of imprisoning wilderness: species will be hard pressed to handle global warming by moving up mountains, northward, deeper into the seas, or out of parks. The mirror of climate change makes remarkably transparent, if it is not already, that wilderness cannot persist as a disconnected patchwork of places—and that any lingering impression of habitats too sheltered or too remote to be safe from serious onslaught is a mirage.[43]

Migration is the most important coping mechanism of species in response to climate change, and I have discussed the ways that it has been undermined. But there are two more ways for species to adapt—by phenotypic plasticity and by evolving new traits. Phenotypic plasticity refers to the capacity of species to adjust to new circumstances: to colder or hotter weather, shifting seasons and phenological challenges, new hydrological regimes, or a different diet. There are two limitations regarding species' phenotypic plasticity in the face of global warming, and both implicate the human impact. One is that the greater the speed of environmental change, the more the adaptive ability of organisms is challenged. Anthropogenic climate change is unfolding faster than episodes of the past—far faster than many species can or will be able to handle. The second limitation involves the kinds of species that exhibit phenotypic plasticity—and of course these are the generalists, or the weedy species, which modern civilization has already promoted. Climate change is expected to boost them again: they will adjust to changing conditions better, colonize opening niches with greater alacrity, and out-compete habitat specialists in their own erstwhile homes.[44]

43. This is not to deny the importance of "wilderness areas and national parks [as] the bedrock underlying protection of biodiversity and rewilding" (Foreman, *Rewilding North America*, p. 169). Wilderness reserves will form the foundation for the next step of "deep conservation": interlinking them in broad, landscape-level dynamic patterns that allow the flow of species, individuals, and genes of fauna, flora, and other organisms. See Michael Soulé and Reed Noss, "Rewilding and Biodiversity: Complimentary Goals for Continental Conservation," *Wild Earth* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 19–28; Reed Noss, "Wilderness Recovery: Thinking Big in Restoration Ecology," in Callicott and Nelson, *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, pp. 521–39; Tom Butler, ed., *Wild Earth: Wild Ideas for a World out of Balance* (Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2002); Josh Donlan et al., "Pleistocene Rewilding: An Optimistic Agenda for 21st Century Conservation," in Marcus Hall, ed., *Restoria* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, forthcoming); Guynup, *2006 State of the Wild*.

44. Thomas Lovejoy and Lee Hannah, "Global Greenhouse Gas Levels and the Future of Biodiversity," in Lovejoy and Hannah, *Climate Change and Biodiversity*, pp. 387–96.

Not only are species' range-shift responses to climate change hampered by the ways landscapes have been shaped, and habitat specialists challenged by the speed of climate change and disadvantaged by generalists, but the potential of genetic adaptations—via selection of better suited varieties—has also been undermined. Genetic change will undoubtedly occur in certain instances as a consequence of climate change.[45] But the reduction of population units and of population sizes that has been imposed on wild species (previously discussed) is forcing them to face the challenge of a new climate with compromised genetic resources. As scientists Thomas Lovejoy and Lee Hannah explain in the concluding paper of their volume *Climate Change and Biodiversity*, "small, fragmented populations reduce the pool of individuals capable of rapid response to climate change, or eliminate the genetic variants for rapid response altogether."[46]

In sum, species' coping responses to climate change—range shifts, acclimatization, and genetic change—have been either vitiated or disabled. The impact of global warming on the natural world can thus be likened to the onslaught of a disease agent on an immune-compromised organism. Nature is highly vulnerable to climate change—and would have been even if this episode of climate change were not anthropogenic—because of the patterns that modern human beings have stamped upon landscapes and the ways that life's diversity has already been diminished. To paraphrase ecologist Alan Pounds: climate change is a bullet threatening to annihilate many species and ecosystems, but industrial-consumer civilization is pulling the trigger.[47]

Climate Change as Apocalypse and the Rise of Geoengineering Proposals

The knowledge that biodiversity is in deep trouble has been available for at least three decades, but this momentous event has never inspired the urgency that climate change has triggered in a handful of years. This seems to be a blatant manifestation of anthropocentrism (the *idée fixe* that human

45. Chris Thomas, "Recent Evolutionary Effects of Climate Change," in Lovejoy and Hannah, *Climate Change and Biodiversity*, pp. 75–88.

46. Lovejoy and Hannah, *Climate Change and Biodiversity*, p. 389.

47. Regarding the chytrid fungus that has driven numerous Central and South American frog species to extinction, Alan Pounds of Costa Rica's Monteverde's Biology Station said: "The disease was the bullet killing the frogs, but climate was pulling the trigger" (quoted in Mac Margolis, "Why the Frogs Are Dying," *Newsweek International*, October 16, 2006).

interests, including short-term and non-vital ones, always come before all others), for climate change is perceived as threatening people *directly*— as the summer 2003 European heat wave, Hurricane Katrina, and other extreme weather exemplifies. The loss of life's diversity and abundance, on the other hand, is not widely regarded as harboring a survival risk for human beings. After all, countless species, subspecies, ecosystems, populations of wild animals and plants, ancient forests, wetlands, and so on, have been eclipsed or diminished, and yet, to cite an anti-environmentalist cliché, "the sky did not fall."

But the dominant framing of climate change—its identification as the most urgent problem that we face—all but bluntly declares that the sky is falling. The apocalyptic potential of global warming in the not-so-distant future manifests between the lines of climate-change writings far more vividly than mere subtext. The difference between such climate-change characterizations (quoted earlier) as "collapse of civilization" or "planetary emergency," on the one hand, and the idea of apocalypse, on the other, is almost purely semantic. Climate-change works do not employ the *word* apocalypse, but they often imply or outright describe something that uncannily resembles what religious imagery has pictured. Ross Gelbspan, for example, in a description fairly typical of what climate change foreshadows, writes of "the world becoming a storm-battered, insect-infested breeding ground of infectious diseases," one "of temperature extremes, of extensive drought and desperate heat."[48]

The Revenge of Gaia may be the most openly apocalyptic work on global warming in print. Lovelock assesses all variables affecting climate as being in positive feedback, which indicates, in his words, that "any addition of heat from any source will be amplified."[49] Among positive feedbacks, he lists loss of albedo from the melting of polar ice, decline of carbon-dioxide-absorbing and cloud-producing plankton, and the release of land-locked and (possibly) sea-bottom methane—all consequences of increasing temperatures, which, in turn, will act to reinforce and accelerate "global heating." Any one of these feedbacks might raise concern, but considered together an alarming picture emerges for Lovelock. He predicts runaway heating: "The evidence coming in from the watchers of the world," he claims, "brings news of an imminent shift in our climate

48. Gelbspan, *The Heat is On*, p. 172.
49. Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia*, p. 34.

towards one that can easily be described as Hell: so hot, so deadly that only a handful of the teeming billions now alive will survive."[50] This forecast proceeds from the apprehension of overstepping Earth-system thresholds and unleashing consequences both deadly and uncontrollable: in the climate-change literature, exceeding such thresholds is referred to as "dangerous anthropogenic interference."

While the specific forecast of a Hell in which billions perish is at the extreme end of climate-change predictions, the general intimation of a looming calamity for large numbers of people, and for civilization itself, is widespread in the literature. Overt or oblique, apocalyptic intimations abound in climate-change discourse. The *concept* of apocalypse is not just a household idea, but it is so in the air today (with fundamentalisms of all stripes and their ideas in full swing) that explicit reference to an impending apocalypse is redundant for the audience of climate-change writings. Dire warnings about the consequences of the continued use of fossil fuels, coupled with images of rising seas, soaring heat waves, raging wildfires, rampant disease, and acidified oceans, suffice to vividly evoke an end-of-the-world vision circulated for two millennia by Judeo-Christian culture.

Apocalyptic thinking manifests in a three-fold narrative structure pertaining to the timing, nature, and consequences of expected events if greenhouse-gas emissions continue unabated: one, an Earth-shattering calamity is forecast (or insinuated) to arrive at a future, albeit unspecified, time; two, it is nebulously portrayed as a single monumental catastrophe (adumbrated, perhaps, by a string of interconnected lesser catastrophes) that will affect everyone and everything; and three, it is suggested that human survival and the viability of civilization are at stake, with unprecedented levels of death, suffering, and social breakdown anticipated.

Whether or not apocalyptic admonitions are tracking an immanent reality, and the world is *actually* headed for the hellish heat and anomie that Lovelock fears, climate change as apocalypse can be censured for playing straight into the hands of the religious fundamentalisms that are menacing the world. Indeed, the apocalyptic narratives of climate-change literature align closely with prophetic claims strewn throughout the Old and New Testaments.[51] A perverse and noteworthy consequence of the

50. Ibid., p. 147.

51. An example from *The New Testament*: "And there will be strange events in the skies—signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And down here on earth the nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides. The courage of many people will

alignment between climate-change and biblical imagery is that many fun-damentalists (politicians, decision-makers, or citizens) may well remain undeterred and unmoved by climate-change warnings, which only reso-nate with their visions of death-by-fire, on the one hand, and rapture, on the other. As Derrick Jensen observes about this disturbing element at play today, "to many fundamentalists, the killing of the planet is not something to be avoided but encouraged, hastening as it does the victory of God over all things earthly."[52] Apocalyptic warnings dovetail into the day-of-reckon-ing fantasies of those who seem to care little about the biosphere's destiny; and while their fantasies may not be widely held beliefs, they possess a sort of *de facto* credibility by virtue of their sheer cultural ubiquity.[53]

Narrative affinity with biblical stories is the least problematic aspect of representing the climate crisis as near-future apocalypse. The most per-nicious dimension of this representation is that of occluding the reality we are (and have been) immersed in *here and now*—namely, the simplifica-tion-*cum*-homogenization of life on Earth. Climate change is not causing, but is hastening, the running down of the planet, and the technological grail that might ultimately solve the climate crisis will, more likely than not, simply allow the business-as-usual unraveling of the biosphere to proceed.

Besides coddling humanity's proclivity for self-centered concern, apocalyptic thinking directs attention toward some future Hollywood-style cataclysm, while dimming awareness of the present and real suffering of nonhumans, disempowered and impoverished people, and consum-ers beleaguered by clutter and malaise. Life's ongoing devastation, and humanity's pathological imbalance with wild nature and schisms within itself, are the predicaments that we are called to face—not the preemption of some imagined crash in some imagined future.

Given the dominant framing of climate change, it is hardly surpris-ing that schemes for what is called "geoengineering" (and, in even more

falter because of the fearful fate they see coming upon the earth, because the stability of the very heavens will be broken up…When you see the events I've described taking place, you can be sure that the Kingdom of God is near." Luke 21:25–33.

52. Jensen, *Endgame*, p. 226.

53. This statement is not intended as a wholesale condemnation of Christianity in connection to ecological issues. A relationship of *stewardship* with nature has been pro-moted by some Christians (as the main message in the Bible), especially after historian Lynn White's landmark essay, which lays much of the blame for the ecological crisis on Christian anthropocentrism. See White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 1967): 1203–7.

Orwellian speak, "radiation management") are increasingly aired as reasonable solutions to the climate crisis; it will be equally unsurprising if they are soon promoted as inevitable. A recent article in *Nature* claims that given "the need for drastic approaches to stave off the effects of rising planetary temperatures…curiosity about geoengineering looks likely to grow."[54] Six months earlier, an article in *Wired* gushed over the prospects, assuring us that "luckily, a growing number of scientists are thinking more aggressively, developing incredibly ambitious technical fixes to cool the planet."[55] In the wake of apocalyptic fears, geoengineering is easily packaged as an idea whose time has come; physicist Paul Crutzen's recent attentions have imbued it with even more credibility. Crutzen received the Nobel Prize for his work on ozone depletion, and is now cautiously promoting "active scientific research" into the possibility of shooting SO_2 into the stratosphere, which, by converting into sulfate particles, would mask global warming by an effect known as global dimming; Crutzen calls it "stratospheric albedo enhancement."[56] In essence, this strategy calls for countering one form of pollution with another.

In a 1997 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, nuclear physicist Edward Teller beat the environmental mainstream to a geoengineering solution for global warming by a decade. Indeed Teller's summons to undertake, if necessary, incredibly ambitious technical fixes to cool the planet, as a rational and economically defensible enterprise, may turn out in retrospect to have been pioneering in the realm of policy. It even seems plausible that Teller's self-assured and dollar-quantified message (coinciding with the year of the Kyoto protocol) played into the current U.S. administration's resolute defiance of calls to curb emissions, for he confidently affirmed that should global warming turn out to be dangerous, an ingenious engineering mega-fix for it will be cheaper than phasing out fossil fuels.[57]

54. Oliver Morton, "Is This What it Takes to Save the World?" *Nature* 447 (May 10, 2007): 132–36.

55. David Wolman, "Rebooting the Ecosystem," *Wired*, December 2006.

56. Paul J. Crutzen "Albedo Enhancement by Stratospheric Sulfur Injections: A Contribution to Resolve a Policy Dilemma?" *Climate Change* 77, nos. 3–4 (August 2006): 211–19. "To compensate for a doubling of CO_2," Crutzen notes, "the required continuous stratospheric loading would be sizeable….[S]ome whitening on the sky, but also colorful sunsets and sunrises would occur" (p. 213).

57. Edward Teller, "Sunscreen for Planet Earth," *Wall Street Journal*, October 17, 1997. Teller concludes his article as follows: "[I]f the politics of global warming require that 'something must be done' while we still don't know whether anything really needs to be done—let alone *what* exactly—let us play to our uniquely American strengths in

If mainstream environmentalism is catching up with the solution pro-moted by Teller, and perhaps harbored all along by the Bush administration, it would certainly be ironic. But the irony is deeper than incidental politics. The projected rationality of a geoengineering solution, stoked by apoca-lyptic fears surrounding climate change, promises consequences (both physical and ideological) that will only quicken the real ending of wild nature: "here we encounter," notes Murray Bookchin, "the ironic perver-sity of a 'pragmatism' that is no different, in principle, from the problems it hopes to resolve."[58] Even if they work exactly as hoped, geoengineering solutions are far more similar to anthropogenic climate change than they are a counterforce to it: their implementation constitutes an experiment with the biosphere underpinned by technological arrogance, unwilling-ness to question or limit consumer society, and a sense of entitlement to transmogrifying the planet that boggles the mind. It is indeed these ele-ments of techno-arrogance, unwillingness to advocate radical change, and unlimited entitlement, together with the profound erosion of awe toward the planet that evolved life (and birthed us), that *constitute* the apocalypse underway—if that is the word of choice, though the words humanization, colonization, or occupation of the biosphere are far more descriptively accurate. Once we grasp the ecological crisis as the escalating conver-sion of the planet into "a shoddy way station,"[59] it becomes evident that inducing "global dimming" in order to offset "global warming" is not a corrective action but another chapter in the project of colonizing the Earth, of what critical theorists called world domination.

Domination comes at a huge cost for the human spirit, a cost that may or may not include the scale of physical imperilment and suffering that apocalyptic fears conjure. Human beings pay for the domination of the biosphere—a domination they are either bent upon or resigned to—with alienation from the living Earth.[60] This alienation manifests, first and

innovation and technology to offset any global warming by the least costly means possible. While scientists continue research into any global climatic effects of greenhouse gases, we ought to study ways to offset any possible ill effects. Injecting sunlight-scattering particles into the stratosphere appears to be a promising approach. Why not do that?"

58. Murray Bookchin, *The Modern Crisis*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987), p. 32.

59. Paul Shepard, "Ecology and Man—A Viewpoint," in Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, pp. 131–40; here, p. 133.

60. This is a paraphrase of Horkheimer and Adorno: "Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise power." Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 9.

foremost, in the invisibility of the biodiversity crisis: the steadfast denial and repression, in the public arena, of the epochal event of mass extinction and accelerating depletion of the Earth's biological treasures. It has taken the threat of climate change (to people and civilization) to allow the tip of the biodepletion iceberg to surface into public discourse, but even that has been woefully inadequate in failing to acknowledge two crucial facts: first, the biodiversity crisis has been occurring independently of climate change, and will hardly be stopped by windmills, nuclear power plants, and carbon sequestering, in any amount or combination thereof; and second, the devastation that species and ecosystems have already experienced is what largely will enable more climate-change-driven damage to occur.

Human alienation from the biosphere further manifests in the recalcitrance of instrumental rationality, which reduces all challenges and problems to variables that can be controlled, fixed, managed, or manipulated by technical means. Instrumental rationality is rarely questioned substantively, except in the flagging of potential "unintended consequences" (for example, of implementing geoengineering technologies). The idea that instrumental rationality (in the form of technological fixes for global warming) might save the day hovers between misrepresentation and delusion: firstly, because instrumental rationality has itself been the planet's nemesis by mediating the biosphere's constitution as resource and by condoning the transformation of *Homo sapiens* into a user species; and secondly, because instrumental rationality tends to invent, adjust, and tweak technical means to work within given contexts—when it is *the given*, i.e., human civilization as presently configured economically and culturally, that needs to be changed.

Against the Anthropocene

"The human hammer having fallen," E. O. Wilson writes, "the sixth mass extinction has begun. This spasm of permanent loss is expected, if it is not abated, to reach the end-of-Mesozoic level by the end of the century. We will then enter what poets and scientists alike may choose to call the Eremozoic Era—the Era of Loneliness. We will have done it all on our own, and conscious of what was happening."[61] In modern Greek "*eremo*" also means abandoned, empty: the Eremozoic can also be translated as "the Era of Emptiness." But Wilson's proposed nomenclature is not the one catching. Instead, a recent academic fad proclaims the advent of

61. Wilson, *The Creation*, p. 91.

the Anthropocene—"the Era of Man"—which is alleged to have super-seded the Holocene that began with the end of the last glaciation about 11,000 years ago. The fact that "mankind's activities" have grown "into a significant geological and morphological force," now even shaping the parameters of the climate system, is the offered justification for announc-ing the Anthropocene—and even postdating it to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.[62]

The term Eremozoic evokes the immensity of what is being lost, and the bleakness of humanity's existential condition in a made-over world where everything reflects back *anthropos*. The term Anthropocene, on the other hand, affirms what is becoming ever-present and inescapable: the ubiquitous mark of modern humanity, the "civilizing frenzy of the productive era and its rage to leave no plot of ground unturned, to coun-tersign everything by production."[63] Eremozoic and Anthropocene signify the launching of the same world; the fact that "Anthropocene" would be the prevalent term reflects the conceit that characterizes our species in its modern guise. But more consequentially, making a motion to christen the biosphere's colonization as "the Anthropocene" works to entrench its real-ity and consequences.

Speaking and acting, as Peter Winch elucidates in a classic sociologi-cal text, are two sides of a coin. We cannot be so naïve as to dissemble that to speak of the Anthropocene is merely to describe, because, in fact, it is also to act: such speech anchors it and participates in its consolida-tion. "The idea gets its sense from the role it plays in the system," Winch explains. "The relation between idea and context is an *internal* one."[64] To propose the "Anthropocene" as a description of reality (for which there is undoubtedly warrant) is to rescind responsibility for the way the pro-posed concept, in turn, *acts upon* the very reality it purports to merely describe: reinforcing it, sharpening its contours, and, through the extraor-dinary power of language to mold the world into experience and meaning, ultimately legitimizing it. In brief, proposing a concept of this magnitude

62. Paul J. Crutzen, "The 'Anthropocene'," in Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft, eds., *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene: Emerging Issue and Problems* (Berlin: Springer 2006), pp. 13, 16.

63. Jean Baudrillard, *Revenge of the Crystal: Selected Writings on the Modern Object and its Destiny, 1968–1983*, ed. and trans. Paul Foss and Julian Pefanis (London: Pluto Press, 1990), p. 103.

64. Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (Lon-don: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 107.

does not simply reflect a state of affairs, but also amounts to crystallizing and affirming that state of affairs.

The linguistic ushering in of the Anthropocene conceptually hardens modern humanity's perceived entitlements, thereby reinforcing how human beings act within the biosphere; by virtue of the internal relationship between idea and context (identified by Winch), enunciating the Anthropocene further normalizes human interference with, and use of, every natural system on the planet. Masquerading as realism, the declaration of the Anthropocene contributes to fixing the course of history in the specific direction that the concept circumscribes. "Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use," writes Winch. "The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world."[65] This statement is not to be mistaken for a simplistic notion that language "constructs the world." Rather, Winch (like the late Wittgenstein, by whom he is influenced) argues that concepts, actions, reality, and experience are so profoundly enmeshed with one another as to be mutually constitutive. When we speak we must be alert not only to *what* we are saying, but to what we are *doing* with our speech—how what we are saying has a good deal of shaping power over the world.

Those who idly herald the Anthropocene in the halls of academe discursively stamp this outcome onto history as "inevitable" and engrave the death of the Holocene as "fact." But declaring the advent of the Anthropocene and the end of the Holocene is arrogant and premature, and it should be unmasked for what it is: enshrining humanity's domination over the planet or, at best, capitulating to fatalism.

In fatalistic thinking, the trajectory of industrial-consumer civilization appears set on tracks that humanity cannot desert without derailing; it is implied that while the specifics of the future may elude us, in broad outline it is (for better or for worse) a fixed direction of more of the same. Fatalism projects the course of human history (and concomitantly of natural history) as the inevitable unfolding of the momentum of present trends. By virtue of the inertia that massive forces display, from a fatalistic viewpoint,[66] present patterns of global economic expansion, consumption

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65. Ibid., p. 15.

66. See Stephen Meyer's 2006 essay-long book, as a poster case of environmental fatalism. "There is nothing we can do to avoid the major manifestations of the end of the wild in the centuries ahead," Meyer informs us. "We have accumulated a mountainous

increase, population growth, conversion and exploitation of the land, killing of wildlife, extinction of species, chemical contamination, depletion of oceans, and so on, will more or less keep unfolding.[67] We glimpse here what Horkheimer and Adorno had in mind when they pointed out that "logical necessity…remains tied to domination, as both its reflection and its tool."[68]

Indeed fatalism is a mind-set that strengthens the trends that generate it by fostering compliance to those very trends. The compliance that fatalism effects is invisible to the fatalistic thinker, who does not regard him or herself as a conformist, but simply as a realist.[69] But the conceptual and pragmatic fortification of the socioeconomic establishment by fatalistic reasoning is incontestable, arising as an effect cognate to what is called "positive feedback" in cybernetics,[70] "looping action" in philosophy,[71] and "self-fulfilling prophesy" in sociology.[72]

The complicity of fatalism in sustaining the dominance of industrial-consumer civilization merits close scrutiny: fatalism may be the most

extinction debt that makes recovery and restoration—even with herculean efforts—an illusion." Stephen M. Meyer, *The End of the Wild* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 73.

67. For environmental fatalists, the destructive consequences of present patterns might be mitigated or partially offset by technological opportunities, rational management, and environmental victories here and there. "Hopefully," Crutzen opines, "in the future the 'anthropocene' will not *only* be characterized by continued human plundering of Earth's resources and dumping of excessive amounts of waste products in the environment, but *also* by vastly improved technology and management, wise use of Earth's resources, control of human and domestic animal population, and overall careful manipulation and restoration of the natural environment. There are enormous technological opportunities." Crutzen, "The 'Anthropocene'," p. 17 (emphasis added).

68. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 37.

69. The variety of realism that stays cautiously wedded to factuality and to the inertia of facts, Horkheimer and Adorno acridly called "dry sagacity" and "dreamless reason"—a kind of thinking that, without deep reflection or rigorous argument, excises the imaginative realm of revolutionary thought as irrelevant, romantic, or childish.

70. What I understand about the behavior of "systems," I have learned through studying Gaian science, in particular James Lovelock's rich body of work. See for example James Lovelock, *Healing Gaia: Practical Medicine for the Planet* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991).

71. The conceptual choices we make (in ordinary language or social science) to describe, for example, certain "kinds of people" can have "strong interactions" with those very people. "I have called this phenomenon *the looping effect of human kinds*," Hacking explains. Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), p. 34 (emphasis in original).

72. Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968).

potent form of ideology in existence. Ideology, as Jürgen Habermas succinctly recaptured the concept, "serves to impede making the foundations of society the object of thought and reflection."[73] The declaration that we live in the Anthropocene (to stay with this key example) has the ideological effect of discouraging deep questioning and dismissing even discussion of revolutionary action. Rather, we are indirectly advised, our fate is to live our days in the "Age of Modern Man," within which we must manage ourselves and the world as best we can. Further, the narrow and technical conception of climate change as "the problem" is beholden to the same fatalistic mind-set. *The real problem*—the industrial-consumer complex that is overhauling the world in an orgy of exploitation, overproduction, and waste—is treated with kid gloves, taken as given, and regarded as beyond the reaches of effective challenge.

But this civilization is not beyond the reaches of radical action—and it is certainly not beyond the reaches of radical critique.[74] If the price of "think[ing] in terms of alternatives to the dominant order [is to] risk exclusion from polite intellectual society," as social theorist Joel Kovel observes about our times, then let us pay the price while preserving our clarity about the unredeemable socioeconomic reality in which we live.[75]

73. Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 111–12.
74. Criticism is itself a form of revolutionary praxis. This was an insight of Critical Theory that often seems forgotten in academia today.
75. Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature*, p. ix.

Hostis Humani Generis:
Devils, Natural Right, and Terror in the French Revolution

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The French have never quite known what to do with their Revolution. Their discomfort was painfully on display during the bicentennial, when politicians and historians struggled to find a suitable legacy to celebrate.[1] Was it possible to commemorate the birth of the French Republic while ignoring the violence of the Terror? Could the new era of political representation be distinguished from the *ère du soupçon*, which clung to it like a shadow? In the end, the official (and academic) response was to focus principally on a single political event, the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.[2] Here at least lay the source of the more palatable tradition of human rights. Implicitly (and often explicitly), these rights were opposed to the stripping away of rights that later characterized the Terror.[3] The 1789 Declaration also enabled twentieth-century France to celebrate its cherished "universalist" mantle, as it called attention to the similar declaration passed by the United Nations in 1948. Finally, concentrating on human rights linked the French Revolution to

1. See Steven L. Kaplan, *Farewell, Revolution: Disputed Legacies: France, 1789/1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995).

2. Kaplan, *Farewell, Revolution*, pp. 32–38. Over 200 books (!) were published in French alone on the *droits de l'homme* at the time of the bicentennial; four of the better studies are Stéphane Rials, *La Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (Paris: Hachette, 1988); Antoine de Baecque, Wolfgang Schmale, and Michel Vovelle, eds., *L'an 1 des droits de l'homme* (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1988); Marcel Gauchet, *La révolution des droits de l'homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989); and Lucien Jaume, *Les déclarations des droits de l'homme: du débat 1789–1793 au préambule de 1946* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989).

3. For instance in Jean-Marc Varaut, *La terreur judiciaire: la révolution contre les droits de l'homme* (Paris: Perrin, 1993).

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Telos 141 (Winter 2007): 57–81.
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the liberalism and reforms of the Enlightenment, hence "taming" the violence of the revolutionary process. Precisely how tame eighteenth-century liberalism really was, however, may need reconsidering.

The early political leaders of the Revolution were certainly wary of founding their reforms on Enlightenment principles of natural right.[4] Did these not contain the seeds of anarchic and communistic society?[5] Surely the dream of reforming civil law on the basis of natural right (expressed, among many others, by Diderot or the Physiocrats) was merely that, a dream. In the age of *sensibilité*, however, the pull of natural authority was difficult to resist. Parliamentary theories about an archaic constitution were soon displaced by *tabula rasa* arguments for political freedom and equality, grounded in natural right.[6] Jacobin ideologists shunned past political theorists ("ambitious charlatans") and aimed instead to do "the exact opposite of all that was [said and] done before."[7] To accomplish this grandiose ambition, they sought guidance in the laws of nature: "We wish," Robespierre announced in a celebrated statement of intent, "to fulfill nature's desires, to accomplish humanity's destiny, to keep philosophy's promises…"[8] As these expressions of boundless faith in natural right accompanied the most repressive pieces of revolutionary legislation, we must face an uncomfortable question: did natural right contribute in some manner to the establishment and exercise of the Terror? Rather

4. Keith Baker, "Fixing the Constitution," in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), pp. 252–305; and "The Idea of a Declaration of Rights," in Dale Van Kley, ed., *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1994), pp. 154–96. See also Jaume, *Déclarations des droits de l'homme.*

5. Albert Soboul, "Lumières, critique sociale et utopie pendant le XVIIIe siècle français," in Jacques Droz, ed., *Histoire générale du socialisme* (Paris: PUF, 1979), 1:103–94. On the political uses of nature and natural right in the eighteenth century, see also Jean Ehrard, *L'idée de nature en France dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1963).

6. Marina Valensise, "La constitution française," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 1, *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. Keith Baker (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987), pp. 441–67; see also Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1989), pp. 290–91.

7. Robespierre, "Sur les rapports des idées religieuses et morales avec les principes républicains, et sur les fêtes nationales," 18 floréal an II (May 7, 1794), in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, ed. Société des études robespierristes (1913; Ivry: Phénix éditions, 2000), 10:445. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

8. "Sur les principes de morale politique," 17 pluviôse an II (February 5, 1794), in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 10:352.

than being fundamentally opposed, as certain historiographical traditions claim, might not the Terror and natural right actually be linked?

I contend in this essay that the legislation authorizing (and perhaps provoking) a majority of executions during the Terror was indeed underpinned by a legal concept elaborated in the modern, liberal natural right tradition: the *hostis humani generis*, or "enemy of the human race." Instead of preserving the rights and lives of the many, natural right enabled and encouraged State violence to occur on a formidable level. This paper presents its claim in three parts: I begin with a philological analysis of the *hostis humani generis* expression and concept, in which I recall its Christian genealogy (where it designated the devil); in the second part, I examine how the concept was reappropriated by liberal natural right authors in the eighteenth century; finally, I consider the historical role of the *hostis* category in the legislation of the Terror. Through the combined effect of these theological and juridico-philosophical traditions, the enemy evolved into a denatured monster, fit only to be killed.

What is the purpose of this historical revision, beyond further questioning the legacy of the French Revolution? The political battles over the Revolution may or may not be finished in France, but they have unexpectedly resurfaced in the United States, where President Bush has adopted a revolutionary discourse to advance his agenda of "democratic globalism" against terrorists whom he routinely describes as "enemies of humanity."[9] The parallels between this neoconservative program and Jacobin ideology have not gone unnoticed by historians;[10] political commentators critical of Bush, however, tend to gloss over his agenda's revolutionary genealogy.[11]

9. Most notably in his second inaugural speech, Bush claimed there existed a universal yearning for democracy, akin to a "fire in the minds of men"—quoting (rather oddly) from Dostoyevsky's novel about nihilistic revolution, *The Possessed*, most likely via James H. Billington's masterly study of the "origins of revolutionary faith." The expression "democratic globalism" is from Charles Krauthammer, "The Neoconservative Convergence," *Commentary* 120 (July 2005): 21–26. Bush has taken to using the following line in his speeches on terrorism: "These militants are not just the enemies of America or the enemies of Iraq, they are the enemies of Islam and they are the enemies of humanity." (Various instances can be found by searching the presidential archives at the White House website, http://www.whitehouse.gov.)

10. See for instance David A. Bell, in *H-France Reviews* 5, no. 93 (2005), available online at the H-France website, http://www.h-france.net/vol5reviews/bell4.html.

11. With a number of exceptions: see for instance Michael Ignatieff, "Who Are Americans to Think that Freedom is Theirs to Spread?" *New York Times Magazine*, June 26, 2005.

Rather than dismiss this genealogy offhand, it pays to recall the central importance of natural right in neoconservative thought, illustrated above all by the work of Leo Strauss.[12] Brandishing the principles of natural right expressed in the Declaration of Independence, Strauss sought to combat the specter of relativism in American politics with the classical idea of the natural State.[13] In his wake, defenders of the current Bush administration invoke "neo-natural right" to justify the neoconservative doctrines of preemptive war and national sovereignty.[14] Chief among the neo-natural principles to attract scholarly interest today is the concept of *hostis humani generis*; indeed, numerous writers have called attention to this category as a model for codifying the legal status of terrorists.[15] It often goes unsaid that a legal precedent actually exists for invoking this concept, the landmark 1980 U.S. Court of Appeals ruling which judged that "for the purposes of civil liability, the torturer has become—like the pirate and the slave trader before him—*hostis humani generis*, an enemy of all mankind."[16] In this instance, however, the designation was only a means of establishing jurisdiction for crimes against humanity committed in foreign countries (in accordance with the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789). As a criminal category, its potential uses are much more questionable. Would it serve to "outlaw" terrorists, so that they could be killed by anyone with impunity? Would it provide the legal grounds for depriving suspected

12. For Strauss's discussion of natural right, see in particular the series of lectures, delivered after World War II, collected in *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953). On neoconservatism in the current Bush administration, see Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2004).

13. For a critical assessment of Straussianism, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *Political Philosophy*, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

14. James W. Ceaser and Daniel DiSalvo, "A New GOP?" *Public Interest* 157 (Fall 2004): 3–17. See also John Yoo, *The Powers of War and Peace: The Constitution and Foreign Affairs after 9/11* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 34–36.

15. See notably the widely discussed article by Douglas R. Burgess, Jr., "The Dread Pirate Bin Laden," *Legal Affairs*, July/August 2005, pp. 32–36, available online at http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/July-August-2005/feature_burgess_julaug05.msp; and Joseph McMillan, "Apocalyptic Terrorism: The Case for Preventive Action," *Forum* 212 (2004): 2–6, available online at http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF212/SF212_Final.pdf. For a critique of the analogy between pirates and terrorists, see Paul A. Silverstein, "The New Barbarians: Piracy and Terrorism on the North African Frontier," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 5, no. 1 (2005): 179–212.

16. *Filartiga v. Pena-Irala*, 630 F.2d, 876 at 890 (2d Cir. 1980). Slave trading had already been identified with piracy in the 1926 League of Nations Slavery Convention.

terrorists of P.O.W. status? Proponents of this enemy concept may wish to consider the one historical instance when legislation actually was crafted around this category, for these were the precise results that occurred. The onset of the Terror during the French Revolution was correlated to this new vision of the counterrevolutionary as *ennemi de l'humanité*. The violent excesses of this Revolution may even be read as the story of what happens when enemies are legally (and literally) "demonized" and placed outside the scope of nature.

Before we delve into this story, it may be helpful to clarify which version of natural right is under consideration. Natural right tends to be invoked today in its classical form, the one resurrected by Leo Strauss and Michel Villey and favored by neoconservatives.[17] One of the characteristics of this version is that it emphasizes the natural rights of the community (or in modern terms, of nations) over the particular rights of individuals. In the early nineteenth century, Benjamin Constant already analyzed the French Terror through the prism of classical political theory, arguing that it was precisely this sort of classical idea of liberty (or "public liberty") that allowed the Jacobins to practice mass execution in the name of freedom.[18] Constant opposed this idea of public liberty to a modern definition that privileged individual rights above and beyond those of the state. In Constant's liberal reading, the French Revolution culminated in a tragic regression back to classical political notions, after having initially enshrined a modern conception of freedom in the 1789 Declaration of Rights.[19] While Constant is correct to emphasize the return of classical theory during the Terror (comments about how "public safety is for us the supreme law" [*le salut public est parmi nous la loi suprême*] were commonplace),[20] it is in the modern, liberal tradition of natural right that I claim the ideological basis for the Terror can be found. Often ridiculed for

17. For Strauss, see above; for Villey, see especially Michel Villey, *Le droit et les droits de l'homme* (Paris: PUF, 1983), and Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law, 1150–1625* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997).

18. "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns," in *The Political Writings of Benjamin Constant*, trans. and ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), pp. 309–28.

19. This interpretation was recently revisited by Ladan Boroumand in *La guerre des principes: les assemblées révolutionnaires face aux droits de l'homme et à la souveraineté de la nation, mai 1789–juillet 1794* (Paris: EHESS, 1999).

20. "Rapport sur la police générale…," 26 germinal an II (April 15, 1794), in Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Michèle Duval (Paris: Lebovici, 1984), p. 813.

its naïveté, most recently by Lee Harris who faulted its ignorance of radi-
cal enmity, it is precisely *because* of its theory of the enemy that it figured
so centrally in Terrorist ideology.[21]

While a conceptual history of the enemy remains to be written, Carl
Schmitt provides a few valuable markers in *The* Nomos *of the Earth*.[22]
According to Schmitt, the pirate was first referred to as *hostis humani
generis* in antiquity, before this designation was extended on land to the
tyrant. Recent scholarship seeking to revive piracy laws in order to pro-
vide a legislative framework for prosecuting terrorism credits Cicero with
having coined the phrase. This genealogy would suggest that the *hostis*
was indeed a classical political concept, thereby validating Constant's
interpretation of the Terror.

But this genealogy is both incomplete and grossly inaccurate. As
Alfred Rubin remarked, Cicero never used the expression *hostis gene-
ris humani*, but rather described the pirate as a *communis hostis omnium*,
or "common enemy of all."[23] Albeit similar, this definition differs in one
fundamental respect: the pirate, in Cicero's wording, is categorized in
military terms (as the *hostis publicus* of all nations), not according to his
perverted or "inhuman" nature.[24] Rubin credits the seventeenth-century

21. "There is always something touching about claims that invoke natural rights or
moral rights. There may well be such things, just as there are transcendental numbers, in
some Platonic realm....Your enemy could care less." Lee Harris, *Civilization and its Ene-
mies: The Next Stage of History* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 176. Ironically, Harris's
own definition of the enemy as the archrival of civilization closely parallels the definitions
of Locke, Rousseau, Blackstone, and other jusnaturalist writers.

22. Carl Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth in the International Law of the* Jus Publi-
cum Europaeum, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003), pp. 44 and 65. Schmitt
examines how this concept was later extended to Islamic "foe" during the crusades (ibid.,
p. 87). On his definition of the enemy, see George Schwab, "Enemy or Foe: A Conflict of
Modern Politics," *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987): 194–201. For another insightful reflection
on the concept of enemy, see Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab: A History of the Enemy*
(Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2003), and "Terror Right," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 4,
no. 3 (2004): 35–69.

23. Cicero, *De Officis*, 3.107; see Alfred P. Rubin, *The Law of Piracy* (Newport, RI:
Naval War College Press, 1989), pp. 10–12. Rubin notes that "The source of the paraphrase
'*hostis humani generis*' has not been found" (ibid., p. 55n61).

24. This is not to say that the notion of an "inhuman" being was foreign to Ciceronian
thought. See, for instance, the famous passage in *De re publica* in which Cicero expounds
on the "*recta ratio*" that nature has placed in all men, and warns that "the person who
does not obey it...will be in exile from himself," since he "scorns his nature as a human
being." *De re publica* 3.33; in Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and On the Laws*, trans. and
ed. James E. G. Zetzel (New York: Cambridge UP, 1999), p 120. From a philological (and

British jurist Sir Edward Coke for having first defined the pirate as *hostis generis humani*.[25] Building on Rubin's research, Emily Tai has traced the expression back to Bartolus of Sassoferrato, the renowned fourteenth-century Florentine jurist who also wrote on piracy.[26]

By concentrating solely on international and maritime law, however, these scholars have overlooked the long and instructive history of this phrase in other domains. Though not used by Cicero, it can in fact be found in antiquity: Pliny the elder described Nero as an "*hostem generis humani*"; and the fourth-century AD Roman historian Eutropius recounts how the Senate declared Commodus an "*hostis humani generis*" after his death.[27] These early uses lend credence to the Schmittian claim that *hostis humani generis* initially served to designate tyrants.

While this claim is certainly true in part, it ignores the lengthy and important role of the expression in Christianity, where for many centuries it served another purpose: to designate the devil. Already in the ninth century, the archbishop of Mainz, Rabanus Maurus, was using the expression in this theological sense: "Can you really catch Leviathan with your fishhook? For he is the enemy of the human race, and a fish in pain will bite its master's body" ["Numquid abstrahere poteris leuiathan hamo tuo quia idem hostis humani generis dum in ore piscis corporis domini per passionem momordit"].[28] The term later became part of the official exorcism ritual of the Catholic Church, where the devil was addressed with all his epithets:

> Hear then and obey, Satan, attacker of the faith, enemy of the human race, messenger of death, robber of life, destroyer of justice, root of all evils, spark of vices, seducer of men, merchant of peoples, rouser of hatred, origin of avarice, cause of discord, instigator of deceit.

Begriffsgeschichtliche) perspective, however, it is essential to determine when and where this exact expression originated.

25. For Coke, see his *Institutes of the Lawes of England* (1628), in *The Selected Writings and Speeches of Sir Edward Coke*, ed. Steve Sheppard (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2003), pt. 3, chap. 1 (2:965). Sir William Blackstone cited Coke as the authority for his own discussion of piracy (see below).

26. Emily Sohmer Tai, "Marking Water: Piracy and Property in the Pre-Modern West" (paper presented at Seascapes, Littoral Cultures, and Trans-Oceanic Exchanges, Library of Congress, Washington DC, February 12–15, 2003), available online at the History Cooperative website, http://www.historycooperative.org/proceedings/seascapes/tai.html.

27. See Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, 7.8, 45–46; and Eutropius, *Breviarium*, 8.15.

28. Rabanus Maurus, *De rerum naturis*, 8.5.

[Audi ergo, et time satana, inimice fidei, hostis generis humani, mortis adductor, vitæ raptor, justitiæ declinator, malorum radix, fomes vitiorum, seductor hominum, proditor gentium, incitator invidiæ, origo avaritæ, causa discordiæ, excitator dolorum.][29]

Much more so than in maritime law, it was through this Christian usage that the expression *hostis generis humani* became known in early modern Europe. This religious reference is particularly evident in the French uses of the term. In seventeenth-century France, the *ennemi du genre humain* was neither the tyrant nor pirate, but the devil:

Hence, the enemy of the human race abuses you:
What he cannot achieve by strength, he accomplishes by cunning.

[Ainsi du Genre humain l'ennemi vous abuse:
Ce qu'il ne peut de force, il l'entreprend de ruse.][30]

The phrase continued to denote the devil throughout the Enlightenment. A typical example is Henri-Joseph Dulaurens's 1766 novel *Le compère Mathieu*: "You do not ignore that the enemy of the human race [*l'ennemi du genre humain*] is constantly on the lookout, that he studies human weakness and never fails to take advantage of this weakness in order to trap us."[31] This periphrase was, moreover, quite common, as a sample database search reveals: it appears in 45 texts (out of a corpus of 546) published between 1684 and 1805.[32]

29. From the *Rituale Romanum* (the seventeenth-century Vatican service manual), reproduced in *Manuel d'exorcismes de l'Eglise* (1626; Charenton: GVP, 2000), p. 47. Aquinas also employs the expression in reference to the devil, both in *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia*, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, chap. 4, lect. 2, and in the *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 41, a. 4. The expression was common in demonology treatises: see for instance Fratris Alfonsi a Castro, *Zamorensis, Ordinis Minorvm, Regvlaris Obseruantiæ prouinciæ sancti Iacobi* (Venice: Spei, 1549), p. 679; for more examples, search the Cornell Witchcraft Collection, available online at http://historical.library.cornell.edu/witchcraft/about. html.

30. Pierre Corneille, *Polyeucte martyr* (1643), 1.1.53–54, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Georges Couthon (Paris: Pléiade, 1980), p. 984.

31. Henri-Joseph Dulaurens, *Le compère Mathieu* (1766; Paris: Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés, 1831), p. 167.

32. Results acquired through proximity searches for "ennemi(e)(s) genre humain" in the FRANTEXT database, operated by ARTFL through the University of Chicago. The

For the history of the enemy, the early modern identification of the *hostis humani generis* with the devil is critical. As opposed to the pirate or tyrant, who threatened the *salus populi*, the diabolical *hostis* was a menace to each and every soul; no one is safe from the devil's temptations. This meant that the bar for determining absolute hostility was drastically lowered. The Republic need not be imperiled for severe measures to be required: whosoever revealed a diabolical nature presented an immediate and constant danger. Accordingly, the imperative for extermination was all the greater.

This theological expression did not enter the modern world (and modern languages) entirely unadulterated. With the rise of "philosophical" literature, self-consciously directed against the "superstitions" of religion, the phrase became increasingly employed in a figurative sense. In the seventeenth century, the same database search turns up 9 citations, 6 of which were theological, as opposed to 3 metaphorical, i.e., referring to a person other than the devil. Of the 45 recorded uses in the long eighteenth century, however, only 14 (roughly 30%) are literally theological, whereas the remaining 31 (70%) are figurative. If one only considers cases from the second half of the century (1745–1805), the numbers are even more striking: out of a total of 34 cases, 8 (24%) are theological, versus 26 (76%) that are metaphorical.[33] While obviously incomplete, these numbers nonetheless tell an interesting story. On the one hand, they point to the expression's newfound availability to signify other referents. No longer restricted to the Christian enemy, this supreme degree of hostility could now be projected onto whoever filled the semantic requirements of the phrase.[34] On the other hand, the theological meaning was not forgotten, suggesting that the original referent lurked, as a palimpsest, beneath

proximity search made it possible to include very similar expressions such as "l'ennemi de tout le genre-humain" or "ennemi commun du genre humain."

33. Among these eight theological uses, furthermore, one is in jest (Mercier's *Tableau de Paris*), another is from a non-Christian context (Florian's *Numa Pompilius*), and a third is a quote from a Catholic priest (the abbé Calmet, in Voltaire's *La Bible enfin expliquée*). Readjusted for these statistics, the percentages are 15 and 85, respectively.

34. Including the theologians themselves: in a letter to Frederick the Great, for instance, Voltaire turned the tables on the priests, suggesting that "the best one can do is to leave to themselves these pretended teachers and real enemies of the human race." Letter of August 26, 1736; English translation in *The Portable Voltaire*, trans. and ed. Ben Ray Redman (New York: Penguin, 1948), p. 440.

the new. In its metaphoric as well as in its theological uses, the expression retained a diabolical flavor.[35]

The lurking presence of the devil would play a significant role in secular theories of the enemy. Its influence may already be grasped in this passage by the seventeenth-century French author Guez de Balzac:

> [W]hen the Goths, the Vandals, the Gepids, the Alains, the Huns…and those other enemies of the human race left their miserable home…when with their extraordinary faces, inarticulate speech, and wild beast skins that hid their eyes, they brought death and enslavement all about them…had there been at the time a Louis the Just…the virtue of this generous defender of liberty would today be held in veneration everywhere that men are assembled, and where policed societies exist.[36]

It is not hard to see why such barbarians would be assimilated by a Christian writer to a horde of devils, yet what is most striking about this passage is precisely its non-religious framework. The Goths, Vandals, and Huns are enemies of *humanitas*, of human civilization. In Guez de Balzac's narrative, they presented "policed" Europe with the menace of animality, or rather, of inhumanity (witness their "extraordinary faces, unarticulated speech, and wild beasts' skins"). They did not threaten Christian souls but rather violated the very nature of human beings. Even before they ransacked the West, they were already intrinsically inimical to all things human. In the language of the natural right theories taking shape at this time, the barbarians were monstrous because they did not respect the most elementary laws of nature.

The metaphorical fluidity of the "*ennemi du genre humain*" in the eighteenth century seems indeed to have crystallized in this natural right category of the unnatural (or inhuman) being. While one might have expected to find this category in works by the authoritarian natural right authors of the seventeenth century (from Grotius to Pufendorf), it was primarily used by the later liberal theorists.[37] This should not come as a

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35. Thus indicating that its non-theological uses were indeed *figures*, i.e., tropical, and not simply recyclings of a forgotten phrase.

36. Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, *Le Prince* (Paris: du Bray, 1631), pp. 242–44.

37. On this authoritarian tradition, see in particular Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979); on the liberal authors, see Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996). The expression figured

surprise, as for Locke and his followers the state of nature was not one of perpetual war, but of relative peace, disturbed only by those "rebels" who rejected natural law. This liberal definition of natural right was a prerequisite for defining its opponents as rebellious, or even as enemies of the human race:[38]

> In transgressing the law of Nature, the offender declares himself to live by another rule than that of reason and common equity, which is that measure God has set to the actions of men for their mutual security, and so he becomes dangerous to mankind; the tie which is to secure them from injury and violence being slighted and broken by him, which being a trespass against the whole species, and the peace and safety of it, provided for by the law of Nature, every man upon this score, by the right he hath to preserve mankind in general, may restrain, or where it is necessary, destroy things noxious to them, and so may bring such evil on any one who hath transgressed that law, as may make him repent the doing of it, and thereby deter him, and, by his example, others from doing the like mischief. And in this case, and upon this ground, every man hath a right to punish the offender, and be executioner of the law of Nature.[39]

This key passage, which provides the justification of executive power in the state of nature, portrays a denatured enemy who has "quit the

prominently in Francis Bacon's *Advertisement Touching a Holy War* (1622), where he argued that all nations must combat those who "have utterly degenerated from the laws of nature" and "may be truly accounted…common enemies and grievances of mankind [*communes humani generis hostes et gravamina*]," in *The Works of Francis Bacon* (London: Baynes, 1824), 3:491; Latin translation (from *De Bello Sacro*), 10:318.

    38. In Hobbes, for instance, such a distinction would be meaningless, as every passionate individual ignores the laws of nature when not forced by a covenant to comply with them.

    39. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), §8. Locke's "offender" bears some resemblance to Pufendorf's "public enemy" (itself a Roman law category): "he who shows himself a public enemy is protected by no further rights from being repelled by me in any way whatever." *On The Duty Of Man And Citizen According To The Natural Law*, trans. Frank Gardner Moore (1682; New York: Ocean Publications, 1964), bk. 1, chap. 5, §8. In Grotius, by contrast, the public enemy retained its classical sense of military foe: see his discussion of "PUBLIC and LAWFUL ENEMIES, with whose STATE our own is engaged in war: but enemies of every other description, come under the denomination of pirates and robbers." Hugo Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*, trans. A. C. Campbell (1625; London: n.p., 1814), bk. 3, chap. 3, §1.

principles of human nature" (§10), and thereby forfeited his own natural rights: "every man upon this score…may restrain, or where it is necessary, destroy [him]." Implicit in this passage is the classical conception that "mankind in general" also possesses natural rights, and Locke did not shy away from celebrating the Ciceronian adage *salus populi suprema lex* later in the *Second Treatise* (§158). Nonetheless, the "offender" here deserves punishment, not for threatening public safety, but for transgressing the laws of nature, understood in the modern sense. Any "var[iation] from the right rule of reason" (i.e., natural law), whether harming a single individual or a community, is sufficient for the offender to become a "noxious creature," a diabolical being that must be destroyed. This imperative persists in civil society as well: whoever threatens the well-being of the state is "to be esteemed the common enemy and pest of mankind, and…to be treated accordingly" (§230).[40]

Locke's philosophy thus provided the theoretical basis for identifying the transgressor of natural law with the *hostis humani generis*. These two categories were fully assimilated by William Blackstone in his influential *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, which defined both in terms of natural right. Following the modern commentators on maritime law, Blackstone described the pirate as a

> …hostis humani generis. As therefore he has renounced all the benefits of society and government, and has reduced himself afresh to the savage state of nature, by declaring war against all mankind, all mankind must declare war against him: so that every community has a right, by the rule of self-defense, to inflict that punishment upon him, which every individual would in a state of nature have been otherwise entitled to do, any invasion of his person or personal property.[41]

40. The eighteenth-century French translation of this section reads: "Tous ceux qui sont coupables d'un crime si énorme, d'un crime d'une si terrible conséquence, doivent être regardés comme *les ennemis du genre humain*, comme une peste fatale aux États…" John Locke, *Du gouvernement civil*, 5th ed., trans. L. C. R. D. M. A. D. P. (Amsterdam, 1755), chap. 18, §20; p. 308 (my italics). The expression also appears in §93, where "ennemi déclaré de la société et du genre humain" translates "a declared enemy to society and mankind."

41. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765–68), bk. 4, chap. 5 ("Of Offenses Against the Law of Nations"), §3. Blackstone's commentaries were translated into French in 1776: see the *Commentaire sur le code criminel d'Angleterre, traduit de l'anglois de Guillaume Blackstone,…par M. l'abbé*

Although the example of the pirate points once again to the classical origins of this concept, the natural right theories that Blackstone invokes are clearly modern and, more precisely, Lockean: the comparison between the community's right to exterminate the *hostis* with the individual's original natural right is drawn from Locke's analysis of the origins of the executive power in society. This same analysis also provides the theoretical framework for Blackstone's discussion of the outlaw, a denomination that, as we shall see, proved central to the legal structure of the Terror:

> [T]hough anciently an outlawed felon was said to have *caput lupinum*, and might be knocked on the head like a wolf, by any one that should meet him; because, having renounced all law, he was to be dealt with as in a state of nature, when every one that should find him might slay him: yet now, to avoid such inhumanity, it is holden that no man is entitled to kill him wantonly or willfully; but in so doing is guilty of murder, unless it happens in the endeavor to apprehend him.[42]

Instead of the tyrant, the outlaw now appears as the terra firma equivalent of the pirate: both have "renounced all law," and may accordingly be killed wherever found. While Blackstone distinguishes between ancient and modern outlawing practices, the crime for which an individual was to be outlawed, namely the rejection of natural right, remains the same. As such, Blackstone's outlaw mirrors Locke's "noxious creature."

If the most elaborate natural right theory of the enemy was developed by the British, this may have been because natural right was not part of the curricula of eighteenth-century French law faculties (unlike those of Prussia, Holland, and Switzerland).[43] As Blackstone's *Commentaries* underscore, furthermore, the "enemy of humanity" bore a close resemblance to the common law category of the outlaw, which was also foreign to the French legal tradition.[44] We would nevertheless be mistaken to discount the importance of natural right in French Enlightenment political

Coyer,… (Paris: Knapen, 1776). This translation renders the Latin term as "*l'ennemi commun du genre humain*" (ibid., 1:79).

42. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws*, bk. 4, chap. 24.

43. On French legal training, see David A. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: The Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994).

44. The first judicial use of this category in France occurred in 1793, at the onset of the Terror (see below). It was, however, occasionally used in Italy: see André Laingui and Arlette Lebigre, *Histoire du droit pénal* (Paris: Cujas, 1979), pp. 105–6.

theory—the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* did not emerge *ex nihilo*, after all. The instruction of natural right in neighboring French-speaking universities, notably in Switzerland, ensured that this legal tradition was readily accessible to French readers. A professor at the university of Lausanne, Jean Barbeyrac, translated and annotated Grotius's and Pufendorf's major works on natural right,[45] and Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, at the Academy of Geneva, published an influential natural right manual, the *Principes du droit naturel* (1747), followed by its posthumous companion volume, *Principes du droit politique* (1751). These texts were written primarily for students and offered a clear presentation of basic natural right tenets.[46] Since both professors were themselves influenced by Locke, whose own *Second Treatise on Government* went through eight French editions in the eighteenth century, natural right entered France in its most liberal version.[47]

As we have seen, however, it was precisely in this version that natural right produced its most radical definition of the enemy.[48] And this definition, too, found its way into the French natural right tradition. In his radical natural right pamphlet, the abbé de Mably (tellingly using an English lord as his mouthpiece) asserted purely and simply that "not to conform to it [i.e., natural law], it is to cease being human."[49] This correlation between humanness and the respect for natural law was standard. In the dialogue

45. These translations went through multiple editions in the eighteenth century and could be found in most libraries: see Robert Derathé, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et la science politique de son temps* (1950; Paris: Vrin, 1992).

46. On Burlamaqui, see M. R. F. Harvey, *Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui: A Liberal Tradition in American Constitutionalism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1937).

47. The leading francophone natural right theorist of the later eighteenth century, Emmerich de Vattel, a Swiss diplomat, was largely influenced by Christian Wolff's Leibnizian philosophy, but also included numerous Lockean precepts in his *Droit des gens, ou Principes de la loi naturelle appliqués à la conduite et aux affaires des Nations et des Souverains* (London, 1758). Along with various works by the *philosophes*, the *Encyclopédie* was an additional repository of natural right principles: see for instance the articles on "droit naturel," "droit des gens," "souveraineté," or "état de nature," many of them plagiarized from Locke.

48. On the latent violence in the writings of the *philosophes*, see Pierre Saint-Amand, *The Laws of Hostility: Politics, Violence, and the Enlightenment*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996).

49. Abbé de Mably, *Des droits et des devoirs du citoyen* (Kell: n.p., 1789), pp. 28–29. This work is presumed to have been written around 1758: see Johnson Kent Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1997).

on "natural law" in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire has "B," initially a skeptic, acknowledge the existence of natural law, only to remark that "it is still more natural to many people to forget it"; to which "A" replies, "It is natural also to be one-eyed, hump-backed, lame, deformed, unhealthy; but one prefers people who are well made and healthy."[50] The parallel could not have been clearer: whosoever disregarded natural right was as morally monstrous as these physically imperfect creatures. This portrait of the denatured "enemy of mankind" was also to be found in Burlamaqui's natural right textbook:

> Whoever violates the laws of nature testifies thereby, that he tramples on the maxims of reason and equity, which God has prescribed for the common safety; and thus he becomes an enemy of mankind [*ennemi dangereux du genre humain*]. Since therefore every man has an incontestable right to take care of his own preservation and that of society, he may, without doubt, inflict on such a person punishments, capable of producing repentance in him, of hindering him from committing the like crimes for the future, and even of deterring others by his example.[51]

Similar to Locke's definition of the enemy, Burlamaqui's suggests that it is less the degree of danger that transforms one into a "dangerous enemy of the human race"—a threat to individual "conservation" is enough—than the fact that an individual has "violated" natural law per se. One of Burlamaqui's best-known readers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, pushed this reasoning even further in his famous discussion of the social right to execute criminals:

50. Redman, ed., *Portable Voltaire*, p. 169.
51. J. J. Burlamaqui, *The Principles of Politic Law*, trans. Thomas Nugent (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1807), pt. 3, chap. 4, §7; in French, *Principes du droit politique* (Amsterdam: Chatelain, 1751), pp. 253–54. See also Vattel: "Nations that are always ready to take up arms on any prospect of advantage, are lawless robbers: but those who seem to delight in the ravages of war, who spread it on all sides, without reasons or pretexts, and even without any other motive than their own ferocity, are monsters, unworthy of the name of men. They should be considered as *enemies to the human race*, in the same manner as, in civil society, professed assassins and incendiaries are guilty, not only towards the particular victims of their nefarious deeds, but also towards the state, which therefore proclaims them public enemies. All nations have a right to join in a confederacy for the purpose of punishing and even exterminating those savage nations." Emerich de Vattel, *The Laws of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law*, trans. Joseph Chitty (Philadelphia, PA: Johnson, 1883), bk. 3, chap. 3, §34 (my italics).

> [E]very evildoer [*malfaiteur*] who attacks social law thus becomes a
> rebel and a traitor, he ceases to be a member of society by violating its
> laws, and even declares war against it. The conservation of the State
> thus becomes incompatible with his own: one of the two must perish,
> and when the guilty one is put to death, it is less as a Citizen than as an
> enemy.[52]

Rousseau's jurisprudence is somewhat ambiguous here: on the one hand,
he seems to be adhering to the (positive) Roman principle of *salus populi*
("the conservation of the State is incompatible with his own"), while on
the other, he echoes the (natural) Lockean theory that whoever trans-
gresses natural right in turn forfeits all rights himself. In this passage,
however, Rousseau extends this natural theory to include civil law (*le
droit social*) as well. The *Social Contract* thus proposes an even more
severe concept of the enemy: if it appears threatening enough, *any* legal
infraction can now be punished by death. This definition and defense of
capital punishment is uncharacteristically lacking in Beccarian propor-
tionality—although Beccaria was in fact to justify capital punishment in
very similar (if limited) terms.[53]

Even the most liberal Enlightenment proposals for justice reform thus
acknowledged the possibility of a devilish creature, an inhuman being
whose existence posed a perpetual threat to society as a whole and to its
individual members. This "enemy of the human race," like its diabolical
ancestor, was guilty primarily of its perverted nature, rather than of any
specific crime. What the *philosophes* ended up creating, however, was a
giant loophole in their judicial theories—a loophole that would soon be
exploited.

Viewed from a cultural angle, this category of the monstrous enemy
featured prominently in the revolutionary rhetoric against the aristocracy.
Antoine de Baecque has chronicled how the aristocracy was represented

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52. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard
Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Pléiade, 1959–), 3:376.

53. "The death of a citizen cannot be necessary but in one case: when, though
deprived of his liberty, he has such power and connections as may endanger the security
of the nation; when his existence may produce a dangerous revolution in the established
form of government. But, even in this case, it can only be necessary when a nation is on the
verge of recovering or losing its liberty, or in times of absolute anarchy, when the disorders
themselves hold the place of laws." Cesare Beccaria, *Of Crimes and Punishments*, trans.
Edward D. Ingraham (Philadelphia, PA: Nicklin, 1819), §28.

in revolutionary pamphlets and prints by means of a variety of mytho-
logical monsters (chimeras, hydras, etc.) seeking to devour the French
nation.[54] These monstrous depictions turned aristocratic ideology on its
head: where the nobility had been defined positively by its alleged Frank-
ish origins and, by extension, its aristocratic blood, the revolutionaries
used this "racial" difference negatively to suggest, first, that the aristocrats
return to their Germanic forests, and second, that their blue blood was
really a "*sang impur*."[55] The underlying message that these revolutionary
representations of nobility incessantly drove home was that the aristocrats
were unnatural, if not denatured, beings. As such, and in order for France
to be regenerated, they needed to be eliminated—hence, Marat's demands
that an ever-increasing number of heads be felled for the nation's *salut*.

    While this antagonism towards the nobility was already visible from
a legal standpoint in the various decrees against the *émigrés* passed in
1790–91, the concept of a denatured enemy was only fully incorporated
into revolutionary legislation and ideology at the time of the king's trial,
from November 1792 to January 1793. As with the aristocrat, the king
came to embody the definitive *hostis humani generis* through a reversal
of absolutist theories privileging the body and blood of the king (his body
natural) over his office (his body politic).[56] As de Baecque notes, this
reversal of monarchical ideology had already begun before the Revolution,
at least where the queen was concerned: a large corpus of pornographic
pamphlets had created a lasting image of Marie-Antoinette as a sexually
denatured beast.[57] In the case of Louis XVI, however, his popularity and

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54. Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolution-
ary France, 1770–1800*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1997),
pp. 157–82.

55. For the traditional defense of aristocratic privileges, see the comte de Boulai-
nvilliers's *Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France* (Amsterdam: aux dépens de
la Compagnie, 1727). The abbé Sieyès reversed this argument in his radical pamphlet,
Qu'est-ce que le Tiers État? (Paris: n.p., 1789), which depicts the nobility as a foreign
(non-French) body; "impure blood" refers to a line from *La Marseillaise*: "Qu'un sang
impur abreuve nos sillons" [May an impure blood water our fields]. See de Baecque, *Body
Politic*, pp. 173–75.

56. For an excellent discussion of this absolutist variation on the medieval theme
of divine right (itself the focus of Kantorowicz's famous study), see Emmanuel Le Roy
Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime: A History of France, 1610–1774*, trans. Mark Greengrass
(Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 4.

57. Dena Goodman, ed., *Marie Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen* (New
York: Routledge, 2003).

reputation remained unflagging until the ill-fated royal escape attempt in 1791.[58] After this fiasco, the king joined the ranks of the debased aristocrats: revolutionary pamphlets tirelessly depicted him as a pig; his blue blood had soured in his veins. Monarchs were the true enemies of the human race, this *sans-culotte* newspaper declared:

> [W]hat is a king or a queen? Are they not the most impure and villainous things in the world? To reign, is that not to be humanity's worst enemy [*le plus mortel ennemi de l'humanité*]?…kings and their race were born to harm us; from birth, they are destined to crime, like certain plants, they are made to poison us.[59]

The once sacred body and blood of the king were now proof of the monarch's "poisonous" nature. The accusation of tyranny would play a central part in the legal proceedings of the king, but one did not need to wait for evidence of tyrannical behavior.[60] The "race" of kings was "*destined* to crime"; like the devil, monarchs were inherently evil-natured. This argument was not only to be found in the popular press: the Jacobins had in fact already exploited this same logic during the king's trial. Saint-Just

58. Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003).

59. Jacques Hébert, *Père Duchesne* 298 (October 1793): 3–4 (facsimile repr., Paris: EDHIS, 1969). See also Jean-Baptiste Chemin-Dupontès, *Morality of the Sans-Culottes of Every Age, Sex, Country, and Condition; Or, The Republican Gospel* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1794), a translation of *Morale des sans-culottes…* (Paris, 1793): "Who is a Tyrant? It is the enemy of equality, that most darling right of man. It is therefore the enemy of the human race. Shew no favour to a *monster* of this sort" (p. 35, my italics). William Godwin advanced a similar argument against monarchy in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (Dublin: n.p., 1793): "But to say, 'that every king is a despot in his heart,' will presently be shown to be the same thing as to say, that every king is by unavoidable necessity enemy of the human race" (1:372).

60. I discuss the legal proceedings in much greater detail in "War and Terror: The Law of Nations from Grotius to the French Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 31, no. 2 (forthcoming, 2008). For some examples of texts explicitly linking the tyrant to the "ennemi du genre humain," see Jean Meslier, *Mémoire des pensées et sentiments de Jean Meslier*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Roland Desné (Paris: Anthropos, 1972), 3:134; and the baron d'Holbach, *La morale universelle* (Amsterdam: M.-M. Rey, 1776), p. 227. In Vattel's *Law of Nations*, the tyrant was also described as the "enemy of the human race" (see notably bk. 2, chap. 15, §222; and bk. 3, chap. 8, §155). Thomas Paine similarly described "monarchical sovereignty" as "the enemy of mankind," in *Rights of Man*, pt. 1: see Paine, *Collected Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), p. 538.

led the charge, shocking the National Convention with his adroit use of natural right principles ("*le droit des gens*," or law of nations) in his act of accusation. As a king, he argued, Louis was a fundamentally unnatural being: his very status "is approved by neither morality nor nature." Accordingly, any immunity afforded to Louis by the 1791 constitution was moot, since it violated natural law: "I know of no natural relation between people and king." The king did not have to be found guilty of a specific crime: "citizens...had a right to proscribe and banish [*chasser*] him, even before his crime," as monarchy itself was an "eternal crime." Like the outlaw, the person of Louis was illegal—"every king is a rebel."[61] Other Jacobin deputies were more precise in their accusations: Jean-Bon Saint-André, a future member of the Committee of Public Safety, approvingly quoted Saint-Just, and added, "despots [are] the enemies of the human race."[62] And Nicolas Hentz reminded his fellow *conventionnels* what Locke and Burlamaqui had concluded about monsters of this sort: "whoever lays claim to [the right of the strongest] to kill me is a monster; he is the enemy of humanity....Every man has the right to destroy this destructive being."[63]

The Jacobin position was not heeded by the Convention to the letter: in the end, Louis was executed as a traitor, not as *hostis humani generis*.[64] But these two concepts were fast becoming identical. In his indictment of Louis XVI, for instance, Robespierre adeptly merged the two: "I demand that the Convention declare him, *from this moment onward, traitor to the French nation and criminal against humanity*."[65] Since France, in the eyes of the Jacobins, was in the process of returning to the natural state (understood less as the "state of nature," than as the natural, republican form of government), anyone who prevented this "regeneration" was indeed both a traitor to France and an enemy of humanity at once.

61. "Discours sur le jugement de Louis XVI," in Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 376–81.

62. *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, 1st ser., ed. Jérôme Madival et al. (Paris: Librairie administrative de P. Dupont, 1862–), 54:213.

63. *Archives parlementaires*, 54:208.

64. Michael Walzer, ed., *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, trans. Marian Rothstein (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974), p. 68.

65. *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 9:130 (italics in original). See also his claim that "if he [Louis XVI] was saved from the clutches of public anger [on August 10, 1792], it was no doubt only so that his punishment, solemnly ordered by the Convention, would be all the more imposing for the enemies of humanity" (ibid., 9:127).

Did this concept of the enemy have any greater political importance? Can it shed any light on the genesis and implementation of the Terror itself? In the ongoing historiographical disputes about the Terror, the importance of ideology has been considerably downplayed, after having enjoyed a central place in "revisionist" scholarship.[66] What tends to get lost in the current debates, however, is the simple fact that the mass executions of the Terror took place, in the vast majority of cases, within the confines of the law. Robespierre called attention to this legal sanction in his exhortation to soldiers heading off to suppress the Vendée rebellion:

> Perhaps you believe that you must revolt, that you must appear insurrectionary; quite the contrary, it is with the law in hand [*la loi à la main*] that you must exterminate all of our enemies....You have everything that is needed in the law to exterminate our enemies legally.[67]

The law to which he was referring was the March 19 decree "outlawing" all counterrevolutionary rebels. As Donald Greer has statistically demonstrated, this law "alone resulted in more executions than all other legislation of the regime."[68] It was also passed a full four days before the Western situation was perceived as being particularly dangerous.[69] Its underlying

66. Arno Mayer, in *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000), discarded ideology as "a poor guide to a revolution's genesis, course, and outcome" (p. 9). Patrice Gueniffey, though a student of François Furet, equally discredited the importance of ideology in *La politique de la Terreur: essai sur la violence révolutionnaire, 1789–1794* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), pointing instead to the "revolutionary dynamic" (p. 14). I cannot do justice here to the complexity of these historiographical questions, but I recommend two surveys of recent publications on the Terror (and Revolution): Jeremy Popkin, "Not Over After All: The French Revolution's Third Century," *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (2002): 801–21; and Antoine de Baecque, "Apprivoiser une histoire déchaînée: Dix ans de travaux historiques sur la Terreur (1992–2002)," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 57, no. 4 (July–August 2002): 851–65.

67. May 8, 1793, speech at the Jacobin society (*Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 9:491).

68. *The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution: A Statistical Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1935), p. 14. This decree also created a parallel tribunal system (the military and civil commissions), which would be responsible for far more deaths than the revolutionary tribunal (ibid., p. 21).

69. As Jean-Clément Martin confirms (in one of the best studies of the Vendée uprising), until March 23, "victory was never in doubt for the various commissionaires sent to the West....The situation was therefore not too critical." Martin, *La Vendée et la France* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p. 37. This particular chronology challenges the hypothesis that the

ideological tenets are therefore well worth examining, all the more since this particular legal category—the *hors la loi*—was entirely foreign to the French penal code. [70] It thus marked both a legislative and an ideological innovation in the history of the French justice system, one which "coincidentally" led to the greatest number of deaths.

In fact, this new legal category captured (as Blackstone had shown) the natural right condition of those who had transgressed the laws of nature.[71] For the Jacobins, this transgression had been the original crime of the king, a crime so grave that he need not even be judged: "Louis cannot be judged... he already has been," Robespierre argued.[72] He need only be killed like Caesar, Saint-Just added, "without any other formalities than twenty-three thrusts of a dagger."[73] The March 19, 1793, decree extended this logic to all other "rebels": if found with arms in hand, they were to be led before a judge who would record their identity, before sending them to their deaths within twenty-four hours.[74] Like the king, they were not to be properly judged, having already been prejudged as enemies of the human race.

The legal and conceptual identification of the counterrevolutionaries with the royal *hostis humani generis* occurred soon after the king's execution on January 21, 1793. The term reappeared in the debates surrounding the emergency March decrees (creation of the revolutionary

Terror was merely the product of a revolution/counterrevolution "dialectic" or "dynamic": see Mayer, *The Furies*; and Donald Sutherland, *France 1789–1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986). In the case of the March 19 law, the "outlaw" concept preceded the exacerbating circumstances.

70. The first recorded use of the expression *hors la loi* dates only back to 1774, as a translation, furthermore, of the English: "I am not what they call in England *ex lex*, outlaw [*hors la loi*]," wrote Beaumarchais in his *Mémoires contre M. Goëzman*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Burne, 1828), 3:315. The term "*hors la loi*" would not catch on until the Revolution; the 1776 French translation of Blackstone's *Commentaries* renders outlaw as "ex loi" (*Commentaires*, 2:78). "*Exlex*" was a Church Latin term (found notably in 1 Cor. 9:21), often used to signify "above the law," as in Calvin's expression, "*Deus legibus solutus est, sed non exlex*" [God is free from the law but not above it].

71. As Eric de Mari has shown in his magisterial thesis on the *hors la loi*, the expression had been used sporadically since 1791, but had never figured in any prior legislation: see *La mise hors de la loi sous la Révolution française* (Ph.D. dissertation, Université de Montpellier I, 1991), 1:44–46.

72. December 3, 1792, speech at the king's trial (*Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 9:121).

73. Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 377.

74. For the full text of the decree, see *Archives parlementaires*, 60:331.

tribunal, sending out *représentant en mission*, establishing committees of surveillance, etc.), which Danton called necessary measures for combating "the enemies of humanity."[75] Where the Convention had been reluctant to try the king for such a crime, it was now ready to indict others on this charge.[76] Later, once it became clear that the Vendée rebellion was not merely a question of *émigrés* leading misguided peasants into rebellion, the Convention decreed the complete annihilation of this region on the grounds that its inhabitants were inimical to humanity: they were, in Bertrand Barère's words, "a rebellious race to be eliminated [*à faire disparaître*]....Humanity will not complain; it is for her good that we must extract this evil; punishing the rebels is to do good."[77]

Underlying and inspiring the legal institutions of the Terror was thus a distinctly natural right framework, one which, according to the Jacobin theorists, had been in place ever since the revolution of August 10, 1792. This insurrection against the king had shattered the preexisting social contract: "What are the laws that replace it?" Robespierre asked in December of that year. The answer was simple: "Those of nature."[78] Whoever opposed the one nation (along perhaps with Switzerland and the United States) that had returned to the sacred source of nature to recover its rights,[79] were unworthy of nature and the title of humanity: "are the enemies of the homeland...in nature?" Saint-Just would later ask.[80] Natural right now superseded and effaced all other legal codes.

75. *Archives parlementaires*, 60:58.

76. Notably the British prime minister Pitt whom, on August 7, 1793, the Convention solemnly declared to be "l'ennemi du genre humain" (*Archives parlementaires*, 70:451–52).

77. August 1, 1793 (*Archives parlementaires*, 70:91, 101–2). Barère was a spokesman for the Committee of public safety. Executions among peasants and the working class would constitute 89 percent of the judicial Terror in the Vendée (Greer, *Incidence of the Terror*, p. 164).

78. *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 9:123. See also: "When a nation has been forced to resort to the right to revolt [*droit de l'insurrection*], she returns to a state of nature with respect to the tyrant."

79. As Héraut de Séchelles, member of the Committee of public safety and president of the National Convention at the time, declared at the Festival of Unity and Indivisibility, on the one-year anniversary of the August 10 insurrection: "It is in your [Nature's] bosom, it is in your sacred source that we have recovered our rights, that we have been regenerated." *Recueil des six discours prononcés par le président de la Convention nationale, le 10 Août an 2ème de la République* (n.p., n.d.), p. 1.

80. "Rapport sur les personnes incarcérées," 8 ventôse an II (February 26, 1794), in Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 703.

When one considers the legislative history of the Terror, it becomes clear that its fundamental ideological principles—and chiefly, its definition of the enemy—were thus well in place by the time of the king's trial, and that it was during this protracted event that the Jacobins refined the line of attack that they would adopt over the next eighteenth months. Granted, their judicial ideology did not appear out of nowhere, drawing notably from popular representations of the monarchy and liberal theories of natural right. It also evolved in the context of a tense military situation, in which internal opponents of the Jacobin regime could easily be cast as traitors to the state. From a legislative standpoint, however, the spring 1793 laws marked a break with the political philosophies of the preceding years, during which governments may not have shied away from repressive "public safety" measures, but never prejudged (or outlawed) their adversaries as enemies to be exterminated.[81] It remains to be explained why the Jacobins unceasingly widened their circle of hostility, from the king to essentially anyone, during the period known as the Great Terror.[82] But let us not forget that the law of 22 Prairial (June 10, 1794), which triggered this final phase of violence, only consolidated demands that the Montagnards had been pressing ever since the royal trial (see my introduction to "The Law of 22 Prairial," in this issue of *Telos*).[83] The attack on enemies of natural right had now reached Rousseauist proportions, as it punished many *civil* infractions with the same severity as "natural" wrongs. Here again, Saint-Just had announced this dogma in his indictment of the king: "courts only exist for citizens [*les membres de la*

81. For an astute analysis of repressive policies before the Terror, see Gueniffey, *Politique de la Terreur*, who argues that legislation against the *émigrés* prefigures the Terror laws. See also Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, on the repressive practices to which both conservatives and radicals resorted in the summer of 1791. One could, however, find very similar examples of political repression during the American Revolution: many loyalists, like the French *émigrés*, had their property confiscated, their mail opened, and were harassed or even imprisoned—but not executed. The prevalence of State violence in the French Revolution thus demands a different explanation.

82. See François Furet and Denis Richet, *La Révolution française* (Paris: Fayard, 1973), on the "Great Terror": "the definition of the enemies of the Revolution is so vague that it could include anyone" (p. 248).

83. As Gueniffey noted, *Politique de la Terreur*, p. 310. On the law itself, see notably Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986), pp. 255–59; Françoise Brunel, *Thermidor: la chute de Robespierre, 1794* (Brussels: Complexe, 1989), pp. 62–71; and Gueniffey, *Politique de la Terreur*, chap. 10.

cité].”[84] Or, as Robespierre would later put it, “social protection is only granted to peaceful citizens: the only citizens in the Republic are republicans.”[85] The law of 22 Prairial incorporated this logic into its draconian sentencing guidelines: defendants must either be completely absolved or sentenced to death. One strike, and you were out(lawed).

As a legal category, the *hostis humani generis* thus provided a legal justification for the exterminating zeal of the Jacobin Terrorists. Its conceptual value in the current “war on terror” is highly questionable, since it depends on a judicial philosophy (natural right), which even most liberal defenders of human rights reject.[86] While neoconservatives may feel drawn to this apparently classical conception of right, its theological genealogy has left an indelible mark: rather than single out the few individuals (the tyrant, the pirate) who truly menace the life of the republic, the *hostis humani generis* can seemingly be found anywhere, even in minor threats or demons. For how are we to determine who among us truly is an alleged enemy of the human race? The French revolutionary solution was to fill the prisons with thousands of “suspects,” arrested almost at random.[87] Although the picture we have inherited of these prisons is rather quaint (marquis and duchesses conducting love affairs behind bars), the reality was for the most part horrific. The prisoners captured in the Vendée rebellion, for instance, were piled into warehouses and left without food or water; most died without even going before a judge.[88] But what other results can be expected when captives are deemed irreversibly denatured, either ideologically, religiously, or genetically? Reports indicate that similar results may unfortunately be occurring in U.S. military prisons around

84. Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 379.

85. 17 pluviôse an II (February 5, 1794), in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 10:357. See also Robespierre's intervention at the Jacobin society two days later: “the first principle of free men is to exterminate all traitors” (p. 370), which Saint-Just would echo in his anti-*indulgent* speech: “let nothing be pardoned nor go unpunished,” he declared, demanding “unflinching censure of all crimes” (Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 706 and 703).

86. See for instance Alan Dershowitz, *Rights from Wrongs: A Secular Theory of the Origins of Rights* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

87. The Bush administration employed a similar “law of suspects” to round up Middle Eastern men following 9/11. See Anjana Malhotra's report, “Witness to Abuse: Human Rights Abuses under the Material Witness Law since September 11,” published by Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union, available online at http://hrw.org/reports/2005/us0605/.

88. Greer, *Incidence of the Terror*, pp. 30–32.

the world, and not just with so-called "illegal enemy combatants."[89] It is as though our adversaries were indiscriminately being treated as outlaws, beyond the pale of the Geneva Convention and international law. To avoid becoming devils ourselves, we may be obliged to follow Thomas More's advice:[90] give the devil the benefit of law, for our own safety's sake.[91]

89. On military prison abuse beyond the Abu Ghraib scandal, see Human Rights Watch, "Torture in Iraq," *New York Review of Books*, November 3, 2005, pp. 64–73.

90. To paraphrase the famous line from Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*.

The Law of 22 Prairial: Introduction

Dan Edelstein

On 20 prairial Year II (June 8, 1794), Maximilien Robespierre, president of the National Convention at the time and dominating figure on the Committee of Public Safety (CPS), stood atop an artificial mountain in the Champs de Mars and addressed the crowd assembled to celebrate the Festival of the Supreme Being. "French republicans," he intoned, "it is your duty to purify the earth that [the tyrants] have soiled, and to recall justice whom they banished from here."[1] The lawyer from Arras had not forgotten his classical references, although this allusion to Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* would have been missed by few: the French Revolution, according to this prediction, was to restore the golden age by bringing back Astraea, goddess of justice, from the heavens, where she had been exiled at the close of the last golden age. Justice would again reign supreme on earth.

Two days after this grand promise, the National Convention, at the bidding of the CPS, passed the law of 22 prairial, drastically reforming the revolutionary tribunal created fifteen months earlier.[2] Translated here for the first time in its entirety,[3] this law denied the accused the right to legal counsel; it allowed the prosecution to introduce "moral" proofs, in

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1. *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, ed. Société des études robespierristes (1913; Ivry: Phénix éditions, 2000), 10:482.
2. On the revolutionary tribunal, whose creation was decreed by the Convention on March 9–10, 1793, see James Logan Godfrey, *Revolutionary Justice: A Study in the Organization and Procedures of the Paris Tribunal, 1793–1795* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1951).
3. Some of the articles of this law have been translated before, but as article XXI notes, the preliminary report by Couthon was also intended to form part of the law. To the best of my knowledge, this report, included here, has never before been translated into English.

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the absence of (or in addition to) material evidence; it vastly accelerated the entire judicial process; it maintained trial by jury, but jurors were hand-picked by the CPS; and finally, it limited sentencing to the stark choice between acquittal and death. In the space of seven weeks, roughly 1,400 people would be sentenced to death by the Parisian revolutionary tribunal, or more than had been executed over the past year.[4] Ending only with the demise of Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon, and their supporters, this period has become known as the "Great Terror." Astraea, apparently, returned from exile with a vengeance.

The timing of this law certainly stands at odds with the grandiose pronouncements made at the Festival of the Supreme Being. A long-standing explanation of this disjunction was offered by Georges Lefebvre, whose interpretation fell back on the *thèse des circonstances* favored by historians sympathetic to the Jacobin cause.[5] Nineteen days before the law was passed, on May 23, Collot d'Herbois, another member of the CPS, was the victim of an assassination attempt; the following day, Robespierre was also allegedly targeted. According to Lefebvre, these incidents, of which a great deal was made at the Convention and in the Jacobin press, led the CPS to imagine (or at least claim) that Pitt had paid assassins to eliminate France's republican leaders one by one. To impede his nefarious plans, the CPS would have determined it imperative to pursue counterrevolutionaries more energetically.

The problem with this thesis, as Patrice Gueniffey demonstrated in the most thorough analysis of the 22 prairial law, is that the CPS had already announced its intention to revise and revamp the tribunal's procedures well *before* the attempts on its members' lives.[6] Robespierre had in fact

4. Marc Bouloiseau puts the total number of deaths at 1,376. See Bouloiseau, *The Jacobin Republic, 1792–1794*, trans. Jonathan Mandlebaum (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge UP and Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1983), p. 209. Patrice Gueniffey, following Gérard Walter, gives the slightly higher number of 1,409. See Gueniffey, *La politique de la Terreur: essai sur la violence révolutionnaire, 1789–1794* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), p. 277. Striking as this figure is, one must keep in mind that provincial revolutionary tribunals were closed on May 8, 1794, after which all counterrevolutionary suspects were sent to Paris. Hence, the death toll for the Parisian tribunal during the Great Terror includes "suspects" from throughout France.

5. "Sur la loi du 22 prairial an II," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 23 (1951): 225–56.

6. Gueniffey, *Politique de la Terreur*, chap. 10. As Gueniffey notes, Couthon himself acknowledges this in his report: "two months ago, you ordered your Committee of Public Safety to present you with a bill that could achieve this aim ['perfect national justice']."

promised a major overhaul of the tribunal in his 1793 "Christmas" speech on revolutionary government, and he had been pressing the Convention to reform the tribunal since July 1793.[7] The law cannot just be read, therefore, as another paranoid reaction to another English conspiracy.

What were the CPS's motives, then, for turning the tribunal into a ruthless judging (and killing) machine? Although Couthon's introductory report rails at length against the faction of the "Indulgents," a loose affiliation of disenchanted Jacobins centered around Georges Danton and Camille Desmoulins, the latter and their friends had been carted off to the guillotine two months earlier (April 5, 1794). Two weeks before that, the CPS had also dispatched with its other main political rivals, the Cordeliers, who had imprudently menaced the Convention with another popular insurrection. While the Jacobin leaders had by then developed a habit of perceiving conspirators behind every dark alleyway, their hold on power was under no immediate threat. The government was even bringing the military situation under control: a string of victories in the spring, leading up to the decisive battle of Fleurus (June 26, 1794), dissipated the threat of a foreign invasion. Accordingly, Couthon barely mentioned the war in his introductory report (even if a number of definitions of the "enemies of the people" do involve military affairs).

If the political or military motives behind this law are murky, Couthon's report, along with the articles themselves, suggest that the legal theory underpinning the law was not a product of the current situation. Indeed, the very first definition of "enemies of the people," "those who will have labored for the restoration of the monarchy" (article VI), recapitulates a law dating back to December 4, 1792. Article XX, which abrogates any prior, contradictory legislation, underscores in turn a long-standing problem with revolutionary laws, namely, their rapid and often haphazard accumulation. As one contemporary wryly noted, the deputies of the Convention were stricken with "*décretomanie*": they passed a flurry of laws and decrees almost every day, in a very non-systematic manner.[8] The law of 22 prairial, in this regard, attempted to codify once and for all the confusing array of legislation on counterrevolutionaries.[9] Couthon emphasized this point in

7. *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 10:280, and Gueniffey, *Politique de la Terreur*, pp. 278–82.

8. Nicolas de Bonneville, quoted in James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 37.

9. "Outlaws," however, continued to be prosecuted under a different system of military commissions.

his report: the goal of the CPS was to "summarize in a single law the scattered definitions and measures from a multitude of decrees."

This goal in itself, however, does not explain when or why the CPS decided to accelerate the tribunal's proceedings until they reached what can only be called a breakneck pace. If Robespierre had already informed the Convention of the CPS's intention to revise the tribunal's rules in December 1793, one must in fact go back to the trial of the king to find the roots of the proposals formulated in the 22 prairial law.[10] Again, Couthon himself provides a number of clues that the trial constituted a turning point in the Jacobin (or at least Robespierrist) judicial theory. He bemoans the decision by the *conventionnels* to grant the king legal representation: "With this single act, they abjured the republic; the law itself invited citizens to commit crimes, and scandalously consecrated the attacks against the republic; for to defend the cause of the tyrants is to conspire against the republic." This complaint was not new: Robespierre had criticized the decision at the time of the trial.[11] Article XVI elliptically ensured that such a "scandalous" act would not occur again.

The demand that the tribunal speed up its proceedings—or that, in Couthon's words, "The deadline for punishing the enemies of the homeland should only be the time needed to identify them"—had similarly been a common Jacobin refrain during the trial. Saint-Just had chastised the Convention for losing time with procedures, when the deputies should simply stab Louis XVI on the "Senate" floor and be done with it. With greater success, Robespierre had argued for the swift execution of Louis's penalty, and the king was in fact executed within twenty-four hours of his sentencing.[12]

The right to use "moral" proofs in the absence of material ones, while implicitly accepted, was not an issue during the king's trial, since evidence of his treasonous correspondence was abundant; but this right, too, was a long-standing Jacobin demand. In a draft decree that Robespierre penned in August 1793, he had argued that "it is both absurd and fatal for the public interest to employ drawn-out legal processes for crimes committed in clear view, where the nation is the accuser and the universe is a

10. Gueniffey also makes this connection in *Politique de la Terreur*, chap. 10.
11. See his December 3, 1792, speech, in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 9:125.
12. See his December 28, 1792, speech, in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 9:185. Robespierre repeatedly insisted on the need to accelerate the tribunal's proceedings throughout 1793. See in particular his August 11, 12, 25, and 28 speeches.

witness."[13] As we will see, this emphasis on a sort of "judicial omniscience" also underpinned his rationale for the cult of the Supreme Being.

Finally, and most importantly, the outline of a legal process (or lack thereof) encapsulated in the 22 prairial law rests on the same natural right theory that the Montagnards had employed in their attempt to deny the king his day in court. As Saint-Just famously argued at the time, "courtrooms are only established for citizens";[14] having violated the most sacred laws of nature and nations, Louis XVI had forfeited the right to due process afforded by civil society to its members. The king was in fact an "outlaw," a number of deputies charged; for Robespierre, his crimes placed him in a "state of nature."[15] Gueniffey has suggested that "the law of [22 prairial] derives entirely from this speech" of Robespierre.[16] This assessment glosses over the few remnants of due process that the law maintained (in particular, a trial by jury, albeit a purged one), but the criminal category at the heart of the Jacobin prosecution of the king indeed closely mirrors the criminal category defined on 22 prairial.[17] This law, Couthon declared, was directed against the "ferocious and cowardly enemies of humanity," i.e., the *hostis humani generis* who, like the king, had transgressed the very laws of nature. Redefined here as "enemies of the people," they were not so much entitled to a trial, as destined to a swift execution: "it is less a matter of punishing than annihilating them," Couthon unambiguously stated.

The shocking departure represented by the 22 prairial law from the more enlightened norms of judicial process enshrined earlier in the Revolution, and its eerie disconnect from any clear and pressing political or military threat, have led some commentators to conclude that by June 1794 the Jacobins had simply locked themselves into an endless

13. *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 10:160. For a similar viewpoint, see his 3 brumaire an II (October 24, 1793) speech at the Convention, and his 16 germinal an II (April 5, 1794) speech at the Jacobin society. See also Drouet's intervention at the Convention on September 5, 1793, in which he argued that there should be no need to provide proof of denunciations and that all suspects should simply be executed. See Albert Soboul, *Mouvement populaire et gouvernement révolutionnaire en l'an II (1793–1794)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1973), p. 126.

14. Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Michèle Duval (Paris: Lebovici, 1984), p. 379.

15. On these characterizations of the king, see my "War and Terror: The Law of Nations from Grotius to the French Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 31, no. 2 (forthcoming, 2008).

16. Gueniffey, *Politique de la Terreur*, p. 300.

17. As I argue in "War and Terror," it was perfectly mirrored by the outlaw decree passed on March 19, 1793.

cycle of violence.[18] Others have interpreted the law in terms of internal power struggles between the Convention, the CPS, and the Committee for General Security (whose powers and jurisdiction increasingly overlapped with those of the CPS).[19] Given the fact, however, that the law expressed legal principles that had already been in large part articulated well before Robespierre or his allies were in a position of executive power, it seems plausible to assume that, in addition to its role in the power politics of the revolutionary government, it constituted an authentic attempt to reform the judicial system on the model of a non-politicized theory of justice. In other words, and as shocking as this may sound, the law of 22 prairial may have been intended to inaugurate precisely the new age of justice announced at the Festival of the Supreme Being.[20]

As Robespierre's discussion of this festival indicates, it was chiefly designed with the improvement of *justice* in mind: "The greatest achievement of society would be to create in [the people] a rapid instinct for moral matters that would lead them to do good and avoid evil, without needing to think at length about it," he proclaimed in the speech announcing the festival.[21] Nature had placed an "invisible prosecutor" in the heart of all men, our conscience, but this wasn't enough: a Supreme Being was needed to "supplement the insufficiency of human authority."[22] God was construed as a metaphysical panopticon, the otherworldly counterpart to the surveillance committees that the Convention had instituted to watch out for suspects.[23] Payan, one of Robespierre's allies at the Paris Commune, emphasized this judicial function in his description of the Supreme Being as a "powerful and terrifying *witness* from whom man cannot escape, who

18. On the early revolutionary judicial reforms, see Barry Shapiro, *Revolutionary Justice in Paris, 1789–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993). On the "impossibility of ever ending the Terror," see notably Mona Ozouf, *L'école de la France: essais sur la Révolution, l'utopie et l'enseignement* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 124.

19. This is one of the conclusions reached by Gueniffey, *Politique de la Terreur*.

20. Carol Blum emphasizes the complementarity of these institutions in *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986).

21. *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 10:453.

22. Ibid., 10:450, 453.

23. See the March 21, 1793, bill, in *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, 1st ser., ed. Jérôme Madival et al. (Paris: Librairie administrative de P. Dupont, 1862–), 60:386–90. It is worth noting that Bentham's famous *Panopticon* project was presented to the Legislative Assembly in 1791, which ordered its immediate publication by the official *imprimerie nationale*.

sees him, who watches him."[24] If the people thought that a divine solar eye—and this is how the Supreme Being is represented in contemporary prints—was constantly watching over their every move, they would act in a moral fashion.

As with the golden-age rhetoric employed at the festival itself, these metaphysical reflections may sound hopelessly detached from the lethal reality of the 22 prairial law, yet they ultimately highlight the Jacobin assumption that some form of fear—civil, metaphysical, or both—was necessary to ensure virtuous conduct in a republic. This last objective is often deemed to be a prudish Jacobin obsession, but any eighteenth-century reader of Montesquieu would have claimed that virtue was the linchpin of true republicanism.[25] If Montesquieu separated virtue from fear, which he associated with despotism, he deviated in so doing from the classical-republican insistence that the two were inseparable (or as Robespierre famously put it, "terror without virtue is dreadful; virtue without terror is powerless").[26] One need not have read Machiavelli's *Discorsi* to have learned this lesson: it was inscribed in a text every French *collégien* knew even better than Virgil, Livy's *History of Rome*, in particular the passage on Numa. Had not this hero of Rousseau's also instituted religious cults in order to "inspire [the people] with the fear of the gods" and redress their "moral fibre"?[27] Such "gentle [*douces*] institutions," as Rousseau called them, were thought by Saint-Just to be precisely the sort of "republican institutions" that France desperately needed and that could replace the clutter of laws (as he lamented, "there are too many laws, too few civil institutions").[28] Alongside these gentler cults, however, Saint-Just also

24. Quoted in Alphonse Aulard, *Le culte de la raison et le culte de l'Être suprême* (Paris: Alcan, 1904), p. 286 (emphasis added).

25. See *De l'esprit des lois* (1748). In this regard, the expression "republic of virtue," often used to characterize the Jacobin regime, is redundant.

26. *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 10:357.

27. Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (London: Penguin, 1960), 1.19; p. 54. Rousseau celebrates Numa in the *Social Contract* and in his *Considerations on the Government in Poland*, where he praises Numa's introduction of "frivolous and superstitious rites in appearance, whose force and effect have been noted by so few," Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Pléiade, 1959–), 3:957–58. See also Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. Leslie J. Walker (London: Penguin, 1970), 1.11; p. 139.

28. For Rousseau, see the previous note. Saint-Just stresses the need for religious institutions in his *Fragments d'institutions républicaines*, from which the parenthetical quotation is taken. See Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 976 and 998–99.

stressed the need for "vigorous," if not "oppressive," institutions, a call that would be answered with the law of 22 prairial.[29]

The suggestion that this law may be rooted in pre-revolutionary republican theory is meant neither to diminish nor to deny its appalling ruthlessness; rather, as Keith Baker has emphasized, it simply points to the fact that classical republicanism contained within it certain violent notions that could, under particular circumstances, "metastasize" out of control.[30] (Anyone doubting the inherently violent nature of republican thought need only read what Machiavelli has to say about the nobility in a nascent republic.)[31] In the case of the Great Terror, however, republicanism alone seems insufficient for explaining its severity. Instead of the "good laws" or "fundamental laws," which according to republican theorists served as a guide for virtue, the CPS offered precious few positive norms for virtuous conduct, and drafted article VI of the 22 prairial law in such a way that it could target essentially anyone. With the Constitution suspended, the only positive legal norms proposed by the Jacobin leadership were the abstract dictates of natural law, as expressed in the Declaration of Rights, or more abstractedly still, "neither on marble nor stone, but in the hearts of all men."[32]

Ironically, it is this absence of explicit norms of virtue (i.e., what was required *not* to be considered an "enemy of the people") that may explain how Robespierre could announce the return of the golden age two days before ensuring that the Convention pass the 22 prairial law. Had not that mythical age been the time when, "without laws, [humans] spontaneously cultivated loyalty and rectitude," as Ovid wrote in another text known by every schoolboy?[33] Since Montaigne, the golden age was associated in natural right theory with the state of nature, i.e., a state governed only

29. The law of 22 prairial was directed, precisely, at the *institution* of the revolutionary tribunal, a central element in Saint-Just's republican thought: "They say that a vigorous government is oppressive; they are mistaken. . . . One needs justice in government. The government that exercises justice is not by extension vigorous or oppressive, since it is only the bad that is being oppressed . . ." See Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 978–79.

30. Keith Michael Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001): 32–53.

31. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 1.55; pp. 243–48.

32. Robespierre, "Rapport sur les principes de morale politique . . . ," 17 pluviôse an II (May 2, 1794), in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, 10:352.

33. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.89–90. (The Latin reads, "sponte sua, sine lege fidem rectumque colebat.")

by natural law.[34] For an important eighteenth-century current of political reform (culminating in Physiocracy), natural law was the code to which all civil legislation ought to conform, hence making positive laws redundant.[35] The cult of the Supreme Being thus seems to have constituted one half of a moral economy that sought to make do "without laws" altogether, or with as few as possible. An unpublished note by Saint-Just (admittedly crossed out) points in this direction: "The best civil law would be that there were none at all."[36] Imagining a religious cult that could serve this function was not entirely unheard of: in *Le Bonheur primitif de l'homme*, the feminist Olympe de Gouges described a golden age of solar worshippers who "never formed guilty plans without immediately abandoning them, when they looked to the sky."[37] But this heavenly guarantor of moral rectitude had to be supplemented by the cold steely fear of earthly punishment. Only together could these institutions force citizens to heed the precepts of the "invisible prosecutor" within.

Placing the guillotine in Arcadia undoubtedly perverted the myth of the golden age, but it was demanded by the toxic fusion of republicanism and natural right that characterizes the political discourse of the Terror. Saint-Just had been foreboding when he claimed that "the spirit with which the king is to be judged will be the same as the spirit with which the republic is to be founded."[38] From this angle, the cult of the Supreme Being and the law of 22 prairial appear as mirror images of one another: where the first was meant to fortify and amplify the voice of nature in our hearts, the second imposed the penalty reserved for those who violated natural right—death after few, if any, legal obstacles—on those who threatened the state, just as the Montagnards had demanded for the king. But the alleged crimes by which one became an "enemy of the people," while for the most part treasonous, were hardly the stuff of

34. See in particular the essay on "Des Cannibales" and the prefatory "Au lecteur" in the *Essais*. See also Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, §111, as well as numerous texts by Rousseau.

35. See for instance Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772; Paris: Gallimard, 2002), p. 89. I discuss this current in my forthcoming book, tentatively titled *The Terror of Natural Right*.

36. Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 940. See David W. Bates, *Enlightenment Aberrations: Error and Revolution in France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2002), pp. 161–78.

37. Olympe de Gouges, *Le Bonheur primitif de l'homme, ou les rêveries patriotiques* (Paris, 1789), p. 31.

38. Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 380.

natural law. Preserving the republic had somehow become a new law of nature:[39] anything that posed even the remotest threat to the survival of "public liberty" now placed the offender in a (quasi-)legal state of nature. Since "courtrooms are only established for citizens," but "as soon as a man is guilty, he loses his citizenship [*il sort de la cité*]," there was little need for courtrooms.[40] The laws of the State had been thoroughly naturalized; Astraea had returned to earth under the guise of Marianne. Georges Sorel's verdict may thus still hold: "During the Terror the men who spilt the most blood were precisely those who had the strongest desire to let their equals enjoy the golden age of which they dreamt."[41]

39. A number of deputies defined the republic, during the king's trial, as "the form of government that is closest to nature," instead of the fragile, man-made institution described by classical-republican theory. See, for instance, Siméon Bonnesœur-Bourginière, in *Archives parlementaires*, 54:118.

40. Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 380.

41. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, ed. and trans. Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 10.

The Law of 22 Prairial*

COUTHON, in the name of the Committee of Public Safety: All of our ideas in the various segments of government were to be reformed. They were all simply prejudices created by treachery and the interests of despotism, or else a bizarre mix of deception and truth, the inevitable result of the compromises that deception had forced upon reason.

Many of these false or obscure notions survived the revolution itself because the enemies of liberty exhausted every possible scheme to perpetuate them.

The judicial order in particular offers us a striking example of this. It was as favorable to crime as it was oppressive to innocence.

The world denounced its vices while Séguier still extolled its merits. The revolution is far from having dissipated them all. How could we imagine the contrary, given that our new criminal code is the work of the most loathsome conspirators of the Constituent Assembly, and that Duport's name sullies its frontispiece? The Machiavellian charlatanism that created the code managed to achieve its mindless advocacy through gullible ignorance, but it changed the terms of jurisprudence rather than the mind, and calculated its measures according to the interests of the rich and of certain factions much more than to the interests of justice and truth.

The rights of the republic were far less respected in the pursuit of crimes against liberty than against disturbances of the peace and against ordinary misdemeanors, committed by the weak. It would suffice to cite the name of the high national court. The less unfortunate times that followed are in no way exempt from the same criticism.

The immoral faction of the Indulgents, which merges with all the other factions as their master and supporter, never ceased to take under its wing the patronizing maxims of the traitors; and the practice of justice, always disproportionate to that of the homeland's enemies and their countless multitudes, left the Republic's destinies to chance. The long-paralyzed revolutionary tribunal justified its title more through the public-spiritedness of its members than through the forms of its organization, which the conspirators themselves heavily influenced, even though their conscience of their crimes forced them to fear it. What didn't they do to thrust it into the fetters of bickering and the old ways of law?

The reign of despotism had created a judicial truth that was not ethical and natural truth, but was opposed to it, and yet that alone determined with passion the fate of innocence and crime. Evidence could not be considered without witnesses or without written proof. And lies, surrounded by this retinue, had the power to dictate arrests on behalf of justice. The judicature was a sort of priesthood founded on error, and justice was a false religion that consisted entirely of dogmas, rites, and mysteries, from which moral doctrine was banned. The indulgent counterrevolutionaries wished to subject national justice and the course of the revolution to these rules. Moral proof counted for nothing, as though any other rule could determine human judgment; as though the most material of proofs could be valid in another way than as moral proof. Counterrevolutionary treachery hid the plan to maintain the conspirators' impunity under the veil of hypocritical scrupulousness and killed the people through false *humanity*, and betrayed the homeland through *scruple*. All of this contributed to weaken justice or lead her astray; the schemers surrounded her with their traps, the aristocracy intimidated her with its eternal clamor. Unabashedly, we saw women without decency ask that liberty be sacrificed for their relatives, for their husbands, for their friends, in other words, almost always for their companions. Everyone appealed for family, for friendship, for the counterrevolution; no one appealed for the homeland. The indulgent faction never lacked pretexts to make them forget it. Sometimes, this faction set the supposed private virtues of the people's enemies against their public crimes, as though virtue could live peacefully alongside crime; other times, the faction sought patriotic claims in the very monuments of their guilty hypocrisy; and still at other times, the faction summoned hate and daggers upon the heads of the faithful representatives and upright judges who had the courage to avenge the homeland.

But the faction was as indulgent toward the great villains as it was relentless toward the unfortunate; never was an enemy of the revolution found guilty, nor a patriot found innocent. These ferocious and cowardly enemies of humanity, drenched with the blood of the people, dubbed those who wished to save humanity through justice "bloody men," and sometimes they managed to weaken or surprise them.

It resulted from this that national justice never showed an imposing attitude, nor displayed suitable energy. It seemed to pride itself on its ability to be just toward individuals without making much effort to be just toward the republic, as though the courts intended to punish its enemies had been established in the interest of the conspirators, not for the safety of the homeland.

What particularly favored the conspiracy of the indulgent was the dexterity with which they mixed the most contradictory things, such as the measures taken by the republic to stifle the conspiracies with the ordinary functions of the courts for private offenses during peacetime. The difference must be sought in the very principles of social interest, which is the source of all political institutions and, consequently, of all laws relative to the practice of justice.

Ordinary crimes only directly harm individuals, and harm society as a whole only indirectly; and because by their nature they do not threaten public safety, and justice delivers a verdict between private interests, this same justice can allow some sluggishness, a certain luxury of form, and even a sort of partiality for the accused; justice has little else to do but peacefully take care of the delicate precautions in order to protect the weak from the abuse of judicial power.

This doctrine is that of humanity because it conforms to public as well as private interest.

On the contrary, the crimes of the conspirators directly threaten the existence of society or its liberty, which is the same thing.

Here, the life of villains and the life of the people are pitted against one another; here, all feigned sluggishness is reprehensible, and all indulgent or superfluous formality is a public threat.

The delay for punishing enemies of the homeland should only be the time it takes to identify them; it is less a matter of punishing than annihilating them.

A revolution like ours is nothing more than a quick succession of conspiracies, because this revolution is the war of tyranny against liberty, of

crime against virtue. Instead of wasting time with examples, it is either a matter of exterminating the implacable satellites of tyranny or of perishing with the republic. Indulgence toward them is an atrocity, clemency is parricide.

He who wishes to subject public safety to the bias of the courts or to the manipulations of lawyers is a madman or a villain who wants to juridically kill the homeland and humanity.

If one wants a reasonable government, if one wants to end the crises of the revolution, it is time to instill all aspects of civil and political administration with the soundness of mind that puts each principle in its place, and which forestalls this eternal confusion of ideas, that most fruitful source of our errors. I shall only cite one pertinent example on this subject. Under the old despotism, philosophy asked in vain for councils for the accused: a powerless resource for the feeble oppressed against the tyranny of laws and courts of the time! It would have been worth much more to establish laws and judges so that this remedy would not be necessary; but when such recollections were brought to bear, quite recklessly if I may say, on the most extraordinary events of our revolution, some asked for and were granted unofficial defenders for the dethroned tyrant of France! Unwittingly (or for some, all too knowledgeably), they did an equally absurd, immoral, and impolitic thing: they called liberty into question again and placed the homeland in danger. With this single act, they abjured the republic; the law itself invited citizens to commit crimes, and scandalously consecrated the attacks against the republic; for to defend the cause of the tyrants is to conspire against the republic.

They made precisely the same mistake when they gave unofficial defenders to the tyrant's accomplices, that is, to all of the conspirators. An incredible thing! Liberty was threatened by endless conspiracies and the law itself labored stubbornly away to seek representatives for her enemies. The [revolutionary] tribunal established to punish them resounded with blasphemies against the revolution and with treacherous declamations whose objective was to try the revolution itself before the people. But it wasn't these devoted mercenaries of tyranny who had to be challenged, only the law; for the more they outraged the people, the more they faithfully fulfilled the role that law imposed upon them. The members of the [revolutionary] criminal tribunal wrote, quite a while back already, to the Committee of Public Safety to complain that the unofficial defenders were fleecing the accused in a scandalous manner; that so-and-so had asked for

1,500 pounds [*livres*] for a plea; that only the poor unfortunate ones were not defended. What else could be expected from a class of men dedicated by their social status to the defense of enemies of the homeland, or rather, from an institution that reflects an absolute lack of principles?

The republic, attacked at its birth by enemies as treacherous as they were numerous, should strike them with the swiftness of lightning, taking the necessary precautions to save the slandered patriots. Only by placing the practice of national justice in pure, republican hands can the republic fulfill this double objective.

The natural defenders and the necessary friends of the accused patriots are the patriotic juries. The conspirators should find none of them. How the blood of good citizens would be cleansed, how many misfortunes the homeland would be spared, if we could escape the rut of routine to follow the principles of reason and to apply them to our political situation.

We have thought it good to evoke some simple truths, not in order to implement them at this very moment in a precise and absolute manner, but to balance the dangerous influence of the indulgent faction, which always seeks to kill liberty through the safety of these assassins.

Let this faction be satisfied with its slaughter of republican heroes who were sacrificed to spineless ferocity. Thanks to their treacherous doctrine (which royal and senatorial despotism long touted as principles of government, even virtue), two hundred thousand of our brothers fell victim to the most cowardly betrayals, and the triumph of the most holy of all causes was delayed for several years. It would have been the end of liberty if you had not given justice the right to defend it. It is your energy that in recent times gave us the means to defeat our foreign enemies by halting the audacity of our domestic ones. How could one believe in the republic or in victory when the league of tyrants and traitors dominated the State and scoffed with impunity at the destinies of the French people? It is true that the audacity of the endlessly renewed conspiracies proved to you endlessly that you had not done enough to smother it. You felt both the insufficiency of a single revolutionary tribunal to deliver the republic from the treacherous and ferocious enemies that she imprisoned in her breast and the dangers of multiplying this institution. You at least desired to perfect her and to rid her of the absurd or disastrous hindrances that can hinder the march of national justice. Accordingly, two months ago, you ordered your Committee of Public Safety to present you with a bill that could achieve this aim.

Distracted to this day from this objective by equally pressing matters, we shall try to fulfill your wish today. We propose no changes in the organization of the revolutionary tribunal, but only a few measures that aim to push aside the most visible abuses that experience has confirmed and which the zeal of its magistrates denounced to us, and to put the tribunal in a position to fulfill its important functions more actively.

It is a matter of:

(1) filling in the number of juries and judges, reduced by several circumstances;

(2) fixing the principles of this institution in such a way as to guarantee liberty to the slandered patriots and accelerating the judgment of conspirators;

(3) summarizing in a single law the scattered definitions and measures from a multitude of decrees.

This is the objective of what I shall propose to you.

We are merely pointing additional daggers at ourselves, we know; but what do daggers matter to us? Only the wicked tremble when they act; well-intentioned men see no danger when they do their duty; they live without remorse and act without fear.

Here is the bill that I have been authorized to present.

The National Convention, having heard the report by the Committee of Public Safety, decrees:

Article I. The revolutionary tribunal will have one president and three vice presidents, one public prosecutor, five substitute prosecutors, and twelve judges.

II. There will be fifty jurors.

III. These different functions will be filled by the following citizens:
               [A list of names is here omitted.]

IV. The revolutionary tribunal is instituted to punish the enemies of the people.

V. Enemies of the people are those who seek to annihilate public liberty, either by force or by cunning.

VI. Are presumed to be enemies of the people those who will have labored for the restoration of the monarchy, or sought to slander or dissolve the National Convention and the revolutionary and republican government, of which it is the center;

Those who will have betrayed the republic in their command of its fortresses and armies, or in any other military function; corresponded in secret with the enemies of the republic; or sabotaged the supply lines for the army;

Those who will have sought to prevent provisions from reaching Paris, or to cause famine in the republic;

Those who will have sustained the projects of the enemies of France, either by hiding or protecting conspirators and aristocrats, by persecuting and slandering patriotism, by corrupting representatives of the people, or by abusing the principles of the revolution, or the laws and measures of the government, through false and treacherous application;

Those who will have tricked the people or its representatives, and led them down paths that are contrary to the interests of liberty;

Those who will have sought to discourage the people to advance the objectives of tyrants conspiring against the republic;

Those who will have spread false news to divide or frighten the people;

Those who will have sought to confound public opinion and impede popular instruction; to deprave morals, corrupt the popular conscience, and perturb the energy and purity of revolutionary and republican principles; or to halt progress, either by counterrevolutionary and insidious writing or by any other machinations;

Those who peddle in bad faith to compromise the safety of the republic, and those who dilapidate public funds, except for those defined in the law of . . . [ellipsis in original];

Those who, entrusted with public service, abuse it to serve the enemies of the revolution, to upset patriots, or to oppress the people;

Finally, all those designated in prior laws relating to the punishment of conspirators and counterrevolutionaries, and who, by whatever means and under whatever cover, will have threatened the liberty, the unity, or the safety of the republic, or will have worked against its consolidation.

VII. The penalty for all the crimes over which the revolutionary tribunal has jurisdiction is death.

VIII. The necessary forms of proof for condemning enemies of the people are any sort of material, moral, verbal, or written document, which can naturally persuade a fair and reasonable mind. The norm for judgment is the juror's conscience, enlightened by his patriotism; the goal of judgment, the triumph of the republic and the ruin of its enemies; its formal procedures, the simple means that common sense indicates for obtaining the truth in the form that the law demands.

The law is restricted to the following points:

IX. Every citizen has the right to seize and arraign before the magistrates conspirators or counterrevolutionaries. He is beholden to denounce them as soon as they reach his attention.

X. Only the National Convention, the Committee of Public Safety, the Committee of General Security, representatives of the people on commission for the Convention, and the public prosecutor can arraign individuals before the revolutionary tribunal.

XI. In general, constituted authorities cannot exercise this right without first alerting, and receiving authorization from, the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security.

XII. The accused will be interrogated publicly in the court; the secret interrogations that usually precede are abolished in reason of their redundancy; they will only take place under specific circumstances, when judged useful for the pursuit of the truth.

XIII. If either material or moral proof exists, independently of attested proof, no witnesses shall be heard, unless this process is deemed necessary, either to uncover accomplices or for other important reasons of public interest.

XIV. If such proof is required, the public prosecutor will call witnesses, either for or against, who can advance the cause of justice.

XV. All evidence will be made public, and no written evidence will be accepted, unless witnesses cannot be present at the tribunal; in which case, a special authorization is required from the Committees of Public Safety and of General Security.

XVI. The law offers a patriotic jury as the defense for slandered patriots; it provides none for conspirators.

XVII. When debates come to a close, the jurors will reach their verdict, and the judges will pronounce the sentence in accordance with the law.

The president will ask for the verdict in clear, precise, and simple language. If asked for in equivocal or uncertain terms, the jury can request that it be posed differently.

XVIII. If there is insufficient evidence for pressing charges, the public prosecutor cannot dismiss charges on his own authority for any accused arraigned before the revolutionary tribunal (even if he himself has arraigned them); he must present a written report motivating his request to the council chamber, which will decide. But no charges can be dismissed before the chamber's decision has been transmitted to and examined by the Committee of Public Safety.

XIX. A double register shall be kept of the names of those arraigned before the revolutionary tribunal, one by the public prosecutor, the other by the tribunal.

XX. The Convention abrogates all prior legislation that conflicts with the present bill, and emphasizes that laws governing the organization of ordinary courts do not apply to counterrevolutionary crimes and to the proceedings of the revolutionary tribunal.

XXI. The Committee [of Public Safety's] preceding report will be appended to the present bill for clarification.

XXII. This bill will become law when inserted in the official bulletin.

Alain Badiou: Infidelity to Truth and the Name of Evil

Timothy Martinez

The Subject of Truth in Badiou's Ontology

At the center of Badiou's Platonic concept of truth is the claim that the highest human good is truth itself. It is through the reestablishment of the concept of truth as a necessary part of thought that he is able to announce the return of humanity (as more than just another animal; as an immortal).

According to Badiou, the normal condition of human existence is our existence within the fully structured environment of a situation. Within such a situation, individuals exist as particular subjects with definitive character as prescribed by the normalizing conditions of the *state* of the situation (i.e., the situation's symbolic order or "encyclopedia," which fits us into well-formed sets or subsets in terms of our membership and roles in the situation).[1] This state of the situation is what determines whether and how one counts as a member of a given context (e.g., nation, ethnic group, profession, etc.). Thus, this encyclopedia of the situation classifies subsets of elements by "gathering together the elements of the situation according to one or other predicative trait" and the "polymorphous interweaving of forms of knowledge" creating the state specific to that situation.[2] Any element so gathered is classified by its predicate trait as a member of a subset of the situation.[3]

1. Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum Press, 2004), pp. 123 and 113.
2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. According to Badiou, "in so far as it exists, *x* is situated, it exists in a situation (or several). This status is not prescribed by *x* itself. This why the belonging of *x* to the situation is called its *appearance.*" Ibid., p. 181.

To appear as a member of a subset of a situation makes it possible to recognize an element as something at all—as something that can be understood and rendered thinkable from within the situation itself.[4] Hence, the state of the situation describes the symbolic order of knowledge specific to that situation and gives that situation its stability in terms of what can appear or appear to happen in the situation: whether something is recognizable, how it is recognized (what it is recognized as), and its status within that order (knowledge).[5] In a sense, on this level of appearance, nothing new or totally unexpected can happen.

However, those elements that appear in a situation do not exhaust all the elements that compose a situation. Since appearance is a construct (constructed by the state's encyclopedia of knowledge of the situation), the actual being of elements (beyond that which appears as a particular element) cannot be recognized by the state of the situation. For Badiou, appearance in a situation as a particular object is distinct from actual being, because any given state of a situation is always a finite condition (as are the objects that appear). On the other hand, being itself is understood as mathematically founded (specifically, mathematical logic), and hence being *qua* being is the infinite multiplicity of being.[6]

The thinking of being (which is part of the situation, though not situated in it) allows access to that which has not been made consistent (as an appearance) with the situation by the state of the situation. When thinking is able to touch on being *qua* being, it thinks truth. This point of contact with the pure form of being (i.e., that which is not included in how an object appears in a situation) is found in the form of the generic set.[7] The generic set is composed of those elements that are indiscernible and are

4. "Appearance is what is thinkable about *x* in so far as it belongs to S." Ibid.

5. "Appearance is *x* situated in S; *x* in a situation; *x* in the place where it happens to be." Ibid. Thus, elements gain identity through the manner in which they appear in relational membership within the situation and have no discernible identity outside of these sites of appearance.

6. Here, Badiou is relying on his Platonism of the multiple, which founds ontology on mathematics. When one thinks of being as such, one thinks in terms of the mathematical logic of sets that, following consequences of Cantor's continuum hypothesis and the axiomatization of set theory, grant access to the realm beyond finite appearances of the state of the situation: the infinite multiplicity of being.

7. The generic set is infinite in its composition and is subtracted from any predicate that could identify or count it as appearing in the knowledge of the state of situation (e.g., its language). See Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, p. 127.

not counted or defined as appearing by the relational construction of the state of the situation.

According to Badiou, being *qua* being (beingness):

> presupposes nothing save for its immanent composition, that is, its status as a multiple of multiples. This excludes that there may be, strictly speaking, a being of relation. Being, thought as such, in a purely generic manner, is subtracted from any bond.[8]

So then, what does it mean to think pure multiplicity devoid of any relational aspect? Would this be the thought of nothing at all, and perhaps no thought whatsoever? Or, does it require us to return to being as presence? Badiou insists that thinking being (of an indiscernible element) in its beingness is precisely to think being in its immanence and in its multiplicity.

> Thinking in the situation must therefore be a thinking of relation in the broadest sense of the term. We know the ontological difference between the two, because *x* and *y* are multiples which are the same if and only if they possess the same elements (axiom of extensionality). This does not in any way bring the situation into play. It is an ontological criterion of differentiation, which is independent of the question of knowing how *x* and *y* appear. It says nothing about differentiation within a situation, i.e., about appearance.[9]

Indiscernible elements within a situation reflect the void of the situation. This void of the situation includes all those elements of the situation presented in the situation but not represented by the state of the situation.[10] Though this void is itself of the situation, it is nonetheless beyond what can be made consistent by the state of the situation as discernible members of the situation. This void of the situation is, at the same time, the very being of the situation itself and that which makes it possible for there to be a source of elements not determined by any given situation. As elements not made consistent by the state of the situation (and

8. Ibid., p. 171.
9. Ibid., pp. 181–82.
10. In fact Badiou maintains that this void of the situation is itself the source of an infinite number of elements in the same manner that set theory's null set (the empty set, or Ø) identified in the null set axiom as the source of all the elements of mathematics except itself: it is the source of all presentations as multiples—it alone is one.

thereby discernible by the knowledge of the situation), these indeterminate elements will make possible the unconditioned agency of human action.[11] The infinite multiple (the multiple of the multiple, which is the ontological essence of all being as being), which for Badiou serves as the ultimate source for limitless multiplicity (of elements joined into inconsistent and indiscernible or generic subsets), can be recognized in thought; when thought thinks the logic of being, it thinks the logic of mathematics, and mathematics "thinks" the infinite. According to Badiou, philosophy is currently unable to recognize truth because of its embrace of the "post-Romantic" gesture of reducing the infinite to "function as a horizontal correlative and opening for the historicity of finitude."[12] As such, the infinite is not accessible for thought but serves merely as the unthinkable background for a fully temporalized historical existence. The Platonic unity of philosophy and mathematics is deposed and replaced with poetry.[13] With this displacement is lost the ability of mathematics as thought to connect "the infinite to the bounded power of the letter" and the ability of mathematics to essentially "repeal any invocation of time" in the very thought of the infinite.[14] Hence, we lose our ability to think the infinite of being in favor of a reduced capacity to think all things (as particular objects) through the finitude of the poem (i.e., language) in which, where the word leaves off, no thing can be.

The ability to think the infinite is again possible if we grant that the meaning of being (ontology) must be understood mathematically.[15] Since ontology thought mathematically makes it possible to think, it also

11. The void is that which "[i]n a situation (in a set), it is like a point of exile where *it is possible* that something, might, finally happen." Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 85.

12. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, p. 25.

13. Thus, the ideal and atemporal character of mathematical thinking figured as the central argument in this deposition. "Romantic speculation opposes time and life as temporal ecstasis to the abstract and empty eternity of mathematics. If time is the 'existence of the concept', then mathematics is unworthy of that concept." Ibid., p. 24.

14. "In my opinion, this presupposition is that of historicism, which is to say, the temporalization of the concept. It was the newfound certainty that infinite or true being could only be apprehended through its own temporality that led the Romantics to depose mathematics from its localization as a condition for philosophy." Ibid., p. 24.

15. "Mathematics has shown that it has the resources to deploy a perfectly precise conception of the infinite as indifferent multiplicity. This 'indifferentiation' of the infinite…has rendered the infinite banal; it has terminated the pregnant latency of finitude and allowed us to realize that every situation (ourselves included) is infinite." Ibid., p. 27.

becomes possible to recognize that which is not fully defined by the finite knowledge of the situation. It becomes possible for the indiscernible inconsistent multiples of the void to be recognized and held up to thought, beginning at the site where these elements are exposed.

Badiou claims that the boundary between the fully defined situation (as consistent multiplicities) and the fully undefined void (as inconsistent multiplicities) is the site where the undefined elements can appear. Since the "void of Being can only occur at the surface of a situation by way of an event," there exists within a situation a location where the void is exposed and made accessible to those in the situation. This "edge of the void" he designates the evental site.[16]

What is exposed at this evental site is that which must be immanent to the situation itself but, at the same time, is apart from the state of the situation's encyclopedic knowledge (hence, while it is a subset of the situation, it is distinguished from any "rubric of knowledge").[17] As a set of elements uncounted by the state of the situation, these merely present elements can be assembled only as a generic set of the situation. This generic set is what Badiou designates as the truth of the situation.[18]

For Badiou, as for Kant, truth must be understood as something distinct from knowledge in order to guarantee the ability of thought to think the beingness of being that is more primordial than knowledge. Truth is differentiated from knowledge because "a truth of the situation is nonetheless heterogeneous to all those subsets registered by form of knowledge." [19] Truth is thus "subtracted from the classificatory grasp of the encyclopedia," and, as such, it is the truth of the situation's being as

16. Ibid., pp. 75 and 85.
17. Ibid., p. 123.
18. "For what comes to the surface at that point, displacing or revoking the logic of the place, is being itself, in its redoubtable and creative inconsistency, that is, in its void, which is the placelessness of every place.... The event arises when a logic of appearance is no longer capable of localizing the multiple-being it harbors within itself." Ibid., p. 175.
19. "That a truth cannot be entirely said means that its all, the subset that it constitutes within the situation, cannot be captured by means of a predicative trait that would turn it into a subsection of the encyclopedia.... For the truth in question necessarily organizes other components, whose traits are not pertinent as far as the encyclopedic concept of hysteria is concerned, and it is only in so far as these components subtract the set from the predicate of hysteria that a truth, rather than a form of knowledge, proceeds in its singularity.... Thus a truth is an indistinct subset; so nondescript in the way it gathers together its components that no trait shared by the latter would allow the subset to be identified by knowledge." Ibid., p. 124.

being, "as opposed to a knowledge of this or that regional particularity of the situation."[20]

Since truth is that which cannot be captured by a "predicative trait" of the knowledge of the situation, and thus cannot be entirely articulated as a member of the situation, it is in thought alone that one confronts truth. Existence in thought is that which is "interrogated as to its existence, which is something other than its being," so that in thought "there is only one kind of being, the Idea." This point at which being and Idea make contact, where "the thinkable, as Idea, necessarily comes into contact with being...[where] thinking and being correspond to one another," is named truth.[21] In essence, truth is that which remains when all norms or predicates of the state of the situation are subtracted away, leaving the pure multiple of multiples: the truth of being as being.

The Subject of Truth, the Unnameable, and the Good

For Badiou, this human ability to recognize and acknowledge a truth as that which stands exterior to, and undetermined by, the state of a situation sets into motion the appearance of a human individual as a subject of truth.[22] With nothing but the momentary erupting forth of an indiscernible element as guide, the individual must seize this supplement and declare that the event has happened. This must be accomplished despite the fact that the situation itself refuses to justify such a determination or decision.[23] It is through such a declaration and decision that the individual begins the truth procedure as a subject of truth.

Because this person has taken on a commitment as a subject of this truth (a commitment to a relation of fidelity to a truth as something generic, as something undetermined by the existing situation), this person

20. Ibid., 124. This distinction between truth and knowledge "shows that a truth is essentially unknown; that it quite literally constitutes a *hole* in forms of knowledge." Ibid., p. 123.

21. Ibid., pp. 53 and 124. For Badiou truth is still of the situation, only that it cannot be fully counted as a member of the situation since it is "an indistinct subset; so nondescript in the way it gather together its components that no trait shred by the latter would allow the subset to be identified by knowledge." Ibid., p. 123.

22. "A truth arises in its novelty—and every truth is a novelty—because a hazardous supplement interrupts repetition. Indistinct, a truth begins by surging forth." Ibid., p. 112.

23. This is an act of pure choice without reliance on a norm of judgment. It recognizes a singular non-relational truth, which, as such, cannot be historical or communal "preconstituted subset" to verify it. Hence Badiou's references to Pascal's wager or Saint Paul's declaration. See, e.g., ibid., pp. 13–14 and 50–54.

has seized the formation of her own subjectivity, redefining it not simply in relation to the exiting situation, but, more importantly, to an undetermined element beyond the merely given. Through this process, the subject as well as the existing situation can become reformed in accordance with this new truth.

The source of truths is being *qua* being, and because this being is itself infinite (infinitely beyond the classificatory grasp of the state of the situation), all truths are non-particularistic and hence universal in their address. Furthermore, since these truths are the universal truth of being as being, by declaring the advent of an event and maintaining fidelity to the truth of that event, the individual gains access to the infinite and hence the status of immortality. Such immortality allows the individual to exceed the mere animal-ness of his biological existence and the situated-ness of his situated existence:

> [W]e know that every human being is *capable* of being this immortal—unpredictability, be it in circumstances great or small, for truths important or secondary. In every case, subjectivization is immortal, and makes Man.[24]

Because it is through fidelity to such a truth that human-animals achieve their humanity as subjects, it is the fidelity to a truth that is the highest good of humanity.[25] Breaking with the repetitiveness of the state of the situation and committing to the inconsistency that is a truth, the individual is able to achieve subjectivity by wagering against the situation. In so doing, the individual gains both agency as a subject and immortality as a subject to a truth (the good).

24. Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001), p. 12.

25. "A subject is…the *local* status of the procedure, a configuration that exceeds the situation." The procedure (generic or truth procedure) being the rendering of truth as a generic set to which an individual commits even against the prohibitions of the norm of the situation and without certainty provided by the knowledge of the situation. The subject thus composes a new language for a future situation: "Every subject is thus locatable by the emergence of a language inside the situation, whose multiple-referents are, however, *conditioned* by an as yet uncompleted generic part….A subject is that which uses names to make hypotheses about truth. But as it is itself a finite configuration of the generic procedure from which a truth results, one can equally maintain that a subject uses names to make hypotheses about itself, 'itself' meaning the infinite of which is the finite." Alain Badiou, "On a Finally Objectless Subject," in *Who Comes After the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 27 and 32.

On the Nature of Evil

Unlike conventional understandings of evil, Badiou conceptualizes evil as operating through the same processes as truth (hence evil stands in direct relation to truth).[26] For example, the Nazi's illegitimate use of the "category of the Jew" as a statement of truth, a statement that served to redefine the German situation by creating a new "German interior, the space for being-together," together as the true German.[27]

For Badiou this understanding of evil has three names, and each one of these names refers to evil's relation to the truth of a situation as the good.[28] These are: simulacrum of truth (terror); betrayal of the subject of truth; and disaster of truth.

Evil as the simulacrum of truth: As I have already explained above, an event is the exposure of elements that are indiscernible from the perspective of the knowledge and norms of the situation. These elements are exposed by the opening to the void that founds every situation. As such, these indiscernible elements must be composed into a generic set as a truth through which the subject of this truth may (re)name given elements of the situation, thus redefining the situation in accordance with this truth.[29] In contrast, the simulacrum of truth occurs when the procedure fails to be generic and instead identifies some named element from the situation

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26. At times Badiou even locates the problem of evil in the excesses of philosophy itself. See Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1999), pp. 132–33.

27. Badiou, *Ethics*, pp. 64–66.

28. As I will make clear in a moment, Badiou's classification of the "three names of evil" correspond to the three major stages of a truth procedure. Hence, evil as simulacrum of truth corresponds with the process of nomination (declaring *discernible* of a situation rather than an indiscernible element as a truth); evil as betrayal of truth corresponds to fidelity to truth (loss of commitment to truth); and evil as disaster of truth (the attempt to name all elements by way of the truth). It is my contention that in the actual historical examples of evil (e.g., Stalinism), at least two of these forms of evil must be viewed as operative in order to fully grasp these historical formations. Some of the weaknesses of Badiou's understanding of evil result from his attempts to apply one type of evil to a particular historical situation. See Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* (London: Verso, 2001), for one such critique.

29. At least in the field of theoretical science (which, along with poetry, politics, and love, is one of the four sites for generic procedures and hence truth), the emergence of truth resembles Kuhn's description of the conditions for scientific crisis and innovation. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd. ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970). For Badiou's discussion of this topic see Badiou, *Manifesto For Philosophy*, pp. 33–40.

itself (i.e., an element that is governed by the language and norms of the situation) and attempts to give it a universal articulation as though it were a truth. This occurs when "a radical break in a situation, under names borrowed from real truth-processes, convokes not the void but the 'full' particularity or presumed substance of that situation." For example, the Nazis' commitment to only "the alleged national substance of a people" (and hence not a universal, "but the absolute particularity of a community, itself rooted in the characteristics of its soil, its blood, and its race"). It is an element that in reality is "addressed only to those that it itself deems 'German'."[30] Thus, absolute particulars (blood, soil, and race) are given the status of the universal, with devastating results (terror).

As I have just indicated, the Nazi movement is a classic example of this move. Aryan and Jew are elements of the situation (pan-nationalist movements and the history of antisemitism). They are given universal status, and thus are no longer governed by their particular qualities, but are defined by these particular qualities in their very being. Nazism proclaimed a "historical community" whose boundaries are defined by the elements of the existing community (German-Aryan vs. Jew) written as universals. According to Badiou, this is a case in which the "link between politics and Evil emerges precisely from the way both the collective (the thematics of communities) and the being-with (the thematics of consensus, of shared norms) are taken into consideration."[31] Here, the only considerations are persons in their "particular existence as human animals." As such, they are treated as mere animals by reducing them to abject conditions of suffering and subjects of terror (e.g., the so-called *Muselmann* of the extermination camps).

Evil as betrayal of truth: As an individual makes the choice to declare fidelity to a truth and struggles to compose its elements as a generic subset of the situation, a crisis of fidelity can arise that threatens the subject's commitment to this truth. This crisis takes the form of a conflict between the interests of the human-animal and the "disinterested-interest" of the human-immortal.[32]

Ultimately what is betrayed is my own subjectivity as an agent. It is only through fidelity to a truth that I can seize my particular being and

30. Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 73.
31. Ibid., pp. 65–66.
32. Ibid., p. 78. As such, it is once again a confrontation with the pure choice, "between the 'Keep going!' proposed by the ethic of this truth, and the logic of the 'perseverance in being' of the mere mortal that I am."

transform it into a "some-one" rather than remaining bound within the subjectifying and normalizing state of the situation.[33] I resubmit myself to the court of public opinion on questions of what is true and what is not, as governed by the continuity and repetition of situational knowledge and my animal nature.[34]

Evil as the disaster of truth: For Badiou, the power of truth to (re)name elements of a situation poses great risk. When the power of a truth is permitted to name all elements in a situation, disaster ensues. "We can now define what the *total* power of the truth would be," Badiou writes. "[I]t would imply the ability to name and evaluate *all* the elements of the objective situation to name the whole of the real, and thus to change the world."[35] This amounts to truth drawing on its "boundless reservoir of power" to name even the unnameable real, to name that element that cannot be expressed in any language that founds every situation. In this case, the disaster stems from the elimination of both the human animal element of human existence and the very conditions for the emergence of truth as that which remains unnamed.[36] The disaster in this case would stem from this totalizing process's elimination of both natural animal elements of human existence and the very conditions for the emergence of truth.[37]

Badiou insists that "at least one real element must exist, one multiple existing in the situation" that the truth cannot force.[38] This attempt to name all of the elements of a situation by means of a truth is evil, because it destroys the very conditions for truth itself on two counts. First, because truth is always multiple (composed of multiple indiscernible generic elements), the condition for any future emergence depends on at least one

33. "I must convince myself that the Immortal in question *never existed*, and thus rally to opinion's perception of this point....Consequently, I must become the enemy to truth whose subject the 'some-one' that I am (accompanied, perhaps, by others) composed." Ibid., p. 79.

34. This condition closely resembles the condition described by Martin Heidegger as fallen-ness elaborated in *Being and Time*.

35. Badiou, *Ethics*, pp. 84–85, and *Theoretical Writings*, pp. 131–32.

36. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, p. 131.

37. This is perhaps where the dangerous proximity of truth and evil exists. As Badiou describes the nature of the danger, "The constraint that the infinite...may give rise to the desire to name the unnameable, to appropriate the proper of the proper through naming...it is the very desire, which every truth puts on the agenda....The imperialism of a truth—its worst desire—consists in invoking generic subtraction in order to force the subtraction of the unnameable, so that it may vanish in the light of naming." Ibid., p. 115.

38. Ibid., pp. 84–85.

present element in a situation remaining unnamed or unrepresented by the state of the situation. Hence, the love of truth (fidelity to a truth) in the appearance of this truth is "transposed" by the conditions of the very appearance as "love of the generic, to its essence, love of the unnameable." Since they reflect the "total power of truth" as the presumption "that the totality of the objective situation can be organized in terms of the particular *coherence* of a subjective truth," and thus to eliminate all non-conforming opinion, using whatever means necessary to complete the task of total naming,[39] even the extermination of the human animal as the source of all opinion.[40]

Second, the attempt to name all elements under the truth of a situation is to recklessly embrace the full power of truth itself without respecting the real powerlessness of truth.[41] The powerlessness of truth is founded in the very essence of the trajectory of truth through subtraction. The key point is that subtraction is that process through which those elements ordered or constructed by the state of the situation (language, norms, etc.) are removed from consideration in order to expose the point of "minimal difference" or undetermined determination in the situation. To name the unnameable would be to betray, in the final moment of the trajectory of truth (naming), the very process through which truth is composed.[42] Hence, I will now show the that the character of evil as disaster can under extreme conditions be conditioned through an initial betrayal of the conditions of truth.

39. The entire present and represented language of the situation would be replaced, and these would be the "complete suppression of self interest" and opinion as the "immortal would come into being as the wholesale negation of the human animal the bears him." Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 84.

40. Ibid, pp. 83–84 and 117.

41. This powerlessness of truth to name the last element, though impossible, seems to fit with the old adage, "Just because something is impossible, doesn't stop people from trying to do it." In fact this may be where the real disaster of truth occurs: when something proves impossible (especially when related to truth), people will use more extreme measures such as mass killings to eliminate those "elements" who prove to be resistant to the power of truth.

42. The two part nature of the disaster of truth demonstrates the nature of the relation that exists between this name of evil and simulacrum and/or betrayal of truth. As I will now show, the nature of evil in the political realm of late modernity depends upon the forcing of naming of the unnameable, because actual fidelity to truth requires a respect for this powerlessness of truth. It is only possible to force the naming of the unnameable if one has already embraced the simulacrum of truth or else renounced the truth through betrayal. See Badiou, *Theoretical Writing*, pp. 130–32.

Evil as the Betrayal of the Conditions of Truth

Since the end of the Second World War, the theme of radical evil has been broadly applied to the most horrific examples of evil perpetrated in modernity. Both the Nazi extermination camps and the Stalinist purges have been identified as examples of a radical evil that serves as the unmeasurable standard by which all other evils are to be judged. However, rather than illuminate the nature of the variety of evils found in the world, this "supreme negative example" of evil makes the judgment of the evilness of something dependent upon consensus and, like the general term totalitarianism (which putatively applies equally well to Nazi exterminations and Stalinist purges), fails to allow for an appreciation of the singularity of each of these acts of evil.[43] According to Badiou, both of these terms fail to recognize that evil is a political sequence whose trajectory is amazingly similar and dependent upon the trajectory of a political truth. It is to "refuse to envisage the possibility of political sequences whose organic categories and subjective prescriptions are criminal," and, by so doing, to "fail to grasp the political essence of Nazism."[44] The Nazi exterminations were the extreme evil of the simulacrum of truth. Furthermore, notions such as radical evil deployed by the current ethical consensus are put forth in a manner that focuses simply on the prevention of evil and injustice, without any sense of the good. The result is that justice is simply the absence of injustice, and any project that claims to possess a sense of the good is itself labeled as evil.[45]

On the other hand, Stalin's purges and exterminations prove to be a much more complex formation of evil—one that cannot be fully illuminated by the reliance on any one form of evil described by Badiou. I will examine Stalinism by means of a more careful elaboration of the notion of the betrayal of truth and of the *disaster* that is facilitated by this betrayal.

According to Slavoj Žižek, it is a mistake to see the Stalinist purges as simply the effort by those who have betrayed the authentic revolutionary project to erase the last traces of that project. Žižek argues that the use

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43. "We must accept the irreducibility of the extermination (just as we must accept the irreducibility of the Stalinist Party-state)." Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 64.

44. It is what the Nazis declared as the political subjectivity of the Aryan that commits them to a politics of evil and not truth: "One of the singularities of Nazi politics was its precise proclamation of the historical community that was to be endowed with a conquering *subjectivity*. And it was this proclamation that enabled its subjective victory, and put extermination on the agenda." Ibid., p. 65.

45. Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (London: Verso, 2005), p. 96.

of forced confession and the random nature of the purges represent "a kind of 'imp of perversity' which compels the post-revolutionary order to (re)inscribe its betrayal of the Revolution within itself," and through which "the betrayed revolutionary heritage survives and haunts the regime."[46] Thus, the Revolution carries out its own revenge on those who betrayed it: the *nomenklatura*.

Although this description of the nature of the purges and the regime that perpetrated them is insightful in exposing the function of betrayal and guilt under Stalin, there is more to this "imp of perversity" than the return of revolutionary ethos in a distorted and terrifying form. In fact, the inscription that is etched into the regime from the inside is the betrayal of the truth of the revolution. This is the path of those who have abandoned the wager on truth in favor of the comforting certainty of historical necessity.[47]

The Stalinist purges and exterminations were the result of, first, the betrayal of the truth of the revolution as a political truth (which carried with it both spontaneity and risk) and, then, an embrace of a stand-in for this truth, which gave the perpetrators of these acts the secure certainty that is never found in a truth. With this secure stand-in for truth, the Stalinists abandoned fidelity to truth and, at the same time, abandoned the love for the conditions of truth found in love for the unnameable element that is the condition for truth. Such infidelity frees one from the constraints of the condition for truth and allows one to abandon the subjectivity that came with fidelity to the truth: the individual becomes an instrument for the totalizing historical necessity that seeks to eradicate all dissent and resistance even before it has yet crystallized and stands as pure potentiality.

For Badiou, the decision to declare the existence of a truth is fraught with uncertainty. The nature of what is exposed when an event has occurred means that we are confronting the existence of an element in the situation, which is unrepresented or counted as a member of the situation and is therefore indiscernible from the perspective of the knowledge of the state of the situation. Literally, it is the advent of something that cannot be

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46. Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* pp. 128 and 129.

47. In fact Žižek seems to share this view to a degree. He argues that the extreme nature of the purges (their terroristic characteristics, if you will) can be understood as the adoption by the executioners of a "*perverse* attitude of adopting the position of the pure instrument of the big Other's Will: it's not my responsibility, it's not I who am actually doing it, I am merely an instrument of a higher Historical Necessity....[I]t is only with Stalin that the Leninist revolutionary subject turns into the perverse object-instrument of the big Other's *jouissance*." Ibid., pp. 112–13.

known as something discernible by the knowledges of the situation. This is the very nature of truth as something outside of the "norms of repetition" that structure the knowledge of the situation. I must decide on the undecidable. I must wager.[48]

Once having made such a commitment to a truth, I am left with continued uncertainty. Because I have committed to something outside of the knowledge of the state of the situation, I cannot appeal to its norms of judgment. As such, nothing governs a truth's trajectory, "because the axiom that supports it has decided independently of any appeal to the norms of evaluation."[49]

As a subject of such a truth, I am the wager itself, not seeking to abolish chance, but to commit to verifying the axiom that grounds me as a subject of truth. This is a working-out of the implications of such an axiomatic truth that grants me the status as a subject and not merely as a member of a subset of a situation. By committing to such a "verifying trajectory," a process in which I cannot rely on the norms of an established body of knowledge, I am freed from the repetition of the situation and the fixed identity it grants to its members.[50] "In this regard," Badiou writes, "the subject of a truth is in effect genuinely in-different." That is, the subject of a truth is indifferent to the state of the situation that establishes the differences between members of the situation.[51]

Given the conditions under which one verifies and composes a truth, it is clear why betrayal is such an immediate danger. Constantly confronted with a commitment that stands in no positive relation with the knowledges of the situation, I am at sea without an accepted compass. I am on my own against the storm of ridicule of the accepted standards and norms of judgment. Worse yet, I may be committed to something that only appears to be a truth, and I am repeatedly "exposed to the temptation to *betray* a truth."[52]

48. "A truth's first step is to wager on this supplement [the indiscernible element itself]. One decides to hold to the statement 'the event has taken place', which comes down to deciding the undecidable.... [T]his decision is an axiom." Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*. p. 112.

49. Ibid., pp. 112–13.

50. "A subject is that which disappears between two indiscernibles.... This subject is that throw of the dice which does not abolish chance but effectuates it as verification of the axiom that grounds it." Ibid., p. 113.

51. Ibid.

52. "Opinion tells me (and therefore I tell myself, for I am never outside of opinions) that my fidelity may well be terror exerted against myself, and that the fidelity to which I

It is at this point, according to Badiou, that the betrayer of a truth must convince himself that the subject of the truth (as an immortal) never even existed, and I must then rally to the judgment of opinion's viewpoint. It is thus that I return to the norms of judgment and the continuity of the state of the situation and deny that any evental truth has ever existed. I again become counted as a member of the situation and lose my status as a subject.

However, there is one additional characteristic of this betrayal that is missed by Badiou. What if, rather than simply returning to the givenness of the norms and knowledge of the situation, he who forsakes truth embraces the norms and knowledge of the situation with the same status of a truth. Instead of merely denouncing the truth and the subject of that truth that they once were, this individual may seek to regain both the repetitive certainty of the norms and knowledge of the state of the situation and the potential power of a truth to totally name all elements of the situation by means of some punitively certain norm of judgment, such as necessity.

As I discussed earlier, for Badiou, truth has the theoretical potential to rename every last element in a situation, even to the degree of obliterating the singular uniqueness of that situation:

> From the vantage point of the subject, it is always possible to hypothesize a universe wherein the truth through which the subject is constituted will have completed its generic totalization…to try to force that which testifies to the situation's singularity, that which does not even have a proper name…for which 'anonymous' is not even an adequate name.[53]

This is the danger "which every truth puts on the agenda." But what of one who has betrayed truth, denouncing it and yet attempting to retain the potential of a truth without the proper respect for the very conditions of a truth? It is at this point that evil takes on a new face, unrecognized by Badiou and hinted at by Žižek. This is the unique face of evil found in Stalin's purges and exterminations. This is the face of evil that occurs where once a truth was recognized and yet, having been denounced by a subject, is reasserted in a perverse form as necessity—or, as in the case of the purges, historical necessity. It combines the betrayal of truth with the

am faithful looks very much like—too much like—this or that certifiable Evil. It is always a possibility, since the formal characteristics of this Evil (as simulacrum) are exactly those of a truth." Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 79.

53. Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, pp. 114–15.

disaster of truth in a manner that goes beyond the evil of the simulacrum of truth practiced by the Nazis, in which no truth or power of truth ever existed. That Badiou seems to acknowledge this aspect of evil in regard to Stalin is evident in the following excerpt from an interview with Peter Hallward. According to Badiou, under Lenin and the Bolsheviks

> a protocol of decision-making was found that didn't involve the extermination of opposing views. Under Stalin, by contrast, such an extermination practically becomes the rule. Every time a plurality of individuals, a plurality of human subjects, is engaged in a process of truth, the construction of this process induces the construction of a deliberative and collective figure of this production, which is itself variable.[54]

If Stalin's extermination of dissenting viewpoints was simply the result of the betrayal of the truth of the revolution led by Lenin, then why the need to resort to such extreme measures as to exterminate not only real opposing views, but even the potential and imaginary opposing views as well? It is clear from Badiou's own description of the trajectory of a truth, from the undecidability of the event to truth's own resistance to the naming of the unnameable, that it is fraught with uncertainty and risk. However, uncertainty and risk are not necessarily overcome simply by renouncing a truth and clinging once again to the norms of judgment of the state of the situation. The betrayal of a revolutionary truth in the midst of revolutionary change may, as in the case of the Stalinists, attach itself to an element of the situation that seems to grant the certainty unavailable to the lover of truth.[55] For the Stalinists, this was found in the concepts of historical necessity and the authority of the state.

This situation was compounded by the manner in which the party state was utilized as the instrument of the Stalinist terror. As Badiou demonstrates, under the best of conditions the state is the institutional ordering under norms and knowledge of the situation (e.g., laws, coercion, etc.).[56] It is, in effect, the state of the situation as a sort of "metastructure that

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54. Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 117.

55. Once again, the lover of truth is more importantly the lover of the conditions of truth: the unnameable. The unnameable affects a shift that "displaces our love of truth from its appearance, the love of the generic, to its essence, the love of the unnameable." Ibid., p. 131.

56. "This is obviously due to the fact that politics is collective, and hence universally concerns the parts of the situation, thereby encroaching upon the domain from which the state of the situation draws its existence. Politics summons the power of the

exercises the power of the count over all the subsets of the situation."[57] As such, the state implements the norms and knowledge of the situation and uses law and coercion to assure that nothing new (truth) can make an appearance.[58]

When the power of the state is harnessed by the logic of evil as a betrayal of the conditions of truth, the situation becomes extreme. In a sense, for the Stalinists, the state becomes the reified form of historical necessity. Historical necessity becomes the norm of judgment as the state of the situation. As such, the inherent uncertainty of political truth is displaced by the reified form of historical necessity embodied in the institutional apparatus of the state (secret police, Gulag, etc.). Since this is not a truth, there is no need to love truth's own practical powerlessness, but instead one becomes the instrument of the fulfillment of history's own necessary unfolding on the historical stage. It is this renouncing of the subject status of the lover of truth in favor of a purely instrumentalized self as a instrument of history, that reflects the joining of the betrayal of conditions of truth in its most disastrous form.

It is because the Stalinists had first betrayed the truth of the revolutionary movement, then seized a given element from the situation (historical necessity), and finally betrayed the conditions for truth using the power of the state to attempt to name every element by means of historical necessity, that we are faced with not just a higher degree of evil, but a unique kind of evil. This evil was unique due to its three-stage development, in which each stage represents a specific kind of evil (betrayal of truth, disaster of truth, and betrayal of the conditions of truth). This formation is different than other evils (e.g., National Socialism) and stands as a uniquely horrific event in human history.

State … whenever there is a genuinely political event, the State reveals itself … its repressive dimension." Ibid., p. 155.

57. Ibid.

58. Politics is to be understood as thought and action's movement beyond the "dominant statist subjectivity." In thought and action, those indiscernible elements that cannot be brought under the norms and knowledge of the state of the situation are brought forth and organized as truths of the situation. As such, "politics is the development of a possible affirmation as a dimension of collective freedom, which subtracts itself from the normative consensus that surrounds the State." By so doing, politics fixes the power of the state by showing its limits. Badiou, *Metapolitics*, p. 85.

*True History**

Wolfram Malte Fues

> "I saw it *differently*
> In the bright light of day."
> "For sure. Stories and history
> Grow and change when they get under way!"
>
>   Theodor Fontane, "Geschichtsschreibung"

Who thinks historically?

> A historian as such is like Melchizedek, fatherless and motherless, and
> without genealogy. When you ask him, "Where do you come from?"
> he must answer, "…I am a citizen of the world, and serve neither the
> Emperor, nor the King of France, but serve only the truth…"[1]

But what is truth in historical thinking? What, or to be more precise, how,
does it represent? How does it establish a certain relationship between its

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1. Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 8th [called 5th] ed. (Amsterdam: Brunel, 1740), 4:486. The original reads: "Un Historien entant que tel est comme Melchisedec, sans père, sans mère, et sans généalogie. Si on lui demande, 'D'où êtes-vous?' il faut qu'il réponde, '[…] je suis habitant du monde, je ne suis ni au service de l'Empereur, ni au service du Roi de France, mais seulement au service de la Vérité; […].'" See also: "Historia will thus lift the veil over the enshrouded Veritas and show her to Rationi." Gerhoh Steigenberger to Franz Töpsl, on January 29, 1778, in the "work instructions" for Johann Baptist Baader and his ceiling fresco *The Unveiling of Truth* (1778–79) in the library hall of the former Augustinian monastery in Polling, Upper Bavaria. Cf. the frontispiece of *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 23, no. 1 (1999).

objective correlates, "[f]or falsity and truth have to do with combination and separation"?[2]

> In our language the term *History* [*Geschichte*] unites the objective with the subjective side, and denotes quite as much the *historia rerum gestarum*, as the *res gestae* themselves; on the other hand it comprehends not less what has *happened*, than the *narration* of what has happened. This union of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere outward accident; we must suppose historical narrations to have appeared contemporaneously with historical deeds and events.[3]

History and stories, historical event and historical narrative, may arguably appear contemporaneously, but they are by no means homogeneous. Event and narrative refer to each other, each has its existence only through the existence of the other; but this is precisely where they differ, opposed to each other and relying on each other with their difference. Unsevered and not united, they create a center that is always passed over, generally defined as well as in itself indefinable,[4] which exists only in its extremes and asserts its rights by warping justice.[5] And what of truth?

2. Aristotle, *Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione*, trans. J. L. Ackrill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1963), p. 43; 16a.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (London: George Bell and Sons, 1902), p. 63.

4. A center, therefore, which "has the complex structure of a weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning...to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others." Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 3.

5. See General Stumm von Bordwehr to Ulrich, in Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*: "If I...may be paradoxical, I would like to contend that world history is written before it happens." Musil, *Gesammelte Werke in neun Bänden*, ed. Adolf Frisé, (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978), 3:977. That's one side: narration before event. Now the other: "[C]hronology is a falsification or a falsifying view because it postulates a *Same*—this Same is provided by the moment—Hence a justification by the from-moment-to-moment....In other words, the historico-chronological view is...incommensurable with real states of observation." Paul Valéry, *Cahiers*, ed. Judith Robinson (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 1:159. Event before narration. Space before time. Object before subject, which, entering reality, objectifies by harmonization and therefore falsifies. Bottom line: "The question of the literarity of the science of history" becomes "more and more urgent." Rainer Maria Kiesow, "Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Wahrheit," in *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Wahrheit: Zum Grundlagenstreit in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Rainer Maria Kiesow and Dieter Simon (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2000), p. 8.

I.

> Thus the day had passed; the French stood motionless, Kellerman had also found a more comfortable place; our people were withdrawn from fire, and it was as if nothing had happened. The greatest consternation took hold of the army. That very morning one had thought nothing but to spear and to eat all Frenchmen; I had myself been enticed by the unconditional trust in such an army...to take part in this dangerous expedition....As night was about to fall, we had accidentally formed a circle, in the middle of which not even a fire could be lit as usual; most were silent, some talked, after all everyone lacked reflection and judgment. Finally I was called upon to say what I thought about this, for I had usually amused and revitalized the troops with short sayings; this time I said, "From here and today a new epoch of world history starts, and you can say that you have been there."[6]

This is what happened. Or is it?

> After a reciprocal fire of four hours, we marched off and withdrew to various hills that we held occupied....Our loss of dead and wounded was 166 men, admittedly a minor loss during a four-hour cannonade, but still large enough during a cannonade that had been undertaken without any hope of victory or solid advantage according to the opinion of all reasonable soldiers....The evening after the cannonade, it was terribly cold, the wind blew sharply and mixed in with rain—and we had to stand there in the open until the next day's evening, from fear that Dumouriez could press home an advantage and attack us....Hunger was afflicting all of us, as our bread had been consumed for a long time....We also lacked water: the enemy's proximity did not permit us to fetch it, and therefore we suffered from immense thirst.[7]

Cannonade of Valmy, September 20, 1792. Two autobiographies, two eye-witness accounts. The same day, the same evening. And yet one could think

6. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Kampagne in Frankreich*, in *Goethes sämtliche Werke: Jubiläums-Ausgabe* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Cotta, 1902–12), 28:59–60. See also Goethe on his particular style of narration: "The separation and combination...demands all attention: one wanted to stay truthful and at the same time not neglect the befitting euphemism." Goethe, *Annalen auf das Jahr 1821*, in *Goethes sämtliche Werke*, 30:356.

7. Friedrich Christian Laukhard, *Leben und Schicksale, von ihm selbst beschrieben* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1989), pp. 187–88. Goethe knew Laukhard's work and used it as a source for his *Campagne in Frankreich*.

that the two texts talk about different events. The commentator of *Campagne in Frankreich* sees despondence, disappointment, horror spread, a circle of people in whose center all reflection and judgment have gone out. Yet he manages, as usual, to rekindle the fire of teleological judgment by using a maxim which places the terrifying accident in the light of a singularity that, as a present universality, sheds light on millions of specific cases.[8] The soldier and Magister Laukhard, on the other hand, can only see a futile and aimless military episode in the event to be narrated, in which both sides do not know what they want—"If he had wanted to, Domouriez could have damaged us greatly on the day of the cannonade"[9]—and about whose meaning the natural forces of cold, hunger, and thirst ultimately pass their verdict. What, then, was Valmy? A symbol or an episode? Part of a story that gathers meaning from its events, or part of a story that makes meaning disappear from them? Which story about Valmy is the true story of Valmy?

This question is a child's question, as everyone knows who has ever told a story to children. And at first view, it seems to be easily answerable with a bit of historical methodology. Both stories, one might argue, express only a partial aspect of what really happened at Valmy. By way of reference to further, historico-critically assorted documents, they have to be combined with each other in order to present the true story of what actually happened on September 20, 1792. Thereby, however, a third story develops, which differs from the other two with respect to its auctorial conditions and its narrative structure, and therefore competes with them for truth. The search for the truth of history via the methodically critical formatting of its stories apparently leads to an ocean of narratives that becomes deeper the more insistently one ventures into its basic factuality. "If you don't put your mind at rest in the face of a story, as if it were a legend," writes Goethe, "then everything becomes doubtful."[10] The child's question aims at this very reassurance, in which a perhaps existential but at least modern humanistic demand lies hidden: whoever aims at a self-conscious identity and wants to feel certain of their own present in order to cope with the future, has to assure him- or herself of the past of their

8. "What is the universal? The individual case. What is the particular? Millions of cases." Goethe, "Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer," in *Goethes sämtliche Werke*, 39:69.

9. Laukhard, *Leben und Schicksale*, p. 187.

10. Goethe to Friedrich Zelter on December 4, 1827, in *Goethes Briefe in vier Bänden*, ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow (Hamburg: Wegner, 1967), 4:263.

present in much the same way, because otherwise the present passes off in the alignments of the past. From this perspective, the question of truth in history demands an immediately convincing answer, an image of the event whose architecture and coloring instantly make sense, while its structure and its design are revealed by standing the test of this moment. The categories that constitute it and can be subsumed under the principles of existence and meaning are by their definition and by their relation probably of a historical nature themselves. The quintessence that they make recognizable is therefore epochal. The singer of the *Iliad*, it seems to me, already evokes the correspondence-theoretical and at the same time intuitionist form of this epochal core of truth when he calls upon the muses:

> All-knowing Goddesses! immortal Nine!
> Since Earth's wide Regions, Heav'n's unmeasur'd Height,
> And Hell's Abyss hide nothing from your sight,
> (We, wretched Mortals! lost in Doubts below,
> But guess by Rumour, and boast we know).[11]

How does the science of history, which is not as suitable for tropes as poetry and cannot simply call upon the muses for help, acquit itself against this pretense? According to Reinhart Koselleck, in his speech on Hans-Georg Gadamer's eighty-fifth birthday, the science of history differs from theology, law, and the philologies (the properly hermeneutic sciences) by a categorically different way of approaching texts. While the latter have texts as their sole object (in whose horizon their claim to truth fulfills and exhausts itself, whatever shape it may take according to whatever method), the former regards texts as witnesses for an object of an entirely different nature, for something "which speaks through the texts unintentionally and only later turns out to be historical truth."[12] Therefore, factual

11. Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Alexander Pope, ed. Maynard Mack (1715; London: Methuen, 1967), p. 155; 2.573–77.

12. Reinhart Koselleck and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Historik, Sprache und Hermeneutik: eine Rede und eine Antwort*, ed. Hans-Peter Schütt (1987; Heidelberg: Manutius, 2000), p. 35. Cf. Karlheinz Stierle, "Geschehen, Geschichte, Text der Geschichte," in Reinhart Koselleck and Wolf-Dieter Stempel, eds., *Geschichte—Ereignis und Erzählung* (Munich: Fink, 1973), pp. 530ff. Koselleck, too, still and yet again attempts to prove "that our [the historians'—WMF] kind of research grants a special kind of scientific cognizance and that there are events and configurations in the wide field of research and knowledge which are only for this kind of scientific cognizance accessible." Johann Gustav Droysen, *Philosophie der Geschichte*: *Jahresbericht der Geschichtswissenschaft* 1 (1878): 626–35, quoted

truth arises from the work of the science of history—which is critically evaluative, comparative, grading, arranging, and hierarchizing with regard to its sources—in two respects: first, as bearing witness to the sources themselves, second and at the same time, as the representation of what the sources bear witness to beyond themselves. In order to answer correctly the (child's) question of the one and only true story of that September evening at Valmy, we do not have to reduce the two conflicting versions to one (if this were even possible), but on the contrary we have to add as many versions as possible. Then, the science of history makes apparent what "speaks through the texts unintentionally" from their countless levels and hierarchies of discourse, their overlaps and ramifications. Yet, what do we experience when we hear that voice? Arguably still the voice of a text, which by following certain auctorial and structural conditions communicates something that due to its scientific adaptation and authentication now bears the title of a historical fact. "The historian," Friedrich Bouterwek declares with lapidary naïvety in his "Idee einer Literatur" of 1818, "has to stick to the facts which are recounted."[13] And Johann Martin Chladenius already states in his *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft* from 1752:

> As historical propositions, narratives, and information do not occur where there are no events and stories implied which are thus expressed: as, on the other hand, events and history that have not been represented cannot be an object of our consideration; for these reasons, narration and information are part of the event: and, yet again, history is part of narration and information. Thus, these things belong to one another in such a way that one cannot exist without the other. But they still have to be distinguished from one another.[14]

in Günter Birtsch and Jörn Rüsen, eds., *Johann Gustav Droysen: Texte zur Geschichtstheorie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1972), p. 66.

13. Friedrich Bouterwek, *Kleine Schriften philosophischen, ästhetischen, und litterarischen Inhalts* (Göttingen: Röwer, 1818), p. 373.

14. Johann Martin Chladenius, *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft* (Leipzig, 1752; repr. Vienna: Böhlau, 1985), p. 9. This necessity dominates the self-image of the science of history until this day: "If everything is merely 'text' and the difference between fact and fiction annihilated, history as a science collapses. The verification of sources and the critical methodology which history has developed are done away with....The 'linguistic turn' has pointed out to historians that the boundary between event and fiction is not an iron curtain....Still, this boundary between facts and fiction does exist, and it is vital for the historian." Ernst Hanisch, "Die linguistische Wende," in *Kulturgeschichte heute*, ed.

Therefore, a criterion must be found that decidedly separates both, inasmuch as it disassociates the narrative from reality, the interpretation from facticity in the act of narrating a fact without breaking them up. Koselleck finds this criterion in five categories, "which aim at pre- and extralinguistic structures . . . , at modes of existence that have to be mediated in language, but in fact do not merge in linguistic mediation but are also discrete from them. It is a matter of categories that aim at a mode of existence of possible stories that primarily provoke understanding and comprehension."[15] Those five categories are: (1) having to die/being able to kill, (2) friend/enemy, (3) inside/outside, (4) parents/children, and (5) master/slave. This table of categories, inasmuch as it takes up as well as emends Dilthey's thoughts on a critique of historical reason,[16] lies close to that of the *Critique of Pure Reason* without merging with it. While Kant defines his four categories (quantity, quality, relation, modality)—"a catalogue of all the original pure concepts of the synthesis which the understanding contains *a priori*" and by which alone "it can render the manifold of intuition capable of, in other words, think, an object of intuition"[17]—by following the method of conclusion according to the rule of three, Koselleck outlines his categories in the shape of the reflection of opposite pairs, of judgment, to which the rule of judgment, the mediating and differentiating concept, can easily be added.

Wolfgang Hardtwig and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), pp. 217ff.

15. Koselleck and Gadamer, *Historik, Sprache und Hermeneutik*, p. 28.

16. "Understanding means to relocate the I in the you; the mind relocates itself at ever higher levels of interrelation; this sameness of the mind in the I, in the you, in every subject of a community, in every system of a culture, finally in the totality of the mind and of universal history makes possible the interaction of the various achievements in the human sciences. Here the knowing subject is at one with its object, and the latter remains the same at all levels of his objectification." Wilhelm Dilthey, *Entwürfe zur Kritik der historischen Vernunft, Erster Teil: Erleben, Ausdruck und Verstehen*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Bernhard Groethuysen, vol. 7, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, 6th ed. (Göttingen: Teubner, 1973), p. 191. Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, Dilthey's friend and long-standing dialogue partner, while moving in a similar direction, has a more skeptical view: "It can be said to be the disastrousness of all historicity that aliveness entails the impossibility to fully express itself, because the medium is always a mental particular. . . . Wherever the abundance of aliveness is contained in the particular means of representation, it becomes the medium of a, as it were, mysterious, unexpressed and inexpressible." Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, *Bewußtseinsstellung und Geschichte: Ein Fragment*, ed. Iring Fetscher (Hamburg: Meiner, 1991), pp. 84–85.

17. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn and Vasilis Politis, ed. Vasilis Politis (London: Everyman 1993), pp. 85–86.

Having to die and being able to kill are opposite modes of death; friend and enemy are opposite modes of community; the border decides between inside and outside; the generational break decides between parents and children; finally, master and slave are the extremes of power.

Koselleck defines these five categories, "the transcendental conditions of possible stories,"[18] in a somewhat strange manner, twice. They are, on the one hand, "something independent" that does not merge in linguistic mediation, and are therefore structural elements of the very factuality whose discovery and representation distinguishes the science of history from other hermeneutic sciences. On the other hand, they are also concepts "that aim at a mode of existence of possible stories, which primarily provoke understanding and comprehension."[19] They are, to use a word that Koselleck uses repeatedly, *transcendental*. In what respect? In respect to Kant's specification in the *Critique of Pure Reason*? "I apply the term *transcendental*," the much quoted and much discussed definition begins, "to all knowledge which is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects, so far as this mode of knowledge is possible *a priori*."[20] Koselleck's categories seem to comply with this definition in all respects. They do not subserve the understanding and comprehension of history as an incalculable interrelation of stories, but the concept that precedes history's understanding and comprehension by making them a priori comprehensible and understandable. "History itself…is irrational—only its analysis may be rational."[21] In this case, do not the categories, which ought to pave the way for analysis, have to be as irrational as history itself in order not to fall short of it? But, on the other hand, how can analytical reason comply with benchmarks whose parameters diametrically contradict the determination of reason? Transcendental philosophy, upon which Koselleck draws time and again, considers its determinations in no case as essentially alien to empirical reason, but as its other, its other side, from which it self-critically assesses its possibilities and its limits, its power and powerlessness. Viewed from this angle, the categories that Koselleck introduces establish the other of historical reason, which not only makes possible and forms the basis for the analyses of historical reason governed by interests and perspectives, ideologies and legitimations, but also allows

18. Koselleck and Gadamer, *Historik, Sprache und Hermeneutik*, p. 28.
19. Ibid.
20. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 43.
21. Koselleck and Gadamer, *Historik, Sprache und Hermeneutik*, p. 30.

for their critical revision and reassessment. If we take a step further from here and understand the categories of historical reason to be historical in themselves by identifying them with the object, the knowledge that they originally were supposed to make possible, then historical reason appears to be a historicity whose epochal cores of truth can only be related to each other in an immanent, genealogical, and discursifying manner. In place of the other of reason, a history that is differently rational steps up, whose understandability and comprehensibility are as volatile in the future as it is itself.

We note the following: The categories of historical comprehension and understanding that Koselleck provides are, according to him, of a transcendental nature, constitute the other of this comprehension and understanding, and thus guarantee access to the not-yet-comprehended and not-yet-understood, to the inherently non-comprehensible and non-under-standable—in short, to history as an object of knowledge that, originally and principally, does not coincide with the definitions of its rational analy-sis. It has thereby not been proven that this object—in its otherness, in which the other side of reason presents it—is at the same time "something discrete," although its mode of appearance a priori supports this presump-tion. Is the other, the *ob*-ject of reason, just a *Grenzbegriff*, a limit-concept, for which reason itself accounts, or is it a symptom of its transgression coming into being by virtue of the essential procedure of reason? This is open to debate. "There are," Koselleck's thesis, from which we started, reads, "historical events which elude all linguistic compensation or inter-pretation."[22] His substantiation of this thesis yields a more moderate result: we must assume that there are such events, because otherwise we would not possess history as an object of knowledge that can be rationally com-prehended and understood. Yet, only by way of an analysis critical of the conditions of knowledge, which depends on argumentation and discourse, can it be decided whether something emerges thereby that entirely eludes such compensation or interpretation. And, to the child's question of the one and only true story, we can only answer: it exists. It must exist, otherwise history would not be worth the trouble of stories. But the signs through which we could recognize it are, without exception, stories themselves.

This answer is unsatisfying, even for children. But as long as we cling to the idea that history ought to present a generally impartible and

22. Ibid., p. 35.

communicable knowledge, which makes use of statistical statements but is not equivalent to them, that it makes sense no matter whether presenting or deferring meaning—in short, that historical knowledge orientates and governs all directions of the time-space inhabited by human beings—then, if I am correct, this answer cannot be avoided. But we can go into the question hidden therein of how the quest, the temptation to comprehend the other that reason suggests as something discrete, as an alterity, arises from the transcendental insight into the other side of reason. This assumption puts paid to the *adaequatio rei et intellectus*—which is infinite and thus always just incidentally arrives at coincidence—and it puts the instantly convincing *informatio intellectus per rem* in its place, as if the transcendental schematism of pure reason revealed itself to be a register of creation concepts. With this intent, we look at Koselleck's categories again and focus on the first: having to die/being able to kill.

The reflective opposite that forms this category rests on the principle "All human beings are mortal." They suffer death, or cause it. Now death has appeared at least in our culture, from its beginnings to this day, as something that exceeds the capacity of reason and, from this beyond, destroys the language of reason, be it by unleashing or by paralyzing it: "These, and a thousand more swarm'd o'er the ground, / And all the dire assembly shriek'd around. / Astonish'd at the sight, aghast I stood, / And cold fear ran shivering thro' my blood," Odysseus says about the dead, which he has conjured up from Hades.[23] And Rilke's sonnet "Death of the Beloved" begins with the verses: "He only knew of death what all men know: / it takes us and it casts us into silence."[24] There is no rational language for death; yet as often and as vainly as language tries to articulate it, death wanders through comprehension and understanding as a transcendent presence, which, by governing futility, discloses the end of futility. "Apparently, our culture has a vital awareness," writes Johannes Fischer, "that the separation from a person which comes with death is a fate we have to endure and not someone else's deed."[25] This agreement on

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23. Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Alexander Pope, ed. Maynard Mack (1725; London: Methuen, 1967) p. 383; 11.53–56.

24. "Er wußte nur vom Tod was alle wissen: / daß er uns nimmt und in das Stumme stößt." Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Ernst Zinn (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1955), 1:561.

25. Johannes Fischer, "Warten können: Worum es in der Debatte um Sterbehilfe geht," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 21, 2001, p. 82.

the otherness of having to die seems to be accompanied by an analogous agreement on the otherness of being able to kill, which under certain conditions, such as in war, allows it to be understood as a befalling, imposed fate and not as a deed of one's own.

What do we then expect from the experience of this waiting for our historical knowledge? According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, it is what befalls us

> when we learn about the death of a person we knew: how the mode of existence of this person suddenly changes, how he has become constant…enclosed and having become visible in his lasting contour—apparently just by the fact that we cannot expect anything from him anymore.…The experience which I describe by using this extreme example seems to me to be a kind of realization. What comes out of it is truth.[26]

If death is an experience of transcendent presence, which has to be expected and cannot be effectuated, we may expect from the empirical experience of this experience that it brings the progress of that experience to a halt, and thus makes visible what provokes that progress without merging with it. The incalculable ascertainment of the past embraces the momentary certainty of its representation as a true story. Yet, if this momentary certainty is supposed to mean more than immediate inherence and should not wear out in the experience of truth, its transcendent presence must range to its empirical representation, and the alterity of reason must lay claim to the specific modes of proposition and modes of narration. All discourses that we have proposed and quoted so far on this truth (which is still open to question) only paraphrase it instead of writing it down, hold and keep it within the game of a metaphoricity, which obtains its capacity to extend itself by its own length inasmuch as it loses against its intent. Whoever wanted to win this game would have to replace the language of circumlocution by the language of inscription, the sign of existence by the delineation of existence, move by move, without having access to a writing, to a language, a semiology of a second type.

What would be required of a metaphor that would satisfy this demand, which therefore would succeed in merging the probabilities of life and the

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26. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Kontinuität der Geschichte und der Augenblick der Existenz," in *Kleine Schriften*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1976), 1:157.

truth of death in order to retain as well as interpret them? Which would transfer the past from the diversity of its transience to a simple present without depriving it of its being past? But do the function and the accomplishment of the metaphor lie in this transference anyway? According to de Man,

> the empirical situation, which is open and hypothetical, is given a consistency that can only exist in a text.…Metaphor overlooks the fictional, textual element in the nature of the entity it connotes.[27]

Certainly: metaphor as a *figure* of speech overlooks the mere probability of the empirical, inasmuch as it transforms the empirical into an image that is obviously clear, articulate, and finite. As a figure of *speech*, however, it overlooks precisely this transformational process in its restless expansion by its specific figurality, where "the empirical entity" can at no point "be sheltered from tropological defiguration."[28] Thus, this simple applying of metaphor to itself already shows that it forms "the transgressiveness of the provisionally understood, its sustained differential."[29] It is not the image, through which the thought seems to calm down, which provokes the concept of the thought. Its opponent is the sign-figure, which is hidden and cannot be hidden in the image, and cannot halt figurality in any apparent view, in order to both trespass upon the concept and seduce it to trespass foot by foot, sign by sign, upon its own conceptuality. The metaphor hollows out and overgrows the concept, which finds its desire for totality in the metaphor, while it disappears in its fulfillment. Can we reverse this movement? Can we construct a metaphoricity which becomes the differential of the concept, inasmuch as it cuts back the totalizing of metaphor inexorably and forms it back from the probability of openly hypothetical empirics to the simple truth of death that has been formed in its life? What kind of interpretation, what kind of true story or history would such an attempt yield?

27. Paul de Man, "Metaphor (Second Discourse)," in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1979), p. 151.

28. Paul de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," in *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 42.

29. Anselm Haverkamp, "Nach der Metapher," in Haverkamp, ed., *Theorie der Metapher*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), p. 501.

II.

Has this attempt already been made? Can we find discourses that, according to these preconditions, strive for the dismantling and the retraction of their metaphoricity?

> MAY the time come when, my stern seeing over,
> I raise up my song of praise and delight to the voice of the angels.
> And may the clear blows from the heart's hammers
> not strike dully on strings that are soft, doubting
> or brittle.[30]

These verses, with which the tenth and last of the *Duino Elegies* begins, outline the program of a language that receives an affirmation so overwhelming by what it addresses that its own determination completely merges in this *informatio intellectus per rem*.[31] From this merging, the "Being without number" springs up, which the last verses of the ninth elegy promise, a being here-and-now whose signifying caesurae are beyond count and measure and beyond all objectifying classification. They answer for a narrative that creates a plot that terminates in itself and is thereby made accessible, instead of "an action that is complete, whole, and of magnitude."[32] A symbolizing process of signification that will not collapse due to any softness, ambivalence, or force must correspond to this self-interpreting, symbolic language at which all further verses of the

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30. Roger Paulin and Peter Hutchinson, eds., *Rilke's* Duino Elegies (London: Duckworth, 1996), p. 231. The following reflections do not claim to interpret the text that they have as their object comprehensively and exhaustively; rather, they follow a trace which is tangent to the one that Paul de Man pursues in relation to the signposts "liberating theory of the Signifier" and "semantic askesis." Cf. Paul de Man, "Tropes (Rilke)," in *Allegories of Reading*, p. 48. On this trace see also Andras Horvath, "Die zehnte Elegie," in *"Geteilte Aufmerksamkeit": Zur Frage des Lesens*, ed. Thomas Schestag (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 113–41.

31. Rilke was by all means aware of the possibility of such a language as his language: "I am seriously worried by this lack of memory, not just that I hardly know anything from days gone by, but it also slips away from day to day, regardless of my efforts; in my way of absorbing things there is something which consumes them without a trace . . . , it enters my blood and mixes there with god-knows-what and risks to be virtually lost." Rilke to Lou Andreas-Salome, March 1, 1921, in *Briefe*, ed. Karl Altheim (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1950), p. 343.

32. Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995), p. 55; 1450b.

tenth elegy aim. This correspondence does not start anyplace, accidentally, or arbitrarily, but when "my stern seeing" is "over." Which seeing, and of what? Stern about what?

> But, alas, how alien the streets of Grief City,
> where in the counterfeit silence, made of a surfeit of noise,
> blatantly struts the form that is cast in the mould
> of emptiness: the tinselly din, the statue burst open.[33]

Life in this city suffers from a silence which emerges from the paralyzing overlap of speech sounds, from processes of condensation and displacement which amalgamate and interlock so quickly and so franticly that they halt each other—the form that is cast in the mould of emptiness, unable to make itself precious and important enough: to the tinselly din of ever more excessive metonymies and to the statue burst open of imploding metaphoricity. In short: in Grief City, the business of that everyday speech prevails, which has to do with everything but does not yield anything and whose becoming silent traces back to fatigue, not to creation. But if there is such a fake silence, there has to be a real silence that can be found on the other side, perhaps on the backside, of the fake one: The Grief City is at the same time a Guide City. To which exit that leads to the true does it guide us from the stern seeing of the false?

> Past the boards, just beyond, there, things are real.
> Children are playing, lovers embracing—away from the others,
> pensive, on a few blades of grass, and dogs—do as dogs do.[34]

Just past the billboards, which delimit the "Cure-All Fair" as well as the "amusement park" and the phrases of their exchange process, the actuality of real silence begins. (We will yet have to consider if the effectiveness of this actuality turns the real into the true.) Children are playing, lovers embracing beyond all the sides from which the existent can be observed, assessed, reviewed daily. On this way from the shopping arcades, from variety to the simplicity of a view, to the minor laws according to which children play and dogs do as dogs do, on the way from enumerable to super-numerous being, the lover follows after a young lament for a stretch.

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33. Paulin and Hutchinson, *Rilke's* Duino Elegies, p. 231.
34. Ibid., p. 233.

But he leaves her, turns round,
about once again, waves…What's the point? She's a Lament.

Only the young dead, unheeding,
untouched by time, taking slow leave of life,
follow her, loving.[35]

She is a lament. On what? On the daily turnover of tropes at the markets of Grief City, on its full emptiness, which, with all its color and form, leads to nothing and nothing again. But it is also an accusation against the city's inhabitants, who let themselves be comforted and entertained by this denominating and signifying business, even though the reality against which it is covered and planked over through diversifying repetition lies just next to and beyond it: in a language that stays off this business by forfeiting its products in the voice of the angels, of transcendence, and of alterity, and thereby uses them. Both the lovers and the dead, the dead as the lovers, set out for the experience and expectance of this language. Neither of them agrees with the communicative plans of Grief City, and they take it for a Guide City, which by means of these plans points beyond it.

Thus they follow a lament, which is also an accusation, a song of grief as well as of contestation, the elegy in its ambiguous determination, which it exhibits already at its beginning in early Greek literature.[36] Beginning in the middle of the tenth and last elegy, the discourse of the *Duino Elegies* turns itself into its own object, as it leads its author, the guarantor of its structural and productive preconditions, through the story of its dispositions and back to its origin. This way back follows and performs a classic pattern: the ascent from the names to the unnameable, from what can be measured and enumerated to the supernumerous, as the negative theology of Dionysius the Areopagite outlines and depicts it in the hierarchy of the angelic choir. He traverses the logical and grammatical procedures of quotidian perception, assessment, balance, and judgment, metaphorically imagining the death of common metaphoricity, that withering away of everyday life and speech which until today constitutes the center of mystical knowledge.

35. Ibid.
36. Cf. Christoph Hollender, "The Poet Meets the Mother of Invention: The Allegory of the Tenth *Duino Elegy*," in *Unreading Rilke: Unorthodox Approaches to a Cultural Myth*, ed. Hartmut Heep (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 109–24.

As Virgil and Beatrice guided Dante, the elegy guides its author backward in cultural history, through the remnants of feudalism and of Greco-Roman antiquity to ancient Egypt, where it apparently presumes the beginnings of the symbolic, the creation of a second nature of things through the structuring generative processes of language:

> And they take in with wonder the regal-crowned head, that forever,
> not speaking, laid the face of man
> on the scales of the stars
> […]
> And higher, the stars. New ones. The stars of the Land of Suffering.[37]

The riddle of the sphinx here conforms to the riddle of the genesis of significative referential language. In itself a hybrid creature, part animal and part human, having the highest physical and the highest mental powers, it answers for the relationship of the face, the visual faculty of man, and the "scales of the stars." The stars become a figure whose momentums form a configuration in the movement of weighing, balancing, pondering when one looks at them as constellations, as human beings in every culture have done from ancient times. This view perceives the starry sky as a panorama in which not only every single thing is involved in a meaningful significative context, but also shifts within and with its context unremittingly, as if the firmament were trying to tare a state in which it would be of such a simple and completely present meaning that one would only have to look at it in order to understand it.[38] In itself the unmediated unity of aspect and perception, of affect and concept, the sphinx symbolizes the genesis of language from the—and thus the mediation of the—immediacy—silently, as what establishes language does not speak itself. (Moreover, the ancient Egyptian word, which the Greek took for "Sphinx," means "living effigy.")

A few verses, a few steps further, indeed: "[T]he stars. New ones. The stars of the Land of Suffering." The elegy calls them by their names, and these names are, on this side of the planks around Grief City, unknown: "the *Rider*, the *Staff . . . Garland of Fruits . . . Cradle*; *Path*, *The Burning*

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37. Paulin and Hutchinson, *Rilke's* Duino Elegies, p. 235.
38. See de Man, "Tropes (Rilke)," p. 52: "The constellation signifies the most inclusive form of totalization, the recuperation of a language that would be capable of naming the remaining presence of being beyond death and beyond time."

Book."[39] In each cultural landscape, down to the offside of the land of suffering, the stars appear in differently figured images; they form, in different ways, a meaningful context. Apparently, the contextual order not only shifts in space in and against itself, but simultaneously, this shifting shifts against itself in time, epoch-making and transcending epochs, forming one story from stories, which presents the moment of its final closure, of its truth, which is evident from its mere shape, as a story in connection with the revolving making of history. At the sky of language, the passage from the voice of human beings to the voice of angels, from otherness to alterity appears as well as disappoints and disappears, as soon as it is understood.[40] As Grief City has become Guide City, the Land of Suffering will become the Land of Guidance; yet the reality to which it guides us no longer lies in the self of language that turns upon itself, but leads beyond it while producing and exhibiting language as a metaphor of itself. The text pursues this path now. The elegy can no longer follow its author, let alone lead the way for him, as it gets ready to subvert the structural and productive preconditions of its discourse. It can only see him go: "Alone he makes his way up into the mountains of Once-Suffering. / Not even the ring of his steps is heard, his lot is silence."[41]

End of language in the origin of language. End of poetic discourse. End of the tenth and last of the *Duino Elegies*. Really? Yes and no. Ernst Zinn, who edited Rilke's *Sämtliche Werke*, adds a centered asterisk after the verse that we have just quoted. In the facsimile of the manuscript K, the draft for the first print, a centered horizontal line, longer than the dashes that Rilke put, is clearly visible. In the most advanced critical edition, which strictly follows the first print, a sign marking the caesura lacks.[42] Be that as it may: after catching its breath, as we presume, the text begins anew, as if its author were speaking himself now, turning back to look at and reflect on the order of discourse of the *Elegies* with regard to its origin:

39. Paulin and Hutchinson, *Rilke's* Duino Elegies, p. 235.

40. "Even those uniting stars beguile. / Still, it gladdens and suffices too / to believe the symbol for a while." Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. J. B. Leishman (London: Hogarth, 1949), p. 55.

41. Paulin and Hutchinson, *Rilke's* Duino Elegies, p. 235. Cf. Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, p. 119: "Only those who dwell / out of sight can taste the spring we h e a r [spaced out in the original], / when the god has silently assented."

42. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duineser Elegien/Sonette an Orpheus*, ed. Wolfram Groddeck (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997).

> But were they to waken for us, the endlessly dead, a symbol,
> behold, they would point to the catkins on the bare
> hazel, hanging downwards, or
> have us believe in rain that falls on the dark soil in springtime.—[43]

Granted that those who have died to everyday language and have passed into its original essence, into the existence that by itself refers to and signifies itself, would give us a sign of their indubitable truth: which shape would these signs take? The shape of that simple immediate sight and insight, which, as the riddle of the relationship between stars and constellations has shown, accounts for and initiates all meaningful language, is referred to and missed in it, and returns from this lapse as a peculiar demand. Tropical speech, which, like the one introduced here exemplarily and sketchily, is by itself able to radically reduce itself to itself, until it passes past its outmost tropic, returns from the exterior that accounts for and causes it, as if it were still adhering to that supernumerous reality in order to permeate the second nature of things with the semblance of the first one and thus prove it to be the actual first nature. However, this proof is not certain or more than an irrefutable appearance; the subjects of this exterior, the "endlessly dead," whose distance to the methods of everyday language can be neither measured nor enumerated nor designated, do not point out anything; they merely point at something, if at all, if that is not also only a necessary assumption of a language reflecting on itself. There is no Other of the Other. But this experience provokes an inherent contradiction, time and again, because it is based on it:

> And we, who think of happiness
> rising, our hearts would be moved
> more than perhaps we could bear,
> when a happy thing falls.[44]

The question of the true story is, like every child's question, irresolvable and inevitable.

III.

How, then, should the science of history act in view of the findings that poetics has played to and given to it? For which of its dimensions, which

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43. Paulin and Hutchinson, *Rilke's* Duino Elegies, pp. 235–37.
44. Ibid., p. 237.

refer to one another and exclude one another, should it opt theoretically and methodically? For which concept of history? Event as narration or narration as event?

For neither of them, perhaps? Paul Veyne, addressed by Ulrich Raulff on the "old opposition between history as art … and history as science," replies:

> "I do not know whether objective facts exist, but it is certain that interpretations are not arbitrary. . . . Of course, there are varying viewpoints, of which each leads to a different answer. But from a specific viewpoint, there is only one true answer. . . . For history this means: I do not believe that there are objective facts—namely in the sense that I do not believe that there is a true politics and a false one, a true and a false democracy; I do not believe that there is a true science and a false one, I do not believe that there is a truth of things. Contrariwise, it is essential that in interpretation, i.e., in speaking true, one can only tell people a single thing."[45]

The interpreter, originally the "interpres divum," the construer and analyst of lightning and dreams, of flames and smoke at open hearths, sees and addresses things as signs that for everyone else except him coexist inconsequentially, arbitrarily; he combines, mediates, splices them until, in this act of interpretation, they point to one another in a meaningful way. As much as the interpreter seems to be following solely the evidence of the matter itself, the self of this matter will depend on a narrative schema, on a plot that affects all combining, mediating, splicing and thus dominates the form of interpretation as well as the way of explanation. The choice of this narrative schema is at the discretion of the interpreter. But once he has decided on a schema, he must, according to Veyne, pursue and keep with his decision with utmost consequence, without being seduced by the configuring offers of language (which it puts into effect grammatically, syntactically, rhetorically, and stylistically) to discrepancies and deviations that might make its auditor or reader ambivalent or even polyvalent. The historian cannot, as an interpreter of the past, say "what it was like" and cannot tell the truth of things; but he is able to speak truthfully in such a way as if he were saying only one thing and therefore, by virtue of the preconditions of his speech, the thing itself.

45. Paul Veyne, "Wörterbuch der Unterschiede: Über das Geschichtemachen. Ein Gespräch mit Paul Veyne," in *Vom Umschreiben der Geschichte: Neue historische Perspektiven*, ed. Ulrich Raulff (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1986), pp. 139–40.

Wherein do these preconditions consist? According to Foucault, they consist in what in classical Greece characterized the speech situation of *parrhesia*, which occurred mainly in political communication:

> In *parrhesia*, the speaker is supposed to give a complete and exact account of what he has in mind so that the audience is able to comprehend exactly what the speaker thinks. The word "*parrhesia*," then, refers to a type of relationship between the speaker and what he says.[46]

Whoever says everything on a matter says what he has in mind, reveals simply and immediately the meaning of the matter and therefore, for his auditors and readers, the matter itself. While interpreting an issue with regard to its meaning, he tells them only one thing and thus makes it appear to be whole and complete. But how do we express the one and the whole without restriction and deviation? In what kind of speech?

> *Parrhesia* is … a sort of "figure" among rhetorical figures, but with this characteristic: that it is without any figure since it is completely natural. *Parrhesia* is the zero degree of those rhetorical figures which intensify the emotions of the audience.[47]

A rhetorical figure is completely natural when it completely corresponds to the nature of the object that it predicates and configures the contours of the object so purely that the object comes forward from it as if it were the stuff that the object is made of. Such a figure, however, would speak a truth that would go beyond the *adaequatio rei et intellectus* and beyond even the *informatio intellectus per rem* toward an identity of predication and object whose absoluteness would already have left behind all identifying, and with it all difference, and in which truth as proving true would be completely bygone. If *parrhesia* were actually to establish such a rhetorical figure, it would "infigure" metaphor and metonymy, the basic patterns of figurative speech within identification and differentiation, as its disappearing momentums, and would thus bring rhetoric as referential and meaningful speech to a close. The emotions of the auditors, which feed on

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46. Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia*, notes to the seminar given by Foucault at Univ. of California, Berkeley, in October to November 1983, ed. Joseph Pearson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1985), p. 2, available online at http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/.

47. Ibid., p. 9.

the desire for the congruence of speech and object that can be idealized and operationalized, would dissolve in complete repletion; and the tension between orator and audience, which depends on the proximity and distance of this congruence, would disappear with it. What would remain of *parrhesia*, if it succeeded as described above, would at best be a prayer. However, it seems to me questionable as to whether this consequence authorizes the judgment that "Foucault is the consummate historian, the consummation of history."[48]

Inasmuch as there is no true speaking from the zero degree of rhetoric, *parrhesia*, where it is practiced, can only move toward it. Therefore, it emerges as the art of a negative rhetoric, which dismantles its tropes figure by figure in order to let the outlines of a different rhetoric appear through the gaps thus opened, in which the configurations of speech have passed into the contour of its object, and in which the thing itself speaks its truth. However, this dismantling and that appearance are themselves originally a rhetorical figure, a special kind of figurative speech, in which it affirms itself inasmuch as it disguises its essence and origin. On the one hand, whoever uses *parrhesia* points out to his audience that he employs configuring speech whose locus of orientation and organization lies outside of itself; on the other hand, however, he suggests to them that this exterior is in fact attainable with the help of the form of speech that he has chosen—he deludes them while he enlightens them; and he enlightens them while he deludes them.[49] Unless *parrhesia* meets prayer in order to rediscover itself there as a concept,[50] as a figure of mutually overlapping, negatively overdetermined rhetorical figures, which, defiguring

48. Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire suivi de Foucault révolutionne* (Paris: du Seuil, 1978), p. 203.

49. The authors that Foucault quotes to support his notion of *parrhesia* are certainly aware of this duplicity. Quintilian remarks that the exclamation (*exclamatio*) does not belong among figures of speech when it is a genuine expression of emotions, "but if they are feigned and artificially produced they are undoubtedly to be regarded as Figures. The same may be said of Free Speech, which Cornificius calls Licence, and the Greeks *parrhesia*. For what is less 'figured' than true freedom? Yet flattery is often concealed under this cover." Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001), p. 49; 9.2, 27–28. The "Rhetorica ad Herennium," to which Quintilian here refers and of which he considers Cornificius to be the author, renders an even harsher verdict. Cf. ibid., bk. 4, chap. 36.

50. The question of the relationship of trope and concept in historiography led to a controversy between Hayden White and Arthur Marwick. See Hanisch, "Die linguistische Wende," pp. 223ff.

themselves, decontaminate and condense the interference of tropological polysemy into the fiercely opposed cliffs of reflective determination. Thus, at the apparent zero degree of figurative speech, a reality might show up that corresponds to what Veyne demands of historical objectivity, even if at the price of an intensification of tropic analogies and paralogies to the point of that logical contradiction that the concept for the sake of its unambiguousness attempts to debar from itself and to which it relates for precisely this reason. However, the mediation of this contradiction leads, in every possibly way, to a smaller or greater narrative[51] and, therefore, even under the conditions of *parrhesia*, to the return to the twofold determination of art and science in historiography. Thus, the metamorphosis of the speaking-the-truth into the true-speaking does not solve the problem of the science of history. Rather, it diverts attention from it to a discourse on discourse history, which "far from determining the locus in which it speaks, is avoiding the ground on which it could find support."[52]

Once again: On which concept of history should history decide? Science or art? Event as narrative or narrative as event?

On neither and thereby on both at once. On a scientific procedure that does not place history on one of the two sides of the unavoidable difference, but on its own ground, at its origin. Such a history

> does not treat discourse as *document*, as a sign of something else, as an element that ought to be transparent, but whose unfortunate opacity must often be pierced if one is to reach at last the depth of the essential in the place in which it is held in reserve; it is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a *monument*.[53]

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51. Even Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which claims to present the self-development of the concept purely through itself, gets into narrative from its beginning. "There is nothing to the object except for my thoughts; and my thoughts are nothing except for the object." From a lost letter by Hegel to Pfaff, his colleague in mathematics and physics at the *Realgymnasium* in Nuremberg, in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 1:408. Already in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which the mediation is undertaken with the history of the speculative sentence, it becomes apparent for us how clearly that nothing, which dominates both sentences, becomes something in their mediation, here marked by the semicolon. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), pp. 35ff.

52. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 226.

53. Ibid., p. 155 (italics in the original).

This methodological designation respects the difference between "the reception history which is produced in the continuity of a tradition bound to texts and its exegesis—and the reception history, which, although enabled and mediated by language, is nonetheless more than language can ever obtain," the difference, therefore, on which, as we have heard, Koselleck decisively insists, but it gives it an entirely different shape.[54] What language can never obtain when conversing its particular documents is, according to Foucault, nothing other than the precondition of this speech itself, the actual procedures and practices that, at a specific place and at a specific time, turn it into reality as their monument, as their memorial. The true history of all documented stories lies in that of their *ordre du discours*, in the development and evolvement, repression and focusing, dissemination and over-clarification of its constitutive rules and practices.[55] However, the history that we envisage does not settle for this. Instead of merely seeing the varying repetition of its rules and practices in the history of documented stories and thus retrieving the same monumentality everywhere, at occasions that differ in time and place, it comprehends precisely this varying repetition, its complex meteorology made of condensation and displacement, as that element whose productive opacity produces transparency for the depth of the essential and persists with it. It treats discourse as a monument to correspond to its discursivity, and at the same time seizes it within its monumentality as a document in order to detect how and whereto its discursivity drives it beyond itself. Writes Goethe: "The literary work insists on its rights as much as the event itself."[56] Such a historiography might perhaps—if it can exist, the historians have to decide on this—not only be a form of cultural studies, but the study of cultural studies;[57] if not the critique, then at least the propaedeutics of historico-cultural reason.

54. Koselleck and Gadamer, *Historik, Sprache und Hermeneutik*, p. 35.

55. White also starts from the assumption "that historical narratives are not only models of past events and processes, but also metaphorical statements which suggest a relation of similitude between such events and processes and the story types that we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meanings." Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 51.

56. Goethe to the Graf von Reinhard on December 31, 1809, in *Briefe*, ed. Karl Otto Conrady (Hamburg: Wegner, 1965), 3:117.

57. "The science of history requires a resolute dedisciplinization." Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Geschichte als historische Kulturwissenschaft," in Hardtwig and Wehler,

IV.

What was the question? The question was about the true history that, emerging from the probably truthful stories of the historians, would not mirror and reify the signifying patterns of interpreting subjectivity, but would impose and suggest to them the steadfast objectivity of a non-negotiable real. The question was about a history in which the event would determine its narration through its being narrated, and science would reaffirm its scientificity through its art.

Rilke's tenth *Duino Elegy*—within the narrative meter of a speaking in which the narration collapses, in which tropic speech meets an outermost trope, a clue that points away from it—has indicated the horizon at which such a history might appear. Michel Foucault and Hayden White have absorbed this clue into their theories of narrative historiography only to, as it were, bend it back upon itself, and to make the gesture with which it points at an appearance yet to come, likely to be the truthfulness of the appearance itself. The horizon which the tenth elegy opened is still empty, and it should remain so: "Historians are concerned with events which can be assigned to specific time-space locations, events which are (or were) in principle observable or perceivable, whereas imaginative writers…are concerned with both these kinds of events and imagined, hypothetical, or invented ones. The nature of the kinds of events with which historians and imaginative writers are concerned is not the issue."[58]

Precisely this nature—to be more precise, the qualitative diverseness of these two kinds of events—concerns us here. The offer of determining it, which White has just presented us in passing, does not get us any further. What are events which are "in principle" observable and perceivable? In which principle? Following which first view, which original form of reflection how and whereto? If we abandon this question by confining it from the start to the relationship of factual and fictional discourse, we will set aside the "pain of the antithesis,"[59] which in the first place allows for "the patience…and the labour of the negative,"[60] and without which the answer that we look for shrivels to a play of the signifier with itself, even if

Kulturgeschichte heute, p. 31. On the final consequence of the latter, see ibid., pp. 39–40.

58. Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985), p. 121.

59. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in *Werke in 20 Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 15:145.

60. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.

its moves may be diverting, surprising, and thrilling. Can we not find any, among current theories of truth in historiography, which has this patience? Which, in view of the ramifying paths of the signifier, asks not only for the plan, the program of this culture park, but also for its pre-scripture and principle, about its origin, its *Ur-Sprung*, which is both otherworldly and secular: "This which happens, takes place, comes about in general, that which is called event, what is it? Can one ask with regard to it: 'What is it?'"[61]

The answer that will help us seems to be no answer at first: "I do not know whether objective facts exist," writes Veyne, "but it is certain that interpretations are not arbitrary."[62] If they are not arbitrary, what governs and confines thus like their arbitrariness? What happens when events get discursified? "At first, you don't understand anything. An individual who is, for the first time, confronted with the thinking of archaic Greece…initially does not understand anything.…Only in passing repeatedly through the experiences, through the *Abschattungen* [adumbrations, aspects], through the conclusion that these things really existed does one enter a past world."[63] And how does one establish the reality, the facticity of this world? "You try out, you *test* a large number of hypotheses, none fits, and then suddenly you think you have found it. That's the notch, you tell yourself. And then a new document comes up…and overthrows the whole reconstruction.…Every time, there is a fact that has been overlooked which overthrows everything.…This is the multiplication and comparison of the *Abschattungen*."[64] Documents that have been mediated with one another through interpretation and narration cast a shadow, which spreads in the

61. Jacques Derrida, "The future of the profession or the university without condition (thanks to the 'Humanities,' what *could take place* tomorrow)," in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), p. 53.

62. Veyne, "Wörterbuch der Unterschiede," p. 139.

63. Ibid., p. 135.

64. Ibid., p. 137. "The arbitrary of human affairs goes so far as to people doing and believing anything without looking for reasons; they do not need reasons, they do not rely on reasons.…Man is…like the gods: He plays, he throws the dice, and the order in which the dice fall does not result in a logic, nor in a dialectics." Ibid., pp. 141, 143. Behind this concept, there is Nietzsche's concept of the human: "With every act, no matter how deliberate it is, the sum of the contingent non-deliberate unconscious with regard to the aim is by far predominant, like the sun's glow which is uselessly radiated: what makes sense is vanishingly small." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884–1885*, in *Sämtliche Werke: kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Banden*, 2nd ed., ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1988), 11:47.

progress of their mediation and, taking on a contour and figure of its own, becomes a monument, the seemingly immediate whole of this mediation. While it develops within the narrative and the documents preserved in it into the adumbration of those documents, it grows to be the shadow that not only accompanies every momentum of this kind of narration, but also forms it, as its pre-scripture, its program, its order lies with it and, superimposed and superior to it, on it. Yet the signs of this scripture are meaningless; mute bodies whose gesture expands sense and immediately presents the true oneness of the narrated mediation, which, however, when it is read, instantly moves to the mediated representations and irrevocably leaves its unmediated truth behind. The shadow that comes about in the interpretative historical narrative evades it in the instant that it tries to turn it into its object, into its signified, and affirms through this evasion its veritable reality. Through its adumbration, the interpretation shows its soul, yet: "If the soul *speaks*, it is, oh! not the *soul* that will speak."[65] The shadow follows the entity that casts it; but not everywhere and not unconditionally. If the medium of the mediation is damaged, it will position its progress against its own rule; its shadow will be distorted to adversity, to an unspoken reproach that the subject of mediation has to cleanse in its own language. If it does not pay heed to the warning, if it discards it while interpreting and narrating, the meaningless adumbration of its speaking may finally vanish completely. And if all the detectable and significant documents of the event in question have been collected and assembled, and its concept thus appears completely laid out? Would not its adumbration have to adopt a definitive, lasting contour, which would provide the entity that casts it, and on which it is superimposed, with the appearance of a firm facticity? If the concept of an event has been completely laid out; if the shadow that it casts and to which it complies as its objectivity stands firm and still, it will vanish from the present and presenting movement of its becoming. It will congeal and fall silent to become a monument, a factum of the interpretative history, which will only begin speaking again when updating documents relate to it and thus make it move. The discourses of history and its adumbrations are ceaselessly changing; they multiply and diminish, win and lose shape and contour, shape and contour anew just when it seems as if they had finally settled down. Fictions and

65. Friedrich Schiller, "Sprache," from the *Tabulae Votivae*, in *Sämtliche Werke: Berliner Ausgabe*, ed. Jochen Golz (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1980), 1:359 (italics in the original).

facts are valid together within a unity that is always problematic—factionality, one could call it.

The answer to the question about the truth of history unfolds, therefore, in the *différance* of a twofold difference. First of all, the difference between narrative and event calls for mediation, for a locus in which both merge, in order to come to an agreement on their mutual unity. Writes Hegel: "For that relation is a *mediating* one in which the related terms are not one and the same, but each is an other for the other, and only in a third term are they one. The *immediate* relation, however, means in fact nothing else but the unity of the terms."[66] If this third can be successfully determined, then what differs with respect to the parts will be sublated as mere momentums of this determination, which therefore takes on a new, richer immediacy that asks for mediation. "Thinking . . . is mediation through sublation of the mediation."[67] But what becomes of thinking if the determination of this third merely leads to its instant withdrawal to pure determination, the simple unity of thesis and negation? If it is held to be the center and the deviation from the center, presence and absence, at the same time? According to Derrida: "If this is so, the entire history of the concept of [centered] structure . . . must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center."[68] Then the search for a principal and categorical concept for the relationship of event and narrative will dissolve in a chain of such concepts, which affirm as well as subvert one another. Each is valid in the instant of its positing, inasmuch as it is already no longer valid, but therefore has to defend its validity to an extreme. Its message, its doctrine "ought to belong to the theoretical and constative order. The act of *professing* a doctrine may be a performative act, but the *doctrine* is not. This is a limitation concerning which I will say that *one must* indeed, at the same time, conserve it *and* change it, in a non-dialectical mode . . ."[69] For this

66. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 398.

67. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, in *Werke in 20 Bänden*, 16:189.

68. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 279. Thus, one could say: dialectical thinking is mediation, which mediates with itself to an ever more concrete immediacy; deconstructive thinking is a mediation with itself, which postpones itself to an ever more problematic immediacy.

69. Derrida, "The future of the profession," p. 39 (italics in the original). Obviously not in a dialectical, but in a deconstructive sense.

reason, the attempt to construct a meaning of the meaning from this chain, to relate the succession of concepts that mutually replace one another to one concept that would express and determine the replacement itself, also loses all prospect of success. In order to be successful, it would first of all have to break away from this series by way of an incomprehensible act of absolute immediacy,[70] to then engage with it—to be more precise, disengage with itself—whereby it would avow its necessary mediation and would return to the series, above which it has just soared. The constative of the theoretical always already contains its destituting act and virtually provokes it through itself. We notice: the child's question, from which we started and which has faithfully accompanied us, can therefore not be answered conclusively, not because there is no answer to it, but because it finds too many ever new answers. "Historia will thus lift the veil over the enshrouded Veritas and show her to Rationi"—as we have seen, neither any of the terms from this instruction of Enlightenment to historiography, nor the history of this dispute, has remained undisputed until today.[71]

From the *différance* we have just described, the prospect of a further one, already alluded to, opens up. If there is no clear-cut and articulate distinction between event and narrative, factual report and the finding of possibilities, factuality and fictionality, no normatively determinable form system of their combination and cooperation, coordination, and subordination, then the difference between literature as art and historiography as science will lose its principal value. Each of the two discourse complexes has in the other, even in its extreme occurrences, still its adumbrations and counterpart. Each remains related to the other within a problematic unity that constantly produces and deforms itself anew. Does that consideration not suggest that the relationship of the two discourse complexes next in size, art and the humanities in general, is shaped analogously, at least with regard to occidental culture? Do we have reason to exempt the natural sciences from this relationship, or does their exemption rely on a normative concept that cannot withstand critical reflection today? And, if this is the

70. Philosophical systems usually provide this act with the status of the transcendental, religious ones with the status of the transcendent.

71. "My thesis is that narrative historiography has to be transformed into description, if a new history shall do justice to our experience of history…" Peter Szondi, "Für eine nicht mehr narrative Historie," in Koselleck and Stempel, *Geschichte—Ereignis und Erzählung*, pp. 540–41. On the other hand, "the trends in historiography…are evident wherever one looks." Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present* 85 (1979): 16.

case, do cultural studies not have to redefine themselves completely—namely, as a transcendentally critical science that takes the process of *différance*, as which and within which occidental culture reveals itself, as the object of its reflection, without exempting itself from it?[72]

72. A science of history that is geared to the conditions a priori of such a form of cultural studies will not be able to do preliminary work for the culture of memory (not to say cult of memory), which is spreading more and more, but has to oppose it. In the culture of memory, real or symbolic individuals attempt to assure themselves of their identity from history in a stabilizing manner; cultural studies, as we understand them here, has the skepticism about this stability as its main object. Cf. the essay, related to the circumstances of this debate in France, by Chris J. Bickerton, "France's History Wars," *Le Monde diplomatique*, English edition, February 2006, available online at http://mondediplo.com/2006/02/14postcolonial.

Context, Event, Politics:
Recovering the Political in
the Work of Jacques Derrida

Jonathan Blair

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida is most well known for instituting the school, or method, known as deconstruction, whereby one . . . interprets? No, critiques? No, challenges? Perhaps, changes? Maybe, performs? Certainly. Performs what? Justice? Was Derrida, then, a *political* philosopher, and deconstruction a *political* philosophy? Many readers of Derrida see what they call a political "turn" in his work near the end of the 1980s or early 1990s, when the content dealt with within that period and after was that of traditionally "political" themes (justice, law, friendship, immigration, etc.). But what makes a work, or thinker, political? I will argue that it is not merely a matter of theme or content, but rather the work's *transformative capacity*. That is, not only the normative critique it offers, but also a form or structure whereby something *new* can be brought into being, and thereby alter the pre-existing situation. Thus, a political work is never a mere hermeneutic exercise, an unmasking of what is, whether in terms of the powers that be, the flow of history, or the structure of being, but rather the transformation of what is.

So, is Derrida a political thinker? Did he take a political turn (Left or Right?) according to the above criteria? The answer that I will attempt to demonstrate in this paper is: *Yes*, Derrida does take a political turn in his thought, thus becoming a genuine political philosopher. However, what I want to argue is that this turn does not come in the 1980s or 90s, nor is it the product of a change of focus to different themes; but rather it is clearly present in the early 1970s (1971, to be specific) with the writing of his essay "Signature, Event, Context." This essay's confrontation with the concepts of language and context, and its reconceiving of the concept

of the performative, as found in J. L. Austin's work, enabled Derrida to accept the socio-historical situatedness of all *events* while maintaining their novelty, their transformational power. As well, one consequence of this turn was the blurring of the distinction interpretation/change: to write *is* to act; to interpret *is* to change. Thus, even before his work on explicitly political themes, Derrida's work was political in its creative intervention of how we think what is. This paper will primarily focus on "Signature, Event, Context" as well as Derrida's later "political" essay "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority," demonstrating how the former structures the latter based on the conception of performativity and the law of iterability.

How does the *new* come into being? This is the question; and I would argue the only truly political question, or rather, the condition of any and every political question. This does not mean, simply, what causes or pro-duces what effects, for the belief in determinable cause and effect, as the fundamental explanation of what is conceived as change, would be a belief in a form of fatalism, and the end of the political (and moral, for that matter). This is what leads Kant to proclaim in the *Groundwork* that, although all phenomena—as they are a priori conditioned by the category of causation—take the form of necessity, of the predetermined, freedom—if it were to exist—had to be separate from the phenomenal realm of cause and effect, and could therefore only be a matter of faith. And this was a faith necessary in order to make any sort of "ought" claims. Following this, there is a twofold consequence of the question of the new being the fundamental political question: first, freedom in the form of the question of agency, not in the simplistic form of Left versus Right, is the fundamental normative, and thus political, problem (at least for political thought, as it is often assumed or dismissed in most "practical" work in politics). *Agency*: how does the new come into being, as if from nowhere, without predeter-minable cause, or, in other words, a theory of the *event*. Second, this mode of thinking implies a critique, at least as a starting point, for a science of politics, taking science in its modern or traditional (non-Kuhnian) concep-tion as description or explanation of what is. Of course, if one understands science, and all interactions with phenomena, as being shaped by one's subject position, then it becomes trivial to see that it is an activity that not only describes what is, but at least somewhat creates it as such, natural-izing the normative model of the describing subject. This is the standard, and fairly convincing, critique of the neutrality or objectivity of scientific and political observation or theory, particularly leveled against the liberal

ideal of a political system that aims/claims to be purely non-normative but rather merely a matter of calculation. On the other hand "political science" abounds (political economy, political behaviorism, "New Public Management," etc.), hence another critique of this mode of thought does not seem superfluous.

In treating politics as a science, in attempting to describe or explain the "what is" of politics, the "facts," in a systemically closed causal fashion, one essentially shuts the door to change, at least in the form of the unprecedented and unpredictable. (There would of course be change in the form of "progress" toward an inevitable goal or telos, but the truly new, that which falls outside the causal system, would be negated or ignored.) This closure happens in two ways typically: either in the form of conservatism of the current, or recently past, status quo, as exemplified by the infamous saying of Margaret Thatcher, "There is no alternative." Or, in the form of a dogmatic teleological belief system, however radical or progressive it may appear: for example, a belief in an inevitable course of history, or a higher life after this one. Neither position allows for the truly novel, an unexpected event that ruptures the closed system of our perceptions, engendering wholly other conceptions of our immanent reality. Thus, any study of politics that treats the world in this manner, dismisses the possibility of real agency, and is thus, in some respects, non-political. The question for politics instead becomes, "How do we find agency, or define the event, in an era that is 'incredulous' to any possible metaphysical One or Actor, whether it be the centered Self or the movement of World History?" (This is also, I would argue given the space, the question and motivation of poststructuralism in general, which is wholly political.) Derrida seems to be attempting an answer to this question by analyzing certain conditions of language.

In 1955 J. L. Austin delivered the William James Lectures at Harvard University, and these lectures were subsequently turned into the small but immensely influential book *How To Do Things With Words*. In this book, which was to form the jumping-off point for speech act theory in Anglo-American philosophy, Austin explores the strange yet prevalent occurrence where to say something is not simply to assert or communicate a state of affairs but to "do it." He names an occurrence of this kind "a performative utterance or, for short, 'a performative'."[1] These utterances

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1. J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1962), p. 6.

are not merely doing something in the trivial sense that speech itself is an act which affects its listeners in some way. Rather, these acts do something more: they actually create the world they purport to describe. (At this point in analytic philosophy, an era ruled by positivism and behaviorism, many theorists felt that language had a purely descriptive role, even if this was a description of thought-content.) Austin gives many examples of what he calls explicit performatives, such as a judge finding a person guilty; an official naming a boat; and a couple saying "I do" in a marriage ceremony:

> In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it. None of the utterances cited is either true or false: I assert this as obvious and do not argue it. It needs argument no more than that "damn" is not true or false: it may be that the utterance "serves to inform you"— but that is quite different. . . . When I say, before the registrar or altar. &c., "I do," I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.[2]

As the lectures progress, the distinction between performatives and non-performatives (called "constatives") becomes increasingly blurry, all statements seeming to be performatives to some extent. As well, Austin continually points out that performatives are not subject to the categories of truth and falsity, but instead to some other type of force, which is some how tied up with context and authority. However, though they cannot be false, strictly speaking, they can fail—or be infelicitous, to use Austin's phrase—eliciting a certain type of "nonsense." In fact, Austin, after a preliminary listing of different cases of infelicity, tells us that infelicity, or failure, is an inherent part of all acts dependent on convention for their force: "Well, it seems clear in the first place that, although it has excited us (or failed to excite us) in connexion with certain acts which are or are in part acts of *uttering words*, infelicity is an ill to which *all* acts are heir which have the general character of ritual or ceremonial, all *conventional* acts."[3] However, he then moves on, pushing aside this fact, in order to attempt to find and describe what the law of the "pure" performative may be, only to finish his lectures doubting whether such a thing as the pure performative exists, leaving these final musings for what he calls a

2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. Ibid., pp. 18–19.

"general theory" of speech acts (Austin only having dealt with a "special theory" that distinguishes between performatives and constatives).

In 1971 at a conference on "Communication" in Montreal, Derrida first presented an essay entitled "Signature, Event, Context." This paper continued Derrida's earlier work, his attack on "Logocentricism," or the traditional system of dichotomies that make up the Western metaphysical heritage, particularly from the perspective of the subordination of writing to speech, writing as language's other. However, and this is the thesis of my essay, "Signature, Event, Context" not only continued his work but became a foundational point for all his subsequent work, particularly those labeled by his commentators as "political." There are several reasons for this view of "Signature, Event, Context": first, it was a rare explicit engagement with the Anglo-American philosophy of language; secondly, it marks a decisive critique of what I will simply call "historicism," by which I mean, following Alain Badiou, "the temporalization of the concept,"[4] a mode of thinking that confines concepts strictly within their temporal and spatial (socio-historical) situation. This type of "historicism," prominent in much of contemporary thought, seems always to lead to some form of ultimate cynicism or sophism (which has the same flaws as the fatalist view discussed previously); third, this critique of historicism is also an explicit separation of Derrida's work from that of hermeneutics, freeing "deconstruction" to be more than mere "unmasking" of the power relations that be; which leads to the fourth, and final aspect for us, the formulation of the *law of iterability* at the heart of the performative, and of all language in general (all sign-systems), which allows deconstruction to become an interventionist philosophy, a philosophy of the event, and thus political. It is the second and fourth of these that are of interest here and which I will now discuss.

The main issue at stake in "Signature, Event, Context" is that of *context*. After briefly discussing some general traditional conceptions of language, e.g., as the communication of thought-content, Derrida moves on to question of whether a context can ever be determined or saturated:

> [A]re the conditions of a context ever absolutely determinable? This is, fundamentally, the most general question that I shall endeavor to elaborate. Is there a rigorous and scientific concept of *context*? Or does the

4. Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 24.

notion of context not conceal, behind a certain confusion, philosophical presuppositions of a very determinate nature? Stating it in the most summary manner possible, I shall try to demonstrate why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather, why its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated.[5]

Derrida then proceeds to show this through a particular piece of work on language by Condillac. In that work, writing is considered a special form of language because of its ability to function in the absence of the original sender (and receiver). But, Derrida asks, is not this absence the very structural possibility of writing:

> One writes in order to communicate something to those who are absent. The absence of the sender, of the receiver, from the mark that he abandons, and which cuts itself off from him and continues to produce effects independently of his presence and the present actuality of his intentions, indeed even after his death, his absence, which moreover belongs to the structure of all writing.[6]

Writing as the system of absences works as part of Derrida's original project of critiquing what he calls the metaphysics of presence, the tradition of Western thought in which speech is always the epitome of language, language as presence (of sender, receiver, meaning, thought, etc.).

"Signature, Event, Context" then performs a double movement, leading to one of the controversial main conclusions of the paper. First and of the utmost importance, Derrida shows that the ability to function in the radical absence of any sender or intended receiver, and thus any verifiable intention of meaning, the predicate of writing, is possible because of the repeatability of the signs, their *iterability* or *citationality*:

> In order for my "written communication" to retain its function as writing, i.e., its readability, it must remain readable despite the absolute disappearance of any receiver, determined in general. My communication must be repeatable—iterable—in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers. Such iterability—(*iter*, again, probably comes from *itara*, *other* in Sanskrit, and

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5. Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1988), pp. 2–3.

6. Ibid., p. 5.

everything that follows can be read as a working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity) structures the mark of writing itself, no matter what particular type of writing is involved.[7]

It is this iterability that forms the *identity* of the sign within a system or code, that which identifies it as unique and thus understandable, differentiated from the other marks forming the system. (Is absence here being separated from difference?) This iterability allows the written sign to "continue to act" after its removal from the original situation in which it was written.[8] In fact, it is this possibility that allows one to cite, to put the words into quotation marks, and thus to forcefully take them out of their original situation, grafting them on to a new one. Hence, iterability has the dual quality of allowing for the rupture of the old situation/origin and the transformation of the meaning of the very signs that have been displaced, through the possibility of the graft:

> [A] written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context. That is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription. This breaking force is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text. . . . [B]y virtue of its essential iterability, a written syntagma can always be detached from the chain in which it is inserted or given without causing it to lose all possibility of functioning, if not all possibility of "communicating," precisely. One can perhaps come to recognize other possibilities in it by inscribing it or *grafting* it onto other chains. No context can entirely enclose it. Nor any code, the code here being both the possibility and impossibility of writing, of its essential iterability (repetition/alterity).[9]

The second movement comes as Derrida goes on to show that this iterability, this citationality is in no way unique to writing as traditionally understood, but rather is the structural possibility of all language, and all experience for that matter:

> Are [these predicates] not to be found in all language, in spoken language for instance, and ultimately in the totality of "experience" insofar as it is inseparable from this field of the mark, which is to say, from the network

7. Ibid., p. 7 (my emphasis).
8. Ibid., p. 8.
9. Ibid., p. 9.

of effacement and of difference, of units of iterability, which are sepa-
rable from their internal and external context and also from themselves,
inasmuch as the very iterability which constituted their identity does not
permit them ever to be a unity that is identical to itself?[10]

The unique aspect of writing, absence, seems to permeate all systems of
signs, whether oral or ritualistic, thus making writing, that lesser entity in
the history of Western thought, the structural possibility of all other "field[s]
of the mark"; absence, and therefore iterability, conditions presence:

> This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from
> the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to
> me to make every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in
> general; which is to say, as we have seen, the nonpresent *remainder* of a
> differential mark cut off from its putative "production" or origin. And I
> shall even extend this law to all "experience" in general if it is conceded
> that there is no experience consisting of *pure* presence but only of chains
> of differential marks.[11]

Taking these two points together, Derrida moves on to his dramatic
and controversial conclusion: the essence of language, so to speak, is not
its ability to transfer or communicate meaning within a given context or
situation. It is, rather, the *possibility of its being taken out of context, its
ability to create new meanings by repeating certain signs in the absence of
their original context, meaning or intention*:

> [T]his is the possibility on which I want to insist: the possibility of disen-
> gagement and citational graft which belongs to the structure of every mark,
> spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark in writing before
> and outside of every horizon of semio-linguistic communication. . . . Ev-
> ery sign linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written . . . in a small or
> large unit, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can
> break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts
> in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the
> mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only
> contexts without any center or absolute anchorage. This citationality, this
> duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident
> or an anomaly, it is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could

10. Ibid., p. 10.
11. Ibid.

not even have a function called "normal." What would a mark be that could not be cited? Or one whose origins would not get lost along the way?[12]

And, it is this critique of context as determining, in the final analysis, of the meaning of a situation, its "truth," which is also a critique of the historicist and hermeneutic position. For, if the possibility of all signs lies in their ability to break with any given context, then to confine the meaning or "truth" of a given chain of marks (such as, for example, the multitude of those in the canon centered around justice), to its local, contextual origin, let alone the attempt to get to the mark's truth through a study of original context, is to misunderstand the nature of the mark. The mark, a sign, is not just an effect but is creative, productive, in its essential possibility of being taken out of its original context. It is, so to speak, force without signification, transhistoric force originating within history, or a *universal*, in the sense given to it by Badiou: "Only what is in immanent exception is universal."[13] But how does the force to rupture and create contexts work, how does a historically situated sign become a rupturing event? This is now the question, as well as the point at which we return to the concept of the *performative*.

Why, when he has thus far been working with very "continental" concepts, does Derrida switch to engage so explicitly with Anglo-American philosophy, in the form of J. L. Austin? He gives four preliminary reason's for bringing Austin's theory of the performative in at this point in "Signature, Event, Context": (1) its reliance, according to Austin (and his French translator) on a determined, or "total," context for success; (2) its break from traditional conceptions of language as communicating a "thought-content." Instead, what the performative communicates "would be tantamount to communicating a force through the impetus of a mark"; (3) the complete lack of referent proceeding or outside of the occurrence of the performative utterance. Rather, the performative does not describe something outside or before itself, it "produces or transforms the situation, it effects," and this is "its manifest function or destination"; (4) finally, the freeing of the analysis of the performative utterance from the "authority of the truth value, from the true/false opposition," again, substituting in

12. Ibid., p. 12.
13. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2003), p. 111.

its place the value of a force.[14] All in all, what Derrida appears to see in the "discovery" of the performative is the perfectly adapted tool to allow for a theory of transformation/action, one that accepts the premise that we are necessarily historically and culturally situated (culture being, at least assumed so here, a system of signs). There is no "God's eye view" that can dictate a path outside of the one we are on, true, but the view we have still allows for agency, the possibility of the "new," and in such a way that can be meaningful outside and beyond its own socio-historical situation.

That being said, however, the performative as Derrida finds it in Austin's work is still an inherently conserving or descriptive theory. This is owing to the first aspect of the performative mentioned above: its reliance on a total context for success, and thus as the basis for analysis. (For one could imagine, after the thorough completion of such an analysis, being able to move back from the occurrence of the performative to the necessary determined context in which it originated.) As we have already seen, Derrida critiques the possibility of a total or determinable context, a context within which an utterance could be confined. And he recognizes within Austin a movement toward this very critique. However, and this will be what Derrida deconstructs in Austin's work, Austin needs this conception of a determined context because of his focus on the *successful* or *pure* performative. Austin's analysis attempts to exclude what he calls *infelicitous* performatives—unsuccessful, impure, or failed performative utterances—in order to try to isolate the performative's nature. What Derrida then proceeds to do, in typical fashion, is to demonstrate that what Austin excludes from his analysis as secondary or subordinate is actually the structural possibility of the concept analyzed. In this case, through his exclusion of failed performatives (particularly those performed in "non-serious" situations, as on the stage, those which are *mere citation*), Austin excludes the possibility of iterability as secondary to the nature of the performative, the ability to remove it from its original context:

> For, ultimately, isn't it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, "non-serious," *citation* (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, a general iterability—without which there would not even be a "successful" performative? So that—a paradoxical but unavoidable conclusion—a

14. See Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," p. 13.

> successful performative is necessarily an "impure" performative, to
> adopt the word advanced later on by Austin when he acknowledges that
> there is no "pure" performative.[15]

In other words, it is failure, not success, which seems to be the more inter-
esting and more essential aspect of the performative.

Derrida, of course, recognizes that there are performatives that suc-
ceed all the time. These are important to take account of in one's analysis.
However, what he is opposing is the opposition between seemingly pure
occurrences, or events, of speech (speech acts), and citations, non-serious
parasitic doubles of the true acts. Moreover, as both acts, the pure and the
impure, rely on the structure of iterability—the very thing that allows for
the non-serious cases—events can never be truly pure, as if they were
not themselves repetitions. We are now dealing directly with what brings
about the new, the event, what "concerns the status of events in general."[16]
As the event, as mark, is necessarily marked by iterability, its origin can
no longer be seen as outside the situation ("a miracle from above") but
always comes from within, the outside-within, is always immanent to
the situation, necessitating a new way of thinking the event in general:
"Rather than oppose citation or iteration to the noniteration of an event,
one ought to construct a differential typology of forms of iteration. . . . [A]t
that point, we will be dealing with different kinds of marks or chains of
iterable marks and not with an opposition between citational utterances, on
the one hand, and singular and original event-utterances, on the other."[17]
And, if we focus only on those acts which "succeed," we have only a
repetition, or reproduction of the *same*, a repetition that excludes alterity,
whereas we have already seen that by iteration Derrida sees the *conjunc-
tion of repetition and alterity*. It is only with those events that fail, through
a contextual disengagement, an inherent structural possibility, that we
gain rupture or displacement of the system, engendering a new situation,
necessarily unforeseeable under the "rules" of the old one: "It is this dis-
placement, this reinscription, that alone is capable of giving us a history,
not the eternal return of the same but a repetition in difference, a tradition
that is indeed programmed from the very start, and programmed even in

15. Ibid., p. 17.
16. Ibid., p. 18.
17. Ibid.

its modes of reception, but that has programmed within it 'moments' that escape all programs—in other words, the 'possibility' of an *event*."[18] We have the possibility of *founding* something, of beginning, again.

This is the task set for deconstruction. It is not a mere unmasking of what is, it is not merely a form of "hermeneutic deciphering, the decoding of a meaning or truth." Rather, deconstruction intervenes in a system and changes it, creating something new:

> Deconstruction cannot be restricted or immediately pass to a neutralization: it must, through a double gesture, a double science, a double writing—put into practice a *reversal* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of *intervening* in the field of oppositions it criticizes and that is also a field of nondiscursive forces. Every concept, moreover, belongs to a systematic chain and constitutes in itself a system of predicates. . . . Deconstruction does not consist in moving from one concept to another, but in reversing and displacing a conceptual order as well as the nonconceptual order with which it is articulated. . . . It is those predicates (I have recalled several of them) whose force of generality, generalization, and generativity is liberated, grafted onto a "new" concept of writing that corresponds as well to what has always *resisted* the prior organization of forces.[19]

As I will now move on to briefly show, this foreshadows and makes possible Derrida's later "political" works, in particular the infamous assertion "Deconstruction *is* Justice."

Cardoza Law School, 1989: a colloquium is held on the theme of "Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice," at which Derrida presented what would be considered one of his first "real" political works, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority." In this essay Derrida is replying to the implied accusation leveled against deconstruction, and through it, at him, in the very theme of the colloquium, i.e., that deconstruction is a form of relativism, and consequently dangerous, for it leaves no room for straightforward, universal positions of what is just:

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18. Michael Naas, *Taking On the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the legacies of deconstruction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2003), p. 21. Note the remarkable similarity of this to Deleuze's reconception of Nietzsche's eternal return.

19. Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," p. 21.

> Isn't it because, as certain people suspect, deconstruction doesn't in itself permit any just action, any just discourse on justice but instead constitutes a threat to *droit*, to law or right, and ruins the condition of the very possibility of justice?...The "sufferance" of deconstruction, what makes it suffer and what makes those it torments suffer, is perhaps the absence of rules, of norms, and definitive criteria that would allow one to distinguish unequivocally between *droit* and justice.
>
> That is the choice, the "either/or," "yes or no" that I detect in this title.[20]

Derrida refuses this simple distinction between relativists and, say, objectivists, or between foundationalism and anti-foundationalism: deconstruction, "[t]his questioning of foundations is neither foundationalist nor anti-foundationalist."[21] Rather, he says, the question—and deconstruction belongs to the history of the question, even as it calls this history itself into question—is one not of mere critique, but intervention and change:

> [Critical legal studies] respond, it seems to me, to the most radical programs of deconstruction that would like, in order to be consistent with itself...to aspire to something more consequential, to *change* things and to intervene....Not, doubtless, to change things in the rather naïve sense of calculated, deliberate and strategically controlled intervention, but in the sense of maximum intensification of a transformation in progress, in the name of neither a simple symptom nor simple cause (other categories are required here).[22]

This is a repetition of what we have already shown above in our analysis of "Signature, Event, Context," as it was for Derrida. All these points, and the "Force of Law" generally, are in fact, explicitly framed within a reference to the importance, in the first instance, of language, which, following "Signature, Event, Context," we know is not simply communicating meaning. As he says just after thanking Cardoza for granting him the right to speak, "This question of language and idiom will doubtless be at the heart of what I would like to propose for discussion tonight."[23]

20. Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority," in *Deconstruction and the possibility of justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 4.
21. Ibid., p. 8.
22. Ibid., pp. 8–9.
23. Ibid., p. 5.

He begins, after claiming the role of change and intervention, without which there would be no political, by analyzing the distinction between law and justice. His first point draws attention to the need for a system of signs in order for justice to be possible, in the beginning, and, drawing from his earlier work, equates this system of signs, this language, with more than mere communication: "'At the beginning of justice there was *logos*, speech or language,' which is not necessarily in contradiction with another incipit, namely, 'In the beginning there will have been force.'"[24] But this is not just any type of force, it is the force explicated in "Signature, Event, Context," the force of the performative: "The very emergence of justice and law, the founding and justifying moment that institutes law implies a performative force, which is always an interpretive force."[25] Justice, and any system of law, is founded by a force inherent in language, which, as was demonstrated in "Signature, Event, Context," can only be possible as an iterable mark within a preceding system. However, the new system cannot be derived, deduced, or grounded in the old, though it necessitates it, for that would in no way be a new one, but merely a more detailed original system, the working out of a complex tautology. Thus, because the force comes from iterability, which is the possibility of taking the sign out of its original context, the founding performative itself will appear "ungrounded":

> Since the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of the law can't by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground. Which is not to say that they are in themselves unjust, in the sense of "illegal." They are neither legal nor illegal in their founding moment. They exceed the opposition between founded and unfounded, or between any foundationalism or anti-foundationalism. Even if the success of performatives that found law or right…presupposes earlier conditions and conventions…the same "mystical" limit will reappear at the supposed origin of said conditions, rules or conventions, and at the origin of their dominant interpretation.[26]

And, if deconstruction is this process of intervention which allows for signs to be removed from their defining origin, an origin that, as system, necessarily contains this possibility within itself, then deconstruction is

24. Ibid., p. 10.
25. Ibid., p. 13.
26. Ibid., p. 14

both this founding and this intervention, "Deconstruction *is* Justice,"[27] and *deconstruction is political*.

Justice is therefore not a system of rules, even though it requires one to coexist with it simultaneously. Justice always repeats the system but in such a way as to make each repetition a singularity, which is only possible by treating each repetition anew, as if it were not part of the system but founding it, as if for the first time: "In short, for a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and also destroy it or suspend it enough to have to reinvent in each case."[28] This is possible because the law of iterability is inherent in every repetition of a mark. And, thus, there is a direct link between the performative, insofar as it is the idealized mode of iterable force, and justice (and the political), which leads Derrida to explicitly declare near the end of the first part of his essay:

> If we were to trust in a massive and decisive distinction between performative and constative…we would have to attribute this irreducibility of precipitate urgency [of the decision of Justice]…to the performative structure of speech act and acts in general as acts of justice or law, whether they be performatives that institute something or derived performatives supposing anterior conventions.…But as a performative cannot be just, in a sense of justice, except by founding itself on conventions and so on other anterior performatives, buried or not, it always maintains within itself some irruptive violence, it no longer responds to the demands of theoretical rationality.[29]

There is much more of great importance in the "Force of Law" for a rethinking of justice and the political, and in particular their relation to the performative. The goal here, however, has been merely to show how Derrida's work on the political is structured around the "law of iterability," the inherent structure of the performative, as put forward in 1971 in the analysis performed in "Signature, Event, Context." The final point that must be reiterated, though, is the call for change, for transformation, that justice requires, before it requires any sort of "truth"; in fact, "truth" requires the justice of the performative: "the dimension of *justesse* or truth of the theoretico-constative utterances…always thus presupposes the dimension

27. Ibid., p. 15.
28. Ibid., p. 23
29. Ibid., pp. 26–27.

of justice of the performative . . . which never proceeds without a certain dissymmetry and some quality of violence." And, justice as performative is always "yet, to come. . . . Perhaps it is for this reason that justice . . . opens up for *l'avenir* the transformation, the recasting or refounding of law and politics." Or, even more: "Nothing seems to me less outdated than the classical emancipatory ideal." [30] It is with the "irruptive violence" of the performative, a violence that is not opposed to but rather identical to an interpretive violence, its independence from truth value and thus from the "demands of theoretical rationality," its madness, that will always link it to change, to the creation of the "new."

This explicit reference and structural dependence on the work done in "Signature, Event, Context" is not limited to "The Force of Law"; it structures all of Derrida's "political" works. Just some brief examples: in *Spectres of Marx* the very conceptions of *event*, *spectre* (or *ghost*) and *hauntology* rely on this structure and shape the entire work:

> Repetition *and* first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as question of the ghost. . . . Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time* makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other [yet repetition]. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology*. . . . After the end of history, the spirit comes by *coming back*, it figures *both* a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again. . . . For if this first theatrical apparition already marked a repetition, it implicated political power in the folds of this iteration. . . . A question of repetition: a specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*.[31]

As well, from the *Politics of Friendship*, which is a meditation on a single sentence, attributed to Aristotle through a succession of historical citations, and its consequent transformation under those citations:

> We said, *independently of all determinable contexts*. Does one have the right to read like this? No, certainly not, if one wishes to imagine a sentence or a mark in general without any context, and readable as such.

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30. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
31. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 10–11.

This never occurs, and the law remains unbreachable. But for the same reason, a context is never absolutely closed, constraining, determined, completely filled. A structural opening allows it to transform itself or to give way to another context. This is why every mark has a force of detachment which not only can free it from such and such a determined context, but ensures even its principle of intelligibility and its mark structure—that is, its *iterability* (repetition *and* alteration)....Now this is exactly what occurs in the history of our sentence.

And:

[B]eyond all dialectics of misunderstanding, etc., the possibility of failure must, in addition, not be simply an accidental edge of the condition, but its haunting.[32]

Derrida's writings following "Signature, Event, Context," however, are not only "political," or more so, in their problems and questions, not only in their "mention" of the law of iterability. They are political in themselves: these works perform, they "use," the performative force of iterability, by rethinking and recasting the heritage of western thought, whether it be Aristotle, Nietzsche, or Levinas, in new contexts in order to transform them as well as, one can only hope, the world to which they belong. As Michael Naas puts it: "In other words...a text by Derrida is always an event. Always contextual, occasional, always written in response to certain conditions—historical, political, philosophical, personal—Derrida's texts try to invent new means of reflection and reception from out of these conditions."[33] There are, of course, many problems and questions that remain in the wake of Derrida's work: for example, politically speaking, the question of the exact nature of the agent or the subject (if they are the same) in his work. What remains certain, though, is the need, the imperative, to now think through the nature and consequences of this work, an act so far from both unfortunate tendencies of sacred reverence and unthinking dismissal. In any case, we must, of course, begin, again, by re-reading him.

32. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997), pp. 216 and 219.
33. Naas, *Taking On the Tradition*, p. xxx.

Charles Taylor's Identity Holism:
Romantic Expressivism
as Epigenetic Self-Realization

Victoria Fareld

Charles Taylor's seminal essay "The Politics of Recognition," which made the "vital human need" for recognition into one of contemporary politics' most pressing concerns, has since its appearance almost fifteen years ago generated a rich and impressive range of commentaries.[1] Few of these, however, focus on Taylor's expressivist understanding of identity as self-realization through expression.[2] By not taking expressivism into account as one of the key themes implicitly underpinning his recognition theory, these commentaries have obscured a central dimension of his thinking about identity formation. Taylor's theory is often seen as anchored in a tension between two different ideas of identity development: one static, referring to origin and essence, and corresponding to the key notion of authenticity; and one dynamic and performative, tied to the likewise central notion of dialogicity in his philosophy. I argue that we can not get a full understanding of Taylor's specific conception of identity without taking a closer look at his appropriation of Herder, Humboldt, and Hegel, as well as at the epigenetic theory of development that influenced German idealism and its central conception of *Bildung* at the end of the eighteenth

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1. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994), p. 26.

2. Notable exceptions are Hartmut Rosa, *Identität und kulturelle Praxis: Politische Philosophie nach Charles Taylor* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1998), pp. 149–55, 351–66, 419–26, and 474–77; Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000), pp. 57–62; Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), pp. 153–54, 214–16.

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century. By seeing Taylor's conception of identity in the light of a theory of epigenesis, according to which evolution is an unpredictable and self-organizing process, a successive becoming, I aim to show why Taylor's idea of identity formation is resistant to much of the contemporary critique of essentialism, which tends to see essence as a preformed inner unit that is to be given an outer expression. A more productive way of criticizing Taylor's conception of identity is to focus on his *identity holism*, which I locate in the heart of his expressivist philosophy. By conceiving of recognition as a restoring movement aiming at intersubjectively unifying the self with itself, I argue that Taylor's identity holism ends up reproducing the very notion of individual autonomy that it purports to undermine.

Critics

Many sharp and critical voices have been raised against Taylor's understanding of cultural identity as the authentic expression of a certain people or individual. I will not repeat this justified and well-known critique. In broad lines it is centred around what is seen as Taylor's too thick and static conception of identity formation, which, it is argued, tends to reify, essentialize, depoliticize, or normativize identity, reducing it to an expression of an authenticity that has its locus in a given culture, community, or moral universe.[3] Another strand of commentators, however, sees in Taylor a "nonessentialist" thinker who ties identity formation to dynamic historically and socially mediated self-interpretations, without nevertheless losing sight of its normative elements and presuppositions.[4] This twofold critique corresponds to an often commented tension in Taylor's philosophy between his philosophical anthropology and his moral theory. Hartmut

3. See for instance Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification," *Political Theory* 22, no. 1 (1994): 152–66; K. Anthony Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction," in Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism*, pp. 149–63; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left Review* 3 (2000): 107–20; Sasja Templeman, "Constructions of Cultural Identity: Multiculturalism and Exclusion," *Political Studies* 47, no. 1 (1999): 17–23; Owen Flanagan, "Identity and Strong and Weak Evaluation," in Owen Flanagan and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, eds., *Identity, Character, and Morality: Essays in Moral Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 37–65.

4. Rosa, *Identität und kulturelle Praxis*, p. 154; see also Kristin M. Novotny, "'Taylor'-Made? Feminist Theory and the Politics of Identity," *Women & Politics* 19, no. 3 (1998): 1–18; Craig Calhoun, "Morality, Identity, and Historical Explanation: Charles Taylor on the Sources of the Self," *Sociological Theory* 9, no. 2 (1991): 232–38.

Rosa points out that Taylor's central thesis of humans as self-interpreting animals, entailing historicist claims that our identities have no other basis than our own contingent self-understandings, stands in tension with his moral theory holding transhistorical claims about what human beings are, based on assumptions of the human predicament to orient oneself toward the good.[5] There seems to be, as Frederick Olafson has emphasized, both an ontological and a historical subject at the center stage of Taylor's thinking. Radically historicist explorations as to why we have come to understand ourselves as having "selves" in the first place are mingled with ontological statements about the self's constitutive relation to moral sources that exist independently of our understanding or espousing them as such.[6] Indeed, Owen Flanagan finds it "extremely puzzling that such a historicist as Taylor" outlines a thesis on selfhood that is "unabashedly essentialist."[7] Although the commentaries differ as to whether the relationship between Taylor's philosophical anthropology and his moral theory, the presence of a historical and an ontological dimension in his thinking, is to be seen as an irresolvable tension or as two complementary aspects of selfhood, they share a common feature: they do not explore Taylor's expressivism in order to elucidate the intricate entwinement of subjectivist and objectivist claims in his conception of identity formation.[8] I argue that Taylor's anti-subjectivist account of authenticity, which constitutes the core of his recognition politics, can not be fully understood and criticized without an account of the historical roots of the expressivism underpinning it.

5. Rosa points out what he sees as Taylor's ambivalence on this point. The greatest obscurity in Taylor's philosophy is however, according to Rosa, that Taylor himself does not clearly articulate the non-essential consequences of his philosophical anthropology, see Rosa, *Identität und kulturelle Praxis*, pp. 64, 154. See also Smith, *Charles Taylor*, pp. 7–8, 101–2; Ruth Abbey, *Charles Taylor* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 2000), pp. 56–57.
6. Frederick A. Olafson, "Comments on Sources of the Self by Charles Taylor," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54, no. 1 (1994): 191–96. For a similar critique, see also Smith, *Charles Taylor*, pp. 7–8, 101–2.
7. Owen Flanagan, *Self Expressions: Mind, Morals, and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), p. 154.
8. For an account of Taylor's philosophical anthropology and moral theory as complementary, see in particular Abbey, *Charles Taylor*, p. 56. Joel Anderson's initiated account of the entwinement of subjective and objective elements in Taylor's moral theory, and the tension that they create in the core of his philosophy, lacks an account of expressivism, which, in my view, would further clarify the specific double feature of his philosophical project. See Joel Anderson, "The Personal Lives of Strong Evaluators: Identity, Pluralism, and Ontology in Charles Taylor's Value Theory," *Constellations* 3, no. 1 (1996): 17–38.

Expressivism

That so few commentaries on Taylor's "The Politics of Recognition" deal with expressivism might at first glance seem little surprising, as the term does not even appear in Taylor's 1992 essay. Its absence is indeed striking, as it has been an always present key term in Taylor's philosophy since the 1970s. Taylor borrowed the term from Isaiah Berlin, who referred to Herder's thinking as *expressionism*, denoting the crucial idea that the essence of man is his self-expression, which is to be considered as art.[9] But where Berlin purposely uses the same term as the school of art to underline the aesthetic connection, Taylor just as purposely does not let these two coincide.[10] And more importantly, by not reserving the term, as Berlin does, exclusively to Herder, Taylor turns it into an all-encompassing explanatory key to contemporary life: "Expressive individuation," he writes*,* "has become one of the cornerstones of modern culture. So much that we barely notice it."[11]

Since the first appearance of expressivism in Taylor's work on Hegel from 1975, it has had a twofold function in his philosophy. It is the most crucial interpretative tool in Taylor's understanding of German Idealism, notably Herder's, Humboldt's, and Hegel's philosophies. But it is also used diagnostically to capture and evaluate trends in contemporary life, indeed tied to Taylor's effort to normatively use the insights of the German philosophers to articulate "a contemporary expressivism which tries to go beyond subjectivism in discovering and articulating what is expressed."[12] Expressivism is thus both a hermeneutical, historico-analytical concept aimed at orienting us in the terrain of history of philosophy, and a highly normative concept directed against what Taylor perceives as the dominant trends in contemporary thinking on personal identity, that is, against the Anglo-American liberal notion of identity, as well as against its poststructuralist and conservative critiques.[13]

9. Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1976), p. 153; Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979), p. 1.

10. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), p. 13n1.

11. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), p. 376.

12. Charles Taylor, "Language and Human Nature," in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1, *Human Agency and Language* (1978; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), p. 247.

13. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991), pp. 17–18, 60–61.

In the 1990s, as Taylor all the more focuses on the normative dimensions of expressivism, well manifested in his 1991 book *The Ethics of Authenticity*, there occurs a noticeable change in his use of the term. Expressivism is overshadowed, and gradually replaced, by the notion of authenticity as the explicit analytical and normative framework in discussions of self-realization.[14] In the essay on recognition, the term expressivism is significantly absent. However, it still constitutes the center and implicit core of Taylor's recognition politics.[15] What Taylor previously called expressivism is in the text on recognition referred to as an "ideal of authenticity."[16] It seems as though the notion of authenticity is what connects the expressivism of the 1970s with the recognition of the 1990s. Or, as Taylor says in one of his most recent books: "Expressivism has become a culture of authenticity,"[17] a culture that is the very precondition for the appearance of a politics of recognition.[18]

By expressivism Taylor wants to capture, echoing Berlin, the human ability for self-expression. When he writes that "[h]uman life expresses the idea which it realizes," the question of course arises as to what Taylor thinks is expressed in the expressive act that he makes constitutive for subjectivity.[19] Insisting on describing this act sometimes as a self-discovery, a revelation, a finding, "a bringing-to-light," and sometimes as a realization,

14. See Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, esp. pp. 61–66.

15. In articles from the beginning of the 1990s, Taylor uses expressivism mostly as a theory of language and not primarily in relation to self-realization, see Charles Taylor, "The Importance of Herder" and "Heidegger, Language, Ecology," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1995), pp. 79–99 and 100–26. Expressivism as a mode of identity formation is, however, strongly present in *Sources of the Self* from 1989, as well as in his more recent work *Varieties of Religion Today*, where he sees the contemporary "expressive individualism" as a "new social imaginary," a notion Taylor uses to describe how a people under a certain time period imagines its social life. Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002), pp. 84, 93; Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004), pp. 23–30.

16. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 30.

17. Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today,* pp. 80–92. This book marks Taylor's return to expressivism as an explicit all-encompassing, explanatory concept. Even the Christian faith is being fundamentally reshaped by the expressivist revolution, Taylor asserts, and a new form of expressive religiosity is gradually appearing with the decline of religious institutions and the increasing individualization of religious life. See ibid., pp. 94–116.

18. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 31; Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, pp. 47–53.

19. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 17.

a making, a construction, "a bringing-about," it seems as if Taylor wants to avoid an either-or answer—as if expressivism gains its normative worth by transcending every clear-cut distinction between manifestation and creation.[20] Taylor's expressivism embraces the twofold lexical meaning of expression as a medium or an outward form conveying or reflecting an inner content, something that precedes and exists independently of the expression itself, as well as something that is brought into being in and by the expression itself.[21] Taylor is, however, never explicit about this doubleness, which is why it remains unclear whether his intention is to productively use it or implicitly overcome it. When he asserts that "[t]he notion that each of us has an original way of being human, entails that each of us has to discover what it is to be ourselves … it can be made only by articulating it afresh," focus seems to be on expression as a creative activity: by expressing who we are, we become ourselves.[22] As he continues, however, stating that "[w]e discover what we have it in us to be by becoming that mode of life, by giving expression in our speech and action to what is original in us," the center of attention is rather on expression as medium that reveals something inner, that precedes and exists independently of the expression.[23]

A similar oscillation characterizes Taylor's account of expressivism as "the idea which grows in the late eighteenth century" that "each one of us has an original path which we ought to tread," referring to an "obligation on each one of us to live up to our originality."[24] Here, originality is understood as a decisive starting point, denoting what already is. Originality for Taylor, however, also means the opposite of what already is, referring to a new and unpredictable creation, an outcome rather than a beginning:

> If we become ourselves by expressing what we're about, and if what we become is by hypothesis original, not based on the pre-existing, then

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20. Taylor, "Heidegger, Language, and Ecology," p. 117. See also Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, pp. 61–66.

21. To express means literally to squeeze or press something out of yourself, from the Latin word *ex-primere*, but it can also signify something more than just a medium, "the production of something." See *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), s.v. "Exprimo."; *The New Oxford Dictionary of English,* ed. Judy Pearsall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), s.v. "Expression."

22. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 61.

23. Ibid.

24. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 375.

what we express is not an imitation of the pre-existing either, but a new creation.[25]

The equivocation between manifestation and creation is often conceived of as creating a tension in the heart of Taylor's philosophy, possible to resolve with an either-or solution: either you understand it as a manifestation *or* as a creation, as an essentialist *or* a constructionist approach.[26] It has, moreover, with regard to Taylor's politics of recognition, been seen as creating an uncertainty as to what the object of the act of recognition actually is. Patchen Markell points out that recognition for Taylor on the one hand seems to be about identifying and affirming the existing—manifested in a group's claim to be recognized for what it authentically (and already) is—and at the same time about bringing a new or changed identity into being by the dialogical process of human interaction, which is constitutive of the recognition act itself.[27]

Markell refers this doubleness to an inconsistency between authenticity and dialogicity in Taylor's thinking. Taylorian authenticity refers to something that always "already is," and because of its already being there, it deserves to be recognized. The authentic identity is thus something that not only has to precede the act of recognition in order to stay authentic, but in order at all to qualify as a legitimate object for recognition. This, however, Markell asserts, collides with Taylor's dialogical assumption that the act of recognition constitutes the identity that it recognizes, which relies on an understanding of identity as a dynamic effect of dialogical interaction—indeed, that it is the very fact that we are dialogical beings, formed in constant interaction with others, that gives rise to the need to have our identities recognized in the first place.[28] As Markell points out,

25. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 62. Cf. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 31.

26. Rosa, *Identität und kulturelle Praxis*, p. 151; K. Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005), pp. 107–8, 305n63; Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003), pp. 40–41, 53, 58–59. Markell who complains that neither the critics nor the defenders of Taylor "inquire into the significance of the peculiar combination of essentialist and constructionist language Taylor employs" (p. 205n10), does not himself further explore this combination, but treats it as an unresolved tension between two independent and incompatible conceptions of identity.

27. Markell, "The Recognition of Politics: A Comment on Emcke and Tully," *Constellations* 7, no. 4 (2000): 496–97.

28. Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, pp. 40–41; Markell, "The Recognition of Politics," pp. 496–97.

authenticity has become tantamount to an "essentialist" understanding of identity. The "authentic" identity is seen as pre-political, stable, and closed, related to recognition as an identifying and confirming act. The "dialogical" identity, on the contrary, is seen as dynamic, associated with change, ongoing formation, openness, and related to recognition as a performative and constitutive process. Taylor's recognition theory, according to this claim, is thus anchored in two contradictory ideas about identity formation. A similar dualism between dialogue and monologue is at the center of Nancy Fraser's implicit critique of Taylor's recognition politics, in her claim that Taylor betrays his own dialogical premises by ending up promoting monologically construed identities.[29]

Monologism and dialogism are undoubtedly two positions that are set in play in Taylor's understanding of identity and recognition. Although it has an analytical value to clearly distinguish between the two, conceiving of them as two separate assumptions obscures expressivism as the most crucial conceptual element in Taylor's recognition politics. Whether you see authenticity and dialogicity as contradictory or complementary, attention is turned away from their inherent tensions, as well as from the meanings generated by their intimate intertwinement in Taylor's expressivist theory.

The clear-cut distinction between an essentialist and a nonessentialist conception of recognition is only possible to uphold by omitting the idea of expressive self-realization underpinning Taylor's theory.[30] Upholding it

29. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," p. 112. A similar tendency toward a dichotomous understanding of authenticity as that which comes from within, and dialogicity as that which is shared with others, characterizes interestingly enough the opposite interpretation promoted by Ruth Abbey, where the two notions are understood as separate but reconcilable, indeed complementary, elements in Taylor's philosophy. Abbey associates expressivism solely with authenticity, with giving an outer expression of what you find within, which she means is compatible with dialogicity understood as what you share with others. See Abbey, *Charles Taylor*, p. 87. For an account of Taylor's authenticity as "an always incomplete project," see Smith, *Charles Taylor*, p. 154.

30. In Markell's otherwise lucid and analytically sharp treatment of Taylor's essay, there is no discussion of expressivism. This is remarkable considering that Markell discusses Taylor in relation to both Herder and Hegel. Another example is Martin Löw-Beer, who although he investigates different forms of expressivism and situates Taylor's overall philosophy in the field of "hermeneutic expressivism," does not explore the specific conception of identity formation made possible by Taylor's expressivist outlook. See Martin Löw-Beer, "Living a Life and the Problem of Existential Impossibility," *Inquiry* 34, no. 2 (1991): 217–36.

not only obscures the point of Taylor's thesis, but also, more problematically, obscures what is truly problematic about it.

To grasp the characteristically Taylorian composition of historical ideas, let us turn to the theories of preformation and epigenesis. In light of these theories, we can distinguish the idea of individuation that underpins Taylor's view on expressive self-realization. His identity holism entails elements of both. The dynamic conception of essence characteristic of the epigenetic theory makes possible an individuation which is distinctly subjective, but nevertheless finds its primary locus beyond the individual. In light of the two interrelated dimensions of epigenetic development, it is possible to situate, via the concept of *Bildung*, Taylor's normatively anti-subjectivist notion of authenticity, being anchored in both a subjective and an objective realm.

Preformation and Epigenesis

In the end of the eighteenth century, within the new and expanding field of embryology, two models of development were competing in defining organic evolution: preformation theory and epigenetic theory. Preformation denoted the gradual manifestation of a beforehand preformed organism, which was assumed to have acquired its form and determination already in the beginning of time. It referred to a process whereby what was previously invisible becomes apparent, the successive and predictable unfolding of a pre-given content. This idea corresponds to the German word for development, *Entwicklung*, which originates from the Latin *explicatio*, referring to a multiplicity that unfolds. The word has roughly the same meaning as the Latin *evolutio*, in its original sense of unrolling a manuscript or unfolding a line of thought, from the verb *evolvere*, to unroll or unfold. Leibniz uses the term in this sense. For him *Entwicklung* is related to the soul's innate dispositions coming to light. That which is un-folding, ex-plicated, is something that has been there from the beginning, fixed like the content in an old scroll that is unrolled before the reader.[31] Like Leibniz's monads, existing beyond time and space and developing entirely independent from each other in accordance with their own inherent principle of individuation, the growth of a preformed organism was seen as an appearance of

31. Klaus Weyand, "Entwicklung," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), 2:550–52.

what was originally immanent. Hence, by lacking an idea of becoming and of temporal continuity, development was not understood as having an extension in time.[32]

Leibniz, however, in spite of his monadology, opened up for a notion of development as change in time. In connection with the discovery of what was called "middle species" (*Mittelwesen*), he articulated an idea of continuity that complicated the predominant absolute distinction between species as closed and stable entities, which his own previous theory implied.[33] His idea of continuity gestured toward a change in the understanding of development that was later to occur with the rise of the theory of epigenesis, where development came to be conceived as a temporal process of change.

The epigenetic theory explained development as a gradual and unforeseeable self-formation, where the organism's meeting with its surroundings was assumed to give rise to unpredictable new formations. Against preformed *evolution* was thus put spontaneous *generation*. The epigenetic theory had one of its most famous advocates in the German biologist and founder of modern embryology C. F. Wolff, who asserted that development is directed by a *vis essentialis*, a vital force or self-creative ability; a conception which through J. F. Blumenbach's notion of *Bildungstrieb* (formative drive), made the theory of epigenesis the dominant explanatory model within biology in the end of the eighteenth century.[34]

Since the rise of the epigenetic theory, a double meaning has thus been attached to the notion of development, denoting both a process of manifestation where what is developed is seen as already existing, and a process where what is developed is seen as the result of an ongoing creation. This double meaning still prevails. Indeed, as I will try to show, elements from both models are often confusingly intermingled in today's account of

32. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Monadology," in *Philosophical Texts*, trans. Richard Francks and R. S. Woolhouse (1714; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), pp. 268–69; Weyand, "Entwicklung," 2:550–52. It should be noted that Leibniz's theory of monadological development, in contrast to adherents of the theory of preformation, rests upon a rejection of causality and mechanistical explanations. The manifold of life forms and stages of development is by Leibniz seen as manifestations of one and the same force active in matter.

33. Weyand, "Entwicklung," 2:552.

34. Elizabeth B. Gasking, *Investigations into Generation 1651–1828* (London: Hutchinson, 1967), p. 43; Helmut Müller-Sievers, *Self-Generation: Biology, Philosophy, and Literature around 1800* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1997), p. 5; Weyand, "Entwicklung," 2:550–52.

essentialism and expressivism. Contemporary accounts of expressivism tend to conceive of the expression as more related to preformation than epigenesis. This is salient in Stefan Jonsson's account of expressivism as denoting something inner, unchangeable, finding its expression. In the expressive paradigm, Jonsson asserts, "[a] person's statements, behaviour, and social position are seen as *expressions* of his or her identity, the essence of which is taken to be an internal personal kernel."[35] Expressive identity is seen, Jonsson continues, as "grounded in an intrinsic essence, which conditions those manifestations, utterances, and ways of behaviour through which this identity is externalized or expressed."[36] This account of expressivism is, in my view, obscuring its core epigenetic idea of identity as a constant becoming, nevertheless fully compatible with an idea of individuation as something interior being exteriorized. When Taylor describes expressivism as entailing an idea of originality according to which "the differences define the unique form that each of us is called on to realize," there is indeed an idea of an essence which each one of us has to realize in our own unique way.[37] But to see this realization as unequivocally a question of manifesting an (already existing) immanent personal kernel, is to miss out the composite character of Taylor's account.

There is certainly a Leibnizian or preformationist thread in Taylor's view on individuation, above all in relation to his idea of difference or uniqueness as complementary parts in a wider whole, which constitutes the heart of his identity holism. Important, however, is that individuation for Taylor also to a great extent is about *becoming* unique—in line with the Greek original meaning of epigenesis, "to be born after"—signaling that nothing unique is there from the beginning.[38]

A criticism that is too anchored in a conception of essence as an original, unchanging, static kernel buried deep down in you that you have to "dig out and express," to use Anthony Appiah's pertinent phrase, fails to capture the conceptualization of essence made possible by the presence of

35. Stefan Jonsson, *Subject without Nation: Robert Musil and the History of Modern Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000), p. 7.

36. Ibid., p. 26.

37. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 17. Taylor writes: "There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, [which] gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*." Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, pp. 28–29.

38. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), s.v. "ἐπι-γίγνομαι."

epigenetic elements in Taylor's expressivist outlook.[39] The same critique can be leveled against those who defend Taylor as a nonessentialist thinker. Both Hartmut Rosa and Kristin Novotny stick to a static conception of essence, seeing it as that which is given once and for all, qualities which are possible to ascribe to persons independently of time and space.[40] An understanding of essence as that which is most unchanging in a person's identity has affinities with the idea of formation as the appearance of already preformed parts, but fails to account for essentialism as epigenetic self-realization.

Bildung *as Epiphany*

In the light of epigenetic self-realization as a key element in Romantic expressivism, we can more clearly see how Taylor's idea of individuation is anchored in a complex conception of essence as both something constant and original, in the sense of always already there (beginning, determining source)—identity is "who we are, 'where we're coming from'"[41]—and something that is in incessant change, in the sense of never there to stay, indeed, an effect of a continuous self-interpretative process. That is, essence both as a starting point and as an always future goal to reach.

In the end of the eighteenth century, when epigenetic ideas expanded from the domain of biology into the fields of philosophy, linguistics, and aesthetics, they became vital elements in German Idealism, and crucial components in the idea of *Bildung* as an individual's process toward self-realization.[42] As the organic connotations of *Bildung* suggest, the individual's self development is seen as growth from within, as a self-organized process, where the individual is master of her own unique self-realization, for which there is no outer standard or general measure. On this very point,

39. Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival," p. 155; Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, p. 107.

40. Rosa, *Identität und kulturelle Praxis*, pp. 57–64, 155. Rosa is, however, attentive to Taylor's account of self-realization as a bringing about of what already exists, as entailing both elements of unchangeability and unpredictability (pp. 168–70); Novotny, "'Taylor'-Made?" p. 14n1.

41. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 34; Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 33.

42. Müller-Sievers, *Self-Generation*, pp. 3–7, 38–42; Weyand, "Entwicklung," 2:550–51. See also Heribert M. Nobis, "Epigenesis," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 2:580.

however, it becomes clear how epigenesis and preformation intersect. Although opposites they share some fundamental traits, which might explain the all too often occurring tendency to blur the two. One of the key ideas in *Bildung*, that not two individuals are alike, can be understood as a kind of epigenetic and unpredictable growth, a self-formation through an inner drive. But it could also be seen as a version of Leibniz's monadology, where the idea of preformation, formation from within, is dislocated from the level of the species to the level of the individual.

Hence, the word *Bildung* refers to individuation as an inherent and unique process. But, as its theological origin conveys, it also means represent, depict (*bilden*), to make yourself into a representation of an ideal, to put yourself in relation to a model of man, originally the image of God, which is why it also refers to a common model in accordance to which human development should occur. *Bildung* is thus an individual but not entirely subjective process: it is deeply personal and cannot be measured by external standards, yet it relates to a common ideal and an objective instance.[43] When Wilhelm von Humboldt uses *Bildung*, he activates this doubleness, seeing it as an individual development and at the same time a process where the individual makes herself part of a larger whole, puts herself in harmony with a common ideal, and makes it into a part of her own individuality.[44] The same doubleness resonates in Taylor's normative account of genuine self-fulfilment, when he suggests that "[i]f authenticity is being true to ourselves ... then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize that [it] connects us to a wider whole."[45] In Taylor's promotion of a nonsubjectivist perspective of self-realization, "[a]uthenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands."[46]

We have seen that Taylor's expressivism entails both epigenetic and preformed elements. Yet *Bildung* as a kind of epigenetic growth constitutes

43. Ernst Lichtenstein, "Bildung," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 1:921–22; Sven-Eric Liedman, "In Search of Isis: General Education in Germany and Sweden," in *The European and American Universities since 1800*, ed. Sheldon Rothblatt and Björn Wittrock (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), pp. 79–81, 87.

44. Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Gränzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen," in *Werke in fünf Bänden*, vol. 1, *Schriften zur Anthropologie und Geschichte* (1851; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftl. Buchgesellschaft, 1980), pp. 64–92, 144–47.

45. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 91.

46. Ibid., p. 41.

the implicit core of his expressive idea of self-realization. Like Humboldt's idea of self-cultivation*,* Taylor's expressive authenticity is both a strongly individual development and a process whereby the individual becomes part of a higher order. Taylor, however, does not mention *Bildung* nor epigenesis. The term he uses to allude to the two dimensions in expressivism is *epiphany*.[47] The word is marked by a significant ambiguity, as it is both a religious term denoting the revelation of God to humankind through Christ, and a secularized aesthetic term, denoting a sudden glimpse of the deepest meaning of things.[48] In the Romantic epiphanic art, aiming at mediating a higher order beyond man and thus referring to something beyond itself, Taylor finds the language that he needs to articulate an individuality that is defined by the very transcendence of the individual and subjective. "The epiphany," Taylor states, "is our achieving contact with something, where this contact either fosters and/or itself constitutes a spiritually significant fulfilment or wholeness."[49] Epiphanic expressivism thus points toward the nonsubjective sources constitutive of who we are as subjects, and makes it possible for Taylor to be highly normative in his account of authenticity, as part of his theistically colored metaphysics.[50] Indeed, contemporary ideals of self-realization that lack an epiphanic quality, he calls "the worst forms of subjectivism," where the ideal of authenticity has been reduced to "self-gratitude," to "self-centred forms of self-fulfilment," or even to "deviant forms of authenticity," being detached from every constitutive moral source beyond the individual.[51]

What characterizes Taylor's epiphany, indeed his entire expressive outlook, is its totalizing and all-encompassing character. Even artists who vehemently negated the epiphanic expressivism of Romanticism,

47. Not many commentators mention Taylor's use of epiphany. Rosa and Smith are exceptions. They both point out the role of epiphany in Taylor's expressivism, making the expression into something more than just a self-expression, which refers to a reality beyond the subjective realm, see Rosa, *Identität und kulturelle Praxis*, p. 153; Smith, *Charles Taylor*, pp. 217–27.

48. See *Merriam-Webster OnLine*, s.v. "Epiphany," at the Merriam-Webster website, http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/epiphany.

49. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 425.

50. For a critique of Taylor's use of epiphany as a means of imposing a theistic normative perspective on reality, see Richard Rorty, "Taylor on Truth," in James Tully, ed., *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), pp. 20–33.

51. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 506–7; Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, pp. 82, 71.

like Baudelaire, Schopenhauer, or Nietzsche, are by Taylor considered as extended expressivists, falling outside of the expressive paradigm but nevertheless being determined by it.[52] What is not epiphanic is for Taylor yet versions of an epiphanic outlook; whether it is the "counter-epiphanic" realism of Flaubert, the "naturalist epiphany" of Zola, or the "indirect epiphany" of modernist art, they all seem to be incorporated in Taylor's model.[53] Hence, expressivism (with epiphany as an element in it) becomes a powerful theoretical machinery that converts all forms of difference into versions of the same; it accommodates its own opposites by dissolving them into complementary parts of a greater whole.[54] I will return to the consequences of this outlook, as it is intimately related to what I call his identity holism.

Taylor's Identity Holism: Difference as Complementarity

In the light of epigenetic theory, we can get a clearer understanding of why an account of expressivism as referring to an inner essence that is being given an outer expression fails to grasp the dynamic conception of essence underpinning Taylor's individuation as expressive self-realization. Instead of trying to situate Taylor as an essentialist or as a nonessentialist thinker, both perspectives resting upon a static conception of essence, I suggest a critical approach that examines Taylor's idea of integral identities.

The epigenetic process of *Bildung*, which implicitly underpins Taylor's ideal of self-realization through expression, is about achieving harmonious individual identities. In Taylor's account of expressive self-realization, unity, fulfilment, and wholeness are ever-present words.[55] Expressivism, Taylor asserts, is about making possible the fulfilment of ourselves by bringing man "in harmonious unity" with himself.[56] For the Romantics it

52. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 441–42. For a critique of Taylor's understanding of art, see Mette Hjort, "Literature: Romantic Expression or Strategic Interaction?" in Tully, ed., *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), pp. 131–35. See also Vincent Descombes, "Is There a Politics of Authenticity?" *Raritan* 13, no. 4 (1994): 102–22.

53. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 431–33, 469.

54. Taylor writes: "[W]e have all in fact become followers of the expressive view...even those who would want to reject expressive theories as metaphysical rubbish and obfuscatory mystification are nevertheless deeply affected by this outlook." Taylor, "Language and Human Nature," p. 235.

55. See Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 21; Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, pp. 2–3; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 384, 509; Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, pp. 64–65.

56. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 22.

was about "bring[ing] man back to unity with nature within and without," where man is "at one with nature in himself and in the cosmos."[57] Important to note is that expressivism is about *bringing back*. Indeed, Taylor's expressivist reading of Hegel arguably transforms the dialectic into a restoring or re-establishing movement.

Recognition, Taylor asserts in the essay, is about approving or acknowledging differences. Therefore, Taylor calls his proposed politics of recognition the politics of difference, as opposed to the politics of universal dignity, which exclusively focuses on the person as an abstract political subject. This, in Taylor's view, insufficient and sometimes even oppressive form of difference-blind recognition is now being superseded by a recognition politics, which according to him operates on a higher level of complexity by embracing and comprising otherness without eliminating it.[58]

Taylor's account of difference is here of central importance. In his understanding of expressive unity as the aim of genuine self-fulfilment, difference is taken to be complementary and constitutive parts of a larger whole, according to the principle: the more differentiated parts, the richer the whole. And here Taylor turns to Herder and Humboldt. By offering a "complementarity view" of difference, the "Herder-Humboldt model of liberalism" is superior, Taylor argues, to the dominant procedural model of Kantian-derived liberalism. By conceiving differences between people as enriching complementarity rather than as obstacles to collective associations, something that has to be abstracted in order to reach unity, it can better encompass differences in contemporary society. This model, he continues, "whose basic idea is that *we need each other, precisely in our difference, to be whole beings*," is thus the one needed in contemporary liberal society.[59] Each one of us has an interest in each others' differences as they complement our own partiality in the human potential and thus promote the richness and fulfilment of our own life.[60] Taylor refers here ultimately to a theistic idea of divine harmony, and although his explicit reference is to Herder, elements from a preformed harmonious order are

57. Ibid., pp. 39, 42–44.
58. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," pp. 37–43.
59. Charles Taylor, "Living with Difference," in *Debating Democracy's Discontent: Essays on American Politics, Law, and Public Philosophy*, ed. Anita L. Allen and Milton C. Regan, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), p. 225 (my italics).
60. Ibid., pp. 212–18.

also implicitly present.[61] Taylor's complementarity ideal bears traits from Leibniz's idea of a pre-established universal harmony, where all living creatures are interconnected in their differences, which makes each one of them into, as Leibniz puts it, "a perpetual living mirror of the universe."[62]

The underlying idea in Taylor's identity holism is that there is a self to be realized through a we. "Put baldly, teleologically," Taylor states, "we are meant to understand each other. This mutual understanding is growth, completion."[63] Identity holism, entailing an ideal of completion as whole-ness only realizable in communion is one of the core ideas in his politics of recognition. The drive is the completion of myself through others, where others being *the others* make me into *the same*. But as complementary elements in a wider whole, the others are also different manifestations of the same. By insisting on a dialogically anchored identity, Taylor is firmly grounded in Hegel's intersubjective thesis of the self's need of others. However, by phrasing difference as complementarity, the dyadic relation to the others subsists, as they remain complementary others who never enter the realm of the self. Even though Taylor talks about "interpenetra-tion of identities," where I constantly change my self-understanding in trying to understand others, otherness is always located in the others and therefore constituting a complement to me, sameness.[64] Through a "fusion of horizon," Taylor suggests that one can integrate one's own world with the worlds of others and thus transform oneself and displace one's own outlook. The suggested fusion is, however, not about the self's grasping its radical dependence on others, but rather of the others as complementing the whole in which I am a part.[65] Significant here is that Taylor never uses the notion of "the other," and very rarely "you" as opposed to "me." The counterpart of "me" is, in his dialogue philosophy, most often a "we." This communitarian, harmonizing ideal, where "me" and "you" are always enclosed in a we, transforms this "we" into an all-encompassing notion that, ultimately denoting a divine order, does not leave much room for radical alterity.

61. Taylor writes: "Herder, for instance, had a view of divine providence, according to which all this variety of culture was no mere accident but meant to bring about a greater harmony. I can't rule out such a view." Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 72.

62. Leibniz, "Monadology," p. 275.

63. Taylor, "Living with Difference," p. 216.

64. Ibid., p. 224.

65. Ibid., pp. 215–16; Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," pp. 67, 73.

For Taylor, Hegel brings Romantic expressivism to its completion, by achieving the most consistent synthesis in which individuals "see themselves not just as individual fragments of the universe, but rather as vehicles of cosmic spirit."[66] Although Taylor explicitly points out that such a spiritual dimension has lost its credibility for us today, it nevertheless remains crucial in his normative account of authenticity and recognition. Hegel's expressive unity, resting upon "a cosmic subject, to whom man could relate himself and in which he could ultimately find himself,"[67] seems to have become, in the transformation of expressivism into authenticity in the 1990s, the proper object of the politics of recognition: to restore the loss of a primal unity.

Taylor's expressivist reading of Hegel has in my view not been sufficiently challenged by reviewers of his recognition politics. On the contrary, one of his sharpest critics, Nancy Fraser, strengthens it by stating that the Hegelian idea at the core of Taylor's theory of recognition is a dialogically constructed identity where the other's recognition is seen as the source of attaining "an undistorted relation to oneself."[68] Hence, she does not challenge but reproduces Taylor's suppressing of the systematic equivocation characterizing Hegel's language, by which recognition is described as a double-edged act which both affirms and *at the same time* destabilizes the self. The Hegelian thesis of the self's dependence on the others' otherness lends itself to an understanding of difference not being primarily located *between* the self and the others, but *within*. Such an understanding suggests that my dependence upon others to gain a self-relation makes my identity grounded in my nonidentity with myself, rather than in my complementarity with others.[69]

Taylor's reduction of the Hegelian dialectic to a one-sided act of restoring is, in my view, seriously undermining the critical thrust of a recognition politics aiming to constitute an alternative to the Kantian-derived notion of autonomy, in the center of contemporary mainstream liberalism. Indeed, Taylor's politics of recognition fails to challenge the liberal conception of the self, being itself too bound up with the ideal of autonomy that it purports to undermine.

66. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 44; Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, pp. 11, 135.
67. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 49.
68. Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," pp. 109–10; here, p. 110.
69. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (1807; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), pp. 111–12.

Failed Critique of Autonomy

Already in a text from 1979 on the issue of collective language rights for Quebec, Taylor writes: "Because the language/culture that we need for our identity is one that we always receive from others, from our surroundings, it becomes very important that we be recognized for what we are."[70] Putting the human need for recognition at the center of a political philosophy, his theory of recognition can be seen as part of his systematic, communitarian critique of the liberal "atomist" understanding of the individual as a self-sufficient and independent unit.[71] As Taylor himself points out, to understand yourself as a person with an identity, based on being part of a society that regards you as such, is to incessantly relate to yourself by relating to the representations by which you are defined by others.[72] His effort to take into account both what he distinguishes as the contemporary drive for authenticity and self-realization, and the "fundamentally *dialogical* character" of human life, is a striving to articulate an understanding of individual autonomy compatible with an acknowledgment of human situatedness.[73] In this sense, Taylor is indeed continuing what he sees as Hegel's great project: reconciling autonomy with belongingness, by stressing our need of others in order to understand ourselves as autonomous individuals.

However, by suppressing the double-edged character of dialogicity— making it into the very enabling condition of individual and autonomous self-realization, without taking sufficiently into consideration that it at the same time, necessarily, also constitutes the greatest impediment to the same realization—his recognition politics stands in an ambiguous relation vis-à-vis the very idea of autonomy it questions. Patchen Markell has lucidly made the point that Taylor's recognition politics "at once acknowledges and refuses to acknowledge our basic condition of intersubjective vulnerability."[74] Markell is indeed right when he claims that Taylor's

70. Charles Taylor, "Why Do Nations Have to Become States?" in *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*, ed. Guy Laforest (1979; Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1993), p. 52.

71. See in particular Charles Taylor, "Atomism," in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (1979; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), pp. 187–221; Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," in *Philosophical Arguments* (1989; Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995), pp. 181–203.

72. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 25; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 15.

73. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 32. See also Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, pp. 40–53.

74. Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, p. 14.

understanding of recognition implies an aspiration for the sovereignty it explicitly rejects, as Taylor considers reciprocal recognition as the means by which intersubjective vulnerability can be overcome.[75] By conceiving self-realization through expression as about restoring self-possession through social mediation, Taylor focuses on how we are constituted by our relations to other, and how these relations are necessary to make sense of our lives; but he leaves out what Judith Butler reminds us, namely, "how we are not only constituted by our relations, but also *dispossessed* by them as well."[76]

Interestingly, being too bound up with an ideal of self-possession, although socially mediated, Taylor himself is vulnerable to the criticism that he passes on Derrida and Foucault. Postmodernism's radical undermining of the self is, Taylor argues, contrary to its aims as it tends to reproduce and promote the conception of the self as integral and autonomous, "leav[ing] the agent, even with all his or her doubts about the category of the 'self,' with a sense of untrammelled power and freedom before a world that imposes no standards."[77] Taylor could be criticized for ending up in a similar position, seeing recognition as a means to secure a terrain for autonomy by restoring integral identities.

Without acknowledging intersubjective dependency as entailing both an element of self-affirmation and of self-dispossession, Taylor's recognition politics takes the form of a one-sided affirmation of the other, thus failing to seriously question the liberal conception of the autonomous self. Being framed within a logic of exchange or equal distribution, it moreover correlates with the commodity market as a mainstream liberal ideal. Taylor has been criticized, by Nancy Fraser among others, for omitting issues of redistribution.[78] Although an analysis of the relations between class- or status-related exploitation and recognition is missing in his

75. Ibid., pp. 16, 57–58; See also Patchen Markell, "Tragic Recognition: Action and Identity in *Antigone* and Aristotle," *Political Theory* 31, no. 1 (2003): 8; and Maeve Cooke, "Authenticity and Autonomy: Taylor, Habermas, and the Politics of Recognition," *Political Theory* 25, no. 2 (1997): 270.

76. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), p. 24 (my italics).

77. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 60–61, 67; here, p. 61. See also Taylor, "Heidegger, Language, Ecology," pp. 118–19.

78. Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Postsocialist Age'," *New Left Review* 212 (1995): 68–93; Nancy Fraser, "Recognition without Ethics?" *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, nos. 2–3 (2001): 21–42.

account, the overall structure of his argumentation is too attuned to a logic of equal distribution. The aim for Taylor is an equal exchange of recognition, a distribution of what each of us needs in order to be independent and well-functioning individuals. Hence, mutual recognition is for him an unequivocal, liberal equality formula, according to which individuals are recognized by having their identities rightly affirmed.

By referring to difference as complementarity rather than alterity, Taylor leaves no room for the radicality in Hegel's thought that I can be a self for myself only by at the same time knowing myself to be an other for the other.[79] Intersubjective dependency so understood entails a profound challenge to the ideal of self-possession, as it makes it as impossible for the self to be one with itself, as to fuse with others in an expressive, complementary unity. A recognition politics that aims to offer an alternative to the dominant conception of individual autonomy should take this double movement into serious consideration.

79. Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 126, 185.

*Second-Best Life: Real Virtuality**

John Zerzan

Reams of empirical studies and a century or two of social theory have noticed that modernity produces increasingly shallow and instrumental relationships. Where bonds of mutuality, based on face-to-face connection, once survived, we now tend to exist in a depthless, dematerialized technoculture. This is the trajectory of industrial mass society: not transcending itself through technology, but instead becoming ever more fully realized.

In this context, it is striking to note that the original usage of "virtual" was as the adjectival form of "virtue." Virtual reality (VR) is not only the creation of a narcissistic subculture; it represents a much wider loss of identity and reality. Its essential goal is the perfect intimacy of human and machine, the eradication of difference between in-person and computer-based interaction.

Second Life. Born Again. Both are escape routes from a gravely worsening reality. Both the high-tech and the fundamentalist options are passive responses to the actual situation now engulfing us. We are so physically and socially distant from one another, and encroaching virtuality drives us ever further apart. We can choose to "live" as free-floating surrogates in the new, untrashed Denial Land of VR, but only if we embrace was Žižek calls "the ruthless technological drive which determines our lives."[1]

Cyberspace means collapsing nature into technology, in the words of Allucquere Rosanne Stone; she notes that we are losing our grounding as physical beings.[2] The key response in the arid techno-world is, of course, more technology. Drug technology, for the 70 million Americans with insomnia; for the sexually dysfunctional males now dependent on Viagra, Cialis, etc.; for the depressed and anxious, who no longer dream or feel.

And as this regime works to further flatten and suppress direct experience, VR, its latest triumph, comes in to fill the void. Second Life, There, and whatever

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* A collection of John Zerzan's essays, entitled *Twilight of the Machines*, will soon be published by Feral House.
1. Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (New York: Verso, 1997), p. 44.
2. Allucquere Rosanne Stone, "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?" in Michael Benedikt, ed., *Cyberspace: First Steps* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

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brand is next offer dream worlds to a world denuded of dreams. In our time, "virtual bereavement" and "online grieving" are touted as superior to being present to comfort those who mourn;[3] where tiny infants are subjected to videos; where "teledildonics" delivers simulated sex to distant subjects.

"Welcome to Second Life. We look forward to seeing you in-world," the website promo beckons. Immersive and interactive, VR provides the space so unlike the reality that its customers reject. For a few dollars, anyone can exist there as an "avatar" who will never grow old, bored, or overweight. Wade Roush of *Technology Review* declares Second Life a success insofar as it is "less lonely and less predictable" than the life we have now.[4] This inversion of reality is the consolation of the supernatural of many religions, and serves a similar substitutive function.

Reality is disappearing behind a screen, as the separation of mind from body and nature intensifies. The technical means are being perfected fairly quickly, making good on the promises of the early 1990s. At that time VR, despite much ballyhoo, could not really deliver the goods.[5] Fifteen or so years later, the technology of Second Life, for example, engages many users with a strong sense of physical presence and other pseudo-sensory effects. VR is now the definitive expression of the postmodern condition, perhaps best typified by the fact that nothing wild exists there, only what serves human consumption.

Foucault described the shift of power in modernity from sovereignty to discipline, and an enormously technologized daily life has accelerated this shift.[6] Contemporary life is thoroughly surveilled and policed to an unprecedented degree. But the weight and density of technological mediation create an even more defining reality and a more profound stage of control. When the nature of experience, on a primary level, is so deeply altered, we are seeing a fundamental shift—a shift being extended everywhere, at an accelerating pace.

VR best typifies this movement, its simulations and robotic fantasies a cutting-edge component of the steadily advancing, universalizing, standardizing global culture. Sadly pertinent is Philip Zai's judgement that VR is the "metaphysical

3. Joseph Hart, "Grief Goes Online" in *Utne*, April 2007.

4. Wade Roush, "Second Earth," in *Technology Review*, July/August 2007, p. 48.

5. Widely circulated books include: Howard Rheingold, *Virtual Reality* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of VR* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), Rudy Rucker, R. U. Sirius, and Queen Mu, *Mondo 2000: A User's Guide* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1992), Nadia Magnemat Thalmann and Daniel Thalmann, *Virtual Worlds and Multimedia* (New York: Wiley, 1993), and Benjamin Woolley, *Virtual Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992). An excellent corrective is Robert Markley, ed., *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996).

6. For his idiosyncratic twist on this, see Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, trans. Phil Beitchman, Lee Hildreth, and Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987).

maturity of civilization."[7] All that is tangible, sensual, and earth-based corrodes and shrinks within technologically mediated existence.

Of course, there are forms of resistance to this latest efflorescence of the false. But a Luddite reaction always seems to pale before the magnitude of what it faces. There is a very long, sedimented history behind every newest technological move, an unbroken chain of contingency. The leap involved in grasping new technics is made easier by the gradual impoverishment of human desires and aptitudes caused by the earlier innovations. The promise is, always, that more technology will bring improvement—which more accurately means, more technology will make up for what was lost in the preceding "advances." The only way out is to break this chain, by refusing its imperative.

Heidegger assailed the "objectification of all beings…brought into the disposal of representation and production," pointing out that "nature appears everywhere as the object of technology," and concluding that "World becomes object."[8] He also understood how technology changes our relation to things, a phenomenon underlined by VR. "Talk of a respect for things is more and more unintelligible in a world that is becoming ever more technical. They are simply vanishing," remarked Gadamer.[9] Virtuality is certainly that "vanishing."

There has been in fact a recent counterattack in favor of respecting things as such, in favor of freeing them from an instrumental status, at least on the philosophical plane. Titles such as *Things* (2004) and *The Lure of the Object* (2005) speak to this.[10] Desire for the authentic experience of "thingness" (Heidegger's term) is a rebuke to the pathological condition known as modernity, a realization that "accepting the otherness of things is the condition for accepting otherness as such."[11]

Immersion in virtual reality is a particularly virulent strain of this pathology because of the degree of interactivity and self-representation involved. Never has the built environment depended so crucially on our participation, and never before has this participation been so potentially totalizing. With its appeal as, literally, a second life, a second world, it is The Matrix—one that we ourselves continually pay to reproduce. Heinz Pagels's description of the symbolic, in general, certainly

7. Philip Zai, *Get Real: A Philosophical Adventure in Virtual Reality* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), p. 171.

8. Martin Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Word: 'God is Dead'," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. and ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 191.

9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), p. 71.

10. Bill Brown, ed., *Things* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004); Stephen Melville, ed., *The Lure of Things* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2005).

11. Brown, *Things*, p. 12.

applies to virtual reality: in denying "the immediacy of reality and in creating a substitute we have but spun another thread in the web of our grand illusion."[12] This use of cyberspace takes representation to new levels of self-enclosure and self-domestication.

Spengler's survey of Western civilization led him to conclude that "an artificial world is permeating and poisoning the natural. The civilization itself has become a machine that does, or tries to do, everything in mechanical fashion."[13] Second Life, Google Earth, etc., with their graphics cards and broadband connections, are sophisticated and enticing escape hatches, but it's still the same basic machine orientation. And VR, as David Gelernter happily proclaimed, "is the sort of instrument that modern life demands."[14]

Born of military research and the entertainment industry, virtual reality depends on us for its projected role throughout society. Real virtuality will be the norm when it infects various spheres, but only with our active consent. Wittgenstein felt that "it is not absurd, e.g., to believe that the age of science and technology is the beginning of the end for humanity."[15] Science and technology are the greatest triumphs of civilization, and the point is more grimly apparent than ever.

12. Heinz R. Pagels, *The Dreams of Reason: The Computer and the Rise of the Sciences of Complexity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

13. Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 94.

14. David Gelernter, *Mirror Worlds* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), p. 34.

15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 56.

Islamofascism, Q.E.D.

Russell A. Berman

Matthias Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*. Trans. Colin Meade. New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2007. Pp. xxv + 180.

Matthias Küntzel's account of the centrality of anti-Semitism within jihadist ideology appeared in German in 2002. The text has been expanded and updated for this translation. The volume includes a foreword by Jeffrey Herf, who highlights key aspects of the argument and the context. Heir to the tradition of Critical Theory—the website of the original publisher, Ça ira, carries a quotation by Hans-Jürgen Krahl, Adorno's student and antagonist—Küntzel's forcefully argued presentation stretches from the origins of twentieth-century Islamism, with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, to the worldwide wave of anti-Semitism that followed the 9/11 attacks.

Küntzel demonstrates that jihadism depends on Jew-hatred. He traces a lineage from the anti-Jewish violence in Palestine under the British mandate, through riots against Jewish communities in Egypt, attacks on Jewish victims around the world (Munich and Buenos Aires are notorious examples), and the terrorism of 9/11: according to Küntzel, the anti-Semitic vision of al-Qaida defined the World Trade Center as a specifically Jewish target. That this goes far beyond any plausible anti-Zionism hardly needs pointing out. Or perhaps it does. Küntzel discusses how western political discourse resists acknowledging the anti-Semitic character of jihadist—and sometimes, more broadly Islamic—behavior. The stereotypical appeal to a putative anti-Zionism has by now lost any ability to sharpen categorical distinctions and has become, instead, a *de facto* excuse for anti-Semitism. Yet even less extreme positions fail to diagnose the hatred: the 9/11 Commission evaded bin Laden's explicit anti-Semitism, preferring to locate the origins of terrorism less controversially in western policies. The Commission's cowardice on this point is symptomatic of the ideological naïveté of contemporary western liberalism: there is nothing wrong in the world that is not the exclusive fault of the West.

Reading jihadist anti-Semitism through the lens of German history and intellectual traditions, Küntzel sheds important light on the category of "Islamofascism." While he does not dwell on the terminological debate, his treatment

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is a compelling response to politically correct efforts to prohibit the term. He illuminates it on several levels. The first involves a specific historical genealogy: the support that the Nazi regime provided to the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1930s, contaminating an incipient anti-colonialism with a Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism. Hence the shift in ideological focus from Egypt (the main British colony and the main venue of the Brotherhood) to Palestine: important from an anti-Semitic perspective, but relatively marginal in terms of the shape of empire. Part of this nexus involves the sorry story of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, scion of a wealthy and reactionary clan, who eventually made his way to Berlin, where he broadcast Nazi propaganda to the Arab world. (Küntzel wrote on this in *Telos* 129.)

A second tier of the Islamofascism thesis involves the anti-emancipatory culture; here, Küntzel's indebtedness to Critical Theory's diagnosis of fascism is most evident. A collectivism that denigrates individual expression, hostility to sensuous pleasure, repressive sexual morality, degradation of women, and a celebration of death: these features of the European totalitarianisms recur within jihadism. They are furthermore linked to anti-Semitism, since Islamist propaganda associates Jews pejoratively with dimensions of pleasure—cinemas and popular music, i.e., the "culture industry"—viewed as threats to an ideologically constructed Islamic identity. This repressive asceticism is fundamentally hostile toward the particularity of any difference, within the grand homogenization projects of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism; it is "the rage at everything different, which invariably vented itself in action against the 'other.' . . . the Islamists' utopia was (and is) aimed at suppressing differences so as to extinguish individuality and submit everybody to the binding forces of the clan and the religion" (59–60).

In a third tier, Islamofascism figures as the ambiguous political terrain in which—as with historical fascism and Nazism—elements from the right and left interweave in a volatile combination. That the conventional political landscape— fascism on the right, Communism on the left—is untenable has been discussed repeatedly in this journal. Islamism is similarly amphibious, mixing elements of leftist social programs with rightist repressive morality. Its anti-imperialism (but Hitler railed against British imperialism, too) goes hand in hand with anti-Communism—stunningly the world Left stands by silently in the face of the repression of the traditional Left within the Islamist world. That is evidently the price of mindless anti-imperialism. Or does the Left calculate that the benefits of supporting the anti-Semitism of Islamism outweigh the costs of betraying its own comrades? When Hamas seized power in Gaza, even the Palestinian President Abbas called it a "putsch"—that is the accusation of Islamofascism by way of historical allusion. *Jihad and Jew-Hatred* adds enormously to our understanding of the roots of contemporary terrorism and challenges us to think through the political substance of the contemporary discourse on terror, the war on terror, and the Middle East.