

The background of the cover is an abstract composition. A large, textured red fabric-like shape dominates the upper right and middle sections. Below and to the left of this, there are more textured, painterly elements in shades of blue, purple, and orange, suggesting a globe or a complex, layered structure. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

# Theatre Number Event

Three Studies on the  
Relationship between  
Sovereignty,  
Power and Truth

Soumyabrata Choudhury

IIAS

# THEATRE, NUMBER, EVENT



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SOUMYABRATA CHOUDHURY



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
RASHTRAPATI NIVAS, SHIMLA

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To the memory of  
Paul Fletcher and for Jayant,  
the immortal



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How many institutional occasions are there of which one can make such a transcendental characterization?

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One day Sharmistha and I took a walk through the streets of the city of Prague. I end my book with a reference to that city. But the walk, which both of us agreed was like walking into and within a crystal ball, doesn't seem to me to be quite completed. Is my reference an effort to trace its completion? But isn't this a futile intrigue until one answers a fundamental question: can one leave traces in a crystal ball? Or maybe the really fundamental question is – does one *want* to leave traces in a crystal ball? The trace of a completed reference? Only Sharmistha can help me with these slightly hallucinated questions...

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## Preface

Two questions, like two swords, crossed and irreconcilable, present themselves in the world as it exists today: are we *free* as never before or are we yoked to a most cruel and unforgiving situation of *debt*? But, who “we”? Factually localized, the “we” is spread over several parts of the world. In the Middle East, rousing joined to the initiatives in Egypt and the symbol of Tahrir Square, people cry out and fight for, win over – while paying a terrible price with their lives, bodies and spirits – an unforeseen and fragile freedom. But, what “freedom”? There are usually two types of response to this: one is the type which says that the “freedom” which countries in the Arab world lack, or lacked, is the one guaranteed by a constitutional democracy – which democracy is the ‘sovereign’ goal of the Arab Spring. The other type of response is more dry and pragmatic, saying that no overall aim or name explains the happenings. We need to look at it country by country, society by society, region by region – Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria etc. The only common feature of all these specific cases is the misleading outward phenomenon that people are out on the streets, they are spontaneously or/and militantly *assembled*.

It seems that the military establishment in Egypt has a more developed structural understanding of the situation. They seem to understand that everything *is* happening at the level of an actual assembly of the people, an assembly which is historically



specific and unique. So the military since the uprising against Hosni Mubarak, in a kind of musical and arithmetical syncopation with the *one* declaration of the popular assembly – in Tahrir Square, in particular – which goes by the cipher, “freedom”, has issued a series of declarations whose names are *numbers*, that is, Declaration 1, Declaration 2 and so on. For instance, as a gesture of apology and explanation for their terribly violent and violative action of beating up a woman activist and tearing off her clothes, the military cites “Declaration 91” as the declaration of regret. In other words, for the single and rousing declaration of the assembly which, in its exuberance, courage, and outrage, remains the *same*, the military orchestrates a mediate medley of tactical declarations that strangely seek to attenuate the ‘violent’ immediacy of the space of assembly while covering and rationalizing the actual violence it does with these mediate – and numbered – declarations. So either the military is like a proto-Constituent Assembly, constituting not so much a future democratic republic with its constitution and law as the present exigency itself by marking out its surface with these numbered declarations – or, it is a proto-land surveyor who marks out the brutal terrain for the future democratic habitation, nay, civilization...

If the “people” are the name of an utterly new assembly in the Arab world, Europeans are, by the parameters of popular sovereignty, an ‘old’ people, none older among them than the Greeks. It was as if the habit of assembling as a *people* had been outgrown by the complex and subtle history of European sovereignty, which in its later-day form, is either all *idea* (of age-old culture, civilisation as well as the shared tradition of modernity) or all *market*. Well, as a market, the European Union meets its intense contemporary crisis of debt, since at least 2011, with a certain nomination of that intensity – the name “Greece”. The situation, minimally put, is the following: Greece, a ‘sovereign’ nation, among the other nations of the EU, is in danger of *defaulting* on its sovereign debt. Either Greece can actually default and go out of the embrace of the European Union, it’s *idea* – or it can, with the help of a massive bail-out by other more solvent nations (like Germany), stay within but by *appearing*, in an all-comprehensive exposure, almost

denudation, to *pay* for its status as bad-debtor. How? By Greece, the sovereign stake-holder in the relatively new, market-driven ‘idea’ of European unity, community and sovereignty, making its ‘old’ Greek people, the oldest, democratic people, that is, pay for the bail-out by practising – and appearing to practise – ‘austerities’. An old people are so obliged to practice their oldest civic art – the art (*techne*) of austerity (*askesis*) which makes them such a sober, responsible, delicate and cultivated ‘people’!

As it happens, the people in Greece today are refusing the obligatory theatre of austerity in which they are meant to appear with their lives and stakes unified with the so-called idea of European sovereignty. But they aren’t refusing for the sake of some *other*, greater sovereignty, whether more Greek or more European. They are doing it *in the present*, refusing to play the game of sovereignty which surreptitiously articulates the stake of nation with that of the market – and those of the former two with the oldest name of emancipated sovereignty, “people”. The Greek people, in the present, are reviving their oldest democratic heritage – they are *assembling*. Yet because their stakes are not in some more originary and authentic sovereignty but in the exigency of *existence*, they are, in a strangely incommensurable way, joined to the ‘new’ peoples of the Arab world rather than to their ancient and venerable Athenian assemblies.

Or is it that the Arab peoples are the new inheritors of the Athenian democracy of the past and its assembled people? The new Athenians? No, that cannot be so because if in Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Yemen, etc., people have *actively* and *entirely* chosen to default on their oppressive debts of old power, old sovereignty, then no debts of that very act, in the name of an ‘inheritance’ however emancipatory, must be prescribed. However it can be pointed out, with some irony and a lot of trepidation, that just like the guardians of Plato’s *Republic*, who were being trained to rule the city of Athens in normal times of ‘debt’ and exceptional times of *defaulting*, the military establishment of Egypt (and surely other countries) is preparing the ground, on the very site of a “revolution”, for the future art of making the assembled people disappear into *new* networks of credits and obligations, debts and

duties, of making the people 'old' with guilt and self-exclusion. And in the *event* of refusal and default..., preparing to re-enter the space of assembly with serial declarations, neutral numbers – and the unbearably partisan music of bullets?

The point is, *everyone knows it!* Switch on the TV and every interview of those speaking out among the thousands in these assemblies, shows that people fully and lucidly know these possibilities. But something else also 'shows', indubitably and exactly: the present, as it is happening, is too real, too urgent, too *lively*, to be captured by the lucid and dismal light of irony and diagnostic competence. The present *escapes*.

## Introductions I & II

What is to follow is a set of two introductions. The first enquires into the possible meanings of a “study”, a “passage” and their relationship. The second introduces the particular studies and passages of this work – and their ‘forced’ relationship.

### **INTRODUCTION I: WHAT IS A STUDY? WHICH IS A PASSAGE?**

However modest, felicitous or ingratiatingly vague it might turn out to be in its actual unfolding, a study is always the violent enforcement of *that* which it studies. That which is subject to study, in profile or frontal assault, or in delicate, nearly invisible, abeyance, in each of these modalities, is indeed a *face*. A word from Greek which will draw our attention in the time to come, the word “*prosopon*”, means ‘face’ but with the strange qualification that not everything which appears has a face. Not everything that comes into spatial and temporal view, that brushes against existence rudely or fleetingly, is every-one – with a face and address of habitation, a name and signature of self-possession. It is not as if women, slaves, foreigners in ancient Greece don’t appear in the marketplace, in religious functions and in the theatre. But do they have a *prosopon*, a face that faces the direction of the world whence comes the debt, obligation and right to participate in the *affairs of existence*, which, in effect, are the affairs of *the face*, the *prosopon*? The unequivocal

reply to this question is suspended for the moment but it can be minimally affirmed that in the marketplace, religious assembly and theatre, women, slaves and foreigners do *pass*.

A passage, then, is the ec-stasy of adjacent re-emergence in the face(lessness) of uncertain rights of existence and individuality, of the uncertain form and name of this-ness and that-ness. It is the life of betweenness unbound from the defining terms of its conditions of emergence and manifestation. An intense episode of manifest reality, then, but without the presentation of a face or faces that radiate it... An event of intense anonymity without the propriety of a name... But how further strange that the *prosopon* is also the actor's mask which produces precisely a fictional adjacency for the proper domain of existence, of that which exists! An actor's *prosopon* doesn't unilaterally proceed from the guarantee of the that-ness of 'that' which the actor purportedly *studies*. Quite the opposite. In this fictional 'study', the actor *enforces* the object of study through the mask she dons. The mask hosts a passage of forms which is inseparable from a passage of force which every enforcement requires. The hypothesis in the foregoing is that within the sovereign and impassive neutrality befitting the ruling image of the philosopher who 'studies' the objective and self-sufficient question, problem or domain whose possible resolution is in scientific and veridical continuity with their actual problem-status, the actor's violent and *disjunctive* study of masks and personae lurks.<sup>1</sup>

The hypothesis of the actor's spectre haunting the philosopher is initially supported by the subjective reaction of the latter in the shape of two simultaneous but apparently contradictory anxieties: on the one hand, it is as if the philosopher feels an overwhelming automatic rush, an involuntary movement, from the several modal degrees of veridical reliability or truth, to a region of seduction and paralogism which passes from knowledge to error, truth to rhetorical falsification *without disjunction*. The actor is the vehicle of this automatism; further, this illegal and fluent connectivity between truth and fiction is the generic passage we call "art". On the other hand, the actor's *prosopon* is nothing if not a disjunctive face, disjunct with the 'natural' passages of life and the world. The

whole force or power of the actor's, and art's, persuasion is that of enforcing the existence of a 'face' – *prosopon* in the sense of a true status of being which slaves, women and foreigners do not enjoy – through the precipitation of the other *prosopon*, which is the "mask", completely ungrounded and in disjunctive (non)relation with any natural, ontological or legal position. From this positionlessness or void-basis, the actor *enforces* the very possibility of a domain of the distribution of 'objects' and 'subjects' according to a 'logic of position'. Indeed, as the vehicle and support of fabulous passages and automatisms, the actor-artist is a magician. As the voice and the mask, the voice in the mask, of the disjunctive and violent declaration of possible existence, she is an axiomatician.

Now it must be clarified that the real point of the philosopher's accusation flowing effortlessly from his anxieties, does not concern either the ecstasy of the passage or the violence of the axiom. Both these modes, the philosopher will resort to – as choice of method within the protocols of a discipline which intends absolute mastery over the origination and development of its object; and as ways of consolation in the *event* of an unmasterable experience of loss of discipline and ruination of the philosophical 'object'<sup>2</sup>. If "discipline" in the above means *orientation* and disposing oneself according to that orientation, *whether in its maintenance or in its loss*, the philosopher's great difficulty with the spectral figure of the artist(-actor) concerns the latter's alleged *indifference* to any orientation, including the loss of it. The artist or actor is completely immersed in the particularity of her site, and her *prosopon* or mask doesn't express a stakes in the generalizability of its contour and form so as to present it as the adequate container of the other *prosopon*, which is supposed to be the true existent 'legal' face. Philosophical orientation is precisely the programme of this generalizability while the fearful accusation rings in the corridors of philosophy that there is a strange space of non-orientation or absolute particularity or ungrounded singularity, a non-space, that is, which claims a shattering *effect of truth* indifferent to any true stakes or orientation.

But why talk of "claim", which must ground itself on some argument and evidence, some 'orientation' in such a milieu of

drastic indifference? Because art, in a nutshell, expresses a violent claim that truth is a disjunctive effect indifferent to its pre-existent value, measure and stakes in any such 'discipline' as philosophy. The truth is the effect of a non-oriented existence whose emergence on the site of the actor's mask, her *prosopon*, doesn't reveal another more true, more profound and veridically certified *prosopon* behind the mask. Nor does it simply 'play' the game of art as simulacrum to reduce non-oriented existence to mere 'inexistence' or fictional pseudo-existence. The violent and indifferent claim of art to truth is the radical consequence of its 'study' in that the latter passing through all the layers of technique and aesthetic self-awareness abruptly produces its conclusive statement: which is that the study consists not of the portraiture, extraction or synthesis of this or that subject of artistic representation – but of the 'generic' particularity that art *is*. Which further means that in the particular happening of an artistic site, in its pure indifference and non-orientation of eventness, something true comes into being. Exactly at the level of the event something comes into being and yet insofar as it is true, something insists on being thought according to the orientation of the 'concept'.

If we have to take hold of this last proposition and save it from the conceptual *sovereignty* of philosophy incarnated in the philosopher's universal and specialized *prosopon*, then we must suture it meticulously to the particularity of the artistic site. Such a localization puts the thought of the proposition in its intrinsic non-oriented play of the site, or mask (*prosopon*), so as to demand a conceptual *orientation of non-orientation*<sup>3</sup>. This is the threshold of articulating a demand, surely a violent one, yet in crucial distinction from the oriented violence of philosophy which *decides* a metaphysical programme for the perpetual and reciprocal pre-existence of the concept of truth and truth of the concept, a pre-existence which *does not pass*. It is at this point that we are confronted with two kinds of decisions and two kinds of immemorials. And in their mutual exclusions and complicities, these pairs solicit the question of the concept either along the orientation of sovereign form or along the diagonal of an eventual suspension.

The nexus of decision(s) and the immemorial(s) unravels in the following way: from the site of art's depth-less *prosopon*, a violent truth is extracted and decided which prescribes a kind of generic 'art' immanent to the particularity of the site. However, in being a decision on truth torn from the site, it is totally exposed to the contingent conditions of its emergence. Its contingency is the measure of its being-a-decision and based on this precarious measure, a so-called truth of 'generic art' coming-into-existence in the site of a particular prosopoeic material can only be *wagered upon*<sup>4</sup>. What is wagered upon then is the coming-into-existence of a *new immemorial*. Contrary to this, the metaphysical programme of philosophy decides the pre-existence of the form of truth. This is what we have called the oriented and constructive violence of a programme that too decides on the existence of the immemorial but in the mode of a *disavowed* passage. The disjunctive moment of decision, as if *naturally*, passes into the eternal co-presence of the immemorial to all contingent sites and moments. This is a strange diagnosis because on the one hand, the decision of philosophy, its oriented avowal of a necessary axiomatic violence, is its power, glory and modesty; and on the other, the decision which, *absurdly*, brings into existence a pre-existent immemorial of metaphysics can achieve this logical impossibility by a passage from the decision to immemorial existence as if it is a transition from a mute pre-existence to a philosophical voice and life. This effectively means either the disjunctive decision or the secondary passage between forms of existence must be disavowed to render philosophy's metaphysical programme consistent and save its orientation.

Thus everything in the philosopher's 'study' seems to be tied to the 'legal' enforcement of that which is studied, with a hint of auto-philosophical series of passages both leading up to and following from the violent but legitimate moment of decision. This is in the exact image of 'law-enforcement' wherein there applies the force of law but not a *forcing*. The philosophical anxiety then springs from the illegal and repulsive appearance of a forced *prosopon* of the actor in public view, an appearance which, under this anxiety, is equally suffused with a kind of sexual charge – an 'ob-scene'



forcing<sup>5</sup>. But let it not be forgotten that this above imagery is part of a subjective reaction-formation and joined to such a constellation of associations, the philosopher and the actor can only be locked in a polemic. But inconsistently, even contradictorily, the stakes of the polemic are not simply victory in the war of discourse and image but something in the nature of an access to truth, whether through the study or the passage. Suppose then that fundamentally, 'forcing' doesn't pertain to the issue of law and its obscene, if exigent, transgression but to that of a constitutive *void* that joins and separates the surge of an automatism and the punctuality of a decision... Suppose, further, that the void constitutes *both* the presentations – the *prosopon* presented in the philosopher's ontological study of 'that' which exists and the *prosopon* in adjacent artistic emergence irrespective and indifferent to any ontological orientation...

These suppositions perform a crucial involution in the status of the philosopher and provide a decisive corrective to the philosopher's subjective association for the actor. Under the convocation of the void, the philosopher enters the register of a speech ungrounded from the metaphysics of a full and true *prosopon*, without abandoning its thinking orientation and yet suspending the orientation we have shown to be divided between the pre-existence of an immemorial and the prosthesis of a decision. At the same time, the void prescribes the philosophical – or ontological, to be more precise – correction of the view that the actor's *prosopon* is a hallucinated transsubstantiation, a passage between illegal fluids, a sort of 'substance abuse'. No, the suppositions played out suggest that the philosopher's ontological vocation is as much sutured to the void as the actor's non-oriented topology is made with a void-neighbourhood. Only upon the acceptance of this common void-condition, can the question of truth's value and role in the sites of philosophy and art be revisited in their differentiation. Otherwise, the trap of polemic will snap shut once more and thereupon we will be either edified by the originary form of philosophical truth or dashed to the rocks of violent art's truth-effects which are 'out-of-form' (or 'out-of-place'). Indeed we are trying to extend the debate from the topology of place and out-of-place, centred articulation

and adjacent emergence, to the common ground(lessness) of the void.

But, in a minimal way, what can one say about the void, what can it be? *What will it have been?* No doubt one can proffer its mathematical name (“the empty set”) as well as its other names, whether cosmological (“the empty place” where the atoms strike), its theological (Pauline *kenosis*) or political (“the voided status of the law” in a state-of-exception) etc. Let us remark this much that the void intervenes between the study and the passage, the decision and the automatism, the disjunctive moment and the plasticity of time. And since no intervention can have a neutral role in an existing state, matrix or *prosopon*, it must itself become the partisan name of a situation-in-torsion. But even this general function must be specified on both sides of the intervention – and if philosophy is the polemical voice on the side of the decision on the study and ‘what’ to study, and art the paradigmatic effect of a ‘truth’ that magically and illegally leaps over or passes through the protocols of study, then the void *exposes* both decision and magic to their ‘forced’ status. But forced how, or put another way, the decision and the magic force who and what? The answer is simple and shattering – nothing. Any presupposition of an object or substance which is forced, despite all eventuality of great violence, would still be an ‘enforcement’. The Law, locus of all enforcement, can and does, follow the most elusive and tortuous paths of organic transformation; the Law arrives punctually at thresholds of organic ‘decidability’ to make, protect and sanction the most provocative decisions. The schema is the following: it is as if the law of ‘natural’ passages provides an opening onto the ‘place’ of decision such that the ‘human’ institution of Law now comes into operation to enforce and justify the actual decision on some sort of sovereignty of Nature. It is the schema of a dialectic between quality and quantity, only operating in the unexpected direction where the process of qualitative transformation gives access to a new ‘place’ or quantitatively speaking, the new *one* of a decision. But of course this direction of legal-dialectical enforcement must always be complemented by the reverse direction: a qualitative passage is as much the result of a One-decision which mobilises the

place of decision into a new, if post-decisionally involuntary, logic of plasticity and transformation. Thus despite great involuntary surges of energy and extreme performative incandescences of enunciation as well as gesture, the reciprocal enforcement of decidability and decision, quality and quantity, remains within a legal-dialectical economy.<sup>6</sup>

But the ‘forcing’ alleged in relation to the constitutive void-basis that brings the two sides of the dialectic into a suspensive, ungrounded and non-oriented contact – which by those qualifications can’t be a unity – is of another order. The effective forcing of a ‘nothing’ or the effective ‘nothing’ that is forced, allude to a violence that exposes the void-basis as a constitutive *inconsistency* of these given systems, each seemingly assured in its conceptual *prosopon*: Philosophy, Art, etc. On the side of philosophy, the inconsistency violates ontological presentation from *within* its resources; on the side of art, it permits the defaulting of the event of art on its hitherto accepted obligation to not simply represent an original truth of Being but to also represent itself in originary *debt* to Being and its truth. It is, indeed, a moment of salutary irony when the much-maligned ‘nothing’ of art’s ontological basis enters into philosophy’s inner register and henceforth determines philosophy’s orientation to Being and Truth on this void-basis<sup>7</sup>. Such an irony, no doubt, prepares for a mutual indiscernibility and indeterminacy between philosophy and art. But we must hazard the hypothesis of a third stage of the relationship when they re-emerge into a differentiated topology wherein philosophy occupies now a new and restricted adjacency, a kind of theatre at the margins, to practice an unforeseen discipline of ‘waiting’... waiting for what? For a truth to arise *elsewhere*, in some other adjacency such that at the so-called centre, the void remains the constitutive common, the *non-oriented sovereign*. So philosophy is not anymore either auto-philosophy with an organic passage to truth nor the violent authority that studies that which it decides into existence – and it is not the absurd and terribly insidious synthesis of both.

Yet it wouldn’t be wrong to say that this point onwards, if it is to exist, philosophy must take upon itself a much greater *unsanctioned* violence. If as a passion of waiting, philosophy waits for the

generic effect of truth arising ‘elsewhere’ which is the adjacency we have indexically called ‘art’ and ‘the actor’s *prosopon*’, as an *act*, philosophy commits the act of a wager, a totally violent and exposed wager, that not only a new truth has come into existence, but it is thinkable according to an orientation without philosophy’s ‘natural’ orientation to Truth. So in rhythm with the event of a default on philosophy that takes place elsewhere which at all makes a new truth possible, philosophy defaults on itself, its ‘nature’. And *yet*, in that moment of the greatest de-capacitation and insolvency, of the most comprehensive *voiding*, philosophy commits the most flagrant and illegitimate violence of calling itself “philosophy”.

So not “anti-philosophy”, “poetry” or “mysticism” but “philosophy” remains the name of this orientation. Staying inflexibly where it always was, philosophy retains its authoritarian shell while commanding the void-kernel. Philosophy does not *pass* into the ‘elsewheres’ which host the ec-stacy of truths and the passages of women, slaves and foreigners, these strangers without a *prosopon*. In that sense, there is no ‘new’ philosophy with new and emancipated subjects who will speak in philosophy’s voice and be presented through new conceptual personae<sup>8</sup>. Yet, precisely in the wake of the event of a default on philosophy by the ‘nomads’ of truth, the strangers without *prosopon* and philosophy’s *own* default on its sovereign orientation, a new philosophical function becomes thinkable. But to unfold that access to thought, a modified topology for philosophy’s ‘place’, which, as we saw, externally and stubbornly remains the same, must be indicated. That brief, if elusive, indication is the following: what is effectuated with the intervention of the void into the neutral and universal orientation at the heart of philosophy is not simply the impoverishment, nay, evacuation of that solid centre. What is effectuated is also a *partisan non-orientation*, of which “void” is the name, that both restricts philosophy in its non-place, hence giving it an involuted adjacency, and induces a new passional philosophical function. Let us, to conclude the first of the introductions, describe this restricted locus of this action and passion.

Schematically put, there are two stages to describe. The initial one consists of philosophy’s hetero-affection by the exact virulence

of effects of truth passed on from an undetermined 'elsewhere', of which the actor's *prosopon* has provided the illegal index. This stage of a new topology (of space *and* time) is to be contrasted with the great saturation of philosophy with an auto-affection inseparable from the movement of philosophical self-knowledge which gathers and exhausts all heterogeneous knowledges, all encyclopaedias, into its *oriented* embrace<sup>9</sup>. In the case of the hetero-affection by 'nomad' effects, the topology of the embrace changes into the 'open' of an exposedness to neighbourhoods. Here it must be urgently clarified that this exposedness is indeed as much to *predicates* of possible veridical judgements as to their so-called 'effects'. Every overall effect of truth brings along with it the heterogeneous synthesis of the judgements of knowledge and their local or regional truth-effects. However these local effects of truth to which philosophy is exposed as predicative neighbourhoods, and which it understands too well in its old orientation to and image of auto-globalization of all hetero-localized predicates, philosophy now responds to in the following restricted way: all these predicates of knowledge and their localized truth-effects are received as 'nomad' *signs*, as torn indices and fragments from an inconsistent totality of these signs and fragments. Just as an actor's 'study' of a character might be formed of scintillating attributes and release enormous richness of knowledge through possible judgements on true predicates of such a character and the *existence* of the object of study might still escape the consistent totalisation of these knowledges while univocally imposing its *real* of an eventness (as with performances by great actors and actresses when the character 'happens' at a strange, passing, imperceptible moment of the play<sup>10</sup>), the 'study' of philosophy is the passion of waiting for the indiscernible real of existence among the passage of predicates, the seizing of existence's void status in the order of knowledge and *declaring* it.

Before describing the second stage of philosophy's Mallarmean reconfiguration as 'restricted action', let us open a brief paranthesis: even as philosophy undertakes the passion of awaiting the sign of indiscernible, new existence – a sign without signification, a traceless trace – it is implicated in the 'politics of knowledge' concerning predicates and forms that discern factual existence. It is implicated

in that from which it awaits *liberation by indiscernibility*. Which means the issue vis-a-vis the politics of knowledge that consists in the distribution of truth effects of predicative knowledge that we have alluded to is one of orientation, dis-orientation and non-orientation with respect to this politics. If “orientation” conforms to the sequences of epistemic discernment in a particular regime of knowledge and “dis-orientation” reverses the order to effectuate a ‘counter knowledge’ of *other* discernments, “non-orientation” is strictly indiscernible from given arrangements and names of knowledge. So “philosophy” is also always a specific, discernable and nominated philosophy — Continental Thought, European Philosophy, Western Metaphysics...The *gesture* of philosophy’s void declaration is through and through sutured to the localized names of *a* philosophy, of *that* philosopher...yet philosophy must declare the indiscernible *new* of a ‘new existence’. While never ceasing to perform the gesture of recognition towards the deeply serious, implicative reality of a ‘politics of knowledge’ into which it is discursively woven, philosophy must also de-suture itself from that fabric, indiscernibly, delicately, resolutely. Every declaration of a new name of existence is also an anonymous declaration, an ‘anonym’. The names however imbricated in the local predicative sequences express a stake which is de-localised, non-oriented: the stake of truth which is not a political ‘effect of knowledge’ but the restricted yet generic occasion for saying something so obvious – and so rare—as “politics exists”. While the studies to follow will unravel the exact and localized anonymities of the generic utterance of “politics”, at this stage let us carry on with the broad assertion of philosophy’s generic function.

The second stage of philosophy’s restricted action is the violent and ‘forcing’ declaration that a truth exists at a *generic* level which, while indiscernible from every other particular sign or predicate, can’t be reduced to any or all of them. Let’s say that this is a declaration of a kind of generic strangeness of truth’s emergence in the local neighbourhood, *always* in the local neighbourhood. The nomadism of the effect of truth coming from ‘elsewhere’ reaches philosophy’s void-heart to be declared along the conceptual orientation of ‘genericity’ whose strangeness is that the generic

particular among a set of particulars, oriented and meaningful predicates, is the point of arrest or non-orientation of that set. Which means that the truth is the possibility of unforeseen sets and existences whose generic condition is the event of a 'new existence' that is already happening. Philosophy, in its utter abdication of being the *pater* of Truth, which is immutable, eternal and *sovereign*, declares a generic orientation for the concept of truth in the contemporaneity of the event's taking-place such that the declaration is a wager on this very taking-place. No knowledge, no predicative support, no *enjoyment* of truth-effects of veridical success is possible in this non-oriented topology of time that the contemporaneity of the event's 'coming-into-existence' marks. What is impossible from the point-of-view of eternal pre-existence and immemoriality of the Truth, philosophy must perform: which is to wager the existence of a new truth, a new immemorial supported by its foundational and partisan non-orientation of the void, swept up by the unfounded non-orientation of the event's 'taking-place' elsewhere, philosophy non-sovereignly, passionately, violently commits itself to declaring the generic name of *a* truth, to deciding the new existence of *an* eternity.

In the above commitment, philosophy is entirely Platonist. As hetero-affected by the 'world' passing through its void-heart, philosophy is riven by a Hegelian passion. And as the thought of the 'unpresentable' brought upon by the heterotopic event, philosophy must force its resources (of which the void is the primary) to stutter this thought, if not speak it. In this indiscernibility between the violent declaration and the weak stutter, philosophy's utterance and study are guided by the Kant of the analytic of the sublime in *Critique of Judgement*. Yet it wouldn't be incorrect to say that these proper names are also subject to the suspension and non-orientation of philosophy's place, which is always the same and always void.

## INTRODUCTION II: WHAT ARE THE STUDIES? WHICH ARE THE PASSAGES?

A statement putting the three main results of the first series of

enquiries into a sequence:

- a) A study is a decision on what to study and the bringing-into-existence of that which is studied.
- b) A passage is the auto-movement of predicates within and between universes of signification and knowledge such that either every threshold of this passage is a threshold of decidability or at least one such threshold becomes an impasse, a void-point.
- c) So in view of these alternative possibilities, a decision on any further object of study and its existence is either the simple translation of the threshold of decidability into a new language or terms of decision – which means, in effect, it is a decision *passing into* a new enunciation of further predicates – or the complex, and subjective, *forcing* of the impasse into a decision in the face of radical undecidability.

Now in the light of the above-stated results, let us look at the bare outline of the studies and passages of the work to follow.

- a. Study I offers “theatre”, not as the decision, but as a kind of model or *analogon*, or even a fiction, for the decision on an object of study whose coming-into-existence is tied up with a presupposed ‘event’. That event is the ruptural emergence of “democracy” in ancient Athens in mid 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. “Theatre” is the proposed model for a thinkable *form* for the presupposed event and in this study, we will show that form to be “liturgical”.

Given that the liturgical nature of the event’s form can only be verified on sites of historical practice, such a history of liturgy must be investigated for the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian function of liturgy and its somewhat differentiated ideological destiny in the Christian periods. In this differentiated history, “theatre” itself becomes a model for the self-difference of the site of liturgy. In the democratic age of Pericles, the meaning of “liturgy” was the public practice of funding civic participation enacted as an assembly, of which theatre is one example. The fund was both an objective measure of the



citizens' belonging to the city to which they owed now a liturgical *debt* of actual participation and a subjective measure of their self-belonging, lived out as a generalized *obligation* to participate. "Theatre", as one of the historical examples of Greek liturgy, makes for a good model because it is a case of mass participation – as different from jury and infantry service, two other liturgically-funded activities – and it also localizes the abstract locus of participation which is the 'common' (*koinonia*) of Greek society into an intensive collective *body*.

It is exactly as the sub-site of the body, liturgically and politically invested in the space of "theatre", that the self-difference of the overall site of the liturgical practice occurs. It is tortuously evident that in the passage towards a liturgical ideology of Christian kingship, the 'body' of common liturgical practice localised in the city's theatre, in the city *as* a theatre, meets, what could be called, a *global* impasse. We will cite from scholarly investigations on the legal and theological name(s) of this impasse – one of which is the Latin word "*fisc*" – to evaluate the so-called forcings of the impasse and its names into several breathtaking and dangerous *axioms*. Axioms on what? We will see that the axiomatic stakes are divided between maintaining the localization and presence of the 'common' in the sites of liturgy, and activating an infinite and global debt of participating in a liturgy ideally voided of all territory, theatre and body. We will note, towards the end of the study, that this forcing a global debt out of the void-point or impasse that makes the model of limited and localised debt of civic (or sovereign, if you will) participation *inconsistent*, is a retreat on the pure exposure of the void as void. The 'work' of the void is the great Christian project of a political and theological economy that progresses into the history of global and colonial sovereignty by retreating from the *event* of Jesus Christ. This history retreats from any decision on the event's generic non-orientation and its absolute clemency of all debt – we will indicate this at the close of the study.<sup>11</sup>

- b. Passage I is the movement of predicates and knowledges, starting from the predicate "liturgical" attached to debt and obligation in the limited sense, mediated by the enigmatic

predicate “fiscal”, to reach the word “economic”, standing for the ‘work of the void’ on a global scale. This work of the void is a double predicative mobilisation: It is a mobilisation of St. Paul’s incarnational word *kenosis* (‘emptying out’) in the *Letter to the Philippians* (2.5-11), into the attribute ‘kenotic’ to constitutively suture it to a presumed theological subject; and it is a mobilisation of the ‘void’ (*kenosis*) for God’s salvational economy or plan (*oikonomia*) in the shape of iconic propagation. So the main epistemological question, which arises on the historical site of a Byzantine controversy in the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., is that what form of knowledge can support the void-basis of in-carnal images of a God or Father who has *emptied* himself out in the apparent ‘event’ of incarnation? And since icons are repeatable objects, what would be a useful *model* for such an iconic knowledge, an iconology?

The passage from the ritual and theatrical localisation of liturgy to the repeated form of icon is correlatively a movement from a liturgical sovereign power – which itself moves from the limited Athenian scale to a potentially unlimited Christendom – to another type and order of power which can go by the name of ‘iconocracy’ but has an undefined infinite amplitude which the global connotation of the word ‘economy’ captures further. Under the shadow of this large hypothesis, we will hazard the imagination of a changed site of power’s exercise, no more the site of theatrical-liturgical sovereignty, but the site of an incorporeal – hence global in a non-saturable sense – “spirit”, which must never cease to be *occupied*. The mode of spiritual occupation is iconic but it is not a unidirectional opening up of the liturgical localisation. In a sort of negative moment of the dialectic between liturgical production of sovereign power and the iconic occupation of the ‘global’ spirit, there strikes the potent non-knowledge that attaches to the power of the ‘idol’. The idol is still not the impasse of the dialectic of global-colonial sovereignty and its endemic non-knowledge, its perpetual negativity, is utilised by the dialectic to form a kind of *knowledge of non-knowledge*. We will see such a paradoxical knowledge inscribe in the relations of history a hierarchy of degrees of otherness

which sovereignty controls as a mode of *internal colonialism*. This construction will be deployed in the imagery and discourse on the eve of the French Revolution. We will travel the remarkable passage from a rigid, almost ‘eastern’, structure of subjection to the French sovereign, to a regime which combines the idolatrous “love” of an infant-people for their king, with the flexible occupation of the ‘spirit’ which makes for colonisation.

The instrumentalisations of knowledge(s) and predicates that we will record in this passage, seek to pass into an epochal change of sovereignty from absolutist and theological to popular and secular, supported by their respective ‘knowledges’. This desire comes upon an impasse – this will be the premise of the study to follow. But it is along the contour of the dialectic’s longing for an epochal gathering and commensuration of incommensurable predicates in which the incommensuration is not sublated but somehow *included*, is indeed the singular encounter of the Revolution as *event* and the *logic* which might minimally formalize a revolutionary ‘knowledge’. While the obvious examples of such knowledge are politics, philosophy, law, etc., we will witness, along the limit of the singular encounter, beyond which lies the real of the impasse and its void-space, the passage to a certain mathematics. Passage II ends with the extraction from certain key texts of Revolutionary historiography, a double articulation of Number and numbers which corresponds to two senses of the collective, or, two meanings of collectivity. At this limit of predicative transparency, the so-called event of the Revolution must choose a collectivity either under the ontology of the One or under the thought of the being of the multiple. And this choice is between two forcing declarations – either “the French people are One!” or “the people of France are a *people*, not made from the matter and form of the One king, so a multiple!”

- c. Study II consults texts of historiography to cite and serialize *political* declarations and yet read the margins of ‘forcing’ in them as the operation of a kind of mathematical unconscious of revolutionary politics. To accomplish this type of archaeology of the mathematical unconscious of politics, certain signifiers

will be configured to forge a conceptual zone that will risk bringing into communication distant orders of knowledge and predication. One might say that this would be the fabrication of a ‘model’ or ‘fiction’ not of a theory of knowledge but of the real of an event declared. But insofar as it is a model, it must realise some ‘form’ for the event. “Mathematics” will be cited as the science of such a real (or Science of the Real, to give mathematics a capitalized singularity) and will be solicited for the minimal form(s) of the event. The signifiers configured such as “one”, “multiple”, “torsion”, etc. yield this minimal form and “Number” becomes the model and logic (and the two are not the same) for this science of the real.

But just as Study I, this one is also an exercise in retreat even while the shattering declarations of the real are performed. In this manner of an oscillation or zig-zag, the study traces a vector that shoots forth from the liturgical-to global debt that sovereignty encodes and imposes, towards an event of *default* the history of the French Revolution declares – and retreats from this militant clemency to induce a new logic of constitutional debt supported by an economic logic of productivity (which Study III will elaborate). But the main focus of this study is the internal equivocation of the event’s unfolding. On the one hand, we will cite the sovereign crystallisations of the One-name(s) for a new nation and republic being enacted in the *congregation* of the Constituent Assembly. On the other hand, we will interpret the historiographic imageries of collective acts in 1789 in the light of a multiple-being of such collectivity. So in contrast to the liturgical form of the “congregation” in the Constituent Assembly (for which theatre remains the model), we will image the collectivity of some specific situations on the streets of Paris and Versailles as a “swarm”, for which the mathematics of immemorial and infinite Number will be the conceptual intelligibility. In simple operational terms, it will mean that the proceedings of the Assembly were geared to a *counting* of the congregation and the unification and monumentalisation of the count into the One-name(s) of Nation, Republic, etc. While the “swarm” on streets are not countable one-by-one and, for that

reason, are *not* dis-ordered. Theirs is a multiple-order rendered intelligible by the ontology of Number as simultaneous infinity of infinities. What eventual collectivity releases in the ‘acts’ of Revolution, mathematics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century will axiomatise and declare as the new immemorial of set-theory’s decisions on *real infinity*. This will be our thesis.

The conclusive stakes of this study are the conceptual relation between the mathematical centrality of the thought of multiple-being and the *partisan* non-orientation produced by an event in history. In other words, the stakes are in a kind of philosophy of history – and towards playing those stakes, we will try to deliver a concept torn from the neutral ontology of multiple-being which we will call “historical multiplicity”. We will trace this concept in configuration with a quasi-mathematical signifier “torsion”, to investigate the topology of the event as an ‘out-of-place’ or excess in default, in relation to the classical one-count and one-place of sovereignty. Such an investigation will provide a philosophical and structural scaffolding for studying the real conditions of a *subject*, not of general history, but of the historicity released by the so-called event of the French Revolution. What is the name of such a subject which is not already oriented by the sovereign, constitutional and juridical forms of “nation”, “republic” and “state”? And yet it must be a partisan name in its non-oriented demand to manifest that very non-orientation as a declaration of the new, unforeseen and revolutionary – in other words, *political* subject. At the end of the study we will illustrate from one of the several scintillations of the Revolutionary historiography the emergence of such a non-oriented, partisan and real political subject.

- d. Passage II enunciates the movement from a mathematical-ontological thesis on Number to the strange and antinomic question of a possible *knowledge of the event*. Indeed this is as much a numerical puzzle as a political one because the knowledge of an event would be the knowledge of something with no repeatable universalizable properties or predicates – except the property of being-void. And yet the event is not nothing and so the puzzle becomes, how to count its *singularity*

across the ordinal and cardinal meanings of the count and what would be the event's singular subject? In this passage, instead of tracking the life of the puzzle in a historical element, we will try to reach it as the impasse of the real confronting the logic (or dialectic, if you will) of knowledges.

The really interesting aspect of this exercise is that within the movement of knowledges, there occurs the affirmative paradox of the *knowledge of singularity*. And this paradox is energetically fertilized into a milieu of 'counter knowledges'. "Event", in this fertile terrain, meets or poses no impasse and rather yields a predicative infinity, a 'chaosmos' of qualities. We will present this 'loop' within the passage – a loop producing enormously productive circulations and passages within the larger passage – as the Stoic loop crafted by the genius of Gilles Deleuze. To his philosophical nomadism, his traversal of counter-knowledges and 'elsewheres' of the event-effect, we will contrastingly localize Alain Badiou's thought to philosophy, only philosophy (which of course was Deleuze's slogan)... But the main element in which this indispensable comparison unfolds remains mathematical, or rather, numerical. Every sub-part of the passage is a modulated and partisan enumeration with a 'politics-effect'. Hence the series of abstractions 'anonymity – aristocracy singularity – event' corresponds to the graphism of any-one – one-one – One – one'. Let's say that the ontological stakes of the loving duel of grimaces played out between Deleuze and Badiou are divided between an intensive, qualitative ontology of Number and the 'evental nomination' of Number as a breakout from ontology.

The above division of stakes is reflected in the site of a political philosophy whose key problem will be one of "decision" in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The last study will prepare the historical ground for the division of the sense(s) of "decision" between sovereignty and the event in politics and philosophy, if not a doctrinaire political philosophy. The role of the mathematical-ontological threshold of this passage is to minimally present the possibility of a *model* that can serve the cause of decision. Again, on this question, the history of mathematical knowledge breaks into two, between

qualitative ‘leaps’ that constitute the events of this history, and the axiomatic nominations (or decisions) that, in the same move, void and recompose it. Let’s say that this is a threshold of ‘automated’ decidability through the self-movement of predicates or it’s a threshold of logical (and dialectical) undecidability in view of which, the decision on the existence of an event has neither the support of an automatic passage or a true model. To ‘force’ a knowledge of how to decide in these undecidable, if not opaque, conditions, this passage ends with the notion of the “generic”.

- e. Study III ‘enforces’ the *name* of the event on the historical sequence(s) of the French Revolution - but not as corresponding to the Revolution taken as a ensemble (or set) of its qualitative predicates, each counted-as-one. The “event” is its own name added to the set as the constitutive supplement to the constituent ground of historical judgements of any such revolution. However the whole wager of such a study or investigation is that the exercise is not abstract; it is a concrete wager on the real *existence* of the event for which no predicative ‘place’ is ascribable. Or more accurately, the study is a wager on the historiographic, political, artistic, erotic, why not, and philosophical, always philosophical, wagers already made on the existence of the event. In this direction, we will investigate the affirmative ‘names’ that make, or *force*, the event into existence in each wager of knowledge when there is none. The most concentrated point of intensity for this wager will be the historiographic ‘name’ of an eventual “defaulting” on the liturgical infrastructure and inheritance of a debt to immemorial sovereignty. The interpretation of this ‘name’ inseparable from a collective ‘act’, enunciated by Jules Michelet, will be a generic one.<sup>12</sup> Which broadly means, “defaulting” will not simply be the negative act of refusing to pay an age-old debt to power. It will be as much a (non) place of a new existence whose particular nomination and generic possibility are indiscernible from each other. Indeed in this light, we will make bold to say with Alain Badiou that “politics”, “art”, “science”, “love” (in this case say it with, with

Søren Kierkegaard) are the most common particular words of the lexicon – and the absolutely generic names for unforeseen, non-common, new existences.

The affirmative extractions of the study must, as in the others, be choreographed with its ‘retreating’ movements. This will be the series of investigations in post-1789 historical sequences going into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a series that analyses the imposition of a *statist orientation*, not on the event, but on its void-basis, to foreclose, again, not the event, but its *thought*. However, we will also see that this binarism of the event and the state doesn’t work out so neatly in the conjunctures of history. A strange and twisting involvement between the event and the post-evental political forms of sovereignty will most publicly, violently, *theatrically* surface in the Terror. This topology of indiscernibility between the evental exception and sovereign exception during the Terror will prepare for the concluding passage of our work.

The study will comprise a set of more insidious, non-theatrical, non-liturgically sustainable set of axiomatic ‘retreats’ from the decision on the event. This set will almost imperceptibly pass through the default-void which is the event’s site and induce debts of a ‘bourgeois’ kind through economic liturgies, which are non-congregational. One of the key ‘retreating’ axioms we will posit for such a non-localised liturgy will be the atomizing axiom of modern productivity. Between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, this axiom will both develop the liturgical logic of debt in the direction of ‘work’ and de-publicise it to the level of absolute particularity and minority of the capitalist ‘individual’. This will be the ‘retreating’ strategy of recirculating debt in relation to the collective defaulting on sovereignty that composes the event of ‘politics’. Though the study will not include the aspect of division between post-evental and generic consequences and the strategic foreclosures of any new, generic thought, the being of the ‘worker’ in this period, as a site of the division, will be crucially implied.

The study will conclude with a kind of supplemental *prosopon* or profile of a so-called subject of the event. This supplemental end to the study on the logic of event as supplement contains,



in a very condensed form, both the affirmative militancy and clemency of the event, and the side of sovereign foreclosure, debt and terror vis-à-vis the same. The section on Théroigne de Méricourt, the ‘subject’ in question, will witness the ‘enforcement’ of a most ‘exceptional’ and yet highly normative knowledge on the event, the knowledge (and practice) of *psychiatry* which develops between the end of 18<sup>th</sup> and start of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Théroigne de Méricourt, a woman who was an unforgettable militant during the Revolution and, almost *simultaneous* with that, declared insane, both secularly and medically, as an instance of the division, expropriation and annihilation of the militant-subject, will be a limit-case of sovereignty’s capture of the event through what could be called “grotesque” knowledges. The extreme moment then will be a glimpse, at the end of the study, of the terribly distorted (“grotesque”) *prosopon* (the convoluted judgements of psychiatric knowledge) in the very image (*prosopon*) of the event’s alleged monstrosity (the madness alleged equally of Theroigne *and* the Revolution).

- f. The passage in conclusion will be, to a large measure, internal to the status of philosophy. It will reconstitute the movement from philosophy ensuring the metaphysical and logical truth-as-consistency of sovereignty to philosophy’s conditioned courage that makes it recognize the heterogeneity of the event and announce its defaulting on the debt of sovereignty without shame, regret or *trembling*. But there *is* the trembling of a situated, improvised and creative courage that doesn’t follow from philosophy’s eternal ‘nature’ and which enables philosophy with a new modesty *in the light of the event*. This is the modesty we started out with in this introduction which doesn’t lead to philosophy abjuring its authority, that is necessarily violent, but which leads it to withdraw its claims to a sovereign sanction of this violence. In effect, philosophy’s courage is the same as its *exposed* axiomatic authority, its void-basis. Our concluding passage will try to arrive at this transformed status.

## NOTES

1. The logic of suspicion is the following: while the actor's *prosopon*, being a mask, is expected to either lie sterile unless worn for the purpose of impersonation or even in the act of impersonation, maintain a dependant distance from the putatively accepted original *prosopon*/face, a distance which is not a disjunctive break, what if the mask starts out as a pure surface of *showing* totally disjunct from and indifferent to any consideration of an original object-in-depth? What if the ontology of depth so dear to the philosopher and where the visage is supposed to gather its eventual truth and peace, is an *effect* in play on the surface of manifestation? The point of this suspicion is not merely that the depth-effect of the surface is an illusion or hallucinated seriousness attached to the value of truth but that it is a *real* effect among effects which philosophy is free to give the name of "truth" and grant a specialized form and value it calls "universal". *But* philosophy can't expect the orientation and stakes of that signifier "truth" that it *decides*, to *flow* from the event of the effect on the disjunctive surface/ *prosopon*. And apart from this 'logic of suspicion', let it also be noted that the 'scientific' discourses on the *prosopon*, which are theatrical, philosophical and legal, will concern us in the studies to come, particularly the first one on liturgy and law. However, there is no emancipation promised from suspicion with those future references. The most one can hope for is a genealogical enablement by that very suspicion to understand these 'sciences' of the *prosopon*.
2. In times of disorientation, if not ruination, philosophy is quite ready to console itself with active particularisms as long as the form and value of the universal remains intact on the horizon even if emptied of all philosophical content. Philosophy exults in the axiomatic lessons of a particular science such as "mathematics" and indulges itself in the particular art of poetry which converts the nihilations of the time into transfigurations of language. All this while the loss of philosophy's object still occupies the *sovereign* place from where the loss is re-oriented into greatly active adjacencies...
3. Does this aporetic improvisation echo Immanuel Kant's 'rule without law', 'purposiveness without purpose', etc., in *Critique of Judgement*? Such a comparison is valid as long as we recognize that Kant's criteria are *explanatory* for the difficulty of formalizing judgements of taste – while here we are stating only the minimal threshold of a difficulty without yet taking the support of any 'faculty'.
4. "Wager" is Alain Badiou's nomination for the act of the so-called subject's self-constitution, which happens in relation to the immemorial released by a new truth wagered out of the event. The burden of following both the preparations and the consequences, philosophical and non-philosophical, of this axiomatic nomination of the "subject" will be admittedly the *patience*

of our future labours. At this point, one must simply record the singular force of Alain Badiou's ongoing thought which as if both 'passes' into the present and *does not pass* – into eternity. Which defines the immemorial to be that whose mode of being eternal is to *not pass* into eternity. Alternatively, 'not passing' or rather 'will not having passed' is the mode of the immemorial's temporality which is one of the *future anterior*.

5. This anxiety is controlled, to a measure, by the speculative mediation by law of the relation between philosophy (-ontology) and theatre. And the mediation invests sexual difference in the technique of the actor's *prosopon*. This is done by two simultaneous prescriptions: make the mask into the simulacral, hence paralogical, 'object' whose corresponding ontological position 'woman' occupies whose being is composed from an endemic non-being. At the same time, make the male actor wear the 'non-being' of the *prosopon* from an ontological distance which supervises and surveys (as in a map) all the territory included in being including the terrain of non-being, which constitutes being-a-woman. Negatively articulated, the prescription *prohibits* women from wearing the mask, *which they are*, and from coinciding with their non-being from the constitutive distance of being-an-actor. Given this tight and oppressive matrix, every 'forcing' which forces it open must be interpreted as a violence against these legal prescriptions. Signifying that if a woman 'acts' (in the theatre), she violates both the rule of identity and of distance and commits the most 'ob-scene' transgression – *which is of forcing herself*.
6. This abstract assertion can be tested on several sites. Insofar as the dialectic of quality and quantity is the fecund inheritance of Hegel's *Science of Logic* passed on to the theory and strategy of Marxism, the application of that dialectic can be seen in sharp variants between say, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Mao: For example, on the question of organization ("party") and the decision on mass-action in historical conjunctures, the schema of organic decidability – which is an ethological, 'animal' parameter – and the wager-decision – which traditionally is probabilistic and strategic – is very much present in the several variants.
7. Clearly this is an intervention in Plato's mimetic hierarchy of *The Republic*. Not to aim to destroy Platonism or even invert it – but to 'expose' the system's hierarchy to its non-localizable 'nothing' which goes beyond Plato's localization of being-nothing to art. Plato's verdict on "the good" as beyond-being points in that topological direction.
8. This statement is made between Hegel and Gilles Deleuze, both of which thinkers will determine, though not necessarily in commensurable ways, the course of our work. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as well as *Logic*, there unfold 'figures' (*prosopon* translated as "figure" involving the Latin "figura" of rhetoric and "*persona*" of law) of Spirit and Idea respectively. But they unfold in the locus or schema of a circular self-sameness of the place or theatre of unfolding. In Gilles Deleuze's book with Felix Guattari *What*

is *Philosophy?*, the conceptual personae are diagonal lightning-bolts across spaces and figurations of knowledge. Every *persona* or *prosopon* is such a 'nomad' lightning-bolt and "philosophy" the relatively old, relatively worn-out and over-familiar name for this generalized nomadism and strangeness of conceptual events.

9. Of course there is something trivial about the term "hetero-affectation" because all affectivity is the capacity to be affected by forces from the outside, from 'elsewhere'. But because it is a *capacity*, affectivity is also always 'auto-affectivity'. It is in the grand scheme of things, which would be a Hegelian scheme, that hetero-affectation pass and disappear into – and become – auto-affectation. So the category of 'capacity', in this scheme of 'becoming', truly becomes so only at the end of heterogeneous experience. In a non-trivial way, "hetero-affectation" would mean the self-division and non-reconciliation of the process, so signifying a kind of interminable "passion" that could be called (barbarically!) "hetero-auto-affectation".
10. Along these lines, we can distinguish between the 'predicative' actor and the 'generic' actor. Does the distinction correspond to the *comedienne* and the *acteur*, the character and personality actors? Strangely, not quite. The strong 'classical' actor who enforces the authority of his/her personality on the public actually keeps *persuading* the audience with more and more brilliant and violent predicates. Violence is a *means* of persuasion – great Indian actors like Shombhu Mitra and Dilip Kumar don't cease to persuade us of their 'genius' with their signature-predicates which as a set represent the 'place' of genius and virtuosity. The character-actor who disappears into the predicates of his/her 'study' as an *actor*, enforces his or her being-an actor, with the *event* of acting *itself* which is a void-category completely subtracted from all predicates de-monstrating 'acting'. Utpal Dutt is an excellent example of the 'generic' actor whose so-called signature-predicates are humorous deceptions that make generic acting happen at a constitutive distance from all the predicates and qualities 'acted out'.
11. This closing point also produces a tremendous irony because it shows the beginning of the study *also* as a retreat from the event. The model ("theatre") and the thinkable form ("liturgical") for the event ("ancient democracy") unravel a political, cultural and subjectivising technology that induces as if a 'debt of the event'. This is a contradiction in terms and the event is minimally indexed to unconditional clemency and voiding.
12. See Jules Michelet, *The History of the French Revolution*, ed. Gordon Wright, trans. Charles Cocks (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967)



## STUDY I

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# Liturgical Origins of Sovereignty

In the Christian West, by roughly the 13th century, theological and political doctrine in certain quarters had started to propose a startling parallelism, if not equation: the parallelism between *Christius* and *Fiscus*.<sup>1</sup> The essence and attributes of Jesus Christ, in this political and theological thinking, assumed a proximity with, or came into the neighbourhood of, something which was denoted by an obscure Latin word 'fiscus' that did not lend itself to any stable philological elaboration. Nevertheless, this much was clear in this doctrinal group of statements and opinions that the spiritual and personological consistency of a christic life, or Christology, was being analysed and resonated with a domain and type of activity that could be called 'administrative', 'executive', even utilitarian and secular. But this did not mean that the writers of this period, whether theologians or political pamphleteers, were suggesting a process of *secularization* of Christo-centric politics and sovereignty. Rather, the situation of discourse at this juncture was balanced in a far more delicate and precarious way: the doctrinal ideas sought to found a new theory and justification of earthly sovereignty in a situation where the guiding observation was that the king, in his imperial person, exercises an ownership of the fiscal-public domain that is inalienable to the tune of the inalienability of christic 'property' – a spiritual property that can be imitated and personified but not alienated to a new owner or sovereign.

But it would be a mistake to surmise that the new doctrinal justification was either unified or unambiguously successful. Instead the more realistic picture would be one of a re-arrangement and modification of an earlier Christo-centric, or *liturgical* theory of kingship. The interest of this career of modification is not so much in the relative power or effectiveness of these theories and discourses as in their internal transactions and convertibilities that nevertheless lead to a decisive change of paradigm in the history of political theology in the West.<sup>2</sup> To conduct any analysis and schematization of these internal relationships, one must still select a provisionally stable axis or pivot. Between the Christo-centric and Christo-fiscal paradigms the sustainable axis of modifications might be called the ‘christic’ axis, or what has been mentioned above as the consistency of a christic ‘property’ – what attributes would describe the contour and substance of this property? Two attributes can be named at a certain level of abstraction: Indivisibility and Perpetuity.

Clearly these attributes secure a kind of spatio-temporal consistency for the christic ‘substance’. But if one were to risk exiting the *abstraction* of this security, one might make the more concrete, more material observation that the so-called christic substance was nothing if not a *life*. From this observation arise at least two historical paradoxes: at the stage of a liturgical and Christo-centric theory and justification of kingship, the main interest was to turn doctrinal gaze towards the production of the king’s or sovereign’s life in its transformation to the status of a perpetual life, that is, a life that is not extinguished and does not die. But this exalted witness, in its acute and real unfolding, could only bear incessant testimony to the fragility and unreliability of the king’s mortal existence. The paradox is intensified and consummated in a play like Shakespeare’s *Richard II* when the king himself becomes the pathetic witness-participant of this unfolding.<sup>3</sup> At the later stage of a justification based on the startling and “scurrilous” balance between *Christus* and *fiscus*, the paradox of mortality is converted to the contradictory filiation between an immortal life (the life of Jesus Christ) cleaving to God and the life of a *res publica*, of the public ‘thing’ or ‘substance’ that cleaves to “common utility”.<sup>4</sup> The

scurrilous commensuration between immortal spiritual reality and instrumental utilitarian reality is made possible by writers in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries by the reasoning that both christic immortality and the public domain ('res') are plunged in the torrent of time that tries to wear them down but they run "contrary" to time, they are *res nullum*, with respect to time.<sup>5</sup>

Now it is true that in the liturgical production of kingship as a perpetual place of sovereignty, what was ontologically at issue was the transcendence of intra-temporal and mortal existence. But insofar as liturgy was a ceremonial technology – and the following section will describe its contexts and genealogies in some detail – the level of analysis and justification was practical, and might one say, *performative*. But in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century reasoning, the statement that the public domain (fisc) and the king run contrary to time, or are not made contrary by time, was a proclamation *de jure*. Such a proclamation culminated in the ontological scandal of declaring that the fisc never dies. What was secured by grace and founded in a divine dispensation ("immortal, everlasting life") and whose beneficiary was the intra-temporal king in his mortal, existential self was, in the scandalous declaration, brought at a par and down to the sphere of human utility. And this "equiparation" was a doctrinal exercise *in principle*.<sup>6</sup> So in the schema of conversion being utilised in this introduction, the relatively immanent procedures and technologies of transformation that comprised the liturgy and that served the political function of obtaining a Christo-centric locus of sovereign power (not so much in its exercise as in its performative *institution*) were displaced and converted to a kind of transcendental position of the *res nullum* (in relation to time) that the fisc was. But the paradigmatic conversion did nothing to de-accentuate the fundamental thesis that this 'fiscal' transcendence was accessible only in a singular mode of *historical existence*.

One might say that this philosophical move, which both comes as an advance and a retreat, is one of the less acknowledged contributions of Ernst Kantorowicz's masterly work *The King's Two Bodies* and Kantorowicz displays extraordinary modesty and vigilance by minimally mirroring in his analysis the philosophical



oscillations of the late medieval period. And yet the decisive shifts in the axiomatic as well as the performative discourses that produce and support theories of sovereignty in this period come out in Kantorowicz's analyses as crystalline fragments of political theology. In other words, the master of his subject is decisive in demonstrating the unity of sequences of a certain history of concepts and discourses, at the same time, each sequence remains a fragment, with internal densities and hollows, investing strategic energies with great stakes, without being inserted in any *imperial* dogma of sovereignty. To this extent, it is possible to understand the specificity of Kantorowicz's object: which is *Christian* political theology crucially related to and different from Roman legal theory which instituted religion and its myriad figures at the *civil* level of society and law. But Kantorowicz patiently and unsparingly demonstrates the project of transcendence of Christian kingship, which meant the transcendence of its very civil status. Simultaneously the demonstration is one of the *fragility*, the *weakness*, the *porosity* of this project and of this transcendence.<sup>7</sup> Structurally speaking, Giorgio Agamben is right to point out the "innocence" of Kantorowicz's thesis, a thesis on sovereignty as *such*.<sup>8</sup> But that is also the mirror-effect of Christian theology's search for an 'immaculate' sovereign life that transcends and supersedes the "sting" of mortality. Clearly this was not the Greek's search or the Roman's (though one cannot be so sure whether that is not the search of modern theories of state sovereignty). Now Christianity was as historically aware of its debts and departures from the preceding systems as any historical religion could be. But as *absolute* religion Christianity was making an 'absolutely' innocent claim – the claim that without any explicit imperial legal intentions (as with Romans) and without civic forms of political organisation (as with Greeks), the Christian basis of earthly power or sovereign basis of political Christianity could be declared as homogenous, indivisible, perpetual, imprescriptible, absolute.<sup>9</sup> And yet.... What would be the historical and structural material of this immaculate claim for there must be some, this remained Kantorowicz's question. So while he mirrors the 'innocence' of the claimed sovereign substance, the actual analyses of *The King's Two*

*Bodies* unfold in heterogeneous elements of liturgical, legal and ontological elaboration. And it is relentlessly cemented with more and more heterogeneous and energetic fictions (*fictio*) by and in the fragments of political theology – this is what Ernst Kantorowicz shows with shattering lucidity.

## ELEMENTS OF A LOGIC OF LITURGY

### History

Though roughly, it can be said with some justice that liturgy involves a *search for truth* in and through the medium of bodies and congregations. In some vocabularies, this search is also given a theatrical term – “performance”. The historical study of liturgical performances, however, reveals several questions and entanglements: what does truth mean, who conducts the search, what is the mode of transmission through the supposed congregation and what is the type of congregation, or assembly in question...?

To take a well-anticipated example: between the Homeric period and 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Greeks were involved in the practices and the codifications of certain types of assemblies. These, broadly, were religious, political and theatrical assemblies. Now, it is methodologically possible to treat these gatherings of ‘citizens’ in three separate modes of spatial and cultural analysis and the liturgical level of analysis, then, would pertain to the religious type of gathering or assembly. But the more interesting approach, followed by a historian like Marcel Detienne (whose Hellenist specialization doesn’t prevent him from having comparatist interests), is to see these spaces of assembly as inter-locked *systems of transformation* rather than as separate domains of coded civic activity.<sup>10</sup> To enable this approach, Detienne chooses a locus of transformations that passes through these separate assemblies and provides narrative, mythic and figural indexes for the overall systematic logic that makes these transformations possible. This is the locus of the “god” in Greek history.

In his essay, *The Gods of Politics in Early Greek Cities*, Marcel Detienne declares a double preference to ask questions of “gods” in their circumstantial and strategic deployment instead of ‘religious’ questions; and instead of an “encyclopaedic enquiry into the ideas or theory-cum-ideology of Greek politics, to study the concrete assemblies and configurations of groups and peoples from not just well-formed cities of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. but from more archaic “village-cities”.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, this sort of pragmatics is as far as it’s possible to conceive from the theological eternities of Christian justification. Or, is it? Because the chief interest of Detienne’s improvised methodological trail is to reach the Greek meaning of “common interest” (*xunon*) that these assemblies were meant to deliberate over. And at least formally speaking, “common interest” means nothing if not a subject and an attitude of interest *that endures* beyond the individual ephemeral set of political and existential circumstances. This is precisely the later ‘fiscal’ perpetuity that Christian political theology is going to concern itself with. The key difference, however, remains that the gods who presided over the Greek deliberations on “common interest” were not the bearers of an ‘immaculate’ life; they were living in the creaturely sense *and* immortal. But how is such a thing possible? In a book co-authored with Giulia Sissa *The Daily Life of Greek Gods*, Detienne proposes a way out of this dilemma. The Greek god Zeus exercises an effective sovereignty over gods and men by traversing the boundary between sublunary temporal existence and the leisurely immortality of the gods in the mode of a certain “intelligence”. Detienne and Sissa say that this intelligence is the exigent invention of a “weak” sovereignty. Instead of an all-consuming power (in the shape of Zeus’ father Kronos who devours his children and who Zeus deposes), Zeus composes, and appears to, ‘scenes’ and ‘situations’ of sovereignty.<sup>12</sup> So he displays a strategic intelligence, a “cunning” that belongs as much to the god’s political competence as to the logic of the situation itself. Then what is the logic of the situation? The authors indicate – and Detienne proposes the same in the earlier essay – that this is a *logic of multiplicity*. The several narrative instances from Homer’s *Iliad* highlighted by the authors act as distributive and relational nodes: Zeus with Hera, his wife,

Zeus' partisan role in the war between the Greeks and Trojans, Zeus' implanting a dream in Agamemmon's sleep to the end of duping the latter and Zeus' fundamentally *committed* speech for the sake of a stabilization and perpetuation of an 'order of things' – these, on the one hand, testify to Zeus' inability, his 'weak' will as far as a kind of spontaneous generation of power is concerned and on the other, given this constitutive weakness, the instances describe the inventions of a *prosthetic* intelligence, cunning that are involved in the sovereign *exercise* of power.<sup>13</sup> And being exercise, these prostheses are always multiple, they correspond to the multiplicity underlying a generalized common domain of function and utility, of calculation and strategic aim, of a worldly, intra-mundane time of exercise of sovereign power. From this Greek example, two fundamental questions emerge, which surely will guide the further investigation. First, how is it that an axiomatic declaration such as that of sovereignty – being imprescriptible, indivisible, etc. – needs to be, and is, exercised? And in what ways the very modes of exercise, in their variations, subterfuges, surprises and fidelities, in other words, in their *multiple logics of situations*, produce, in the history under discussion, forms of endurance and perpetuity, of a kind of pure sovereign form of time that one calls "immortality"?

The horizons of inquiry opened up by the above questions oversee the ground of Zeus' sovereignty in Greek theo-logic – a strange ground because it is both "limited" and "multiple". It was a basis of power that was "less totalitarian" and by that token, "more real and more widely deployed"<sup>14</sup> This "*more real*" and "*anything-but-absolute*" power of Zeus that Detienne and Giulia Sissa narrate and analyse form the material springboard, not for the development of a so-called, actually non-existent, 'history of sovereignty' but of a series of ricochets and false starts, of leaps and fabulous turns as well as awkward, almost embarrassing falls.<sup>15</sup> When the metaphysically undetermined but intuitively crucial word "transformation" is used, what is meant are precisely these aporetic but irreducible gestures that divide sovereignty *against its own axiom*. But the further passage from an intuitive characterization to conceptual image of transformation, as the process of being-multiple of situation and their elements, takes

place under the elusive shadow of another Greek god. This is a god with archaic, rural antecedents but who reaches the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian amphitheatre from his native Thebes to induce in the people present a kind of ‘mania’ of masks and transformations. The god Dionysus induces in the Athenian people a “theatromania”.<sup>16</sup>

## Theatre

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek city, theatre articulates a double function: theatre is a space of visibility where the single actor and a chorus *appear* to a public under a regime of representation (of written dramatic texts submitted for contests in the city festivals); theatre is also the *liturgical* occasion of a socio-cultural transformation. So, the god Dionysus is, on the one hand, the elusive, super-natural force that infects the poet, the actor, the public all alike with the power of manic *fictions* rendered corporeally visible (and audible). And on the other, Dionysus is a “citizen-god” (Dionysus Polities) who generates the sign, albeit in the element of Olympian divinity, of an “incorporeal transformation”. The transformation is of the natural, physical individual to the status of a socialized “citizen”.<sup>17</sup> We can also call this a liturgical transformation.

Interestingly, the liturgical specificity of the transformation in question is entirely embedded in the social and economic *conditions* that make possible the cultural practice of theatre in the city Dionysia. But Dionysus was the citizen of Olympus, which surely pre-existed the particular historical Greek city. What is the significance of this paradox? If Zeus marks the arrival of a kind of *structure* of strategic, political reason in the domains of gods and men, Dionysus announces (and is announced by) the pre-existence of a field of force, a regime of material if incorporeal effects without which the effective sovereignty of a “limited” yet varied power (of Zeus) would be null and void. This, no doubt, intensifies the paradox because in the space of Dionysus the order of effect pre-exists the order of strategic reason, of historical-sovereign causation. But the paradox produces a need, among what Detienne and Sissa call “the society of gods” to come to a distributive arrangement where, henceforth, the paradoxical

order would be set right and each god would *be* sovereign and *alienate* executive power to the kings, governors, administrators, etc., of particular, historical cities.<sup>18</sup> Thus in each specific area and for particular bodies, fields, congregations and corporations, a *generic* sovereign power would be applied. But the paradox still remains in operation because without the tacit, elusive, masked but ‘ecstatically’ active force of Dionysus, the exigency of the sovereign order would not arise; without the original *generic mixture* of Dionysus, the hierarchical articulation of genus and species, of structure and actualization, of sovereignty and executive power, would not be possible.

The analysis of liturgical logic in the Greek city must be unfolded in the light of this original precarity and mixture of orders. And at this cross-roads a philological surprise awaits us: strangely this surprise comes in the wake of Plato, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century mocking the ‘democratic’ sovereignty of the ‘masses’ who constitute a theatre public and who embody a “theatrokratia”. Actually Plato’s difficulty in the relevant text *Laws* was not merely with the visible assembly of theatre public but with at least two associated objections. First, this unenlightened mass of spectators also formed the majoritarian basis of Greek democracy as a political system and next, the socio-economic fact that the government encouraged and legitimised the attendance by providing a small fund for the citizens which they in turn payed as a token fee for entering the theatre. This was a system of *liturgical funding* and a subject of public controversy.<sup>19</sup> Without entering into the details of the controversy, it is important to study this mode of paying a “dole” to the city-people including the poorest as capacity-enhancing policy of the 5<sup>th</sup> century government, in the light of the relationship between sovereignty, power and the subjective ‘truth’ of the citizens indicated earlier.

Now, historians have pointed out the symbolic significance of the liturgical payment. Citing Thucydides’ account of Pericles’ funeral speech for the war-dead when the latter announced that poverty must never prevent the Athenian citizen from taking full part in democratic life, Paul Cartledge emphasises the symbolic value of theatre as an area of discussion and debate.<sup>20</sup> So, the payment from a festival fund called *theoric* made to the citizens

was a sign of this value and a kind of “cultural credit”. But this interpretation leaves unresolved the problem, what constitutes “taking-part” in democratic life and what sort of a subjective and axiomatic structure and capacity is pre-supposed in this worthy aim of ensuring popular participation in theatre and politics?

Clearly two things are happening at once: the liturgical ‘dole’ corresponds to a pre-supposed subjective capacity for theatrical, ritual and political involvement of citizens which is kind of ‘marked’ by the dole (and its monetary measure) and at the same time, the very liturgical inclusion of the citizen-group-people *creates* that capacity. It is possible to widen this generalization for Greek society because liturgies were implemented by Pericles in 450 B.C for the benefit of jurors serving in courts as well as infantry men on active duty. Now these were small, token payments made and they must be seen as objective *marks* for a generalisable subjective capacity of popular “participation” in Greek civic existence. But this encoded relationship comes alive only with individuals and citizens and whether jurors, military personnel or the theatre-public, acting out their capacities on behalf of society as a whole, of a ‘being-in-common’. In that sense, these capacities for subjective transformations – aesthetic, ritual, political, etc. – were being supervised within a generalizable and systematic horizon. And whoever was excluded from the liturgical disbursement was excluded from this overall horizon of subjectivation. It is below this liturgical threshold – which, as should be evident by now, is a *minimal* threshold marked by token monetary measure – that the cathartic distribution of the population begins. Aristotle in Book VIII of *Politics* represents this above prescription when he says that the slaves and women and several such groups are meant for cathartic reception of music and theatre and this reception is completely saturated at the corporeal level with no *incorporeal transformation*.<sup>21</sup> If ancient Greece is a caste-society, then the lowest caste defined positively is liturgically accessible while below the liturgical threshold lies a black mass of cathartic automata who form a congregation of ‘outcastes’. In fiscal terms, this liturgical threshold is also the *taxable* threshold of society.

## Taxation

Now, the source of liturgical-public expenditure can only have been the taxation of wealthy citizens and “lords of the oikos”. In fact this is why people opposed to the democratic liturgical system (the case of an old Oligarch has been mentioned by historians) saw it as a forced re-distribution and transfer of wealth.<sup>22</sup> This is not the place for investigating this polemic but the point to consolidate here is the same as Max Weber’s when he was studying the economies of ancient Greece and Rome. Weber emphasised the military-political organization of Greek culture and called it a “guild”. He wrote:

...the city democracy of antiquity is a political guild. Tribute, booty, the payments of confederate cities, were merely distributed among the citizens.... the monopoly of the political guild included cleruchy, the distribution of the spoils of war; and at last the city paid out of the proceeds of its political activity theatre, jury service and for participation in religious rites.<sup>23</sup>

The simplicity of the above description does not merely pertain to the articulation between extraction and distribution; it, more profoundly, testifies to the presence of the citizens to the materials of “common utility” in a very concrete way. Instead of basing the economy and society on an abstract equation between spiritual and earthly (secular) properties under the common denominators of perpetuity and imprescriptibility, it, the guild-structure is topological and transformative. In this structure, a largely contingent and limited extraction (taxes, tributes, booties from contingent conquests, etc.) is *made present* to the citizens not only for the purposes of possession and consumption and enjoyment – though that might be a dominant purpose too – but also for a subjectivating and might one say, ‘spiritual’ purpose. But this proto-transsubstantiating purpose (where material becomes subject and a *truth* attaches to its materiality) in the Greek case, does not have the exemplary structure of Christianity where Jesus Christ will become present as theological, mimetic and sovereign material as well as example. So while the Christian (Catholic) congregation will search for the commemorative presence of the



exemplar in the liturgical performance, Greek liturgical logic is constituted by an immanent axiom: instead of being the physical and theatrical performances of ritual (to reach a transcendent truth) which assembles, gathers, congregates a liturgical ‘people’, let liturgy be a system of transformations, a threshold of popularity and participation, a rule-bound horizon within which a contingent material of common utility undergoes a concrete process of subjectivating ‘free play’... To this end, one doesn’t encounter a religious tax in 5<sup>th</sup> century Greece like the later Christian *tithe* but the re-distribution and deployment of tributes, taxes, booties, etc., has the precise, concrete purpose of achieving ritual purification, theatrical enthusiasm, political education – three ‘exemplary’ incorporeal transformations. So to answer the possible collateral question that what rationalizes the prescribed taxes on the wealth of the rich in ancient Greece from the point of view of the self-interest of the rich, or whether it is entirely coercive and punitive – one suggested rationality is that the wealthy gain a certain amount of public virtue by submitting to these taxes, a kind of ‘*persona*’ of the conscientious and public minded citizen.<sup>24</sup> But then, one must not forget that ‘*persona*’ itself is a manufactured presence, a presence at a distance, the kind of distance we encounter in the theatre. It is in ancient Rome that one finds that this theatrical notion has become a central *legal* category.

### *Persona*

The legal mobilisation of the *persona* in Roman jurisprudence is crucial. But before that discussion, a quick and immediate recapitulation is in order: the Greek horizons are two. One, the horizon of a ‘common’ Dionysian capacity of transformation that in the limited sense seen above is egalitarian; and second, the stratified horizon marked by wealth and caste. This second horizon though *touches* the first and the ‘liberal’ or democratic sign and *persona* is erected at this point of contact. This is an individualised *persona* of the “good” citizen who fulfils the obligations of society, an obligation externalised in the payment of tax. But the tax is not merely on the differential wealth of some individuals; it is also an

objective indicator of a threshold of citizenship *and* subjectivation. Strangely, this is a taxable threshold because tax, in this liturgical system, expresses a capacity which belongs to ‘all’. Now, is the word being used in English “capacity” to refer to the Greek situation the same as the translations of two words of Roman law “*potestas*” and “*auctoritas*”? How is this question related to the change in meaning and status of “*persona*”? Very schematically put, the liturgical capacity in question is non-possessive. It is not an attribute or a predicate possessed by or common to individuals or a class of citizens. The twist, of course, is that the liturgical capacity for subjective transformation and civic participation *is* a common capacity that provides the incorporeal element of Greek community (*koinonia*). But the logic of this “common” is that it expresses the possibility of becoming “un-common”, transformed, subjectivated in a regulated but new direction for *every-one*. If slaves, women, foreigners fall below the liturgical threshold it is not fundamentally on account of possessing or not possessing material, physical, even social attributes (like rights, privileges, status etc.). It is the other way round: because these groups are considered beset by an “incapacity” for subjectivation and are confined to relatively involuntary, automatic, merely cathartic spaces/states (instead of the egalitarian Dionysian creative and affective capacities), they are also regarded as politically and socially non-significant, if not insolvent.

Interestingly, the Dionysian liturgical capacity is different from the Roman *auctoritas* in that the latter declaration (I am made the auctor) is made by virtue of possessing a primary, direct attribute. So this declaration issues from the Roman Senate which is the assembly of *paters* – the logic being that the *pater* both is *auctor* and transfers *auctoritas* to his son (in the familial scene of say the son’s marriage which is authorized by this transfer) or as senator in public law to the magistrature and other decision-making committees (*comitia*) to the end of ratifying their decisions.<sup>25</sup> The interest really is in the basis of this transfer: it takes place on the basis of an extraordinary, even splendid possession, or ownership. Only on this primary possessive basis can the seller transfer ownership to the buyer, the father to the son, the senate to the people. Giorgio

Agamben quotes Pierre Noailles on this relationship: “Like all the powers of archaic law, be they familial, private, or public, *auctoritas* too was originally conceived according to the unilateral model of law pure and simple, without obligation or sanction.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, the capacity unleashed and transferred by *auctoritas* neither follows from the modality of representation (based on the person with rights that society is obliged to serve or fulfil) nor from the non-possessive, axiomatic and Dionysian capacity described above. *Auctoritas* then, is a kind of ontological declaration of *being* the person with capacity/power in an irreducible sense. From “I made *auctor*” to “I am *auctor*”...

Roman law converts this ontological sovereign declaration to legal sovereignty. To do this, it needs, along with *auctoritas*, a more natural-institutional (together defining a threshold of normalization) notion of power, a ‘normal’ notion: *Potestas*. Negatively speaking, *potestas* does not generate the extraordinary *experience* of *auctoritas* that Hannah Arendt saw disappearing in the modern age.<sup>27</sup> It doesn’t involve the singular figure of the *auctor* and his ontological supplementation of a normal order of law. But *potestas* was the necessary form of law in ancient Rome in that it (and *imperium*) designated that which the magistrate and also the citizens were institutionally empowered with in the shape of rights, decision-making authority etc. To return to our earlier negative characterization, *potestas* as a normal form and threshold of power is precisely that which can be suspended in the situation or event of an extraordinary *interregnum*.<sup>28</sup> This brings up the great partisan question Carl Schmitt will ask in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: who decides the suspension of decision-making authority in the interregnum? At a pinch, the answer is “*auctoritas*” but the genealogical as well as the projective compilations of this answer will be examined as one proceeds. At this point it is important to note that for the Romans, the concrete manifestation of the suspension of the *potestas* of the magistrate and people was also the emptying and suspension of the assembly of the public, in the literal sense, the *res publica* (the public element, its ontological presence to itself). And exactly at this point of vacancy (of the *potestas*) the *auctoritas* is activated with a primary force and the singularity of the ontological

claimant, the *auctor* assumes a *dictatorial persona*. In Roman law, the exigent but essential counterpart for this intensified *persona* is not simply the disappearance of the people from the *res publica* but turning of the people themselves into a public “hostis”, or enemy.<sup>29</sup> In specific terms, one of the circumstances of the *interregnum*, “the state of exception” (Agamben) was the declaration of some citizen to be a “hostis” because the threatened the security of the empire and the republic. This circumstance intensified in the history of emergencies and states of exception yields the *persona* or figure (*figura*) of the extreme auctor-dictator on the one hand and on the other, the public *hostis* encompassing the entire assembly and congregation of the people.

And yet one must be careful not to contrast too sharply the politically and legally (through the suspension of the law) produced or assembled figure of the *auctor* and so-to-speak the ‘natural assembling’ of the people and the abduction of their *potestas*. In fact the situation, in Roman Law and its appropriation by more modern regimes of power, is somewhat the opposite. As Agamben shows, *auctoritas* in its extreme force works at the level of life itself and becomes indistinguishable from life while *potestas* indicates the domain of representation, right, sanction and obligation that might present themselves as institutionally naturalized but it only takes the interruption of the *event* in history to render the institution inoperative. Though it must be said here that Roman Law is pioneering in recognising the exceptional status of the event, its decodified appearance (for which it gave the name, *Iustitia*) and proposing codes or laws of the exception itself. *Auctoritas* is such an exceptional, partisan (Carl Schmitt) and figural invention (because *auctoritas* belongs to the *persona* of the *auctors*).<sup>30</sup> But then what does one make of the pivotal category of the subject of Roman Law which is “*persona*”? What is this category which is constitutively partisan and neutral?

There is an analogical and a genealogical response to this problem. The analogical response consists of exposing certain structural comparisons of elements and relations between elements; and the genealogical one involves uncovering a series of historical entwinements. Interestingly, both responses point

in the same direction – theatre, or rather, the art of acting in the theatre. The historical question is that while there is agreement on the “*persona*” of Roman Law being of the element of the mask, what kind of a mask is being talked of here? The mask of the Greek actor or the death-masks of ancient (Greek and Roman) mortuary practices? In Alain Supiot’s *Homo Juridicus: On the Anthropological Function of the Law*, the division of possibilities is stated clearly: While the Latin “*persona*” translates the Greek word “*prosopon*” which is the actor’s mask, Marcel Mauss shows that the legal sense of “*persona*” comes from mortuary masks (*imago*).<sup>31</sup> And the *imago* is itself derived from an important and dense funereal custom in Roman society – the practice of the preservation of the *imagines*. Now, *imagines* were such ‘properties’ that were shut away in the dead ancestor’s cupboards – *armaria* – which could be displayed only when passed on to the descendents. This is not detachable property that can be possessed and transferred as a matter of inherited rights merely; exactly the nature of *auctoritas*, the *imagines* or *imago*s were the direct *attributions* from ancestors to descendents.<sup>32</sup> The death masks, the *personae* were non-detachable possessions of whom? It is impossible to answer because the masks were indelible traces that belonged neither to one form or the other, the one figure or the next but to that dense point of linkage and passage which on both sides, completes the logics of these forms. The *persona* itself is the trace, the signature of the passage. Based on these historical excavations, Florence Dupont indicates a non-Christian genealogy for the king’s two bodies, natural – mortal and consecrated – permanent.<sup>33</sup> Supiot emphasises the infrastructure of this consecration – which is the real physical trace, the seal, the mask of the ancestor and so the logic of passage here is metonymic rather than metaphoric.<sup>34</sup>

In an expected framework, the theatrical mask is meant to function metaphorically. The mask is what is put on and taken off. In the duration of its use, the mask stands for, not so much the actor, as the character, the fiction (*fictio*) that the actor is meant to embody and convey. It is a great mystery of the *persona* as mask of the actor that this mask *appears* as the trace of *truth*. And the truth is liturgically verifiable as the truth-effects passed

through the bodies of the public, the congregations whether as belief, enthusiasm, possession or any other affect. But it is exactly in this *partisan* function that the actor's mask begins to display the same metonymic contagiousness as the death-mask of the legal *persona*. The mask, at the Greek juncture or in the far-away instance of Ramnagar's Ramlila (where no masks are worn but the actors are *thought to be* masks, *swaroop or murti*),<sup>35</sup> does not replicate a form of the original character, fiction and figure; rather it yields, opens up a passage through which a fragment, a shard of the true passes. In the Greek case, this metonymic fragment of the true – and not the mimetic, that is, metaphoric substitute of truth – that passes, with great effect and sober (Junoian, as Hölderlin would say) violence, is the *voice* from behind the mask to beyond it. Exactly as in the legal passage where, the real force of inheritance doesn't come from right but from a physical and excessive attribution, the voice in Greek theatre is an utterance from the *mask itself*.<sup>36</sup> So to revise one's terms, it is not a passage from behind to beyond; but the passage is an extremely sober, extremely delicate and precarious *play of the mask*. The passage is conducted in a flickering synchrony and has topological features of conduct. So to complete the analogy, if the *persona* of the ancestor is passed on to the descendent as in a direct 'transfusion', it is the transfusion of an ancestral, fundamental and *impersonal* voice that expresses and generates the power of *auctoritas* beyond 'legitimate authority' (*potestas*).

Yet if there is a key difference between the discourse of Greek theatre and that of Roman Law, it pertains to the nature and degree of codification involved in each case. While the Greek mask codifies qualities, moods and forms of narrative logic (narrative translating the Aristotelian *mythos* equally known as plot or myth), the Roman *persona* codifies degrees of legal-social personality.<sup>37</sup> And this Roman codification is also a move of the neutralization of affect or *pathos* of the very grain of theatricality. What does this neutralization signify? One possible significance is the conception of sovereignty involved: Roman legal sovereignty is not individualistic in the modern sense but also does not provide an exterior liturgical codification for a "being-in-common" based

on a regulative horizon of affective and teleological transformation through civic activities and forms. It institutes a *legal assembly of personae* where the *persona* is a differentiated and neutralized legal category corresponding to social status of ancestry and *patria*. This is a form of the institution of legal truth – or law providing the element of a true authority of the authority of truth – that neither coincides with true subjectification nor with the subject’s intentional authenticity. Hannah Arendt will write in her pioneering work *On Revolution* (1962) that the French revolutionaries in the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, particularly a figure like Robespierre, tried to shatter and finish, once and for all, the structural distance that underlay both Roman Law’s formalism and Western theatre’s generic ironism (Denis Diderot’s *The Paradox of Acting* in mid 18<sup>th</sup> century already praised this irony).<sup>38</sup> And this they wanted to do in the name and wake of a *new truth*. But that discussion for a later chapter...

## A NEW LITURGY I

Yet to say “formalism” of Roman Law and its notion of *persona* is to create a false fixity. If the *persona* is an ancestral death-mask with an enigmatic tonality playing upon its surface, forcing a fresh attribution of authority (*auctoritas*) by torsion, then these are only *sketches* of a mask and a tone. The Latin “figura” derives from *ingere* which denotes the contour, the forming of a form rather than the substantial unity and density of the form itself.<sup>39</sup> *Persona* is closely associated with *figura* to the same extent as law is indissociable from rhetoric. What is involved in this process is a kind of *gesture* that is not reducible either to the act of authority or to the form of the person or subject, in the modern sense. One could say that this gesture has two components: one Greek, which is the stylized eternity of the tragic or comic or any other mask in the theatre, and the other Roman, which tears a fragment of the mask *within* the mask and recomposes the same mask but with a different tonality. When it is said “tonality”, on the one hand the voice of patristic authority is meant that is passed on as the emblematic properties of the dead (*imagines*) and on the other, a certain materiality is indicated, a “grain” (Roland Barthes) that

attaches not to the personal resonance of individual majesty but to the *event* of the gesture.<sup>40</sup>

When on January 16, 27 B.C., the Roman Senate conferred on Octavius the title “Augustus” and then Augustus proclaimed his decision to transfer the *res publica* from his hands to the people and Senate, and this proclamation formed a part of his *res gestae* – these moves rendered indiscernible the factuality, the thingness of the *res* and the event of the *gest* or further, the question was, what is the *res* of the event, the gesture? What is further rendered indiscernible is the personal life of the Augustus and his public “gestures”.<sup>41</sup> Because these gestures are undetachable from his corporeal, singularity, they spring from the *res*, the body of the person; however, because the gestures are immanent to a public life, a life of impersonal *auctoritas* and its majesty *through and through*, the *persona* of the Augustus is nothing but the maximal vivacity of the event of the gesture(s).<sup>42</sup> In an early short and remarkably insightful essay “Notes on gesture”, Giorgio Agamben quotes from Varro’s *De Lingua Latin* to distinguish the gesture from the enactment of the actor’s part and the production (*poesis*) of the ‘poets’ work.<sup>43</sup> In that sense, gesture belongs to the *imperator* who as magistrate, supports its burden, its weight, which is also the weight of the mask. Gesture belongs to the magistrate in the normal sense; but in an exorbitant sense, it attributes itself to a sudden, an eventative *auctor*. But who can deny that categorical inventions of the law are very much part of what George Dumèzil called “the fabulous ‘history’ of Romans”?<sup>44</sup> This fabulous, archaic history is populated with highly individualized figures who serve specific, lucid functions and form distinct series while being immersed in several colourful goings-on of the fable. A fundamental series that underlies and makes possible the legal apparatus (dispositif) consists of two functional terms – which, as this investigation indicates, are also ontological terms: being-bound/being-in-debt and being-unbound/being-freed-of-debt (through payment of debt). The first status and function corresponds to a word from the earliest fragments of Roman Law, *nexum*. This is a clear linguistic reference (in Latin) of being bound to a creditor and being subjugated to his authority. While *mutuum* is a word denoting



the relation and event of exchange whereby the debt is extracted and payed, leading to the un-binding of the *nexum*.<sup>45</sup> Now these are not opposed terms but complementary and between them a relationship of complicity obtains. But the really interesting dimension of this structure is verifiable in homologous ritual and sovereign cases: in the ritual domain, a liturgical debt obtains – whereupon the member of a religious congregation must pay back with devotion expressed in *performance* (of sacrifices, for eg.).<sup>46</sup> and this performance which un-binds the devotee from the liturgical debt *remains* complicit with an original *nexum* (contract?) that the devotee is permanently and cruelly part of. So the performance, the expression of *mutuum* is an attenuation, rather than a reversal of the *nexum*. This is also the case with sovereignty: the ‘founder’ of Rome, Romulus, has placed the people in a *nexum* which originally (as with the Greek Uranous) is *unconditional*.<sup>47</sup> The developments in the representation of sovereignty testify to complementary possibilities that this arbitrary, unconditional, violent (surely!) power might be attenuated in actualization of the *mutuum*. These acts of actualizations come through in the “fabulous” histories (of Rome, India, Iran, etc.) as acts of un-binding and ritual release that complement the original cruel structure. In Rome the *flamen dialis* serve this latter function both ritually and sovereignly. In the narratives of Roman history, fabulous or factual, these figures (*flamen dialis*) both complete the structure of liturgy and sovereignty but also moderate it to a point of conditional relaxation.<sup>48</sup> To the unconditional and arbitrary exercise of power (Uranous to Romulus) the form of a condition, which is liturgical obligation or debt and sovereign mastery to be obeyed, is opened up and counter-pointed. This attenuated structure of obligation yields a kind of *proto-subject* of the exchange relation instead of the unexchangeable and unfulfillable debt inaugurated by the *nexum*. The concluding point here must be made clearly, without negotiation: the obligatory relation which is finite and cancellable under the function of the *mutuum* remains tied to the non-relational sovereignty of *nexum* – and this is what returns, with pathos and vehemence, in the endemic situation of *non-payment of finite debts*, the situation of the *bad debtor*.

Now, the bad debtor is an interesting and ambiguous case of the *nexum*. On the one hand, the debtor is at all in debt by virtue of an original (legal) contract/bond, a *nexum*. But the *bad* debtor is subject to *nexum* in all its terrible acuity precisely on the occasion of defaulting. In this, the division of sovereignty into a formal legal sanction and the *force* of law comes into evidence. The *nexum* seems to hold this division in a dangerous balance that George Dumèzil magisterially outlines. And Dumèzil shows how this force which is internal to this sort of a divided or disjunctive totality gives rise to the possibility of ‘the intolerable’. So Livy is cited on the extreme abuse of a debtor by a creditor which leads to popular outrage. Livy is quoted at length:

On that day through the criminal act and abuse of a single man, the awesome bond of *fides* (*ingensvinculum fidei*) was vanquished. By order of the Senate, the consuls announced to the people that no man, unless as the result of a merited sentence and while awaiting punishment, should thence forward be held in shackles or bonds, and that in the future it should be the property and not the body of the debtor that should be answerable for money borrowed (*pecuniae creditae*). Thus it was that the bound (*nexi*) were unbound (*soluti*). And measures were taken to see that they should not be bound in future (*cautumque in posterum ne necterentur*).<sup>49</sup>

Dumèzil further narrates from instances of Indian mythology, cases of liturgical and magico-religious debt that run the risk of becoming terrible and exorbitant. The answer to prayers asking to be released from these terrible *nexi* comes as a “miracle”. In Dumèzil account, Indra plays the role of the miracle-maker but the function remains general and precise – to intervene in a cruel and unsparing system of debt as the generous warrior. The warrior, “the society of warriors”, was to be characterized by a completely altered economic (and sexual) morality. Tacitus will say that these warriors and their society do not possess land, house, any business; they waste public property and are indifferent to their own interests.<sup>50</sup> In other words, a *new* “unsocial sociability” is coming into view – one which, negatively speaking, is not interested in what Adam Smith will call (almost two millenia later) “credit-worthiness”;<sup>51</sup> and affirmatively put, this is a counter-sociability that introduces the

“miraculous’ *right to clemency*.<sup>52</sup> Strangely, this marks the advent of an unconditional right but not one which is arbitrary in the archaic sovereign mode. Rather, the warrior-unbinder, with reckless generosity in the heart and impassive courage in his/her stride, forces the *event* of this unconditional right in a bound (*nexum*) universe of liturgical and pecuniary obligations and contracts.

But the forcing of the unconditional right doesn’t take place in a vacuum. It takes place in response to a *demand*, a demand that articulates itself as the weak and vehement truth that is immanent to the (intolerable) situation of the *nexum*. And the demand holds reality in so far as that truth itself is intolerable. Dumèzil relates the situation of Rome when war against the Volscii is imminent. But the soldiers of Rome are subjugated to the *nexum*; they cry out – while we fight for the glory and power of the empire, in Rome we are bound and oppressed by our creditors. A former centurion, now an old man in rags, addresses the city’s public assembly. “He displays his chest, covered with wounds earned in many battles and he gives voice to his misfortunes”. His fields, his goods, his freedom have been expropriated. And he has been beaten up by his creditors, marks of which violence he carries on his back.<sup>53</sup> This pathetic (from the phenomenological unfolding of the debtor-soldier’s *pathemata*) and vehement spectacle presents, at the one and the same time, a lament, an appeal and a demand. The lament is of misfortune, the appeal to justice and the demand is a kind of subjective ‘making manifest’ of and at the level of the ‘intolerable’ of the objective situation. To this subjective intervention, the city and its *populus* respond by besieging the senators and forcing them to grant the soldiers fighting for Rome unconditional clemency and un-binding.

Dumèzil quotes from Livy’s account of the Senate’s decision: “No man must detain a Roman citizen, either in chains or in prison, so as to hinder him from enrolling his name before the consuls (*nominis edendi caput consules potestas*). And nobody may either seize or sell the goods of any soldier while he is in camp”.<sup>54</sup> The liturgical meaning of this political decision is the following: an unconditional liberty attaches to the insolvent Roman citizen so as to free him from past debt and only then to participate in

the *magisterium* and its consular *potestas*. So reciprocally, a new inclusion of unforeseen political sensibility and situation is at stake for an act of unconditional “forcing” to take place whose hazardous origins lie not in a recognizable form of legal or sovereign authority (*potestas*) but in a kind of anonymous upsurge of a ‘popular’ *auctoritas*. The splendour of this anonymity lies in the heroic, warrior-like phosphorescence of the event rather than in the “magico-religious” and liturgical attributes of the *patria*. Of course, it takes but a decisive, if fundamentally perverse, move to re-appropriate the splendour of the event, its “heroic mystique” (Dumézil) and re-institute the regime of legal sovereignty and contractual obligation.

## A NEW LITURGY II

Opposed to the *nexum*, the warrior takes a voluntary oath, he performs a *sacramentum* but in the presence of a commander-in-chief.<sup>55</sup> In Christian liturgy, the priest performs a sacrament too but in the presence of Christ and God. So what is obviously called for is an analysis of these specific modes of presence. But instead of choosing either a purely mythical or consistently theological frame of reference, it is more interesting to hunt for *historical* clues that provide glimpses of the upsurge of ‘mixed’ frameworks. One could say, with reason, that the warrior-figure, for all its heroic emanation, is also a rich ‘mixture’ of mythical, structural and historical elements. Indeed, being a ‘mixture’, the warrior is not really a figure and doesn’t enjoy a pure *persona*. And the mixture of elements presents itself at the core of something which doesn’t exist as a legal or ontological category. Unlike the *persona mixta* of Christian political theology, which will solicit this investigation soon, Roman Law thought of the *persona* as an instrument of consistent discernment that clarified the ontological mixtures of the world and its multiple situations. Yet, the warrior is a function that produces a kind of indiscernment, a mode of separation in the continuum of the world. So while the warrior takes an oath of *virtu* and *opera* (courage and deeds) he doesn’t do this in exchange of a conditional freedom and redemption (of debt). It is because the

warrior has been unconditionally released from the past that he can begin *a new life* with the oath. This is the clemency of the event that the warrior-mystique and the warrior-function mark.

It took a great and virulent controversy in 9<sup>th</sup> century France to highlight a similar division of stakes in the Christian liturgy. This controversy surrounded the writings and interpretation of the ceremonialist Bishop Amalarius of Metz with regard to the extremely popular Catholic ritual of the Eucharist. The controversy pertained to the following problem: whether the mode of presence of Christ as evoked in the liturgy was an allegorical *interpretans* or the mode corresponded to a phenomenological object of a type of *experience* that was lived at an individual as well as a collective level.<sup>56</sup> In other words, what was at stake was the status of the liturgical performance - was it a theatre to be interpreted according to symbolical conventions and their institutional authority or was it an event of "love" that poured out of the believer's heart for Christ, an event rigorously 'erotic' and historical. Then, the stakes are equally reflected in the understanding of the status of the congregation - whether this congregation was of the nature of a theatrical assembly governed by the general logic of mimesis or of the nature of a liturgical 'people' moved to a corporeally indiscernible, yet incorporeally singular enthusiasm. Strangely, the controversy and accusation of heresy concerning Amalarius were not explicitly to do with the presence of theatre in his explanation of the ritual's power and popularity - indeed, theatre was not present in any discursive visibility. Nor was the Church's charges openly political - that Amalarius was promoting any sort of Christian subalternity (as others will do and be accused of). Rather, the objection was nigglingly technical but with heretical implications, according to the Council of Kierzy.<sup>57</sup> Amalarius had said, among related things, that the priest who performed the sacrament(s) in the mass was *like* Christ. Everything hinged on the meaning given to this "likeness". Now, Amalarius seemed to be trying out a logical proposition. If the eucharistic ritual as led by the priest or Bishop suffused the congregation with a real and transformed presence, then, in view of this phenomenological evidence, the power of the ritual must lie in a power that was infinitely greater than the priest and yet

was transmitted through him. So the “likeness” was supported by an infinite supplementation. But the council of the church was far more attentive to the importance given by Amalarius to the phenomenological and historical irreducibility of the evidence of the *here and now* of the congregation. In the here and now of the congregation, according to Amalarius, the allegorical meaning of the ritual coincided with the cutting edge of experience. And the division of the stakes pointed out earlier is overcome to make them even more critical: in the here and now, is it possible to envisage Christ’s eucharistic sacrifice being materialized? Is the allegorical distance between the corporeal (and signifying) material and the invisible Christic result – which is a divine presence among the believers – collapsible into the element of that very materiality? In other words, can the infinity of Christ’s eucharistic presence and significance be *localized*?

Amalarius’ chief accusers and judges, Deacon Florus and Agobard, refused the possibility any such localization. Florus argued that Amalarius was fantasizing about Christ’s multiple bodies as rendered visible by the signs and objects of the liturgy:

Amalarius himself, the famous master, teaches that the body of Christ is triform and tripartite, how there are three bodies of Christ (or three parts of Christ’s body). The first is that part which rose from the dead, the second that part which is in us, and the third that part which walks on the earth. Amalarius asserts that the mysterious sacrifice brings these three into being: one the chalice for Christ, another the paten of his life, and the third the altar for his death. Amalarius says that the bread is the sacrifice of Christ, the blood his soul, and this the complete Christ.<sup>58</sup>

Donnalee Dox points out the Augustinian basis of Florus’ and Agobards’ accusation and judgement. Augustine had clearly judged human-made signs pitifully inadequate to the task of representing Christian truth. And *that* was the real stake – “truth”, in the eyes of Augustine. By the 9<sup>th</sup> century, as a case of church dispute pertaining to dogma, the stake of truth was invested in the authority of the *one* Christian body on earth – the church – and its protection. But what would the church be protected against? In simplified but acute words, against the eros, the clemency,

the “vocalization” of the event. Agobard raised harsh objections against ‘Amalarius’ celebration of antiphonal singing in the liturgy of the Catholic Church. Agobard issued the stern admonishment:

Let the young people listen to this, let those hear it whose duty is to play music in the Church: they should sing to God not with the voice but with the heart; nor in the manner of tragic actors should the throat and jaws be smeared with sweet medicine, so that metrical tunes and songs may be heard in Church; but in fear, in work, in knowledge of scripture.<sup>59</sup>

At last theatre is mentioned! Not by the accused – who attributed direct allegorical powers to Christic presence or Christ-like infinity to the allegories – but the accuser. And here “theatre” is not only a specific regime of aesthetic materials and signs of representations, “theatre” is the generic name of an endemic mixture and contamination of form and substance. Thus the name must be obliterated every time anew and an act of purification must take place through a conversion of attitude on behalf of the congregation – “in fear, in work, in knowledge...” In the 9<sup>th</sup> century around ‘the Amalarius affair’, the dangerous upsurge of theatre doesn’t take place only as a damaging pagan remnant which returns but equally as an exigent diagnosis of the *here and now* – an exigency to be appropriated and neutralized by the only possible event: the event of the scripture. It has to be accented that Amalarius did not translate the liturgical proceedings into a theatrical vocabulary; he used the word *sensum*, or “feeling” for the effect of the liturgy on its congregation.<sup>60</sup> In his judges’ eyes, *sensum* was a temporal variable that only a heretic could allow to infiltrate in an eternal spiritual presence. Dox rightly draws the inference that such temporal preference meant being the partisan of the temporal power, Louis rather than the resurrected power of Christ.<sup>61</sup> Yet the object of this debate must be precisely spelt out. It was not the political and theological choice between temporal and material existence and eternal, spiritual life. Within the narrow and dense passage of this period, the real problematization attached to the status of the *incorporeal object* – whether it was a static and a permanent form of the Platonist type or a more Stoic (Deleuze)

notion of the incorporeal transformation as an abstract object also called “event”. And within this passage, both these interpretations of the incorporeal object arose from worldly self-divisions and returned as concrete effects *in the world*.

Two strange yet ‘normalizing’ phenomena take place between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D, phenomena that probably only have a tenuous internal connection. First, between Amalarius and Honorius Augustoduenensis three centuries later, the question of ritual, liturgy and theatre are analogically and mimetically rationalized. In the *De tragoedis*, Honorius will compare the Eucharist with the Graeco-Roman tragic plot (mythos) and the tragic effect (catharsis) is analogically the same as Christian triumph of good over evil, personified in the victory of Christ over satan.<sup>62</sup> The liturgical support now is the normalized ritual-procession undertaken by a Christian congregation – where the theatrical, ritual and political assemblies coincide – in singing and “rejoicing”. Insofar as the mimetic logic of the liturgical performance was concerned, Honorius not only pointed out the analogy of plot (mythos) but also the correspondence of *persona* between the tragic actor and the eucharistic celebrant. In the times of Amalarius there were others like Remigius of Auxerre (841-908 A.D.) who, in his commentaries on Boethius, had distinguished the *persona* of the human person from the shadowy and/or skeletal mask (*persona*) of the actor.<sup>63</sup> The ritual parameter of this distinction was that of the effusion of life in one and not the other. There could be no comparison or commensuration of the Greek and Roman *personae* that represented and generalized transient qualities merely and the Christian person (*persona*) whose truth was indivisible and fully individualized, a truth completely inaccessible to mimetic performance.

It is remarkable that by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this incommensurable (non)-relation had yielded to a political-theological justification of kingship that was Christo-centric, Christornimetic and by the ritual exercise of Christic power and presence, *liturgical*. In this second ‘normalizing’ phenomenon, no less remarkable for that fact, a new, hitherto impossible object of problematization surfaces in discourses of sovereignty and its milieu of exercise: *persona*



*mixta*. But before a scholarly exposition of the *persona mixta* in 12<sup>th</sup> century literature, an exposition guided by Ernst Kantorowicz, it is essential to state, in general terms, the *hopes* from a study of liturgy and politics. These hopes have been outlined by traditional Catholic commentaries as well as studies with overt political orientation. They centre on the ‘common life’ of worship and the worshippers. Now this is not merely a zoological (from the *Greek zoè*) life shared at a human level with the common attribute of “Christian”; this is a life *to come* promised by the event of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection. So the crucial political question becomes, who will counter-sign and ‘authorize’ the event of Christ? The church, the people or is it the event itself that must, perpetually, renew its promise and sign on its own abyssal behalf? But the signature is a *letter* and “the letter killeth, but the spirit gives life”. This is the knot that ties up liturgy in its historical and ontological articulation. For the liturgy is nothing if not a *gesture* just as the signature is. So, how to trace the figure, the contour of this gesture, its incidence and localization without losing the force of the *passage* that the gesture opens up to a *new* ‘common life’ – this is the wager and hope not of political theology, or a theologico-political movement but of *the encounter* between bodies of a congregation (also called *laity*) and the ‘body’ of an excessive gesture. Thus, in a recent work *Torture and Eucharist*, William T. Cavanaugh passionately argues for a reciprocal commitment: the Church to commit to the world as a real ecclesiological space of solidarity, resistance and emancipation and the *ecclesia*, the space of assembly to commit to a drastic decision to withdraw its stakes from the world *as it exists*, to leave the world *in* the world, “to be in the world but not of it” (St. Paul).<sup>64</sup> And what unites the Church and people, in this view, is the joint commitment to equally abandon the Church as merely a *corpus mysticum*, a ‘soulful’ corporation and to disperse the people as an aggregate of atoms subject to the *corpus verum*, the state. The site of this united commitment is the Eucharist as *liturgy*. When liturgy recalling the original “*leitourgia*” means, “an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals”.<sup>65</sup>

William Cavanaugh's above argument is not primarily a scholarly exercise; he locates the paradoxical liturgical hope in a most ravaged contemporary political landscape. In post-Allende Chile in the 1970s and '80s, with Pinochet's murderous dictatorship in action, a comprador arrangement can be seen. Cavanaugh shows how the military-bureaucratic-authoritarian state had assumed a mystical, axiomatic status and body that inflicted itself on the 'least' bodies of the subject-people while the Church assumed the severely restricted mandate of governing and saving "the souls" of individuals (while their bodies suffered to torture and murder) – a purified comprador or arrangement that the author exposes and de-mystifies. So his argument wants to produce an affirmative mixture, or 'impurification' in the world that would bring into eucharistic presence the transformation of a collected and counted (uncounted as well, as later chapters will show) people into a new "incorporeal" corporation. A mixture of bodies, events, personae... In articulating this desire, Cavanaugh's argument traces a patient, tortuous, indispensable scholarly path that Ernst Kantorowicz excavated in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in *The King's Two Bodies*. Cavanaugh's study confronts, with contemporary urgency, that which was Kantorowicz's deeper political objective – to trace the formation of an elaborate rationality that he calls "political theology" to support and produce the "myth of the state".<sup>66</sup> It is important to re-trace the path of this formation whose initial subject and material of problematization was the *persona mixta*.

### PERSONA MIXTA

Around 1100 A.D., a pamphleteer puts out a series of political tractates based on liturgy, canon law, theology, an English writer who will get known as the Norman Anonymous... "Among the many topics he [the Norman Anonymous] saw fit to discuss, there was also what later would be defined as *persona mixta*, the 'mixed person' in which various capacities or strata concurred. 'Mixtures' of all kinds of capacities, of course, may be found today as in every

other age and under almost any conditions. However, the yoking of two seemingly heterogeneous spheres had a peculiar attraction for an age eager to reconcile the duality of this world and the other, of things temporal and eternal, secular and spiritual”.<sup>67</sup> In fact, the Norman Anonymous can be seen to obsess himself with “mixtures”. The mixture is created not only by mixing positive predicates as “secular” and “spiritual” or “temporal” and “eternal” but equally by the tentative and delicately negative characterization – “not wholly laical” or “not wholly spiritual”. But Kantorowicz points out that in early 12<sup>th</sup> century, the question of the *persona mixta* when applied to king or sovereign, could not be fully equated with the later medieval, doctrine of *The King’s Two Bodies*. Very schematically understood, *The King’s Two Bodies* referred to the mortal, corporeal sense of the body and the permanent, incorporeal sense while the *persona mixta* referred to a mixture of capacities, intra-mundane and spiritual. So from the two bodies of the king, political theology will derive, eventually, a theory of the political corporation (body) as super-imposed on the random distribution of natural bodies. But the *persona mixta* provokes much more situated analyses of the *performance* of the mixtures. Kantorowicz, staying close to the pamphleteer’s text, calls this a “liturgical” performance of kingship. In that light, he cites the Norman Anonymous.

We thus have to recognize [in the king] a *twin person*, one descending from nature, the other from grace... One through which, by the condition of nature, he conformed with other men; another through which, by the eminence of [his] deification and by the power of the sacrament [of consecration], he excelled all others. Concerning one personality, he was, by nature, an individual man; concerning his other personality, he was, by grace, a *Christus*, that is a God-man. <sup>68</sup>

It is not the consciousness of heterogeneous capacities and ontological positions that is new in the pamphleteer. Marcus Aurelius displayed this stratified and tactically (as well as ethically) reconciled consciousness in his meditations.<sup>69</sup> It is the technology of the production of the king’s sovereign capacity (*potestas*) that is singular in the Norman Anonymous – and he calls this technology “grace”. Now it is possible to object here that there has been a

surreptitious displacement of the theology of the cross by the theology of grace, of sacrifice by glory. Indeed, in the history of liturgy these are distinct contents supported by different portions (or *logoi*) of the Bible. But what is at issue here is something far more material and modal: production of the king *as* king, as sovereign function. It is as part of this requirement that liturgy serves as site and vehicle; Kantorowicz says that with the Norman Anonymous, not any more is the paradigm that of kings of the Old Testament as fore-shadows (*figura Christi*) of Christ but the King of the New Covenant is *Christomimetes*, the actor/impersonator of Christ *here and now*.<sup>70</sup> On the one hand this latter replicates mimetically the relationship of Christ and God (Christ as an embodiment of the divine prototype) and on the other, the king is *not* Christ – he must become, or be produced as *Christus*. At this point, a complex and deeply interesting dimension, equally structural and historical, comes to light.

Now, the Norman Anonymous calls the mode of production of “grace” by which the king is anointed “deification”. Scholars ranging from Florence Dupont, Bickermann, Geiesey to the much-discussed Giorgio Agamben have argued that the ritual of deification by which the articulation between the natural and the political/sovereign *persona* is produced, can be traced back to pre-Christian origins such as the Roman *consecratio* and other ritual performances.<sup>71</sup> What seems to emerge, in a forceful way, through these extraordinary scholarly adventures is the recording of a political and ontological *demand* – the demand for a sustainable political form and essence that survive the contingency of history and existence. The demand, then, is to survive the condition of banality whose ontological passage is closed down by a fundamental finitude marked by the so-called mortal event, the event of death. The demand, whether in Rome, Christian rule or modern politics, is to re-infinite this condition and open up the ontological passage, the demand for a *true* sovereignty! But ironically, every particular historical study shows that the ontological-political demand is translated in a specific age and culture as a *technology* of sovereign survival rather than as an infinite revolution of conditions. It is as a series of historical and cultural techniques – limited and insistently

productive – that the Roman *consecratio* with its apparatus of actors and *imagos* leads up to the *Christomimetes* as a ‘sovereign actor of sovereignty’ – a hopeless contradiction rescued by the visitation of grace.

But “grace” is not a verifiable property bestowed either by a logic of election or pre-destination. The only verification of grace is that it *must be* the king’s singular – and ritual – possession. In this sense, the Norman Anonymous initiates a liturgical rationality: he *prescribes* the theoretical remainder when the ritual (deification) has been exhaustively described and still the super-numerary event of grace remains undemonstrated. But the king’s sovereignty is eminently demonstrated, not in the performance of grace, but in the performance of *consecratio*/apotheosis/deification resulting in effective power, in *potestas*. It is true that Kantorowicz emphasises the Norman Anonymous’ paradigm as liturgical-theatrical but the touchstone of this paradigm is the production of *potestas* or normalized sovereign power. It is incontestably a part of liturgical rationality that through the anointing and deification the king *becomes* Christus by the touch of grace but as a transcendental machine (Antonio Negri) the king *is* fabricator and producer of power (*potestas*). What is really interesting here is that this intense transcendence and productivity (“effluence” according to Kantorowicz) is not necessitated by and predicated upon a *theory of right*. The king is king because he *becomes* one through grace. Why does grace touch *this* king? Because he *is* king already in all his unexchangeable singularity. This is the problem and interest of the *persona mixta* that the Norman Anonymous attempts to solve liturgically.

But the solution is not completely aporetic, as the above riddle might suggest. For, the model for the singularity of the king in all his “mixtures” is the singular and “mixed” model of Jesus Christ himself. To this end, the Norman Anonymous offers the following “baffling” (Kantorowicz) example: Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, enters into a ‘mixture’ with Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, and submits to him. Jesus says, with regard to the payment of the tribute money, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s....” As an

explanation of this, Kantorowicz cites the following extraordinary argument from the pamphleteer:

He said “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”; and did not say “unto Tiberius the things that are Tiberius”. Render to the power (*potestas*), not to the person..... For it was just that the human weakness succumbed to the *divina potestas*. Namely, Christ, according to his humanity was then weak; but divine was Caesar’s *potestas*.<sup>72</sup>

This passage offers several “geminations” – the twin natures of Christ, the twin personae of the *imperator* etc. But what is crucial – and Kantorowicz diagnoses this exactly – is that the singular Christ must insert himself, in all his submitting weakness, in a history of *potestas*, of power. He must enter the historical ‘mixture’ of Roman, Jewish, even Christian kings, where each instance of sovereignty is already a re-composition and working over of the *persona mixta*. And Jesus Christ enters this mixed stream, not to straightaway augment its flow of *potestas* as another *imperator* but as a contradictory force. Christ pays the tax to submit to the emperor’s divine status *but* he proclaims another kingdom. Again, it is this aporetic, singular point that is the most interesting in the Norman Anonymous – not, as Kantorowicz correctly points out, the divisions and bifurcations between “office” and “person”, “dignity” and “nature”, etc.<sup>73</sup> These aporias and knots are ontological and they both set the limits on and open up passages in a sovereign politics. These contradictory forces are *played out* in the actions of the liturgy and sacrament – which, in the pamphleteer, are completely Christ-centric but which, to take up a speculative mood, *must* spread through and modulate the life of the congregation, the ‘common life’ in this period. In fact, the concluding irony is this: the Norman Anonymous was writing with passionate and concrete Christic commitment in a period when the paradigm of sovereign rationality was shifting towards new abstract considerations of law, right and public property. The irony is furthered when we recall that the age when Christo-centric, liturgical kingship obtained (900 to 1100 A.D.) was the same age when Amalarius in France

was declared a heretic on the grounds of a grave mimetic and *figural* fallacy (and fantasy).

## FIGURE

In the two sections following the one on the Norman Anonymous' tractates, *The King's Two Bodies* discusses the representation of the *figure* of the King in a kind of liturgical iconography and the figuration of a generalized form of sovereign perpetuity Kantorowicz calls "the halo of perpetuity".<sup>74</sup> The striking feature of this discussion is that the transition from concrete liturgical staging to permanent forms of abstract justification is itself a displaced *figure*. For example, the dual status of Tiberius mentioned above is expressible as the unjust individual tyrant Tiberius as physically mortal and ethically unconsecrable, so without a "halo", while the very place of divine *potestas* of the emperor is constitutively 'haloed'. So when Jesus, in human weakness, submits to the *potestas* of the emperor and acknowledges his *debt* to the empire in the form of tribute money, his mere human figure is subject to the halo, the aureolae of power. And when Jesus announces *another* kingdom, he not only sets up a heavenly alternative, he also *divides* the halo of sovereignty and indebts this very sovereign power (the emperor's) to God's dispensation.

But in the regimes of representation of this period in and after the 12<sup>th</sup> century, these divisions and transitions are in search of distinctive *marks* of emergence and stabilisation. They are not merely transitions of ideas but self-divisions of certain paradigmatic figures and forms. Every "abstraction" is also a "personification". Taking another example, there are records in antique art of provinces such as Egypt, Gaul, Spain etc. which were Roman provinces represented with haloes. In 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the coinage of "Eternal France" was an imitated 'haloed' coinage in the style of Eternal Rome.<sup>75</sup> What these examples illustrate are not just acts of glorification, which have liturgical force, but also effective figural displacements where existing zones of *potestas* and legitimacy (such as existing representations of the Byzantine emperors till the fall of Constantinople) were being rendered into

*generalized forms* of perpetuity and sempiternity. Thus a historical material of sovereignty would be monumentalized as a record of kings and emperors; but that material would be sought to be generalized and eternalized, in the form of the “halo”, into a kind of consecration of *history* (whether pagan or Christian) so as to produce an empty, abstract form of *sovereignty itself*. One could risk the hypothesis that this consecration is of “power” – from an excessive, precarious act and incidence of historical *auctoritas* to the permanent and sovereign economy of a *potestas*.

But in the actual documents, images, discursive traces that reach this present investigation, all that one can soberly invest is a movement of *passage* from one regime, paradigm, idea to another rather than the assurance of a consecrated *result*. In that light, Kantorowicz cites one more instance: in 9<sup>th</sup> century, the same Amalarius of Metz that was excommunicated, in his time of being a leading ceremonialist of the Church, sang a liturgical acclamation for King Louis the Pious, and distinguished, in the song, between the *divus* status of the king, which made him a divine figure only *analogically* and the king as a “new David”, which made him a *perennitas*, a perpetual form of sovereignty *in himself*.<sup>76</sup> This *figura*, which is an over-determined and simultaneous production of the “new David” and a pure perpetuity without specific content, is the same as the acclamations of a “new Rome” that gets trans-located from Constantinople to Moscow back to Rome itself during these centuries.

Kantorowicz points out the further detail that if one transposes this above movement to *Jerusalem*, than a kind of “transcendental Jerusalem” emerges that is more eternal as an idea and image than being perpetual *in time*.<sup>77</sup> Yet this eternity might well touch the earth – and produce a kind of messianic humour for effect. So as his last example from this section, Kantorowicz relates the story (from a Sunday sermon whose authorship is doubtful) of the little ass that carried the Messiah (Expected One) into Jerusalem. Now the ass had an original owner to whom, once its job of carrying the Messiah was completed, it was returned. But its *idea* remained. Its “natural body” trudged back to an original *prescriptive* place (of ownership) from which it had been alienated. However, as a



'haloed' idea, it had gained a perpetual, imprescriptibly, pure life. The animal itself had become messianic, Christic.<sup>78</sup>

### CHRISTUS-FISCUS

The 'becoming-haloed' or messianic of the animal can also be formulated *constitutionally*. At least, this is the trend Kantorowicz describes in the transition from 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century with extraordinary commitment and patience – the trend of legal and constitutional formulations in the age of Frederick II. Without attempting to reproduce the details of this trend – which is beyond the competence of this investigation – it might simply be useful to sum up this movement in terms of its inner equivocation (something Giorgio Agamben will call the “paradox of sovereignty” in *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*).<sup>79</sup> The equivocation comes out clearly in the formulations of John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus* when he says the Prince is both the lord and the serf of Law.<sup>80</sup> In other words, he constitutes the Law as well as is constituted by it. But this abstract paradox can be translated back to concrete imagery by saying the Prince is a “perfection”, an embodiment of the idea of Justice that all Law serves; but his Justice (its idea) must be realized through the binding (*nexum*) mediatorship of the Law itself of which the Prince is a *function*. Thus the Prince is seen moving in these formulations, from the mediatorship by liturgy, which is *exemplary* (mimetic enactment of Jesus Christ's exemplary kingship) to an abstract legal *capture* (*nexum*). In the equivocations of this period, the force of discourse is distributed between the figure of the Prince both being captured by a new legal sovereignty and being the locus, figure and *persona* of a new captor.

The above account of the jurisprudential formulations of this age keeps to their metaphysical nature. In Neo-Platonist terms, the Prince or king was a kind of “hypostasis” of the idea of justice and its most intense magnitude (emanation), the *pontifex maximus*.<sup>81</sup> But with the English lawyer Henry of Bracton, the contemporary of Frederick II and writing in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the nature and level of formulation changed to *fiscal* from metaphysical.<sup>82</sup> Bracton's sources were Roman and Canon

Law – as well as remnants of Christic-liturgical practice and ideologies. But his main objective seemed to be to moderate the king's *auctoritas*, his direct, figural stamp on the law not only with the sanctity of something like Natural Law but with the non-scholastic, governmental *working* of the realm. So his interests were constitutional as well as administrative, but the more far-reaching implication of Bracton's formulations were to do with the *rationality* of power in its exercise. Liturgical rationality held that all constituted *potestas*, power was dependant on an effective mimesis and figuration of the singular and exemplary event of Christ – so neither Law nor Sovereignty could be self-constituted. The jurists as well as Frederick II in the 13<sup>th</sup> century tried to scholastically solve the problem of constitution by the Neo-Platonist speculations indicated above. For Bracton, the real challenge seemed not to formulate the ground-plan of a 'perfect' constitution but to free the problem partly from the exemplary and the metaphysical conditions. Instead, he wanted to grasp the problem at the point of its application to what could be called the fiscal body as resonating with the earlier liturgical and immortal bodies of the sovereign.

In Bracton's conceptual innovations around a relatively obscure Latin word "fisc" or "fiscus", the meaning of the word is tied to a very concrete image: the fisc is that which "touches all".<sup>83</sup> In Roman Law, a distinction is found between *patrimonium* and *fiscum*. Gratian's *Decretals* is a renewed source for this very distinction – and through it individual, specified ownership (*patrimonium*) is distinguished from that which is also owned but *imprescriptibly* so, that is *fiscum*. Bracton takes up this distinction to work through a related problem – that of *time*. One of the traditional maxims – "theologisms", as Kantorowicz calls them – that Bracton discusses is the following: *Nullus tempus currit contra regem*, "Time runneth not against the king".<sup>84</sup> How does this maxim impinge on the fiscal question? Well, the question is – can the king's demesne ("royal demesne", Crown, etc.) be alienated into individual, private hands who subsequently, with the passage of time, earn a secondary but naturalized right of ownership? To the common belief "time creates right", the theologism rebuts with the declaration that no

diminution occurs with time of the king's demesne. Now this is the exact equivalent of the Roman axiom that the Empire can only be augmented (*augere* to *auctor*, the augumenter), never diminished.<sup>85</sup> But any prescription of royal property can only lessen it. We are confronted here not only with a legal bar against alienability of property but with an ontological axiom: sovereignty is inalienable and imprescriptible. But every axiom would be sterile were it not to be fertilized by the theorems that paradoxically follow from it. Thus, in Bracton's discussions, the maxim of time and sovereignty that declares an axiom yields a stable perpetual and sempiternal form which can receive the otherwise dispersed materials and bodies of the public domain. Now the *model* for this perpetuity came from Church property. It was this type of property that was always declared to be the direct possession of God and Christ, hence constitutively and metaphysically inalienable. With the royal property there might still be a division between the private and the public, but with Church property no such division was conceivable – it was, through and through, *res sacrae* ('sacred substance')<sup>86</sup>. So the *governmental* challenge was how to produce an analogical predicate (sacred) and substance (God and Christ) at the immanent level of fiscal existence? From Bracton's treatises and Kantorowicz's pioneering interpretation, one can extrapolate the following possibility and wager: the challenge is met by producing a remarkably simple and strikingly new theorem: *the theorem of 'security'*.

To listen to Bracton's words:

*A thing quasi-sacred is a thing fiscal, which cannot be given away or be sold or transferred upon another person by the Prince or ruling thing, and those things make the Crown what it is, and they regard to common utility such as peace and justice.*<sup>87</sup>

In being of common utility, peace and justice are *res fisci* and being such immutable, perpetual values and forms as peace and justice, they are *res sacrae*. Exactly by this conjunction, the logic of security is instituted and operationalised. To begin with, the axiomatic proposition is, that which is *nullum tempus*, i.e. to which time doesn't run counter, is secured as sempiternal and perpetual.

The next move is to ‘trans-value’ this proposition by giving it a sacred content, thingness (*res*). This is achieved by the analogy, conjunction and eventual indiscernibility of the crown and Church (which includes the continuum from material to spiritual property) domains. This is, properly speaking, the *fiscal* achievement. But the instrumentality of this achievement is governmental to the extent it produces and secures a *world*, so *in* time, but which is capable of nullifying temporal (and spatial) diminution. At the level of the problems and dispute surrounding the prescription and alienation of property (land rights, taxability of property and arguments for exemption by private individuals against the king’s *sovereign* right to tax, etc.) this nullification is made possible by an impersonal, so legal, sanction against *even* the king’s own individual or private right to alienate ‘fiscal’ property. Where the king is allowed such individual relations with other individuals (barons, seigneurs, etc.) with regards to certain commodities and exceptions (the exemption of certain fish such as sturgeons from the unalienable control of the fisc for example) he is to exercise his “feudal” rights; while the fiscal rights are *not his or anyone else’s*.<sup>88</sup> Whose rights are these, then? This is where the theological axiom returns with a kind of accurate vehemence but returns for the sake of the worldly interests of security. The axiom is, to repeat, the axiom of *sovereignty itself*: which means in the fiscal logic, the holder or figure of sovereignty cannot be distinguished from its principle and form. To anticipate Rousseau: sovereignty cannot be prescribed or *truly* represented and alienated. The remarkable fact of discourse is that Bracton applies this axiom to the materials of “common utility” to attempt to extract from this materiality, what phenomenology would call, a “pure form”.<sup>89</sup> Of course Bracton gives a name to this pure form, a very recognizable one, *Christus*. And builds the startling equation – *christus-fiscus*. But the productivity of this parallelism, or equation, is testified to by the emergence of a new sacred, Christic object which is saturated by governmental and utilitarian considerations – the object, this investigation has dared to call, “security”.

It might be useful to verify the tactical and theoretical consciousness of “security” in the documents of the 13<sup>th</sup> century

(and some from later) by that which threatens security and its reflection in this consciousness, that is, the verification of “security” by a consciousness of *danger*. There are at least four illustrations of “danger” that can be extracted from Kantorowicz’s analyses of the medieval documents:

- a. The first illustration, which actually comes from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, concerns an argument used by a judge of the court of common pleas, John Paston (the context of which was tax-exemption, a case that will also serve as a separate illustration). Paston used the example of a criminal – a non-legitimate owner of properties – who dies intestate without leaving a will behind. In such an event, the properties must be turned over to the dead hand, the Church. But by the same token, because “what is not snatched by *christus*, is snatched by the *fiscus*” (the Latin word for snatched is “*capit*”, evoking an act of capture), the properties are forfeited to the king insofar as he represents the domain of common utility, the *fisc*.<sup>90</sup> In that line, a donation made by a felon can only go to the common domain, the *christus-fiscus* space which is a spiritual and material space “that touches all”, rather than to any individual and private beneficiary. The danger posed by an ownership not covered by the force (the “*capit*”, capture) of law doubled by the ontological danger of a death that is not temporally re-born and re-circulated as a “will” is met by the christic-fiscal security apparatus. What is really illustrated here is not merely a form of appropriation by a public authority but the *motto* (which is translated into several emblematic depictions also in this period) that no unit of utilitarian value – and who can deny that felonious properties also possess value! – must be spared the *force*, the *capit* of *fiscus*. Such an illustrative emblem from early 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy shows the king (*fiscus*) squeezing a sponge (strangely, also a figure of the *fisc*) to the last drop.<sup>91</sup>
- b. The second illustration concerns the context of John Paston’s argument. This is a context of the exemption of taxes by the king. A case that came up in 1441 A.D., it featured a monastery asking for exemptions due to some sort of a public emergency.

The conflict was not just due to a *de facto* question of grant of exemption but to a *de jure* protection of the king's *fiscal rights* which could not be compromised by a circumstantial grant of exemption or by an exorbitantly generous event of "clemency". Such an intense consciousness geared to securing the perpetuity of fiscal rights came into play with regard to the imposition of a directly christic tax, the *tithe*. Now tithes were a special extraction from the populace – and it became the object of the inaugural gesture of refusal for the French Revolution – that was the apportionment of a portion of the produce from land directly *to God*. But this yields a shattering paradox: why is it that God's share, that is the share of axiomatic, undivided, imprescriptible sovereignty, *must be extracted*? And who else can extract but the fiscal tax-collector, not God or Christ? This violent tear in the sovereign fabric, to externalise an extractive, acquisitive, 'usucaptional' (from the Latin "usucaption" meaning acquisition) figure leads to the conversion of a spontaneous divine share (*tithe* as a biblical effusion) to a public and fiscal tax. With this, the incomparable has become comparable, liturgical debt has become pecuniary. The patrimonial property of Christ has become the extractable material of fiscal measures. The fundamental motto upon which this new *act of power* is based is the same as cited above; "what is not received by *Christus* is exacted by the *fiscus*".<sup>92</sup> This act of power, flowing from the alienation of sovereignty, was meant to secure the imprescriptible rights of sovereign and public authority. Further, the *event* of Christ, warrior-like in the archaic Roman sense in that it inaugurated the unconditional clemency and writing off of all past debts, has become in the structure of the above justification, an *instrument* of infinite and unpayable debt.

- c. The third instance of "danger" is admittedly more banal – how to secure the fisc from losses of already existing alienations and prescriptions? If such prescriptions have lasted for a long time "beyond which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary"<sup>93</sup> then how to recover from them their *immemorial* imprescriptible origin? This search for a method of recovery

started from at least Justinian's era in Roman Christianity. The Roman method possibly was to allow a claim against the Church the prescription of its ecclesiastical properties only after a hundred years. This was also followed in medieval times – but what was the tactic being adopted? For the medieval jurists, the Church's hundred years' security extended to the Empire but what secured both against temporal alienation and private possession was the fact no witness, (and a witness could only be older than 14 years to be a responsible witness), could survive the hundred years after which the deed would come into existence (when the witness would reach the unlikely age of 114 years). So effectively, the act of prescription would be prevented from coming into existence while the presumed death of the witness would create, not a crisis of law parallel to the crisis of sovereignty when the king died, but the return of the origin wherein immemorial Christic and fiscal property retained their immaculate self-possession and sempiternal plenitude.

- d. Kantorowicz's section on *Christus-fiscus* contains, among a magnificent array of footnotes, a particularly curious one where he cites the medieval jurist Baldus who uses the Latin word "equiparation" for a kind of equalization of incommensurate magnitudes like the Church, fisc, the status of being underage or a minor and madness.<sup>94</sup> Baldus is reported to have said that these are all under age. What are the possible implications of this perplexing "equiparation"? Well, for one thing, with respect to the *metaphysics of ownership*, they are all *res nullius* – meaning, they don't possess a substantive and temporally specified owner. They are also no-*thing* (*res*) insofar as their being is still too mobile, too callow, too *innocent* to grasp or capture (*capit*) within a defined sovereign fist. This equalization (*equiparation*) thus is not between forms and substances but between *modes* of escape from the metaphysics of ownership.

Yet, these escapes are exactly the obsessive preoccupation of fiscal security. That which no one owns and which eludes, the proprietary technologies of law, right and sovereign dispensation

must become the very substance of an instrumental immortality. The *infancy* of the phenomena discussed above (Church, fisc as equal to madness and the minor individual) must be converted to a superior maturity, beyond temporal modification. One could say, that the politico-theological consciousness of European late middle ages was a proleptic and pre-emptive consciousness of the future Hegelian danger: the danger that every historico-human phenomenon, however, infantile or monumental, must *fall into time* and must be subject to an immanent phenomenology where the consciousness of modification and the modification itself, the sovereignty of spirit (*geist*) and the heterogeneous strata and figures that spirit *bears*, the freedom and the passion of the subject – none of these dualities can be strictly distinguished from each other.<sup>95</sup> Political theology, with all its pliant reworking of heterogeneous concepts and its tactics of exchange between incommensurable domains, remains faithful to the *transcendental* opposition between the *res pubilca* and the *res sacra*. But because the stakes are as much in the world as outside it, this faith is *implanted* in immanent, temporal continua – to produce in the thickness of the world’s ‘matter’ incorporeal and interruptive “haloes”.

## CONCLUSION: THE SACRALIZATION OF EMERGENCY

This investigation is not oriented to a biblical hermeneutics, or a political hermeneutics of the Bible. But it might be apposite to cite Oscar Cullmann’s recovery of the Greek word “*kairos*” from key biblical texts – a word (*kairos*) used to denote the christic *interruption* within a historical time-line. So, *kairos* is the time of the happening of the Christ-event in the middle of a historical continuum, which in its happening re-configures the past, present and future of this continuum. And it is not an intra-wordly, secular re-configuration; rather, the retrospective and prospective *effects* of the Christ-event produce a *redemptive* hallowing of any secular history. *Kairos* is operative as the point of departure of this redemptive process but as a pure event of time, it is rich in this ambiguity of meaning: on the one hand, Cullmann quotes from the Acts of the Apostles on “the *kairoi* which the Father in his sovereign power has fixed”



(Acts. 1:7) and on the other, he refers to Paul who reminds the Thessalonians that the *kairoi* break into the course of things and cannot be predicted.<sup>96</sup> The ambiguity consists in the fixity of the *kairos* under the Father's sovereignty being rendered undecidable by its sudden in-breaking or implantation in the economy of time called "history". Of course, any such ambiguity is dispelled within the christic *singularity* of the *kairos* because in its singularity, the Father and the *kairos* of Christ are re-economised by self-division and reconciliation, debt and recovery (when in Timothy 2:6, it is said that "Jesus Christ has given himself as if as ransom for all, as a witness to appropriate *kairoi*").<sup>97</sup>

For the Greeks and Romans (before the rise of Christian dogma), the experience of the *kairos* was far more plural, with an insistent materiality. A great victory in war, a defeat, an earthquake, pestilence, a storm at sea... were all examples of the *kairos*. They all broke into the secure rhythms of life with 'dangerous' material and affective consequences. So while the pretensions of sovereign control were exposed to the ungovernability of the *kairos* and solicited an *ethical* response rather than a sovereign one (a Stoic theme from the Hellenistic period whose discussion is postponed for the moment),<sup>98</sup> there were also precise ritual techniques of consecration applied to the *kairos* with the remarkable feature that they were *consecrations of the event*. In the Roman period of Augustus, a god could be created by consecrating both qualities and events, categories of language and of nature. Loyalty became the god *fides*, legendary storms encountered and defied by Roman navies were consecrated and temples were raised to them – and such consecration-cum-deifications delivered to these kairological upsurges a greater incorporeal body, a *divus* or divinity.<sup>99</sup> It is not completely uninteresting that the technologies of sovereignty in these Hellenistic cases entered into disjunctive relations with or were subversive of or indifferent to sovereign power. The distinction of the Christian singularity that goes by the announcement of the christic event lies in the invention of the relation of the non-relation, forced by the *kairos*, between itself and everything that goes before and after it. Or, it is the infinite mediation of terms caught in *situated* incommensurability: the conversion of the

*kairos* of Christ – at the situated levels of a war, a storm, a warrior-like act of unbinding of all debt relations – to the very dogma or *axiom* of sovereignty. And being an axiom, it then neither needs an executive definition nor is dependent on the theatrical externalities of a ritual of consecration.

So it is a matter of some irony that this investigation has spent a considerable time on the Christian era citing and analysing familiar and remote documents justifying the liturgical and fiscal *exercise* of sovereignty, rather than simply reiterating the dogmatic and axiomatic accomplishment delineated above. Which underscores the porosity, the fundamental inoperativity of the axiom *as axiom*, of *sovereignty as such*. Yet, one has little choice but to intensify the irony: the heterogeneous and widely distributed points of application of heterogeneous modes of power, in these disparate liturgical, juristic, theological and other documents, get strangely *axiomatised*. These are axiomatisations, sacralizations, hallowing of these very executive departures, and externalisations that ‘impurify’ the sovereign axiom in the first place.

This process, belaboured at some length in this investigation, leads to a clearly conservative *result*: the conservation, or rather, the return of the axiom and dogma. But the process produces multiple, and if one may call them that, *drastic* objects in the course of returning the final result. These drastic objects, the last part of the investigation has classified as objects embodying and generating a kind of “danger”. The death of sovereigns and criminals intestate, the possible survival of ancient witnesses to prescriptions against immemorial, untestifiable imprescriptibility, the unruly presence of madmen and children (the unruly presence of *infancies*) in the public domain of utility, in the *fisc* – all of these bring up of for consideration, for the present of this work and for the exigencies of past discourses, a strange eventuality. Which is that of the emergence of a series of intended and collateral effects that threaten to escape the economy of power and the form of unilateral ownership, whether imperial or feudal. Insofar as they ‘emerge’ unwarnedly, as interruptive *kairoi*, they represent *states of emergency*. What we saw happen towards the end of the liturgical period and then continue up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century at least (a time

which will feel the sombre necessity to produce a theory of the new corporation called the modern *State*) is the hallowing and consecration, the sacralization and thus fiscal appropriation of the emergent interruptions, the states of emergency.<sup>100</sup>

## NOTES

1. Nothing in the investigation to follow would have been possible without the pioneering and magnificent illumination of Ernst Kantorowicz's 1957 classic *The King's Two Bodies*. For the discussion of the present chapter, the first part of the book has mainly come into play – the part before the treatment of the *Corpus Mysticum* of the state. See, Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985). For the first four chapters concluding with the section “Christus-Fiscus”, see pp. 3-192.
2. While Kantorowicz's work is no doubt a classic, one would hesitate to characterize his documentation as one of *classical* theories of sovereignty. Apart from the sheer fact of his having excavated anonymous and neglected and ‘non-representative’ documents of kingship (the Norman Anonymous pamphlet from the 11<sup>th</sup> century on liturgical and Christomimetic production of kingship is a case in point), the further methodological aspect of difference from the ‘classical’ approach is that while the latter records a linear advance of theoretical scope meant to correspond to the putative ‘advance’ in forms of power leading up to the equally putatively declared ‘absolute’ state-form (in the 16<sup>th</sup> century end or so), Kantorowicz analyses instead the points of resistance and even of arrest of simple theoretical advance. It is a matter of extraordinary interest that these points (and Christ's is the exemplary one) also become historical and structural channels of *transaction* when the resistant material starts to hollow itself out into new but provisional ‘fictive’ forms (again Christ is the paradigmatic form). For Christo-mimetic, liturgical arguments of the Norman Anonymous see, *ibid.*, pp.42-61.
3. Ernst Kantorowicz launches his book with an analysis of Richard II. There are at least three crucial moments in this analysis. The exposition of a structural weakness in Richard's earthly kingship, the ‘pathos’ that corresponds to this weakness expressed in a trembling self-awareness of the king's mortality, and the ‘making manifest’ (Kantorowicz's words more or less) of this weakness at an ontological level, not merely a theatrical and cathartic one. The challenge for thought is, how to consider this ‘manifestation’ ontologically and yet not transcend its weak element – since that itself *is* its ontology. See *ibid.*, pp. 24-41. For the reference to Richard's residual task of ‘making manifest’ his own humbled status at a par with “the humbled Christ”, see, pp. 34-5.
4. See, *ibid.*, p. 173.

5. See, *ibid.*, pp. 164-5.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
7. Curiously, the admitted greatness of Kantorowicz's book can be seen in the contrasting light of the author's prefatorial remarks on the near-ridiculous logic of the king's two bodies as propounded by medieval jurists. What might appear a severe theologism in the sphere of religion applied to law and politics, leads to "havoc" in reasoning and practice. This is also the "messy" status from which Kantorowicz rescues the fiction or myth of the two bodies to show its investment (one could almost say, *over investment*) in the project of demanding the absolute consistency of religious and political life and of (over) compensating for the failure of the demand to be ever *consistently* satisfied. See, *ibid.*, pp. 3-6.
8. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Chicago: Stanford University Press, 1988).
9. If one doesn't simply identify the declaration of Christianity's 'absolute' character with Hegel's culminating figure of a positive and revealed event in the philosophy of religion that includes and supersedes (*anfheben*) all the other figures of religious life and thinking, thus overcoming the very logic of figurality in favour of a *revealed exemplarity* of Christ, then the question is, can the absolute position be sustained without a figure (*figura*) at all? In that sense, can the absolute be dignified with its immaculate self-possession while being absolutely de-positioned or de-posed? This question, or the series of questions, have crucial implications for the *work* of politics, law and religion because such work cannot dispense entirely with the aesthetic materiality of the figure or the ontological value of a 'relation'. But every relation forces a 'relative' perspective on the absolute immaculate claim. This paradox can be a point of impasse or a productive transactional channel, depending on the path of analysis taken. At this point, it is interesting to note the roots of this tension also in the etymology of religion in *religio*, *religare*, etc. Which indicate binding, connecting, relating, etc., in *relation* to the absolute, ruptural and redemptive 'strangeness' of the Christian claim (or any such claim for that matter). In this connection, Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophical observations are extraordinarily nuanced. He further moves to the phenomenon of the affect in conjunction with religious assembly and their consecrated naturalization into particular being-in-common of communities and peoples. The non-relative, 'absolute' yet thoroughly worldly challenge is, how to sustain the thought of the singularity of the affect, the event of the encounter, how not to consecrate the affect. See, Jean-Luc Nancy, "Church, State, Resistance" in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-secular World* ed. Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, (New Delhi: Social Science Press and Orient Longman, 2007) pp. 46-54.
10. See, Marcel Detienne, "The Gods of Politics in Early Greek Cities" in *Political Theologies: Public Religion in a Post-Secular World* ed. Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (New Delhi: Social Science Press and Orient

Longman, 2007) pp. 35-45.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
12. For the chapter “Scenes of Sovereignty” in Detienne and Sissa’s book see, Gulia Sissa and Marcel Detienne, *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) pp. 99-118.
13. All the cunning and duplicity that Zeus employs with the several human characters of the *Iliad* is still in the service of the god’s committed speech in favour of the Greeks against the Trojans. This partisan commitment combined with strategic intervention makes Zeus an ironic god and a kind of fabricator of a “tragic” and “complex” web of human and divine interests. See, *ibid.*, p. 110.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
15. Sissa and Detienne provide a fluent guideline, a novelistic one based on the *Iliad* for the logic of multiplicity that creates the exigency for Zeus’ sovereign exercise of power. They write, “For is not the narrative of the *Iliad* an epic about desires that clash, recover and grow ever stronger? A story above all, a novel, surely derives its strength from the perception of whatever is contingent, whatever would be possible otherwise”. *Ibid.*, p. 118. “Whatever would be possible otherwise” is the key guideline or index to the thinking of the logic of multiplicity – which makes the apodeictic certainty of the axiom tremble.
16. For an excellent introduction to the ‘substance’ and effect of the god Dionysus, particularly in the theatre, an effect that deserves the word used by Plato for the poet, “mania” see, P.E. Easterling, “A show for Dionysus” in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* ed. P.E Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) pp.36-53. For Plato’s other phrase for theatre-attendance “theatro-kratia” meant with worried derision and its liturgical context that will be elaborated in the following section, also see in the above collection, Paul Cartledge, “Deep Plays: Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life” pp. 3-35.
17. For “Dionysus Politics” see, Sissa and Detienne, p.138. The key notion for this investigation “incorporeal transformation” is a grateful borrowing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s conceptual creation. Deleuze in certain places and elsewhere with Guattari takes up the *Stoic* linguistic category *lekhton* and discovers in it a kind of incorporeal ‘surface’ where utterances and bodies slide and mix to generate new compositions which can only be called compositions of *thought*. As thought, these compositions are abstract objects and release a kind of purity of effect, or pure effect. But these effects are not transcendently outside a series of causes which are material bodies, passions, actions, gestures, utterances, etc. The effects inhere in the series without being produced as results of its linear action. However, this inherence ceaselessly *transforms* the series and makes its rise up to the surface from the depth of its heterogeneous materialities. This is an “incorporeal” transformation that appeals no more to affects

- and qualities of bodies but to the delicate prescience of thinking. 'on the surface', superficially. Gilles Deleuze finds the analogous image for this art of thinking in the art of the mime and the actor who make the dense body delicate, rare and scintillating. See Gilles Deleuze *The Logic of Sense* trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990) p. 147.
18. See Sissa and Detienne, op. cit., pp. 145-147.
  19. See Paul Cartledge, "Deep Plays: Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life" in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* ed. P.E. Easterling, pp. 8-11.
  20. Ibid., p. 9.
  21. For a useful discussion of Aristotle's classification of cathartic music in relation to their modes (which have conceptual and practical potential for transformation) see, Andrew Ford "Katharsis: The Ancient Problem" in *Performativity and Performance* ed. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, London, New York, 1995 pp. 109-132. Also, see, Soumyabrata Choudhury, "Cathartic and Reflective Moments of Aesthetic Education: Some Remarks on Hölderlin, Schiller and Other Greeks" in *Schiller and Aesthetic Education Today* ed. Rajendra Dingle (New Delhi: Mosaic Books and Goethe Society of India, 2007) pp. 14-25.
  22. See Paul Cartledge, pp.10-11. The old Oligarch is the appellation for an anonymous pamphleteer, obviously anti-democratic, who wrote a "splenetic" diatribe against the liturgical system (around the time of the death of Pericles).
  23. For Weber's quote, see Harry W. Pearson, "The Secular Debate of Economic Primitivism" in *Trade and Market in Early Empires* ed. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson (Illinois: The Free Press, 1957) p. 9.
  24. It is also interesting to note in this context that one type of source for liturgical information in 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens is the litigious one. Demosthenes' corpus contains the case of a certain Phainnipos whose opponent claims in court that the former is a wealthier citizen and hence should perform liturgical commitments instead of him. This case brings out central issues of social obligation and economic constraint, material necessity and the political ideal of a free city. The question really is, are all the liturgical activities to be considered on the same plane – feeding of the population, military and legal service, festival participation, etc. ? If so, is it the plane of necessity or freedom? For the details of the case of Phainnipos in the background of the Greek city and countryside, see, Robin Osborne, "Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Subsistence: Exchange and Society in the Greek City" in *The Ancient Economy* ed. Walter Schneider and Sitta Von Reden, (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2002) pp. 114-132.
  25. See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* trans Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) p. 76.
  26. Ibid., p. 74.
  27. Ibid., p. 74.

28. Ibid., p. 79.
29. Ibid., p. 80.
30. In this sense, the *auctor* is not necessarily the dictator according to Roman Law. In the Roman codes, the dictator is actually appointed by the consuls and is a kind of exigent magistrate, partaking of an 'exigent' *potestas* while the *auctor* is the *general* figure of the exception. See, *ibid.*, p. 47.
31. See Alan Supiot, *Homo Juridicus: On the Anthropological Function of the Law* trans. Saskia Brown, (London, New York: Verso, 2007), p. 22.
32. For an essential interpretation of these details in the light on Ernst Kantorowicz's intervention into the discourse of later Christian sovereign logics, see Florence Dupont, "The Emperor-God's Other Body" trans. Brian Massumi in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* ed. Michael Ferher, Ramona Naddaft and Nadia Tazi (New York: Zone Books, 1989).
33. Dupont very felicitously says that Kantorowicz "raises the issue of the archeology of his monarch's divine body". We could also underline the exigent political stakes of this issue by saying that this is also the archeology of the *demand* for such a body from the side of sovereign politics. See, *ibid.*, p. 397.
34. See Supiot, *Homo Juridicus*, p. 22, note 69.
35. The case of Ramlila of Ramnagar in India is literally 'exceptional' because it doesn't exemplify the general popular form of the Ramlila enacted in several parts of the country to date. Rather, the performance at Ramnagar is a simultaneous – and *singular* – *codification* of intensive and extended spaces of ritual performativity. This codification is surely liturgical – because it encodes modes of social and religious transformation that attach to the figure of the 'pilgrim'. But it also is a historico-theatrical puzzle that under what concrete circumstances does this elaborate and sophisticated code develop since it is not an ancient or classical prescription. The stakes for this enquiry are not just factual; they pertain to the power (potential or *potestas*) of a collective and institutional logic that is both articulated as a kind of 'mentality' (*topos* of collective thought) and incarnated as an 'assembly' (during the cycle). The physical absence of the mask for the figure of the boy-god-actor doesn't diminish the power of the above-stated *potestas*, as it were – it is displaced to the 'exceptional' site of strictly codified ritual virtuality and its actual, living per formative effects year after year. See Richard Schechner, "Performance Spaces: Ramlila and Yaqui Easter" in *Over Under and Around: Essays on Performance and Culture* (Calcutta, New Delhi: Seagull Books, 2004) pp. 54-72.
36. Hannah Arendt notes this feature in her work *On Revolution*. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1973) p. 106.
37. See Supiot, *Homo Juridicus*, p. 22.
38. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 99-109. Also Denis Diderot, "The Paradox of Acting" and "Masks or Face", Wilson Follet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957).

39. While the stakes of the discussion are both philosophical and legal-political, it is essential to keep a philological foothold on the question of *figura*. Eric Auerbach organizes such an investigation by producing perspectives on classical authors as Quintillian and Cicero (also Tertullian) that aren't simply rhetorical; they pertain to the question of the *transition* from material formations (sculpture, masks, images, etc.) to the regime of illusory effects called "semblance" (from the Greek *Skhema*) from plasticity to the ideology of the simulacrum. See, Eric Auerbach, "Figura" in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, Theory and History of Literature* Vol. 9 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
40. See Roland Barthes, "The Grain of Voice" in *Image, Music, Text* trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977) pp. 179-189.
41. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, pp. 81-82.
42. Florence Dupont's essay begins with a citation from Seneca (*Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*) which expresses the two layers of articulation of the *persona* and its gestural precipitations: "The pilot has two personas: one is common to all those who board the ship, the other peculiar to him, for he is the pilot." See Florence Dupont "The Emperor God's Other Body", p. 397.
43. See Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture" in *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience* trans. Liz Heron (London, New York: Verso, 1991) pp. 133-140.
44. See Georges Dumèzil, *Mitra-Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representations of Sovereignty* trans. Derek Coltman (New York: Zone Books, 1988) p. 95.
45. See the chapter "Nexum and Mutuum" in Dumèzil's work. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-112.
46. For the transition from religious and liturgical debts to legal and pecuniary ones (though the two are never totally separate as we have seen in the origins of liturgy in 5<sup>th</sup> century Greece), *ibid.*, p. 108-109.
47. *Ibid.*, p.47. This can be put in relation with Marcel Detienne and Gulia Sissa's cartography of the rigid place of Uranous and the mobile one of Zeus, see note 12.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 107.
51. Amartya Sen, the noted contemporary economist and ethical philosopher, quotes Adam Smith to be saying that the "creditable" individual is the one who, unless the material "necessaries" of his life were satisfied, would be ashamed to appear in public (Smith is referring to the wearing of leather shoes here). This, according to Sen, is a subjective state of self-exclusion that corresponds to the social exclusion of the person struck by material poverty. So, this subjective 'self-exclusion' by the upsurge of shame is also a kind of negative indicator of the subject's fundamental *interest* in an economic sociability, which means, interest in property, possession and the power (*potestas* in our terms though Amartya Sen uses the word "capacity")



to produce wealth, etc. Which is, then, that type of subjectivity that takes militant disinterest in this above sociability and what are the ethical implications of this militancy? See Amartya Sen, *Social Exclusion: Concept Application Scrutiny* (New Delhi: Critical Quest, 2004) p. 6.

52. Georges Dumèzil, *Mitra-Varuna*, p. 106.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
56. Though there is a rich corpus of analyses around the controversy of Amalarius, it mostly concerns the specialist of medieval theatre history. The fact though is, this corpus offers fascinating historico-philosophical perspectives to the specialist and the generalist alike. For a succinct and useful gathering of some such perspectives, see Donnalee Dox, “The Eyes of the Body and the Veil of Faith” in *Theatre Journal* 56 (2004), Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 29-45.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 33-34.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 36-37.
64. For the argument and its stakes, see, William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).
65. The above is Cavanaugh’s citation of Orthodox theologian Alexander Schememan’s definition. See, *ibid.*, p. 12.
66. In his preface to the book, Ernst Kantorowicz submits that he had hardly been able to exhaust the demonstration of what Ernst Cassirer called “the Myth of the State”. This humble submission actually signals the enormity of the project and the contribution is a now a matter of scholarly consensus. See, Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, p. XIX.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
69. In his 1982 College de France seminar on the heremeneutics of the subject, Michel Foucault utilizes, parts of Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Book 5, in particular) to uncover the Roman emperor’s strata of awareness as to the specificity of his job as emperor as well as the shared nature of this job with any other job (the dancer’s, the shoemaker’s, etc.). The heterogeneity (mixture) of the relations here are not absolutely qualitative but are rather constituted by only differing ‘qualitative’ emphases and supplementation (so Aurelius as emperor, while doing a job like anyone else, has a heavier responsibility). See, Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*:

- Lectures at the College De France 1981-1982* trans. Graham Burchill (New York: Picador, 2005) pp. 199-202.
70. See, Kantorowicz, op. cit., p. 47.
  71. In his path-breaking and contested book *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben brings up what he calls Kantorowicz's Roman "exclusion" and recapitulates the scholarly efforts to provide that missing supplement. See, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, pp. 99-103.
  72. See, Kantorowicz, op. cit., pp. 53-54.
  73. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.
  74. *Ibid.*, pp. 78.
  75. *Ibid.*, pp. 79.
  76. *Ibid.*, pp. 81. The text of the song reveals the two keywords (*Divus, perennitas*) and their divided apportionment: *Divo Hludovico vita/Novo David perennitas*.
  77. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
  78. For the story and its allegorical unfolding, See, *ibid.*, pp. 84-86.
  79. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, pp. 15-29.
  80. See, Kantorowicz, op. cit., pp. 94-96.
  81. For *Pontifex maximus*, *ibid.*, p. 126.
  82. This difference of interest and accent was also a reflection of the difference between English rulership which was projected in a predominantly legal-pragmatic light and the 'incarnational' theories of kingship in Italy. See, *ibid.*, pp. 146-147.
  83. This is the crucial criterion for temporal and substantive being-ness of the fiscal form: that which "touches all" cannot be prescribed and alienated in or diminished by time. By this criterion, according to Bracton, the king's own 'nature' is divided into temporal (thus subject to private will and vacillation and pleasure) and sovereign (thus imprescriptible and self-same). But it is noteworthy that Bracton's legal pragmatism is, through and through, supported by a metaphysics of saturation of the "all" by the provenance of the 'one' who is perpetual and inalienable, a metaphysics of 'one-all' which is intensively expressed by the saturating contact ("touches") that doesn't alienate the subject from the object (of contact-touch) but *binds* it to itself in a greater *plenum*, a *nexum* a great embrace of a kind of fiscal love. See, *ibid.*, pp. 170-171.
  84. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.
  85. *Ibid.*, pp. 167, fn. 231.
  86. *Ibid.*, pp. 168.
  87. *Ibid.*, pp. 173.
  88. *Ibid.*, pp. 170.
  89. There are at least two directions – and possibly, two destinations – the history of phenomenological thought yields, with regard to the constitution of the "pure form". The one direction is oriented to the Platonist form of the *eidos* that supervenes on behalf of the pure object-form to release, in

that move, the other pure moment of the ego-cogito, the Cartesian moment par excellence; the second direction is Heidegger's whose gaze is towards the meaning of Being, a destination whose *sovereign* constitution must be a result cutting through the subject-object matrix. The latter result must be equally solidly constituted and originally primordial. The apparent contradiction is partly explained by the fact that the constituted result is also a torn but *constitutive* gesture in the same way as the utterance of the "I" (or "we") is both a formal, content-less cipher of the subject as well as the fullest modulation of Being.

90. See Kantorowicz, op. cit., pp. 173-174.
91. For the emblem and its caption or motto (*Quod non capit Christus, rapit fiscus*) See, *ibid.*, p. 174.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
94. See fn. 285, *ibid.*, p. 183.
95. The great Hegelian passage, the phenomenological passage of *geist* takes place between the pre-emption of time at one end and its abolition at the other. From which movement a strange thesis offers itself to the power of thinking it: time is the figure. Insofar as the Notion (*Begriff*) takes the form of time, time itself is nothing but the constitution of a figural series. *But*, time is also an imperfect form of the Notion and when *geist* (spirit) will possess its proper Notion, it will do so by abolishing the time-form itself. The passage within the larger passage, from Religion to Absolute Knowledge, is the passage between substantial (spatial) figuration to the subjective (historical) figure of Spirit arriving at the threshold of a figure-less sovereignty. See G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* tran. A.V.Miller (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1998) pp. 486-487.
96. See, Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949) p. 40.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
98. The outline for that discussion can, however, be etched here: the Stoic theme of ethical response to the objectivity of that "which happens" is precisely based on the notion of a self-mastery that doesn't make or pass (sovereign) judgment on the objective world, which includes facts and events (*kairoi*). While 'the sovereign' judges so as to interpret and govern, the ethical project of Stoic self-mastery entails a reserve of the will (the "inner citadel" of Marcus Aurelius) that is able to subtract itself from both the error of judging and investing the judgment in a milieu of 'passion' that produces the *force* of sovereign fiat over the 'ungovernable's of the world. The Stoic diagnosis is that the fiat is supported by error and for that reason, is even more dangerously effective in the world. To that extent, as Pierre Hadot points out, even passion is a kind of judgment upon the involuntary movements of the soul in response to the precipitation of the *kairoi* of that

which happens. The erroneous judgment of good and evil upon phenomena that are, in reality, neither, is not only a passionate judgment but “passion” is also a kind of intensive, generic name for this type of judgment. See, Pierre Hadot, *The Present Alone is Our Happiness: Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson* trans. Marc Djaballah, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) pp. 152-155.

99. See Florence Dupont, “The Emperor-God’s Other Body”, pp. 400.
100. The important point in the above is not the invocations to Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, among others, who diagnose the centrality of the state of emergency/exception in the modern political condition. A shatteringly accurate diagnosis beyond their own moments of political reflection! But what is being indicated here is the genealogical multi-vocality that the modern state will attempt to gather into a relatively unified space and voice, into a single sense of the rational body (*corpus*) with its rationality, autonomous though in secular substance (*res*) enjoying the sacral-incorporeal magnification that obviously stems from religious energy. A rational Church, as it were! Ernst Kantorowicz reaches the threshold of christic-fiscal rationality as a provisional set of abstract procedures that are derived from and re-applied to exigent “... institutions and utilities, necessities and emergencies”. However, everything is also ceaselessly oriented to the *absolutization* of the exigency which becomes the fundamental content of the tactical and metaphysical consciousness investing the modern state. The patience of Kantorowicz’s genealogical demonstration, thus, cannot but be contrasted with any sequential documentation of theories of sovereignty such that, in an exasperating – and violent – circle, the ‘modern’ theory of sovereignty legitimates the modern state and such a state donates its permanent logic, cipher and secret to the so-called modern theory of state-sovereignty, etc. See, Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

## PASSAGE I

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### Liturgy-Icon-Idol-Number

Can one speak of the mathematical developments of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe – Frege, Dedekind, Cantor, among others, representing these trends – as leading towards a mathematical iconoclasm? Or, at least, hint at a Byzantine controversy surrounding the mathematics of this period?

In his *Begriffsschrift* of 1879, Gottlob Frege sought a pure language of what he called “conceptual content”, an “ideography or *lingua characterica* of pure thought”.<sup>1</sup> This search Frege undertook in the interests of an investigation into the concept of number; only, such an investigation demanded a means of discourse free of the rhetorical and imagistic vicissitudes of natural language. Thus the elaborate creation of an ideography (or what Austin called “concept writing”<sup>2</sup>) in the *Begriffsschrift* – which was of course a relentless exercise in logical and internal consistency of propositions.

Yet Frege’s main preoccupation was not with the structural elaboration of a calculus or its abstract formulas. His avowed concern was with a conceptual *content*, a content whose true consistency was inseparable from the consistency of thought. The *lingua characterica* that he mentions in this context, a term inherited from Leibniz, hence was meant to ‘write’ the process of a thought whose logical protocols were only a schematic preparation for the real task at hand: this was the task of bringing into presence the *mathematical* capacity of thought to think the concept of

number. The schematization, its graphic limits of expression, the propositional chain contained therein, were neither the end nor the stakes of Frege's labours of formalization. So, is this a situation of *iconoclasm* when Frege, for one thing, refuses the flickering referentiality of natural language and for another, searches for a thought of number not to be confused with the form or schema of logical expression? A situation of iconoclasm insofar as the icon, to the iconoclast, is the terrible and unjust line (*schema*) that cuts off the "real presence" of thought or the thought of a "real presence"?

No doubt, at this early stage of the argument, everything is dominated by the analogical power of metaphor. The "real presence" of the deity and that of number are only metaphorically connected at this point with the imagination of a thought which involves this presence as a pure 'object' providing the support for the metaphor. To go any further, one can either bolster the analogical edifice to produce a kind of metaphoric certainty of imagined 'relations' across domains and histories or attempt an *actual* historical passage between openly disparate domains of knowledge and stakes of truth. The first approach could well have the great virtue of communicating, through a lightning flash of condensed associations, the *subjective* approximation of phenomena with completely different provenances. Thus the "real presence" of eucharistic performance and the provenance of number as, in Dedekind's terms not far away from Frege's, a "free creation" of the mind, have an analogical unfolding on the terrain of an 'imagined' interiority where a 'pure' presence can be extracted from widely disparate sequences or procedures/performances.<sup>3</sup> Though it has to be said here that even within this "lightning flash" of analogy, there is already a moving apart on the question of freedom of conceptual creation: while the *ritual* coding of liturgical production – the "real presence" to be generated during the eucharist – severely seeks to limit subjective freedom, the search for pure number is carried out, in the period indicated, in the element of 'thought', sometimes substantified as 'mind', whose only reality is the consistent use of signs of logic (discourse of logic) for the sake of *presenting* number. Paradoxically and at the same time, there is historical reason to affirm the *excess* of subjective experience over ritual code in the

history of liturgy, an excess interpreted by theological authority as the sign and affect of freedom; while there is 'logical' reason to state that Frege and his generation at the dawn of modern mathematics were untiringly surveying and schematizing the 'free' creativity and capacity of the human-mathematical mind such that the language of logic would exactly mirror a putative, if imaginary, 'language of the mind'.

Now for the more materially and consciously historical approach and its initial doubting point – what allows us to at all hypothesise a historical trajectory for Byzantine divisions over the power and profanity of the religious icon and the *fin de siècle* ordering of number as secular, natural and 'pure' conceptual matter without any dependency on *mimetic* schemas entailed by referential language?

Interestingly, a singular source of confidence for this unlikely hypothesis, Marie-José Mondzain's book *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* doesn't concern itself with either the theology of trans-substantiation or the ontology of number. However the source/book performs another, a greatly elusive and subtle operation: it demonstrates, with acuity and patience, the historical, conceptual and figural *departures* from a liturgical regime of sovereign power in the medieval West without the abandonment of the stakes of territorial and 'spiritual' domination. According to Mondzain, the vehicle of this "departure" is the 'economy', its mode of transport is a certain numerical countable repetition across spaces which are *sacred* but not necessarily *consecrated*.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the Byzantine controversy in the 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D, with its iconoclast protagonist, the emperor Constantine V, attached to a project of *returning* to the liturgical-eucharistic precinct in which the "real presence" of the sovereign was at stake.

The details of the above controversy and its 'contemporary future' we will come back to later but it is worth, at this stage, mentioning once more, the *repetitive* character of the icon. Which Mondzain shows to be also, first, an index for a certain 'pure' form, which is repetition *itself*, and second, a locus of *insistence*, a field of force that is not immediately consecrable. Does this 'historical' thesis

serve to confirm and praise Gilles Deleuze's vibrant ontology of "intensive" repetition that includes the ontology of Number?<sup>5</sup> That is not the direction Mondzain takes and she invests her 'conceptual' material in the further historical field of the exercise of religious and political power. Now, we will recount the sizes and strategies of these investments but it is only just to end this introductory section with the *philosophical* reminder that Mondzain's so-called 'historical' investigation is a rigorous and systematic overcoming of both analogical and intuitive correlations; it is a recovery of the *univocity* of Being that never ceases to be articulated by history and never ceases to be silenced by it. Such univocity was no doubt dear to otherwise dissimilar figures as Frege and Deleuze and in the Byzantine period, Marie José Mondzain tells us, the contestants of the iconoclasts, that is the iconophiles, called this force of univocal being, the force of the "natural image".

## LITURGY – ONCE AGAIN

Did the first study, in moving from liturgical sovereignty to the immanence of the "fisc" and its several intra-mundane crises outlined by Kantorowicz, sufficiently relinquish the 'sacred' premise of liturgy? Not really because the main demonstrative emphasis (with a certain irony included, no doubt) in the study was on the *consecration* of fiscal crises and emergencies in the late medieval period. Such "consecration" implied the tactical and interruptive production of sacred politico-theological spaces *in the liturgical sense*. Which meant that in these spaces what was at stake and what was the 'object' of production was the "real presence" of an effective, if non-visible, sovereign. The figure and examples of "haloing" were instrumental in carrying out this process and expressing these stakes; moreover, the 'halo' was also an aesthetic 'sweetener' of the *kairos*, the interruptive event of history, in its emergent reality. Within the massive integrity of Kantorowicz's project the liturgical shadow that the halo cast, a haloed shadow, if one may call it that, extended to the theoretical fiction of the modern absolute state. Only rendered thick by the incorporeal and phantasized presence of the liturgical congregation to the



sovereign and the halo of sovereignty upon the congregation, could the “myth” (Kantorowicz’s word) of the modern state be translated into a continuous, unified and *fictive* consciousness of imminent *kairoi*, of the ‘danger’ of history as event.<sup>6</sup> Even while all three components – the sovereign actor, the congregation and the envelope of historical or ‘fiscal’ circumstance – were rendered incorporeal, the density of the *theoretical* consciousness of ‘danger’ that secured the modern state grew, to that measure, thicker and more impenetrable.

And yet... yet who can deny the experience and existence of what can be called with excusable vagueness. “modern politics”, beyond the consecrated space of state sovereignty! The “myth of the state” powerful as it is, unerringly betrays its mythic density, its “real presence”, its ‘halo’ by a kind of auto-dispersion of its structure. Even within the classical period of the Reason of the State in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and its monumental institutionalizations, we see the simultaneous dispersion of techniques, modes and tactical suggestions oriented to an exercise of power that doesn’t coincide with the exercise of the state power in the liturgical and sovereign sense. As Michel Foucault showed through several archival scintillations, the dispersion of the consecrated precincts of sovereignty resulted in *other* ensembles and activities that possessed other “splendors”.<sup>7</sup> However the interest of the present investigation is not to recite the archive of the period 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It is to highlight Marie-José Mondzain’s work on the Byzantine controversy of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to re-direct her thesis on a non-liturgical and “economic” sacred power of the icon already being conceptualized by Nikephoros, the Patristic, in this period, towards the secular, even ‘mundane’ thought of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of which not just politics but also mathematics was, nay, is, the modern paradigm.

Mondzain recounts Nikephoros’ logical and polemical diatribe against the iconoclast emperor Constantine V along the following lines: neither capitulating before the idolatrous “real presence” that turns God into fetish and rigid body nor subscribing to the incorporeal localization of the eucharistic “real presence” in the ritual of trans-substantiation (the iconoclast’s favored sacred

precinct) Nikephoros initiates and develops a “relational” thought using Aristotelian logic on one side and the dogma of incarnation on the other.<sup>8</sup> Logic provided the Patristic with the particular resources of the work of relative terms (*Pros ti*) and their strange relational *and* non-seperative intimacy (*skhesis*), their mutual passage as opposed to the iconoclast’s rigid separations; and the dogma of incarnation provided him with a *foundational* and *ontological* vocation whereupon the divine prototype whose infinite and “economic” incarnation was at stake was never a simple if exclusive and super-natural ‘presence’. So what, according to Mondzain’s philosophical and philological apparatus (*dispositif*), was the meaning and function of the “economy” in this discourse? And, if the divine prototype was not referentially accessible to signifying and representational practice, then what was the mode of its ‘work’ in the aforementioned “economy”?

We saw in the first study, how in Kantorowicz’s interpretation of medieval documents, a certain liturgical coding of sovereign power through christic mimesis in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was displaced, by 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., to a christic-fiscal justification which could be broadly called ‘economic’. Henry of Bracton’s characterizations of the fisc as that which “touches all” and which embraces “common utility” is nothing if not an ideological – and to that extent, mythic – discourse of worldly ‘economic’ power.<sup>9</sup> But it has to be still said that this discourse *functions* through transplant or grafting of the halo or the conservational precinct to the body of society. Marie-José Mondzain’s extraction of the signifier “economy” (*oikonomia*) from Nikephoros’ text in Byzantium and its earlier uses among the Patristics serve to construct a somewhat different mode of discourse, a mode which could be called “pragmatic”. Mondzain writes of the use of the word in the Byzantium context “..... the economy in Byzantium was exactly a pragmatic model that took into account the real historical situation of the person who was acting within the model, and by the same stroke led him to rearrange the truth itself in a different manner”.<sup>10</sup> However this “pragmatic” and rhetorical, why not, usage did not either sub-serve a logic of justification or one of sophistication and embellishment. The discursive and conceptual functions of the Greek word

“*oikonomia*” of which “economy” is only one translation, served as *mediation* for the divine *plan* (another common translation of “*oikonomia*”) of the *incarnation* (another translation) of the Word, according to dogma. The word “economy” launched from the pre-eminent source of dogma, St. Paul – though the imagination of a pure, authoritative origin is mistaken – had a specificity in the historical position we are citing from Mondzain in that from Paul to the patristic, conciliar and then Byzantine uses, the word conveyed a real *circuit* of material and spiritual exchanges.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, it differed from the more theoretical and by that virtue, more ideological discourse cited in the first study (without detracting from the decisive insights Kantorowicz draws from these marginal documents).

But whence arises this dynamic possibility of mediation and exchange which evidently is blocked both to idolatrous and liturgical frameworks, the first anathema and the second admissible to the iconoclasts? There is profound theological scope to investigate that emergence from Paul’s text – and we will quote that investigation in parts soon – but let’s summarize a general response to the question with the following remark: the possibility of a kind of historical dialectic that the economy inaugurates and which rhetoric subserves – so “economy” is the true level of pragmatics here and rhetoric a secondary elaboration – arise from an active recognition of transgression and “inconsistency” with respect to the rigour (*akribeia*) of law.<sup>12</sup> Such that Mondzain can propose that “the economy is the solution to inconsistency; it is the art of enlightened flexibility”.<sup>13</sup> In the thick of the Byzantine controversy, the iconophile’s reliance on the pragmatics of the economy supported by the above conceptual content not only won some key academic victories against iconoclasm but it also *included* the iconoclast’s own exigent and necessary reliance on icons. The liturgical and mimetic power of the emperor as *christomimetes* carried on being iconically expressed in the iconoclastic period – only the religious iconography of Christ, Virgin and the Saints was prohibited. However it was precisely the *economic* argument of the iconophile that the effective and true ‘dogmatic’ incarnational plan (*oikonomia*) had that much more of a future when borne by

christic and related icons apart from the imperial emblems already in sovereign currency. Thus the economic argument was also a temporal argument because the plan of incarnation could only unfold in historical time *but* we cannot bypass here the essential theological and Pauline thesis that such a conception of time was itself engendered from the *event* of the incarnation. This point has some important implications.

Two of these implications are political and imagistic – and they are intimately linked. Who can deny that Paulinism, unlike the ‘theoreticism’ or ‘logocentrism’ if you will, of the Johannine text, is an exercise of christic *power* intervening in history and by that act, giving history a ‘plan’, an *oikonomia*. This plan extends from creation to redemption and most crucially, it involves the sequences of time and life in-between. Doctrinally speaking, these are the sequences of sinfulness or fallenness but economically speaking, they are the material of an *institutional* transformation. This meaning of ‘institution’ must not be confused with the Church. If the Church was the body of Christ temporally and spatially localized on earth – even if this localization had a ‘universal’ amplitude – the meaning of “institution” was more delocalized and, in that sense, was ‘global’ and economic in its purport. So the entire orientation of this global and abstract circuit (*oikonomia*) was to circulate and exchange a kind of ‘image-credit’ and the circuit forever came into existence in the light of the institution of the *Father’s image*.<sup>14</sup> Paul’s paradigmatic presence in the form and history of the Christian Church has drawn out a series of remarkable responses in the ‘modern’ period, let’s say between Nietzsche and Jacob Taubes, and definitely the stakes expressed in these responses pertain to the *power* of Christianity – not simply as the influence of a powerful world–religion but as an *occupation* of the world.<sup>15</sup>

What Marie-José Mondzain’s work offers to political intelligence is a prescient argument regarding the mode of the above-stated occupation. She traces the Byzantine movement and in particular, the features of Nikephoros’ discourse to bring out the future of contemporaneities of a global yet Byzantine imagistic power of Christianity that has already broken from the localization of the liturgical model in the direction of an abstract regime of

“similitude”. Similitude between what and what? Model and copy? Or with more precarious philosophical consequences, between the Father’s image and *its* “icon”? This was exactly the point on which the iconoclasts were most moved to utter rejection. How could the circumscribed means of the iconic “schema” or *line* be adequate to the infinity of the divine image! A repetitive, numerical and limited ‘object’ couldn’t possibly transport to the spiritual subject the irreducible singularity of the image in question. The iconoclast felt so attached to the unique act of the Father in the event of incarnation – to the event of Jesus Christ, that is – that he would completely localize it to the closure of the absolute speech–act such as the Johannine one. But the philosophical and practical force of the iconophile’s argument arose from the economic *opening* of the incarnation on to what Jacques Rancière in another context calls, “the future of the image”.<sup>16</sup> Thus the defender and theorist of the icon, with great vivacity, presents to his adversary (and the public of the controversy, in general), Paul’s term for the incarnation as a verbal correlate of an ontological opening and ‘emptying out’ of the event – the Greek word, “*kenosis*”.

In the hymn from the Epistle to the Philippians (2.5-11), the pericope states:

Who, subsisting in the form of God  
 did not count equality with God  
 something to be grasped.  
 But he *emptied* [emphasis is mine] himself,  
 taking the form of a slave,  
 becoming as human beings are;  
 and being in every way like a human being.  
 He was humbler yet,  
 even to accepting death,  
 death on a cross.<sup>17</sup>

The ‘kenotic’ description of the first pericope in which Jesus is both equal to God and God’s sovereign incarnation is also where he is the humblest and a slave (*doulos*). Only upon the inaugural dereliction and *voiding* of the sovereign and divine premise through the event which is a *kenosis*, can the *power* of the event be asserted in the second pericope. Herein it is further stated that God

raised him high and gave him the supreme name that commands or obliges all to “bend the knee” at the glorious presence of Jesus Christ. Without confronting the strange contradiction between the two halves of the hymn, the contradictions completing each other, as Stanislas Breton says, there is no way of finding the ‘economic’ plank upon which the history of Christian Church and its ecclesial power will proceed. Of course it is possible, with someone like Breton, to trace the path of transformation from debasement to glory in the cited hymn.<sup>18</sup> But even that textual logic of passage and its incorporeal map of intensities requires us to affirm the inaugural – and eventual – scission between the ‘form’ of God and the reality – which is also a form or should one say, ‘anti-form’ – of the slave. Every transformation and reconciliation simultaneously and always affirms the irreducibility of the scission. Marie- José Mondzain’s work on the economic functioning of the iconic doctrine of the Byzantine period in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. releases, mobilizes and recovers the “void” that the inaugural Pauline scission institutes for Christian history. Neither the icon – doctrine nor the political imagology that follows in its wake would be possible without the conscious or unconscious operativity of what Mondzain shows to be the *ontology of the void*, an ontology opening up the field and work of being beyond the sacred precincts and shudders of the liturgy and its eucharistic “real presence”.

## ICON

Philosophically speaking, it is the void that both results from the division within the “natural image” upon incarnation and provides it with a kind of futural force. But before this ontological elaboration it is important to make an epistemological observation since all ontological propositions must be re-inserted into the discourse of knowledge that envelops the historical controversy in 9<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium.

At the very outset of her book, Mondzain clarifies that despite being thoroughly involved with the contingency of historical experience, the thought of the economy which supports and unifies the icon-doctrine in the Byzantine period was an *institutional*

thought. That is, it drew its own validity, despite its apparent indistinction from natural description of “immediate experience” (as in Euclidean geometry), from the implicit epistemic premises that constructed its discourse.<sup>19</sup> Those premises, to be made explicit, required a passage through other epistemological contexts and historical discourses – again like the story of Euclidean geometry up to the time of Riemann and later axiomatization in the history of mathematics – but even at the cusp of its Byzantine singularity, the shape of the thought based on these premises yielded two profiles in simultaneous projection. One was a ‘logical’ profile in that it was composed of a certain *relatively* neutral set of conjunctions and divisions – this relative neutrality made possible an internal criteria of consistency and validity. The second was the ‘political’ profile in that it exuded a command-gesture and demanded a certain return gesture of obedience.<sup>20</sup> The degree of vehemence of the gestures could only be correlative to the *relative* power of the logical construction, its ability to function as a ‘model’. Both these aspects will come back in the course of the actual unfolding of the icon-discourse (or doctrine) but it is essential to state the differentiation of the epistemological resources and limits of the iconophile position from the iconoclast’s ‘pure’ identification of the power of the sign with the knowledge of *sheer* experience .

The differentiation operative between the iconoclast and the iconophile positions in the specific Byzantine context also impinged on the very meaning and role of ‘the model’ in the process of iconic production. From the vantage point of our epistemic present, we can distinguish at least two senses of the concept of ‘model’. One is a rather ‘popular’ and empiricist sense which defines the model as a privileged space of description of ‘facts’ – whether objectively observed or subjectively experienced – with the merit of being *exceptionally* adequate to the facts. Insofar as the model is always an abstract form or structure, it possesses logical, thus, universal and ahistorical ‘power’. But insofar as the model is a *particular* and felicitous capture of a *certain* set of facts and experiences, it also becomes a grid of historical intelligibility with its power that much exacerbated because of its natural–ideological ‘appearance’. The other sense of model owes its concept to the developments

in mathematical logic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and after that: without attempting its complex derivation, suffice it to say that this sense is always immanent to a history of formalization with no privileged or 'natural' access to an *outside* world of experience or 'fact' (even if it be 'divine' fact). Such a sense of model *openly* avows its moment of differentiation to the effect that its universal syntactic properties only add to its force of *departure* from an ongoing history of formal practice. Unlike the ahistorical remove of logic, the 'mathematical' specificity of model always re-inserts itself into the very history from which it departs. This describes the upsurge of the model as structure and also as *intervention* which has both retrospective and anticipatory effects on the history of formalization in question.<sup>21</sup> We will have occasion to substantiate this general statement with mathematical examples but at this point, it might be of interest to bring to bear this force of differentiation on the Byzantine example. And the interest is not only epistemological, it is also ontological.

If one reads from the extracts of the declarations of the iconoclastic *Horos of Hieria* in 754 A.D, extracts found at the end of Mondzain's book, one must come to the following pin-pointed conclusion: given that the model must be none less than the Godhead and given that it falls to the human craftsman and artist to *use* the model, so degrade it, such a constitution of the model was contradictory, hence, impossible. In this falsified use, the iconographer and the iconophile commit the sin of circumscription (*perigraphie*) of the model's limitlessness and are prey to confusion (*synkthesis*) between two natures of forms, one eternal and divine, the other changeable and human.<sup>22</sup> If one analyses this in the light of earlier general statement on the model, a strange displacement can be read: in the iconoclast's declaration, the model has occupied the place of the primary 'fact' or 'outside world' and transplanted itself into the discursive and logical hierarchy such that all further 'facts' and 'acts' fall woefully, and shamefully, short of the model's sovereignty. But the demonstration of the impossibility of iconic truth is still predicated upon the empiricist premise that a model *should* cover the facts with exceptional adequacy – which premise can only be falsified with the iconographer's signifying efforts.



The essential meaning of the iconoclast's prohibition of the icon and declaration of the iconophile as anathema is that the place of the exception – which is the model – is *already* given to us in Jesus Christ's commemorative words/gestures of the eucharist. And in here – the consecrated place of this sacrament – the unconfused and unified coalescing of model and fact, spiritual transformation and allegorical – material signs etc. has *already* happened. In other words, there is no further event ontologically possible, and any such claim or profane attempt is a blasphemy against Being. The iconophile's discourse of refutation, also a discourse of vituperative attack, seeks to refute the above ontological bar with a double reversal of theses: Nikephoros, in the *Antirrhetics*, cites the iconoclast's accusation of false consubstantiality between the model and the copy, Jesus Christ and icon... and, immediately, pitches this accusation at the level of something so self-evidently false so as to be "irrational" when cited as a premise.<sup>23</sup> Nikephoros' entire orientation is towards effecting a scission, a decisive differentiation at the level of *human* discourse and practice such that these productions gain a certain value of economic use and theoretical truth, and further, the value of a *composite* 'economic truth' which the icon will embody. To achieve this, he modifies the meaning and status of the model in significant if subtle, ways.

What Nikephoros doesn't do is spare words of insult for the emperor Constantine and his iconoclastic syllogisms: so there is madness and stupidity in these syllogisms. Not in their syntax but in their semantic, conceptual and pragmatic *content*. A content that closes off the regions of 'meaning' in the world of human creation – as art and thought – in the name of a "totality" that is already instituted, coded and consecrated (in the sacrament of the eucharist) and is a *blocked* content, in that sense, a 'stupid' and uneconomical thought. So Nikephoros says that the relation between model – which is the divine prototype – and artificial image is not an identitarian resemblance, which is a redundant expression, but a *differentiated* similitude or "likeness".<sup>24</sup> This is Nikephoros' threshold for making his crucial epistemological 'break': the icon is not meant to be a mirror of the model or prototype but its *effect*; it is an upsurge of knowledge and not extension of being, and is

always *relative* to its cause, a relative term (*pros ti*) in Aristotelian language of logic. On the one hand, the icon as a relative term has the same property of a father's relations to son (and vice versa); or lord and slave (O Hegel!); or of friend and friend.<sup>25</sup> *On the other*, the icon participates in the relationship with the model in a way that external relatives (like father-son, friends, lord-slave) do not. But this participation is not the iconoclast's demanded identitarian thickness but 'economic' in nature. So while it is true that the icon draws all its potency from the field of univocal, and in the context here, divine Being, its material force is, through and through determined by the unfolding of a relational discourse, at both the syntagmatic and the semantic levels. The iconophile knows that there is no way to 'represent' through an external display of visual and logical causality the relation of icon to prototype. That is his epistemological modesty; but it is also his great 'economic' project to lend *figure* to that relationship insofar as the void or hollow at the heart of the Father as Word and Image – that is, the living movement (*kenosis*) of the incarnation (*oikonomia*) – is accessible to figuration.

This last bit of ontological research at the Byzantine site is Mondzain's step beyond mere historical investigation, which is also, as Maurice Blanchot would say, always the 'step not beyond' an exercise in infinite suspension.<sup>26</sup> Though it has to be said that the ontological challenge is thrown by Nikephoros' own relational thesis. He says, between the model and the icon, the relation of similitude is expressed by a "homonymy". We read, '... the name is one and the same for both [the icon and the model]. The icon of the king is called "the king". The icon could say: "the king and I are one thing", despite the evident fact that they are different in essence.<sup>27</sup> No argument could be more damning for the liturgical hopes of "real presence" and the eucharistic and christomimetic support for the Christian emperor. But the fundamental question arises – does iconophilia breathe a 'nominalist' air and 'economically' transmute it to iconocratic life? Then what happens to the ontological vocation of the icon?

In Mondzain's view, the iconocratic mission of Christianity – which plays an irreducible part in the history of globalizing

colonialism – must be seen in intimate relation with the ontological vocation – which is definitely not nominalist. Quite the contrary, in fact, because the entire function of the homonymy between the icon and the model is to secure a *passage* between the provenance of the void and the *tangible* form of the visible icon. Put another way, it is a homonymy between the ‘empty’ universal and the dense particular.

Following the above observation, we can round off, for the moment, our intermittent point on the differentiation produced by the Nikephorian sense of the model. This sense belongs to the historicity of iconic formalization of the kenotic phenomenon of the incarnation. The key ontological question that Mondzain poses for herself in the study of the historical icon of the Virgin, for instance, (among others) is the following: ‘by what schematic or graphic means (by the means of the *schema* and *graphie*) within the particular density of the iconic image is the emptiness, the hollow and void of the universal released and preserved? By subjection to what *formal* syntax of visibility of the icon is the ‘natural’ invisibility of the prototype – the natural, invisible image – institutionalized? Along the faint contour of this question(s) is etched the preliminary form of the model, from the iconophile’s point of view. According to this form which features a *torsion* – a term we will explain at length in the next study – the model is a particular universalisation at the invisible heart of the universal prototype with all the attendant division or scission of this operation. So the actual icon (whether the Virgin of Tenderness or the Virgin of Non-Contact in Mondzain’s study) formalizes its rules of creation to the tune of being a *model* for the iconographical and philosophical ‘totality’ of its own historical moment. The relational economy, which is an infinite economy of incarnation and a temporal economy of power, is, and must be, subtended by this epistemological *torsion* that tears and relates, in the same move, the two terms of the iconic relation (*pros ti*).

Precisely the above ‘twisting’ relation of the particular and the universal is played out by the politico-spiritual occupation by images of the ‘world’ – a globalized as well as colonized world. As said before, the logic of the image and the logic of power are

*departing* logics that within history, depart from their prescribed historical localizations. The departure from the iconoclast's liturgical prescription must be 'economized' upon – that is the iconophile's globalizing counter-prescription. But if a departure necessarily means a de-localization, positively translated, a "globalization", then the economy of this process must equally necessarily impinge on a kind of *spiritual* territory rather than a physical one. Mondzain gives a superb demonstration of this process of *iconocratic* abstraction but interestingly the Byzantine projection onto the contemporary 'imaginary' that she performs also has a retroactive shadow that falls on the pre-Christian period.<sup>28</sup> Without dissipating the focus of this argumentation, a brief parenthesis on this retroaction:

In 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Macedonian emperor Alexander refused to follow his teacher Aristotle's advice that there must be strict separation between the *natural* localization of the *polis* of which Alexander was the natural leader (*hegemon*) and the conquered, hence 'artificial', territories over which he was a necessarily arbitrary master (*despotes*).<sup>29</sup> Alexander preferred to follow a *cosmopolitan* policy which meant he encouraged his conquered subjects, the Persians, for example, to join the Greek army. This risky policy was 'equi-liturgical' in the pre-Christian sense we outlined in the first study. Which meant, Alexander would rather induce the conquered Persians to become *spiritually* localized despite being territorially usurped – such that they could also be cultivated as subjects with social and liturgical debt who would fight wars as patriotically as the 'natural' Macedonian soldiers.<sup>30</sup> Such a 'spiritual' project was based on the non-Aristotelian principle of political *homonoia* (equality of forms of belonging) among conjunctural unequals. This Stoic principle enunciated by Eratosthenes, Zeno and others already employed a 'global' word for the common material of imperial control and transformation' a kind of 'common pasture': *Cosmos*. Corresponding to this notion was the further *economic* word indicating a common 'world' of habitation beyond separate localizations, *oikoumene* with a unified army as its citadel (*acropolis*).<sup>31</sup> Plutarch, who reports these policies and episodes, presents Alexander not simply as an emperor-conqueror but as a

*persona* or *prosopon* (the figure of the actor who is also an instituted subject) who demonstrates the true *logic of sovereignty*. At this point, however, the descriptions and analyses undergo a strange twist. It is when we begin to see the dissipation of the structure of localization in favour of a *global* prescription which is supported and accompanied by a logic of liturgical commensuration that a blow is struck: this is the blow of an *absolute localization* effected on the *body* of the emperor through his own imposition of the ritual of *deification*.<sup>32</sup> With this imposition a certain displacement occurs with regard to the concept and function of “liturgy” and the new passage to later Christian spaces, which are holy, consecrated and sovereign, all in one massive codification, is inaugurated. We could say that at this point the ‘economic’ potential of a history of political and spiritual subjectivation as well as conquest is blocked in favour of imperial and idolatrous sovereignty.

## IDOL

So it’s a matter of extraordinary interest when Marie- José Mondzain unblocks and re-opens for us the ‘economic’ channel in Christian history. To do this she takes the archival assistance of the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century controversy featuring the Constantinian arguments of the council of Hieria (754 A.D.) and the Patristic defence of icons by Nikephoros. She uses a crucial distinction between the idea of the “holy” contained in the Greek word *hagion* and the work of the sacred implied in the word *hieron*.<sup>33</sup> Further she portrays the division of thinking between the iconoclast and the iconophile *within* the unity of stakes insofar as both sides despise the idolater. What repels the Christian philosopher of the image is the sheer, even brute, presence of the body before which the idolater would prostrate himself/herself. In fact that is what Alexander in the 4<sup>th</sup> century would have his subjects do – which was to perform *proskynesis* (prostration) before this absolute point of localization which was his corporeal majesty.<sup>34</sup> Even for the iconoclast – or particularly for her – such an empirical point of corporate concentration was an anathema: iconoclastic thinking proposed an *incorporeal* extraction of “real presence” from the

ritual-holy (*hagion*) space. Which space crystallized into a point of concentration that hid a paradoxical form – an ‘incorporeal congregation’ under the action of the Holy Spirit or the form of a liturgical community (*koinonia*).

The ‘economic’ channel that Mondzain opens up doesn’t consist in channelising a history of community. Rather, as noted earlier, it marks a history of ‘departing’ upsurges, of *inconsistency* befalling stable structures and subjects as well as of the theoretico-tactical solutions of inconsistency. Insofar as these solutions are tactical they come up in extremely particular and localized circumstances; this is the sphere of what Mondzain calls “the profane”. But to the extent that they are universalizable, *model-solutions* to problems and dangers threatening the provenance of the natural invisible image, they possess the power and claim of the sacred. In Mondzain’s treatment of Christian iconographical tradition and its conceptual support, she is led to make a startlingly heterodox distinction: instead of distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, she distinguishes between the holy precinct (*hagion*) and the sacred-profane spaces (*hieron*) of the iconic economy.<sup>35</sup> Let us examine this distinction in some detail:

Now the above distinction must not be taken as static and simply maintainable. According to Mondzain’s interpretation, Nikephoros accuses the iconoclast of falsely maintaining the separation of *hagion* and *hieron* while the whole iconophilic project is the *sacralization* of the profane without rendering the latter a *consecrated* or “pneumatic” space. Moreover what the iconoclast is not able to distinguish is the *use* of the symbols that constitute the sacred project – a use that can go perverted such that it enters the idolatrous domain. In the latter case of bad use, what is lost to the false absolutization and animation of the idol is the ‘economy of the “relative” (*kata skhesin*)’ that mobilizes the good use of sacred symbols. Nikephoros, thus, employs the word, *ta enhage*, which means “the damned” for idolatrous constitution instead of the profane.<sup>36</sup> On the question of the “use” of symbols, Nikephoros brings an acute ‘economic’ self-consciousness or he brings that self-consciousness on behalf of the iconophile. The latter realizes that any use of material, worldly symbols is always an

active *profanation* – which means nothing but a particularization, in the structural sense – of the holy (*hagion*) idea. Yet the paradox is precisely that this use is nothing if not in the interests of a *sacralization* of that very materiality. Thus, it is only an acute, self-conscious “symbolic capacity” that enables the iconophile to re-arrange the ‘mixtures’ of existence into the direction of a redemptive and ‘economic’ truth. And the iconoclast lacks exactly this “symbolic capacity” which leads him to rigidly oppose ‘mixture’ and yet repeatedly slosh in it. In terms of the present investigation, the accusation is that the iconoclast is unable to fabricate a ‘model’ for the relation between the particular and the universal, the local and the global, the invisible and the visible. As a result, he is locked inside the absolute particularity – Alexander’s mortal body! – of the substance of the greatest universal. So Nikephoros’ eventual charge is that unconsciously, if not consciously, the iconoclast falls into the sensational blasphemy of the idolater.

What the Byzantine confrontation does between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., is express the logical, conceptual and philosophical stakes of a division that was already in intense action in late antiquity. As the historian Peter Brown shows, the “holy men” from monastic and related traditions of this time could be said to be “arbiters” of the holy in society.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the dogmatic image of being an embodiment of God’s election, of exception and grace, the arbiter-image facilitates the exchange, mediation and circulation of “holiness” which composed, in Brown’s words, the religious “common-sense” of society.<sup>38</sup> In light of our Byzantine citations, it is just to regard this common-sense not as an external aggregate of notions and beliefs but as an irreducible process, excruciatingly hesitant and delicate, which still results in an explosive monotheistic, Christian *decision* of which the common-sense was only a naturalized discourse. Our chief contention here is that no such historical or conceptual decision is possible without the conscious or unconscious functioning of what we have called a “model”. And while the iconophilic construction constructs a kind of ironic model since in here it is the void (*kenosis*) of the incarnational event that does its formalizing work in the density of the iconic symbol, the iconoclast literalizes the model and renders

it dense. As a consequence either the form of the model and that of the image collapse together, as in an idol or they are drawn so far apart that all the image is able to achieve is a faint, external mimesis.

As this point, let's hear Mondzain quoting Nikephoros on the sacralization – which in a strange way is always an affirmation of the profane, if not a profanation – of the holy (*hagion*) in Christianity. She paraphrases “In ancient times everything was *hagion*”. Then she cites Nikephoros on what happened after: “Wood replaced wood, the temple replaced the temple, sacrifices replaced sacrifices; in the place of everything that is impure and profane there is a substitution for things that are holy for us [*ta kath hemas..... hagia*]:<sup>39</sup> Every thing hinges on the substitution of the pre-existent “holy” and the merely “profane” with the function of the differentiated “holy” (*hagion*) as a sacred-profane. But what is this apparently tautological substitution (wood with wood, temple with temple, etc.) and what is the sacred-profane solution? We might say the solution consists in the formal (another term for “symbolic”) experimentations with an identitarian and passively ‘consistent’ material such that *a history of inconsistency becomes possible* (or an ‘inconsistent’ history in other words) instead of repetitive oscillation between holy and profane. But whence comes the *power* of Christianity – whether taken doctrinally, colonially or imperially – if inconsistency is its basis? The support for this sequence comes from Mondzain’s use of “economy” (*oikonomia*) for a process in which the *hieron* becomes a decisive category: the *hieron* is understood as precisely the historico-conceptual space which brings together the inconsistency of the ‘relation’ between the divine and human and its ‘economic’ solution; an isomorphism then between sacred-profane and consistent-inconsistent!

Yet the above is not quite accurate. Because what we are concerned with here is not really the structural property of isomorphism but the operational notion of intervention. It is difficult to say which term corresponds to which – “sacred” with “consistent”, “profane” with “inconsistent” or the opposite. But it is analytically as well as existentially possible to say that *given* a certain transcendental consistency granted to the holy (*hagion*),



the profane, in its *inconsistent* historicity, doesn't merely make the holy impure; it has the tremendous potential – two words that join the *tremendum* of mystery and *potenza* of power – of intervening in the *hagion* to transform in into a redemptive plan (*okionomia*) incarnated in the element which itself is transformed to “sacred-profane” or even “consistent-inconsistent”. The word *hieron* describes such a transformed element and gives a specific philological form to iconic history while the word *oikonomia* with all its variant translations, retains a more general status.

Now it is clear that the institutional as well as theoretical generation of ‘Christian’ power is divided between the ‘pure’ source of the *hagion* and the heterogeneous and hieratic ensemble of the *hieron*.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly Nikephoros warns against the immediate purity of the *hagion* because it is also indistinguishable, in particular contexts, from the absolute impurity of pagan religion. While *hieron*, following its philological and historico-philosophical space of “transformation”, allows for the properly ‘Christian’ – which is also colonial and globalizing – power of mediation, delocalization and *decision*. Everything Nikephoros directs against the iconoclast emperor is equally targeted at what is perceived by him to be the unjustly and uneconomically restricted *source* of the iconoclastic decision. Theologically speaking, this source packs in itself the consubstantial embrace of ritual and “miraculated” (Justice Daniel Schreiber’s unforgettable neologism)<sup>41</sup> body. But this “pneumatic” (Mondzain’s word) source must be animated and unleashed as the human emperor’s sovereign pleasure. And at the threshold of this human, all-too human ‘release’ what threatens the pure sovereignty of the pneumatic source is the horror of imperial incontinence. As exercise of conciliar, dogmatic and of course political power, the mere human emperor Constantine turns out to be, to Nikephoros, a man with no control over his bodily functions, orificially utterly undisciplined, wallowing in his own several excretions – in short, an anti-model of power, an un-economy of sovereign decidability.<sup>42</sup>

According to Nikephoros, only with the institution of the symbolic circuit of the economy, that is, with the operativity of *hieron* as a process and space of sacralization as different from eucharistic *sanctification* and as equally distinct from the *proskynesis* or *latria*

(adoration as prostration) before the idol, can the infrastructure of the true iconocratic decision be set up.<sup>43</sup> In other words, we must spell out the parts going into the making of the sovereign apparatus (*dispositif*) or what we have called “model” on the iconophile’s side: first, there is the particular constitution of the material icon; second, there is the immanent formalization, or syntax, organizing the material into a “meaning”; and third, there potentially arises a point of inconsistency, a torsion within a historical “situation” of the icon to which the iconic body/form itself will provide the intervening and ‘departing’ solution – *that* is the Christian *decision* unto a kind of iconic power of faith, an iconocratic faith. Of course there is also an iconoclastic decision. But that decision, according to the opponents, is still too dependent on the personification of the decision-maker, a system of the imperial *persona* which generates power and that simply doesn’t hold up against the challenge of historical and structural inconsistency. For the latter challenges, what is required is a “disciplinary” analytics of the icon.<sup>44</sup>

Mondzain’s book has a main part which deals with the doctrinal and epistemological issues arising from the Byzantine moment – issues affecting the fate of images up to the present. Its concluding part, which is work-in-progress, speaks of “idols and veronicas”. Idols and veronicas, unlike disciplinary objects (which human-made icons are), claim either corporeal immersion into divinity (idols) or divine ‘automatism’ as if icons created without human intervention, ‘acheiropoietically’ (veronicas).<sup>45</sup> It is self-evident, in both cases, the question of economic *deployment* of images such that a history of disciplinary technics in relation to *events* of inconsistency opens up, is foreclosed. To the measure iconocracy was able to prise or even tear open these foreclosures, by localization and automatism, it became that much more globalizing, imperial – and tactical. And the process, in its sovereignty beyond territory, was able to force new and *imaginal* localizations into sites of history, which were as much sites of ‘life’, where power was to be further exercised. In Mondzain’s research, the Virgin Mary is one such relational, yet singular site of localization.

“In order to investigate this economic and globalizing process in greater depth, let us examine two traditional iconic models

portraying the *Theotokos*. The first is the Virgin of Contact, the *Glukophilounsa*, still known today as the Virgin of Tenderness. The second concerns a scene in which the Virgin points to her son at her breast, yet does not touch him; it is known as the Virgin of Blachernai, and it is the heir to the earlier Virgin orants. These two icons are laden with meaning both in the fields of spirituality and Christology, and in the setting in play of the space where temporal power is *decided* [emphasis mine].<sup>46</sup> Mondzain's actual analyses of these icons need not be repeated here but their main iconocratic argument can be cited: it is that the space of the icon doesn't host a theatrical secularity wherein the audience and the scene (Andre Grabar says "décor")<sup>47</sup> are placed in a univocal relation of seeing-shown; it testifies to the more equivocal institution of the *invisible* gaze, which itself never ceases to attempt to testify to the univocity of Being as Divinity. Thus while political "economy" of power following iconic logic is always a double occupation of spirit and territory, its power of *ontological* claim to this economy is always a claim based on a single Truth.

However it would be drastically incomplete to cite the general argument above without specifying the modes of imaginal localizations of the Virgin (in both cases). Of course, the very captions of these icons indicate the modes – one is created by contact between mother and son, the other by non-contact. Yet the real force of demonstration is that the very intimacy of localization in space and affect in both icons is also a massive de-localization unto infinity and transparency of their "economy". In the sense of what we have called "torsion", the site of the Virgin is an "oxymoronic" site.<sup>48</sup> What is the concrete 'disciplinary' implication of this? It might be this: even as the incarnational plan or economy immaculately, miraculously and divinely passes into the virgin birth of God's son – the miracle of the event which is the event of a miracle – it is also *disciplined* into repetitive objects of iconic formalization. As such an object, the divine prototype that gives it a superior, more-than-natural life must also pass through a natural, organic life. So the virgin womb must not be taken as a canal – thus the metaphor of "passage" is inexact – through which God passes into human life, but as a fully evolved *natural* site or

localization of motherhood. What is at issue here is not so much a contradictory motherhood as the occupation of the woman's *real* body by an invisible, carnal gaze. If the force of the gaze is every time transmitted as a global-spiritual power, its point of application and the intensity circulating within that point making it a vortex, is always a *particular* corporeal location, a body.

Exactly at this juncture Mondzain reminds us that the force of the gaze is not substantial, it is kenotic, empty. An emptiness circulates forcefully in the mother's womb with explosive global results. It is the ontological emptiness of the incarnational economy that forms the basis and infrastructure of the iconcratic decision – which always passes through, sometimes tears open, often explodes to splinters real and particular bodies. Yet we must recognize the specific persuasion of Mondzain's argument – the power of icons is not the power of wounding to death and destruction; it is the 'economic' power of a kind of infinite and transparent, and a kind of colonial and disciplinary *life*. In fact, with all the contestation between them, the iconoclasts and the iconophiles are united in their supreme evaluation of life. It's just that for the former, life remains tied to a pneumatic source, to a consecrated jointure of breath and presence while for the latter, the entire investment of the incarnation and the christic sacrifice is towards the transformation of pneumatic life to economic 'light' that surpasses the trembling affects surrounding the idolatrous body as well as the rarefied grace supporting the liturgical presence.<sup>49</sup> The attributes of life that becomes light from being mere breath are the same institutional attributes of the invisible gaze that opens regimes of visibility in history. Thus, under the supervision of such an 'institutional' light, life becomes that much more sustainable, productive and investible – an opto-political economy of life as the organization of repeatable and countable 'units' of light rather than a political theology of sovereignty as power over "bare" life.<sup>50</sup>

## NUMBER I

The precise and unavoidable implication of the conclusion of the last section is that the politics of life as 'light' is not the politics

of 'natural' life. Already, the economic deployment of life is the deployment of an *intelligibility*. And two formal attributes of this intelligibility are repeatability and countability – exactly the attributes that feature in discussions on the concept of number in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But this comparison is only analogical; and of crucial interest in this matter is the *subject* of repetition and the count in either case. The starting hypothesis is that, both in the iconic and the mathematical instances, the question of the subject confronts *the relation of the void to Being*. And the path of investigation might consist of a series of enquiries on the status and meaning of the void in theological discourse and the same regarding the place of the void in modern mathematics. The first set of enquiries would then address the voiding or withdrawal of the divine substance effected by the *kenosis* of the incarnation; and the second would interrogate the property of 'belonging' in set-theory insofar as the void is an element belonging to a set of arbitrary elements. Again the decisive point is not the difference and connection of operational details. Those, at this preliminary stage, can only be analogical and arbitrary linkages. However a preliminary yet fundamental 'curiosity' is at stake: through these disparate enquiries, are we haunted by the same *enigma*, the enigma of a strange *ontological* presence whose name is "the void"?

In Mondzain's interpretation, the icon-doctrine is a doctrine of the void as the pivot of the carnal (or rather, 'in-carnal') economy that the icon formalizes. The theologeme of this structure is the Pauline *kenosis* and this kenotic structure is not just a matter of the inaugural "emptying out" of God the Father into the form of the humblest slave (*doulos*); it is a matter of the unrelieved persistence and renewal of the act of emptying, of the void at every stage of the incarnational economy up to the *Parousia*. At the heart of iconic repetition is the repetition of the void – the void, in other words, insists as the key formal feature of the model that supports iconic history. What it crucially supports is the ontological emergence of withdrawal or a distance within the material of the icon. Precisely this *invisibility* of what Mondzain cites from Nikephoros as the force of the 'natural' image in the artificial, 'local' and visible icon, is what insists as a kind of ontological eternity in an otherwise

wholly relational arrangement.<sup>51</sup> Or, at least that is the ontological solicitation of the theological ambition and the iconocratic project that makes ‘Christian’ history so effectively *global* in orientation.

As a logic of paradoxical sovereignty, Paulinism encodes the “power of weakness”, weakness being the intensive self-abasement in the act of *kenosis*. Only such a paradoxical encoding can accompany the dialectic of localization and delocalization, of invisibility and visible signs of power, of predicative subjectivity and the *generic* subject – this much has been complexly and superbly demonstrated by a vast and varied literature.<sup>52</sup> That the ‘great’ code and the dialectic it supports and mobilizes is an out-and-out *political* dialectic is beyond dispute. For that reason it has an inexorable instrumental drive on the way of Christian history. But that it also lays a foundational ontological claim makes the dialectic reach up to the very constitution of the true end of all instrumental politics, of *Parousia*.<sup>53</sup> This extra mile that the dialectic travels, its added stretch, produces a strange inversion within the idea of *Parousia* as fulfillment or fulfilled ‘presence’. Exactly at the arrival of the ‘last state’, the eschatological fulfillment and transfiguration, the work of *kenosis* again empties out, voids and ‘weakens’ the parousaic power. *Again*, the entire economic plan (*oikonomia*) of the incarnation is, as if, returned and renewed at the stage of its *infancy*. And this, it seems, is the key to the logic of ‘Christian’ power from its western to oriental expanse: it is the vitalization of what Paul called “the time of the *kairos*” into a forever and thus immemorial time of the infancy or, at least, youth of the project of global power.<sup>54</sup> Despite appearances, it is this ‘infant-power’ that makes the project and process of ‘globalisation’ historically specific yet terminally infinite. Within its *Parousia*, ‘the time of its end’, it makes and remakes that ‘end’ (both in the sense of goal and termination) as the fresh *means* of its own further fulfillment. Ends and means enter, in Giorgio Agamben’s terms, “a zone of indistinction”.<sup>55</sup>

In terms of our first study, it is the “fisc” that resembles the paradoxical infinity of the terminal condition of the incarnational economy. The fisc, between 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries roughly, featuring several civil cases as well as cases from Canon law, comes

out as perpetually *minor* – whose status as the site and repository of ownership can never have the fixed *persona* of the patrimonial owner.<sup>56</sup> Being minor and ‘weak’ the fisc is always operated by a trustee but never prescribed to him. And being absolutely imprescriptible, the fisc is ‘more sovereign’ than any patrimonial owner or sovereign. It is as if the incarnational economy enters into the last stage of fulfillment to play out the transfiguration of christic economy of redemption into the fiscal irredeemability of a ‘minor’ debt.<sup>57</sup> If that *minor* burden is politically instrumentalised as the *immemorial* of the global obligation of infinite repayment, it is still supported by the ontology of the void (*kenosis*) that opened the economy (*oikonomia*) in the first place.

Of the *kenosis* in Paul’s hymn to the Philippians, there are variant interpretations –whether Patristic, Catholic, orthodox, etc., or even more modern heterodox attempts to study the kenotic act in the light of Muslim Sufi thought of certain kinds.<sup>58</sup> Let’s say these interpretations choose between a purely ‘externalist’ determination of *kenosis* without God’s sovereign immutability being affected in the slightest, a ‘relativist’ Aristotelian position of the sort Nikephoros advocated without relativism compromising ontological unvocacy and the subtractive way of looking at things that *de-nudes* the putative power of God to the incarnate “null-point” of the slave (*doulos*) exactly also mirrored in the null point of the cross (*stauros*). In the light of the above very rough schematization, we move from a ‘full’ ontology of divine plenitude to what Stanislas Breton calls a “meontology”.<sup>59</sup> This movement of denudation covers the range from the most majestic attribute of immutability to the mediate predicate of ‘being-similar’ or ‘likeness’, to the predicative impoverishment of the slave (*doulos*). In a strange way, it is once this interpretative movement has been saturated that the global trajectory of power starts to be charted with a doctrinal pragmatics as its intellectual artillery, a pragmatics which flexibly and conjuncturally recombines several elements of the scholarly interpretations. Yet we would say an ontological proposition runs through the history of pragmatics (of discourse as much as figure) as its central spine: The proposition is that the void (here a substantive as well as an ‘active’ translation of *kenosis*

used in Paul's hymn) is always localized in and sutured to the form of a Subject. Such a form may well be 'filled' with the homonymic icon or the 'fiscal' minor. Even and particularly in the critical and exacerbated form of the featureless slave who is the image of the 'minor' fisc with no circumscribable name or identity in the proper legal sense of patrimonial *persona*, the metaphysics of the Subject is at unrelieved work and provides generic weakness or voidness with the greatest constitutive power. The active motivation of the terribly risky leap across an abyss between a silent Christian axiomatics which *decides* the status of the void and the *avowed* axioms of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century mathematical thought is the desire to experience the following 'other' proposition: which is that there is no subject of mathematics; in its pure state mathematics is a truly de-sutured and unbound science of the Real.

## NUMBER-II

Don't the above statements of desire and undemonstrated proposition which is our desire's 'object', bring us to the point where we started from, the point at which Frege seemed to be contemplating and fabricating a pure ideography for the "real presence" of number, the Real of Number? Upon the mention of this liturgical term in the mathematical context, albeit in a metaphoric way, the question of a certain iconoclastic passion for that context was raised. In the light of the investigation that followed the initial 'suspicion' guided by Marie-José Mondzain's research, it is possible to pose a few sub-questions in the nature of 'tests' for the iconoclastic suspicion:

- (a) If Frege and his generation were pursuing an immediate 'holy' space of numbers' ontological existence, then what is the relation between this supposed consecrated space and the concept of 'model' that provides this space with its *true* axioms? If these axioms are immediately 'natural' to the holy space – whether it be a Platonist universe, a divine mathematical will or the human mind's inherent capacity – then why differentiate the axiomatic level at all and raise the question of the model



- in which the stakes are those of true and valid axioms and not simply natural-logical forms?
- b) If the iconophile's construction of the model is used as reference and a note is made as to how this reference enables the 'sacred-profane' *repetition* of the icon *counted-as-one* without collapsing the dissimilar similitude of the icon into the fusional One of the idol and the sacramental One of the liturgy, then what structures the order of repetition? What *passes between* the one and the one which repeats? The void?
  - c) If the text of religion (Paul's text, in this case) asserts that the void in the kenotic act subsists and persists in the iconic series – only a sub-series of the incarnational economy – then doesn't the void already take the silent shape of a decision or an axiom on the existence of a *subject* which supports the series? And so, doesn't such a subject demand permanent *pre-existence*, an already-always count of one that permits the economy to open up?
  - d) Following these interrogations, is it within our rights to enquire about the *general* status of Numbers' Being which at all makes it operationally possible to count and as one? What *donates* Being to Number? The void?

In a short essay "Additional Note on a Contemporary Usage of Frege", part of his 1990 book *Numbers and Number*, Alain Badiou clearly, economically dismantles the presuppositional structure and ontological consequences of Jacques Alain Miller's Lacanian construction of Fregean number theory in a 1965 lecture titled "Suture: Elements of the Logic of the Signifier".<sup>60</sup> The main presupposition in the lecture, according to Badiou, is that there is an isomorphism between the logic of the signifier and that of number – as a result of which the stakes of the lecture became the refurbishment of the relation of the subject and the signifier rather than what the form of being of number might be. An ontological consequence of the demonstration based on the presupposition of isomorphism is that the order of number remains the order of calculation; and since the Fregean concept of number joins it with the truth-cases that are included to the concept's extension,

in Miller's appropriation, the order of truth itself becomes an order of calculation.<sup>61</sup> What is effected in the exposition of the logic of the signifier is the installation of the mark of the subject which is lacking in the signifying chain, that is, the mark of the lack and then the *passage* of the lack that engenders the chain at its every moment of iteration. Taking Frege's "conceptual content" of the ideograph O, or simply written, zero, the content that defines zero to correspond to the number of elements that are *truly* included in the extension of the concept "not identical with itself" which number is zero or which quantity is null or void (according to the law of non-contradiction as well as Leibniz's principle of indiscernibility between identicals), Miller inscribes the same letter or ideograph, 0, zero, as the mark of lack.

Interestingly, the above demonstration is anti-theological in the exact symmetrical sense that it, deliberately and actively, disempowers the theological architectonic by a procedure of reversal; to the paradoxical infinity and sovereignty of the most voided and humbled act of *kenosis* in Pauline logic, the psychoanalytic 'knowledge' that Miller *represents* (there are several layers to that function in Miller's case)<sup>62</sup> opposes the finitude and heteronomy of the subject whose *misrecognised* image is always that of self-mastery. Without entering this massive detour to the parallelism and reversal between theology and psychoanalysis, it is enough here to cite Badiou's intervention that Miller's operationalisation of the zero or void as the mark of the subject as lack and its engendering passage to the next link in the series of whole numbers primarily serves the logic of the *letter* of number, that is, the logic of the signifier and not the Being of Number itself. This Fregean account which, according to Badiou, is Miller's account of Frege making the latter a kind of 'subjective' thinker of number which he was not, localizes or sutures zero or the void to the twisted form of the subject of misrecognition.<sup>63</sup> So, in this 'subjective' interpretation, the twist or '*torsion*' grips the subject in and through its lack (which has an obvious, intuitive resemblance to a perpetual *kenosis* of the divine subject) and the void itself is only a mark, a letter, a signifier of this torsion.

Thus, what is not asked by an abyssal-foundational knowledge such as psychoanalysis – a ‘secular’ abyss if you will, instead of the kenotic one of Pauline theology – is the question equally soliciting of the other foundational secular claimant, mathematics: what is the relation of the void to Being in their mutual un-binding, de-suture? And what possible thought of ‘relation’ is possible for such an un-bound mutuality, a disjunctive, exterior inclusion? Alain Badiou’s extraordinarily frank *decision* on this question is that the thought for the above (non) relation is encoded in the mathematics of sets or set theoretic formalization.<sup>64</sup> It is easy to misunderstand this decision as one which is successfully tempted by the elegant logicist attraction of set theory. Not so. The entire ground for Badiou’s ontological decision is laid by a wayward, almost stuttering history of ‘modern’ mathematics whose “delicate and severe” point(s) of departure – Frege, Dedekind, Cantor to the 1908 axioms of Zermelo, etc. – intensify and differentiate themselves into *mathematical* axioms or decisions from the general logicist discourse of the times, a discourse which remains a necessary condition and instrument of these decisions.<sup>65</sup> The concept of mathematical models, in this respect similar to iconic ones in the Byzantine period, are characterized by the assertion that only *some* postulates among all possible logical ones, are true.<sup>66</sup>

In Badiou’s refutation of Miller, what also seems implied is the latter’s indifference towards the possibility of historical and axiomatic ‘stuttering’, even *inconsistency* in Frege. Everything is arranged as if the consensual image of number being of the order of calculation and engendered by passage to the next counted existence from an initial one, is prescribed and guaranteed by logic and intuition in one voice.<sup>67</sup> Everything is progressivist and self-identically finite; and only on this assurance, is the insistence between units of progression, that is, numbers of the mark of zero as “stand-in” (Miller’s word) for the subject as lack, justified. So in effect what is flattened out in Miller is the possibility of a history of experimentation, differentiation and axiomatisation in mathematics;<sup>68</sup> and this self-assured ‘flatness’ of attitude is made possible by the confidence in the *impossible* object of all history, the exceptional non-identical object which is the “subject” alienated in

the signifier for which the mathematical mark of the zero, or null set  $O$ , provides only the *analogon*.

So what remains passively presupposed and fundamentally untreated in Miller's 1965 lecture is the ontological status of mathematics *itself*, and the implications of such a status for any possible subject of mathematics. This is the point at which we must cite Alain Badiou's thesis that the void or zero gives itself to be thought *on the side of Being*, not on the side of the subject.<sup>69</sup> The void is the 'object' of Being's suture in a strange way – it is the mark of Being's inconsistent localization. Which means, there comes to be such a point, or element, or neighbourhood whereupon the "totality", which expresses all of Being or all the 'things' that Being includes, falls into a contradiction. This element or neighbourhood is the predicate/feature "not including itself" or "not identical to itself" or "void", etc. So the question arises in every logical eternity, as it did in the historical materiality of Russell's response to Frege, of Cantor's definition of "inconsistent multiplicity"... , as to what is that totality of elements, or set of sets, which *consistently* includes the set which doesn't include itself in this totality?<sup>70</sup> The so-called "suture" or binding then of this inconsistent point of Being's localization is a binding of unboundedness, of de-suture or de-localization. Unlike the suture to the subject of lack of the mark of lack (0 or zero) the 'production' of the inconsistent definition of totality or Being, which effectively defines Being as inconsistent *multiplicity* (Cantor) based on the ontology of the void is entirely intra-mathematical. We must note here the threshold of mathematical differentiation from the mere logical judgment of contradiction which only results in the impasse of thought: in the history of mathematics between the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup>, the logical experience of contradiction that, for instance, Bertrand Russell 'gifted' Frege with, actually becomes the key productive resource of mathematical experimentation to result in a new 'model', or what Bourbaki called "a species of structure", for the mathematical axiomatization popularly called "set theory".<sup>71</sup>

The above is a broad contextualization for tracing the mathematical lines of departure from the earlier 'economic' departures of Christian iconology from liturgical theology. Apart

from analogical evocations of liturgical ‘real presence’ in the mathematical production of number, where the question really was whether the analogy is either valid or sustainable, the main object of our tracery is to map *ontological* consequences of the unbinding of the void from the repetitive and counting ‘form’ of the iconic subject. Is the consequence a return to a quasi-theological space of separation praised by a kind of mathematicians’ liturgy to Number as only accessible to a sacred ideography? Or, is it an ontological upsurge of a *new immemorial* that number is, a consequence challenging both the divine immemorial of theology and the ontology of finitude and lack that characterizes a certain psychoanalytic (and linguistic) modernity? Everything, then, hinges upon the frank exposure of the ontological axioms of this ‘new’ mathematics of Number to the question, decision or ‘cut’ of existence: do only those few numbers exist that *we* count and pass from and to? Or does Number exist as an immemorial collective figure Alain Badiou calls “swarm” (a figure of the collective produced from ontological un-binding and not the opposite) from which the so-called ‘counted’ number is *cut*?<sup>72</sup> This double articulation carves a forked destiny for the investigation to follow in our next study, we having reached the end of the present passage: what *political* forms and figures correspond to the respective numerical modes of finite and immemorial existence? How does the latency of power in these modes manifest in the hierarchies organizing the political forms? And how does the decision on the void, its axiom, affect and resist the hierarchy of pre-existent political subjects to declare a new axiom of *sovereign* existence?

It is not without symptomatic as well as affirmative interest that in one of the inaugural sequences of ‘modern’ politics, the French Revolution between 1789 and 1794 – a hundred years or so before the conjuncture of ‘modern’ mathematics we have discussed –, the void-name declared for the new sovereign existence was of the fullest subjective intensity – “people”. But it is precisely the forked path to such an ‘inconsistent’ conclusion that needs to be travelled.

## NOTES

1. See Gottlob Frege, “*Begriffsschrift*, a formula language modeled upon that of arithmetic, for pure thought” (1879) in *From Frege to Gödel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic, 1879-1931* ed. Jean Van Heijenoort (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967) pp. 1-82. It is essential to keep close to Frege’s letter when he writes “pure thought” which doesn’t easily allow slippage into the region of a ‘mind’ which thinks, or ‘mental thoughts’. Any such *subjectivism* of interpretation can’t be prevented from being suspected of either disingenuous reading or motivated imposition. Of course the more common orientation is that of identifying (reducing?) “pure thought” to *logic*. For a useful discussion, see Mary Tiles, *Mathematics and the Image of Reason* (London and New York: Routledge; 1991) pp. 33-54.
2. See Gottlob Frege, “*Begriffsschrift*” p. 1, note b.
3. Dedekind’s “naïve” and more fundamentally philosophical approach (than Frege’s) to number arrives at an ordinal view of numbers. Unlike Frege’s conceptualist and cardinal treatment, Dedekind seeks enchainment and engenderment of the number-series such that the order of, let’s say, natural numbers can be treated as a “system”, a “naïve” and “free” counterpart of Cantor’s idea of “sets”. We must understand that Dedekind’s search for the *pure and real* presence of numbers as Number (N) is relational such that when all external context is abstracted from, we are left with an order or a series which is forever, that is, *infinitely* of “transformations” that attach not to a material or a content but to “pure thought”. For these terms of discussion, some part of Dedekind’s vocabulary and some added by later commentary, see Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers* trans. Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008) pp. 31-46.
4. See Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* trans. Rico Franses (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005) p.91, where the author writes, “the face [of Christ] in the icon rims an essence whose incarnation and resurrection the icon reiterates, *but never represents*”. Thus the logic of the icon addresses the ‘event’ of Christ (up to resurrection) which it reiterates or repeats; it doesn’t seek to portray or narrate or describe the qualities or predicates that are said to inhere in the event. In the light of the event, the reiteration through the icon is also a *transfiguration*, which carries on in every such singular reiteration. On the question of sacred and consecrated spaces, Mondzain’s further chapter ‘Sacred Precinct and Profane Space’ is the reference.
5. On the ontology of number as intensive difference internal to quantities before being co-opted into extensive repetition of equals, on the relation of ordinal and cardinals in this context, there are some inimitable passage in Gilles Deleuze’s 1968 masterpiece *Difference and Repetition*. See Gilles

Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), pp. 232-233.

6. This generalization constitutes the concluding part of the earlier study. Though there is a grafting of a philosophical problematic of the event onto Ernst Kantorowicz's analyses, this much can be said with assurance that Kantorowicz built the *fictio* of a continuous horizon of political consciousness we call the State along the locus of *crises* of sovereign justification and not theories of sovereignty.
7. Michel Foucault, in his 1978 College de France Seminar, published as *Security, Territory, Population* says, "...From the seventeenth century 'police' begins to refer to the set of means by which the state's forces can be increased while preserving the state in good order. In other words, police will be the calculation and technique that will make it possible to establish a mobile, yet stable and controllable relationship between the state's internal order and the development of its forces. There is a word, moreover, which, more or less, covers this object... You find it at the start of the seventeenth century in a text..., a text from 1611, Turquet de Mayerne... This word is quite simply 'splendor'. Police must ensure the state's splendor, In 1611, Mayerne says that police must be concerned with 'Everything that gives ornament, form and splendor to the city'. Most certainly, the police 'splendour' is not a liturgical one and nothing is more crucial than the difference between the two". See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 313.
8. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit*, pp. 75-81.
9. In our earlier study, we tried to show that an effort such as Henry Bracton's was tortuously metaphysical even while he was forcing concepts and equations geared towards ideological density – which is also always a condition of complete transparency. So he had to extract a *form* from all the materiality of "common utility" which could be placed in conjunction with Christ *without* rendering that form entirely transcendental. Thus there is, along with the purpose of justification, an 'economic' investment of a metaphysical form extracted from the very economy in question.
10. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit*, p. 12.
11. The moment the reciprocity entailed in exchange is deferred from physical and social presence of the parties and the act of exchange to a circuit and circuits of exchange, we are already thrown into the logic of debt which involves deferment and investment of *time itself*. This is a complicated issue within which the commercial sense of the economy is often confused with the ceremonial sense of what anthropologists call the "gift-economy". In the context being cited here, we are faced with the following, admittedly difficult, enquiry: Even if God's plan (*oikonomia*) includes the logic and instrument of deferment, investment and the wily induction of a generalized and *global* debt in Christian history, what happens in Parousia, which is the

end of all instrumental logic? Is there unconditional un-binding of all debt – or does debt become terminally infinite insofar as Parousia is a never-ending time of the end of time? This is a great theological knot of course but in the present context it is clearly overdetermined not so much by either political or economic theology as by a kind of ‘economic iconology’ which treats of an ‘image-object’ of circulation whose ontological basis is the Pauline *kenosis* or “void”. For a comprehensive and admirably lucid account of the confusions and distinctions between the gift-economy and commercial circuits of exchange, see Marcel Hénaff, *The Price of Truth: Gift, Money and Philosophy*, trans. Jean-Louis Morhange with the collaboration of Anne-Marie Feuberg-Dibon (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).

12. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
14. What we call “image-credit” must always be referred back to the Father’s invisible image which, in the iconic figure or simile, is not in-corporated, but “in-imagined”. See *ibid.*, p. 77.
15. Of course the choice of these two authors between late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> is only a discrete, partial marking of a dense referential terrain; also they mark the modalities of response from Nietzsche’s massive *refusal* of Christian power to Taubes’ plea for a thought of messianic *withdrawal* of a power which can’t be called unproblematically ‘Christian’ (and thus differing in crucial, subtle and urgent ways from Carl Schmitt). See Frederick Nietzsche *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ* trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990) and Jacob Taubes *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander (California: Stanford University Press, 2004).
16. Let it be clear that here we only utilize the evocation of Rancière’s title without really engaging with his otherwise superb distillations of the contemporary ‘image’ See Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*. trans. Gregory Elliot (Puducherry and New Delhi: Navayana Publishers, 2010).
17. See Stanislas Breton, *The Word and the Cross*, trans. Jacquelyn Porter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), p. 83.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-86.
19. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
20. On the movement of “believing what one sees” (natural description) to “obeying what one believes in” (axiomatic prescription and power), see, *ibid.*, p. 16.
21. See Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model: An Introduction to the Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics* ed. and trans. Zachary Luke Fraser and Tzuchien Tho, <http://www.re-press.org>, 2007. Also, see, Tzuchien Tho, “The Consistency of Inconsistency: Alain Badiou and the Limits of Mathematical Ontology” in *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, pp. 70-92.



22. On *graphe-perigraphe* and the line as a kenotic practice which intervenes in the discourse of circumscription, see, Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-96.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
25. This is a crucial and complicated point. While the anteriority of the cause to the effect is unquestionable in ordinary 'empirical' cases and their 'knowledge', the greater sovereignty of the object of incarnation – God the Father – always *accompanies* the artificial iconic image even while the latter 'aims' at the former. Is this a relation of 'participation'? Definitely not in the sense of Platonist participation in the fullness of a primary idea but possibly in the sense of participating in a 'void' since God's accompaniment to the human-made, historical icon is in the mode of a *withdrawal*, a kenotic mode. See *op. cit.*, *ibid.*, pp. 86-92. The later part of this section deals with Ernst Kantorowicz's politico-theological evaluation of human-made mimetic practice in relation to God's grace (*kharis*) more in the light of 'economic' power. While we don't draw out the full implications of Mondzain's critique of the evaluation at this point, they are palpably present in our treatment.
26. See Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lycette Nelson (Albany: State University of New York, 1992).
27. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, p. 237.
28. With respect to the iconocratic argument for a thesis on Christian (Western) globalization, Mondzain's chapter "Iconic Space and Territorial Rule" has an effectivity almost independent of the rest of the book. See *ibid.*, pp. 151-170.
29. For Arrian's and Plutarch's accounts of Alexander's policies and practices, see Ernest Barker (trans. With intro.) *From Alexander to Constantine: Passages and Documents Illustrating the History of Social and Political Ideas 336 B.C.-A.D. 337*(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 3-19.
30. This is part of Arrian's account. See, *ibid.*, pp. 4-6.
31. For sections of Plutarch, see, *ibid.*, pp. 6-8.
32. See, *ibid.*, pp. 8-16 for several accounts of the move to deification and physical gestures of adoration (*proskynesis*). It is noteworthy that these accounts speak of the emperor's *desire* for divinity which is constantly questioned and resisted by his own subjects – such that Alexander often is seen retreating from his own decrees.
33. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-126.
34. See above note 32. In this connection also see *ibid.*, p. 137.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-147.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
37. See Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 55-79. This is the chapter called "Arbiters of the Holy: the Christian holy man in late antiquity". For a discussion of Brown, See Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, pp. 147-148.

38. See Peter Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 60.
39. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, p. 122.
40. The question of the transmission of power apart from being obviously religious and political is also 'economic' in the specific sense that the economy is a mode of repetition in the elements of number and time. Both the iconoclasts and the iconophiles assert their validity (or even truth) and dominance vis-à-vis the numbers that belong to their respective camps, number of synods and so on; also they announce their persistence in time, their immemorial duration. But while the domain of the *hieron* is more heterogeneous, composite, *mixed* which habit, custom and tradition rationalize and institute, the *hagion* seems to manifest itself as the "*continuation of a prohibition*" (Mondzain) which is as much the manifestation of sacrament, law and sovereignty taken as a *total* and *single* image and gesture of purity. See *ibid.*, pp. 126-129.
41. Who can doubt that the discourse 'forced' into existence by Judge Schreber is a great and tortured challenge to the cultural anchor of all ritual and theologically supported performance(s) of miracle (of transubstantiation, for example) – an anchor expressed by the term 'code'. For Schreber, it is the *code* which must be 'immaculate' along with his impassioned body given over to the 'divine rays' that penetrate it. This singular incommunicable, 'immaculate' code he calls 'ground-speech' on whose basis his suffering can find its own most 'private' signifiers. See for Schreber's reference *Memories of My Nervous Illness* and Lacan's interpretation and formalization of the problem of psychosis, See Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis". trans. Bruce Fink, *Ecrits: The First complete Edition in English* (New York, London: W.W Norton and Co.), pp. 445-488.
42. For a citation of Nikephoros' vivid vituperations against Constantine V under the expressive section–title "The Anti-icon of the Iconoclast Emperor's Body", see Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, pp. 107-114
43. See above, note 32.
44. The word "displinary" occurs in Mondzain, as also the word "strategic". No doubt discipline is the discipline of repetition through the iconic form or scheme or line (*graphie*), in short, *body* of the kenotic void which hollows out that very body. And "strategy" is the investment of the same controlled space of the icon *imaginally* to enforce an "endless mobility" as well as a most *decisive* sovereignty. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, p. 138.
45. On the fascinating issue of *acheiropoiesis* in the context of the 'miracle' of the Holy Shroud of Turin and photography's access to the shroud in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Mondzain's chapter "Ghost Story", *ibid.*, pp. 192-208.
46. See *ibid.*, p. 159.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 139. The word "scene" would then be the more general and theatrical equivalent of the decor of a consecrated and *contained* space.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

49. The horizon of life as light, as redeemed transparency is a known ideal. In the icons of the Virgin Mondzain analyzes, this transparency is already present as an *exposure* of the economy of the iconic construction to its own strategic meaning – a kind of ‘face-to-face’ of the economy with itself. But such a possible encounter displaces the very meaning of strategy and pushes the human-made icon towards a more ‘pure’ space where the gesture of fabrication tends to disappear in favor of a new automatism, a new “real presence”. The latter is not anymore tied to the pneumatic infrastructure of life or elective aristocracy of grace or the ritual property of the eucharist. This “real presence” is an ontological as well as phantasmatic wager that the human-made icon forces on its own formal and material limits – a step beyond the opposition of the human-made and the acheriopoetic without simply etherizing into a bodiless docetism. So the new wagered “real presence” is a wager on the exposure of strategy to its contingency, on the transparency of the economy to its analytics, on passage of the dense, trembling body to its immanent, intelligible ‘light’ (the word *photo* for light anticipates the arrival of a new photo-graphic “real presence” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). And this new, whether wagered, whether fantasized, state is a *state of perfection* within the human world beyond human means, it is not an aberrant, merely miraculous event. Only upon the recognition of such a state of perfection and truth that life potentially reaches, can the renewed expropriation and utilization of life take place. See *ibid.*, pp. 199-200.
50. “Just as the political mythologeme of *homo sacer* postulates as a presupposition a naked life that is impure, sacred and thus killable (though this naked life was produced only by means of such presupposition), so the naked corporeality of human nature is only the opaque presupposition of the original and luminous supplement that is the clothing of grace. Though the presupposition is hidden behind the supplement, it comes back to light whenever the caesura of sin once again divides nature and grace, nudity and clothing”. Giorgio Agamben, “Nudity” in *Nudities* trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011) p. 64. Thus we see that naked (bare) life and the structure of power are involved in a relation of presupposition and originary supplementation. In fact ‘bare’ life is only reached by a process of de-nudation of a state-of-knowledge which is a ‘state-of-light’ also called “grace”. Grace is the supplemental name of a perfection that sovereign politics must both re-iterate *and* de-nude, void so as to ‘produce’ what Agamben so influentially calls ‘naked (bare) life’. Clearly there is a similarity of stakes between our analysis, following Mondzain, and Agamben’s. But the key terms of difference are “economy” and “grace”.
51. And this is the reason one cannot diagnose any relativism in Mondzain’s extractions from Nikephoros, as the counterpart of her own diagnosis of Nikephoros’ critique of iconoclastic absolutism. Her reading of Nikephoros must always be supported by her *affirmative* reading of Paul, especially on

- the question of the void (*kenosis*) and the enigma (*kerygma*).
52. There is an affirmative dimension of Paulinism as there is a strategic one. Without being symmetrical, the two dimensions enter into ironic as well as paradoxical intertwining. But the truly interesting trend, roughly in the wake of Jacob Taubes' insights, has been a subtraction from particularisms supported by 'Christian' predicates and intensities, in favour of a thought of either the unclassifiable 'remnant' (Agamben) or the generic and indiscernible universal (Badiou). Of course within this subtractive trend there is a significant division of political and ontological directions, the consequences of which division we will draw out in the following studies. But it seems to us, Mondzain's reading of Paul radicalizes the career of the void (*kenosis*) by following it into the state of fulfillment or Parousia. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005) and Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, California: Stanford University, 2003).
  53. The following is the specificity of Mondzain's interpretation of Pauline *kenosis*: Instead of following the trajectory of condescension and of abasement, she says "... In the debate over the image, the question of the incarnational emptiness takes on a whole new amplitude, because *it perpetuates the emptiness of the Parousia* [emphasis mine] in the very form of the iconic memorial". *Ibid.*, p. 95.
  54. The time of the end, is a time of the now, the *kairos* but a 'now' in "imminent expiration" (Agamben). Everything we are saying here is dependent on the vitalization, expropriation and in-termination of this above imminence. This process we call the rendering unto an infancy or youth the project of interminable power which always lives its "imminent expiration" with the most delicious and ferocious verve. Now such a life of power is also and at the same time, a life of *perfect weakness*. This is Paul's enormous and paradoxical message within which the history of the Church's appropriation of the message and its 'pure' proclamatory character are divided. Jacob Taubes makes the extraordinary observation that it is the purity and perfection of Paul's message that cause it to be accompanied by "fear and trembling". It is a strange twisted inheritance that what we call global power of capitalism today mobilizes as an 'economic' Paulinism, with its fundamental intensities, towards a sense of the *natural* infinity of its regime and existence. This economic naturalism is indeed an erasure of the role of 'event' in Paul, the cutting edge of Paulinism as a divided *kairos*. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 2 and Jacob Taubes, "The Justification of Ugliness in Early Christian Tradition" in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments towards a Critique of Historical Reason* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 84.
  55. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 25, for messianic nullification of and absolute indiscernibility between determinant terms of

discourse and analysis. Our use of nullification has no doubt a more ironic than a messianic content.

56. See footnote 285 in the section on Bracton in Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.183. Here the equation of church, fisc, minor and madman as all underage, remains the enigmatic and crucial reference for legal construction of the perpetual minor status of the subject of the most unrestricted sovereignty.
57. The argument here is that with the fiscal-legal forms and problems (with their declared solutions) of medieval Christianity, a certain structural preparation is underway for the extreme individualization of modern capitalism. The irredeemable Christic debt is fiscally lived out as granulated and 'minor' such that its immanent actuality is co-existent with a non-localizable, global obligation rather than merely being the function of a sovereign and religious command. Thus the preparation towards the capitalist 'individual' is a global minoritization of an infinite debt encoded in Christianity. It is not difficult to show Mondzain's thesis on a global occupation by the image is also a globalization *and* minoritization of the debt relation encoded in the iconic transaction. For a related but variant perspective, Marcel Hénaff's work is greatly valuable See note. 11.
58. See Stanislas Breton, *op.cit*, pp. 90-94
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98
60. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, pp. 24-30. The chapter is called "Additional Note on a Contemporary Usage of Frege"
61. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
62. In her definitive recapitulation of Jacques Lacan's life, work and epoch, Elizabeth Roudinesco points out Jacques-Alain Miller's double relation to Lacan's thought: on the one hand, Miller brought out a historical and logical core of that thought which institutes psychoanalysis as a Lacanism almost beyond its Freudian provenance; on the other, he closed that discourse in upon itself as a consistent and 'total' knowledge. The ontological question being discussed here is the very consistency of the idea and being of 'totality'. See Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* trans. Barbara Bray (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 305-306.
63. Of course as Badiou cautions the reader, the sense of 'subjective' as mind-dependent or site of mental representation that Frege wanted to refute must be differentiated from Jacques Lacan's mobilization of the subject. However, it is interesting that Jacques Alain-Miller manages to 'involve' the intuitionist and finitist 'subjects' of number-theory with the Lacanian function of the Subject. In Badiou's dismantling of Miller's demonstration, the focus and stakes are shown to be the place and function of the Subject (in psychoanalysis) and the discussion of number serves only as an *analogon*, an exemplum. However, *if* number were to become the stakes, it would then be possible to demonstrate that the function of the Subject is an *effect* of

number understood as a form and gesture of being. In fact the exact cutting edge point of that effect to emerge would be the first number, the void-number or zero. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers* pp. 24-25. Also, pp. 29-30.

64. This is a complicated – and essential – statement. While a decision must necessarily express an *instantaneous* moment and act with all the intended and collateral consequences to follow, a history, nevertheless, is thinkable around the irreducibility of the decision. And strangely, such a history, with all its projections and retrospections, enters into the heart of the very instant of the decision to make it that much more *frank*, to expose it to its contingency. In the case of Alain Badiou’s decision, inscribed in the 1988 work *Being and Event*, the frankness of that ‘instant’ and all its later confirmations eventually give the decision the character of a *commitment*. Like any true commitment, the avowal is towards a consistency of principles, axioms and their rigorous drawing out of consequences; and yet pertaining to the mathematical-ontological decision on set-theory, it precisely is a recognition of the need to consistently present inconsistent multiples – which best mirrors the need of ontological presentation, according to Badiou. Everything that pertains to the investigation of Beings suture or binding of the void must take into account the fundamental effect of inconsistency, or un-binding, that the void, or the empty set, produces in any-set-whichever, or the consistent schema of Being’s presentation. In this context, see Tzuchien Thos interview with Alain Badiou forty years after the publication of *The Concept of Model* published as an appendix to the English translation. See Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model*, pp. 79-104.
65. Though we are dispersing with its construction – which is both technical and minimal – the definition of ‘model’ in the mathematical sense Badiou gives involves an essential differentiation of mathematical axioms from its own, what he calls, “logico–mathematical system”. The double occurrence of ‘mathematics’ in the following definition deserves consideration: “... *a model is the mathematically constructible concept of the differentiating power of a logico-mathematical system*”. See *ibid.*, p. 40.
66. Interestingly, in the context of mathematical construction, Alain Badiou points out the “homonymy” between the model in the sense of scientific differentiation and intervention and the same in the sense of simple external adequation of putative empirical facts. This homonymic differentiation recalls the Byzantine relation between the icon of the king and the actual historical sovereign through a homonymy carrying the resemblance while the similitude is essentially subtended by ontological and attributive *differentiation* – a point the iconoclasts failed to grasp, according to Nikephoros and hence the flatness of their ‘model’. See *ibid.*, p. 22 and also Marie-José Mondzain, *op.cit.*, p. 237. Of course the irony here is that there is a homonymy between the iconophiles’ and the iconoclasts’ use of the word ‘model’ with all their fundamental differences. One could hazard that one

result of this irony is that the two parties share in an anti-idolatrous Christic stakes despite their differences. While in the 'secular' mathematical context, no such irony can be permitted and no homonymic 'relation' can be said to exist between the ideology of resemblances and mathematical practice of differentiation.

67. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, pp. 29-30
68. On the point on experimentation and axiomatization, there is a question put by Tho on Badiou's view of Deleuze's anti-axiomatic position. Badiou's reply has a historical interest, apart from a philosophical one: According to him, the history of axiomatic decisions is *both* a series of points of crystallization of creative experiments and an ordering of axioms into mathematical systems (the Zermelo-Frankael. ZF, system of set theory is an example). See Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model*, pp. 100-102. In the following study, we hope to show such a divided axiomatic history is as much a matter of *politics* as of mathematics.
69. See, *ibid.*, pp. 99-100
70. This is a famous, vast and yet punctiform enquiry with great amounts of literature in mathematical logic and philosophy dealing with it. As a reliable reference, we could go to Mary Tiles' reconstruction of the historical and logical dimension of Russell's objections to Frege. See Mary Tiles, *Mathematics and the Image of Reason*, pp.70-80. For Cantor on 'inconsistent multiplicity' see Georg Cantor, "Letter to Dedekind" (1899) in *From Frege to Gödel* ed. Jean Van Heijenoort, p.115
71. See Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model*, p. 44.
72. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, p. 30.

## STUDY II

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# The Numerical Logic of Sovereignty

This study has two main contentions. The first is that sovereignty, in its general structure and historical sedimentation, both possesses and inherits a numerical logic. The second – in specific historical conjunctures and sites, this logic is played out with a special intensity such that we are confronted not with the simple confirmation (or refutation) of that logic but with its *contestation* and *division*. The French Revolution names one such conjuncture and site. In a greatly simplified way, the study will try to formalize certain key moments and processes of division during the Revolutionary period and its subsequent historiography. For the archive of the Revolutionary material (between 1789 and 1794) we consult some declarations of a leading pamphleteer of that time, Abbé Sieyès. For inaugurating the tradition of history-writing with French Revolution as its vital subject – and infinite object – we read Jules Michelet. For counter-revolutionary logic and polemic, we go to Michelet's senior contemporary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Joseph de Maistre.

The method of this study is to excavate certain 'numerical' operations that run through the sources mentioned above (among others). It is, so to speak, an archaeology of the 'mathematical unconscious' of the historico-political discourse of the Revolution. The stakes and motivation for this effort lie in the imperative that we must inquire anew whether the paradigmatic 'will' to a modern, secular and popular sovereignty that is often imagined to



begin with the French Revolution (as opposed to the theological and monarchical sovereignty of the Old Regime) is sustainable as to its *axiomatic* logic. This is the logic that declares – whether in the field of mathematics or of politics – the One *exists* and is that with which we subsequently *count* the sovereign(s) – whether the ‘one’ king or the ‘many’ people. Then the question to ask is, what are the ontological and political implications of this prescribed existence? And what happens, what strange ‘trembling’ is induced, if one wagers another prescription, an errant one, that the One is *not*, or should one prescribe, *make* the One not...?

### TREMBLING AND POLITICS: A NOTE ON MACHIAVELLI AND ALTHUSSER

In 1962, when Louis Althusser gave a few lectures on Machiavelli, he complained of his dissatisfaction with them. Shortly after the lecture he suffered a mental collapse and was hospitalized for three months. In September 1962, in a letter, Althusser wrote, “It is no accident, I now think, that in the month-and-a-half preceding my collapse, I did this strange course on Machiavelli – the delirium of the course was nothing other than my own delirium”.<sup>1</sup> So what was the content of this “delirium”? Althusser goes on, “... Machiavelli’s central problem from a *theoretical* viewpoint could be summed up in the question of the *beginning, starting from nothing, of an absolutely indispensable and necessary* new state ... In elaborating this theoretical problem and its implications, in expounding the theoretical consequences (in particular, the theory of fortune and *virtu*), I had the hallucinatory sense... of elaborating nothing other than *my own delirium*... The question I dealt with, how to begin from nothing... was mine”!<sup>2</sup>

So what *is* precisely the delirium? Is it the unconscious identification that is delirious, or, the very nature of the question that contains a delirium? Or is it that the question – how to begin from nothing? – *produces* a delirium? A symptom or a trigger? These questions that articulate, in perilous ways, the “theoretical” question of absolute beginnings, pose, for us, the problem of delirium – which could be called the problem of the *symptom* in

relation to *truth*. Whatever be the degree of vehemence of Althusser's suffering, he does not hesitate to state the level at which the identification with Machiavelli emerges: it is the level of theoretical knowledge which holds the 'consciousness' of the identification and only there can lie the key to the *truth* of Althusser's symptom, his suffering. In an interesting if perverse reversal of the situation of discourse, the delirium of the philosopher of the 1960s can also be imagined to seep through the pores of Machiavelli's own tapestry, his 'discourse', as it were, to induce in that 'old' milieu (of the 16th century) a new delirium and trembling, *another* manifestation of the symptom commonly called "politics" in the many readings of Machiavelli.<sup>3</sup>

But the interest and stakes that Althusser expresses vis-à-vis Machiavelli are not fundamentally tied to the *clarification of the symptom*; rather, they are tied to the *torsion of truth*. Hence we must follow, exactly, the theoretical question that cleaves to the delirium and its elaboration – the question of absolute beginnings starting from nothing. In this sense, we would rather interrogate the so-called symptom, not so much in its own terms, which is "politics" in this context, but in terms of its *refusal*, which is precisely the event of the question of beginning with 'nothing', that is, without the support and enjoyment of the symptom. What, then, would be the 'torsion' experienced by the common, consensual, strategic name of "politics" when struck by the event of the question of 'nothing' at the heart of its rhythm of enunciation? So even if Althusser's delirium is expressible and commonly expressed in a certain psychoanalytic idiom, its real force, its stakes in truth rather than the symptom, push it beyond that consensual perspective.<sup>4</sup> Which makes it immediately thinkable whether a delirium exists in *Machiavelli* which can be expressed and transmitted through a perspective other than the strategic one of "politics". What would be a non-strategic, 'ir-relevant' perspective for Machiavelli – and is such a perspective sustainable so as to maintain the *consistency* of Machiavelli's thought?

Maybe the questions above are badly put. The question of consistency already assumes a set of parameters and points of reference decided upon, from which the evaluation of consistency

would be carried out. And the name of “politics” already saturates the range of recognisable parameters which might be utilized for the purpose of logical evaluation. This is the *crux* of the matter: the intelligibility that is powerfully and consensually imposed on Machiavelli’s thought is a *logical* intelligibility called “politics”, whose myriad instantiations retain the nature of a conjunctural and historical immanence, a kind of ‘pragmatics’. In our previous investigation of the oxymoronic and inconsistent power of the iconic image in Christianity, we saw how the purely logical hierarchy of a dominant consistency and a conjunctural inconsistency must be acutely re-examined on the grounds of axiomatic *interventions* in the logical structures of knowledge. We saw how the status of an ‘intervention’ was, strictly speaking, oxymoronic in a tremendously productive way: the ‘consistent-inconsistent’, ‘sacred-profane’ regime of the image produces, not simply historical inconsistency, but an ontological solicitation of the void, of a kind of absolute and indispensable *solitude*.

“Solitude” is Althusser’s word for Machiavelli’s situation<sup>5</sup> ; a productive solitude but also an *absolute* one. Rather, the absoluteness of Machiavelli’s solitude is the precondition for his singular and singularly ‘modern’ productivity. Unless the enigmatic relation of these two singularities, two ‘deliriums’, is worked out, the relation between the absolute solitude and the singularly productive one, the further discourse of the ‘symptom’ called Machiavellianism or simply, ‘politics’, remains ungrounded. This is Althusser’s word and image for Machiavelli’s “consistent-inconsistent” intervention in the history of ‘ideology’ – “solitude”. Machiavelli’s solitude, thus, is without the criterion of *relevance* that ideology hitherto had fabricated for the construction of politics and its defined object, at least Aristotle onwards.<sup>6</sup> But at the cusp of solitude, its ir-relevant, almost child-like preoccupation not with strategy but with the *truth* of strategy, Machiavelli doesn’t offer himself to a logico-political *choice* – the choice of politics as a pragmatics of immanence versus that of some transcendental compulsion of politics as ‘form’ already rendered normatively consistent.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the calculus of choice, important as it is, is exactly the becoming-symptom of Machiavelli in the hands of natural law philosophers.

The becoming-symptom or becoming-politics of Machiavelli is the grand form of the becoming-One of the author and his 'object'; the *one* definition of politics as the concern with power and reason of the state.

So let's hazard the following formulation for Althusser's image of Machiavelli's solitude. It is an absolute and multiple solitude, a solitude which can't be *counted*. And precisely in this manner of the incalculable calculus, Machiavelli's solitude, 'becomes the people' (as Gramsci said) while in the sociability of discourse, of a logical object, he will have become 'symptom' and 'politics'.<sup>8</sup> So everything hinges on how we understand "people" here without the edification of that signifier into the combined senses of being natural-legal and sovereign. The matrix for this understanding built from a refusal of the symptom, from *nothing*, is provided by Machiavelli himself in a short section of *The Prince*.

In section IX of his book, Machiavelli poses the following problem for the Prince who comes to power not by crime or insurrection but by the 'favour' of other similar private citizens: for the problem to be delineated clearly, we must first follow the possible formations of 'favour'. Either, the one to come to power can be supported by the 'few' nobles or the rest of the populace. Or, the Prince can be supported by one formation but he must decide whether to approach the other for support or with hostility.<sup>9</sup> In such an undetermined milieu, Machiavelli says, the Prince must decide on the basis of some self-evident facts but which dictate some specific truths, 'the truth of things' to base all strategic reasoning and decision on. Now in the general description of facts, both in *The Prince* and in *The Discourses*, Machiavelli, again and again, describes nobles within a certain compass of affects and dispositions and in relation, describes the rest of the populace, the 'people' within a differentiated compass. The emotions are the *same* – love, hate, envy, fear etc. – but their contingent emergence is always singular. It is not any more a simple vision of political and affective cycles with provision made for chance (Polybius' *tyche*) but a paradigm of simultaneous and often indiscernible compositions of circumstances and affects from which a singular encounter must be composed anew.<sup>10</sup> This is Althusser's interpretation

of Machiavelli's "aleatory materialism": it is a materialism of encounters but the composition of the encounter doesn't *follow* from an intention, an objective or even a pragmatics or strategics of decision.<sup>11</sup> It follows from *nothing*.

Given the void-basis of the Prince's decision (in the voluntaristic sense) and given the ontological availability of the paradigm-situation, the Prince can only recognise a contingent but absolute tie-in or relation between the void-basis and the paradigm-situation. *But every recognition issues a prescription*. So in section IX of *The Prince*, Machiavelli clearly enunciates the facts for the Prince to recognise – that he can never secure himself against the people if they are hostile because "there are too many of them".<sup>12</sup> In comparison, the nobles are "few" and the Prince can make himself safer against their possible hostility. Though this doesn't mean the nobles' hostility is less troublesome for the Prince. On the contrary. The hostile if 'few' nobles are far more active and concerted in their opposition than the 'many' people. *Despite* this strategic consideration, Machiavelli pleads for the more fundamental recognition that the people are "too many" and the *same*, while the nobles can be "made" and "unmade" by the Prince, can be made the objects of a strategic flexibility.<sup>13</sup> So the knot of decision, in its tyings and untyings, its torsions, involves two 'recognitions', the one of strategic value that the 'few' nobles possess and the other of a 'fundamental' people who are "too many" and "the same".

The prescriptions or injunctions that issue from these heterogeneous articulations of recognitions are requisitely differentiated: with regard to the nobles, the Prince must constantly evaluate the different groupings of interest, affect and disposition within their few numbers to secure his position; while with respect to the people, a bolder, a more 'axiomatic' approach must be taken. The Prince, once having accepted the *permanence* and *indiscernability* of the people, must *decide* that the people are only disposed to a minimal demand – not to be oppressed.<sup>14</sup> Given this decision, it is up to the Prince to produce an affective discernibility among and for the people, given their numerical indiscernibility ("too many of them" to *count*, to discern...). This can be done, according to Machiavelli, by inducing in the people a collective

feeling, a subject-hood, as it were, of *debt*: if the Prince disposes himself with favour and friendship, especially if the people were initially hostile and least expecting such behaviour from the ruler, he effectuates a collective obligation and thus subjectivation of the people as a locus of political debt. This transformation, Machiavelli says, takes place “in an instant” – the people return the Prince’s favour and now, in this form of the subject of political debt and obligation, the people *can* be counted.<sup>15</sup>

It must be stressed that the above, despite appearances, is not a psychological thesis. It is only a minimal – and at that minimal level, a *weak* – ontological statement on the happening of something, of a flickering emergence of a utilizable subjective form, from *nothing*: The whole question of there being ‘too many’ of the people is put to the very form of a discourse on counting and identification, of knowledge and political utility. It is too early in this study to offer a full-fledged mathematical image for this question but in relation to the concluding portion of our previous investigation this much can be said that being ‘too many’ and the *being* of ‘too many’ escape, even within Machiavelli’s enunciation of a fundamental, even brute fact about the people, both the natural-law philosophy of popular liberty which is innate and consistent, and the Roman-Law form of the republican (*res-publican*, to subject the Latin to a torsion) *persona*. In this sense of an ‘escape’ from form and yet as a self-evident presentation, the people, in Machiavelli’s prescription(s) to the Prince, are a “swarm”.<sup>16</sup> And being a swarm, they are un-countable as a collection of mere individuals or ‘ones’. Or more precisely, they *become* uncountable at a certain threshold of indiscernibility when the people are unutilizable as a strategic and political entity. This ‘swarming’ is an image of *experience* that the Prince must recognise in an intuitive as well as axiomatic way because the normal deductive apparatus of principles, method and conclusion will not apply to that experience. This is the ‘nothing’ of experience which resists the forms of utilization, the ‘nothing’ for which no subject of experience called “the people” (*populus* in Roman Law) exists yet, that distinguishes it from the ‘few’ of the nobles; this is the ‘nothing’ of Machiavelli’s ‘popular’ solitude.

It has been pointed out by others, Antonio Negri being a remarkable ‘other’ among others, that Machiavelli, in close comradeship with Spinoza and Marx, was not a thinker of sovereignty but of immanence and “the multitude”.<sup>17</sup> That may well be true – and true in a revolutionary and joyous way – but our point here is that (following Althusser) even if one keeps to the basic and well-known object of Machiavelli’s prescription(s) which was the founding of the National State, that object required a paradoxical solitude. This was the solitude self-avowedly *weak* in its relation to greater strategic networks but *ontologically* productive of a decision towards an existence-to-come. In other words, in Althusser’s interpretation of Machiavelli, the latter was telling us that the founder of the new National State must *cut off*, withdraw drastically, from all traditions of power – in the sense of patrimonial and sovereign *potestas* – so as to *decide* on a new and hitherto ‘indiscernible’ existence. Therein lies his solitude. But everything becomes possible with this solitude and a new thinking opens up a whole field of new ‘symptoms’ among which “modern politics” names one, “revolutionary multitude” another...<sup>18</sup>

Let us close this section with some considerations on the “delirium” or *trembling* indissociable from Machiavelli’s solitude. Such a trembling must be carefully distinguished from the affects of politics that Machiavelli so unsparingly diagnoses. It must be tied to the stakes of truth instead. Althusser understands the latter task to be an analysis of Machiavelli’s commitment to thinking the *preconditions* of a new state rather than either a taxonomy of old political forms and constitutions or an empirical set of prescriptions towards new types of government.<sup>19</sup> It is in the thinking of the immanent preconditions of the new that solitude exacts its most profuse, most inscrutable delirium. Why is that? Because the preconditions form as much a part of the new as they are the conditions of the new. That is why they don’t represent a *tradition* of political power or government, whether rooted in Aristotle or Roman Law. In Althusser’s view, the thinking of the preconditions of the new state is carried out on the site of the encounter between fortune and *virtu*. Unlike a ‘tradition’ of politics that encodes exercise of power through the twin elements of a

theoretical object and a practical mobilisation of anthropological intensities, the encounter is an encounter between a singular constellation (called “fortune” and infra-theoretical in its chance emergence) and a non-individual, even non-human intensity (called “*virtu*” and unrecognisable anthropologically insofar as anthropology is a science of the general human ‘individual’).<sup>20</sup> Thus what we find in Machiavelli is not a recounting of a hallowed tradition or narrative of politics but an iteration of encounters: in the *Discourse on Livy*, the broad and rich canvas of Roman history can’t be thematized either as a legal or political or philosophical narrative; rather, Machiavelli creates a kind of new and ‘original-primitive political accumulation’ not as symptoms of an underlying permanent if invisible structure but as aleatory or encounter-driven truths.<sup>21</sup> Now the above is a generalization entirely allied to contingency and exactly to that measure, the *conjuncture of Machiavelli* and the truth it gives rise to is contingent. When it is said that Machiavelli overemphasised the equation of power with the state and in fact *blocked* the new games and routes of power in his own times, the validity of this observation must be received with the provision that there is no empirical saturation of historical possibilities with Machiavelli’s prescription(s) of ‘new’ truths<sup>22</sup>. What is of fundamental ontological interest, however, is that these universalizable contingencies of thought we called “new truths” mark the void-space, or the ‘nothing’ of history where Machiavelli’s solitude trembles *generically*. Which means, this trembling is not before an object of *eros* or terror but is itself the immanent object and activity topologizing and intensifying the void-space. Let it be said that this invocation of void-space is not a geometrical or figural fantasy; the entire force of Machiavelli’s *isolated* ideas comes at the threshold of a lost empirical opportunity. And if Cesare Borgia had actually accomplished the *fact* of a new state, none of this would be needed and at the price of such isolation!<sup>23</sup> The ‘trembling’ that seizes Machiavelli’s ir-relevant thought is a trembling of all such thresholds that subtract the last actualisable predicate-shelter from history or any other material universe – and yet don’t nullify the actuality of the subtractive movement itself. In this sense, Machiavelli’s isolation is not a remote or an austere one;



it is an *ongoing* subtraction of predicates excruciatingly close to the imminence of a historical subject but insofar as it is a relentless subtraction and isolation, no such subject is empirically thinkable *yet*. All images of trembling cleave to this narrow threshold across a great abyss and the non-figurable image (an oxymoron again!) of a “generic” trembling concerns the intensity of the new that opens up an abyss within the frantic density of political species and individuals.

### LITURGY-ICON-IDOL-NUMBER: TO MAKE THE SERIES TREMBLE

In the example from *The Prince* discussed earlier, Machiavelli was seen to induce a minimal debt in the ‘people’ – enough to sustain and reproduce the constitutional principality. It is interesting to note here that Machiavelli’s prescription, which is potentially liturgical in the sense we gave to the term in our first study, had an echo in his treatment of the military subject in relation to the civil government. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli doesn’t merely praise the thinking of the military exigency in the defence of the republic, he also *includes* the soldier in the economy of debt and popularity. His logic is crystalline: the soldier must not only be paid as a contracted professional or *client*, he must be *liturgically* funded by the government for his upkeep and maintenance.<sup>24</sup> He must be subjectivated as a public citizen so as to be induced into the economy of the liturgical debt which he will pay through public devotion and service to the republic. This *Greek* recommendation – and not Roman, which entailed the contract client relation – was entirely in the direction of a contemporary exigency (in the 16<sup>th</sup> century), an exigency that was as *erotic* as it was political.

What does it mean to say “erotic” in the above? It means something simple – the military subject or the soldier must be induced as subject to and a subject of love as much as subject to and of debt. Ideally, the two are the same. While being so simple an argument, it is attended to by a strange reversal and confusion of terminology. In the Machiavellian moment or conjuncture, the entire Christian burden of the congregational presence to liturgical

transcendence is sought to be shed in favour of the limited and exigent 'Greek' recommendation. But is it possible to accept this idealized leap back in simple and good faith? The difficulty is that while in the Greek case (of 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian democracy before Christ) there were clear-cut external parameters of spatial public inclusion and exclusion – concerning the position of slaves, foreigners, women, etc., vis-à-vis citizens in the approximate topology of caste and outcaste – the 'modern' instance had *already* been populated with a *global* and *spiritual* congregation for which the parameters had been Christianized and delocalized. This last assertion we tested on the sites cleared by Marie-José Mondzain's work and so it seems, to reach into the heart of the Machiavellian problem of secular liturgy we need to cut a diagonal passage across those very sites studied earlier with the following questions in mind: to these sites, what forms of love correspond, which types of passion support these forms and what are the constitutions of the bodies that experience these passions? And, does love mitigate debt or does it exacerbate the latter? Of course these questions are inexhaustible and all we will do here is give some schematic indications for their investigations.

## Liturgy

In the *Christian* sense, liturgy is a ritual programme or code for sacramental love. Such an intensity is predicated on the particular precinct whose transformation into the attribute of "sacred" (*hagion*) takes place during the Eucharist in the thickness of the congregation and in the subtlety of Real Presence, simultaneously. In other words, sacramental love is felt by a particular congregation but under the non-localizable power of an *effectuated* divinity. However what is *felt* is also effectuated in the particular instance of its happening. So the ideal construction would be that the effectuation of love is indeed simultaneous with the production of the ritual effect. But the so-called effect of Real Presence is a dogma! And this is where the theo-logic of the sacramental unity of particularity and universality, localization of intensity and the non-localizable power of God (*Theos*), is put to a crisis of the *event*.

We saw, in the first study, how in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the liturgical and allegorical explanations of Bishop Amalarius of Metz also allowed for an explanation of the intense surge of “love” felt by the Catholic congregation of that period.<sup>25</sup> However we further saw how this event of a “surge” was harshly evaluated by Amalarius’ judges, Agobard and Florus. The issues were, at least, two here: one was of course the empirical intensity of a collective affect called “love” for God which flowed into a belief-gesture and finally crystallized in institutional subscription as it were; but the second issue was more ontological in that it concerned the very opposition of a *phenomenological* localization of love and the *donation* of love from an inscrutable and non-localizable source, which made all love into an infinite and unpayable debt.

This was at stake in the controversy surrounding Amalarius and it could also be said that the phenomenological position was occupied by kind of corporeal subject whose eventative confrontation or encounter was with what the Stoics called an “incorporeal transformation”.<sup>26</sup> Liturgical love describes nothing but such an incorporeal transformation under certain ritual conditions and codes, whose secular logic was a logic of *theatre* (as Honorius Augustodunensis delineated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>27</sup> But there is an essential difficulty, a torsion, an ‘inconsistent trembling’ in the above formulation – which was surely felt in the exposed bodies of the alleged heretics such as Amalarius: how can a transformation be encoded in the light of the event of the encounter, when the event-ness consists, or rather, in-consists, in the *surprise* of the code and the crisis of the authority? All the evidence of the judges’ reactions, apart from their terrible violence, also vouches for the surprise of the event. But we must also understand that there is no absolute prohibition of the event either. In fact, the thought of such prohibition is equally inconsistent because the legal, theo-logical or theo-cratic structure can only consistently apply to transgressions that are coded in advance or anticipated by the codes of exception.

In the Byzantine situation, this torsion is experienced most acutely as much in the element of politics as in that of *eros*. As we saw earlier, a volatile combination of the two invests the power of the icon in Byzantium. The iconoclasts of that period (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>

centuries A.D.) raged against the *love* of icons (*icono-philia*) on the paradoxical grounds of a particularistic liturgical love – whose own global logic or rationality was the theology of the sacrament. For the iconoclasts, the event or ‘miracle’ of God’s love had *already* take place in the very Word and now could only be commemorated in the sacred precinct of the Eucharistic ritual.<sup>28</sup> So love was not so much a phenomenological danger, whose facticity and empirical incidence the human subject carried as a structure of finitude *and* the possibility of inconsistent surprise, as a sovereign code in itself effectuated in the *subjection* of the congregation to the power of the sacred (*hagion*). In this liturgical justification by the iconoclasts, the Eucharist possessed the status of the *exceptional* ritual. So all its generalized power was justified on the grounds of the *direct* power of the miracle of the particular ritual (Eucharist) with its theatrical – to that extent, phenomenological and mimetic – support (exemplified in what Andre Grabar calls “*décor*”).<sup>29</sup> The name of the miracle is “transubstantiation” and its ‘erotic’ content is indeed, affirmed by the iconoclasts. What is the index for that content in the texts of those who would destroy all icons – in *corpora* and in thought?

In the *Horos of Hieria* (754 A.D.), the specific index for the *eros* and semiosis underlying the *only*, the exceptional, consecration of the Eucharist is lodged in the “heart”. The heart receives the celebrant’s commemorative words and gestures (“This is my body...”, “This is my blood...” etc) such that they are *incorporeally transformed* into a “life-giving” commemoration of Christ’s self-sacrifice (*eucharist*).<sup>30</sup> This incorporeal transformation, however, is not the expressed content of a performative intervention, an “event”, in a general state-of-affairs, which is the Stoic idea; it is the *prescribed* and ritual effect of the theatrical commemoration of an event already taken place and its supplemental presence in the ritual structure – the presence of *grace*.<sup>31</sup> There is thus a “heart” surging with love and devotion but only on the condition that it is electively touched by grace. However the ritual power and guarantee of the elective *eros* on a generalized, congregational scale is provided by the exceptional status of the eucharist, according to the iconoclasts. Any generalization of the generalization, meaning,

the putting into the circulating “economy” (*oikonomia*) of artificial iconic production – where one material mimesis of Christ or the Virgin or the Saints essentially repeats another mimesis – of the erotic power of the liturgical exception is anathema. Indeed, the bitter, *heart-felt* division between the iconoclast and the iconophile corresponds to that between an *exceptional* love and an *economic* love which ‘circulates’. To these singular modes of love correspond particular forms of *debt*.

### Icon

There is no doubt that liturgical debt in the Christian sense is a *bloc* of debt, a major debt. In the same way that sacramental love surging in the heart in the Real Presence of the host is a bloc of love, congregational and homogenous in nature. Yet we must be careful to reiterate that it is an ‘incorporeal’ congregation rather than a simple collective body experiencing a single affect. And being incorporeal, the congregation, in the history of Catholic liturgy, also undergoes a strange *minoritization* of the liturgical debt. A granulation of the bloc of debt – and of love...

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century text by Honorius Augustodeunenis, *Gemma Animae*, we are met with reflections and judgments beyond the question of transubstantiation. If transubstantiation was centred on a ‘miraculating relation between two blocs – bodies – those of Christ’s body-blood and bread-wine, chapter 66 of the *Gemma Animae* proposed a “symbolic equivalence” between the eucharistic act of sacrifice and the practice of tithing.<sup>32</sup> Which means, there is an equivalence proposed between the debt payable directly to God expressed by the *tithe* and the ritual obligation of partaking in the sacramental bread and wine. Further exactly to the measure the *tithe* must be a ‘minor’ part of one’s wealth but *infinitely* recurrent as a tax to God from which no ‘Christian’ is exempt in this world, the eucharistic bread is broken down or re-granulated, for the massive number of communicants or congregants, as the equivalent of a *denarius*. Honorius says, “It was decided... people should offer *denari* for the offering of wheat, for which they would understand that the Lord was handed over and these denarii be given for the

use of the poor”.<sup>33</sup> *Usum Pauperum* (“poor use”) is a great theme of the period and the Franciscans as well as Benedictines, like Honorius, were writing about it – and though we will not treat that theme here, it is important to note the fragile relation between the localization of the liturgical debt in the Eucharist and the *virtual* absenting of the Body of Christ into the granulated equivalent of the *denarii* offered. The fragility consisted in the maintenance of the sacramental precincts of liturgy and the presence of the congregational ‘in-corporation’ to the precinct while rendering the heart of the precinct – the superior materiality of the Host – *productively void* in response to the demand of the numbers and their constitutive poverty, their ‘minority’. Let’s say this demand was an *erotic* one...

It is interesting that between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, between Amalarius’ condemnation and Honorius’ ‘rational recognition’ by the Church, we are already confronted with a change in the status and interpretation of the *eros*.<sup>34</sup> In the situation of Amalarius, the significance of the chasm between the subjective autonomy of the *eros* and the dogmatic authority of the Church was not simply the repression of *eros* by authority but also a dramatization of two *major* confrontational forces. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this constitutive chasm was strangely bridged by the granulation or minoritization of these forces unto the ‘voiding’ of Body of Christ. This bridging of a chasm by the void is truly catachrestic in that it takes place in tune with the extreme *inconsistency* threatened by the popular power of the Catholic ritual. The only way of managing the *direct* incorporeal ‘surge’ or *eros* testifying to the above power such that it doesn’t manifest in an outbreak of sheer *consciousness* (the premise of all phenomenology) was to provide a theatrical ‘norm’ for the ritual effect, which Honorius provided along the lines of pagan tragedy; and to forge a ‘little’ object or a minor object at the level of a mass-erotic demand, a kind of “*objet petit a*” of liturgy.<sup>35</sup> Only such a displaced object of which the *tithe* was the economic marker as it was of granulated obligation, could render consistent the exorbitant inconsistency of an erotic object fantasized on the scale of a massive congregational ‘presence’ or ‘body’.

In Nikephoros' – and Mondzain's – elaboration of a kind of 'economic' love of iconic images, the love and the debt involved do not correspond anymore to the localization of a space and object of either *eros* or consecration. No more are we captured by the ritual *return* of a sacramental presence; we are, rather, mobilised by the *process* of incarnation in which there is infinite 'emptying out' (*kenosis*) of the natural image which the artificial image (the icon) circulates both as a vehicle or mediation of God's salvational plan (*oikonomia*) and as a node of infinite attachment (*icono-phila*). Instead of the return of liturgical presence – which is, no doubt, exceptional in structure and power – the central preoccupation of the economic interpretation of icons is the *void* that hollows out the *source* of Christian *eros* and Christian debt. That source is of course the incarnation. Now, the source of incarnation can always be interpreted in at least two ways – first, that source has a pre-incarnation fullness or plenitude which is burst open by the *event* of incarnation; and second, that the source is nothing but the *economy* of the incarnation in infinite voiding (*kenosis*) and a kind of interminable *Parousia*. Again, what is at issue here is the dialectic and division between the transcendental localization of a source, or power, or capacity that both distributes an impermanent, 'popular' affect and induces as well as executes a structure of obligation and debt, and the non-localizable or 'global' (in Mondzain's terms) dispersion of the source *itself* as *eros* and as power. Unlike the 'exceptional' effectivity of liturgical logic, albeit expressed in more and more effectively 'minor' forms, the latter logic is 'economic' in that peculiar sense that it produces a work of void, a productivity of distance, an in-exhaustion of reserve *in* the very being of the source or origin.<sup>36</sup> Thus it becomes impossible to speak of an 'exceptional' source of the incarnation because the incarnal economy is an economy of that source itself as it plays out till *Parousia*.

If according to the iconophiles, it was incoherent and stupid to confine the economy to the ritual exception of the liturgy, they did enunciate a new and (hopefully!) 'consistent' name for the element of iconic love: the name was "life". What is "life", according to the iconophiles? No more, in this view, is life to be located in

breath (*pneuma*) or body, life is the same thing as history in its multiple modes of existence with the provision that it is, across the many modes, subject to the christic and incarnational work of *kenosis*, of the void. So while “life” is criss-crossed by necessarily historical, multiple and inconsistent forces, it is also a site of ever renewed configuration. Which means, in the patristic thinking around the economy which will be taken up by iconic doctrine, the configurations of life and the configuration called “life” promise to *go beyond* the complicity and impasse between the law and the exception. Or, “life” names another site of existence that doesn’t merely subject itself to the *application* of the law as norm or law as exception, an application felt in the affects of the body and the vibrations of breath. No doubt, the impulse of this movement “beyond” is to be found in Paul when the latter says that life in Christ, or “messianic” life is *already* nothing but love, even when it is historically, ‘inconsistently’ lived.<sup>37</sup> This immanent shift of perspective that makes life “love” is exactly the kenotic message of the later Byzantine icons that the iconophiles, including Nikephoros, will receive and praise.

At this point we must be reminded of the following analysis by Marie-José Mondzain: there is a certain generativity or “fertility” of life and the ‘economic’ discourse on life, the patristics onwards, that transfigures and “puts into abeyance” the lawful framework on norm and exception but *doesn’t escape it*.<sup>38</sup> So, the life of Pauline love is a historical life existentially involved with the ‘problems’ of such an existence; only it is able to display a “prudence” beyond its circumstances which allows it to recognize and adapt to a *continuous* exceptionality or inconsistency instead of only deciding on the discrete exception.<sup>39</sup> And extending Mondzain’s analysis to a re-statement on Paul, we can say that “love” is one of the economic names for this experience of *consistent inconsistency* that must be distinguished from the corporeal name of “passion” and the incorporeal “surge” felt by the liturgical congregation – though it doesn’t have to materially exclude either. All we are saying, following Mondzain, is that “economic love” must be conceptually and *ontologically* differentiated from liturgical as well as idolatrous love.



## Idol

It can be said with sufficient, if oblique, reason that the paradigm of the love of the idol is the love of the king, the idol-king. But it must be said, in the same breath, that the entire campaign of Christian power is to overcome idolatry, both at the levels of divinity as well as sovereignty. In that way, the iconoclast as much as the iconophile, the liturgical ideologue as well as the economic thinker of the Patristic to Byzantine periods, were fighting the terrible fascination of idols. But why should such an intense investment be made vis-à-vis the apparent *dead* appearance of the idol, its sheer muteness of existence? So it must be hypothesized that the iconophile as well as the iconoclast didn't encounter a dead being in the idol; they encountered a life, though strangely in-mixed with death, that passed over the veil of the idol. They saw it *tremble with passion*....

But this passion nearly always presents itself as a situation of danger, aberration, falsehood; it is the constitutive *negative* of both iconoclastic as well as iconophilic thinking. There were (are?) manifest shapes of the negative, the Jew, the Greek, the barbarian as such, but the main diagnosis of danger was that with these "negatives", the body saturates the field of the *eros* with its substance and attributes, its forms and predicates, its encounters and affects with no ontological remainder – a remainder that Paul's epistle to the Philippians inaugurated with God's 'emptying out' (*kenosis*) of himself as an invisible image in to the *least* visible body, that of the slave (*doulos*).<sup>40</sup> On the iconoclastic side this corporate saturation of idolatrous passion travestied, to the greatest degree, the indirect *sign* of Real Presence, the indexical gesture highly codified yet only abyssally connected with the incorporeal effect of the ritual. On both sides, it was as if the hermeneutic will of Christian power to *make meaning* of worldly, historical life so as to re-invest and re-circulate that meaning *as* power, was face-to-face with a body which trembled with passionate life but *with no image*.<sup>41</sup>

From the point-of-view of economic thinking espoused by the iconophile, without-image meant without-debt. Of course the debt understood here is not marked by the liturgical-monetary

tax-obligation of the *tithe* but corresponds to an image-credit. The image-credit circulates as the kenotic work of the invisible image in the specific circuits of artificial images, that is, icons. The erotic saturation of the idol, however, is not based either on the granulated and displaced ('minor') relation of liturgical debt nor on the continuous receipt and circulation of credit in the iconic economy. The real combined objection of the iconophiles and iconoclasts to the lover of idols is not so much that she is subject to superstitious capture by an inert block of stone but that the fascinating body of the idol which is stupefied by its lifeless matter and yet trembles with inconsolable passion, is a *waste* of investible life. Such a life is left too non-relational, too absolute in its upsurge of demand and satisfaction ... Ah, were it available for *conversion* to obligation and power which could be put into perpetual and global *circulation!* But the unavailability of this conversional, 'economic' access doesn't leave the idolater with the iconophile's (and the iconoclasts' in short, the *Christian's*) wistful regret; no, the idolater becomes, at exactly the moment of political and symbolic failure, the object of *hate*, of "destructive rage" (Mondzain).<sup>42</sup> And of colonial conquest.

This is not the place for such an elaboration but it can be materially and conceptually demonstrated how colonialism proceeded, and proceeds, on the forked ways(s) of violent repetition of anti-idolatrous rage as well as a kind of erotic conquest of idols through slow, subtle and long-drawn "conversions". Let it be crystal clear: this is not the logic or process of conversion of one religion to another or one form of worship to another; it is an *ontological* conversion attempted on the incommensurable grounds of *eros* and the economy, of what Georges Bataille called "pure expenditure" (exemplified in eroticism laughter, festival etc.) and the circulation of debt.<sup>43</sup> Again, it must not be mistakenly thought that the above is a comparison and contest between two actual positivities, one belonging to the coloniser, and the other to the colonized – even if such positivities cross over from local forms of action to total ways of life. The point of the demonstration lies elsewhere: the idolatrous impasse of the otherwise extraordinarily patient iconic doctrine – from which an unforeseen rage and hate arise – is that

the idol is both the opaque, fixed, lifeless 'one' without the *work* of void being able to hollow it out to a *unit of utility* as well as the ungovernable and hallucinatory *swarm* that means the opaque surface trembles and vibrates with *uncountable* subject-effects, 'peoples'.<sup>44</sup> This is the impasse internal to the doctrine itself and its global, colonizing logic – and *not* an ethnological or vitalist opposition of one 'people' and another. Exactly from this modulated perspective, we must hear Mondzain when she asks, "who.. is an idolator? It is always another, or more particularly, the people... Idolaters are neither emperors nor patriarchs. But the faithful, the believers, the credulous, the superstitious, these are the idolaters, a feverish mass, inspired and subjugated at the same time, who do not have ears for the too-subtle doctrines of the incarnation and consubstantiality. The idolaters are all those who bend the knee, who prostrate themselves [*proskynesis*], who worship, who touch and sway to the point of ecstasy. They have seen the icons cry, have seen them bleed, have seen them kill.... They spend time with icons and contemplate them, eyes brimming with tears... They are all there in their thousands...."<sup>45</sup>

## Number

No one knew better than Jules Michelet, when inaugurating the historiography of the French Revolution, how Louis Capet provided the paradigm of the idol-king who saturates the subject-people in a dense fusional structure of political *eros*.<sup>46</sup> But Michelet's force of history-writing was a singular force of the recapitulation of the *de-colonisation* of this *eros* and *voiding* of the structure. There are grounds for noting the lack of sufficient notice taken of Michelet's diagnosis of a *colonial* impasse in French history to which the Revolution responds with a 'willed event' which is not simply the numerical replacement of the one king with the many people. Moreover, what has been frequently identified as Michelet's subjective 'passion' reflects the *torsion* between the impassibility of the impasse and the novelty of the formal revolutionary will to *another* sovereignty. In Michelet, this torsion hollows out the surface of language to fill it with the new signifiers of Revolutionary

history. But, even with the progressive enrichment of Michelet's 'full' signifiers the discourse never ceases to repeat the torsion and re-hollow language unto its originary void. So philosophically speaking, everything depends on the status of the void vis-à-vis its hitherto sacred theological position and the singularity of the event vis-à-vis the general deadlock between absolutist and popular sovereignties.

The philosophical investigation of the above problems will be carried out in the following section based on Michelet and related documents. But here it is required to clarify the colonial infrastructure of the so-called 'event' of revolution. Its subjective side is vividly foregrounded when Michelet essentially tells the reader that even on the eve of the Revolution, *an infant people loved the idol-king*.<sup>47</sup> However, this is a deceptive utterance at the very level of Michelet's own enunciation. Though Michelet writes with stellar imagination of the constitution of the "infant-people" of France – indeed a perpetual infant-star in the sky of 'peoples' – the idol-king is no fetishized, rigid construction at all, he is historically and terrestrially constituted as a locus of power's exercise *and* embodies the stellar sovereignty of God and Christ.<sup>48</sup> That is the duplicity of the colonial structure: while the 'people' are consigned to a form of infancy even below the threshold of liturgical subjectification – or just about at that 'minor' threshold with the *tithe* being obligatory before the Revolution – the king is 'economically' invested and circulated by a symbolic power far more wide-ranging than the localized presence of the idol. Yet the king will extract the *enjoyment of the fetish* as a magical sovereign, an idol in the erotic, 'loving' presence of his people. At this critical juncture of extraction and impasse, Michelet forces from the flux of history a startling transformation, an *event* of 'de-colonization'. In fact in his great narrative of the Revolution 1789 onwards, Michelet writes of the becoming-adult of the people. But what does "becoming-adult" mean in this context? Strangely, it means, the people, from its presentation as a feverish mass and idolatrous materiality, became a *numerical* materiality, an event of Number.<sup>49</sup>

Now, we must be careful not to confuse this so-called 'becoming' with what has been earlier called "incorporeal transformation"

which befalls bodies and congregations in the liturgical mode. No doubt, in the further balance and modification of historical forms and forces, a kind of ‘secular liturgy’ – a Machiavellian horizon – will be an object of the Revolution’s social search. But at this stage of indicating Michelet’s diagnostics, we must emphasise the question of becoming-adult as becoming-Number, as a question of *torsion*. Pending the mathematical clarification of this signifier in the next section, let us at least understand “*torsion*” to be a topological threshold where the stability and repeatability of the iconic function are unhinged. Even the millennial infinity of iconocratic power, with all its liturgical obverse and idolatrous negative, is interrupted. Hence “*torsion*” too brings up the question of the “*void*” but without its sacred, economic support anymore. And Michelet’s diagnosis, which is as much an affirmation of *eros* in history, is that this de-sacralized void is not simply an absence or caesura in a kind of succession-function of symbolic power but a new occasion for what Alain Badiou would call an “evental nomination”.<sup>50</sup> That evental nomination is Number and it presents a historical *materiality* that Revolutionary France between 1789 and 1793, till before the Terror, would struggle to rationalise and *constitute* as a political form, whether destined to be called Nation or Republic.<sup>51</sup>

This is the extraordinary singularity of Michelet’s diagnostic sequence in the narrative of the Revolution (not to be found in Tocqueville): that which is to be constituted *already exists*; and what exists has not always existed, its evental provenance is that of an *existence-to-come*.<sup>52</sup> What has been termed “*eros*” and symptomatically fused with the negativity of a “*people*” as if presented in *delirium*, in the revolutionary conjuncture, according to Michelet, demands an ontological emancipation, health and truth. *And* that demand is, through and through, indiscernible from an *eros* of what Michelet calls, “justice”.<sup>53</sup> This modality is particularly significant because in Michelet’s emancipatory narrative, justice is emancipated from the erstwhile theological “grace” – which exactly corresponds to an emancipation of “people” from the supernumerary number of God’s and the King’s condescension, from the sovereign One. This is, indeed, the *trembling* formulation

Michelet can be gifted with vis-à-vis a “people” who are, as yet, not the alternative constitution of the One sovereign, hence are non-sovereign, and are not also the delirious and symptomatic negativity of the global-colonial structure of ‘economic’ Christian power: at this trembling instant, this non-relating *topos* of a torsion, the “people” are an *indiscernible* existence – for which existence, *eros* and Number are two eventual nominations.

The historical and ontological lineaments of the above existence we will lay out as we go along in this study, but it is a particular irony with regard to Michelet’s extraction of the event of existence during the French Revolution in relation to the opposition of justice and grace that must be pointed out. Let’s say it is a mathematical irony: the thought of “grace” has fertilized many a contemporary philosophy of the event on the basis of its supernumerary ontology. It has been as if Paul’s declaration of God’s unaccounted for gift (of grace) has released and dispersed all inherited debt of humankind. Such grace is, indeed, not countable in the balance-sheet of sequential and ordered magnitudes (of receipts and payments, let’s say). It comes from a super-numerary elsewhere, from One with whose inscrutable measure you can’t scrutinize or count the ‘entries’ of the world. Or conversely, the measure of worldly debt can’t measure the supernumerary ‘event’ of grace. But it has to be admitted that the real force of thinking the event in the light of Pauline grace issues from the *forgiveness* that such grace is supposed to bring in an economy of conflictual affects<sup>54</sup> or from a kind of messianic “fulfillment” through the revocation of an intra-mundane calculus.<sup>55</sup> Much of Marie-José Mondzain’s contribution is towards a Byzantine translation and transmutation of the mystery of supernumerary grace to the productive enigma of the ‘economic’ void that *works* in the world. According to Mondzain, the ‘economy’ doesn’t correspond to a theological structure that is actualized as sovereign, liturgical power and is constitutively supplemented by grace which, by now, has become the alibi for the *exceptional* decision beyond justice from being the gift of clemency. Or, is the alibi and the gift, fundamentally, the same? This is Michelet’s guiding question to the materials of Revolutionary history – and it is fertilized by the intuition that

Christian (Pauline) theologemes, whether political or economic, of “grace” and “void”, already prescribe a *subject* of history, a sovereign, whose ontological validation and political legitimation are both drawn from these theological *axioms*: the axiom of the void, the axiom of grace. The mathematical irony of Michelet’s diagnosis is that from the point of view of mathematics, the above are *not* true axioms. They have the appearance of being pure (Pauline) declarations but it can be shown that they enjoy a logical internal connection or derivability (which axioms must not).

It can be shown that the work of void in the economic sphere up to Parousia is always the *proof* of a subject of life before and at the end of Time (eschatological subject) whose ontological supplementation is pre-given and prescribed. In other words, grace is not an unexpected event at all but the supplemental *repetition* of the only event always already declared – the event of Jesus Christ. So unless a second event happens and is declared – the second coming or fulfillment as Parousia – the course of the world, that is, history, is condemned to a pseudo-mathematics of infinite – and sacred! – repetition.

Michelet speaks on behalf of an intervention in this logic of repetition – and in that effort, he documents a mass of anonymous declarations that, he says, are declarations of “justice” as opposed to the violence of grace. Everything that will follow in the next part of the study will try to find the ‘numerical’ concept for this ‘mass’ and its anonymous voice(s) – without the concept of number becoming a substitute – and sovereign – nomination of the subject of history. An initial *axiomatic* pronouncement on our part in this project is that the subject of history, which is One, is *not*, even if the one-name of the subject is the “void”. So the investigation to follow from this axiom would concern: a) What is the ontology of the void that doesn’t suture itself to a ‘sacred’ subject, whether of theology or history? b) How then does such an ontology function in the only other meaning of history, history as a site of torsion or the topology of events? c) How are events transmitted, under what rational-mathematical and poetic conditions of signification, without the metaphysical support of a *consistent* subject? What

void-names are invented for events? d) In sum, how to *count* events, how to receive their *trembling*?

## COUNTING AND TREMBLING DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION - ELEMENTS OF A HISTORICAL MULTIPLICITY

### Introduction: Adunation

Let's begin with a somewhat unfamiliar word used by the greatly influential logician and pamphleteer of the French Revolution, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, Abbe Sieyési In 1789, Abbe Sieyès proposed the term “adunation” to the Constituent Assembly to convey a kind of statistical project of nation-building. This was a project meant to construct a system of common references for Revolutionary France in objective and quantitative terms, a system not dissimilar to the ‘political arithmetic’ of someone like William Petty who urged the uniformity of “measure, weights and numbers” for the whole of England.<sup>56</sup> Yet there was something peculiar about Sieyès’ ‘adunative’ proposal. While data with respect to the population, the incidence and distribution of births, marriages, death, etc., therein, was being collected in the age of Louis XIV – and one could say there were specific statistical ‘styles’ prevalent in Germany and England too in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – Sieyès seemed to be speaking from *another* place and level of pre-supposition. So, what is this peculiar locus of enunciation?

To Sieyès, “adunation” did not mean the collection or aggregation of data originally dispersed all over the existent provinces of the Old Regime. Such provinces were too haphazard in their distribution, unequal in size, population, abundance of natural resources; even their formal unity secured by the feudal thread running through them, in actuality, betrayed striking disparities of seignuerial practices and relations. Of course the king was meant to unify the regime but this symbolic function was increasingly being weakened by fiscal and administrative crises in the time Sieyès was campaigning. But *even if* these disparities and heterogeneities could



be statistically regulated and reduced by a process of arithmetical standardization, or the imposition of standard ‘measures, weights, numbers’ on the French provinces, the demand of Sieyès’ adunative project would still not be sufficiently met.

“Adunation”, then, did not mean the arithmetical homogenization of qualitative and contingent differences of political, economic, geographical phenomena that encompassed the monarchical realm; rather, it meant the index and blueprint of a kind of statistical, mathematical and existential *sharing* of the nation, nay, Nation which was *already* pre-supposed, understood and declared to be One and Indivisible. But at this point, consider the following paradox: how can one think in any meaningful way the existential sharing of a reality which *does not yet exist*? Because in the year 1789, that is precisely the revolutionary commitment – the commitment to something that does not quite exist yet. One could also say, this is the paradox of the ‘municipal’ existentialism of this period. And it is at the municipal level that the Constituent Assembly attempts to mitigate the statistical and organizational paradox, or knot, that France’s historical existence, at this point, is tied up in.

To this end, the municipal unit sought to be operationalized was the “department” as different from the provinces of the Old Regime. The departments would be of equal size unlike the provinces and would consist of prefectures and sub-prefectures. The operational principle was that a person could travel to the prefecture within a day and from a sub-prefecture she could even come back the same day. One extreme municipal and revolutionary ‘vision’ at this time was the ideal physical partition of France into equal squares mapped by latitude and longitude. This idealization, however fantastic (and fanatic), did reveal the *axiomatic* pre-supposition of Sieyès’ idea of the nation: the nation, which was One and Indivisible, was also strangely a composition of ideal and equal ‘ones’. Now compare this situation of discourse with another of Sieyès’ acute formulations in 1789: “The nation is the people assembled”.<sup>57</sup> Which means, the people in this formulation, are not to be considered either as a congregation (of which religious liturgical assembly was a standing model) or as a

multitude (of which the ideas associated, from at least Machiavelli to D'Alembert, were those of dispersion and danger). Rather, the people, in the above axiomatic, were distinguished by the supreme – and sovereign – attribute of being 'counted-as-one' without being any sort of corporation or body or 'entity'. Sieyès' adunative project, which sought to operationalise new statistical and administrative units, which is to say new forms of corporations, new 'ones' called "departments" etc., pre-supposed that a non-corporate reality called "people" already existed counted for one. However, *this* was precisely the knot or paradox mentioned above. And the difficulty presented itself in a historical and a structural dimension.

First the historical dimension: in George Lefebvre's great study and unfolding of the French Revolution, he relates the event of a particularly *municipal* revolution starting from 1789. According to Lefebvre, the event was a municipal articulation towards *direct democracy*. So, people in the provinces and districts (units chosen for election of deputies to the Estate General) wanted to *be present to the new nation* so as to disarticulate the older forms of centralization of which the king was the most visible talisman.<sup>58</sup> But this subjective demand for absolute, direct and localized presence to the axiomatic of national sovereignty was *also* a demand not to be counted as a local corporate entity in the earlier fashion of the estates. And therein enters the structural dimension of the paradox, or knot, being discussed: how to count a non-corporate reality – and by what measure? What form of being to assign to an absolutely localized existence which refuses to present itself as a 'local' body, an 'entity'?

And yet ... When Sieyès proposes the principle of adunation and in another place, announces that the nation is the people assembled, it is exactly that – an announcement, a historico-axiomatic declaration of modern political ontology with, if we may call it that, a 'mathematical unconscious'. And if the unconscious, to follow Freud's teaching, surfaces in its displacements and disavowals, then the mathematical unconscious of the political discourse of the Revolution was encountered at the flickering conjuncture when the enunciative apparatus of *bringing into existence* a new political reality (Nation as "people assembled")

was simultaneously disavowed into the pre-supposition that such a reality (the new nation) was *already* existent. Consequently, the fundamental task of an investigation such as this is to invent and forge tools of a kind of archaeology of these disavowals. Of course the possibility of such a structure and history of disavowal is predicated on the mathematical property of an axiom that is *declared* in the mode of a decision and not proven in the form of a deduction, inference or theorem. So the historically specified question is, does Sieyès' adunative, statistical and 'counting' project for the Constituent Assembly acknowledge the precarious nature of its axiomatic decision(s) or does it attempt to bury the courage and risk of the declaration in the mute depths of pre-supposed existence?

### Counting

However, to the specific question of history there is no exhaustive and proper historical answer. Any such answer would itself presuppose a saturated reflection of the ontological movement of "coming into existence" by a kind of transparency of historical consciousness and intentionality embodied in the leaders and protagonists of the Revolution, whether Sieyès or the several others. But what the structural aporia of the logic of adunation indicates is the exigent insertion of that labour and passion we call the "new" in the *gap* between the intentionality of the historical actors and the blurred forms of actual historical existence. Let's take two situations of the "new" from the first half of 1789 and both connected with the person of Abbe Sieyès. First, his text from January 1789, **What is the third estate?** Then the issue of re-naming the Constituent Assembly as *National* Assembly with Sieyès' proposal at the centre of the debate...

If Sieyès can ask the fundamental question he did in January 1789 – "What is the third estate?" – and he can hypothesise the existence of the third estate *itself*, it is in the wake of a series of moves made in 1788 from different quarters to historically and numerically rectify the relation of the third estate with the two others. This rectification is attempted on the question of *voting* in

the Estates General. Hitherto the estates voted as single units or corporations and each – the clergy, nobility and the third estate – had one vote. Thus, on issues of both feudal and clerical privileges, whether they related to tax-exemptions or such impositions as the *tithe* (among other things) it was a foregone conclusion that the clergy and the nobility would vote on one side and against the third estate which had to bear the enormity of the fiscal burden at hand.<sup>59</sup>

Now, in 1788, when the king called a meeting of the Estates General to be held the following year, the first one after 1614, it was not for reasons of correctional or egalitarian justice. The finances of Louis XVI were in doldrums and his minister of the exchequer Jacques Necker knew that it was impossible to fiscally sustain the nobiliary privileges any further. And thus he responded with tactical and vigilant approval to the third estate's demand for a doubling of its vote and additionally, counting by heads on crucial matters in the Estates General; because that was the only way to defeat the motions for continuing exemptions and privileges. The demand of the third estate was of course articulated along the self-evident justification of its large numbers (over 98% of the total population) *and* the material deprivation of its condition. On this point, let's open a short parenthesis with regard to some protocols and stakes of the historiography of the French Revolution.

It was in the 1970s that François Furet, in several studies including his most influential work **Interpreting the French Revolution**, diagnosed a kind of Jacobin 'fallacy' in the dominant history-writing around the Revolution which was history-writing on the Left.<sup>60</sup> The singular source of this fallacy, according to Furet, was the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century writer Jules Michelet and its approximate shape was the following: led by Michelet's magnificent and ambiguous 'Jacobin' passion, historians of the Left had mistakenly identified the material *state* of a part of the population – that is the deprivations of the sans-coulotte – with the rational *cause* of the revolutionary 'act' of 1789. And in this fallacious schema of reasoning, the leaders of the Revolution provided the ideal mirror of reflection whereupon the lucidity of the cause yielded its corresponding passion, imperative and organization that

made revolutionary action possible. Clearly Furet's criticism was the diagnosis of a proto-Leninism in the discourse of this type of history-writing. Without involving oneself too much in the densities of this contestation – and there are several chapters to it – let us take a brief look at the modalities of the source mentioned above, that is, of Michelet's narrative singularity and the 'bent' arrow it becomes when aimed at the heart of the revolutionary *present*.

No doubt Michelet's account lends a double imagery to the fluid presences of 1789 – a 'passive' imagery of popular destitution, hunger and expropriation on a massive scale and a strangely active one which presents these very conditions of existence and their 'mass' as *gesture*.<sup>61</sup> One could hazard naming this gesture. "the revolt of Number". What are the phenomena dramatized by Michelet that this name seeks to capture? Well, this seems the place to make a preliminary numerical observation: in the passive type of imagery, the statistical support comes, from a citation of *numbers* – numbers relating to poverty, famine, people imprisoned in the Bastille before July 1789 in a certain form and order that could be called "sequential". Unlike "numbers" which are *counted* in sequence, that is, one after another, Number, to roughly paraphrase Alain Badiou's superb thesis, presents itself as a *subtractive gesture of Being*.<sup>62</sup> This can be illustrated from Michelet's narrative, though the example is only a random citation from the historical multiplicity we are studying.

Michelet recounts the date 5<sup>th</sup> October 1789 when eight to ten thousand women led a large crowd to Versailles to fetch the king to Paris. Why? Because the king must live with his people who haven't enough bread to feed their children. The king must live among those who *love* him, the people, that is. And so Michelet writes, it is this love and *hunger* that galvanise the people towards Versailles where the king is secured. Further, it is the women who *materialize* this combination of forces more than the men whose subjectivities are still oriented to the militant event of the storming of the Bastille. At this point, Michelet writes these most vivid, most enigmatic lines, "... What is most *people* in the people, I mean most instinctive and inspired, is assuredly the women. Their idea was this: 'Bread is wanting, let us go and fetch the king; they will

take care, if he be with us, that bread be wanting no longer. Let us go and fetch the *baker*”.<sup>63</sup> No doubt it takes the historian to add the acid of *enunciation* to the other ferocious but mute forces of history. And it is with the event of this enunciation, that an ‘infant-people’ who were merely the idolatrous lovers of the king hitherto, produced this same love as a torn gesture from their own fabric of being, their immanence. The ontological name we hazarded earlier for this gesture is Number. Thus, women who led the crowd to Versailles, and who bring the king to Paris are indeed counted as persons and bodies, peoples and sexes, individuals and genera but they also are “most *people* in the people”, meaning, they are the *event* of a people in the set called “people” who can be counted in several ways or as several sub-sets. The ontological as well as operational enigma that Michelet’s singular narration presents us with is indeed, how to count an event?

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, in their doctrine of the multitude, have powerfully recognized the above problem but preferred a kind of ‘chaosmic’ solution attuned to contemporary Spinozisms, or should one say, Deleuzisms.<sup>64</sup> To them, the event of a people is a chaosmic singularity, i.e., a chaosmos of ontological possibilities such as love, poverty, revolution, subjectivised by the praiseworthy name “multitude”. What the name expresses is a splendid if miraculous transmutation and metamorphosis of number (in their sequential, counted unity) into subject of possibility, into enactment. Its leap of faith, hope and love, why not, takes it to an ontological and political region where the field of possibilities is ‘tendentially’ maximized and saturated. The contemporary region is global capitalism but in its own time, the French Revolution in the discourse of history and political philosophy did claim a similar maximization beyond its local ‘gestures.’ However, it seems to us, the local premise of the global multitudinarian thesis is unable to cross the threshold from numbers to Number. It would subjectivise Michelet’s women too quickly in the direction of a chaosmic ‘force’ or potentiality – hence the common identification of Michelet’s Jacobinism – and its enthusiasm would spring from the hopes of a maximal *actualization* of this potential which is *already* inscribed in the

ontological field of politics. Strangely, this enthusiasm which, in the revolutionary conjuncture, must be nothing if not enthusiasm for “the new”, itself prevents anything unforeseeably new from taking place. And thus in this hypothetical argument over how to interpret a certain historical text and its situation the very fecundity of Jules Michelet’s source of historiographical passion might be at stake. To retain the passion of the situation, if not to save its ‘truth’, let us take another path, the path of Number as gesture.

The proposition for this other movement is the following: unlike the counting (and counted) sequential numbers which present themselves in specific cardinalities at specific crossroads – so the cardinal figure of eight to ten thousand for women going to Versailles – Number, as a gesture torn from the fabric of Being, is a *swarm*.<sup>65</sup> What does this mean? In a simple way, it means that unlike the single chain or order of numbers, which can be an ascension, descent, accumulation, subtraction, etc, taken as a “swarm”, numbers display a simultaneity of orders and by that property, can be capitalized into the gesture of Number. Applied to Michelet’s imagery and formulation, the “most *people*” in “people”, that is, women marching to fetch the king, does not merely convey a point of extraordinary psychological intensification or of ontological potentiality; it transmits the *actuality* of women condensing in their being the simultaneous ordering of *several* demands of existence. Each supposed generative potential, “love”, “hunger”, “revolution”, constitutes, in this thesis, an actual and non-localizable element of an emergent historical multiplicity. The women of France on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1789 tear these elements from their domestic habitats, their expected localities and re-deploy them in the tremulous hollow or void which the multiplicity *that they are* is perpetually sutured to. The economy of the above proposition on numbers and Number, the passage between them, deserves some elaboration.

In this effort, let’s recapitulate François Furet’s effective allegations of a kind of Jacobin Micheletism or Micheletesque Jacobinism colouring historiography on the Left to the detriment of the analysis of the ‘other’ French Revolution, the long and elusive one. Furet intervenes in and revises decisively what he considers to be the presumptive ‘innocence’ of those who incarnate the

Revolution as the Antigone of the new era, absolutely transparent, absolutely trustworthy.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, what is at stake in this discussion is a certain reading of the *interruptive* innocence in Michelet and a certain search for the ‘matheme’ of this interruption rather than the repetition of its consecrated image(s). It is not unknown that guided by Tocqueville, Furet de-stresses the very point of concentration and intensity that enacts the caesura between the Old and New Regimes in the year 1789. He mobilizes all the revolutionary parameters extending from economic data, political acts to religious and cultural indices against themselves to produce a *generic indiscernment* of criteria by which the Revolution can be reliably identified and evaluated. This, in essence, provides the effective force of Furet’s ‘revisionism’. And we will suggest that it is precisely the *generic* resources of this revisionism that must be re-inserted in the constitutive ‘void’ of Michelet’s discourse. Of course it is the void which demands the most urgent, most persuasive demonstration. And the poetic horizon within which this demonstration might unfold is that of a Micheletesque ‘innocence’ whose ontological name is the “void”. Which is to say, Furet’s figuration of the Revolution in Michelet as the trustworthy Antigone must be displaced from its substantive pathos to a kind of logical and indiscernible space of possibility which must be *taken up, re-commenced*. And only upon such a re-commencement will the space be filled up with a supposed subject, intentionality, project and language.

In the above sense, the innocence or transparency Furet alleges attaches to the “void” of Michelet’s theatre not its busy mise-en-scene of signifiers. And that historians on the Left, with varying degrees of accuracy and vehemence, have *repeated* the ‘filled’ signifiers, not re-commenced the void, strangely unites the so-called revisionist Furet with them, not set him apart. Now to demonstrate the void in Michelet, with admittedly a great deal of ellipsis, let us shift back to June 1789 when in the Constituent Assembly, two proposals were made – by Sieyès and Mounier – regarding the composition, status and name of the Assembly. In short, the demonstration takes as its object the very “coming-into-existence” of the Assembly, its *constitution*. It is difficult not to be



transported from crest to crest in Michelet's rhythmic narration of the *names* of this constitution: from Sieyès' rousing declaration of "the third estate" to "commune" to Mirabeau's 'flexible' "people" to the final movement from Constituent to National Assembly.... Yet it is required to modulate this undulating reception to a more interruptive tone and pitch, a response which every time *breaks* the rhythm of history and every time re-commences it. In concrete terms, it means taking up the problem of June 1789 when Sieyès emphasized that the deputies of the third estate must be known as "acknowledged representatives of the French Nation", as different from the deputies of the other orders (clergy and nobility) who could only be presumed to be so.<sup>67</sup> Sieyès was further advanced by other proponents who desired the eventual and urgent constitution of the Assembly as "General" and "Indivisible". But how was that possible with the formal composition of the Assembly still consisting of three separate orders or corporations? There was only one logical and political way out – to produce a *non-corporate* form which was constitutively indivisible: to this end, Sieyès proposed the non-corporate and interruptive name – Nation or National Assembly.

Let's pay close attention to Michelet's terms of narration: Michelet says that the proponents who were precursors to Sieyès' proposal on change of name wanted that *nothing* should separate the *declaration* of the new name ("General", then "National") from the ontological truth of the nation's indivisibility.<sup>68</sup> This was a desire *against* the void and yet this desire brings up the void in history and discourse in a razor-edged way. Now note the tremendous paradox that Mirabeau, who, according to Michelet, feared Sieyès' radicality, desired precisely another sort of repetitive adherence in history notwithstanding the Revolution, a desire against the void and for adherence, the cipher and glue of which was the king. In particular, Mirabeau campaigned for the retention of the king's veto on the Estates General, the Assembly now, thus, in effect, meant retaining the corporate and idolatrous mark of the king's haloed body on another, drastically altered non-corporate, revolutionary 'body'.

Yet Mirabeau preferred, in the penultimate rounds of discussion before voting, the “formula” for the Assembly as a forum for the Representatives of the French *People*. “People” was a flexible word whose meaning was manipulable. But the two proper motions, Mounier’s and Sieyés, that were to be voted raised the formal even mathematical, stakes of the political discourse of this period. Mounier’s motion said that the Assembly consisted of the Representatives of the *major* part of the Nation, in the absence of the minor part. Obviously the major part of the nation could be construed as the “people”, the word Mirabeau preferred. Sieyés’ motion clearly asked for the enunciation of *National* Assembly. Mounier’s arithmetical basis was that the “people” constituted the simple majority of the total members of France – an overwhelming 98% or so – and so *simply* understood, their deputies were representatives of the ‘simple major’ part of the Assembly.<sup>69</sup> So arithmetically argued, the nation was a sum of its simple parts, a class of its constituent classes, an abstract body of empirical bodies. *That* was its justice. Michelet calls this Mounier’s “unjust justness” and we will suggest that Michelet draws out here the unjust justness of a kind of arithmetical masking of the problem of political and ontological constitution. To perform this task, Michelet’s historiographic arrow bends with devious, almost “unjust” innocence.

Michelet draws the reader’s attention to the ironic fact that the arithmetically simple and negligible part of the national sum, the privileged classes, owned two-thirds of land in France and thus most of its source of wealth (in physiocratic terms, at least). This unsurprising knowledge possesses a political and mathematical surprise: Mounier’s *simple* scale according to which the parts, corporations, classes are counted next to each other has already been interrupted and indeed voided by the surreptitious smuggling in of an *inconsistency*, which means, the presumed simple and countable parts of the welcoming ‘national’ totality are inconsistently, thus complexly, *weighted*. This further implies that between the parts apparently passively subject to this ‘just’ count (of major and minor partitions), an inconsistent, ‘unjust’ *void* must

exist. Now, the void which is the ontological and mathematical name for inconsistency *in the scale of count* must not be confused with the physical image of a passive, neutral ‘empty space’ that must lie between discrete, indifferent, countable parts. In other words, while the empty space is a structural condition of *repetition*, the void is the inconsistent, interruptive and in the context we are studying, definitely violent *event* of ‘decision.’ Sieyès’ motion in the Assembly was the enunciation of such a decision.

It was a decision, neither an arithmetical nor a political demonstration, that the “people” were not a simple if major part nor the “nation” a sum of parts; rather the latter was a complex and *re-composed* articulation of a decision in response to the structural complexity indicated above and disavowed in Mounier’s proposal. The nation was a re-composed articulation beyond the schema of aggregation or collection – an ‘adunative’ decision enunciated by Sieyès. When the deputies voted in Sieyès’ proposal (with 491 in favour and 90 against) and the Assembly was proclaimed *National* Assembly, the decision that won against Mounier’s arithmetical and “unjust” *exactness* was, in set-theoretic language, a “generic” decision. Meaning, the decision wagered the imminent existence of some element, some reality, some combination of elements – that is, some sub-set – that was *indiscernible* within the contemporary order of countable, identifiable entities.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the decision to name this ‘indiscernible’ set “nation” was a new and perilous *axiomatic* declaration with the only generic attribute of being ‘new.’ And it is not a matter of negligible irony that the only way to *force* the new into the existent *dispositifs*, apparatuses, of the present was to *demonstrate* the new as an exercise of sovereignty. In the case of the Revolution and its perilous dialectic of interruption, forcing and re-composition, the demonstration was by asserting the right of taxation once the Assembly had been founded, “it existed”. According to Michelet, the assertion of this exercise was the infusion of “life” to an axiomatic constitution, its founding decision – which, according to our thesis, was a decision to suture a name, a gesture, a subject not to the void but to the ‘event’ with a *void-basis*.<sup>71</sup>

Let us open a cinematic parenthesis on the question of the void in relation to the subject's suture and its degree of ontological and topological freedom – an example from contemporary Iranian cinema to be resonated with Siey s' great wager on the people's will, their sovereignty in the January 1789 pamphlet **What is the third estate?** In Majid Majidi's film **Children of Heaven** (made in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), the young boy is relentlessly led by a single prescription issued by the terrible contingency of the situation – he must acquire a pair of shoes for his sister such that they don't have to share the same pair for school. This is a contingency which is the cause of their running late to school, their consequent anxiety and unhappiness. Then the boy discovers there is a long-distance race at school and the person *coming third* will win a pair of new shoes. This, then, is the boy's greatest will – to be *third* in the race, win the shoes and restore their lives to equanimity. And he will try as hard as he can to translate his will to the desired result. What does 'trying' mean here? It means that the boy must run hard enough to be within the first three but slow down or should one say, *turn down* enough at the critical moment when the group of first three has crystallized in the race such that he *retracts* from the fundamental numerical logic of the game – which is to be counted in the proper 'place' and according to the proper 'scale' of the set of competitors. Thus he wills a *void* at the point of crystallization so as to suture himself to that void with an explicitly, sovereignly, unjustly, innocently chosen thread of Being. This is the thread of the 'third', the existential thread of the boy's and his sister's salvation in desperate immanent retreat from the universal fabric of arithmetical, unjust justice whose other war-like synonym in the game is 'victory'. Can the boy win this retreating victory, this existential victory over the universal rule of the game but also this numerical victory of being the exact third over the *force* of existence that running or the running body is? The film simply, wisely, tenderly demonstrates he can't – his body runs ahead of his will and he comes first in the race. The film demonstrates that the subject, at the very point of his disorientation, retraction and renewed declaration of the will, can't will the void. And because the

void can't be willed, the event (of standing third in a pure filling of the void with the desired existential cardinality beyond the ordinal environment of the race) can't be willed *as one's will*.

What is the mathematical meaning of the above example? It is that while the void is constitutive of the number series or an ordinal (that is, ordered) multiplicity (whether sequential or swarming), it can't be actively – which is always immixed with passion, the *passio* or pathos – *localized*. The void structurally pre-exists the will and at the point of the emergence of the subject, in all its epic disorientation and delicate, courageous creation, this perpetual and non-localizable pre-existence must be the subtle material, the ontological fabric of its *decision*. In Majid Majidi's film, this decision is pointed at in the last scene when the boy dips his tender, wounded 'unbound' feet in water – indeed the decision has crossed the threshold of anxious and finite will, anxious because finite, and become 'unbound' from all relational capture. The *infinite* feet of a very small, very 'finite' boy... Both in Michelet's early 19<sup>th</sup> century account and Abbé Sieyès' January 1789 pamphlet **What is the third estate?** – the "people" are understood as very callow, an infant people enjoying a 'least' existence. In his pamphlet, when Sieyès starts with the famous text – What is the third estate? Nothing. What must it become? Everything – nothing announces the decision to suture the subject to the void more decisively.<sup>72</sup> Yet the void is *not* the name of the event, it is the friable, 'infantile' material of Being. In other words, the "event" of the people is not decided in the revolutionary pamphlet; but its *imminence* is prepared for with a tensile, "coming" energy.

Negri and Hardt have praised Sieyès' central tenet of "constituent power" as a multitudinarian intuition that resists the rigid constitution of "people" and "nation" as fixed names of sovereignty. Indeed Sieyès calls the history of the idea of "people" the 'history of constituent power'. All we are arguing for here is that instead of adding a third name, "multitude", let us not shirk from muddying our boots on the rough trail to the structural support of the void to the process of constitution and the indiscernible component of the event that befalls this process. So with some mud soiling it, let us still risk the rough proposition that Sieyès' doctrine of

people as constituent power is a revolutionary subjectification of what could be called a “constituent void”. And insofar as the void makes possible an order of the count and prescribes the recommencement of the count at every critical step but is itself *not counted* and doesn’t have an algebraic or a political location, the “people” as a constituent void are not counted and must never be. They are not sovereign *and* must never be! To any objection that the “people” in this thesis oscillate between the constituent power of the void and the indiscernible localization of the event, one can reply with the caveat that the suturing *decision* decides the event without personifying it in the alternative forms of theological or secular sovereignty. In this sense, the “people” do not come to occupy the same space of sovereignty as the king of the Old Regime and if they do, it is already an attenuation and retroactive personification of its drastic evental and indiscernible precision. The revolutionary and the later so-called Jacobin wills to incarnate the new in the *personae* and figures of the new – whether the new calendar or the commemorative figures of the festivals between 1790 and 1794 – were examples of resolving the historical oscillation of the new political being in favour of certain resplendent and ‘full’ signifiers. These wills willed the pacification of the *trembling* induced by the constitutive void and the domestication of the *enthusiasm* (Kant’s epochal word for the French Revolution as an intensity of pure thought)<sup>73</sup> generated by the event. And exactly to the measure that this project of the will was an executive, governmental failure, the government imposed on the “people” a state of emergency and its decision took the figural and intensive form of the Terror.

### Trembling

Before God’s inscrutable decision and command that Abraham must sacrifice his young and innocent son Issac, the father felt *trembling*. Or at least he must have – this is what Kierkegaard hypothesized about Abraham’s state on Mount Moriah and in this unrelieved, ‘trembling’ state, Abraham must decide his faith in the face of the “void” of God’s command. Modern philosophy, of which Kierkegaard was indeed a ‘trembling’ source, gives a simple and

shattering name to the void – “absurd”.<sup>74</sup> In his play *Danton’s Death*, Georg Buchner wrote an ‘absurd’ scene: in the flurry of deaths by guillotine during the Terror, well after the king had been executed in January 1793, a woman in the public witnessing another such beheading shouts out, “long live the king!” What explains the absurdity of this declaration? It’s errancy? It’s innocence? It’s terrible injustice in a time inundated by the blood demanded by an endless revolution? Paul Celan, in a lecture cited this “absurd” declaration from Buchner’s 19<sup>th</sup> century play – and Jacques Derrida has written about it in more than one place – as the *poetic* condition for revolutionary sovereignty which is not a simple structural and temporal transfer from an earlier sovereignty.<sup>75</sup> The poetic revolution of the French Revolution...

Of course it is possible to object that the woman in Buchner’s play was only a crypto-royalist unable to control herself in the heat of the moment. Even if that be the case, the *singularity*, the non-localized errancy of the utterance in a revolutionary situation must be given its poetic instance of enunciation, or rather, such an enunciation demands its errant, ‘weak’ place-holder in a *truly* revolutionary place of speech. In other words, true revolutionary sovereignty must include inconsistent, ‘absurd’, *other* instantiations. The revolutionary intensity must calm the trembling in the air not by sedating (or terrorizing) it but by affirming its *uneconomical* – thus in the sense George Bataillie gave to the word – sovereign core. Let us draw a provisional conclusion at this point: Buchner’s absurd, definitely comic, example counter-posed to our earlier structural proposition on the “void” indicates, a counter-attribute of the situation we are trying to formalize. The situation secretes an “excess”, an uneconomical and transverse movement of bodies, affects and utterances, which, nevertheless, must not be left to the expressive resources of a chaosmos. Insofar as “trembling” is an intensity of errant, inconsistent forms, it passes between the form of the void and the form of excess.

On the fundamental and inconsistent immanence of the revolutionary situation and its bloody yet strangely burlesque consequences, François Furet quotes from a letter from Friedrich Engels to Marx in which the former says the Terror was a reign of

the terrorized.<sup>76</sup> For historical logic and its ‘Jacobin’ historiographer i.e., Michelet as seen by Furet the crucial question was, how to formalize the division between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces *without* dividing the ‘true’ subject of this history, the “people”? For Furet, the problem is more ironic in the sense that the divisions of the Terror put the unity of “people” into question and further, these divisions had a denser history than the one inaugurated by Robespierre’s ‘normal’ declaration of Terror in 1794.

This is not the place to treat these issues in detail but some summary remarks are in order: first, if Furet contrasts the opacity of circumstances leading to the Terror to the transcendental transparency of Michelet’s interpretation, it is eventually to convert the sharp figure of the people-subject into something vaguer, fuzzier. Furet calls this converted milieu “democratic sociability”, formed during the Revolution with its constituent societies, clubs, media, groups, groupuscules – an array of socio-historical variables (of which the Jacobin tendency was one) that “implodes” into the decision of the Terror.<sup>77</sup> So on the one hand, the Terror ‘decides’ the undecidable and precarious event in the direction of revolutionary virtue (subjective condition of the militant of the event) and terror (the objective name of the event declared in 1794); on the other, this mode of decision returns the variability of the temporal sequences, their enigmatic ‘swarmings’ without cardinal discernment into the number and figure of the subject of history, to the binary and obsessive distribution of *personae* – revolutionary and counter – revolutionary, people and enemy of the people, humanity and the criminal against humanity.

Second remark: in Furet’s analyses and schematizations, the Terror was also an *abstraction* from the actual history of ‘mixtures’ between 1789 and 1794. What was the composition of these mixtures? Well, two leading ingredients seemed to be the older corporate exercise of power and privilege *and* the new, vaguer form of a kind of ‘mass-politics’ wherein the idea of “mass” couldn’t be equated with the corporate form (whether that be the clergy, nobility, even the corporate presence of the king, etc.). Yet out of the theological core of the older corporations – a core in which



the theology of divine grace and the terror of sovereign *exercise* of power were indistinguishable – and the political constitution of the new “mass” – which was a locus, or *topos*, of strategy and passion – the horizon of a ‘modern’ style of trembling was composed. We could say this was the horizon of the “state” whose Hobbesian *theory* intended it to be a space of eternal and economical trembling but whose historical experience between 1789 and 1794 revealed it to be a staccato and unstable rhyme of various emergencies. And so it is not surprising that at least in theory, Joseph de Maistre, avid polemicist against the Revolution, admired the Jacobin readiness to shed uneconomical amounts of blood for the sake of a mysterious economy – the economy of theological authority whose permanent mystery was further demonstrated by the ‘abstract’ blood of the Terror, according to Maistre.<sup>78</sup> However, according to Michelet, the *alleged* Jacobin, the trembling of the Revolution was born of its concrete enthusiasm, its feverish *eros*, not its abstract Terror. But how does this testimony relate to our argument on the functioning of the constitutive void in Michelet’s discourse and that joins him with Sieyès?

We think Michelet conveys an essential materialist truth in his historical narration: in the situation of trembling, the void functions as a non-localizable and tremulous ontological condition but the trembling itself accrues to *bodies*. And so in January 1789, when Sieyès put out his influential pamphlet, the infant body of the people was both trying to get itself counted according to some *representative* scale and (in the pamphlet) staking a super-numerary ‘national’ (adunative?) claim. Between July 1789, when Bastille was stormed, and October 1789, when the king was forced back to Paris, the people were an *improvisation*, a gestural actuality whose numerical name we have given “swarm” and whose *complex* order had already breached the historical condition of infancy. This movement Michelet narrates with a kind of partisan accuracy. In the episode of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October, he presents to the reader two trembling bodies, but this time removed from the popular stage – the king and the queen. Strangely, this pathetic drama of corporate destitution is transmitted by Michelet into an account of popular and ambiguous *eros*.

On the one hand, it is true that in Michelet's scenario, the royal couple are trembling before the hungry and volatile crowd. *On the other*, when the same crowd sees and hears the queen's young son, the dauphin, cry out "Mamma, I am hungry" they gasp for tenderness at the sight of royal, innocent, *infantile* hunger – Michelet writes of this instantaneous communication of incorporeal intensities, this shared affect of hunger between classes otherwise separated by the abysses of history, "Hunger passes from people to the king!"<sup>79</sup> This, Michelet writes at this point and into the next chapter, is the ideal conjuncture of pardon, of popular clemency. It is the subjective emergence of an unbound and generous horizon which, indeed includes both the people and king on the same plane. Here the king is as if 'liberated' from his own court, its artifice, its false images, automata and lifeless statues, to be restored to his 'natural' body. Thus from trembling, the king is delivered to the *eros* of the people – such is the subjective horizon painted with a exuberant brush by Michelet. When the people, in this period, want to free themselves from the church's imposition of the traditional *tithes*, they seek to unbind themselves from the infinite debt of religious inheritance. Through a similar act of forcing a *defaulting* on inherited debt, only in the reverse direction of the king, the people would force the king to default on his own "artificial" sovereignty to restore him to natural, forgiving, loving life.<sup>80</sup> In other words, the people, in Michelet's impassioned plea, in the first year of the Revolution were "full of magnanimity, clemency and forgiveness". Their *will* is a will to unconditional forgetting, a lifting of what the ancient Greeks called "stasis" (civil strife)<sup>81</sup> once and for all ... will to revolutionary *void* to which a new, emancipated society could be sutured. Of course everything Michelet, and the historians after him will write of the developments following this idealized conjuncture confronts us again with our earlier ontological thesis: the will can't will the *place* of the void, it can't will the event in its own image as will, the will can only *decide* the event as an indiscernible effectivity... In this confrontation, the "people" fantasized as a great count of the One – and in that exact sense of fantasy, Sovereign – are 'forced' to turn towards and face the trembling reality of what we will call "historical multiplicities".

## WHAT IS A “HISTORICAL MULTIPLICITY”? A CONCLUDING NOTE ON TORSION

A historical multiplicity, being a multiplicity, is not One. What is the ‘*historical*’ dimension of this general definition? It is, negatively put, not a historical *period*. What is a “period” in history? It is a bloc of repetition within an empty temporal schema. The content and intensity of reflection gives the schema a certain density but the very structure of repetition gives this density a homogenous presumption despite enormous differences of coloration and texture between historical periods. The generalized form and name of this presumption is “subject”. So, for example, in the first half of 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., we see the insertion of Christianity in the Roman Empire as a ‘countable’ element in the open totality that the Empire was. Once countable and historically designated, Christianity also became the specific *subject* of history, whose amplitude increased from the scale of the West to world-history. Thus Paul Veyne could write a book recently with as simple and provocative a title as *When Our World Became Christian: 312-394*.<sup>82</sup> Here the “becoming-Christian” of the “world” is not an isolated question of either religious conversion or political change but the befalling of a ‘new’ and ‘true’ subject of history. The *befalling* and the *constituting* divide the terrain of history into the *torsion* between *that* which periodises and the repetitive closure of the period. Pending the meaning we give to the mathematical idea of “torsion”, let’s call “historical multiplicity” as that which periodises as different from the unity (one-count) of the period.

In the appendix of his book, Paul Veyne uses an interesting term that would describe the nature of a historical multiplicity very well – it is a “generic plural”.<sup>83</sup> A generic plural indicates a non-localizable set of forces that effect an interruption of repetitive, even rhythmic sequences – the case of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity in all its non-localizable pragmatics, its multiple durations of actualization in history for which the date 312 A.D. marks a *subtle* index – and must be distinguished from the predicative unity of a historical period with its sovereign subject – the case of a *Christian* Roman Empire as a period of ancient history

and after. The mathematical concept of “torsion” corresponds to this process and distinction and helps formalize it to an extent but before we explicate that notion, let’s outline the stakes of such “generic” philosophies of history in relation to those who oppose them.

Joseph de Maistre poured counter-revolutionary vitriol on the ‘generic’ philosophy of the Revolution.<sup>84</sup> He carried out at least three polemical operations against this philosophy: first, Maistre refused any credence to generic humanity; hence, according to him, the Declaration of the Rights of Man was a document based on a false premise of generic Man. Second, he shot down the claims to a French republic on the grounds that no cohesive republican *body* (*res publica*) could correspond to the largeness of the ‘number’ of France (whether expressed as population, number of provinces, the number of representatives of the people, etc.); in this he mocked the use of the (adunative) word “nation” as a mystification of the real impasse of representation. Third, and crucially, Maistre *insisted* on an alternative philosophy of history as *war* enacted in the numbers killing and the numbers killed, encoded in a kind of economy of blood; thus his main concern was not the impossible emancipation from bloodshed but the constant quantity of bloodshed which must not flow too much more, shouldn’t exceed the economy. Consonant with these unsparing operations, Joseph de Maistre laid down the prescription of the counter-revolutionary and sovereignist Right in the discourse of Revolutionary historiography. It was that the axiomatic declaration of sovereignty, a declaration intrinsic to the nature of an axiom, must never pretend it can issue from a void in history. History is only the repetitive series of pre-existences (thus the Rights of Man was only a specific *polemic* against already existing rights with no real change of substance) and no real interruption, no *event* occurs in this schema (neither the Revolution nor the Thermidor were real events for Maistre). Indeed there is a generic depth (or height) to the world and to life – but that *originary* place of mystery – in that sense, a void – was beyond any intra-historical declaration, however inventive and courageous. In this way, Joseph de Maistre opposed the glacial transcendence of sovereignty (of

which the most lucid embodiment was always the one king, not the multitudinous and “childish” people) to the immanence of historical multiplicity. This was also the paradigmatic prescription against *torsion* in history.

The mathematical notion of torsion involves a series where an element, let's call it  $x$ , is repeated a certain number of times, let's say  $n$  times, upon which the value of  $x+x+x+\dots x$  ( $n^{\text{th}}$  place) is equal to 0, or  $nx=0$ .<sup>85</sup> A group, series or multiplicity with such a place of interruption, disappearance or voiding may be called a “torsion group”. Now it must be remembered that there is no code or algorithm or programme by which this void-point (the  $n^{\text{th}}$  place) can be anticipated or calculated. Its befalling is its ‘event-quality’ and as a formal place or location, it is strictly indiscernible. In other words, a torsion group (call it  $T$ ) is similar to any repetitive or rhythmic sequence (call it  $S$ ) with the ‘indiscernible’ difference that there comes an interruptive, ‘non-relating’ whole number ( $n$ ) when the repetition disappears into an abyss, the accumulating value meets with the caesura of null-quantity, or in set-theoretic terms, the empty set. So in this abyssal but determined sense, between  $S$  and  $T$ , there is *nothing*.<sup>86</sup>

What consequences does this simplified meaning of torsion have for historical multiplicities? Well, the first consequence is paradoxical in that the event of disappearance is also the event of *excess* over the designated place of repetition, which upon torsion, has been voided. Only from the perspective of such an excess can the punctual failure of value at the torsion-place be thought of as *lack*. And from the anxiety of lack, the excess is viewed as a wandering, nomadic, almost anarchic search for a *singular* place. Why singular? Because the place in question doesn't *follow* from the last place of the economy of repetition or it is not the *next* place. And precisely for the reason of this non-localizability, the interrogation of this singular place becomes all the more historically razor-edged: which would be the next step from the interruptive, periodising and dividing (non) place of torsion, the step to the next. new period of history? And *who* takes that purely prescriptive, purely unprogrammable decision of the “next step”? Thus we are confronted with the second historical-ontological

consequence of the mathematical concept – it pertains to the status of the *subject* of history. If the form of the subject doesn't pre-exist the periodising torsion and is the locus of stabilisation and crystallisation that renders a historical period accessible to *nomination* (“Christian”, “French”, “Popular”, “Elite”, “Subaltern”... “Revolutionary”, etc.), then the periodising and abyssal ‘step’ is not the subject's. Let's formulate the anonymity of the step with two ciphers: The step is any-one's. And any-one is the one first to pass by the (non) place of torsion. One among the countless winds to pass through the void and yet the ‘first’ wind to *commit* to the void; in that sense, not the one which insists in and repeats the place of identity but the singular one, the *one* one. A brief illustration from Michelet: In July 1789 on the brink of insurrection in Paris, there was formed a kind of “citizen-police” which was meant to be a permanent committee to watch over public order. The general consensus was that this committee would comprise the electors – which of course implied that the deputies on the Constituent Assembly would mainly perform this task. A man, during these discussions, steps forward, “why electors alone?” He is asked, “Why, whom would you have named? “Myself”. The man is appointed to the committee by acclamation.<sup>87</sup> According to the ontological schema we have drawn out, with its tremulous boundaries and abyssal neighbourhood and the perturbation of that schema by what we have called “historical multiplicity” or *event* of torsion, the declaration of “myself” is made by any-one. Thus *any-one-whomsoever*, exactly equal to the *one* one who says “myself”, is acclaimed, appointed.

## NOTES

1. See Gregory Elliot's Introduction to Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London, New York: Verso, 1999) pp. XIV-XV.
2. *Ibid.*, p. XV.
3. The ‘common’ horizon on Machiavelli seems to be that for the author, “politics” is given, it exists. Whether the definition of politics is fabricated militarily (as Engels said it was) or more along the lines, of a theory of the State, etc., is a subsequent question upon the assumption of the existence of politics. However, with certain interpreters, the effort was more towards

the tracing of the *travail* of the ‘coming-into-existence’ of politics in Machiavelli. Claude Lefort was one such interpreter much admired by Althusser. Quentin Skinner remains a magisterial and essential reference. Of course, these are samples from the modern 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> century corpus of Machiavelli literature (from Marx-Engels passing through Gramsci to Negri is one line, among others). A whole discussion on the effect of Machiavelli on the generation following him is possible, which is postponed for the moment. Gregory Elliot’s introduction to Althusser’s book brings up the modern references. See *ibid.*, pp. XI-XXII.

4. Slavoj Žižek has written, with extraordinary pertinence, on the libidinal support-system of the “symptom” in the effort to bind desire and give it a repetitive structure of fantasy. But he has also shown, drawing from Jacques Lacan’s seminars in mid-1970s (the Joyce seminar and associated writings), how the repetitive stability of the symptomal ‘enjoyment’ is internally loosened up, and particularly un-bound by slippage, within the symptom, towards ungovernable signifiers. This marks the slippage from “symptom” to the *sinthome*. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Puducherry, New Delhi: Navayana Publishing, 2008) pp. 55-84 Also his book *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (London: Routledge, 1992).
5. See the concluding essay “Machiavelli’s Solitude” in Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, pp. 115-130 for the background of this 1977 lecture (here presented as an essay) and Althusser’s pupil Emmanuel Terray’s comments on it, see Elliot’s Introduction.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
7. This oppositional point and its force has been powerfully brought out in a recent unpublished dissertation by Animesh Shukla, *Kant and the Political*, dissertation submitted to the Centre for Political Studies in School of Social Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2011, pp. 99-109.
8. See, Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, p. 27
9. See Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* trans. George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1999) pp. 32-34. The section is called “Constitutional Principality”.
10. For the basis of the distinction between Polybius’ *tyche* in the cyclical careers of ‘mixed’ constitutions and Machiavelli’s “important” thought of the event as encounter, Polybius’ doctrine needs to be put on record (as Negri does in another context). See Ernest Barker (trans.), *From Alexander to Constantine: Passages and Documents Illustrating the History of Social and Political Ideas* – 336 B.C. – A.D. 337 Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, pp. 103-123. Also Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, p. XVI.
11. See Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, pp. XII-XIII.
12. See Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 33. The line reads, “[Moreover], a prince can never make himself safe against a hostile people: there are too many of them”.
13. “[Again], a prince must always live with the same people, but he can well

- do without the nobles, since he can make and unmake them every day, increasing and lowering their standing at will". See, *ibid.*, p. 33.
14. "The people are more honest in their intentions than the nobles are, because the latter want to oppress the people, whereas they want only not to be oppressed." *Ibid.*, p. 33.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
  16. For the numerical concept and image of "swarm" as proffered by Alain Badiou, See note 72, Passage-I: Liturgy-Icon-Idol-Number.
  17. Here we must note Antonio Negri's and Michael Hardt's distinction between the transcendental apparatus of sovereignty and the "revolutionary" immanent forces of Renaissance political thinking to which Machiavelli provides a singular outpost. See Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2000) pp. 63-66.
  18. This distribution of 'symptoms' in the ensuing Machiavellian field could also be considered a distribution between symptoms of 'power' organizing a discourse on 'policy' to which a political calculation (of strategy and tactics) corresponds and symptoms of 'force' releasing a discourse of insurrection to which corresponds a politics of the 'event' (whose thought in Machiavelli is "impotent" , says Althusser). [Note.10]. Interestingly, both discourses pertain to perspectives on the model of politics as *war*.
  19. See Appendix "Machiavelli's Solitude" in Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, pp. 119-121.
  20. *Ibid.*, p.122.
  21. *Ibid.*, p.125.
  22. In his 1977-78 lectures at College De France, Michel Foucault spoke, at some length, on the *The Prince* and its author as a condensed "point of repulsion" for texts and authors on, what Foucault calls, "government" between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This relationship as a general anti-Machiavellianism (between *The Prince* and texts on "government") is fascinating and indispensable. In Foucault's presentation, the premise of Machiavelli's "abominable" text is that it is about the securing of the Prince's sovereignty in the face of "danger". That is the symptom "politics" as accepted by Foucault and as different, if not opposed, to the multiple 'government of things' wherein 'things' are not inert, passive objects of sovereign exercise of power but lines of force, vectors of modification and folds of 'economic' management. So, the presentation here is not primarily of the 'figure' of the sovereign, the Prince, but of immanent 'relations' that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Quesnay will bring into the orbit of 'economic government' as different from the transcendental prescriptions of sovereignty. See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France 1977-78*, trans. Graham Burchell (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 87-114.
  23. See Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, p. 19. For the general background of Cesare Borgia's rise to power and Machiavelli's ambiguous heroizing of



- Borgia, see Anthony Grafton's introduction to Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. XV-XXXI.
24. Apart from his liturgical insinuations against the mercenary and the client-forms vis-à-vis the efficient and patriotic soldier, Machiavelli's own attempt, with the committee called Nine, to set up a militia of citizen-soldiers to defend Florence in 1512 A.D (a terribly failed attempt) must be noted. See Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. XX. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli raises the point of the patriotic soldier as opposed to the mercenary several times – this he does, “liturgically” (in our terms), in the context of the Roman army's “disposition” (Machiavelli's word) under the consuls and during the rule of the Decimvirate. The “disposition” Machiavelli prescribes is liturgical in the sense that it must, in the soldier, subjectively correspond to the prescribed military-social-secular (in Machiavelli's time) *objective capacity* for “glory”. Fighting for glory, rather than the mercenary's pay, disposes the soldier to “love” (Machiavelli's word) the person or land or republic he is fighting for, of which he becomes, the “partisan”. See Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, ed. Bernard Crick (London: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 218.
25. The word used by Amalarius, *sensum* or “feeling”, conveys a feeling of the event (of Christ's historical sacrifice) conjured in the congregation such that the feeling (*sensum*) is the event, or surge, of “love” among the congregants. Now according to Amalarius' explanatory schema, this surge or ‘pouring forth’ of “Christian love” among the people had a mimetic basis (“likeness”) and it testified to the “true heart” of the congregation. This was exactly one of the key points of his accusers' (and judges') condemnation – the precedence of Holy Spirit from where Christian “love” or “Charity” comes, over the mere humanity of the “heart”. Already there is a division over the stakes of an ‘immanent’ force of “love” that seizes the heart and that of an inscrutable, super-numerary force of the Holy Spirit. This is the division between a ‘theatrical’ possibility of the *impossible* intensity of the love of Christ as a performative effectuation and the theological *promise* of a greater, transcendental arrival (to-come) exemplified in the ‘miracle’ (of trans-substantiation) and its ritual repetition. See Donnalee Dox, “The Eyes of the Body and the Veil of Faith”, *Theatre Journal* 56 (2004), 29-45, Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 34-36. We must make an additional terminological clarification that when the word *eros* is used here, it is done so in a general way to convey a kind of ‘outbreak’ or ‘conversion’ of a subject's *direction of life* towards an ‘object’ constitutively unverified, problematical, ‘impossible’. Otherwise, in specific liturgical and iconographical contexts, the words *agape* and *philia* have crucial hermeneutic significance.
26. For the Stoic meaning of “incorporeal transformation” as brought out in Gilles Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* (also deployed with extraordinary facility by Deleuze and Felix Guattari), See note 17, *Study-I: Liturgical Origins of Sovereignty*.

27. See Donnalee Dox, *op.cit.*, pp. 40-44.
28. Here the sacred precinct or holy space must be referred to the Greek word *hagion* instead of the 'economic' (non-consecrated) word *hieron*. See Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* trans. Rico Franses (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001) pp. 120-121.
29. For Mondzain's interpretation of Grabar's "décor," *ibid.*, p.139.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.
31. For Mondzain's powerful and subtle reservations on Ernst Kantorowicz's thesis on the progressive substitution of mimesis by grace – governed by the binarism of *phusis/kharis* or *natural/gratia* – and her emphasis on the *economic* work of incarnation instead of the simple resort to God's power as grace (without denying its supplemental centrality) which the economy in any case, gathers as its central 'void' or *kenosis*, see *ibid.*, pp. 89-92.
32. See Donnalee Dox, *op.cit.*, p. 42.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 42
34. Donnalee Dox's above-cited article, which puts to use important samples from the literature on liturgy and Christian theatre, demonstrates the epistemological 'normalization' of theatre in Christian history by the time of Honorius. It can be said that correlative to that of theatre runs the 'normalization' of the popular *eros* of the Catholic liturgy. Insofar as *eros* is only an indexical name for the fuzzy idea of the "event", this movement is the insertion of the fuzzy, unprogrammable 'event-people' feared by Amalarius' accusers to a 'theatre-people' 'rationally' recognized and theorized by Honorius.
35. While we are not following through Lacan's teaching here, it might still be of interest to note that according to this teaching, the *objet petit a* is a displaced object standing not merely for an original lost object of drive and desire but more fundamentally, *for the loss itself as an objet*. At that level, we are confronted with not so much the subject's erotic demand for a perpetually lost object as with the objective existence of the demand as a granulated embodiment in the *objet a*, the 'little' *perverse* object – the *denarii* in Honorius text – that condenses all the surplus enjoyment of sovereignty or mastery at whose heart lies the void, the loss of Christ's (the master's) body. See Slavoj Žižek, "Object a in Social Links" in *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII*, ed. Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp.107-128.
36. The philosophical vanguard for this thinking around what has been called "saturated phenomena" and the donation of "God without Being", is led by Jean-Luc Marion whose own debt to Emmanuel Levinas is unmistakable. In Marion, we find a great liturgical enthusiasm which responds to the gestural communion of the Eucharist and its effect of "super abundance", of a 'surplus enjoyment' beyond the semantic and ontological resources of

the so-called Word. The vanguard comprises others like J. Courtine, Michel Henry and it opens up a phenomenological horizon for theology which is elusive and in-apparent. For a paradigmatic text see Jean Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. T. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

37. For love's "magnanimous" inconsistent saturation of a historical life under the messianic sign, read the following part of the hymn in Corinthians 13:4-7 (as quoted by Giorgio Agamben in support of his messianic thesis): "Love is magnanimous; it acts kindly. Love does not envy; love does not boast; it does not become haughty. It does not behave improperly; it does not seek its own; it is not provoked; it does not keep a record of evil. It does not rejoice over injustice, but it rejoices with the truth. It covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 128-129.
38. See Marie-José Mondzain, op. cit., pp. 47-49.
39. Ibid., p. 48.
40. See note 17, *Passage-I: Liturgy-Icon-Idol-Number*.
41. See Marie- José Mondzain, op. cit., p.178.
42. Ibid., p. 179.
43. No doubt this is a skeptical interpretation, not so much of Bataille's 'sovereign' proposal as of his concrete historical examples – among which is also the sacrifice of Jesus Christ – which are nearly all recuperable as debt-in-circulation of the global economy. In the essay concerned, Bataille employs the term "minor" for how "conscious humanity" straitjackets itself only to productive expenditure – beyond which lies the true sovereign experience of *pure loss*. We have used the same term "minor" in our argument, though with a somewhat different accent and with a paradoxical import, See Georges Bataille, "The notion of expenditure" in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) pp. 116-129.
44. This statement anticipates much of the labour and purpose of the sections to follow. It indicates the to-be attempted correlation between the mathematical thesis on an infinite simultaneity of infinities which precludes any ordinal or successive definition of infinity as a final totality – which is a thesis on the "swarm" – and the simultaneous and 'inconsistent' description of the 'people' in political contexts.
45. See Marie-José Mondzain, op. cit., p.179.
46. Read these crystalline enunciations from the early part of Jules Michelet's historiography of the Revolution – 'I hear this exclamation escape from the bosom of ancient France – a tender expression of intense love: "O my king!" or "This love for royalty during the earlier days of Louis XIV, and Colbert, was idolatry" See Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution* trans.

- Charles Cocks, ed. Gordon Wright (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967) pp. 41-42.
47. The entire development of the preface and introductory sections of Michelet's work takes place around the several phenomenon of popular "infancy" in relation to the apparent immemorial presence of Christian Grace and Royal Sovereignty. What we see dramatized is, however, the historical newness, the 'inconsistent' erotic wagers of the infant-phenomena that lead to the Revolution (Michelet says that to begin with, the Revolution loved *everything*, including its enemies, as opposed to the paradoxical consistency of Grace selecting only the Royal immemorial for its sovereign choice). See, *ibid.*, pp. 3-40
  48. The term "terrestrial life" is used by the pamphleteer François Richer in 1766 to express the object of preservation for which societal constraints are constituted in history that limit the otherwise "natural" liberty of men. While Christianity might still be the formal basis of sovereignty before 1789, in Richer we already find a recognition of terrestrial, coercive and a somewhat Hobbesian covenant of sovereignty wherein "natural" liberty is alienated irrespective of theocratic doctrine. What is interesting here is the *oscillation of inconsistency* whereby terrestrial power is inconsistent with Christian God, and the Christian Church – "corps of travelers on earth" en route to "an other country", according to Richer – is inconsistent with the stakes of "terrestrial life". See Soumyabrata Choudhury, "Why the People to come will not, and must not be Sovereign: Notes on a Mathematical and Political Puzzle", in *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol.13, Issue 3/4 July-October 2009, p. 359.
  49. This assertion begs the demonstration from within Michelet's text which we will undertake in the pages to follow. But it is important to point to the ontological disjunction between a kind of organismic materiality or 'nature' of the people understood as a *mass* – which is a dynamic and physical bloc of movement and intensity – and the 'natural' organization of Number understood as a *multiplicity* with an order of the progressive count (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.) or a succession function. However, this 'natural' being of numerical multiplicity is only possible because Number *already* exists as an immemorial of infinite infinities, a "swarm". In politics, this relation of 'natural' and 'infinite' ontology of Number is effectuated as a *new* immemorial of the people as "event" torn from the subject-mass of an infant-people.
  50. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 101.
  51. The Terror, indeed, is transmitted as an evental nomination, of which Robespierre and Saint-Just are two subjects of declaration – and it has the decisive role of ending the inaugural sequence of the Revolution (1789-1794) and rendering it 'infinite' for which the Thermidor to follow would

provide the 'iconic' counterpoint. How so? The Thermidor would institute the void-name of "people" at the heart of a repeatable, iconic form which was, and still is, the French Nation. Now the void-name would play the 'prudent' role of supplying a kind of finite though continuous content for a national and republican form. While the eventual wager was, and always will be, contingent, somewhat illegible, a kind of anonymous nomination.... Which also shows that there, in view of the wager, exists no intensity of the decision on the event. All intensities – splendor, glory or terror – are retroactive results of the eventual nomination and decision, even when one of the *names declared* is "Terror".

52. Michelet, in the preface to his book, imagines the birth of Revolution – its coming-into-existence – not as the simple crystallization of a new "self" which will stake its rights in the egoistic statement "I am!" as the threshold between infancy and adulthood but as an existence-to-come. This is clear when Michelet says that when the new Liberty declared from her cradle "I am!", she exclaimed further to address "all nations, o my brethren, you shall be also". See Jules Michelet, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.
53. One of the negative indexes for the demand indiscernible from the *eros* of justice in Michelet is the index of a Christian liability, an inherited transmission of unjust debt. However, the remarkable affirmative side of justice comes out in Michelet, on myriad occasions, as the *joy of defaulting*. The evidence of this will be provided in the next section(s).
54. Such a forgiveness both historically inherits and is homologous to the 'events' of forgetting and clemency that solicit a kind of stasiological history of ancient Greece and Rome – *stasis* being the Greek term for civil conflict or war. On the one hand, such forgiveness, clemency, forgetting, indeed, burst open circuits of debt and obligation, burden and contestation; on the other, the question persists whether the *memory* of such contestation doesn't stick to the site of the purported events with a sort of unconscious remainder of ir-reconciliation or trauma. Nicole Loraux brings out this fundamental equivocation in the site of Greek democracy towards the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and its epochal or eventative effort to utterly *forget* not just the immediate tyrannical past but also its very litigious, stasiological *present*. See Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens* trans. (New York: Zone Books, 2006).
55. In support of his extraordinary thesis on *messianic as the revocation of every vocation*, Giorgio Agamben cites the following from Corinthian.7:29-32: "But this I say, brethren, time contracted itself, the rest is, that even those having wives may be as not [*hos me*] having, and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, and those buying as not possessing, and those using the world as not using it up. For passing away is the figure of this world. But I wish you to be without care." See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 23.
56. For "adunation" and the context of statistical history in this period, see

- Alain Desrosieres, *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning*, trans. Camille Naish (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 16-66.
57. For Bailly's statement, "The assembled nation cannot receive orders" in relation to the king's power to command the estate in June 1789 along with Sieyès' declaration to the third estate, "You are today what you were yesterday," See Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From its Origins to 1793*, trans. Elizabeth Moss Evanson (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 110.
  58. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.
  59. *Ibid.*, p. 98-111. On the question of *tithes* and their eventual abolition, see Jules Michelet. *op. cit.*, pp. 249-50.
  60. See François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
  61. We can summarize our impressions of Michelet's mobilization of numbers in the paradoxical formulation that they are historically generated but they have a 'natural' appearance. This formulation will be substantiated as we proceed but this much must be said here that the 'natural' being of numbers is their *ordinal* character. That is, they present themselves as relations, networked and ontologically *woven* rather than simply as cardinal quantities or units. Also see note 49.
  62. For this conclusive thesis and the entire range of philosophical and mathematical inspiration that underlies it, see Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, p. 211.
  63. See Jules Michelet, *op. cit.*, p. 282.
  64. Among their trilogy on the *potentia* of the multitude – *Empire, Multitude, Commonwealth* – let us refer to the first for its inauguration of the debate, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *op. cit.*, (see note 17).
  65. In Alain Badiou's view, as swarm, Number displays its *infinite* extension albeit that extension is also orderly. While as sequential progression, each number comes "step-by-step" such that *we* recognize them in their assigned place. But that counting also involves the structural and ontological complication of the "void". See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, p. 30, p.141.
  66. In his 'revisionist' evaluation, Furet counterposes the early 20<sup>th</sup> century sociologist Augustin Cochin to the Historian from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Michelet, and analyses the paradoxical similarities between the two. See Furet, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-203.
  67. See Jules Michelet, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
  68. "Two deputies [M. Legrand and M. Garland] were precursors to Sieyès. M. Legrand proposed that the Assembly should constitute itself a *General Assembly* and allow itself to be stopped by nothing that might separate from the *indivisibility of a National Assembly*". *Ibid.*, p. 111.
  69. *Ibid.*, p. 113

70. For the narrative material of the above analysis see Michelet, op. cit., pp.108-121; for the idea of indiscernible and generic sets, see Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. Bruno Bosteels, (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 271-274.
71. “The Assembly was founded; it existed; it lacked but strength, the certainty of living. It secured this by asserting the right of taxation... It adopted openly the question of honour, the public debt, and guaranteed it”, Jules Michelet, op. cit., p. 117. On the ontological formulation of suture to the void, it must be admitted, as it was earlier in this investigation, that the void is on the side of Being, not the Subject. If the Subject is a decision, it is a decision on the event, for which the void is a constituent and non-localizable condition and not the semantic content or synonym.
72. See E.J Sieyès (1899), *What is the Third Estate?* In *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*. Vol.6, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (first published 1789)
73. The word “enthusiasm” that Kant uses in *The Conflict of Faculties* for what the thought of the Revolution evokes, occurs in Michelet frequently. For the latter, enthusiasm is not just a subjective experience of the Kantian “spectator”, it is equally the objective ‘milieu’ of the Revolution. See Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of Faculties*, trans. M. J. Gregor (New York: Arabis Books, 1979).
74. Apart from in the Old Testament contexts, “fear and trembling” also accompanies St. Paul’s message. But these are not accidental affects in Paul; rather they are the *generic* Pauline intensities that announce the event of Christ. Kierkegaard is not away from this generic logic when he joins the pure decision of faith to the sense-less, ‘absurd’ command of God. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, trans and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna N. Hong (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) pp. 34-37
75. Among other sources, see Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutirot and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006)
76. See Furet, op. cit., pp. 128-129.
77. Ibid., p. 38.
78. Joseph de Maistre’s several responses and polemics against the French Revolution are contained in Joseph de Maistre *Considerations on France* trans. and ed. Richard A. Lebrun (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) .
79. See Michelet, op. cit., p. 313.
80. On the *tithes* and defaulting on the heirs of the old regime, see *ibid.*, pp. 249-50.
81. See note 54 above .
82. See Paul Veyne, *When Our World Become Christian: 312-394*, trans. Janet Lloyd, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

83. Ibid., p. 158-159, Veyne suggests the term “generic plural” for how the Hebrew word *elohim* is used in Old Testament contexts – both as a singular and a plural.
84. For the following arguments and polemics, see, among others, the essays “On the Violent Destruction of the Human Species” and “Can the French Republic Last?” by Maistre. See de Maistre, op. cit., pp. 23-40.
85. Several questions of method and ontology are involved in this exploration: there is the initial question of the productivity as well as hazard of the encounter between mathematics as knowledge and the serial descriptions of history. Also, the ontological question of mathematics as a possible science of the Real, or as the reprise of the event. This much can be proffered here that the algebraic idea of “torsion”, which presents the aleatory, non-programmed interruption of the series, apart from holding metaphoric attractions, also realizes the gesture of language or discourse in its improvisational capacity to precipitate a limit-signifier: Torsion is such a signifier whether extracted from mathematics or historical analysis – and in its adherence to these fields, it divides them, hollows them. Strangely then, the limit-signifier is also always a signifier ‘in the middle’, a partitive gesture of discourse. So torsion doesn’t only convey a marginal or great crack, cut in the fabric and field of being we are concerned with but it also raises anew the epochal questions of new coherences or restored totalities. The locus of the French Revolution that we are following and which goes by the ‘canonical’ distribution between “revolution”, “counter-revolution” is nothing but the topology of these epochal questions. In its algebraic opening, torsion helps formalize a certain tendential movement towards topology from algebra, which replicates, in our terms, the movement from historical ‘period’ to the ‘periodising’ event. See Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, pp. 148-153.
86. Let us summarize three of the main features of torsion based on Alain Badiou’s text cited above: 1) Torsion interrupts repetition 2) When and if torsion is surpassed, the partial sums will return with the possibility of another presentation of the torsion-elements. So, if  $nx=0$ , then  $nx+x=0+x=x$  and  $nx+2x=nx+x+x$  and finally  $nx+nx=0+0=0$ . Axiomatic theory of torsion groups is not presentable in first order logic. Which means, unlike in torsion-free groups, that are sometimes called “straight” groups where no element apart from zero is subject to torsion. Torsion groups pose the problem that one doesn’t know for each number, which whole number presents its torsion. All one knows, such a number exists but in first-order logic, that is, in a logic which applies existential and universal quantifiers to the individual variables, it is impossible to localize the torsion element to an individual variable. That is, it only applies to the property ‘being a whole number’, that is, to a predicate. So, as Alain Badiou notes, the theory of torsion is in qualitative excess, according to parameters of complexity, over “theory of straightness”. The implication of this excess is that a torsion-presentation is always the presentation of an *existential singularity* rather



than of a codified universal form. This comparison can be expressed both in terms of mathematical and political “justice”: mathematical justice created from the torsion elements’ singular intervention in the schema of logical and universal repetition, i.e., in the *inheritance* of every model of the ‘straight’ theory that supports such repetition, is to be compared to the intervention of political justice in the inheritance of debt as a model of universal sovereign obligation infinitely repeated in history, an intervention at the exact and indeterminable point of the revolutionary defaulting on this inheritance. See *ibid.*, pp. 150-152.

87. See Michelet, *op. cit.*, p. 156. Who can avoid noticing the *liturgical* impact of this appointment by acclamation. Indeed, at the threshold of localization and ‘appearance’, any-one is also a subject of the ‘new congregation’ whose ontological anonymity as swarm of Number is also articulated as demand for *persona, prosopon, face*. But we must take note of the reverse nature of this demand – it is articulated, insofar as it also resists the transcendental liturgical apparatus (*dispositif*) of miracle, incarnation and grace, at the level of immanent and multiple anonymity of this so-called ‘new liturgy’. Who can equally deny the reassuring – and comprador – presence of the theological form on *both* sides of the threshold, waiting to universalize and iconise the void-basis of the singular any-one!

## PASSAGE II

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### Anonymity-Aristocracy-Singularity-Event

On 20 June, 1792, a mass of marchers stepped into the deliberations of the deputies in the National Assembly in Paris. Whereupon one marcher declared, “Legislators, we are not two thousand men, we are twenty million!”<sup>1</sup> The question which forms the starting point of our present investigation is the following: how to receive, mathematically and politically, a certain *oscillation* in the above utterance? The oscillation being, between the utterance’s claim to represent the entire population of France in that instant of the marcher’s warning and its presentation of the real of a multiple. If on the one side stands the *fantasy* of a massive and saturated presence of the French people in the figure of a number (“twenty million”), from the other side signals the mathematical and political challenge of thinking the spoken number as an *event of existence*. The fantasy of presence is supported by the following two great beams – a single, municipal and direct-democratic body which magnetizes and organizes the dispersion of a multitude, and the fantasy-number with which the operations of counting become possible, the number which doesn’t pass, the immemorial number One.

No doubt the declaration by the marcher attests to the *intensive* passage of the physically present number (“two thousand”) to the great incorporeal presence of *all* the sovereign people. But even this intensive passage is based on the ‘classical’ mathematical presupposition that we count with ‘one’ the numbers presented

by a congregation and that congregation results, out of the count, into a greater One of power, glory and sovereignty. However, this so-called classical presupposition – mathematical and political – must be interrogated on ontological grounds: do we really *know* what we are counting with or what the unit of being is in the scale of magnitudes to be counted?<sup>2</sup> The real question is of *that which doesn't pass*, that of the immemorial, in the actual or speculative passages of the count. This is the stake of a kind of *new* intervention in the classical mathematical episteme which the fantasmatic interpretation resists in the acute declaration.

How so? By the logic that the operation(s) of classical counting is constitutively inaugurated by the fantasy of the One. Which means, we count with the fantasy-number which is One rather than simply count up to a fantastic totalization of twenty million or any other cardinal result.<sup>3</sup> Such a result is only an operational vindication of the fundamental infrastructure of a sovereign fantasy whose classical mathematical image is the One. The One, then, in this construction, does not pass and secures the immemorial of sovereignty to which the new 'people' only bear *intensive*, if hyperbolic, witness. Thus in the vivid declaration, what is testified to is a great 'incorporeal transformation' or surge of affect constituting an excess, a surplus, over the resources of hitherto available forms of political representation. So before the National Assembly, the 'people' urge the *constitution* of representation such that this existential upsurge of the incorporeal congregation is thereby constituted – and placated. This expresses the demand – consistently satisfiable within a certain political and mathematical knowledge – for finding the requisite *constitutional fantasy* to correspond to the inherited sovereign numerical fantasy. The demand is, of course, at all exigent because of the historical happening of a new witness for an old – nay, immemorial – debt of sovereignty. So the second possible way to think of the twenty million as the real of a multiplicity, or multiple, entails two radical shifts of ground: first, a critical shift which is able to diagnose the appropriation of the intense witness-function by the inherited structure of debt such that the 'enthusiastic' (a misapplication of Kant's word) witness is reduced to a potential debtor<sup>4</sup>; and

second, an affirmative shift which is able to think in terms of a new immemorial. To complete the articulation of these shifts, one must note a third movement for which Jules Michelet provided the exact motto in the context of the refusal to pay *tithes*: this motto, to refuse, or to wilfully default on, one's own inheritance, expresses the necessary *void-point* between the critical caution against perpetual indebtedness and the affirmation of an 'event' that brings in its wake the prescriptions of a "new immemorial". These tasks, as formally stated now, have been unequally performed in our earlier studies. What is at issue in the present is the theoretical clearing of the idea of multiplicity as it impinges on the status of the event. Clearly, an issue of Being and the Event... Yet the obvious presence of Alain Badiou's remarkable formalizations in our intervention must not be taken for granted<sup>5</sup>. What does that mean, if it is not a sheer disavowal? For one thing, it means the obligation – and desire! – to *avow* an Outside, that plays an indispensable and hugely interesting role, to Badiou's philosophy of the event. The name of that Outside is "Deleuze".

Before getting on to the act of clearing the terrain for Badiou's (non) relation (we will explain this subtraction soon) with Gilles Deleuze to be established, a glimpse of the division of and contact between the two protagonists can be had from a further interpretation of the example from June 1792. In the incorporeal interpretation to which the effort to understand a multiple *as* a multiple was opposed, we can add a Deleuzian twist: what if the incorporeal transformation is not the simple affective basis of a renewed actualization of a 'people', an 'incorporeal congregation' as it were, but a true Dionysian *intervention* in the congregation, in the 'common' (*koinonia*)<sup>6</sup>? Which means, when the marcher declares an intensified image of number – twenty million and not two thousand – it is not a numerical hyperbole but an *ontological* declaration. In the sense that Deleuze might give to the utterance, it emerges, as an *intensive magnitude* with a certain affect of 'life' attaching to the declared number<sup>7</sup>. At this point, the extensive appearance of the number as a counted ordinal series or a cardinal result – whether two thousand or twenty million – has metamorphosed or transformed to a 'body', a scintillation of 'life',

which are *not* simply shared by a congregation of individuals. At this point, indeed, in the Deleuzist interpretation, the cipher of “Dionysus” marks not the affects of a ritual, political or libidinal body but the affect or intensity *as* a body<sup>8</sup>. It is a remarkable mathematical scintillation in that a pure, neutral, sterile number presents such an intensive, vitalist and surely, revolutionary thesis. And exactly on this point, Alain Badiou is both excruciatingly close and irreconcilably separate from Deleuze.

### A NOTE ON ALAIN BADIOU’S (NON) RELATION WITH GILLES DELEUZE

In the first line of his book on Gilles Deleuze, published after Deleuze’s death in 1996, a book evocatively titled *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, Alain Badiou writes, “What a strange story my non-relationship with Gilles Deleuze makes!”<sup>9</sup> We will not describe the anatomy of this “non-relationship” based on the procedures and arguments of Badiou’s book – and go to some other shorter articles – but one must mention a biographical lapsus which corresponds to the withdrawal or subtraction from the expected ‘relation’. Expected because the two were singularly close in their exact search for *a* philosophy – not a critique or a deconstruction but a “philosophy” whether that meant an ontology, a metaphysics or an amalgam or alchemy of both. The mention of the lapsus because irrespective of oblique and sometimes truncated correspondence, Deleuze and Badiou never debated or discussed their philosophies in the face-to-face sense of a life situation that forms the main substance of a kind of mutual biography. And yet...

And yet, along the very contour of the withdrawal and the shadowy space of the lapsus, a discourse has grown over the last decade which incessantly specifies a stake in the thinking of the “event” which is irreducible to the recognizable systems of philosophy – a stake vivifying the void of Deleuze’s and Badiou’s “non-relation”. And insofar as these systems were equally inherited codings and doctrines of *being*, the thinking of the event turned, and keeps turning, out to be an interrogation of, and displacement from ontology. It is a bracketing of, and eventually, at least a partial

defaulting on this inheritance<sup>10</sup>. No doubt, Badiou and Deleuze are the two irreducible signatures to this epochal defaulting on the tradition of western philosophy and metaphysics. Signatories to the event of defaulting! And yet exactly at this juncture of epochal identity, the two part with an insistence and near-repulsion that behoves strangers with an uncanny sense of anonymous intimacy that spells challenge and danger. This parting of ways has been recapitulated more by Badiou in his several articles (and the book) and it hinges essentially on the question of the event's relation and fracture with ontology. In Deleuze's (along with Félix Guattari) comment, the issue seems more Alain Badiou's fundamental choice of mathematics as the systematic thought of ontology – and the further implications for the sense of the event beginning with this choice. Deleuze's construction and criticism of this system we will come to in a later section but first, Badiou's axiomatic separation of his doctrine of the event from Deleuze:

Badiou in an essay “The Event in Deleuze” gives a declarative status to some of Gilles Deleuze's propositions (mostly from *The Logic of Sense*) and transmits them as “axioms” given that between the axioms there is mutual independence but no inconsistency and they are declarations without need of demonstration<sup>11</sup>. We will not examine the validity of the axioms along the lines of these properties; let us simply repeat them. According to Badiou, Deleuze's four axioms on the event are: a) unlimited becoming becomes the event; b) the event is that which has either just happened or about to happen, never happening; c) the event is neither action nor passion of the body even if it results from them; d) a life is composed of a single and the same Event, never of the variety of ‘events’ that happen to it.

The significant move made by Badiou in the essay is to give the axiomatic position to Deleuze's propositions such that it follows that from this axiomatic *system*, a set of inevitable operations and results follow. It was always Badiou's acknowledgement of Deleuze as a *systematic* master – too systematic in fact! – which regulated an equally counter-systematic response on the former's part. For Badiou, Deleuze's ‘system’, which he calls One, and thus includes in the ambit of the critique of classical ontology, yields

a consistently concentrated result as far as the position of the event is concerned. We would call this result “Stoic” and connect it up with our earlier example(s). The main features of the ‘Stoic result’ of the investigation of the event are: a) the event is *not* what happens; b) the event is, what happens *in* what happens; c) what happens in the variety of happenings that happen is the same, the One-All, the Event, now capitalized and immanently open to higher ‘compositions’ such as Life; d) but what is open *to*, is open to something transcendent, so not “pure immanence” which Event, Life and such Dionysian individuations axiomatically claim and declare in the first place.<sup>12</sup>

We won’t carry out a systematic elaboration ourselves but it can be asserted that in this above interpretation of Deleuze’s event, the *appeal* is Dionysian, the procedure and result Stoic. In our first study on liturgy, we have shown, with certain historico-philosophical sequences, how the Dionysian openness to the interruption of the ‘common’ (*koinonia*) in the site of the affect gains a liturgical-stoic horizon of civic prescription which prescribes not only social, artistic or ritual acts (with their correlative passions), but also new ‘abstract objects’ of civic production, new “incorporeal transformations”<sup>13</sup>. In the example from the French Revolution we began with in this study, it is exactly the horizon of affective, incorporeal prescriptions that is in question and yet which must *emerge* as the new of the event. We think, in Deleuze’s construction of immanence, no horizon or prescription is envisaged and openness can never be intended as openness *to* – to something exterior and transcendent. Hence, in this figuration, the so-called composition of Life doesn’t aim to evolve to a ‘higher’ power – and the Spinozan function of life’s power (*potenza*, so dear to Negri and Hardt too) increases (or diminishes) *not* according to a *law of aristocracy*<sup>14</sup>. Such an increase (or diminution), in the Spinozan-Deleuzist understanding of immanence, follows differentiated lines of *anonymity*.

However Badiou’s axiomatic criticism is based on a reversal of effect as diagnosed – which means, every *apparent* declaration on behalf of anonymous multiplicity or immanence *results* in an aristocratic prescription of the one-Name or the name which is

“One”. Strangely, on the site of the example we quoted from the archives of 1792, this was the initial “liturgical” straitjacket we were trying to break through with the force of Deleuze’s intensive ontology. We asked, impelled by that inimitable force<sup>15</sup>, what if the Dionysian surge of two thousand expressively *intensified* as Number (twenty million) opens onto an abstract localization we might tentatively – but creatively – either call Life or Body or even People... or Event?

On this precise matter of localization onto a fragile, creative ‘naming’ of anonymous individuation, Badiou’s criticism is sharp: he says that what is ontologically required is to find a thinking consistent with the specific or particular localization of the anonymous multiple; every effort to produce a greater localization in the name of the ‘abstract objects’ of infinitives, becomings, events etc., re-produces the same name (with multiple synonyms) at a *global* level – that is the aristocratic ‘conversion’ imminent in a certain Deleuzism. According to Badiou, the particular thinking consistent with the particularity of every localization – Being as appearance, existent being – remains mathematics<sup>16</sup>. Even if set-theory in *Being and Event* axiomatized the thought of Being qua Being, which explains the declaration of the equation ‘mathematics=ontology’, and here we are dealing with the *localization* of Being, the overall point is that anonymity is *not* the dubious privilege of either Being qua Being, i.e. abstract Being or Being as absolute particularity. ‘Anonymity’ is the fundamental mathematical *strength* of a minimal but sufficient knowledge that thinks Being *and* Appearance and for which thought, Event provokes the *torsion* of a further thinking of a fragment of being, a trace of appearance.

It was on the character and procedure of Alain Badiou’s mathematical choice(s) that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *What is Philosophy* (1991) raised their own objections to an ‘aristocratic’ conversion on Badiou’s part. This separation pertains ultimately to the very choice of set-theory and the ‘nature’ of sets in a certain formalization – but the *force* of the objection remains political and one might say, libidinal<sup>17</sup>. But before we narrate the exact features of Deleuze’s and Guattari’s objections, let us take



another look at the stakes of the declaration of 20 June, 1792 divided between a certain form of sovereignty and a certain sweep of the event.

In its irreducible insistence, even as the barest form of utterance, without considering its obvious rhetorical uses, the declaration *effectuates* something just as a performative does. What is that “something”? From the Stoic perspective put to work by Deleuze, the something that is effectuated is an “abstract object”; and that abstract object is the pure “expressed” of the declaration. What is “expressed” is neither the actions nor the passions of a pre-given subject which is the “people” of France asserting itself in the numerical name of its entire population (twenty million) in a local intervention. Everything centres, rather, on the production of an *event* of change from the quantitative assertion of an absolute magnitude, the population of France, to the new and a kind of ‘sovereign’ quality of being, nay, ‘becoming-a-people’. The Event, then, is the supernumerary name for a specific local, historical performative with a specific effectuation but underlying what happens locally something always happens – the pure “expressed” of the declaration, the unique sense of every event, the Sense-Event<sup>18</sup>.

Is there another way of reading the performative intervention of the declaration which doesn’t employ the dialectic and differentiation of quantity and quality, magnitude and incorporeal becoming but localises itself to the movements of the multiples concerned? This would mean resisting the temptation of *imaging* the intensification of a number (two thousand) to a saturated population (twenty million) as either an iconic or idolatrous *body* of the people. Instead we have to interrogate the basis on which the multiple can be moved – through the local gesture of a speech-act – from one count to another. If the first count, two thousand, is an obvious, if errant, approximation of an ordered or ordinal series – that is one after another – the second is not necessarily a count or set of the same order at all, whether extended or intensified to the entire population. Taken as an effectuation of *existence*, the performative says that more people *exist* than the total count of a sovereign people which is always One. Thus, as an effectuation

of existence, the assertion makes more people exist than ‘all’ the people. In other words, existence is in subtle excess of the direct municipal presence of the democratic body. The physical count of the marchers present at the Assembly, the magnitude “twenty million” which denotes the population of France, are only local metonymies, fragments and traces of existence. Then the question arises that what would be the *site* of this anonymous localization of existence for which all ‘sovereign’ names are only conventional, and errant, indices?

In this perspective, the movement from the multiple “two thousand” counted ordinally on the site of the National Assembly on a particular date and instant of time, to the real of a “twenty million” localized as a metonymy of existence culminates in a localization to the *void*.

Gilles Deleuze could be said to have a fundamentally different philosophical taste from Badiou’s<sup>19</sup>. Clearly Deleuze had no taste for the “void”; he and Guattari had written extraordinary pages *against* the nihilistic attractions of nothingness, lack and death in the history of western culture of which theology, philosophy and psychoanalysis were the sad and tireless messengers<sup>20</sup>. “Void”, surely, came in that crushing monotonous tradition even if it was shown to have a mathematical provenance. In fact, in *What is Philosophy*, the authors spend some four dense pages demonstrating the *resultant* that the “void” was, in Badiou’s magnum opus *Being and Event*, the resultant of a transcendental and aristocratic ‘conversion’ of the mathematics of set-theory. However, we would like to clarify at this stage that the real interest of this exposition is not the scholastic and tabular comparison of two great thinkers with a strange biographical ‘non-relation’. What really interests us in this encounter is the co-presence of a non-relation and indiscernibility between two systems of thought. When completely exposed, this paradox strikes us with a renewing blow that while the genealogies of the two philosophers mark the non-relation and disjunction of ‘taste’, the *future* of thought, as it stands in the difficult present, is actually being traced by a common taste for that word of transformation and passage, of power and existence, of intensity and the void – the word “event”<sup>21</sup>. And in the context of the example from the

French Revolution and our earlier study, it is possible to say that for the “names” of the Revolution precariously held up in the flurry of anonymous revolutionary literature – Sieyès and Michelet, two such ‘names’ – the stakes of the maximal, thus sovereign, power (*potenza*) of the event and those of the minimal emergence of existence are the *same*.

Expressing the above co-implication, this is what Sieyès will say to the clergy and the nobility, the other two estates apart from the third, with a logician’s economy of deduction and a pamphleteer’s appetite for destruction: “Your existence derives from your power. But because your power is inherited, your existence is also inherited. Since existence is a self-produced and self-constituted material actuality and not a power to be inherited or transmitted, your existence is non-actual, inauthentic, lacking.” At this point we can imagine Sieyès making the following statement of the event from the point of view of the Third Estate: “As it stands, we are nothing. Which means, we have no power. And insofar as existence derives from power, we don’t *seem* to exist. But we must become everything. We must do so by taking two steps: first, by exposing the inauthentic derivation of existence and by defaulting on the inheritance in which we serve power, hence making power impotent, in-operative; second, by showing fidelity or committing to the event of *coming-into-existence*, that is, to the Revolution and reversing the principle. Whereupon existence becomes the principle by which power is constituted, existence being now recognised as a *constituent power*<sup>22</sup>.”

It is in the continuing light of Sieyès’ logic of event as “coming-into-existence” that Michelet will transmit Thorouet’s simple statement to the clergy and the nobility in his report on the reorganization of the nation into departments leaving behind the earlier orders: “You don’t exist!”<sup>23</sup> What does this polemic reflect at the fundamental ontological level? We might hazard the hypothesis – which we have substantiated earlier and will not again test thoroughly here – that the withdrawal of the rights of existence pertain to a *corporate* form which both embodies and names social groups and entities to the tune of aristocratic ‘election’. Precisely by this corporate logic, existence is *determined* as value and power

– and such existence is polemically refused forthwith to such a logic of determination. But, non-polemically, *truly*, who refuses, that is, what is the ontological status of the so-called Third Estate? This brings up the question we had concluded the last study with, the question of the *subject*. We had said, the subject must be thought and indexed, as the slight and shattering movement from the multiplicity of any-ones-whichever (which is a tautology because the multiple is always any-multiple-whichever and one is a multiple) to the ‘first one to come by the event’, the movement, that is, from anonymity to singularity<sup>24</sup>. Always along this tremulous movement lies the offer of an aristocratic ‘conversion’ to the unfounded subject – the offer to convert to a foundation and a transcendence, a metaphysics and a sovereignty.

### ANONYMITY (ANY-ONE)

In his 1991 book co-authored by Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Gilles Deleuze devoted around three enigmatic pages to Alain Badiou, a contemporary philosopher Deleuze found “interesting”. The authors also acknowledged Badiou’s very complex reductions and extractions, but these three pages still propose a critical summary of Badiou’s great work, *Being and Event* (1988)<sup>25</sup>. They – Deleuze and Guattari – take into account Badiou’s “bare” and “neutral” – basis and neutrality will precisely be at stake – term “multiplicity”. Badiou starts with the concept of ‘multiple’ as “any-multiplicity-whatever” – this concept is joined to and presented as a ‘set’. Now Badiou, at several places, has emphasized the *formal, neutral, open*, nature of the multiple or the anonymous any-multiplicity-whatever; in other words, while the history of mathematics up to set-theory develops around the comprehension of the number system (though there is an associated history of mathematical logic involved), the notion of ‘set’ does not depend on ‘number’ but on any ‘element’. This is an open, unqualified doctrine which is transformed into an ‘intense’ interpretation by Deleuze and Guattari with their masterly virtuosity. They say that these elements can be “bodies, objects, units of situation” with the condition that these elements are subjected to the regime of

‘counting-as-one’ are denumerable in the cardinal sense<sup>26</sup>. But the authors perceive that the force of Badiou’s appropriation of set-theory comes from elsewhere. Badiou immanentizes Georg Cantor’s discovery of the transfinite infinity – that is the infinite set which is cardinally numbered and there are infinity of such infinities – into the “inconsistent” or “unassignable” excess of the subsets of a set over its elements, bodies, objects – the excess of the situation over its countables, a kind of ‘surplus-immanence’, so to speak. This excess of the set of subsets over the set itself cancels the possibility of a stable whole or totality – a whole of wholes – but there still remains the obligation to represent this excess, this inconsistency where the inner mathematical operations/operatives of the initial presentation don’t apply at all anymore.

Deleuze and Guattari make their criticism at this point, the point they call the “conversion” of immanence, of anonymous, egalitarian immanence into transcendence, a form of ascetic aristocracy<sup>27</sup>. This transcendence is performed by the conversion of the excess, the inconsistent into a *void*, at the edge of which sticks the *event*. The event, according to Badiou, is a torn fragment of being – “Being”, capitalized, qua Being, being the pure inconsistent multiple in the set-theoretic sense pronounced by Cantor in his letter to Dedekind<sup>28</sup> – but the event still takes the mode of an ‘advent’, a happening whose appearance is nothing but its disappearance. The event is a subtractive reality and its relationship to being, the site of being, is ‘undecidable’. And yet the undecidable is the very cue for a decision, a subjective decision productive of a ‘truth’ – locally determined out of the conversion of an excessive situation into a transcendental void, according to Deleuze and Guattari – the conditions for which are supplied by certain generic functions that inhere in the situation but whose “seizing” and organization is philosophy’s task. These functions – Art, Politics, Science, Love – solicit the event, but the event itself is the conceptual prerogative of philosophy. On this division of conceptual labour, Deleuze (and Guattari) raise their final doubt, their philosophical disappointment and political suspicion: is this not a return of a higher ‘aristocratic’ image of philosophy, which itself reigns unconditioned over the torsions of being and immanence? Doesn’t it take away the ecstasy

of the anonymous multiple, the any-multiplicity-whatever, and sedate it into something passive, mere matter-like to be mobilized by philosophy as by the leader of cadre?<sup>29</sup> After this criticism of a kind of philosophical Leninism or vanguardism, the preferred mathematics of Deleuze and Guattari is hinted at – an affective mathematics of singularities without parts, a multiplicity which is not a ‘closed’ set but an *open* (an ‘open’ escaping the territorial closure of sovereignty but a territory always also *open* to the sky, the seas...), a betweenness flanked by the actualizations of events and that part of the event which is non-actualized though real. Which is the continuous birth of the virtual in a vital world of individuations and modifications.<sup>30</sup>

Let’s open a parentheses here: towards the later part of his life and work, Michel Foucault studied certain smaller texts by Kant with a view to analyzing in them the matrices of ‘modern’ politics, which meant, for Foucault, analyses of the formation of a subject of politics, subject not to interest but to truth-effects of power within an overall programme of the ontology and strategy of “ourselves”<sup>31</sup>. One such text was *The Conflict of Faculties* in which Kant sites the proximate ‘event’ of the French Revolution *not* to subjectivize the actuality of the happenings through a new and popular *active* form of the political subject. Instead through the use of a strange theatrical notion of the “spectator” of the Revolution, Kant, according to Foucault, introduces in the explosive idea (of the Revolution) and its irreducible event-ness, a “permanent virtuality”<sup>32</sup>. This permanent, non-actualizable part, the ‘virtual’ part, of the event only a spectator could incorporeally carry, not the material *actor* of the situation whose subjective participation, however heroic and admirable, is always bound to the ‘interest’ of the situation. Only a spectator could respond to the *sterile* part of the event, its princely, sovereignly splendid part which is un-bound from the logic of actuality and attains a certain ‘virtual adequacy’ (which the actual, in the Spinozan sense of adequate and inadequate causes, will always fall short of and be caused inadequately, heterogeneously, unfreely)<sup>33</sup>, a sterile vitality. The spectator, who is un-bound from the active interest of the revolutionary actors, where the leaders or the ‘people’ (cadre?),

respond to the virtual part of the event, its permanent, universal and disinterested part, with “enthusiasm”. This affect or intensity of the so-called ‘true’ Subject or this intensity of truth, makes of the event a *sign* – a sign for the future of mankind, according to Kant, that its pre-disposition to universal progress is *happening*, but at a level fundamentally different from the actual happenings of the historical revolution, with its deficits of truth and terrorisms of interest.

The real puzzle in the above is that Deleuze and Foucault, two great pioneers of the febrile scintillations of an event-thinking, were the *enemies* of universalism. And it has been Alain Badiou’s ex-centric vocation to think the event as an exceptional and immanent torsion in the *actuality* of the situation that must be and will be, *sometimes* universalized without a shred of any ‘virtual’ support. And the puzzle can only be dispelled either with a different reading from ours of Deleuze and Foucault (and Kant), or with following Badiou’s thesis that the virtual was always tendentially speaking, a dogmatic universal<sup>34</sup>. And in a sharp reversal of Deleuze’s allegation, Badiou says in his 1997 book *The Clamour of Being*, the master secures his dogma of the virtual with a transcendental or aristocratic ‘conversion’. Now it has to be pointed out that in this book, contrary to expectations, Badiou does not address the mathematical provenance of ontology as the basis for the comparison of his philosophy with Deleuze’s ‘metaphysics’. Instead, while admiring Deleuze’s programme, his indisputable position as a master, his unique singularization of the history of philosophy as a map of affects and events, Badiou alleges that Deleuze takes the pedestal of an aristocracy of the One and, without intending it, unleashes a vitalist terror, a “Deleuzianism”<sup>35</sup>. Badiou is clear that the programme of “rational ontology” can be served by mathematics and only mathematics; Deleuzianism is, on the other hand, a tremulous, uncoordinated embrace of a Bergsonian inheritance. We will not elaborate on this ecstatic debt, as it were, but it is crucial to all manner of interpretation of Deleuze’s relation to the history of science, as Eric Alliez has noted.<sup>36</sup>

Let us take recourse to a summary image for the above alternation between thoughts of anonymity and allegations of aristocracy: Alain Badiou opposes the progressive and local superiority of mathematics as a ‘thinkable’ material for thinking Being to the animal envelope of Deleuzian intensities and unthinkables. If Badiou has a senior ally, a genius in his own right, we know it is Jacques Lacan. For Badiou as with Lacan, to promote the affective power of the unthinkable ‘thing’ does not allow the subtle and exacting task of encountering the thing in the mode of the real so as to inscribe that encounter in a kind of *science of the real*.<sup>37</sup> According to Lacan and following him, Badiou, mathematics is that Science of the Real. Mathematics is foundational, severe, delicate and impassable – it is abstract and without the affective cleaving to empirical ‘things’. But in that, the ‘abstract’ of mathematics is more concrete than concrete. However, Badiou acknowledges that Deleuze as a true philosopher is not content to perform an effusive phenomenology of things. He enters the greater circuit of immanence where immanence expresses the greater power of the One-principle Deleuze encounters in his chosen philosophers and artists – the Stoics, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson or the great (and minor) Becoming(s) of Melville’s *Moby Dick*, of Kafka, the principle of Non-Organic Life in Orson Welles’ films...<sup>38</sup>

To open a second parenthesis: what most moves and influences the Deleuzian reader – the best of them – is the indistinguishability between the sovereignty of the One-principle and the *minoritarian* effectivity of that principle which has the supple, ‘escapist’ virtue of what Deleuze calls “becoming-imperceptible” and thus, paradoxically, escaping sovereign capture<sup>39</sup>. The meaning of “anonymity” in Deleuze is nothing if not these proliferations of ‘becoming-imperceptible’ of perceptual objects, of phenomenologies of the eidetic subject along the Stoic diagonal of events that are “abstract objects”. This tremendous virtuosity of thought has extremely punctual *political* and *erotic* consequences – which can be expressed within a single paradigm of “incorporeal transformation” that gives content to the *minor* dimension of Stoicism. As different from the two major dimensions



– the necessary but inoperative divine dimension of God and the accidental but causal dimension of Fate – the minor Stoic dimension of the subtle, incorporeal event that is *created* by an act of language, by that creative dint, escapes both the sovereignty of God and the government of contingency.<sup>40</sup> According to Deleuze’s singularisation, this Stoic extraction of events is constitutively political and erotic because the essence of a politics and an erotics is the ceaseless activity of becoming-minor, becoming-imperceptible, thus, *creating* lines of escape from sovereignty and government. In other words, the paradigm of thinking both politics and love is *art*.

We do not wish to bring up the Benjaminian motif of the aestheticization of politics – which of course has enormous contextual validity – but discuss the minoritarian possibility in the light of the results of our earlier studies. We saw, in our initial tracery of liturgical practices, that liturgy was not only the later Christian angelological function nor the early Christian eucharist congregation but a proto-matrix of the *debt-relation*. We saw how this debt-relation was activated, within limited contexts, by *prescriptions* towards incorporeal transformations, following which prescriptions was a way of paying back debt with a kind of subjective participation in objective logics of civic obligation. We further investigated how this earlier limited Greek (Athenian) matrix was extended, transformed, *infinitized* and *minoritized* by Christianity. This was done by applying liturgical debt to *anyone* and its application was the point of articulation of both the most global colonial force (which Christianity exercises with the doctrine of the iconic *oikonomia*) and the most *minor* granulation of collective obligation (expressed in the *tithe* and its ‘disappearing’ eucharistic referent, 12<sup>th</sup> century onward). This global granulation found legal correspondences in the fiscal peculiarity of minor sovereignty of God and Christ where the *fisc* stood for an imprescriptible ownership whose holder could only be legally ‘minor’ and whose operator could only be a ‘trustee’. But the real force of this illustration of a paradoxical sovereignty lay in its analogical preparation for a logic of capital where the *subject* of credit, debt and investment, that is, the subject of the *economy*, was institutionally earmarked as the “individual”. Our thesis was/

is that the “individual” is nothing but the ontological declaration or prescription made by the *oikonomia* (of political economy) 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, subjectifying the granulated or minoritized debt of a kind of global Christianity on the site of a new aristocracy – the aristocracy of the bourgeoisie<sup>41</sup>. Thus, the aristocracy of capitalism becomes that of the undifferentiated “individual”, now an aristocracy of anonymity, of ‘any-one’, within bourgeois limits.

### ARISTOCRACY (ONE)

Now, Gilles Deleuze doesn’t cease to effectuate, in the unforgettable philosophical metamorphoses he performs, the de-individualizations of capitalist ‘individuals’. And each such effectuation or becoming is an occasion of transvaluation and creation of new values. Thus, with Deleuze, the open, becoming-minor, becoming-multiple, etc. are trans-created *values* with a kind of aesthetic potentiality for what Deleuze, as a delectable artistic Stoic, calls “counter-effectuation”<sup>42</sup>. Such counter-effectuations are the joyous, secret, fragile lives of the many anti-capitalisms that sweep us up along the diagonal of the event. The Event, thus, is the counter-effectuation of incorporeal transformation, the trans-value of value.

Alain Badiou would want to demystify the master’s image as a patron saint of aesthetic – and political – potentiality which rests so well with the “anarcho-desiring” cults post-1968 and in this he would want to serve the cause of the sober political analysis of the consequences of the *rare* event rather than praise the construction of multiple events raised to a higher aristocratic power of the One. In the years following the *Clamour of Being*, despite Badiou’s establishing an economy of attentive non-relation with Deleuze, the battlelines had been drawn. Students and followers of Deleuze, such as José Gill, the philosopher of anthropology, were nearly bitter at the affective and political *loss* suffered with Badiou’s repudiation of Deleuze’s philosophy of the virtual – a great loss, as it were, to the *dynamic* world of multiplicities in their existential upsurge rather than only their concept and its niceties. In reply, Alain Badiou wrote a short, terse, magnificently intelligent encore which still does not ‘convert’ the rigour of a non-relation into the pathos

of a relationship. This time Badiou places his finger on the pulse of the mathematical correctness of thought. In this piece called “One, Multiple, Multiplicity”, Badiou argues against textual orthodoxy – that is, repeating the authority and texture of the master’s words – and in favour of the correctness of procedure in light of the indisputable validity of the project<sup>43</sup>. To this end, Badiou has the following theses by way of criticizing Deleuze’s procedure: (i) What Deleuze understands by ‘set’ belongs to an anachronistic pre-Cantorian era without taking into account the progress made by the history of mathematics. (ii) Given this progress, the set-theoretic concept of the set as a pure inconsistent multiple is “superior” to the earlier idea of the Riemmanian manifold, or multiplicity without parts, a post-Euclidian geometric idea of intensive spaces. (iii) Given this attachment to a primitive reference to multiplicity, Deleuze cannot reach the subtractive and actual rarity of the event – he can only raise the event to an amorphous region of the virtual. (iv) As a move of thought, Deleuze adopts the binary trajectory of open and closed models of the set with an intervallic productivity – multiplicity as betweenness. Badiou argues that it is precisely to the credit of post-Cantorian set-theory that the meaning of ‘open’ and ‘closed’ have lost their earlier stability. It can be shown, both set-theoretically and topologically, that the closed is only the reverse or complement of the open, not its opposite. The ‘open’ itself is not a qualitative fluxion without parts but a neighbourhood of each of its constituent parts; there is nothing intensive about the phenomenon<sup>44</sup>. Badiou says that a set-theoretic model of the open localizes its openness as its own neutral, anonymous immanence rather than the Deleuzian openness to something: Life, Affirmation, Desire, etc. Badiou would turn his impassive mathematical gaze onto these values and ask – what is inherently preferable, just or *true* about these values that they be recommended? For the truth, according to Badiou, must be entirely local, produced of a void’s suture to Being, created by the fidelity to an event and conditioned by the generic procedures mentioned earlier. If the truth is *named*, it is through a subjective decision in the face of the undecidable, the name issued in response to the advent of the anonymous, entirely without pre-value, however noble, evocative, ecstatic or liberatory.

We think that it is the accusation that mathematical ontology resorts to a transcendental conversion of a surplus-immanence into a kind of aristocratic “void” which is repeated in a certain bio-political analysis of sovereignty, though not always explicitly as an accusation or on the question of mathematics. In fact, what is essentially vindicated in these dense bio-political patterns of argumentation is anxiety over a hyper-subjectivity, an all-inaugurating voluntarism of the event (if not of the human will) that subtracts from and voids the irreducible political effectivity of the *remainder*. Apparently this is a quick and a drastic change of terrain from mathematical procedures of ontological thinking to a consideration of historical exigency of politics as praxis. But the real concern for someone like Giorgio Agamben, who likes to think of ontology as ontology of ‘acts’, of praxis, at the point of indiscernability between being and praxis, must be that the mathematical neuter or anonym of Being as any multiple whatever is still too pure, too self-contained and constitutively immobilized from thinking the ‘reminder’ that impurifies all formal ontological proposals<sup>45</sup>.

In his book *The Royal Remains*, Eric Santner converts the above anxiety into a positive and greatly interesting thesis on ‘popular’ sovereignty<sup>46</sup>. According to Santner, a certain theological remainder sticks to the people’s immortal sovereign (second) body in the form of the “royal remains”. Since the logic of the “King’s Two Bodies” was the vertical ascension to a super-numerary sovereign position that was unaffected by the errant destiny of mortal flesh and yet demanded a *transfigured flesh* for that very position of sovereignty which the author calls “royal flesh” (Agamben would probably use the word “life”), the horizontal translation of that logic of transcendence forces on the axis of a new, popular sovereignty, a persistence of the royal flesh, its remainder, in the form of a “surplus of immanence”<sup>47</sup>. It is not difficult to see how Santner is addressing a core problem of political-theological content enduring and surreptitiously determining the new, epochal and so, revolutionary forms of modern sovereignty. In doing this, he evinces an excess of royal ‘flesh’ impurifying the peoples’ ‘body’ and *yet* by the very paradigmatic virtue of aristocratic (that is corporate) and

the metaphysical (that is sovereign) oneness of the royal figure, such a figure retains a supplemental function of unification in the actual distribution of sovereignty as ‘multiple’ popular power. Thus, in this construction, the “surplus-immanence” of popular sovereignty is *false* immanence and in reality is only an effect of an excess and remainder of aristocratic *transcendence* which secures for the people a supplemental investiture and a fantasmatic ‘body’, the second sovereign one of the Two Bodies.<sup>48</sup>

Yet this interesting and significant analysis is unsatisfactory. For one thing, it places a demand on the ‘people’ to be produced as a ‘body’ exactly by the pre-given metaphysical prescription of the theo-logic of sovereignty. In this sense, bio-politics *repeats* the prescription(s) of political theo-logic – and departs in this respect from Michel Foucault’s pioneering contributions to the analytic of bio-power<sup>49</sup> – to subsequently, or even simultaneously ironise it and hollow it out by all the supplementary logics of the remainder. In effect, the theological paradigm, with all its internal pragmatics of hollows and fertile inconsistencies, *refuses* its own eventual rupture – the refusal of the void of the event is the insistence of the form of analysis we have cited in the foregoing. In the light of our earlier discussions of an intrinsic mathematical ontology, Santner’s notion of “surplus-immanence”, even if it arises in the political field, can be challenged. Intrinsic mathematical ontology which is an ontology based on the immanent and anonymous ‘any-multiple-whatever’, secretes or effectuates its immanent ‘excess’ or ‘surplus’ through the set theoretical property that the number of subsets of a set always exceeds the number of elements belonging to it. If this mathematical statement can be taken as a model for ontology, and not simply a metaphor, it can be translated into what can be called then a “situation” of politics. Even this expression is inaccurate. What is termed a “situation” *is* the anonymous multiple, the set, and its presentation of everything that ‘belongs’ to it – its ‘elements’ – is ‘inconsistent’ because the sequences or chains or even arrangements, of the situation – its ‘subsets’ or ‘parts’ – demand a re-presentation always in excess of the ‘language’ of presentation of the elements. But this is not a demand for *another* language or code in transcendence of the situation. On the

contrary, the inconsistency of the situation is explained by the fact that the surplus *intrinsically* exceeds the set and so, immanently infinitizes the situation *in* the situation<sup>50</sup>. Nothing is brought to the situation, secretly or residually, from a surviving transcendence; or the situation does not ‘open’ to a kind of surplus, messianic transcendence either. The fundamental inconsistency – and it can be hazarded, infinity – of the situation is *banal*, not ecstatic.

In view of the above, it can be seen why to say “situation of politics” is inaccurate. Because “situation” is, ontologically speaking, a *void* category, while politics must *make something* of the void. But does that make politics an activity of exceptional voluntarism which subjects the void to a will? On the grounds of sovereignty who can deny the validity of bio-political analysis’ impurification of the will by ‘life’, ‘flesh’, ‘economy’ and ‘government’ – whether that be the will of god, king or people? However on the ground(lessness) of the *event*, something remains to be thought: what remains unthought are not the ‘remains’ of grace and/or flesh, but the problem of the *new immemorial*. This signals to the problem of thinking that which comes into existence entirely locally, situationally and yet in its ‘coming-into-existence’, this existence becomes universalizable; that which comes to pass and in its passage, becomes a *singularity*, a *cut* in Being, indeed, an event exposed to the wager of a decision – a decision which in all that will come to pass, *will not have passed*.<sup>51</sup>

## SINGULARITY (ONE ONE)

Within a particular mathematical unfolding, a singularity is the declarative coming-into-existence of a *new* axiom. And by the simultaneous localizations to the void and to eternity, an axiomatic decision marks the emergence of a *new immemorial*. In the history of mathematics spanning the periods from late 19<sup>th</sup> and to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, between Cantor and Skolem, such universalizable emergences are namable<sup>52</sup>. They pertain to the thought of pure number, but in set-theoretic terms, and we have indicated this programme in one of our previous studies. As examples, the axioms of foundation, infinity, choice, etc, are not simply formal postulates for developing deductive systems and results but crucial

*ex-centric* decisions making possible new proofs and choices; at the same time, these decisions mark thresholds of new *impossibilities*, mark the further displaced cuts of the Real. In the course of this history, the equivocations regarding the continuum hypothesis and Godel's proof exemplify these displacements.<sup>53</sup>

However, for our purposes, let's present the emergence of singularity in the element of mathematical *fiction* – a 'fiction' which helps Alain Badiou interpret Hegel's section of the Greater Logic on "Quantity" as a "speculative birth of number". In his *Theory of the Subject*, a work comprising several seminars and predating *Being and the Event*, Badiou asks the question, how is it, in Hegel's *Logic*, contrary to expectations, the transition or 'leap' is not from quantity to quality but the other way round<sup>54</sup>. In a way, this is a question against the expectations raised by a counter-history of 'qualitative' mathematics up to the famous Catastrophe Theory of René Thom.<sup>55</sup> But that aside, what Alain Badiou is doing is a kind of simplified schematization, a *staging* of two movements in Hegel's logic via the mathematical 'actors' or 'actants' – algebra and topology. Through the algebraic discreteness of elements and the topological continuity of neighbourhoods, and their tie-in or unity, the Hegelian "quantity" is born. 'One' stands for the discreet element which is exchangeable and self-differentiating from all such discreet 'ones' or multiple-of-ones while 'One One' (emphasis mine, not Hegel's or Badiou's) stands for the emergent neighbourhood where *this* 'one' amalgamates in itself the dispersion of multiples. This is its attractive unity. In Badiou's imagery, *this* 'one' is "the first one to rise up in revolt"<sup>56</sup>.

It is important to remember Alain Badiou's tenacious engagement with the 'mathemes' of class struggle during these seminars. So the *one one*, or the first one is an emergent, topological adherence and affirmation from *within* the morass of differentiability of the 'ones', their immanent 'struggle'. We will not investigate the universalization of this exigency in the historical period of the *Theory of the Subject* (mid-1970s to early '80s); instead, shift this action of the mathematical fiction to the scenes and situations 'infinite' by the French Revolution. And this reconfiguration, we think, will present the gestures of interruption of *infinite debt*

that we serialized and circulated in our earlier studies. There is an interesting connection to be pointed out here: in one of his seminars contained in *Theory of the Subject*, concerned with Hölderlin's essays on Sophocles and Aeschylus' position, Badiou says that unlike Hölderlin's 'intrinsic' interpretation of Sophocles, Aeschylus' *Oerestia* must be received in terms of its ex-centric axiomatic decision. In the trilogy the decision comes as Athena's judicial intervention, which subsequently mediates an objective calculus of choice by votes, an intervention which interrupts the "infinite debt" of blood enacted by the cycle of revenge.<sup>57</sup> Since this decision, ex-centric and axiomatic to begin with, is vastly encoded into the history of law and sovereignty in the west, it is, to that measure, 'naturalized'. In our ongoing investigations we have deciphered an infinitely granulated or minoritized form of the debt, which we call "liturgical", that comes in the wake of the very interruption of the infinite debt of 'archaic' logics of revenge. Strangely, the interruption which was 'topologically' effected in the 'neighbourhood' of the Revolution, in late 1788 to 1789, was both against the inherited debt that cleaved to the corporate, aristocratic 'bodies', and against the atomicization of debt into the any-one as debtor to sovereign, an interruption of which the atomic, equal and secret, vote of the ballot box is the most apt 'natural' image<sup>58</sup>. *But* the whole rationality of the French Revolution, its own egalitarian liturgy, was the demand, praise and formalization of the single vote-single estate-single head!

That is why we must find an anti-liturgical neighbourhood for the so-called event and in that continuous localization of the event find its axiomatic 'cut'. In other words, our way can't be *consistently* sovereign, whether sovereignty is understood juridically or liturgically. To go back to two of Michelet's 'localizations' first, the defaulting on inherited taxes (*tithes*); second, the appointment by acclamation of the *one* one who says "myself" to the question of representation or, which is the same thing, of "surplus immanence". On the suppression of the *tithes*, we read the following passage from Michelet, which converts the historical break into an anonymous statement of the event (for which the 'named' subject "France" is clearly a mask, chimera) – "Today (August, 1789) France takes



back the tithes, and tomorrow (November 2), she will take back the estates. By what right? A great juris-consult has said: “by the right of *default of heirs*”. The dead church has no heirs. To whom does her patrimony revert? To her author, to that PATRIA, whence the new church shall rise”<sup>59</sup>.

It is impossible either to bypass or stand up to the infinity of this statement. Everything is contained here and more – the contemporaneity and the messianicity, the rupture and the void, the law and the supplement... The real question is, *whose* rights of default, if it is not the thin mask “France”? Because the problem is that all rights are intelligible either as patrimonially inherited, thus, possessed or as translated and circulated liturgical-fiscal obligations. Which is the subject of right to default on the intelligible subject of rights? Only a singular subject localized to the “revolt” of the event. But even if such a ‘subject’ has no metaphysical intelligibility, no historico-political predicates, it does arise from a particular *torsion* in a concrete situation; and this torsion has specific implications for the juridical-legal and liturgical-fiscal logics of sovereignty – it is not simply ‘unthinkable’!

One of the more striking results of the above torsions in patrimonial inheritance is that it produces a *major* void in the finely granulated structure of liturgical-to-fiscal debt that, as we have seen, was the ‘minor’ economic unconscious of theological patrimony<sup>60</sup>. Every old and new meaning of Michelet’s thunderous enunciation, “PATRIA”, must find its renewing and re-composed neighbourhood with the void. Notwithstanding the dense career of the *patria*, its use as a point of intensity in Michelet’s text demands an *exceptional* immanence of the situation that will join the void of defaulting to the singularity of *this* PATRIA<sup>61</sup>. We think this brings up at least two consequences. First, the localization of the void of a situation doesn’t simply replicate the ontological anonymity of the situation; in fact, we have seen, how a certain indifferent anonymity describes so adequately both the minor and global debt of liturgy as well as the atomic individuation of the voting-booth. What the evocation of the *patria* means is a search for a *name* of the singularity at the level of immanent defaulting when the transcendental and the inherited, corporate and aristocratic

names of patrimony are being defaulted on. Which brings up the second consequence – which is that the defaulting on debt and patrimony is a defaulting on transcendence without giving in on the stakes of a *surplus*<sup>62</sup>. That is why an incomparably adventurous search for the new decision on the name, on the axiom, which is nothing but a name, must ensue of which, as we have seen, in our earlier study, how Nation and National Assembly were precarious metonyms. Clearly, the only condition for this political and axiomatic adventure is the vigilant – and militant! – resistance to any transcendental ‘conversion’ authorized by the inherited patronyms.

Yet we have to recognize the terrible provocation from the fact that a word like *patria* in Michelet is nothing if not a liturgical investment in language where a theological, political and martial signifier expresses a congregation’s enthusiastic acknowledgement, nay, praise and acclamation of its patriotic, communitarian, *native* debt. On the theatrical level, the history of acclamatory liturgy testifies to specific re-constitutions of the incorporeal debt in several ‘scenes’ of sovereign spectacle<sup>63</sup>. Exactly in response to the provocation of this massive liturgical *dispositif*, we must return to another fragment from Michelet, the one we cited at the end of the last study, for a counter-proposal. Ironically, in a sequence from July 1789 where the main preoccupation was to constitute a citizen police *against* insurrection and for ‘security’ in Paris, the discussion leads to a non-deputy and non-elect, *any-one*, a man... stepping forward and saying, “Why only deputies, why not... Myself?”<sup>64</sup> The subtle, almost indiscernible challenge is to constitute this gesture and utterance at its singular juncture of *de-constitution*. Because this is not a juncture of either aristocratic or liturgical conversion of indifferent any-ones, multitudes, into an incorporeal congregation of subjects of debt. This is the ‘free’, indirect speech of defaulting when any-one, which logically means, one from the multiplicity of ‘others’, says two things, “why *not...*” and “my-self”. Such is the *demand* for pure localization of “my-self”, not to a ‘converted’ surplus, a “people”, but to an *actual* surplus which is “myself” as subject to an event arising on the site of an anti-liturgical “non-people”<sup>65</sup>. Thus the singular point of this emergence, which a

historian like Michelet dramatizes. And Michelet dramatizes this singularity *not* because it cohabits henceforth with the names of the revolution from Sieyès to Robespierre, but because its singularity is *inconvertible* into any corporate transcendence, including that of revolutionary ‘bodies’ and ‘names’. What is, indeed, acclaimed and transmitted is the *aristocracy of anyone* – an acclamation no liturgy can consistently and economically enact<sup>66</sup>.

### EVENT (ONE)

The event takes place on the swerve between singularity and decision. Before a more formal substantiation, let us see the example from 1789 release some of the elements of the above articulation.

The rousing Deleuzian question could be: does the one who says “myself” produce an *instantaneous* transformation on a politico-metaphysical surface, a transformation from “non-people” to “people”, an abstract, incorporeal object-event which sweeps up the empirical bodies of revolutionary history with unforeseen passions? If this is taken to be the case, a sequence of logic and affect can be seen to be at work: within a vibrant, non-decomposable and mobile multiplicity without parts, *which all Being is*, whether natural or historical, an anonymous utterance creates a scintillating ‘object’, whose intensity is simultaneously distributed on both the natural and historical planes, to effectuate a pure ‘sense-event’ whose self-sufficiency as Becoming of Being is testified to by the arrival at a new *threshold of decidability*. The reason why for Deleuze, neither the void-basis or event-basis of the decision, nor the exceptional status of the event, is a problem is because a kind of machine is at work here which, without rupture and continuously, produces *decisive* and *singular* effects. If we call this machine “politics” then its powerful, creative and inexhaustible virtuality is singularly expressed as immanent ‘decisions’ on two types of bodies – the animal-body of intensive and libidinal becomings studied by an ethology, and the metaphysical – body/surface where thoughts and deliriums arise studied by a noetics<sup>67</sup>. This is pre-subjective history of political ‘events’ wherein each event is a threshold of decision on

the flux of becoming in the impersonal and transcendental raising of that very immanent threshold to the univocal power of an Event, Becoming or, in our rewriting, Decision.

Rousing as this constructed sequence is, it veers away from two fundamental problems: how to approximate the *localization* of the emergence of the event on the site of a singularity; how to capture the great *undecidability*, the non-localizable oscillation between belonging and non-belonging that an event provokes in its own site. And the very possibility of formalizing these problems arises from two non-Deluzian axioms. First, an axiom which says that in a situation, the site of a possible event is the *only* undecomposable part of the situation which makes the part *singular*; second, one which says that the event *might not* arise even if its site exists – the event is exceptional, rare<sup>68</sup>. Illustrating from the historical utterance, this means that the so-called first to say “myself” was never really presented as an element of the “situation” – not as a militant of the new constitutions in France, whether as deputy in the Assembly or elector in the municipality – and his singularization takes place as an undecomposable site of utterance and, to begin with, the appointment by acclamation is a re-presentation *without* any presentation. Secondly, such a singularization doesn’t necessitate the universalizable transmission of the event and the utterance of “myself” could easily have drowned either in unacclaimed silence or situational cacophony. Such an acute example of the *militancy of the event* – as different from activism of constitutions – is entirely contingent, locally exceptional and temporally sutured to a threshold of disappearance. There is no sterile and global splendour of the abstract, incorporeal event-object apportioned for this axiomatic of universalizable disappearance.

But if deprived of the logic of immanent and qualitative transformation to a threshold of decidability, how does the non-Deluzian understanding of the event prevent what Badiou calls “total singularization”, which means the complete extinguishing of the “brief illumination” that an event is, and open up to the *evental presentation*?<sup>69</sup> There is a certain rigour and subtlety to this enquiry in mathematical terms that we will bypass at this point. Let it be clear that the real stakes of making the effort at all is the local intervention

of the event which has nothing but the support and neighbourhood of the void to nevertheless *be decided* on the impredicative ground of “existence”. In this axiomatic exposure of the event to decision and its minimal emergence from a *total* singularization, the stakes are nothing but existence. What that means is, the event instead of being a qualitative ‘leap’ of decidability, an idea joining Deleuze with Kierkegaard, and also not belonging to the problematic of the late Heidegger which makes Being gather and arrive (*ereignis*), convokes the following quality-less ‘becoming’ – the becoming of existence from inexistence of a ‘trace’ in the localization of the initial situation<sup>70</sup>. Now this becoming or emergence is that of an intense existence but it is not an intensive becoming – herein lies the elusive yet phosphorescent line of difference between Badiou’s and Deleuze’s induplicable programmes of the event.

One could also consider a third and connected axiomatic for the event – which is that it is a pure performative creation. Neither the possibility of qualitative and incorporeal transformation nor the supplemental localization of the trace of existence vis-à-vis the constitutive void, are admissible because they, in their own ways, *fabulate* a pure, if shattering, moment of nomination. The Revolution was so only because a sequence of political, philosophical and historiographical enunciations produced a new ‘object’ or ‘place’ of discourse – the Revolution. “Nothing takes place but the place itself” (Mallarmé), no torsion takes place but in speech and no elements pre-exist the existence of the so-called discursive event of the revolution.<sup>71</sup> There is a strange conservative result of this otherwise drastic appearance of the performative nomination of the event. Because there is no actual localization or local actuality of the event, its only existence is in its name; the event *is* a name. The name captures and saturates the presumed ontological change of status between a state-of-affairs before and a one after the event. But if that is the case, the name names the void between situations without the void being sutured to the multiple-being of a situation constitutively. Then if the void is, indeed, pure emptiness, the empty place between every place holder of the *same* place, then effectively, the *name names itself*.

We suggest that the above result from the performative-nominalist axiom on the event exactly holds for the performative effectuation of sovereignty. From the *constitutio principis* of Roman Law which lays down that the empire is the edict declared by the emperor, passing by the interpretation that sovereign appointment and liturgy are both nothing but the strictly ‘unjustified’ speech-acts of God’s grace and coming to the sovereign declaration of the *name*, “the Third Estate”, in a particular sort of reading of Sieyès’ – this obviously random sequence of examples still demonstrates the *formal* substitution of place-holders while every time, with striking consequences, no doubt, nothing but the place takes place<sup>72</sup>.

We see, in this process of derivation, the neutralization of both the kenotic and the mathematical ‘void’ that we have studied earlier. Given such a putting into passivity and the reduction of the void to an empty place, it tabulates for us a repetitive schema of ‘events of sovereignty’ vitalized periodically – and surely sensationally! – by the performative incidence and personification of a new sovereign-event and sovereign-subject.

Now the really interesting and significant twist to the choice between the three axiomatics of the event is that while such a choice can of course be made in the light of historico-philosophical analyses of past sequences or, on the basis of what Deleuze called “taste”, or on the grounds of a rational ontology whose demands of supplementation must not be left to a “pragmatics”, or an act of performative will if it can’t be *thought* conceptually. *The choice is also fundamentally undecidable*. Within aesthetic, mathematical or linguistic resources, a choice might be expressible as to the possible theory of the event but from the point of view of a kind of ontological entanglement, the event displaces the very question of its knowledge. The entanglement pertains to the ontological *position* of the event – is it a secret slope of modification between two states, is it the partisan name of the void or the neutral utterance of an empty place between places? – and, in our thinking, the only justice that can be delivered to the reality of the event remains an ontological justice, not an epistemological one. Because it is only within an ontological investigation that the question of the event’s *indiscernment* of the situation of its emergence can be asked, while

every theory and science of 'events' will force a 'figure', a 'count', a 'code' – loci of discernment – for their object of knowledge. And precisely by the measures of these predicates, event will enter the sovereign embrace. It will be measured by the power and economy of sovereign exercise.

Now the very problem of decisions on the event and sovereign decision must be distinguished by the nature of the above entanglement such that the sign of the reality of the event is its indiscerning effect on situations of sovereignty<sup>73</sup>. And this relationship divides the meaning of, what in a certain register of political philosophy, has become famous as the "exception". We will see in the concluding passage the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among others, Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, though in singularly different ways, determine some key motifs at the intersection of politics and philosophy – the name of that intersection will, indeed, be the "exception". By that time the ontological consideration on the event, correlative tracteries of the event's existential intensity and the axiom of sovereignty grounding the constitutional form of politics, will have mutually infiltrated and complicated each other. But, here, let's only make the preliminary analytical distinction between the decision on the event and the sovereign decision, or alternatively put, between the sovereign's decision and decision of the Other, in the following terms<sup>74</sup>. The sovereign or sovereign's decision is characterized by a transcendence in two directions – first, the direction of the sovereign's exceptional power of decision beyond the normative and legal limits; and second, the direction of an exceptional state that overruns and suspends the 'normal' closure of the situation. In contrast, the decision on the event must be, minimally, understood to be the *singular* and *universalizable* response to the undecidability of the exception's location in the immanence of a situation. The exception, in the latter case, is not modelled on the political – and sovereign – exception of the "state-of-emergency", but is thinkable as the mathematical supplement of the indiscernible sub-set among the subsets, or as part of the surplus immanence of an initial set or situation<sup>75</sup>. We will not develop the mathematical demonstration here but emphasize the difference of matrix or model between the logic of sovereignty and

the supplementation of the event. The model in the first case is classical in its figural and epistemic installations; it is distributed between the liturgical intensification of sovereign glory, power and economy fabricating the sovereign *subject* and the crisis, maleficence and emergency befalling the exceptional situation or 'object'. The mathematically differentiated model, as we saw earlier, doesn't depend on a subject-object intelligibility but arises out of a history without a subject, out of a kind of impersonal 'psychosis'<sup>76</sup>. The impersonality of the mathematical 'psychosis' as a generalizable field of specific emergences of non-localizable, indiscernible and *generic* supplements, on the one hand, full-bloodedly joins Deleuze's programme on the non-personal extraction of singular events that 'escape' the transcendental personae and forms of corporeal and noetic (incorporeal) capture; at the same time the mathematics of 'banal' set-theory itself escapes the metamorphoses or leaps magnitudes undergo to become 'qualities' in a certain vitalist doctrine of the Event. Again, such decisions between the sovereign and eventual thresholds of decision, between transcendence and immanence and the internal divisions of proposals on the ontology of immanence, depend largely on the admissibility of the void, its site and suture, the partisan mobilisation of the void beyond a passive and neutral 'empty place'.

We think the above clearing of issues and concerns, knowledges and interruptions, can be utilised for re-stating the inheritance and defaulting vis-à-vis debt at the cusp of the French Revolution. We know that 1788 onwards, Jacques Necker, the King's minister of the treasury, encouraged and supported the Third Estate's doubling of the vote in the Estates General because that was the way the other two estates could be made to relinquish some of their privileges and made to pay taxes<sup>77</sup>. Such compulsion accomplished through legitimate voting would strengthen the exchequer and build some resistance to the Old Regime's financial pressures. But from Necker's side, this was giving a tactical support without essentially disturbing the rationality of sovereign exercise (of taxation here) because while the King also borrows money and is under fiscal strain of debt, it is not a reflection of *liturgical* debt. The king, the aristocracy, the church are not yet, apparently under any liturgical



danger of defaulting on their corporate-spiritual (incorporeal) obligations. Paradoxically, the aristocracy, its feudal representatives, protest the Third Estate's new political rights on the grounds that withdrawal of seigneurial privileges is the greatest wound to their *liturgical* status – by protecting and continuing their privileges, the Estate's structural, that is, liturgical *obligations* would be served. Thus the argument was clear: the feudal privileges were actually *rights* of the order as a corporate body and they perfectly corresponded to inherited obligations created and legitimated by theological, political and social axiomatics. Developing from the protests, the eventual pleas made by the feudals were on behalf of a kind of aristocratic *life* that would be weakened and voided by the Third Estate's new rights and claims.<sup>78</sup>

Conversely, the Third Estate's strident declarations were not only on behalf of counter-privileges but were claims to obligation, to *the right of obligation* – which exactly defines the liturgical relation and rationality. Now this was the reversible calculus of sovereignty at stake in the revolutionary change of power – which was liturgical as well as representational between the Old and the New Regimes. But, on the site of the *event*, something else seemed to be at stake: which was, an irreversible “*right of default of heirs*”<sup>79</sup>. But this meant the right to default on one's inherited liturgical calculus, economy and ‘zero-sum game’ of debt and obligation. The empty, formal schema of the ‘game’ co-exists and is consistent with the logic of the transcendental remainder, that we laid out earlier, yielding the proposition that with a change of sovereignty within the sovereign ‘subject-object’ matrix, however revolutionary in figural-liturgical and juridical-legal appearance, *there is always some debt remaining*. There is no void-point in this great narrative theatre and *oikonomia* – and so, there is no event. For the sake of the eventual presentation, we must think neither with the image of the “will” nor with the predicate of “popular” because they already assume the iconic and numerical consistencies of ‘body’ and ‘count’. Taken together, the two consistencies present *and* re-present themselves as the new and the authentic liturgy of “direct democracy”<sup>80</sup>. Incommensurable with this, the demand of an eventual presentation is that it must “make manifest” the Real

of a constitutive void, the Real of defaulting as an irreconcilable *separation* in inherited ‘common’ history<sup>81</sup>. In conclusion, if we consider the paradigm of *tithes* once more and its “taking back” (Michelet), we see how the void’s suture to any-situation-*whichever* is the ungraspable material for the event of “defaulting”. When the paradigm, as we constructed it, was meant to function as a minoritised, monetised and globalised logic of power through freedom, right and obligation, the voiding of its displaced indiscerning ‘situation’ and indiscerning by its supplemental ‘event’ in the wake of the “taking back” of *tithes*, returned the paradigm to its place of origination, the church (*ecclesia*), to experience its own origin in a completely new and *separate* way. Jules Michelet, in his pioneering singularisation of the Revolution, at one place, quotes Thouret that if the church is only an estate or corporation, it can only be a part of the “nation”<sup>82</sup> but insofar as the people, they *all*, belong to the church in the fundamental way of *existing* through its universal presentation, they belong to a church, which is not, and cannot be, an estate, a corporation, or a ‘body’. In this sense of the taking place, the *One* – happening within a mere count of ‘ones’ (of corporations etc.) what happens is the universal church which cannot anymore be localised or be said to belong to the “situation” of inherited religion. In the same way that the “nation”, in the sense Sieyès declared it in 1789, cannot be said to belong to the situation of sovereignty... In this respect, according to the demand of the event, to ‘make manifest’ its own brief and disappearing illumination, the Nation and the Church are disappearing, undecidable, universal incandescences.

## NOTES

1. See J. Cowans, *To Speak for the People: Public Opinion and the Problem of Legitimacy in the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2001), p 39.
2. In Euclid’s *Elements*, the one or *monas*, is not really a number. It is a super-numerary ontological entity for which Number, or numbers, proceeds like a “procession”. This is the schema of classical number theory Alain Badiou suggests. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity, 2008) p.7.
3. Of course, we are resorting to a ‘leap’ when without demonstrating the

thesis we assert that the One, following the Euclidian decision to declare it as a mathematical 'sovereign', or super-numerary, produces the co-relative ontological 'fantasy'. Here we go by Alain Badiou's demonstrations but the crucial point is that with the founding of the "modern" Number, a decisive ontological rupture happens. Ontology follows an 'event' in the history of mathematics. But reciprocally, 'modern' ontology *obliges* mathematics to draw the requisite consequences of the thesis that Being is not One, it is multiple. See, *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

4. This word "enthusiasm", used in Kant's *Conflict of Faculties*, meant for the "spectator" of the revolution, has a peculiar 'virtuality' which we will bring up a little later. At this point it is important to clarify that Kant intended the spectator to be disinterested as opposed to the "active" participant. However, the nexus (*nexum*) of and capture by debt covers both the actuality of participation and the so-called virtuality of spectatorship. The unremitable logic of debt which we introduced in the first study, acts by a generalised virtuality or potentiality that comes as much from the past as the inherited 'place' of sovereignty as it goes into the future for all those prospective debtors who will attempt to fulfil the obligation of that self-same place. For Kant's reference, see note 73, *Study II: Numerical Logics of Sovereignty*.
5. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005).
6. This speculation is of course based on a recapitulation of the early part of our first study. In there we saw how complexly the liturgy (public practice) of Athenian democratic system was articulated within its finite limits. While liturgy prescribed forms and sites of civic participation through a strategy of debt and obligation, it also exposed the citizen to a subjective breach in the 'common' (*koinonia*) by unleashing the non-common Dionysian affect (*enthusiasmos*) in the event of Greek theatre. And yet it is a single articulation, not a disjunctive reality, liturgy – this was what we sought to unfold there.
7. For "intensive quantity", see Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, (London: Athlone Press, 1994), p. 232.
8. This disjunctive identification or synthesis of the incorporeal affect, the fragmented or partial body (part-object or organ) and the body-without-organs creates the most 'unnatural' envelope in which incommensurable predicates communicate as do disparate thinkers (from the Stoics to Antonin Artaud) See Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* trans. Mark Lester with Charles Sitvale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) for the extraordinary singularity of a book as an "envelope" of incommensurables.
9. See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 1.
10. We could say, there is an 'acephalic' tradition, or counter-tradition, of thought to the history of philosophy which is mainly transmitted as a

- history of debts, duties and obligations . The ‘acephalic’ counter-tradition defaults on this history – not simply as a subject of debt defaults on payment but as the ‘acephalic’ defaulting on the subject itself, on its very axis of stabilisation. Gilles Deleuze praises such ‘acephalic thinking or thought without the ‘thinking head’- which means thought without its ruling image – inspired by George Bataille’s promotion of the word “acephalic” and Antonin Artaud. See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.147.
11. See Alain Badiou, “The Event in Deleuze”, trans. Jan Roffe in *PARRHESIA*, Number 2.2007.37-44, [www.parrhesiajournal.org](http://www.parrhesiajournal.org). It must be pointed out this is a translation of a part of Badiou’s book in French *Logics of Worlds*, which in the meantime has also been translated into English.
  12. See, *ibid.*, p. 40.
  13. For a recapitulation of the Stoic concept of “incorporeal transformation”, see Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, pp. 4-11. Also, see note 17, *Study I: Liturgical Origins of Sovereignty*.
  14. For several followers of the Master, including Negri and Hardt, Gilles Deleuze is in unbroken and fluent proximity with Spinoza – indeed, the two, together compose an affirmative ‘life-politics’ where a life must reach its most extreme individuation in the most unnameable, indefinite and impersonal state of a life, and not the aristocratic form of the “great lives” or lives of “great men”.
  15. While it is true that a certain cult has grown around Deleuze, exuding the usual combination of esotericism and abandonment to the Cause, as happens in such cases, the irreducible force of the thought that the philosopher brought and keeps bringing, has an ever renewing quality in the ‘new’ reader. Between the force which individuates and renews upon an originary encounter, and the ‘form’, which encloses a *persona*, a habit, a texture to be imitated and repeated, there is an unbridgeable abyss. In this respect, Deleuze, his cult of personality and the impersonal’ individuations of his thought reminds one of Ritwik Ghatak’s singular and abyssal position in the history of cinema in India.
  16. While this “fidelity” on Badiou’s part has been enunciated in several places, in the interview conducted by Tzuchien Tho, published as appendix to *The Concept of Model*, Alain Badiou speaks very precisely of the “particularity” of mathematics as a “resource” to think Being simply, transparently. See Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model: An introduction to the materialist epistemology of mathematics*, ed. and tran. Zachary Luke Fraser and Tzuchien Tho, <http://www.repress.org>, 2007, p. 102.
  17. No doubt objections can be expected regarding Deleuze’s and Guattari’s ‘naturalism’ which includes politics and *eros*, libido and life. So what role would ‘nature’ have in mathematical constructions? But this presumed line of objection must take into account the author’s repeated pronouncements in several places that in their discourse, ‘nature’ is nothing if not a “construction”, an assemblage.

18. See Alain Badiou, "The Event in Deleuze", pp. 40-41.
19. On the specific meaning and intervention of "taste" in philosophy, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 77-78.
20. What better representative than *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia!* See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
21. While it is true that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is Heidegger who inaugurates the 'taking-place' (*eregenis*) of Being and subsequently commentators have retroactively made the 'event', dis-locate and re-direct, monumental references of modern philosophy (Catherine Malabou on Hegel is a good example), Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou *do not* share a certain reserve bordering on melancholy and epochal pessimism, that make the "event" a limit-symptom of the "end of philosophy". For Deleuze and Badiou, the event is at the heart of philosophy.
22. This logico-polemical (where polemics might be thought in terms of discourse as *polemos*, or battle) invention based on 'What is the Third Estate?', is actually modelled after much of Michelet's historical invention of voices and discursive positions. For example, the imagined polemics between departmental logic and ecclesiastical logic. See the note that follows.
23. On Michelet's citation and dramatization of the legist, Thoruet, vis-à-vis the clergy and nobility, see Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution*, trans. Charles Cocks, ed. Gordon Wright (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 339-340.
24. Much of the guiding intuition of our attempts to formalize the event and its insupportable support from 'any-one', comes from a phase cited by Jacques Derrida which originates in Jean Paulhan – a fleeting, and archivally un consecrated, reference to "the first to happen by". For a reference to "anyone, no matter who, at the preamble limit between 'who' and 'what', the living being, the cadaver and the ghost." see Jacques Derrida, "The Last of the Rogue States: The Democracy to Come, Opening in Two Turns" in *Rouges: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 86.
25. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 151-153.
26. See *ibid.*, p. 151.
27. Clearly everything depends on the interpretation of the word "conversion". Is this a signifier of mathematical necessity, philosophical sleight-of-hand or crypto-aristocratic "taste"? Such seem to be the terms of interrogation in this condensed capture of three pages.
28. See Georg Cantor, "Letter to Dedekind" (1899) in *Frege to Godel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic, 1879-1931*, ed. Jean Van Heijenoort (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 115.

29. Deleuze and Guattari write in this context, “Is this not the return, in the guise of the multiple, to an old conception of a higher philosophy?” See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 152. Very clearly the “old concept of a higher philosophy” is a concept originating in a reading of Plato and is one of Sovereignty – the philosopher as sovereign. We hope to return to this question in conclusion of our studies.
30. The key terms, italicized by the authors themselves, are “mixture” which pertains as much to the movement towards the unity of “bodies” and “things” as it does to the more precarious and subtle formation of “singularities” which lay themselves out on coordinates of arrangements and relations. This, indeed, solicits the pre-individual “mathematics” and “physics” of state-of-affairs perpetually between virtuality and phenomenal evidence. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari *What is Philosophy?*, p.153,
31. See the lecture “What is Critique?” in Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (Semiotext, 1997), pp. 23-82.
32. See Michel Foucault, “What is Revolution?” in *ibid* p. 97.
33. See Benedict De Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (London, Penguin, 1996), pp. 69-70.
34. See Alain Badiou, “The Event in Deleuze”, pp. 41-42.
35. For the contrast between a “cynical Deleuzianism” and the “sobriety and asceticism of the master”, see Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, p. 96.
36. Eric Alliez, in his remarkable study of *What is Philosophy?*, has drawn attention to the question of what image of science is at stake in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s philosophical war machine – when the battle rages against analytic philosophy and mathematical logic who would reduce conceptual ‘events’ to mere ‘functions’. For the historical connection of Bergson’s relation with Einstein and the particular importance Albert Lautman’s researches for the authors of *What Is Philosophy*, see Eric Alliez, *The Signature of the World: What is Deleuze and Guattari’s Philosophy?*, trans. E. R. Albert and A. Toscano (New York, London: Continuum, 2004), pp.33-51.
37. Apart from elliptical data on Jacques Lacan’s preoccupation with mathematical topology towards the end of his life and work, his sorties with young mathematicians sometimes even more quizzical in their quests than the old (and dying) master, even more insistent on the rights of the real to be inscribed (the rights to the mathemes of the real), see the meditation “Descartes / Lacan” in Alain Badiou *Being and Event*, pp. 431-435.
38. The two-layered conversional method of the encounter and its conversion to the power of the greater One, Badiou calls “monotonous” about Deleuze. See Alain Badiou, *The Clamour of Being*, p. 14 this in syncopation, without a trace of irony with the statement “...we end up with Deleuze as the joyous thinker of the world’s *confusion*”. See p. 9.
39. “Becoming imperceptible” reaches its most intense and delicate point of concentration with literature when one does not write any more with

perceptual forms and objects, with what are called ‘experiences’ but when one writes with the imperceptible and unexperiencable in all their ungovernable becomings. See Gilles Deleuze, “Literature and Life”, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London, New York, Verso, 1998), pp. 1-2.

40. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and The Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)* Trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (with Matteo Mandarini), (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 114-115 for Chrysippus’ *On Providence* for two models and uses for the “providential machine”.
41. Let us make clear that “aristocracy of the bourgeoisie” is not meant in the sense of “feudal socialism”, as an ‘unequal synchrony’ produced by something like the irony of history, a dialectical diagnostic handed down from Hegel to Marxism. It is used in the simplified sense of a corporate drive to the One-formation of a constitutively fragmented class. Which meant the setting of limits and the forcing of parameters of inclusion and exclusion, affiliation and disaffiliation exactly mirroring the logic of the aristocratic ‘body’, now applied to the bourgeoisie ‘individual’.
42. See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 151-152 for an unequalled distinction between the actor as an “anti-god” who counter-actualises events to make them rise up to the surface of things and give them a pure humour and splendour, and the “god” who does not cease to actualise and insinuate effects of power as domination and utilisation in the depth of things. The actor “counter-actualises” the comic possibility of sovereignty such that in the time of plague it is revealed that the sovereign ruled for “nothing”.
43. See Alain Badiou, “One, Multiple, Multiplicities” in *Theoretical Writings*, trans. Ray Brassier & Albert Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 67-80.
44. “...we can elucidate one of the main properties of open sets which Deleuze (wrongly) identifies with their ‘absence of parts’, and therefore with their qualitative or intensive singularity. This property is that the ‘points’ of an open are partially inseparable or not assignable, because *the open is the neighbourhood of each of its points*. It is in this way that an open set topologically provokes a sort of coalescence of that which constitutes it”. See, *ibid.*, p. 72.
45. See the chapter “Being and Acting” in Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and The Glory*, pp. 53-67.
46. See Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains: The Peoples’ Two Bodies and The Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
47. See, *ibid.*, p. XXI.
48. Santner engages with a crucial administrative – liturgical dimension of the “transfer of power” from absolutist to popular sovereignty. He calls this

dimension a “crisis of investiture”. He, however, does not really deal with the underlying debt relation that supports as well as destabilises investiture and liturgical ‘transfer’. See *ibid.*, p. XII.

49. We have to make a summary statement here: though his work was interrupted and then dispersed over several seminar-texts, lectures, interviews, etc, Michel Foucault was consistently clear that the production and infiltration of bio-power was articulated with sovereign and disciplinary power yet in precisely differentiated ways. If discipline was intensified, invested and circulated in greater ‘incorporeal’ circuits of a ‘life politics’, sovereign power, in the period 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards was displaced, weakened, even ‘voided’ in a strange way such that in the contemporary period, Foucault’s genealogy showed sovereignty displayed a kind of ‘excessive non-existence’. Definitely such an excess and non-existence or void do not conform to the politico-theological interpretation of sovereign power which *is always already looking for signs of exceptionality, irony and self-suspension in the history of texts from theology and law*. Surely Foucault knew such signs are logical inevitabilities in a tradition and type of discourse whose object always was the prescription and legitimation of sovereign power, irrespective of its historical and ontological *inconsistencies*. So no “genealogy of sovereignty” was, or is, the programme because sovereignty is not Foucault’s *problem of the present*. So no particular attention to theology or law either!
50. Mathematically speaking, it is not necessary that every situation be infinite, in the same way that politically (or erotically) speaking it is a matter of contingency and rarity that a situation be struck by the eventual blow. Yet it is a subjective wager, an act of foolhardiness, courage or hesitant decision that there is *something* infinite in any situation. That is the wager of the possible indiscernability in the discernible ‘figure’ or number of a set or situation. For the expression “intrinsic ontology” see Jean-Toussaint Desanti, “Some Remarks on the Intrinsic Ontology of Alain Badiou” in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and The Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 59-66.
51. This is exemplified in our use of Alain Badiou’s thesis on Number and numbers in an earlier study. The thesis that numbers are defined by passage and Number is co-extensive with a kind of ‘swarming’ of its being produces two immemorials: first of Number itself which does not pass and the new immemorial of a ‘decision’ on Number, which will not have passed. See Alain Badiou, *Number and numbers*, p. 30.
52. For Thorali Skolem’s re examination of the axioms of set theory and the possibility of two distinct models to yield two separate system of natural numbers – denumerable and non-denumerable see Thorali Skolem, “Some remarks on axiomatic set theory” (1922) in *Frege to Godel: A Source Book of Mathematical Logic, 1879-1931*, pp. 290-301.
53. On the question of indetermination and undecidability of the truth or falsity of at least one theorem or proposition formalisable within a consistent



- formal system, hence the “incompleteness” of the system, see Mary Tiles, *Mathematics and the Image of Reason* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 114-119.
54. See Alain Badiou, *The Theory of the Subject*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 4.
  55. See Rene Thom, *Structural Stability and Morphogenesis: An Outline of a General Theory of Models*, trans. D.H. Fowler (Redwood City, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, 1972).
  56. See Alain Badiou, *The Theory of the Subject*, p.213.
  57. See, *ibid.*, p.163.
  58. Pierre Rosanvallon importantly points out the change of meaning of suffrage between 1789 and 1830 in France. It was as if the concern in 1789 was the right of the abstract universal which the individual was and in 1830, it had become the rights of the concrete individual that a collectivity was. The pre-eminent name of that concrete individual was “proletarian”. See Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democracy: Past and Future* ed. Samuel Moyn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 58-59.
  59. See, Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution*, trans. Charles Cocks (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 249-250.
  60. We might hazard the statement that from the work of Pauline Kenosis in iconic economy to the mathematical theory of ‘empty set’ we have cited, our preparation was toward the conceptual goal of a *minimal* and *major* thought of the “void” as opposed to the global and minor ideology of the debt.
  61. On the genealogy of the *patria* and its singular projections of the word and idea on the screen of contemporary politics, we will devote the introductory portion of the next study.
  62. The stakes of a “surplus” here must not be taken as one of a *produced* surplus but concerns a fundamentally unproductive yet necessary one that *exists* in the situation whose only consistency is its binding to the void. So this ‘surplus’ is not meant to be competitively appropriated but is to be extracted from the void subjectively, courageously and minimally by taking *one more step*, where no such step follows from a rationality of choice. Thus, learning an essential lesson from Pascal, we can say ‘decision’ is not an act of choice. This is also a mathematical lesson on the so-called “choice” of new sets from an initial set, which we will not rehearse here
  63. The examples of insignias, symbols, acts of adoration (*proskynesis*), pure spectacle of the empty throne, etc., testify not merely to the presence of power and glory but a regime of glorification that expresses a relation of incorporeal indebtedness and not simply submission to a sovereign-divine substance which itself must be “glory”. The difference, thus, between glorification (*doxazein*) and glory (*doxa*) is crucial but subtle. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, pp. 166-196.

64. See Jules Michelet op. cit., p. 156.
65. In Romans 9:25, St. Paul says, “My non-people” with reference to Hosea. “Non-people” falls outside the liturgical and sovereign logic of conversion of a “multitude” (*ochlos*) to a “people” (*populus*) — which logic is the main business of constitutional, executive and iconic-liturgical modes of government. Whether this anonymous “non-people” is to be understood messianically, as does Agamben, or through the resources of the constitutive void and the eventual defaulting on liturgical debt, are matters of infinite, and urgent, interest. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, p. 175.
66. The phrase “aristocracy of anyone” is a modification of Alain Badiou’s occasional coinage “aristocracy of everyone”, which he has probably borrowed from Antoine Vitez.
67. Eric Alliez covers this range and articulation with remarkable concision. He uses an evocative name for the complex articulation of “body” and “brain” in Deleuze, “auto-ethology”. See Eric Alliez, op. cit., p. 69.
68. For this elaboration, see the chapter “Matheme of the Event” in Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 178-183.
69. See, *ibid.*, p. 182.
70. See Alain Badiou, “The Event in Deleuze”, p. 39, in particular, Badiou’s own Axiom I on the event.
71. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 182.
72. It must be crystalline what is implied if the event is a ‘name’ performatively added to the situation with only the void for its element and material: it is implied then that the *decision* on the event is a decision on the name decided as the event, that is, a *decision on a decision*. In Badiou’s prescription on fidelity to the event, which we have not really dealt with here directly, it would mean ‘fidelity to the fidelity to a name’. We think that it is crucial to join the ex-centric decision to the trace of “existence”, which is always also a supplemental demand for being ‘made manifest’ within the Real of a situation – and not simply be a decision on the singularity, however fabulous, of a name.
73. For the moment, let it be granted to us that we ‘illustrate’ effects of indiscernment on so-called “situations of sovereignty” which works only by personification and abstraction – both of which follow the same principle of the one-count. The question of indiscernment of the one-count and the positive emergence of indiscernible, generic sets is Alain Badiou’s vast welcome to the mathematician Paul Cohen to his system. Cohen’s use is made in the early period of *Theory of the Subject*, and then in *Being and Event*. Cohen’s theorem constitutes Badiou’s most developed proposal on the real, unpersonifiable and uncountable actuality of the “new”. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 373-375 for the section “Ontological *Coup de theatre*: the indiscernible exists” of Part VII that enacts the vast and grateful welcome of Cohen.

74. Jacques Derrida complicates and deconstructs the exclusive opposition of the Sovereign and the Other, the name of *majestus* (Majesty) and anonymity, by making a finely modulated and exact gesture towards the *automatism*, the imperturbable, “ithyphallic” indifference or even stupidity of sovereignty. Such marionette-like thoughtless life of the automaton, that the sovereign is, is the precise counterpart of the automatism of the undeclared axiom, the decision of the sovereign appearing as an indifferent, stupid, *violent* obviousness, apodeicticity or axiomatycity that befits only the “beast”, which is the figure of the most non-sovereign other. See Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign Vol. I*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 224.
75. The specific challenge is to think of the so-called exceptional sub-set as *existing* in the very place where it is indiscernible. And how to find a ‘name’ for such an existence? From the interior of the indiscerned situation, where the reality of the indiscernible set is a matter of subjective ‘faith’, or from the position of an ontological ‘science’ which knows such a new, indiscernible and exceptional set exists? All the while remembering that ontological knowledge is not *sovereign* and so it cannot choose to forge a ‘superior’ situation composed of the earlier one and an extension which includes the exception. For that would only mean the reduction and normalization of the exceptional sub-set from its constitutive supplemental status to a new state of discernment. So, the ‘name’ must be a torsion of language from within the resources of the situation to release its intelligibility-to-come. For these complex considerations and the generic path to the problem, not the sovereign one, see Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 374-376.
76. See Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model*, p. 103.
77. See Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From its Origin to 1793*, trans. Elizabeth Moss Evanson (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 99-101.
78. For a vivid illustration, see the letter to the king by the “royal princes”, which by virtue of its clarity and moving tone can be considered the manifesto of the aristocracy, in *ibid.*, p. 100.
79. See note 59 above.
80. The most cogent statement on this double consistency is Carl Schmitt’s, cited by Agamben. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and The Glory*, p. 254. We see Schmitt repeating Sieyès’ exact characterization of “nation” as “people assembled”, as the presence of a direct democratic body.
81. Though we will not refer to a particular text by him, Jacques Ranciere has been the exemplary archaeologist of a ‘common history’ created not by commonality or consensus but by new “partitions” (Ranciere’s key idea).
82. See Jules Michelet, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

### STUDY III

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## Evental Supplements of (Non)Sovereignty

In the course of our investigations, this much has emerged: if as an *event*, the people are a voiding and a default vis-à-vis a history of debt and obligation, an inherited structure of capture and circulation, as a *name*, the people are an intelligibility or an ideality ‘to come’. In the same way as love that in the very indiscernible place of its coming-into-existence, searches for the poetic felicity of its amorous address, the people dig deep in the earth of their times – which always means reaching new earths of other times – in the hope of finding a discursive touchstone, the fable of a ‘new *patria*’ that will call out to the very void from which it springs. Who will ever have missed the punctual iridescence of the unforeseen name(s) of the indiscernible events of a people and of love – the unforeseen or rather unforeheard names(s) indiscernible from every other utterance of the name(s), “people”, “love”!

The challenge is razor-edged, situated on a historical and ontological precipice – how to utter a name without equivocation, commit a gesture of filiation, with an uninhibited, *full* address in the ungraspable yet real place of the event which is constitutively and inconsistently tied to the only universal tie which is of the void? Jules Michelet’s vibrant imagery and the full articulation of his narrative *vocalizes* the event with no trace of inhibition. But it is remarkable that in that much-noted plenitude, a certain void plays, a friable matter is exposed with its orphan spaces in-between, a release or *clemency* of the event and of language returns us to the

question of the 'origin' of revolutionary plenitude, an origin-in-default or the point of lapse of heirs whereupon the question of origin has to be re-articulated with a certain fear and trembling, a certain exuberance and courage.<sup>1</sup>

The singularity which expresses Michelet's historiographic 'decision' with regard to the position of the event and the status of the name-to-come, in the context of the abolition of the *tithes* in 1789, is the word "*patria*". It was a strange word to use and yet was consistent with Michelet's signifiers of plenitude – on the one hand, its provenance lay in the patrimonial and liturgical milieu of Christian norm and law; on the other, its *power* came from an intensity that invested it with an attachment and filiation that tied a so-called subject to a inalienable localization to the point of repelling even the alien generality of any name. Indeed, we will elaborate on this 'unnamable' singularity beyond the norm of canon and patrimonial law as it occupies the constitutive void in Michelet. But before that, it is logically imperative to prepare the ground of thought which prescribes any such genealogy of a singularity. This ground of thought is, within the protocols of our larger project, the 'ground' of sovereignty. Everything then centres on the determination of the concept of "ground" and its determining role in the structural possibility of thinking the questions of exercise of sovereignty as *power* and of the *truth* of sovereignty as the commensuration of the ground and the sovereign 'figures'. These figures, in our study up to this point, have been understood in the three following senses – Greek-liturgical sense (as a civic grid of incorporeal prescriptions); the Christian-consecrational sense (of the presence of the congregation to the king in a single incorporeal horizon of eucharistic transformation); and in the economic-vicarious sense (as the 'minor' universe of ministers, angels and other liturgical assistants)<sup>2</sup>.

Now we have encountered, in our several analyses and interventions, the violent and delicate point of 'exception' which both abyssally grounds all further prescriptions of sovereign power and at the same time, doesn't admit for itself the defining contingency or historicity of any exception, thus violently constituting itself as the *exceptional exception*, as the "ground". Upon

such a violent and abyssal procedure of grounding sovereignty, the entities of power play on that great stage – and the truth of the dramaturgy is preserved by a second violence, the violence of silencing the axiomatic hinge on which the instant of grounding and securing the exception as the sovereign instant is fixed. What we have seen in our passage from theology to mathematics, with an interest in their ‘unconscious’ contributions to modern politics, is that the status of the axiom is divided between a metaphysical normalization and an evental exposure. The procedural necessity of axioms for the discourse of proof that is for theorems, applies as much to Spinoza’s Substance as to Kant’s regulative ideas. As a kind of hyperbole of interested reason, sovereignty accepted as a ‘total’ superior substance, whether ontological, cosmological or political, will defy the strictures of regulative ideas; as a paradigm of *causa sui*, self-grounded ground or God, sovereignty will indeed be present in its immanent, infinite effects such that the axioms of reason are fertilized into demonstrations of Life and Power. However, in *either* case, the cautioning Kant and the generous Spinoza, it is easy to step over, silently and unconsciously, the line or instant – violent and delicate – of the axiomatic decision.<sup>3</sup>

What we really wish to bring out in the above is the historicity of the axiom that in the act of thought that exposes it, renders any so-called history of sovereignty inconsistent and un-grounded. In a kind of homage to Gilles Deleuze’s brilliant perversion of Stoic philosophy of language-events into the theory of “counter-effectuation”, we could speak of a counter-axiomatization of the axiomatic decisions that both open up a history of mastery generated by the truth-effects of axioms and also close, at that very instant, any possibility of historical multiplicity or historicity that carries the torsion of truth. The counter-axiomatization of the axiom’s position as a non-condition of possibility, as absolute limitation, would consist in the exposure of the axiomatic decision to its own torsion, its extreme violence and fragility.<sup>4</sup> We apologize for these remarks because they are by way of repetition from our earlier lessons and results. Still it is worth bearing that monotony if it helps us grasp the fact very clearly that between the axiomatic instant (or line, or should one say, flicker) of sovereignty and

the structure of possible actualizations of power, understood as a logic or a history, there lies an abyss. Because it only grounds itself, the ground of sovereignty falls outside itself and herein lies its serenity and its ecstasy, its vast, self-contained normativity and its pure exigency and exceptionality. Again, this is nothing new, and writers like Giorgio Agamben have attacked this problem with amazingly honed scholarly weapons and from every conceivable direction. Our minimal stake is to try the possibility that with the trace of historicity, something else than sovereignty might be thought, and that thought arises in the density of the sovereign substance along a supplemental hollow and from which hollow a generic non-sovereignty might be freed.<sup>5</sup>

### **PATRIA: GENEALOGY OF A SINGULARITY**

“Today (August 1789) France takes back the tithes, and tomorrow (November 2<sup>nd</sup>), she will take back the estates. By what right? A great jurisconsult has said: ‘By the right of *default of heirs*’. The dead church has no heirs. To whom does her patrimony revert? To her author, to that PATRIA, where the new church shall rise”.<sup>6</sup> At the point of voiding and default of heirs, it is not only that the *magnitude* of an enormous debt is thrown out and dissolved; more crucially, it is that the *power* of debt is evacuated and the nexus (*nexum*) of obligation is struck by a warrior-like (*soluti*) lightning flash and henceforth freed open in the hearts of a people.<sup>7</sup> The ‘people’ as the lightning flash of an event, are not simply the privative result of a subtraction from the quantum or magnitude of debt – they are the power of the powerlessness of inherited (liturgical) debt, hence an affirmation rising out of the void, produced by a torsion, and ‘rising’ in the hearts. Or, perhaps more closely said, the people *are* that heart in which a void swells, not as emptiness, but as an abyssal site, a groundless ground, of what Jules Michelet calls, “the new church”.

By the above account of a trace of historicity passing from inexistence to existence the name of the void is “*patria*”. But is this what Michelet is proposing in his logical crescendo? Or, are we resorting to a kind of ontological hermeneutic that recovers

an unconscious layer of Being's inconsistent presentation in the historian's sequence? We suggest that put in this static form of alternation, the problem is not soluble. Instead it is possible that at every stage of Michelet's construction, a genealogical depth opens up, which reveals a history of names as a history of subjective investment or obligation. So even if we declare the void-name of a reality voided and defaulted on to be the signifier *patria*, this flickering, new, even 'generic' name must again be genealogically relativised into a history of *the debt of names*, or the name as a debt. Only such a labour will make it possible to re-trace the path to the present (the moment of Michelet here) whose self-division and self-displacement dramatize the historical present of debt face to face with the *singular* present of default and the void.

So what is Michelet proposing in the stated sequence? The end-moment of the crescendo, which is frankly messianic and proclaims the new church, is predicated upon the *event* of an equally frank confiscation. It is "France's" confiscation of the *tithes* and the society of orders and estates. 'France', the first precipitation of a name, in our reading, oscillates between a "who" and a "what", a *persona* (or *prosonon*) and a body or thing (*res*) with ever increasing violence as the syntagm progresses.<sup>8</sup> But we will not make that name the point of concentration because of the obvious danger of identifying "France" with an originary image of the *patria* – which of course defeats the whole point of the genealogical tracery of the singular present. In any case what is confiscated, taken back, is what we have shown to be a liturgical nexus of obligation objectified in the *tithes* as a direct debt to God expressed in a *small* or *minor* magnitude (which is the Church's motto, not necessarily the empirical reality borne by the debtor) and the right of membership in the *widest* embrace of Christ's Body or the Church – even to the point of the global invisibilisation of that body which precisely expresses its greatest power.<sup>9</sup> However, as we saw at the end of the last study, the whole force of Michelet's historiography is the writing of the event of the Nation along the locus of a universal new Church, which forfeits, with enthusiasm and contempt, the corporate embrace of the old Church. So Michelet's horizon consists of an *excess* of 'popular being' and 'sovereign form' once the inherited



liturgical relation is voided. And this excess is not the same as the tactical excess of christic transcendence that passes through the imperceptible pores of the world's immanence, expressed in the medieval *fisc*.

Yet, genealogically speaking, the singular difference of the two excesses must still be re-inserted into the tree of descent and imbrication. And this is evident in Michelet's own utterance: "The dead church has no heirs. To whom does her patrimony revert? To her author, to that PATRIA..." It is this reversal of the sovereign form of patrimony or ownership from the old church which is dead, to the originary, greater form which is *non-patrimonial* that must be situated. Ernst Kantorowicz provides us with a theoretical derivation of the non-patrimonial author of any, all and the new church, which Michelet capitalizes as the PATRIA – a derivation closely resembling the imprescriptible and "common" definition of the *fisc* that we have already studied. According to Kantorowicz, in the middle ages, *patria* was to be differentiated from the feudal code binding vassal to the lord. Insofar as *patria* was an object of unsurpassable *fidelity*, something to die for and so not an 'object' at all but an irreducible moment of the subject, death *pro patria*, needed to be separated from death *pro domino*.<sup>10</sup> This separation corresponds to the non-negotiable distance of the 'cause' that becomes the object or reason for an obligatory death in payment of a feudal debt, from the 'love' that is inseparable from an infinite readiness to die for the *patria*, the readiness to infinitely pay an unpayable debt. It is in this latter sense that *patria* is remarked by an irreducible subjective moment to which no object corresponds in a homologous way as the sovereign form of the *fisc* to which no sovereign *persona* or patrimonial owner corresponds. The only, but shattering, difference is that while *fisc* remains an enigmatic *logical* form, the subjective investment of the *patria* gives it a mobile historicity, which is what we are trying to recover.<sup>11</sup>

Before a further historical derivation guided by Kantorowicz, let us speculate on the possible theoretical meanings of the *patria*, a speculation along the lines of difference between the finite feudal debt even if it entailed dying *pro domino* and the infinite subjective obligation which marks a more insidious mode of liturgy (as we have

shown). What, then, is *patria*? Either it is absolute undifferentiated self-belonging, native existence, homeland in the sense of birth-place or space of birth (*khora*), *autochthony*, or it is the widest, most expansive, *global* space of residence, so wide that this residence is incommensurable with *this* world – so residence in the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>12</sup> So subjectively speaking, attachment to or investment in the *patria* meant either ‘self-trans-substantiation’ in the sense of an ipseity which transforms itself into itself as a self sunk back into the earth it sprang from, thus fully presenting the *indigene* or *autochthon*, or it meant an act of participation, or the disposition to participate, in a kind of civic assembly or congregation of saints. But this apparent scission between absolute, indigenous self-belonging and the most extreme migration of identity also reverses direction into the most intense centripetal tendency of inseparation. How so? By the *logic of singularity* that we believe works exemplarily in Kierkegaard, in Benjamin, in Derrida (among others).<sup>13</sup> Which is to say, utter self-belonging can only be the singular *exception* to all general judgement on belonging to the universe of predicates that define the object or subject in question. Because in its coming-into-existence, its individuation, a *supplement* must enter the heart of the predicative universe to make it a hollow. This would be the supplement of *existence itself*, which is never a predicate and not a quantifier either but the very ‘monstration’ of belonging rather than the de-monstration of a self that belongs in a certain number of predicative ways.<sup>14</sup> Such a ‘monster’ which belongs so unmistakably to itself is not an individual among a species or generality of individuals but the *singular individual* whose existence is the supplemental prosthesis and by virtue of that very logic of prosthesis, *sovereign*.<sup>15</sup> And this fragmented exposure to *existence* of the supplement or prosthesis of sovereignty, makes the ponderous and mute stability of the sovereign of kingdoms and territories, lands and frontiers, laws and taxation, tremble.

By the logic of singularity, the ecstatic meaning of *patria*, apparently opposed to autochthony, is determined by a moment of the singular *wager* that *this* footstep on the deterritorialized earth, *this* setting up of camp, *this* step beyond to a subjective territory of commitment and fidelity, the step into the hollow of the heart and

the fringes of the cosmos – they create the *patria* worth loving and dying, and surely, living for. In both cases, whether the singular exception or the singular wager, the prosthesis of autochthonous belonging or the autochthony of the outermost hollow of the heart and the skies, the *patria* is never a pre-given, object or cause; rather it is a *locus of transformation* such that an ensemble of contingent elements enters into a site of existence and wager, love and abandonment.

Now for a more historical derivation of the *patria*: In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as part of the Holy Crusades, taxes were imposed in the name of two emergencies in a single mould – the theological emergency that had befallen the *terra sancta* (Holy Land), and the politico-territorial emergency that threatened the defense of the *regnum* (realm).<sup>16</sup> In this double articulation of the historical exigency, the Christian *patria*, which was of *another* world, not of the dominion of earthly sovereignty, had to *return* to this one as a supplemental added force, a super-numerary value to confront this exigency. The new, super-numerary value was now given the name “nation” and welded to this value, the “emergency” was *localized* as much to an Italy, an England, a France as much as it was a *global* emergency.<sup>17</sup> The consciousness of the scale of the emergency, which empirically concerned Christendom, as global is consistent with Christianity’s global-colonial tactics. This latter thesis demonstrated by Marie-José Mondzain has, as we know, iconic force and is ontologically beholden to the Pauline *kenosis* as the void-support of an infinite credit and iconic obligation on a world scale. Instead of rehearsing that thesis here, let us connect it up with the exigent steps taken by the authorities of the 13<sup>th</sup> century not as part of the ‘economy’ of Christian salvation but as part of the state of emergency *here and now*.

So in matters of taxation, we could say what was sought to be effectuated was a kind of ‘emotion of the tax’ among the populace. This emotion was expressed by saying that the tax was levied for one’s native fatherland, one’s *patria* (*natalis patriae*).<sup>18</sup> The emotion was acutely replicated in the justification of the crusades as *bellum justum* (just war), as a war in defense of the *patria*. Again we must emphasize the invocation of the *patria* not simply as a theologeme

for Christian territory – which it was – but as much as a subjective terrain or site of a fidelity (*pistis*).<sup>19</sup> Only at that irreducible ‘subjective’ level does the global stakes of a Christian politics – if such a conjunction is admissible – emerge, a kind of politics of the *patria* understood as an infinite expropriation of the ‘heart’, a politics of the heart, as it were. At the same time, given it was a call and justification for *war*, there had to be a ‘tone’ of contingent necessity, of the emergency, of a *decision*. But this decision joined to the justification by the *patria* was not made in a vacuum nor was it a pure function of exigent circumstances. The decision(s) corresponded to the ongoing and encoded knightly obligation as part of a larger ‘liturgical’ logic – the obligation to die for Christ and for the father-land. Two models of self-sacrifice, religious and civic, were installed through this knightly code of debt. But the really significant use made of this inherited structure was to transpose the ‘subjective’ utterance that the knightly obligation was the “sweetest” to perform, to the condition of the emergency, which led to the ‘sweetening’, a ‘haloing’, and beautification of the emergency.<sup>20</sup> No surprise then if the emotion accompanying the tax to pay for such a sweet exigency must have been a sweet emotion too!

Again we must be careful to distinguish the above knightly obligation from the *feudal* obligation which was a kind of private code of service and loyalty to the individual feudal lord. The liturgical amplitude of obligation, as we have emphasized more than once, was tied to a *public* level of existence, that Henry Bracton, in terms of Canon and Roman Law, had called “fiscal”. In the same way that the *fisc* was not an object of patrimonial possession and prescription, *patria* was not, originally, a territorial or national belonging, a “national individuality”, as Antonio Negri accurately puts it.<sup>21</sup> Now suppose that as a conceptual constellation, “*fisc*” comes in line with “*patria*” and “*empire*” to constitute an obscure genealogy for inconsistent sovereignty – given only patrimonial ownership or sovereignty is consistent –, what would be the fuzzy form of this constellation? *Fisc-empire-patria* would be a non-patrimonial space of *circulation* – *but a space of circulation which is also a space in circulation*. Such a topological space is non-

bounded (which means non-territorial) but with strict regularities of movement, stoppage, arrest and breakage. It is a space of neighbourhoods, an 'open' of proximities that in liturgical terms acts as a "network of exchange, obligations and credits" (Marie-José Mondzain).<sup>22</sup> By the double features of being a space *of* and *in* circulation, the constellation *fisc-empire-patria* conveys both a *khora* (space) and it is an *akhoretton* (non-space).<sup>23</sup>

However, let us note a paradox, which probably enacts itself as much historically as theoretically. The paradox is the following: if the constellation suggested (*empire-fisc-patria*) is ceaseless, non-patrimonial, regulated by a logic of circulation, stoppage, passage and transformation, in other words, a *logic of plasticity*, operating on a global, or planetary, scale, it is also the world-wide 'normalization' of 'everything', the global saturation of what exists by a kind of secure 'non-being'. In this sense, while the *patria*, *empire*, *fisc* are non-claimable, excessive *debts of the name*, every time by their utterance, marking an infinite, unpayable obligation, they are as much security-apparatuses of non-being with no outside to their constitutive hollow, their *nothing*. That is why, with all its differentiated theoretical potential, the *genealogy* of *patria* must always specify the latter's imbrication with the individualization and generalization by power in particular historical modes – which are always also modes of naming, implanting the name into the bodies of 'subjects' and extracting sharp debts from their souls by the power of the name. In this light, listen to the quotation from Calgacus, the Caledonian chieftain, about the Romans in Tacitus' *Agricola*, "... Plunder, butchery and theft they miscall by the name empire, and where they make a solitude, they give it the name of peace".<sup>24</sup> Everything that power and sovereign might (*majestas*) deploy is also the deployment of a 'calling' and a 'miscalling'. And that is why everything is also up for a historical, ontological, nominative defaulting on the debt of the name; every name is, and must be, redeemed into anonymity.

When Jules Michelet speaks of the "new Church" which must spring from the original author of things, the PATRIA, he is both making a magnificent leap across the genealogical web of names and their truth-effects to a great backward transcendence, and

also incarnating the historical *angelus novus* for the future of a redeemed church, nation and people – but he is doing these extraordinary things in the torsion or the event of *the present*. In this, the two directions of transcendence, past and future, which are united in a fine philosophy of messianicity and redemption (our thanks here to Satyabrata Das)<sup>25</sup>, are still the collaterals of Michelet’s resistance to a *total singularization* of the present in the present which resistance only makes the present more vibrant with equivocation and suture itself to the only support of such an open and exposed view of historicity, which is the support of the “void”. So we might repeat, in the light of the present investigation, that with which we concluded the previous study on the passage to the “event”: the event, in its presentation of a trace-in-coming-into-existence, its making manifest of its real, divides and hollows the very singularity which is its site such that minimally the void can accompany this presentation by presenting itself. Which means, Michelet’s contribution to the historical reflection on the event of the so-called Revolution is not that the forms of sovereignty, power and truth make a paradigm-shift in the history of political society but that every thing can be re-commenced, everything can begin again *in thought*: one more step is possible, both in the directions of the past and the future, when the present is *thought* in its passage to the void, in its pure defaulting.

### **PATRIA: FUTURE OF A VOID**

In Kant’s essay on Perpetual Peace, concerned with a kind of axiomatic basis for the European world after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), the *neutrality* of the prescriptions interestingly relates to Kant’s ‘neutral’ affect of progressive politics – enthusiasm – in the *Conflict of Faculties*. In any case, the sixth prescription/imperative of the essay implies that there is no more sense of a *bellum justum* (just war) in the modern world.<sup>26</sup> Why so? Because a *bellum justum* is predicated on the possibility of a judicial or sovereign decision on which nation is just in a situation of war. But such a power of decision goes against the axiom of absolute and equal sovereignty of states. This axiomatic naturalization of a

balance of peace as opposed to a decision by war – the opposition between a perpetual state and an active result – tends clearly to the neutral horizon of UN ‘sovereignty’ in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We could say such a naturalization of peace between nations attempted to convert the void, effectuated through an event such as the French Revolution, the void between the old and the new regimes, into a neutral ‘form’. Which is the territorial, sovereign nation-state as a form of *patrimony* within its objective limits or boundaries – which further means the axiomatic as well as legal standardization of the differentiated singularizations of the *patria*. This could also be termed the point of contestation between what Antonio Negri calls, “a philosophy of old Europe” as opposed to the philosophy of New Europe. The latter is based on a US-led neo-conservative prescription that the Western model of political sovereignty which is modern democracy”, is the *coming to birth* of real and only sovereignty. Everything else is corrupt, primitive and – simply old and insignificant. In that sense the history, where nothing really ever happened, has indeed ended.

Interestingly, Carl Schmitt raised a series of ‘existential’ objections to the de-legitimation of the *bellum justum* in the wake of Germany’s defeat in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War – and the Treaty of Versailles that followed. According to Schmitt, such a treaty fundamentally “criminalised” the defeated nation and usurped its existential possibility of deciding on a war in a *situation of politics*.<sup>27</sup> A treaty and a forum of neutralized sovereignty *masked* the real usurpation which was that of the subjective dimension of a nation’s existence – in that sense, the dimension of *patria*. The forums of so-called peace pre-decided or foreclosed the *threshold of intensity* that existentially decided ‘politics’ which is, transcendently speaking, always war.<sup>28</sup> According to Schmitt’s criticism of modern, liberal regime of international, hegemonic politics, a certain fundamental violence is committed by the silent axiomatics of ‘peace’ against the existential exposure to the event of politics and the existential justification by the singularity of the *patria* of a *bellum justum*.

But the experience of contemporary history reveals a terrible irony with regard to the above debate: even while Carl Schmitt’s existential parameters were always exposed to an extremely

destructive partisanship in history, they still reflected a stand on the classical Kantian dictum on neutral, equal and absolute sovereignty, *within a European limit*. It was as if Europe displayed a metaphysical competence for modern, democratic-to-liberal sovereignty that was denied to the rest of the world. At the same time, in Kant's own view, such a remainder of the world was very much included in the *promise* of a universalized future. And exactly along the contour of the future, as it is being carved in the last two decades at least, a new *bellum justum* of the liberal-democratic type, with a neo-conservative thrust on the question of the decision on the exception, is emerging. We will not elaborate the historical details here but the conditions, under which the United States invaded Iraq and the further forcing of those conditions, together, produce an altered axiomatic ballast for the new just war, *bellum justum*. This is not any more the axiom of equal, absolute and limited sovereignty – a dizzying contradiction between axioms that condense the entire history of the real historical violence 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards! – but that of *differential sovereignties*. While this axiom still awaits its Immanuel Kant, we can provide its bare outline. In this axiomatic, nations are differentiated or singularized according to a kind of 'magnitude' of sovereignty such that we are mobilized along a scale of 'least' sovereign states to the most sovereign one(s). Under such an axiomatic, the classical (modern) prohibition against the "Old-European" threat of partisan war is *lifted*, not in a return of imperial war or war of victory and the reason and rule of the strongest but for the sake of a war of emancipation of indigenous sovereignties, within a still-Kantian horizon of democratic judgment. But within the exigent necessity of emancipation, as opposed to the risk of imperialist transgression, a scope of decision, of partisan war, or rather partisan intervention on behalf of the universal judgment is opened up. And here arrives a new *patria*, a subjective condition or site where the universal judgment is continually played out as a recitation of the contingent slogan of a new *bellum justum* or just war for the objective cause of that very judgment. In Giorgio Agamben's terms, "decision" and "judgment" enter into a "zone of indistinction".<sup>29</sup> As do the universal and the singular.



When the communist philosopher Antonio Negri praises the “philosophy of old Europe”, its neighbourhoods of love, abandonment and joyous individuations beyond “national individuality”; praises *singularity* of the *patria* as did Machiavelli, as would Spinoza, he wants to wrench himself free from a certain privative narrative by the Heideggerians regarding the decline of European metaphysics as he would like to wrest from the ironies of international politics, a counter power of *singularity itself*.<sup>30</sup> We think there is great virtue in recovering what Althusser movingly called “the impotent thought of the event in Machiavelli”.<sup>31</sup> A thought that, as we showed earlier, secretly installs a kind of erotic vulnerability at the heart of Machiavelli’s programme of a “secular liturgy”, a regime of non-theological debt and repatriation. There is, we think, a peerless line of flight and philosophical and political genealogy passing through Spinoza and Machiavelli as different from the one passing through Kant up to Heidegger. But this is not the main point here. We would like to raise an ontological doubt with regard to Negri’s emphasis on the *patria* – a doubt with political implications we will not draw out here. In our view, the *total singularization* Negri affirms with regard to the *patria* and his own wager on that medieval name re-imposes a new and further unpayable *debt of the name*. It re-imposes a new counter-aristocracy and counter-austerity under the shadow of the substance he will also call “multitude”.<sup>32</sup> When he says that every multitude is a singularity, every singularity a multitude, he equates an ontological rupture, an event which must provoke the torsion of thinking as it does in the order of being with a *name*. He thus equates a problem of anonymous presentation of being as void-supported and the aleatory ‘chance’ or ‘throw’ of the event, with an ideal form, an intelligibility- to-come, a science-to come of the to-come, which a name marks and promises. But as we saw in our work on Michelet’s two leaps, into the past and the future, the two pirouettes around the great name PATRIA, every redemptive movement (“the new church”) must involve itself with the *alea*, the chance of the event *as it is happening*. As it is happening, the name “*patria*”, in each of its aleatory upsurges in the many presents that our genealogy

gave glimpses of, also absorbs some of that chance and play which results in the necessary *formlessness of every name*. That is why, there is no ‘natural’ and lucid name of the event and no singularity totally singularizes the same. That is why insofar as “event” is also a conceptual name, form and *debt* as is “singularity” we must be ready to default on them and be happier for that readiness.

### **CONVERSION OF THE ALEA: FROM EVENT TO DANGER**

The *alea*, or “chance”, of the event does not enjoy any *power*, so to speak, of making the event. So no power, or capacity – whether understood as *potesta* or any other classical locus of these words – is transmitted to the event by the indiscerning singularity and its aleatory dimension that the event, retroactively, might throw into relief. Rather, the contrary: the event is a point of lapsus or default in the history of forms of power. And insofar as that default also presents the empty perfection of the void, the event is, indeed, a “perfect weakness”.<sup>33</sup> Yet the least one can say, after our several disquisitions and indices about it, is that the event is not nothing. Its indices, of which the name is an ideal and dangerous horizon, as we saw, signal towards a necessary formlessness arising out of an indiscerning contingency, which doesn’t cease provoking *acts of thinking*. Every act of thinking that encounters the real of a point of default, also encounters the passion of pure possibility of the impossible that the real is. Which means, thought is provoked into seizing its own new-born passion into the form of the evental formlessness. But if we are not to multiply self-cancelling antinomies, we must now ask the concrete question, seizing in which element and in what way?

Unlike the attitude of infinite pathos that accompanies the abdication or default of thinking itself before the *prohibition* of the event, the present effort is to restore thinking to its infinite task before the *clemency* of the event. Which means, in its defaulting on the inherited debts of magnitude, form and names, the tentative index called “event” also dissolves, releases and, so, ‘forgives’ the

power and value of that inheritance. This, it does, not only by a superior trans-valuation in the manner of a Nietzsche but also by a more minimal, more strenuously weak exercise: the thought of the event (in both direction of the genitive) converts the representation of inherited debt, of obligatory transcendences, into the void-material of a new *alea*, a new and “generic” existence. Interestingly, every effort to understand the meaning of Alain Badiou’s concept of the “generic” as the events threshold of passage to a new existence involves a process of subtraction from the given predicates of an initial situation – which predicates are themselves formed from a *conversion* of the torsions of historicity, of the power-less and ‘forgiving’ chance of events into the power of “dangers”.<sup>34</sup>

The remarkable tests we have cited from the Revolutionary historiography of France in defense of the irreducible reality of the event, its new, indiscernible and generic consequences, are also great texts prescribing the *affairs of the state*. And it is the fundamental affair of the state to convert, nay, constitute the event as a “danger”. Let’s say such a process of conversion-cum-constitution takes place in two modes, a historico-social mode and a politico-ontological one. Again, the revolutionary situation in France between 1789 and 1794 being a case in point, we see both modes in operation and often indistinguishable from each other. Robert Castel, in his comprehensive study of what he calls “transformation of the social question” in the context of practices of labour in French history, points out a key reservation in the thinking of Abbé Sieyès on the constitution of a socially productive existence in the wake of the Revolution.<sup>35</sup> We have already seen the vivid axiomatic declaration on Sieyès’ part bringing into performative existence a new “people” – the declaration of the event of a people, as it were. We have seen the contingent torsion erupting in a historical sequence called the “third estate” as an “utterance” of *existence* as opposed to and torn from the inherited *power* (and promise, surely) of debt. Such an existence was to be fundamentally allied to an ontological ground whose supplemental status, historically determined by the hierarchy of the three estates in the Old Regime, was to be corrected, nay, revolutionized in the New Regime. That,

indeed, was to be the central and manifest programme of *justice* as opposed to the subtle, supplemental and insidiously manipulable doctrine of *grace* that underlay theological kingship<sup>36</sup>. But how was this breakthrough to justice to be accomplished?

We might recall that Sieyès, in his influential pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?* in early 1789, declares the subtraction of the third estate from the total count of the three estates taken as a population or a nation. The people, then, are a subtraction from the population – but based on what historico-social and politico-ontological parameters would this subtractive reality reconfigure itself into the positive new *Nation*, a supplemental name Sieyès himself proposed for the constituent assembly in June 1789? It is here that Castel's critique of Sieyès' reservation about true 'ontological sociability' becomes noteworthy. In Castel's interpretation, Sieyès stands as moral and ontological gatekeeper at the door to 'entry into society' refusing permission to the two estates, clergy and nobility, on grounds of lacking intrinsic capacity and being parasites of inheritance *and* to the workers in society who are reduced to their bodies, their biological lives. If the latter were, as Sieyès thought of them, mere "bipeds", then what does the people have as its intrinsic, social and productive existence?<sup>37</sup> Basing ourselves on Castel's prescient analysis, we would call this above aporia the *problem of the bourgeoisie* in the new political and ontological regime. And this very aporia becomes the historical occasion for converting the aleatory material of the event – the indiscernment of the people once the initial predicates of estate and order in the situation have been subtracted – into procedures of evaluation and endangerment. Emmanuel Sieyès' own contribution to these procedures, which we could also call "liturgical", was the proposed distinction of *active* and *passive* citizens. Active citizens, who paid a tax equivalent to three days of work in a month, entered into a full-fledged relation of rights and obligations with society such that the following debt was affirmed: while society provided for and protected, essentially included, the citizen-individual, this membership was incumbent upon the (active) citizen placing all his stakes in the constitution and reproduction of that social space.<sup>38</sup> And the whole question

of the quantitative and existential evaluation of these “stakes” lay at the heart of the passage through the ontological aporia pointed out earlier.

Having made the inaugural and wrenching movement of the third estate’s self-declaration and having followed it up with a set of parameters of exclusion from the ontology of “the people”, the pamphleteer-logician prescribes a *measure* of ontological inclusion through the active citizen-passive citizen distinction. But that measure itself is not ontological and it is not part of the poetic wager on the supplement of the event (that, for example, the name “nation” was in June 1789). Rather, it is the issuance of a new axiom that allows the passage from the aporetic but brilliant ‘citizen of the event’ to the counted and measured ‘citizen of the law/constitution’. We can say, it is a “bourgeois” axiom, which decisively intervenes both in the structure of corporate inheritance and in the instrumental interpretation of labor. The new, “bourgeois” axiom of productivity or work as capacity was different from the inherited power of wealth, land and dominion, which were *localized* sites of a kind of social fecundity, as well as from the physical or natural attribute of manually working/labouring which was taken for granted in all empirical human endeavours<sup>39</sup>. The axiom inserted itself between the greater (and thus, further minoritized, as we have shown) christo-fiscal ‘surplus’ giving sovereign guarantee against all feudal localization, a guarantee itself impossible to localize and the primitive automatism of the “biped” whose generic enslavement to the life process represented the most complete, the most perfect non-sovereign sovereignty, the sovereignty of autochthony, embodied in the worker-autochthon. Instead, the axiom of productivity or work as a capacity of being, declared the *immanent* existence of a surplus-creating capacity which was neither externally localized (as in land or inherited wealth) nor self-identical with the ‘natural’ man’s, the biped’s labouring activity. Indeed, by this prescription, the capacity of productivity, whose *truth* lay in the creation of a surplus, was immanently de-localized to the apparently popular and egalitarian ontology of ‘any-one’. An arresting image of the worker-immigrant at the level of ontological de-localization is thus born! But exactly at that threshold of de-

territorialization of being, the axiom retreats from its evental, revolutionary exposure to the historicity it is born from, retreats to reappear as the affair of the State, the government of counts and measures.

In the regime prescribed by Sieyès, the gradation between active and passive citizens is a way of externalizing the ontological declaration of existence as intrinsic productivity, to a pragmatics of government: “Measure, count and judge the stakes of anyone according to their taxable surplus”. Further, “Limit the ones without surplus at the level of their limited stakes, thus, limit their circle of rights – and in a strange (and incorporeal) way, their subjective obligations”. And further, “whoever and whatever escapes the measure of a surplus as well as the limits of subjectivity, is a *danger!*” What we see illustrated in Robert Castel’s vast material on work, vagabondage and poverty in European middle ages to the Revolutionary period of France is not merely the outright repression and exclusion of insolvent phenomenon by instrumental and sovereign power. What is more remarkable is the account of oblique, convoluted even tortured initiatives as part of government and institutional policy to *empower* insolvency and indigence so as to convert them to historico-social ‘dangers’.<sup>40</sup> The reason for this seems two-fold: first, the very experience of exclusion by law and force is unsuccessful in cancelling out the *existence* of supplements, however degraded and corrupt, weak and indigent. In fact the problem is that the so-called poor, vagabond, miserable... *are too weak to entirely capture*. Hence the need to convert them to categories of logic, value and power so as to deploy them in fields of policy and ‘play’.<sup>41</sup> But this history of the ‘play of policy’ is also precisely a history in the service of the *foreclosure of the event*. This is what constitutes the second possible reason for a kind of onto-governmental investment in the weakest links of the social *dispositif*. The very reason of the state intensifying methods and spaces of surveillance to survey these ‘least’ singularities in the historical sequences we have mentioned desultorily (and Castel examines thoroughly) is to give these ‘least’ existences permanent forms of recognition – which can only mean permanent forms or figures of power. The reason to do this is not to simply control

these institutional forms and utilize them for ‘public purposes’ but to encode them as ciphers of discernments in the eventuality of the event’s ontological indiscernment of even these accessible weaknesses, deprivations and insolvencies. The real danger against which the grant of the power of being to a social danger must be made as a preventive measure, is the one of what Michelet called “default of heirs” – in which event, the social danger would, in a *generic* default, default on its own dangerous status. Thus the whole affair of the state consists in the invention of a history of representation in which the poor, the vagabond, the indigent would *inherit* a historical and logical form of being the *possible* poor, the *possible* vagabond, the *possible* insolvent and bad debtor. Thus inherit the power (and debt) of being a danger to society for which no generic default is thinkable and all actual cases of transgression or failure only reconfirm the strange empowerment of weakness as a critical threshold of danger, where society is most endangered and most controlled. The power which maintains a limit-possibility as the very definition of security and sovereignty, defined in proportion to the coefficient of danger maintained, defined as functions of *possible* danger, attempts, by such self-inflicted logical tortures, to foreclose the figure of the impossible which figure will have been the indiscerning dis-figure of the event.

But in the rare instant of declaration (to which someone like Michelet gives historiographic form) of a generic default, what is defaulted on is not anymore the individual or specific burdens of debt and obligations but the very systematicity of debt-relation and its *promise* of liturgical and ‘sovereign maintenance’ secured through the continuity of the line of debtor-heirs – which the poor, the vagabond, the miserable are in their ‘dangerous’ power of weakness in the logic which maintains the danger. The generic default takes place when the promise of infinite debt-maintenance is defaulted on, and there are no more debtor-heirs – not essentially because of external clemency or the debtors’ militant refusal to pay (though both these circumstances are possible) but because of a new and impossible possibility we call “generic”. This is the possibility of a historical multiplicity born of torsion and aligned to the clemency and militancy of the *void* that is presented along

with the presentation of the ‘default-event’. Which means, the void-presentation renders dis-figured and unrecognizable not only the encoded figures of danger and weakness – which are the same – but the very axiomatic and figural stability of the sovereign who was always the ultimate creditor and guarantor of debt and judge of credit-worthiness. The axiom is eventually exposed, the figure’s representation is either put in perpetual abeyance or rendered openly grotesque, the sovereign’s credit is *no good any more*. Thus the generic default on debt is always fundamentally on behalf of the creditor.<sup>42</sup>

Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès was saying nothing less in *What is the Third Estate?* when he declared the “people”, who at present are nothing, must speak in the imminent future, not only on behalf of themselves but of *all*. But the really far-reaching consequence of this declaration was that when a “people”, created through the default on the hitherto reigning forms of the “all” speaks affirmatively in the present of the happening of the event, which it is, it speaks on behalf of a singular point of *exception* to the “all”. This point of exception, though, is non-localizable and undecidable in terms of the form to which it is an exception; it is the impossible possibility of the generic existence of the “not-all”.<sup>43</sup> Sieyès’ “third estate”, in the early months of 1789, start to speak of their existence-to-come as indiscernible from the coming of the “not-all”. Here it is instructive to remember the point of incorporeal (Dionysian) exception that always, as intoxication and ec-stasy, promised to open up the Greek sense of “common” or *koinonia* to an experience of the “not-all”. In fact the originary passage of the god, Dionysus through the space of the common or *koinonia*, the passage of a *theatre of events* through the *theatre of liturgy*, of a generic theatre through a theatrical *city*, was the experience of a “people”, taken to be civically and politically united in a shared or common space of the *polis*, exposed to the incorporeal arrival of the ‘non-common’ divinized in Dionysus.<sup>44</sup> However and paradoxically, what was revealed through this originary experience was a deeper, if equivocal, ontological and political possibility – the *common* possibility of being exposed to the arrival of the ‘non-common’, the impossible possibility of the exceptional event that makes the



“all” default on itself and makes the “not-all” circulate as a subject of aleatory seizure.

So it is not without significance that we see in Sieyès a hunt for some primary basis or ground for “political sociability” (François Furret’s useful coinage)<sup>45</sup> and his ‘liturgical prescriptions for instituting a logic of citizenship through a correspondence between material taxable surplus and the excess of civically available being of the political subject over the life-process of the labouring “biped”. Only a *political* subject is productive both in the sense of creating material surplus and in that of participating in the civic assembly. And conversely, to complete the liturgical circle, only the ones, the active citizens, who are capable of creating wealth for society, who produce re-investible surplus are qualified *ontologically* for civic and political participation in the full sense. However, in conclusion to this section, we must underline a crucial, if subtle, difference of perspective on democracy and popular sovereignty in the respective situations of 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Athens and Revolutionary France. The difference is the following: in the limited assembly of Athenian democracy, the political subject is given through a relatively unproblematized “freedom”, constitutively inapplicable to categories such as women, slaves, foreigners. And insofar as freedom meant the capacity for incorporeal transformation, this freedom had to be utilized for the key practical and ontological concern of the city – active, subjective participation in the assemblies. *Everything* as part of the activity of an extremely limited freedom was incorporeally significant, everything was an *assembly*. Hence the system of liturgical funding, created out of taxing wealthy persons, among other means, to make available these forms of assembly, which were also forms of incorporeal subjectivation, to all those who were ‘free’, whether rich or poor. In Sieyès’ conjuncture of the revolutionary *event of freedom*, where the event was also the liberated destiny of a passionate and difficult problematization of “freedom” *in thought*, it is not without irony that a new and infinite liberty comes to be limited by the real existence of poverty. Under such limitation, entry into society, into the new civic assembly becomes barred on the grounds that significant and participative freedom is only possible through

being involved in a new incorporeal condition, the condition of productivity. It was not enough for ‘free’ men (and women to a limited extent) to be present at the civic assembly; their incorporeal capacity could only be attested to by their presence to a greater incorporeal and figureless figure than even the sovereign state. No doubt such a presence to the axiom of productivity was also one to the axiom of property or *capital*.<sup>46</sup> But we can’t afford to forget that this super-numerary ‘property’ or capital, ideologically created in the aftermath of the event of the default on the heirs of the Old Regime, had still to contend with the other ‘super-numeraries’, the poor, the unemployed or indigent worker, the immigrant, the mad, who threatened, with a constitutive weakness, not only a new regime of government and sovereignty but also a post-evental Capital. These weak “peoples” threatened to default on the promise and debt of a post-defaulting age: so would they be now produced and maintained as the dangerous and necessary limits not only of society but also of capital? Or, even while derisory conversions to power proceed, will a *trace* of the event pass into the strange Festival of Misfortune in the last phase before the Thermidor when a “sacred and inviolable debt” will be paid by society to the unfortunates and the unhappy, who bear in their lacerated hearts, the terrible power and fear of defaulting?

#### “AN INVIOABLE AND SACRED DEBT”<sup>47</sup>

Three citations:

1. “*All men have a right to subsistence*: The fundamental truth of all society, and which imperiously reclaims a place in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, appeared to the committee to be the basis of all law, of all political institutions which are proposed to release begging. Thus, each man having a right to his subsistence, society must oversee the relief of all those of its members who have need of it, and this relief must not be regarded as a good deed...it is the strict and indispensable duty of all men who are not themselves in poverty, a duty which can no longer be depreciated, neither by the name nor

by the character of alms giving. Henceforth, it is for all society a sacred and inviolable debt.” [From the report of Committee for the extinction of begging and public assistance]

2. “Public relief is a sacred debt. Society owes subsistence to its unhappy citizens, to be procured for them by work, to consist in procuring them work, or to consist of ensuring them the means of subsistence, for those who are beyond the status of work.” [From Article 21 of the constitution passed on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1793]
3. “The two extremes of life will be reunited with the sex that is the source of them. There you will see elderly farmers, disabled artisans, and next to them you will also find mothers and unfortunate widows, burdened with children. This spectacle is the most beautiful that politics might present to nature and that the fertile Earth can offer to the consoling sky.” [From Barère’s report envisaging a civic ceremony to “honour misery”, a report on which was based the law of May 11, 1794, two months before Thermidor, establishing the Book of National Goodwill and organizing relief in the countryside.]

Two contradictory impulses, two “profound intuitions” (in Robert Castel’s words<sup>48</sup>) are in play in the above citations: on the one hand, they avow an *absolute*, unconditioned right of “subsistence”, which means, the right to the reproduction of the life-process, irrespective of the use that life-process might have for the public ‘thing’, the *res-publica*, the republic. On the other hand, this is a universal right enunciated from within the constitution of a new republic expressing a revolutionary and popular sovereignty – and to that extent, the formal coherence that this right possesses, as opposed to the arbitrary privilege of charity, is the right to access to a *productive* life of the republic. If the eventual arrival at the threshold of a liturgical violation was flickeringly visible in the dis-juncture of subsistence from *significant* public participation of ‘civic lives’, as it were, the conversion of the vigorous non-productivity of the event to the new axiom of work as capacity, is equally if not more emphatically, visible. The tactical, economic, and might one say, bio-political conversion is not difficult to observe – and the

long-term consequences of this conversion, profound – but here let's examine, in some speculative detail, the “sacred and inviolable debt” avowed and attested to, from within the hollow defaulted out by the event in a history of debt.

It is clear that the debt is owed to a continuing history of “unfortunates” – the vagabonds, the beggars, the old and the infirm. The subject covered comprises what Castel calls a physical and social “handicapology”.<sup>49</sup> But if the debt itself is a new one, a new declaration of subjective obligation and objective emancipation from injustice, it implies a generalized defaulting on all old matrices of debt as unjust, so invalid. But it further implies the *retributive* counter-declaration that for all the murderous obligations of past debts, the suicidal terrors of possible defaulting, the actual event of default produces a new debt owed to the defaulters. This is not only the objective correction of categories – poverty and indigence corrected to the right of subsistence, charity corrected to duty – but also the new *terror* induced in the debtor which is society itself. Only terror can subjectively correspond to the “sacred and inviolable debt” felt in the heart, and only an extraordinary call to *virtue* can begin to enable the paying of the debt and alleviate the terror. Then the question arises: doesn't such a retributive cycle falsify the torsion of the event and its pure presentation of the void as the aleatory support of the *generic* indiscrimining of all debt?

We think there is a double articulation in the above knot, or a double knotting of the above problem. For one thing, between October 1789, when the people, led by women (“most *people* in the people”), marched to Versailles to fetch the King to Paris, and the Jacobin declaration of Virtue and Terror in 1794, we had moved from the exposure of the void to its naked universality, from the *clemency* of the event, to the axiomatic *naming* of that point of historical singularity which the event was, to a new debt of the name. The debt of the name, in syncopation with our earlier sections, was a debt borne in the heart allied to the virtue, terror and (surely) *eros* of a new *patria*. However, we must take into account a second dimension of this problem, a second tying and untying of the knot: in Barère's vision of civic ceremony in “honour of misery”, when mothers, widows, the old and infirm will be ‘honoured’ with relief,

it will happen, not only as a matter of abstract right, but also as an event of *theatrical equality*.<sup>50</sup> That is, the right will be enacted in the midst of those fortunate not to be struck by poverty; it will be enacted *between* categories of misfortune themselves such that the distinction of the capable worker and the handicapped will be blurred (the farmer, the artisan, the old, the widow, the mother in a “beautiful” assembly which is also a “spectacle”). And this transfigured unity, this festive mixture and indiscernment, is the greatest *gift* that politics might present to nature, which is the ultimate horizon of all fertility, all consolation, all unity. And this gift of politics is, in our view, the gift of *theatre* – which is the utopian paradigm of incorporeal equality between actors and spectators, between actors and between spectators. This equality of “betweenness”, of “incorporeal transformations” transforms, in the theatre or festival of relief to the miserables, both the miserables and the debtor-society in a mutual betweenness of *generic* equality<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, such a paradigm of the theatre as the event of a generic assembly of equals, politics creates, honours and gifts to the source of all things – call it Barère’s Life and Nature, or Michelet’s PATRIA.

The above is the non-liturgical, or even anti-liturgical, blip on the event’s improvised radar we wanted to tentatively record, in contrast to the *signs* or *codes* of power transmitted as structure and history, recorded in encyclopedias and archives and *felt* as debt and obligation. In this critical disentanglement of contradictory impulses or intuitions of the revolutionary conjuncture, Robert Castel shows the loosening of the axiomatic thread of work and productivity from the clemency and militancy of the event. According to this regime of prescriptions, of which Emmanuel Sieyès was a magisterial representative, all right to relief and right of subsistence must be judged and implemented, which essentially means, *discerned*, according to the calculation or ‘counting’ as to who is capable of working and who, truly, is subtracted from capability, is in-capable. In this way “the inviolable and sacred debt of society” is translated back into the governmental judgment on debt *to* society and the sovereign decision on clemency towards certain individual and *exceptional* cases of obligation. This translation also implies the contractual reduction of the relation

between individual and society where the capacity to work remains, axiomatically, always on the side of society (or capital) while the individual (worker) *incarnates* it, gives it a “figure”. This ‘iconological’ contract between society as a kenotic self-abasement of capacity and the individual as a *worshipping idol* of work also means that in case of the violation of the contract through any sort of intentional non-compliance (indolence, dereliction and so on), the offence committed is a *social* one.<sup>52</sup> The significance of this social saturation of the contract, despite its ‘individualist’ appearance, is that it, while being the talisman of free society where labour is constitutively free to sell its power *anywhere*, is entirely *normative*. Exactly when the historico-social substance is minoritized to the last granule of the ‘individual’, the ontology of that granule is given over entirely to the power of society and capital, society of capital.

Such a saturation by a kind of *logos* of society – socio-logic which is, truly speaking, “political economy” – the breach of the event a-voids. Such ‘avoidance’ is its singularity, its resistance to the encyclopedia of knowledges, the figures of the archive. The event is neither memorialized nor incarnated. Its ontological suture is neither to substance (“society”) nor to subject (“individual”) but to the void. We could say as a sober caricature of Parmeneides, “the torsion of the event and the torsion of thinking are the same”.<sup>53</sup> The historicity introduced by both torsions consists in contingent rupture with the history and sovereignty of codes, languages and encyclopedias. But since sovereignty is axiomatically declared to be One and imprescriptible, its history is evacuated of all figures of *existence*. Existence, being the result of a passage from inexistence of a ‘trace’ of historicity, being the ‘monstration’ of a singularity or exception at the point of the breach of the One, is always *generic* and *non-sovereign*. In the light of this turning inside out of the axiomatic glove the sovereign hand wears, in light of the counter-axiom “the One is not”, historicity rests on the side of the event of existence while “history” falls to the side of sovereignty. This also means that what we called “figures of existence” are not incarnated as forms of representation that a history of codes supports. Indeed, they are dis-figures or traces of an exceptional, even maximal,

intensity that are impossible to localize and indiscernible through the language of predicates that represents the 'historical' situation. Yet existence is a *local* emergence without being localizable – it is, thus, “generic” without being “sovereign”.<sup>54</sup>

Despite its utopian tenor, Barère's report and its vision of a civic theatre in honour of misfortune addressed a real question of generic equality before a local and concrete situation of historical deprivation and injustice. When all parties were learning to play the game of a new *social* sovereignty – society being in sacred and inviolable debt of the unfortunates and individual transgressions being social offences – the vision of a festival of misfortune sought to give a figure to the very dis-figure of ontology, which the *logos* of society took for granted. The question was, how to be equal to the truth of misery without any vicarious and cathartic 'living out' or enactment of the predicate “miserable”? How to, rather, dis-incarnate or dis-figure the localization of intensity in the figures of the “poor”, the “vagabonds”, “the mad”, (we will come to this), etc., without dislocating or abstracting from the real of these intensities? Thus the proposal for a festival or theatre, not in glorification of poverty – which is a subtle and sometimes not so subtle danger in the liturgy of micro-credit situations in praise of poverty as potentiality<sup>55</sup> – but to present the real (of poverty, misery, vagabondage, etc.) as the point of an *exceptional* solidarity arrived at the local and nonlocalizable, generic and non-sovereign place of a new betweenness and equality. Clearly, the equality being attempted as thought here is not supported by analogies of predicates or identity of substances; it is not a cathartic reduction of Dionysian theatre, always mediated by civic-liturgical logic, where equality is either animal-automatic as with women and slaves, whose bare lives are cathartically 'pleased', or is activated as 'free' and responsible participation through social, liturgical and political marking and stratification. The equality in question here is a thinkable betweenness emerging out of a contingent and exceptional point of differentiation, which point is also the opening through which, what Alain Badiou calls, “a generic humanity” comes into existence.<sup>56</sup>

## UNIVERSAL CONSTITUTION AND THE EXCEPTIONAL EVENT

The documents of history testify to the passion and struggle 1789 onwards, directed towards the founding of a universal constitution that would correspond to the arrival of the event of a “generic humanity”. So let the problem not be trivialized to saying that there was a denial or disavowal of the event from within the event – of which denial Sieyès was a vacillating symptom. No, the problem was the opposite: there was an over-avowal of the event and resounding as well as bloody attempts were made to constitute the exceptional event of existence exceptionally. The exceptional constitution breaching the history of constitutions to which no further exception must come into existence...

The endlessness of the Revolution and Saint-Just’s enunciation, “the Revolution is frozen”, contribute equally to indexing the project of a *total* and *exceptional* politico-ontological constitution of “revolution” understood as the ungraspable place of a new indiscernible and generic existence.<sup>57</sup> In a way, there is a Kantian intelligibility to this project or programme. The foreclosure of all further events of exception is also the potentialization of the so-called revolutionary event into a “permanent virtuality” – which means the displacement of the founding void to a circuit of oblique signs that, in their specific readings, convey this virtuality in both universal and strategic, or ‘economic’ ways in history. Kant saw the French Revolution in the shape of a displaced sign of the disposition of humanity’s universal progress – but who can ignore the irony, nay the disavowal, that exactly at the conjuncture of the total constitution of the Revolutionary and Free State which pre-empts all further exceptions, there is produced a near *total* legitimization of the free market economy, whose ‘unconscious’ or ‘inconsistent’ principle is that it is a reality made by the *continuous exception*<sup>58</sup>. There is a genealogy for this thesis which we have indicated earlier in our citation of Marie-José Mondzain’s work on the iconic economy (*oikonomia*) of the Christian West, but the really interesting trajectory of this filiation reaches up to the strange



fraternity of an eloquently over-avowed politics and a garrulously disavowed economy in late 18<sup>th</sup> century. A word or two in defense of this proposition:

In Barère's vivification of the festival of a generic taking place of equality, it is politics which makes the singular gift of the event to universal and pristine nature. Politics releases the heterogeneous categories – of the fortunate and the unfortunates – to an indiscernible betweenness. Such a taking-place of a singularity, even if as a report to a committee, is also the occasion for a reiteration of the constitutional project that seeks to universalize the singularity of the exception, the generic (non)place of equality. But it must be remembered that *in fact*, Barère's vision-report was also an eloquent if not hyperbolic, dramatization of the abstract universality of the constitution and the law as already enunciated. The right of subsistence, based on the declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, expressed a meaning of generic humanity with reference to universal reproducibility of the life-process. By such an apparently universal and generic measure were applied the actual steps or measures of public relief. However, insofar as it was a *right*, subsistence or the life process now belonged to an ontology of individual and social freedom. There could be no greater closure for the definition of a new political ontology, no greater triumph! But once more what was the right saying in its constitutional articulation? Simply put, it was saying that relief must be provided for those incapable of working and for those capable, the free possibility or access of work must be provided. What it was *not* saying, at that stage of constitutional history and the history of labour rights, was that a right to work existed.<sup>59</sup> The right to the possibility of and access to work as different from a right to work put a certain degraded power in the worker's hands to use this possibility as he or she wanted within the laws of economic *tendency* (which were supposed to lead to a fair chance for the worker to find work if he or she *really* tried). That this apparent freedom and power of work was degraded was simply demonstrated by the fact of the market-situation that there were more *possible* workers than actual work available and this surplus helped push the price of labour, that is, wages, down to a minimum.<sup>60</sup> This surplus of possibility

or capacity, was the new universal horizon of a supposed “generic humanity” whose figure and identity was *not* the worker but capital. Capital was the expanding and the axiomatically infinitized (which infinity is simultaneously normalized as if a law of nature) reserve of all productive virtuality, of investible potentiality. Capital was the reserve army of unemployed labour to the extent it was the incorporeal (dis)figure of generic work.

The point of the above was to state the complicity or dubious fraternity between the political ontology which announces the exceptional predicate of “universal” for the human subject and the continual exception of the economy which institutes, circulates and naturalizes a “freedom” with an empty and generic status. But then, isn’t such complicity and its admittedly global entrenchment in the future onwards from the conjuncture we are studying a massive neutralization of the event? In our view, it is very much a massive process that has been underway but not one of neutralization. Unlike the neutralization of a presumed potency of the event, what seems to have been attempted is an inexorable *expropriation* of the event supplementing its constitutional foreclosure. The very language of the economy’s tendential laws and its everyday phenomenology imitates the halting and experimental language invented for the event. Only, in the sphere of its strategic and dogmatic usage, in other words, in its use for *rationalization*, the language of the economy, sometimes literally same as the declaration of the event, asserts its truth-effects at the level of a permanent exigency. Where the event, wagering a hesitant mathematical idiom, made possible the thought and commitment to a generic and indiscernible ‘set’ coming-into-existence out of a *rare* exigency, the economy while dogmatically identifying new, generic humanity with the historical arrival of the Economic Man, displaces the rarity of genericity to a continuous pragmatics of the exception, to cyclical strategics of “crises”.<sup>61</sup>

The over-avowal of politics, its foundational naming of an ontological “universal” as the subject of sovereignty, is also always an over-compensation for the economy’s ‘anonymous’ and ‘indiscernible’ freedom that imitates the event to make it Nature.

The complicitous duo arranges its fraternal syllogism in this fashion: if the world, joyfully destituted of its corporate rigidities, tends to go to the other extreme of fragmentation, atomization and interest-governed particularism, to emancipate its transitory anonymity, indiscernability and privacy, a *political* subject must be produced, a true subject who is distinctive, discernible, discursively lucid and practically free. It is not difficult to see that such a project is in close proximity with Kant's notion of a moral freedom to which Reason responds with a purposiveness fundamentally drawn not from interest but from a higher *nature*<sup>62</sup>. The emancipatory project of politics which requires the conceptual and *public* universalization of any so-called political subject, also names the subject as the Universal. So over the anonymous terrain of the economic freedom where a welter of particularisms spreads, arches the *name* that the Revolution repeated, the name which is the "Universal" of particular individuals, never of corporate entities. There is no doubt to be found a corpus of theories, maxims, and fictions that create and support, problematize and render enigmatic the relation of the universal which is the individual and the *totality* of such universals which carries the name "society" (or "the state"). Rousseau, Hobbes earlier and Kant himself, represent these genetic and structural pathways to the *contractual* image of that relation. However, it was in the wake of the torsion of the event, which frees a historicity in default of history that during the first years of the Revolution, the project of universalization of the predicate "political" confronts the singular existence of a *generic politics*.<sup>63</sup> In the torsion of those years till the Thermidor, this confrontation enters deeper and deeper into the deliberative spaces of the assembly called "nation" – such that these spaces became on the one hand, intensely subjectivised, almost libidinized, and on the other, they resolve into a kind of *paradigm* for 'modern' politics and for future societies to follow. This latter is the paradigm of the constitution whose motto becomes acting upon a double prescription: what must be emancipated as a universal possibility must also be constituted as a historical, political and juridical reality. And to this reciprocal imperative, this ideal synthesis of possibility and existence, *there must be no exception*.

In our view, the great turbulences, the great insistence that runs through the first four years of the French Revolution is an insistence on the saturation of the Revolution by the emancipatory proposition we have paraphrased. This proposition is also usually translated – as it was being obsessively translated then – in terms of popular sovereignty and its undivided, imprescriptible and *direct* constitution. Where constituent power translates directly into constituted existence, where power and existence become indiscernible from each other, there can be no exception which falls outside this sovereign transparency. Or, to this perfect consistency between propositional meaning and constituted assembly, any positing or declaration of the inconsistent and un-emancipated exception is *absurd*.<sup>64</sup> But isn't it also possible to interpret the first four years of the Revolution as the insistent *resistance* to the historical and conceptual upsurge of inconsistency and absurdity that threatened to de-constitute the presence of the Revolution to its constitutive forms? Or it could be said that this de-constitution kept forming a molten strata of revolutionary history that kept dissolving under the pressure of the constitutional prescription.

These possibilities of interpretation divide the great emancipatory proposition and its horizon of an ideal synthesis into prescriptives and schools of the historiography of the Revolution, of which Jules Michelet was the blazon and pioneer. Roughly, the division can be schematized into three logics or types of Revolutionary narratives: a) the logic and type based on the exhaustion of the revolutionary project by the axiom of popular sovereignty, *in good faith*; b) the logic and type of a historical and political discourse of suspicion and resistance towards the inconsistent exigencies and opacities that arise on the transparent surface of revolutionary and sovereign intentions – a resistance culminating in the declaration of Terror in 1794; c) the logic and type of narrative of the gap, the inconsistency, the absurdity *in themselves*.<sup>65</sup> Clearly, it is the third option in the schema that has concerned us the most. This is the option of considering the protocols of thinking the traces of historicity in their existential effectivity as different from the options, whether credulous or suspicious, pertaining to historical interpretation of an object already presupposed to exist. But it is

not a matter of philosophical separation or distillation from some schematization of historical materialities. Rather the philosophical problem of thinking the void-basis, or inconsistent basis, of the generic existence of a new and indiscernible politics arises from the schema itself. And this stake is powerfully vindicated every time a so-called philosopher feels compelled to intervene in the historiography of the French Revolution, particularly in the wake of François Furet's "revisionist" theses.<sup>66</sup>

In our view, the stakes can be laid out in the following terms: once a historian like Furet forcefully and enduringly proposed that the Revolution was not a transparent fact, a blemishless mirror in which the intentions of the revolutionary agents were present, in full plenitude, to the results of their actions but an obscure hiatus between programme and event, the problem became how to 'measure' this hiatus. The whole force of Furet's argument, deeply aligned to Alexis de Tocqueville's thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lay in the thesis that the hiatus was not an accidental discrepancy or a correctible inconsistency but *belonged* to the Revolution. Given this thesis, a forked possibility opens up: either the measure of inconsistency is a methodological relativism or skepticism with regard to the 'object' of history or, the measure is affirmed as generically immeasurable in attestation of the real of an impossible object, the real of a new politics. We will not discuss the judgment of "revisionism" in Furet's position – the stakes of that judgment are evident in the very presentation of the two forks for thinking the procedure of the hiatus in the Revolutionary historiography. It is enough to say here that Furet stresses the *illusion* of politics as a kind of social mastery in the history between 1789 and 1794 (when the mastery turns to the statist declaration of Terror).<sup>67</sup> In other words, the historian diagnoses a *symptom* of politics behind the constituted predicate's domain of valid extension, the predicate in question being "political". In essence, it meant the diagnosis of a hyper-voluntarism of the social will which would henceforth take political and moral control of all actions beyond even the conditions of the very universal space politically constituted, that is beyond the republican state. Hence, the illusion of the Revolution and its absolute constitution of sovereignty. And when this "illusion" gets

incarnated in the decision of the policy of Virtue and Terror, the locus of that decision, the State, passes from being a republican space to a *subjective* one. The state, in a state-of-exception, is pure will and nothing but will, decision and nothing but decision, hence, a pure exceptional subject. In the several dramatizations around the figure of Robespierre, such an axiom of Terror resounded distinctly, with an indistinct aggregate, or *swarm*, of “right wills” humming assent in the background.<sup>68</sup>

## MADNESS AND REVOLUTION

Have we veered too far away from the threshold of complicity between political ontology and the economic simulation of the event and spent too much ink on the banal ironies of intra-historical politics? Not really because the issue running through the universal constitution of the political subject, the brute particularity, hence, permanent exigency, of economic freedom and the return to the exigent state of emergency as a decision of politics, is the issue of producing a *norm* or *norms of exception*. If political ontology encloses a subject whose progressive universalization is an equally progressive emancipation from all possible states of exception, the norm of economic exceptionalism is the measure of governability or regulation of exception and crises. And if economic exceptionalism imitates and expropriates the event’s anonymity by making it a question of the government of contingency, of the regulation of ever-present yet inessential particularity potentially saturable by the universal but contingently excepted by it, the absolute and singular power of deciding on the state of emergency strangely avows the event by enacting its intensive passage from inexistence to existence. Indeed, it is this ruptural passage that makes the decision on the exception *subjective* – where the so-called subject is a singular if ‘intolerable’ extraction (or exception) from both universal and the regulative models of normalizing the exception.

The subject, exception to the norm of exception, an emergent flotsam of intense existence, delivered itself over to its Jacobin naming in 1794 with the slogan “Virtue and Terror!”. It was also at this moment that the singularity which wagered an ‘intolerable’

subjective forcing of the situation, also gave itself a tremulous theatre, a risky figure of *sovereignty*. How was the ‘forced’ theatre and figure, formally still known as the State, still convening the assembly of society beyond its corporate articulation, to be related to the theatre of representation as a municipal space of fulfilling and paying the constitutional obligation and debt? In other words, how was the direct presentation of society’s debt to the event – which is the scene of virtue and terror – to be compared with the constituted, republican, thus, re-presented forms of attenuated payment that mediate society to itself? The point is this: the declaration of Virtue and Terror as the obligatory affects of the emergency raise the stakes of that act from saving the constitution to saving the event.<sup>69</sup> Indeed at this point, the event and the Revolution are forced into absolute identity and the generic coming-into-existence of an aleatory possibility is identified with eternal necessity.

The risky, nay, intolerable theatre of sovereignty, assembled out of the decision(s) on the emergency, consists of a topology of space as well as of time. The topology of space is produced on the one hand from a disassembling and evacuation of the public assembly, the *res-publica*, of its normative, constituted, *counted* populace (the *populus* constituted as citizens); on the other, instead of simply tyrannizing the republican desert, the void left behind by the declaration, Virtue and Terror overrun that very void as the partisan intensities of a teeming and indiscernible ‘multitude’ of *militants of the event*.<sup>70</sup> And exactly in the name of revolutionary justice to this new ‘class’ that very really *exists* but by its eventual and generic nature, is indiscernible from the *populus*, the citizens of the constitution, the State, in the instant of its declaration and decision, speaks entirely from the side of the generic particularity born of the event, is entirely *subjective and partisan*. Only such an exposed decision on the state of the exception makes possible for the historical diagnosis of the *madness of the revolution* incarnated in the months of the Terror.<sup>71</sup> No doubt it is the paranoid variety of madness’ symptomatic organization that proceeds as if it possesses the deliberative mastery over the *alea* of the event to give it the militant and subjective content of “right wills”. No doubt such an

exposure of sovereignty to its paranoid exceptionality makes the norm of the exception *tremble*.

Now for the topology of time featured in the theatre of sovereignty: strangely, much as the months of the Terror represent the extreme disorientation of the Revolution in historical time before the consensual ‘rehabilitation’ of the Thermidor, the actual declaration, its singular exigency, were prescriptions for an explicit *orientation* in time. Now, what will orient the assembly of the people in a situation of conflict, confusion and of course, the infamous *plot* or conspiracy?<sup>72</sup> It is not enough to instantiate the Revolution as an immediate will which wills itself through the declaration of its event, it must also will itself as an Idea in eternity. Thus the orientation in time will be produced through a performative presentation of the Real of an exceptional contingency in the gesture of declaration, and as much through the generic opening to a new universal, or *new truth* of the Idea. Being a contingency, the Real will make the revolutionary ‘bodies’ (individual and collective; subject to enthusiasm and death) shimmer and tremble. Being a truth, the Idea, born of a generic and particular torsion in history, will be impassably universalizable and meant “for all”. This is the crucial dialectic between the contingency which opens a breach onto the “not-all” and the axiom of the revolutionary Idea released by the breach and universalizable “for all”.<sup>73</sup> The dialectic stages the partisan investment in the absolute present and yet, by that very moment, divides its element into the historical ‘now’ and the now of eternity where the partisan of the Idea insists.

We could say, the above is the dialectic of the *patria* which is illustrated by the months of the Terror and which underlies the bloody and weak nature of the Revolutionary State, both of which attributes induce in the state of the State an uncontrollable *trembling*.<sup>74</sup> Just as the *patria* in the Middle Ages was a subjective basis of the *bellum justum*, was the laceration felt in the heart in the event of the expropriation of an irreducible self-belonging before being an object of territorial usurpation, the obligation of subjectivising oneself according to “virtue and terror” was oriented to be felt in 1793-1794 as a debt to the revolutionary *patria* before



the constitution. But this was a strange and self-contradictory debt because the *patria* immemorized in the wake of the event of a revolutionary *default*, was the new immemorial of debtlessness, the liberating exposure to a *generic expropriation*. If sovereign expropriation is rooted in patrimonial law, economic expropriation in fiscal logic, generic expropriation is the abandonment of property by existence. Such expropriation or what Alan Badiou would call “subtraction”, subtracts from the predicates of the universe of belonging that supports the self of debt and payment.<sup>75</sup> It even ‘escapes’ the infinite, minor and global-fiscal debt, that itself escapes patrimonial sovereignty, by locating itself to the singular and indiscernible position of the Idea that defaults on inherited debt and its power. The Idea that takes the figures and bodies of existence and “existence” that escapes indebted and ‘in-carnated’ bodies to call out to *its* Idea, grope for the common un-common name that would answer to their *eros*, their love. What a particular, if not travestied, destiny then that the name invented and declared in early 1794 to answer to the love of *patria* born of the event and endangered by enemy loves, was “the State”!

Topologies of space and time configure a “state” whose infinite object of love is “society” only insofar as the latter is constituted as *patria*, which becomes an irreducible subjective moment of the virtuous, terrorizing and ‘loving’ State. The State has indeed absorbed the erotic object but as a result, it itself doesn’t remain the same. It, the State, becomes, in turn, a “swarm”. Let us end this section explaining the “swarm” mobilized between a certain mathematics and a certain madness. We saw in our earlier study on Number, how the event of a “people” in the first phase of the French Revolution (the example of October, 1789 was taken) was a ‘swarming’ composition. This idea has to be supported mathematically by recalling that the “swarm” is understood as the simultaneous and immemorial existence of infinite orders and types of Number, of which only a very few can be *counted*.<sup>76</sup> The whole constitutional project 1789 onwards, staged and debated in the Constituent and National Assembly, was a project of countability, counting and the subjective stakes and debt of being-counted. No doubt the objective count of citizens in every one-by-one operation

must correspond to series of pure subjective moments of liturgical duty, whose performance, as Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out with regard to jury-service, essentially consists of popular self-education rather than explicit social utility.<sup>77</sup> Thus for every objective constitution of “citizens”, there is also the liturgical constitution of “subjects”. Thus what exists as an event is constituted as the *res-publica*, “the public thing” as a countable of countables, as One. But the whole ontological torsion releasing the event featured, as we have repeatedly seen, the torsion, or breach unto the not-One and the not-All. That is also the breach opening out to the new immemorial of the “swarm”, which is a political dis-figure with a mathematical-ontological basis. We might then say that the *eros*, virtue and terror topologised by the State, represented in the flurry of political axioms declared by Saint-Just and Robespierre, were directed towards the impossible reconciliation between the One of the republican State and the not-One of the event. The stakes of this axiomatic drive (as in “drive to end poverty” or “drive to quick economic reforms” etc.) were impossibly high since they pertained to *the existence of the event in the figure or theatre of the State*.<sup>78</sup>

Which brings us to the “madness” of the swarming State. Now in a way, the State’s ‘policy of society’ which concerned poverty, vagabondage, beggary etc. was always a policy towards the conversion of a physical, multitudinarian swarming into a calculus of possibility and power, that went by the generic name “productivity”. Everything then was oriented towards the dispersion of the swarm – which itself is a situation of dispersion – into an *empty place* which could take on, henceforth, contents and values dictated by the universal(s) of political ontology and constitution. But it seems to us that what was really at issue in the Statist evacuation of the swarms of society was the evacuation of ‘pathological’ *intensities* that passed over the social body when the beggars, the vagabonds, the poor swarmed it. This was a kind of proto-psychiatrization of state policy in late 18<sup>th</sup> century whereupon every enunciation of universal right was accompanied by the diagnostic of social pathology which, in turn, dictated Statist intervention in the body of society, the State’s ‘policy of society’.<sup>79</sup> But with the axiomatic hyperactivity of the Revolutionary State in

1794, what replaced the policy of intervention into the swarms of society was the desire to manifest a swarming state. Which can only mean the State desires itself as a *theatre* where all the intermediate social forms, figures and intensities are traversed and recollected in the lightning-flash of an event, an instant of exceptional eternity to present a new, super-numerary and generic subject whose particular name – is what?

This is the crossroad of a question that exposes the State in the pre-Thermidorian stage to incessant violence, trembling and paranoid interpretation of *signs*. Thus every particular name must hide some conspiracy, some counter-revolutionary plot, must contain a sign to be deciphered and destroyed. No name is good enough, innocent enough, virtuous and terrible enough to stand for a “generic humanity”. But the generic subject, by the very logic of emergence from the event, is the indiscernible new particularity among particulars which makes a *world* possible, never a simple, empty and sovereign universal.<sup>80</sup> So a particular name must be wagered and the politicians and axiomaticians of Virtue and Terror wager the universal non-name “the State”. And so convert their desired theatre which manifests the Real of an event, a theatre which is a kind of performance-art of the event, into a theatre of *public sacrifice*. Which return the logic of the state and the logic of theatre to the altar of the Real where now a debt to the Revolution must be rhythmically paid. But the so-called Revolution already represents the real of an event as the Name of Sovereignty which is the Revolutionary State. And since it is a theatre (and state) equally of the *emergency*, that rhythm must be the rhythm of death and sacrifice performed, not *for* the constituted people (*populus*), but *in* its very place on a fantasized stage of history. A public sacrifice in honour of the *fantasy* of the public ‘thing’, the *res-publica*... This is the extreme exposure of the debt, in a situation declared to be an emergency, a state of exception, to its immediate, exhaustive and murderous presentation. No one is equal to the debt of the Revolution, no liturgy is economic enough to alternate and circulate it (*mutuum*); only death is the possible respondent to this debt just as death is the originary and final capture (*nexum*) of all indebted existence.<sup>81</sup>

## A CONCLUDING NOTE ON THÉROIGNE DE MÉRICOURT: FROM SWARM TO SWARM

In conclusion, let us take a singular and unforgettable figure from the history of the French Revolution who actively risks filiation with, and is ruthlessly exposed to, the dis-figure(s) of the “swarm” between 1789 and 1794 – and during the Thermidor that follows. In a series of summary images, we could visualize Théroigne de Méricourt as someone who refuses the ‘feminine’ position and directly identifies with the impersonal revolutionary *swarm* instead of the ‘men’ of the Revolution; who responds to the ‘madness’ of sacrificial debt (of death) to an absent, nay, fantasized, people in the period of the Terror with a mixture of reason and delusion; and who is confined to the asylums of the Thermidor and the Napoleonic Empire as a psychiatric patient and is diagnosed as *chronically delusional*.<sup>82</sup>

It is not our intention here to tell the story of Théroigne de Méricourt. Truth be told, that story, having gone through myriad perverse fabulations, has to be ‘untold’ to get at the core of the problem: to us, that problem is indeed one of “madness and revolution”, as Elisabeth Roudinesco puts it – but in relation to the further question that when is it that the event becomes *chronic*, is expressed as a *symptom* and becomes the object of asylum, care and administration, that is, of medical government and a kind of psychiatric sovereignty. When Jules Michelet, in his *History of the French Revolution*, ‘rehabilitated’ Théroigne de Méricourt to the enthusiasm and love of Revolution in the days and months of 1789, he had to, as it were, ‘de-chronicise’ a life bearing the name Théroigne de Méricourt of its diagnosed fixities and automatisms, its compulsions to repeat.<sup>83</sup> Yet we know, even in 1789 when she was newly in Paris, her presence, witness and participation in the happenings in the streets, in the salons and in the assemblies were already being interpreted as automatisms of a surplus of *eros*, belonging essentially to feminine pathology, diverted to the so-called event of the Revolution.<sup>84</sup> Which simply meant, as far as the counter-revolutionary vilifiers and the disapproving revolutionary partisans were concerned, for someone like Théroigne, *there was*

*no event*, only the automatism of her nature whose wandering erotic surplus accidentally met the subjective demands of a historical constellation. As a result of this foreclosure of possibility, everything became possible such that the reality of Théroigne de Méricourt was, henceforth, an object to be fantasized and commanded rather than truly observed and understood.

When in October 1789, eight to ten thousand people marched to Versailles to fetch the King to Paris, a march led by women who were, in Michelet's words, "most *people* in the people", it was widely circulated that Théroigne de Méricourt was part of the crowd. Either she was seen in vivid colours wearing a red hat with a riding crop or spotted disappearing into the anonymity of the multitude. In any case, her presence was actively registered as the emblem of a swarming, libidinal population criss-crossed by uncontrollable incorporeal effects. Whether for the lovers of the Revolution or its sworn enemies, Théroigne filled the ontological void to which the 'event' was tremblingly sutured, with an incandescent erotic and revolutionary substance. She gave a body, or even, *flesh*, to the void-basis of the "swarm" understood as the eventual self-organisation of Number and hence converted the ontological possibility of a new political collective into either an idol of the people or its obverse, a locus of excess. In the latter case, the revolutionaries swarmed the social body just as the beggars and the vagabonds did, only with a super-numerary libidinal value instead of one of misery, a value of which Théroigne was the emblem and embodiment.

Now, the only hitch in this machine of interpretations was that Théroigne de Méricourt *was not present in the march of 5 and 6 October, 1789*. It has been verified beyond reasonable doubt that she stayed back in Paris and was involved in other activities at that time.<sup>85</sup> Yet that didn't seem to be the issue at all. Her life had already been submitted to the command of fantasy – and the logic of fantasy that dictated the insertion of a life in it was that the individuations of such a life must be produced as *symptoms*. Symptoms of what? For the revolutionaries, these were symptoms of the very *nature* of that life which was 'female' or 'feminine', thus, taken beyond a point, they betrayed the unsuitability of women to the rigorous demands of the Revolution. For the royalists and

counter-revolutionaries, they were symptoms that illustrated the ‘beautiful’ correspondence of two illnesses: Revolution and Woman. In this view, both illnesses had a common generic name, which was “madness” and which will be progressively psychiatrized as sexual, social and ultimately, political pathology.<sup>86</sup> But we might also say, as an excruciatingly negative tribute, “madness” was the legible surface for recording a more uncertain, even, illiterate signifier, which is “event”. Revolution and Woman, two alleged fundamental illnesses, were joined, in their supposed pathology, by their being ‘events’.

The irony that intensified into logical violence in the above process consisted in the identification of two contradictory notions: if “event” is the index for what happens, in an unforeseen and incalculable way, and “nature” is the essential programme of repetition and evolution, then it can only be a logic of fantasy that renaturalizes the event and commands it to be not what it is, in its upsurge, but what it *must be*, in its ‘chron-icity’. The entire story of Théroigne de Méricourt, grown and fertilized into a forest of speculation and fabrication, also follows a strict line of induction, or even, inducement. The story would inductively create, or induce through psycho-logical temptations, a law of chronic madness, or psychosis, that would cut the thread of the event off and show *nothing happened* except the Law of Woman and Revolution. It is one of the greatest ironies of this process of instating the Law of “nothing happened” that history is complicit with, through one of its most acute happenings. No Jacobin herself, Théroigne was arrested in the Spring of 1794 during the Terror as a suspected ‘enemy of liberty’.<sup>87</sup> While she was in confinement and her brother was trying for her to be taken into medical care on grounds of his sister being subject to “absolute dementia”, Théroigne wrote a letter to Saint-Just (dated 8 Thermidor, Year II), a letter which never reached him. Elisabeth Roudinesco interprets this letter as evidence of a mixture of reason and delusion. On the one hand, it was a perfectly reasonable appeal to Saint-Just to act on her behalf because, essentially, the two shared the same passion and task of working for the Revolution. She appeals for paper and light, she must be freed in order that she can write which is impossible in her

confinement. By remaining inactive, she is “degrading” the “civic crown”.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, Elisabeth Roudinesco points out, Théroigne is writing in *Thermidor* (July) when the Terror is over and no one is quite empowered to release her from physical and mental confinement. But, “...in speaking to Saint-Just, Théroigne was not so much addressing a real statesman as a pure name. It was to God that Théroigne was writing from the depths of her cell, that is to say, to an essence whose name embodied in her eyes the two primordial virtues of the Revolution. Saint-Just was thus an incarnation of the Mystical (*Saint*) and of Justice (*Just*).”<sup>89</sup>

Clearly, the “madness of the revolution” subjectivised in the Terror and stretching the thread of the event to its limit-axiom(s), tipped over in the Thermidor to a condition of Théroigne de Méricourt’s individual madness without any more the support or guarantee of either the Revolution as historical or the event as ontological reference. Thus between then and 1817, when she died in the most wretched physical circumstances, many of which were brought upon herself by her own actions, Théroigne slid from a kind of “asylum madness” to chronic psychosis.<sup>90</sup> Throughout this long period, doctor’s reports, culminating in the version of the famous Esquirol, testified to the patient’s delusional fixation with the Jacobin vocabulary of the Terror. The vocabulary was increasingly accompanied by a strange, private theatre of self-degradation, when she would lie down in her refuse, by a *useless* liturgy of purification, when she would give herself ice-cold baths. Indeed, within the individuations of her life in psychiatric asylum, the exposure to the event, that, in the first place, had ungrounded Théroigne de Méricourt towards a new *eros* of existence which was “politics”, folded back into a kind of “ground-speech” of absolute autochthony and absolute sovereignty. Virtue, Terror, Revolution etc. were now fragments from a secret code that belonged to the useless sovereignty of a chronic inwardness.<sup>91</sup>

But the reverse passage from existence to latency or inexistence, from inexistence to a kind of extinguishing of all lived experience, all phenomenological access, however epicene and wretched, does not extinguish the stakes brought up by the event against the stakes of mastery over an ‘object’, however dangerous, insolvent or ‘mad’.

Let's say that with Esquirol's final report and the last iconographic capture of Théroigne's life with the autopsy of her dead body and engravings of the shape of her skull, that life was mastered by a certain 'judgement' of truth. The judgment delivered by psychiatric science and conveyed by Esquirol was indistinguishable from the decision of a *name*. Esquirol attached to all the massive vacillations of Théroigne's life- purely invented or empirically verified – the comprehensive truth of a nosological name: "Lypemania" was Esquirol's "barbaric" signifier or name for Théroigne's eternal psychic *truth* as the culmination of a *deranged* nature, for which no *organic* trace of a cause was ever found.<sup>92</sup> The logic of fantasy that had with reckless, secular violence produced a feminine "nature" to insert it in its purple productions, was now crystallized into the punctiform name and place of truth supported by the specialized neutrality of scientific judgement. In Esquirol's "zoography" of madness, Théroigne de Méricourt simply fell into a certain 'class' of veridical arrangement of symptoms and signs, into a 'zone' of knowledge.<sup>93</sup>

The zone of knowledge was also the zone of sovereignty. The asylum, where the patient was put in 'care', was the prototype of the Nation, where the citizens were 'governed'.<sup>94</sup> However, it was a strange model or prototype because in here, the madness or citizens of the asylum-nation had all moved over to the side of the exception and their constitution or their *res-publica* could only be built upon the norm of the permanent exception to the norm. This was, though, a strangely effective model of government of the exception because with respect to the mad and their care, it proposed a theory of sovereignty which was not axiomatic and classical but supplemental and *grotesque*. The theory was constructed through the three following stages: a. The secularly denounced 'mad', a shrapnel of ungovernable intensity or 'enthusiasm' thrown out from the crucible of the event, is put in asylum care. b. The one brought under care starts displaying the signs of "asylum madness" which means, the 'secular mad' now imitates the specialized code that gives her madness a scientific or medical normativity. The 'mad' self-medicalizes her madness to become a 'patient'. c. The final judgment of mental illness having



entered the *truth* of chronic, incurable ‘psychosis’ comes with the judge’s risking a grotesque or barbaric figure of sovereignty when he passes the verdict of a *name on life*. The grotesquerie consists in the sovereign’s exposing himself to an Ubuesque contortion of features and self-presentation to present sovereignty in madness’ own image. Sovereignty now withdraws its stakes from legitimacy and law, and incarnates a singular face of comic expropriation. As Michel Foucault pointed out with reference to a psychiatric parallel to Alfred Jarry’s play *Ubu Roi*, the more Ubu, the king, appears arbitrary, irrational, physically ugly and grotesque, the more illegitimately he usurps territories and lives, the more dangerously and stupidly *effective* he is as sovereign.<sup>95</sup> The psychiatrist by the blatant barbarity of the “name” he *decides*, against all classical norms of scientific figuration, effectuates a sovereignty of knowledge which expropriates the madness of the ‘chronic’ exception to supplement its own power with a new, ugly and singular *truth*. In this respect, the asylum of chronic exceptions is also the nation of possible dangers, for whose management classical theories of sovereignty as true, vast and *tragic* legitimators of the exercise of power must be abandoned.<sup>96</sup>

Grotesque sovereignty, of which psychiatry provides an initial model in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is an expropriation of the event’s own joyous expropriation of or defaulting on sovereign politics, tragic debt and liturgical theatre. Exactly on the brink of the Terror in 1794, Barère had declared, “If we are agreed that no portion of humanity should suffer...let us put inscriptions above the gates of our asylums which declare that they will soon disappear. For if, when the Revolution has ended, we still have some unfortunates among us, our revolutionary labours will have been in vain.”<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the declaration inaugurates, through the breach of an event, the new and singular truth of a “generic humanity” which cannot, and must not, be divided into the normal and the mad, which is not, and must not, be subject to either of the two sovereignties, of the law or of the exception. And indeed, the wager of the name “Nation”, 1789 onwards, up to the precarious threshold of Terror, wagered an event of generic humanity and indiscernible people. By virtue of this wager, the event, the truth and the name

were all universalizable beyond their historical site of emergence “for-all”. But the “for-all” must be strictly and delicately understood as the generic and non-sovereign possibility released by the cut or the breach of the “not-all”. So the universalization of the singular truth born of the event must pertain to *all* of the “not-all” – a contingent and infinite necessity which is cause of a mathematical and political joy escaping the tragic guilt of debt and the grotesque convolutions of sovereignty.

## NOTES

1. To recall the contexts of certain effects said of the event, “vocalization” and “clemency” of the event form parts of our first study on liturgical origins of sovereignty. “Vocalization” was the dire threat felt in the Council of Kierzy in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, coming from the theatrical singing of the eucharistic mass. “Clemency”, in Roman Law and Legend, was the sudden freedom from debt the warrior (*soluti*) brings to the debtor otherwise immediately captured by sovereign power (*nexum*) and subject to attenuated but perpetual obligation (*mutuum*). The warrior-like ‘event’ of clemency becomes the thought of a pure possibility of *clemency of the event*.
2. Since we have dealt at length with the Greek and Christian logics of liturgy, we won’t repeat those references here. For the enormously interesting thesis on ‘vicarious’ power and the role of ministers and assistants in the economy and in liturgy, see, Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and The Glory : For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (with Mattee Mandarini) (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011) p. 141
3. In the very first two pages of the preface to *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant moves from the “problematical” demonstration of freedom in the order of speculative reason to the “apodictic law of practical reason” that proves the concept of freedom. An apodictic law acts now as a supportive assumption, a *decision* which *makes freedom exist*, while all “unconditional” ideas in speculative reason are only regulative. In Kant’s words, from the practical point of view, an assumption or set of assumptions gain the force of *law* when it meets the need to prove the concept which is necessary for moral action. In other words, the change of threshold from theoretical to practical reason is the threshold of a decision of thought. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (Mineola, New York: Dover Publishers, 1909), pp.1-3

Spinoza creates his *Ethics* as a “geometry” not only in the sense of a ‘method’ but also as a ‘mobilisation’, first of the simple brilliance of axiomatic assertions of the *causa sui* (cause of itself or by another) which ‘sovereign’

definitions (of Substance and God) follow; and later of the development of 'human' freedom where 'affects' lose their passional dependence and gain their distinct "ideas" as a kind of culmination of *immanent sovereignty* as a full mobilisation of the initial axioms.

4. See for this thought of an axiom as a "decision" which is always on the border or threshold of the passage from intuitive form-lessness to the 'discipline' of formalization (which means an axiom is never either purely intuitive or completely part of a system of knowledge), Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model: An Introduction to the Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics*, ed. and trans. Zachary Luke Fraser and Tzuchien Tho, <http://www.re-press.org>, 2007, pp. 101-103
5. Without intending any such effect, the project of a freeing of "generic non-sovereignty" seems to try to refute Peter Hallward's article on "Generic Sovereignty". Our efforts are entirely independent of that article. See, Peter Hallward, "Generic Sovereignty: The Philosophy of Alain Badiou" in *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 3:3, Cartzux Publishing Ltd, 1998
6. See Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution*, ed. Gordon Wright, trans. Charles Cocks (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967) pp. 249-250
7. See Georges Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representations of Sovereignty* trans. Derek Coltman (New York: Zone Books, 1988) pp. 95-112
8. For some fascinating observations on the turning of the 'who' into the 'what' and the role of number in becoming-things of persons through counting, see Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. 1, trans. Geoffery Bennington (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 199
9. We have worked out this thesis in our earlier investigations with reference to Honorius of Augustodunensis in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the prescriptions for the *denarius*. When Honorius mentions the decree that the communicants offer *denarii* for the offering of wheat, it is tendentially clear that the virtual equivalent of money is substituted for the 'body' of the bread which was the sacrificial substitute of the Body of Christ. 'Money' (or any *equivalent* of generalized circulation) was the most minor and infinitely mobile vehicle of the liturgical economy and Christic belonging or membership. See Donnalee Dox "The Eyes of the Body and the Veil of Faith" in *Theatre Journal* 56, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004, p. 42
10. For the several transactions of the classical Latin word *patria* between a private and limited meaning to a signification beyond the feudal obligation in the Christian middle ages, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1997), pp 232-234
11. For Bracton's contrast of feudal services and the services due to king and

the public realm from the point of view of *patria* (a contrast obviously comparable to the contrast between feudal and fiscal property), see, *ibid.*, p. 237

12. For the Christian martyr's death *pro fide* and the transfer of the model of civic self-sacrifice to an expanded political notion of a *regnum caelorum* to die for, see, *ibid.*, pp. 234-235
13. Without getting too bookish, and quoting passages, let us mention the leads we get from these thinkers on the 'logic of singularity': in Kierkegaard, the moment of *decision* or leap of faith is the singular occasion of an utter expropriation of the given self and complete belonging to a seizure by faith – which is the event of time, non-equivocal yet always an *other* individuation of the self. Walter Benjamin, in contrast, utilises the emergence of singularity in the services of equivocity when he points out the paradox of an exceptional kind of Baroque sovereignty which he calls "historical sovereignty". How can a transcendental power such as the sovereign be, through and through, immanent to the *life of history*? By the singular and equivocal logic of a degraded martyrdom, of a low theatre of redemption, Benjamin says. Jacques Derrida recollects and dis-assembles the above and other related motifs to offer the abyssal lead of a *prosthetic sovereignty*, a sovereign that creates its super-numerary existence from the 'inexistences' of the beast and the marionette. Indeed it is on Derrida's trail that a supplemental, non-sovereign sovereignty is promised – all the more inexhaustible and abyssal for that reason.
14. "Monstration" is Jacques Lacan's coinage in his last phase of the play of thought and the signifier. In this phase, around 1974-1975, Lacan was greatly preoccupied with certain literary authors such as James Joyce and with mathematical topology. "Monstration" was a cipher for a direct *showing* through the signifier rather than its so-called referential function. Such a showing purported to be eventually the showing of the Real – for which possibility mathematics of topology or certain extreme portmanteau word-creations in novels such as *Finnegans Wake* were the exemplars. "Monstration" was used in the sense of a 'turning inside out' of existence, of existence's radical self-exposure, just like torus, mobius strip, etc., in topology presented themselves in their 'inside' exposed as 'outside'. See Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, trans. Barbara Bray (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 358-386
15. See Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, pp. 56-57
16. See Ernst Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 235
17. See, *ibid.*, pp. 237-238
18. *Ibid.*, p.236
19. We can't claim any philological authority but the translation of St. Paul's Greek word "*pistis*" into "*fidelity*" instead of "*faith*" creates a partisan subjective stakes for the 'decision' which expresses that fidelity. These are not the same stakes as those of a 'conversion to faith', which the Pauline

paradigm institutes, where the “faith” is as if pre-given as an object of choice. The use of the Latin *fides* and *fidelitas* occurs in variant medieval contexts sometimes in relation to sacrifice *pro domino*, sometimes *pro patria*. We must also remember the stakes of *fides* as a kind of promise of truth in the *sacramentum* or oath. Again, our point of intervention is not philological; it is that node which holds the distribution of stakes between an ‘object’ of faith, the performative decision of a fidelity and the expropriation of given conditions of decidability that solicits and necessitates the *risk* of an infelicitous decision/ performative. See, *ibid.*, p. 234

20. Such a ‘sweetening’ is an ironic metaphor of a real subjective process. In fact, the irony is created through intense investment of words and their possible significations in contexts of several prescriptions for action issued both by eternal authorities as well as the subjects’ own precarious inwardness. In Kantorowicz, we see the movement from faith shown to a master, as in the feudal relation, to fidelity shown as risk taken for something much more undefined yet irreducible, which is the *patria*. Kantorowicz demonstrates further that with the knightly ‘affect’, fidelity (*fides*) moves to *amor* or love, which is love for the *patria*. *Patria*, as the line of flight of love, stands not for a private, erotic object but for the ‘love of common... a kind of ‘fiscal’ love instead of feudal loyalty. See, *ibid.*, pp 236-242
21. See Antonio Negri, “The Philosophy of ‘Old Europe’” in *Empire and Beyond*, trans. Ed Emery (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.204
22. See Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary*, trans. Rico Franses (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.157
23. Compare this double affiliation to being a “space” and a “non-space”, to Antonio Negri’s visionary affirmation of Europe as a “non-place”. See Antonio Negri, “Europe and Empire: Issues and Problems” in *Empire and Beyond*, p.86
24. See for the citation from Tacitus, *From Alexander to Constantine: Passages and Documents Illustrating the History of Social and the Political Ideas, 336 B.C. - A.D. 337*, trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p.241
25. See Saitya Brata Das, *The Promise of Time*, (Shimla: IIAS, 2011)
26. See Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”, trans. H.B.Nisbet in Hans Reiss ed. *Kant’s Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)
27. See Jean-François Kervegan, “Carl Schmitt and ‘World Unity’” and Carl Schmitt, “Ethics of State and Pluralist State” in *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London, New York: Verso, 1999), pp. 54-74 and pp. 195-208
28. See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976)
29. See Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) pp. 2-3

30. “One thinks...of the idea of native country [*patria*]. As Machiavelli has shown and Kantorowicz has very well picked up, the idea of *patria* in ‘Old Europe’ has no truck with national individuality: patriotism is rather the free transformation of solidarity, of love between persons. This has nothing to do with national individualization or related phenomena: national pride, chauvinism, imperialism and colonialism.” See Antonio Negri, “The Philosophy of ‘Old Europe’”, p. 204
- In the above, *patria* is the name of singularity *itself*. However, in response to these admirable lines, one must ask, “Does this singularity *itself* have *nothing* to do with national (and other) individualization?” That is our genealogical question to the singularity, *patria*.
31. See Althusser’s quote (which we have used earlier) in Gregory Elliot’s introduction to the former’s book on Machiavelli. See Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London, New York: Verso, 1999), pp xv-xvi.
32. See Antonio Negri, “The Philosophy of ‘Old Europe’”, pp. 202-203
33. This is Alain Badiou’s description of the event which has been utilised by the author of the present investigation in an earlier article. See Soumyabrata Choudhury, “Why the People to Come will not, and must not be Sovereign: Notes on a Political and Mathematical Puzzle” in *Journal for Cultural Research* Vol. 13, Number 3-4, July- October 2009, pp. 354
34. ‘Generic’ and ‘indiscernible’ are concepts which are almost equivalent. Why play on a synonymy? Because ‘indiscernible’ conserves a negative connotation, which indicates uniquely, via non-discernibility, that what is at stake is subtracted from knowledge or from exact nomination. The term ‘generic’ positively designates that which does not allow itself to be discerned in reality the general truth of a situation, the truth of its being, as considered as the foundation of all knowledge to come. ‘Indiscernible’ implies a negation, which nevertheless retains this essential point: a truth is always that which makes a hole in a knowledge.” See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London, New York: Continuum, 2005), p.327
35. See Robert Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Labourers: Transformation of the Social Question*, trans. Richard Boyd, (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 2003)
36. Jules Michelet wrote some extraordinary pages on the *betrayal* of the ardent love of the people for a king found on the “government of grace and paternal monarchy”. He writes of the people’s unrelenting search, the people’s passion for a *God of Justice*, not simply as a matter of principle but as the search of love for a being worthy of its passion. See Jules Michelet, op. cit., pp. 41-44
37. See Robert Castel, op. cit., p. 188 (note 15)
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 178 - 179
39. Castel provides interesting evidence for the worker’s labour being treated in the Revolutionary period at the comparable level of land (or any such

localized, fixed site of fecundity), for which a kind of “social rent” is appropriate and not “salaries” for productive contribution of ‘free’ labour. The radicals, of which Babeuf in one, don’t see any intrinsic “potentiality” or “productivity” in the worker’s work, only a natural necessity which must be exercised only ‘moderately’ in the interests of humanity and decent leisure. See, *ibid.*, p. 179

40. Castel’s preface to the book makes clear that his is not a history either of social exclusion or economic exploitation. Such projects still presuppose a static ‘subject’ of history. His is more of a genealogy of the conversion of *dissimilar* social, economic, existential phenomena into a common horizon of ‘danger’ or into a shared dangerous ‘substance’. This is the way of ‘solving’ the theoretical and practical problem of groups and classes, who are “super-numeraries”, who *make* nothing useful for society and yet *exist* – the problem being, how? See, *ibid.*, pp. xiii- xxvii
41. We think it is a much-needed supplement to study the ludic dimension of government and institutional policy. It is this dimension of ‘play’ that traverses the literal and the strategic levels of policy to diagonally float through these spaces the ‘simulacrum’ of the objects that concern policy. As dangerous, risky or vulnerable, the so-called poor, vagabond or indigent are not only calculable subjects or objects; they are also ‘effects’ of rhetorical and phantasmatic *staging* of ‘scenes of danger’. In the forms of simulacrum and fictions, these ‘dangers’ are sought to be *maximised* in their figural variations and so that all *possible* danger is now phantasmatically realised. All this in the effort to foreclose the ‘impossible’ event which doesn’t quite have a ‘scene’, of which there is no voyeuristic and vicarious control.
42. We could also say that the default on the creditor’s behalf is to default on the creditor’s interest to earn interest on the loan he/she gives. The question of the ‘artificiality’ of interest that drives the creditor resonates with the problem of the sovereign exposed to the ‘artifices’, or prostheses of sovereignty that, in that event, makes sovereignty *unbearable* for the one enjoying it. In Michelet’s account of October, 1789, the ‘people’ are driven by the desire to expose the king to the false ‘powers’ produced and supported by alienating artifices such that the natural *eros* between king and his people can be resolved.
43. See Alain Badiou, “Rhapsody for the Theatre: A Short Philosophical Treatise”, trans. Bruno Bosteels in *Theatre Survey* 49:2, November, 2008, pp. 212-213
44. In an essential way, this point revives Nietzsche’s grasp of a Dionysian *event* at the origin of tragedy as opposed to the developed positivity of the theatre-form that civically institutes the agonal festival of performances in the city. In Nietzsche’s declaration, that event is “music”. Contrasted with Richard Wagner’s operatic ‘work’ of music (in combination with the other arts), for Nietzsche, Dionysian music is the incorporeal passage of a de-constitution that exists as a ‘permanent virtuality’ of all liturgical-communitarian,

- socialist and statist theatre. For a related but variant view on theatre and the event, see, *ibid.*, p. 206
45. See François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.37
  46. This is a highly simplified articulation of a very complex process. Even as the production of “capital” as a theoretical and scientific object of knowledge will go to the incomparable credit of Karl Marx in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the Revolutionary period in the late 18<sup>th</sup>, a series of struggles of opinion, theory and policy are already underway. Much as labour is tipped over into the depths of ‘indignity’, there is no absolute consensus over the sanctity of ‘bourgeois’ private property. Many a polemicist and activist speak on behalf of ‘property’ as a source of ‘wage’ and of social usage rather than an object of simple individual appropriation. There is, thus, underway a struggle over the being of property in its internal disarticulation between mode of appropriation which is ‘private’ and mode of usage which is ‘social’. We are forced to think along this disarticulation to the tune of an improvised index of ‘social property’. Robert Castel describes the historical trajectory of this index reaching up to the ideology of “insurance” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a practice of the calculated offsetting of risk or danger to ‘life’, ‘social existence’ or ‘productivity’ (in our terms) as analogues of “social property”. See Robert Castel, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-280
  47. The title of this section and the citations that follow are to be found in Castel’s book. See, *ibid.*, pp. 159-167
  48. *Ibid.*, p. 166
  49. *Ibid.*, p. 3
  50. We have to be careful in understanding this hypothesis. It doesn’t mean the equal presence of the numbers that gather in a civic assembly, of which the theatre is an example – the numbers that liturgically share a horizon and possibility of subjectivation. Neither does it entirely mean the presence of sheer any-number-whichever, measurable by a civic count-as-one or not, identifiable as a constituted *populus* or dis-counted as a multitude or *ochlos*. What we have in the case above is a “festival”, which means an occasion created around the public act of relief to the miserable as a generalised *spectacle*. Yet, because it is a festival and not the ‘scene’ of theatre, this is a spectacle without the outside position of a spectator. “Theatrical equality” is created from within this spectacle-festival when the presumed celebration or enthusiasm of the festival *suddenly*, as in an event of theatre, releases a point of exceptional cogency or lucidity, which is the lucidity of the thought of *axiomatic and generic equality*. The bearer of that ‘thought’ is the spectator-thinker of equality, an equality which arrives through the activity of the festival and without which, paradoxically, the festival is inconceivable in its truth. After all, why should one enthuse over relief to the poor and the hungry as a question of right unless it is a right following from generic equality of any-one and every-one *before* any predicates are attached to the



subject of right, including the predicates “hungry” or “poor”? But there is no deduction of this axiom. It arrives in the middle, in the breach opened by the event, in the wake of the throw of a ‘festive’ dice.

51. Ontologically, this might appear less than a rigorous thesis. After all, a “transformation” must carry a predicative change or metamorphosis beyond a pure passage or rupture. “Betweenness” indicates a reciprocal transformation to some third ‘state’. However, the thesis can be saved by the following reasoning: the transformation or predicative intensity of a new existence (of betweenness) remains unnamed and unnameable at the level we are investigating the question – which is the level of an existence whose emergence is a kind of ‘new residue’ once all given, ‘old’ predicates are subtracted. Which is not to say that this ‘generic’ existence, though created out of a void-basis, has a void – intensity; only that intensity, at the level of its existential emergence, is unnameable. It is, generically and simply, the *intensity of existence*.
52. See Robert Castel, *op. cit.*, p.164
53. The great identity of Being and Thinking is brought to a critical edge when we talk of torsions befalling both terms. The ‘identity’ then loses its sovereign support of the One-form, because both Being and Thought are under the suspension of the encounter with, what is constitutively, not-One. And yet when we say that Being and Thinking, under torsion, are the *same*, we are trying to say the unsayable of a ‘common destiny’ that *remains* ‘to be’ and ‘to be thought’ in the very process of its unfolding in the wake of the encounter with the ‘torsion-element’.
54. Such “generic non-sovereignty”, anonymous and ‘illegal’ as it is in its intervention in the orders of the State and the Constitution, is *not* a disorder by itself. On the contrary, as with the mathematical immemorial of “swarm” of infinite numbers, generic, non-sovereign existence is the irruption of an unforeseen *order*, one with incalculable and ungraspable *promise*. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 230-231
55. We will not develop this parenthesis here. But in a way the micro-credit movement in the contemporary times carries forward the equivocity of the concept of “productivity”, which oscillates between a labour-theory of value and the power of “social property”, into the relatively modern site of labour as enterprise. The interesting thing, however, is how the micro-credit rationality granulates the legal and ontological category of “person” (*persona*) to a “micro-person” whose moral habitation is the paradoxical credit-and trust-worthiness of ‘being-poor’. See Soumyabrata Choudhury, “Political Sociability and Theatre in the Subcontinent: The Poverty of Appearance, Appearance of Poverty”, presented in Warwick University-Jawaharlal Nehru University Conference titled, *Research and Documentation in Theatre and Performance Studies: Strategic Locations, Disciplinary Challenges and Critical Dialogues*, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. <http://www.warwick>

- ac.uk/fac/arts/theatre\_s/research/jnu/colloquium/jnu\_abstracts. Accessed, June 28, 2011.
56. See Alain Badiou, "Rhapsody for the Theatre", p. 220
  57. "Between 1789 and 9 Thermidor 1794, revolutionary France used the paradox of democracy, explained by Rousseau, as the sole source of power. Society and the State were fused in the discourse of the people's will; and the ultimate manifestations of that obsession with legitimacy were the Terror and the war... The Terror refashioned, in a revolutionary mode, a kind of divine might of public authority." See François Furet, *op. cit.*, p.77. The reader will notice that while being a forceful and lucid statement of the *total* and *exceptional* constitution of the Revolution, it completely discounts any possibility of the generic and indiscernible event, which could be the real stake in this "obsessive" project.
  58. This was a point brought up by Marie-José Mondzain in relation to the Pauline *oikonomia* and the kenotic (voiding) logic of economic exceptionality which is not *present* in the figure of exception, as in the sovereign's idol. Thus the iconological void-basis of the modern economy which, as we have tried to show, is resisted by the inconsistent and set-theoretic void-basis of the event's emergence. See Marie-José Mondzain, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49. Here we find a genealogical lead of the history of the economy as a history of 'adaptive' policy in response to the continuous, imperceptible exception – rather than the discrete, suspensive paradigm of the judicial-legal exception which is the 'state-of-emergency'.
  59. See Robert Castel, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164
  60. For Turgot's anticipation of the "iron law of wages" and the industrial "reserve army", see, *ibid.*, pp. 179-180
  61. For the arrival of *Homo Oeconomicus* as a 'generic' subject who is the 'entrepreneur of himself' and the entire web of genealogical intrication forming the 'liberal' art of government of the exception to sovereign's knowledge, see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave, 2008)
  62. For one of the most influential statements for the universal and 'public' use of Reason, and not merely its 'private' employment, see, Immanuel Kant, "Was ist Aufklärung?" in Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, (Semiotext), 1977, pp. 7-20
  63. "Generic politics" means not the empirical appearance of a great or oppressive, recognised or contested sovereign. Nor does it mean the fact of a certain regime of government inserted into a legitimate – or non-legitimate – State. Generic politics is the possibility of saying, for every example of the so-called political act, that "politics exists", that the "being of politics is affirmed". Which is not necessary even if there is ample evidence of 'political' and 'sovereign' facts/acts. The generic and rare possibility requires the precarious suture to an event. For the derivation of this meaning of the

- generic in response to Rousseau's problem of the "general will" (as opposed to a historical solution to the problem proposed by someone like Pierre Rosanvallon), see the meditation on Rousseau (number 32) in Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 344-354
64. As a perfect fit between the proposition and the assembly, what is being declared is a kind of eternal speech of the congregation, which is another definition of the "constitution". Against, or possibly escaping, such an eternity of *logos*, the "absurd" insists in the form of what Paul Celan calls, "the majesty of the present". Celan cites the absurd speech-act "long live the king!" in Georg Buchner's *Danton's Death* as the poetic exception to the theatre of political exception which is Terror. "The majesty of the present" pertains to the poetic contingency and sovereignty of any-speech-act-whichever that constitutively interrupts, and renders absurd, every constituted assembly of political meaning, every constituted political eternity. In view of this knot, what remains to be thought is the poetic revolution of the political revolution. See Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, pp. 295-296
  65. This schematization is a somewhat speculative stretching of the neat fabric of interpretations of the Revolution woven by François Furet in his *Interpreting the French Revolution*.
  66. Without devoting full books to the subject, two contemporary philosophers who have consistently decried the relativistic pragmatism of Furet's 'democratising' interpretation of the French Revolution are Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. The real point of rejection of the 'revisionist' thesis is - democracy as marking the universal horizon of the French Revolution is not the 'democratization' of an earlier regime of sovereignty; it is the generic possibility opened up by the default of the event on the debt and axiom of *sovereignty itself*. Thus, without mincing words, it is an *absolute* position against the paradigm of sovereignty rather than a relative one on the progressive emancipation of sovereign politics.
  67. See Furet's citation of Marx on the illusion of politics in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 58.
  68. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-61
  69. This is the raising of stakes that Furet refuses to admit in his interpretation. For him, what stakes could be higher than those that prompt the 'mythic' identification of a figure such as the Incorruptible with the constituent power of the people, their collective 'will'. Thus the saving of the constitution was the saving of power of the figure of the Incorruptible, whether 'power' is understood brutally or constitutionally and legally. For us, the stakes are indeed higher when there is an attempt to make consubstantial the power of decision on the exception with the *void* of the event. The power unleashed in the Terror is the power of a *fictitious* debt of the event extracted from its constitutive default.
  70. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 346

71. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* there is already a diagnosis of the 'madness of the revolution' during the Terror in terms of the impossible project of the institutionalization of "absolute freedom". The 'madness' lies in the *factional* realization of the absolute under the stale violence perpetrated by a kind of 'absolute faction' holding power. The objective cipher of this stale violence is the death-producing guillotine, which Hegel says, "is the coldest and stalest of deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of a cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water." See the citation and surrounding discussion in Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 185
72. It is a mistake to think that the plot is a monopoly of the Terror. In the Thermidor that followed, exactly the same paranoid schemes of denunciation were implemented. See François Furet, *op. cit.*, p.57. But Furet is accurate on pointing out the difference that during the Thermidor, the plot was the personal doing of the plotters such as Robespierre and his accomplices, whereas the 'plot', during the Terror was an overall *milieu* of the counter-revolution endangering the 'event'.
73. As a reminder of the origin of this dialectic in the thinking led by Jacques Lacan around the question of sexual difference (of the Man as "for all" and Woman as "not-all"), see Alain Badiou, *Rhapsody of Theatre*, p. 212
74. Recall F. Engels' letter to Marx on the Terror as made of 'little terrors', the Reign of Terror as the reign of the terrorized, the petit-bourgeoisie messing about with the 'business' of Terror. See François Furet, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129
75. The notion of "subtraction" in Badiou and our mention of "expropriation" are crucial because they attempt to think both the negation of belonging or property and existence of the 'unpresentable' (in terms of set theory where a multiple is proposed to which no element belongs) and the 'expropriated'. So subtraction and expropriation are not nihilations but the founding gestures of un-founded, ground-less, debt-less existence. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 66-69
76. Recall Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.30
77. Slavoj Žižek, who quotes Jon Elster – who in turn cites Tocqueville – makes, with his usual penetration, an ironic point about liturgical participation. The real meaning of such participation, according to Žižek, is not the measurable utility gained from the activity but its subjective by-product, its non-intended collateral benefit. Which is simply that the subject is formed along such a mis-recognition that he/she is contributing to the public 'thing' while actually what is happening is the formation of the 'liturgical' subject as a *real effect* of this misrecognition. The moment misrecognition changes to the true recognition that such 'public' service (as jury service) might be quite *useless*, the usefulness of the subjective formation as a function of 'self-education' through misrecognition is lost. In other words, Žižek exposes the socially useful *hoax of the liturgical debt*. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime*

*Object of Ideology*, (Puducherry, New Delhi: Navayana, 2008), p. 83

78. Reciprocally, can one speak of a drive towards a condition or state of the theatre which exhaustively represents the event of Revolution? And, is such a drive internal to the dynamic of performance that underlies theatre or is it the agenda of the generalised regime of representation which the State is? In the latter case, theatre becomes the regime or 'affair' conducted by the State which performs that very event (or Revolution) which inaugurates that regime. But the event, by its very void-basis, is *not* representable – and all such efforts either break the ontological mould of theatre (thus we speak of performance art as *beyond* theatre) or one is surreptitiously returned to the limits of representation. Within the parameters of classical 'western' theatre, what we see are kinds of displaced procedures of representation – Greek plays are displaced to a 'mythic' age mostly from their time and place of staging – that position theatre *between* the event and the state, each, with respect to the other, in a "state of abeyance". See Alain Badiou, "Rhapsody for the Theatre", p. 204
79. We can't help but notice in Castel's accounts the frequent characterizations of beggars (and other such vagabond, poor categories) as "swarms", "hordes", "multitudes" etc. that criss-cross pre-Revolutionary France and that are inherited 'debts' of the Revolution. See Robert Castel, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145. The 'psychiatric' dimension of the trends from pre-Revolutionary to the later epoch, as seen in Castel's citations (police, intendant versions, etc.), is the interpretation of poverty and vagabondage as general, mass *vulnerability* from being thought earlier as intense conditions of marginal existence.
80. This is the essential feature separating the generic possibility from its appropriation by 'universal' political ontology and economic ideology. The possibility arises from the subtracted, unnameable particular among particulars – which subtraction makes a new world of 'existentials' come alive but whose generic starting point of a *trace* of historicity provokes the existential and poetic risk of a naming, the promise of a name-to-come.
81. Charles Malamoud, in the context of Vedic debt without borrowing, has superbly analysed the place of death (*Yama*) as the only adequate one to saturate the unpayable debt the *brahmana* is born into. In a way, this becomes the general structure of the *total* and *infinite* presentation of debt to sovereignty as a presentation which pre-exists the individual 'subject' or 'citizen' who is socially, legally, constitutionally re-presented as a subject of rights and obligations (always limited, always finite). Only the sovereign's power over life and death can correspond to this absolute presentation the citizen/subject is born into. But we also see that this classical, 'Vedic' or 'Brahmanical' picture of sovereignty is exposed to its 'modern' contradictions during the Terror, when the debt sought to be indubitably externalised in the machine of death, as it were, in the *guillotine*, was as much to the *event of history* as to the immemorial of sovereignty. See Marcel Hénaff, *The Price of*

- Truth: Gift, Money and Philosophy*, trans. Jean-Louis Morhange (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 212-214
82. For the basic reference for this section, see Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Madness and Revolution: The Lives and Legends of Théroigne de Méricourt*, trans. Martin Thom (London, New York: Verso, 1991)
  83. *Ibid.*, p. 183
  84. See the chapter “Love of the Revolution” in Roudinesco’s book for the relentless and terrible irony that on the one hand, every move of Théroigne was attributed to the uncontrollable erotic proclivities of a feminine ‘nature’ (or ‘anti-nature’, if you will), to a diverted ‘coquetry’ and on the other, she, according to Michelet, shut out all ‘personal’ relations with the ‘men’ of the Revolution except for the cold and abstract Abbé Sieyès, who she openly admired. See, *ibid.*, pp. 25-43
  85. For Roudinesco’s beautiful paraphrase of Michelet’s account of 5-6 October, 1789 (“the crowd became a woman and the Revolution became feminised”) and her clear report on Théroigne’s absence from the march and her presence in the Assembly on both days, see, *ibid.*, pp. 26-27
  86. Between Pinel and Esquirol, the Revolution went from being a “dialectic” of derangement and true liberty, to a “bad object”, an ‘idea-object’ that explodes in the ‘heads’ of people. So we have now the materials for a full-fledged “political” pathology instead of the more primitive theory that politics is diverted ‘instinct’. See, *ibid.*, pp. 164-165
  87. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146
  88. For the letter, see, *ibid.*, p.147
  89. *Ibid.*, p. 149
  90. “It is no surprise that the onset of legalised madness occurred at the very moment when the Revolution was culminating in the Terror, and when the Thermidorean reaction was being set in motion. For so long as it was sustained by the revolutionary ideal, Théroigne’s madness could remain masked or else express itself freely in what were probably oscillations between exhilaration and melancholy. Conversely, with the advent of a new moral order...her insanity tended to assume a legalised form. Then, with the birth of the modern asylum, that is, the definitive confinement of the mad under the medical gaze and in suitable sites, Théroigne’s madness became increasingly fixed as a nosological object fixed by science... In moving from a ‘free’ and ‘travelling’ madness to a chronic psychosis, she then lapsed into the repetitive lethargy of asylum dementia”. *Ibid.*, p.150
  91. *Ibid.*, p.152. Roudinesco writes of Théroigne’s dwelling among “pure signifiers” in the asylum having lost the “dialectic” of a “real madness”. These ‘overdetermined’ signifiers were again fragments from the Terror and they testify to the ‘loss’ of reality. We think “real madness” consists of a dialectic indeed but torn from the reality of the event.
  92. *Ibid.*, p.169. Esquirol’s “barbaric” signifier, a nosological name, was itself “super-numerary” in response to the super-numerary challenge of

encompassing a madness, which encompassed the Revolution and Feminine Nature, by a name. While the name must transcend all material traces through a scientific and sovereign abstraction, the path to it is populated with material traces of several provenances. The iconographic trace is particularly interesting because in Georges Gabriel, we find someone who Esquirol asked to draw sketches of Théroigne's face and profile, bone-structure and her skull in 1816 and who also drew the 'portraits' of victims at the last moment before the guillotine claimed their heads during the Terror. The transcendence of the eternal scientific 'name' has, as if, a secret umbilical cord tied back to the trace of the terminal reality, the real of the 'last moment' of the so-called subject's life, whether that be the last moment before death or before the 'event' of madness.

93. The zoographic construction of a zone of knowledge about madness followed the horizon in the future of a "national medicine". Compare such a temporal structure of knowledge-expansion within a double articulation of the immemorial sovereign axiom and the disciplinary colonisation of 'modern' *historical* societies, with the exceptional Jacobin prescription entirely invested in the *instant* of the present that the asylum must disappear if the Revolution has to mean anything. The stakes are then divided between the utopian 'terror' of the present, which the detractors call madness, and the epistemic colonisation of the future, of which the asylums, Thermidor onwards, were a site and cipher. See, *ibid.*, pp. 166-167
94. We could say that in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with Esquirol as a leading representative, psychiatric thinking took 'events' of history as the terrain upon which specific mental maladies arose and the 'form' of sovereignty as the models based on which maladies could or must be treated. Conversely, at least in the case of forms of sovereignty, the spaces of psychiatric 'cure' were also intense and exceptional laboratories of generalised government of Men and Citizens. See, *ibid.*, pp. 164-165
95. See Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France, 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchill (New York: Picador, 2004), pp. 11-12. Also, Soumyabrata Choudhury, "Why the People to come will not, and must not, be Sovereign: Notes on a Political and Mathematical Puzzle", p. 356
96. Who better than F. Hölderlin to mark the passage from tragedy to madness when struck, not by the event's transgression and defaulting, but by the caesura and prohibition of transgression, by the *direct divinity* of the debt. When struck by the 'gods', all mediation must disappear. But in his theatre, Holderlin struggles valiantly for the perspective of 'mediation', for its sign and measure against the "becoming-One in fury" of the tragic figure. Holderlin struggles on behalf of the debt of a tragic theatre which pays back its ignorant guilt with a residual exercise in thinking on the unthinkable under whose star the tragic figure (Oedipus) wanders. This thinking, this residual 'paying back', takes place along the sign or measure which recedes to a zero. This is the 'destiny' of the heroic sovereignty of the tragic figure/

*persona*. Thus, tragedy doesn't present the event but presents its inaugural hollow with ashes of the sign-measure thrown about on one side of the hollow or abyss and the shadow of that which is *beyond* repetition and debt, the "incalculable" and without measure, falling from the other side. See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Holderlin's theatre" in *Philosophy and Tragedy*, ed. Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 117-136

97. For Barère's statement on 23 Messidor XI Year II, see the epigraph on the page opposite the acknowledgements of Roudinesco's book. The statement acts as the opening 'declaration' of the book's project.



## A Concluding Passage

From philosophy to philosophy – such is the passage in conclusion of our investigations. Does the conclusion then reiterate the introductory motto of our work, “philosophy, always philosophy!” – or even more singularly expressed, “philosophy, *only* philosophy!”? Always and only philosophy – and never quite the same: this was the lesson learnt during the course of our labours.

The introduction made an anticipatory declaration to the effect that philosophy will have experienced a decisive change of status and stakes *in its own place* even as the studies and passages of the work proceed. But that declaration was always predicated on the givenness of the place called “philosophy” which was as if also a mirror in which a changeless, eternal ‘philosophical’ nature was captured. So it was as if before any particular declaration towards a change in philosophy’s position and image, before the emergence of any crack in the mirror, the place of philosophy must be accepted as a *natural* place. In that sense, all so-called change would be the contextual dimension of philosophy’s engagement with more empirical and contingent knowledges. None of that affects the natural and eternal ‘givenness’ of philosophy. And yet the introductory declaration, its partisan, if unargued, force was directed at a *crack* in the mirror of philosophy. The studies and passages that followed in the wake of this declaration set about to produce at least two sets of consequences: first, by putting

philosophy to a *test of the event*, the work raised the stakes of 'change' from philosophy's assimilation of and modification by contextual procedures of knowledge, to a more fundamental possibility: was it possible to think of philosophy as an *encounter* instead of as an "encyclopaedia"?<sup>1</sup>

Which brings up the second set of effects. The procedures of the test of the event entailed the torsion of philosophy's *sovereign* image from its restful capture, a torsion effected by the mode of confrontation with the event's impasse of 'natural-philosophical' decidability and lucidity. The experience of impasse was also a strange threshold of decision in the face or of the face-lessness (to recall the Greek word, (*prosopon*) of undecidability. Let's say, this was the threshold of *decision of the Other* in confrontation with the impasse of sovereign decidability. But the ruptural emergence of a decision that declares "an event is happening, is coming-into-existence" without the pre-existent support of the sovereign decision-maker or the logic of the 'natural' place of sovereignty, enforces an authority completely unfounded beyond that declaration. So the critical question becomes, what is philosophy, in its 'given' natural pre-eminence and foundational sovereignty, to do with this un-founded and interruptive authority? Two options: either philosophy must, with a vehement upping of the ante, declare the forever pre-existence of its immemorial authority, or it must abdicate the truth of its eternal image to other truths born of the chance of events and not the wound of eternity. Clearly, the second possibility re-articulates philosophy as an 'encounter' with decisions of the Other and 'other truths'. But there is something revealingly violent about the first possible reaction on philosophy's part.

In philosophy's own contingent and insistence reaction to the 'forcing' declaration of the event that its pre-existent status precedes and survives all so-called tests of the event, it commits a violent antinomy. By expressing stakes in its present declaration on a status, which is 'natural' and 'immemorial' and beyond all calculable stakes, it seeks to, retrospectively and prospectively, 'naturalize' its decisionistic enforcement and, in the precarity of the present, enforce this eternal nature. Thus the historico-speculative

scenario is bound to be created in which the sovereign image of philosophy and philosophy's function as the greater encyclopaedic illumination on all temporal and regional decisions by sovereign power, are an *axiomatic* founding of a specific conjuncture and stakes. To have admitted the possibility of such a scenario does in no manner lift the intra-philosophical repression of its own axiomatic, and so, interruptive, foundation, a repression serving the cause of a naturalized and immemorial pre-existence. For such an untying of the knot and the lifting of repression, we must revisit the *test of the event* whereupon philosophy is either subject to evental torsion or it refuses the test in the name of its sovereign infallibility – or negotiates its erstwhile status and stakes through tactics of partially retreating and partially *enforcing retreats* in the domain of the event's consequences.

The schema configuring philosophy, sovereignty and our investigations of the event has been broadly the following: sovereignty is the constant, eternal and synchronic place where the decision born of the impasse and 'forcing' of events are brought, not immediately and brutally, but in the mediate and finite forms of their *models*. This delivery is almost as periodic and partial repayment in recognition of some originary *debt*.

Within such a disposition, the logical passion is oriented to forging, between the model approximating the decision on the event and the insuperable stakes of securing and replicating sovereignty's place, a relation of commensuration. Everything in our work, again and again, testifies to the logical passion of a finite force to repay an infinite, unpayable debt to sovereignty. We have adduced several such instances of a 'retreating' passion, a *love*, as it were, for the Greater Logic which will bring into commensuration the truth of immemorial pre-existence of sovereignty's place and the aleatory coming-into existence of the 'out-of-place', haphazard event. Indeed in such a fertilization of a Greater Logic, philosophy lives its life of nominations and determinations, all in service of the vast (and mute) declaration of sovereignty's One-place. Judged along this consideration of the highest stakes – that too only in the finite order because from the perspective of infinity, the stakes are either incalculable or they *don't exist* because purely

infinite sovereignty is self-constituted like Nature – and along the logical passion to pay back an originary debt, however meagerly, philosophy’s amplitude becomes more and more inclusive and its thresholds of commensuration become more and more daring. As a source of the nominations of the debt intrinsic to sovereignty’s enforcement of its place and as memorializer of the historico-ontological debt of names, philosophy covers a considerable distance within the ambit of our investigations.

For example, however much contradictory and locked in a life-and-death struggle might seem the determinations, “political theology” and “secular philosophy”, within an intra-philosophical discourse, we saw, in our development of *liturgical logic*, the metaphysical consistency secured for these opposed determinations in a certain nexus (*nexum*) and relationship or mediation (*mutuum*) between sovereignty and debt. We saw, over the course of the work, the flexible attenuation of a violently captivating theatre of sovereign *persona* (or *prosopon*) into a deterritorialized global economy (*oikonomia*) of obligation and debt. This *stretching* of the figurations of philosophical concepts and names, of the figure of ‘the philosopher’ herself, includes a genealogy of the subject of debt which traverses the range from secular and limited logic of liturgies in ancient Athens to the Catholic liturgy of theologically justified kingship – to a theological-to-economic-to-secularized-and-individualized modality of subjection to debt between at least 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. to the eve of the abolition of Christian *tithes* in pre-Revolutionary France. This is a thesis which has little choice but to plunge into the deep end of the night of history but we believe it re-emerges into the light of a sustained, if tortuous, philosophical consistency. Which consistency is also the object of the event’s *generic defaulting*.

Before we come to the generic naming of the event’s default which, in turn, is a default on philosophy’s sovereign name, or reciprocally, the name of sovereignty which is “philosophy”, let us look at the tactics of philosophy for enforcing different ‘retreats’ of infinity within the One-place of sovereignty. The word “retreat” must be understood both in the sense of a negotiated distance from an absolute reference and as a fortuitous oasis of absolute

reconciliation and rest. Towards such a double articulation of the stakes of infinity, philosophical nominations such as “political theology”, “the theologico-political”, “the theologico-political-to-secular”, etc., in our studies of sovereignty and debt, are commonly oriented.<sup>2</sup> The distribution of stakes takes place roughly like this: in each of these nominations, with all their predicative and objective variations there is on the one hand an infinite *potentiality* which every immanent, earthly sovereignty can only insufficiently actualize. The debt of sovereignty is forever renewed and every earthly sovereign is also a debtor – and, potentially, always a bad and inoperative debtor. At the same time, being a sovereign, the sovereign’s earthly position is *absolute*. And the challenge is that how, within this fundamental political absolutism of *all\_earthly* sovereignty, the infinite potentiality of a non-payable and ever-renewable debt, whose initial paradigm is metaphysical-to-theological, is to be re-implanted in the condition of the immanent ‘world’? Indeed this becomes the further granulated, further ‘minor’ and ‘global’ question of the subject of and to sovereign debt. And philosophy, within its structural, topological and ontological consistency, must both ask the question and craft its answer – this is its insidious and inclusive mandate going beyond the apparent contradictions between the theological and the secular.

The historical and ontological irony, with implications bordering on terrible violence, that philosophy’s liminal consistency extracts as a price is the generalized global condition of being irredeemably indebted to a bad debtor which a sovereign potentially is, indebted to a sovereign intrinsically beyond redemption himself. In each of our studies, philosophy’s tactics and axiomatic infrastructure were always on the verge of breaking their ‘consistent’ silence. In the rude and rhythmic vocalization of theatrical singing in the Catholic liturgy, in the Christ’s warrior-like clemency of all worldly debt and announcement of the kingdom of “another world”, in defaulting one one’s inheritance as both subject of sovereignty and of debt to effect a *torsion* of the One-place and One-name of sovereignty, an intermittent shout is heard, “inconsistent!”. Also, a nominatively more adventurous voice shouts, “Event!”. Philosophy,

clung desperately to the armature of consistency, breaks its vast axiomatic silence too and declares. “Unthinkable!”<sup>3</sup>

It was by the third study that we inscribed the event as its own name, “event”. The naming was sutured to the historiographic declaration of a “default of heirs” taking place in the conjuncture of the refusal to pay *tithes* in 1789. This effectively meant that event’s self-inclusion of its name was a suture to the *void*. The event’s default on its sovereign debt, which was also its structural and historical support, was a voiding of this very putative particle, “its”. What the event scrambles and renders inoperative is the finite point of a “subject’s” localization in a particular form, name and magnitude of debt, a localization subtended by an infinite, *sovereign* potentiality of supplying credit and of scrutinizing credit-worthiness. But the scrambling of localization can’t but produce a global defaulting not only on a particular debt but further on the very *potentiality* of infinite credit. This marks the decisive voiding of the infinite and crushing axiom of philosophy prescribing sovereignty’s One-place and the particular localization of the ‘subject’. The decisive and shattering question becomes whether the particular localization of the defaulting subject is then a ‘place’ of the subject as bad debtor, as ultimate, insolvent, *slave-like* (*doulos*, the lowest enslaved creature that God incarnated himself as in an act of self-voiding or *kenosis*) antithesis of sovereign potentiality, or is it a *generic* subject of new post-defaulting possibilities that only a philosophy which wagers the ‘out-of-place’ of a *new* immemorial can prescribe to thought?

What we verified between the end of Passage II and the ‘enforcement’ of Study III was the *involution* of philosophy in its own place as a result of its ‘encounters’ with the torsion of the event, whose heterogeneous and heterotopic test of existence it was invited to orient itself to. But since the test of the event’s ‘coming-into-existence’ is a test under the conditions of a voiding and default, of a suspensive *non-orientation*, philosophy’s invitation became one to orient thinking to the *truth* of this non-orientation. In effect, philosophy was henceforth enjoined with two tasks: the task of tracking or tracing a minimal but rigorous thinking of the topology which yields non-oriented multiplicities; and the task

of *itself* thinking the becoming-truths of eventual chance(s).<sup>4</sup> This giving of the task of thinking, what we have called, “new truths” or “new immemorials” to itself by an involuted and restricted mandate of philosophy, we were able to reach only upon a long and wounding journey. A journey to reach that point when philosophy instead of being the encyclopaedic narrative of infinite self-alienation and infinite return to self, becomes infinitely *alien*... The first glimpse of such ‘alien-thinking’ that we caught at the impasse of Passage I and its ‘forcing’ towards Study II, was the thinking accorded by numbers and Number.

In other words, philosophy, by the logic of passage, communicates its farthest, most alien site of thinking to its most immemorially *ancient and nearest* source of mastery – which is thinking befallen on itself by the encounter with *mathematics*. While we did not – and we are not capable of the task – chart the historical destiny of mathematics’ relation with philosophy with an accent on the particular stakes of thinking the concept of “infinity”, what did emerge at the ‘alien’ – in that way, ‘modern’ – site of 19<sup>th</sup> century mathematics was the possibility of an axiom in sharp contrast with the philosophy of infinite potentiality – the axiom, “infinity exists!”<sup>5</sup> Indeed this axiom illustrates, from within the precincts of set-theoretic formalization, our main thesis as to the consequences in particular situations of eventual voiding or default that force new truths and new immemorials into the world. Mathematics provides one of the simplest and most rigorous paradigms, at least from the point of view of formalization, of this process. While we didn’t dwell systematically on the theorems of set-theoretic infinity, in an oblique but singular way, we saw “real infinity” emerge on the site of political collectivity in 18<sup>th</sup> century France, an infinity realized in the numerical and ontological proposal of the “swarm”. The “swarm” expresses the political and mathematical “truth” of a non-countable but ordered collectivity *which exists* – this was our obliquely argued but clear thesis which shifts the burden of thinking along the stakes of infinity away from philosophy, which philosophy, in the encyclopaedic style, thinks sovereignty in the image of infinite potentialization expressed in the postulates of

immemorial pre-existence of such a *debt* of sovereign being, the thinking carried out in the ‘elsewhere’ of mathematics wagers the ‘coming-into-existence’ of an image of infinity – for which Number provides the appropriate contour – which, in being axiomatically prostaticulated, *will not have passed*.

However the above shift of burden doesn’t signal either the irrelevance or the ‘end’ of philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Quite the contrary. *Only* philosophy and *always* philosophy has the task of thinking the ‘becoming-true’, the mode of ‘becoming immemorial’, of new truths. This is a task pertaining to the topology of time that constitutes historical multiplicity – which is the time of event – even while neutral-and multiple-being constitute mathematics’ atemporal ‘thought’. Let there be no misunderstanding here: Philosophy doesn’t think or anticipate the possibility of the event as it doesn’t think, in its restricted adjacency unto its own place, the sovereignty of Being. What it is prescribed to think is the process or procedure(s) of *new* consistencies for the ‘truths’ that might arise as consequences of eventual default on the debt of Being. If we pursue the example of the status of set-theoretic infinity a bit further, the steps in the procedure of philosophy’s seizing of it will become clear: unlike the ‘old’ metaphysical method whereby philosophy committed the surreptitious absurdity of bringing-into-existence a pre-existent ‘eternity’ by ‘naturalizing’ its axiomatic authority, the ‘new’ procedure declares, in the first place, as an echo of the mathematical axiom, the *existence* of ordered and non-countable (one-by-one, that is) infinities. Then it wagers the *thought* of that existence as a universalizable ‘truth’, which holds for all pasts and futures in the wake of this wager *in the present*. The only consistency, a new and ‘forcing’ one, philosophy can now forge for this topology of time is the modality of a *future anterior*.<sup>7</sup> A new immemorial such as the axiom of real and ordered infinities, which ‘swarm’ and do not present themselves as sequential or serial, is so by virtue of being always the case upon the conjunctural and chance creation of its “thought”. Philosophy doesn’t create it; philosophy secondarily announces, once it is created – by mathematics, politics or any other site – the invention of a consistency and procedure for



the chance of the thought. We can then call this new consistency, philosophy's "concept" for 'alien' thought(s): Philosophy's 'meta-thought'.<sup>8</sup>

Let us compress these elusive and involuted orientations in a somewhat abrupt summary: once philosophy is exonerated of the debt of thinking Being and mathematics, as a consequence of set-theoretic immemorial(s), *will have thought* Being, it turns out that mathematics thinks Being *without debt*. This minimal ontological thinking is sutured to the thought of the void's presentation (the empty set). All debt is engendered with the representation of multiple-Being as sets and sequences counted-as-one(s). Philosophy as the seizure of events – as much seizing as seized – that scramble and indiscern count-as-ones, seizes real historical defaults on different modalities of the debt of the One. These modalities are at least metaphysical, theological, political and cultural. In our studies and passages, the generic particular name given to the form of capture (*nexum*) that unfolds (*mutuum*) the relationship of sovereignty and debt, is "liturgical debt" or "liturgy". The particular default, which is *generic* instead of being only historical, we call, following Jules Michelet, "defaulting on one's own inheritance".

\* \* \*

In Alain Resnais' film *Love unto Death*, Elisabeth and Simone love each other. Then Simone dies. And comes back to life – but both he and Elisabeth know that this is a brief reprieve; at any time he will die again, this time forever. Elisabeth refuses to accept this state of affairs. She will not give in to this foreknowledge of Simone's second – and permanent – death. Her love, which refuses the knowledge of a 'fated' death, leads Elisabeth to carry out a series of passionate and rigorous *scrutinies* of the meaning of death which are equally worldly and metaphysical. Every intense and unsparring 'study' leads to the same brutal impasse – Simone will die again any time with no hopes of revival (or resurrection). This experience of their impasse of an imminent Real of death doesn't break Elisabeth's will, and her love makes her undertake

even more insistent investigations with a stakes, not in some epistemological miracle leading to prescriptions of immortality, but in a counter-Real of a true passage across the impasse of death. Let's say, Elisabeth's vocation of love doesn't lead her to search and pray for re-surrection in view of imminent death and loss; her's is a *militancy* of love conducting abyssal 'studies' so as to *intervene* in the 'state-of-knowledge' that makes death into fate and fate into either, a 'natural' passage or a 'mortal' condition. Her intervention, then, is towards a 'surrection' of the impasse into a statement of the impasse's self-refusal. How is such a thing possible? Only by *defaulting* on the state-of-knowledge, and state-of-being – which 'states' are also 'debts' – that prescribe the impasse in the first place.

When Simone and Elisabeth go to the believer couple (Judith and Jerome), who are their close friends, and put to them their 'problem', the reply they get is the following: "Aren't you being both impious and unwise by refusing to accept Simone's inevitable death? Isn't God's law, and his grace, that only upon death will everlasting, joyous and truly loving, truly beatific life come? Doesn't the Bible so definitively teach us this?" To this, Elisabeth declares, "The Bible was written before my love for Simone existed!"

The above is a statement of defaulting on the sovereignty of any pre-existent immemorial in the lacerated light of a 'love' that will have come into definitive existence in its refusal of death as fate, nature and hope. Elisabeth, to declare the exact, indiscernible, ungraspable and generic position of her love as a stakes of intervening in the 'verdict' of death and as a *withdrawal* of stakes from the sovereign codes of rationalizing such a verdict – whether theological, cultural or inter-personal – must disinherit herself of the power of all pre-existent immemorials, the rights, obligations and debts that follow from them. To be left with what? With the ecstasy of inconsolable self-belonging that shuts out anything that *happens*, including and especially death? Or, with the 'ultra-eventness' of a love that is so special, so aristocratic, so singularly a 'first love' that its exceptional happening must induce a new regime of erotic and affective debt to which even nature and fate must submit and suspend their 'normal' law of death? Is Elisabeth someone who, in pre-emptive symbolic over-

compensation, already entered into interminable mourning, or is she an imminent psychotic in stubborn default on, and foreclosure of, all symbolization of the automatism of death?

Let us, in conclusion, try to think along a further slope of possibility that Elisabeth's declaration might release in its 'impossible' enforcement: it is up to us then to think of "love" as *any-other-love and for the first time*. That being the indiscernible and immanent status of Elisabeth's love as "exceptional", we are as much provoked to think *against* the status of death as an "event", to decry its pseudo-eventness. This trajectory of 'thinking' Elisabeth's declaration leads to a point of separation between death and love. Indeed this point must be thought as the juncture of division between a so-called subject cleaving to the condition of mortality and the debt of finitude – a 'human' subject in all its pathos and heroism – and a wager on the inconvertibility of love either to the cyclical automatism of death or to its redemptive transfiguration – a wager on the *generic* and *immortal* subject of love. It is with this immanent affirmation of love's immortality that Elisabeth is subjectivised away from both neurotic conformism, which accepts the human condition as finite and mortal, only can't accept *this* particular loss of the loved 'object', and psychotic foreclosure, which repeats and insists in the 'one-place' of love mirroring the automatism of death's 'one-place' as Nature and Fate.

Along the above slope of thinking that releases both an 'Idea' of love and its singular 'coming-into-existence', the name "love" arrives in the neighbourhood of other names such as the "infinity" of a certain mathematics and the "equality" of a certain politics. Yet love has a peculiar nominal localization in that its 'name' is completely indiscernible from every other utterance of "love", while the mathematical and political axioms (on infinity and equality, respectively) yield the minimal enforcement of a 'new' name for a new immemorial. No such invention of a minimally differentiated force of utterance for love is thinkable. It is always "love", the same and tonelessly unflinching "I love you". Of course, as the *event* of separation from the debt-infested pseudo-event of an imminent death, the flat and uninteresting utterance erupts into, "the Bible

was written before my love for Simone existed!” At the moment and juncture of division, an unforeseen and ‘alien’ event of love divides itself from all sovereignty, property and inalienability. ‘Becoming-alien’ is the only ‘common’ of a humanity-in-love – definitely not a common “property” or “capacity” but a generic exposedness to the event.

Just as the philosopher exposed to the ‘surrection’ of the event becomes incapable of writing a single word on love when ravaged by love, the lover meets the philosophical exigency of wagering a new consistency when confronted with her erotic and existential predicament. That is the infinite and feverish exchange of alienations that takes place at the above-stated juncture of division. This is also the juncture whence takes birth a new, strange and luminous ‘theatre’. It is not a theatre presenting a discernible *prosopon* of the actor-sovereign for the benefit of a civic, legal and liturgical assembly of *personae*; it is, rather, a theatre that is *manifest* in the irreducible taking-place of a gesture of existence. In the same way that Elisabeth, through a ‘gesture’, makes her love come into existence *forever* against the pre-existent ‘forevers’ of death and Christian redemption, the ones who declare actual, secular infinity and generic, axiomatic equality in this world, interrupt the world to ‘surrect’, or re-surrect, it in the unforeseen, alien and generic light of this theatre of gestures and declarations.

In sum, it is a theatre of *truth* without a true subject, whether that be the actor’s *prosopon* or the citizen’s *persona*. Indeed the only subject of this theatre is the very gesture that gives birth to it. As a particular materiality, the gesture must be a fragment of ‘common’ humanity, a human fragment like any other. But as a gesture of interruption and re-surrection of the world in the world, it gives birth to humanity for the first times every time anew. Of this ‘generic’ humanity, torn from the world and born in it by a gesture of unfounded and non-sovereign declaration, we have no ‘human’ knowledge. All we have are a few alien truths, an indiscernible luminous theatre and immortal love, to start off ‘generic humanity’ on its incalculable journey.

## NOTES

1. Of course the historical reference ready-to-hand here is to the *philosophes* of 18<sup>th</sup> century France. And who can avoid the comparison and contrast between the 'professional' encyclopaedic craft of the *philosophes* and the passionate suspensions and 'non-orientations' of someone like Pascal! The question really was, can the philosopher be non-oriented, isn't the philosophical obligation to be oriented to the Truth? For someone like Pascal – and this is a lineage of belief starting from St. Paul – in *this* world, the so-called Truth is too immature, infantile, *minor* to be fully grasped as knowledge. And the consummate divine Truth of another world is anyway too sovereign to be grasped; it can only be *encountered* in a mode which is inadequately but authentically existential, rather than be reflectively mastered philosophically. But the question which reaches back beyond the Christian 'encounter' to the 'acts' of the Socratic *daimonon*, is whether philosophy, and its *persona* which is the philosopher, can existentially and ethically master the encounters of *banal* life which are always the locus of error and delusion? Interestingly, Socrates practices his art of mastery and wisdom through the relentless clarification of all erroneous life-encounters led by his minimal and absolutely 'true' encounters with the *daimonon*. In our passage, we are moving along a possible philosophy which is not encyclopaedic, not under the shadow of the encounter with a super numerary God, and it isn't oriented to ethical mastery vis-a vis the errant immanence of worldly encounters.
2. Giorgio Agamben has, with extraordinary philosophical and poetic acuity, demonstrated the consistent 'bundle' of relations that the theologico-political and the secular compose with each other in the genealogy of power in western society. It is important to note Agamben's use of the notion of "signature" (rather than sign) in the history of displacements of the One-Place of sovereignty. This use separates Agamben from a structural approach to the question of consistency of 'relations' – and makes him diagnose these exacerbated consistences on the brink of dissolution, when the 'signature of things' will have become completely illegible. For his recent work of unique merit, see, Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II,2)*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (with Matteo Mandarini) (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).
3. Will we go to Kant's analytic of the sublime for the abyss before judgments of thought, for the "unthinkable"? Will we cite the problematic of Radical Evil for the 'surplus' of malevolent freedom, whether incarnated in this world or some other, that thought can't seize with its constitutive concepts? Will we simply stop at Theodore Adorno who would not surpass the absolute *and* historical negativity of the Holocaust, an 'unthinkable' nomination (Auschwitz) whether for philosophy or for poetry? Let us simply note the privative 'un' of the 'un-

thinkable' as a *prohibition* of the event, rather than the affirmative verdict that the event *is* unthinkable.

4. Just as a quick lead, the obvious example of a non-oriented surface (or "multiplicity") is a Moebius strip. Of course this is a topological example – and the whole mathematical epic written in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is the to-and-fro between topology, algebra and set-theoretic axiomatics. Alain Badiou's magnificent embrace of this epic has led to a philosophy which subtracts itself from any 'natural' or 'sovereign' orientation pre-given to it; yet the resultant is a philosophy which orients itself to the non-orientation, or "purity", if you will, of topological and mathematical thinking. As an essential footnote to this note, we must put on record Alain Badiou's *debt* to Jacques Lacan's 'psychotic' preoccupation with knots, surfaces and other non-oriented multiplicities as the dis-figures of the subject's impasses(s) in psychoanalysis.
5. This refers to the overall statement gathered in the Zermelo-Frankel (ZF) axioms but at its core is Cantor's theorem on the actual cardinal infinities called "trans finites". The mathematical details convoke for a philosopher like Alain Badiou the epic, nay, *immortal*, coming-into-being of a consistent thought of infinity which doesn't fall into the mournful arms of 'human' finitude.
6. Clearly this distinguishes the status of philosophy as arriving here, from the 'post-modern' reduction of philosophy to sophistics as well as from the finely wrought intelligence of deconstructive thinking between Heidegger and Derrida, a thinking woven around the 'ends' of philosophy.
7. In his magnum opus *Being and Event* (1988)HHHH. Alain Badiou brings into philosophical existence, the existence of mathematical infinity. This means, the 'place' of infinity, arithmetically and geometrically solicited since the Greeks, is *decided* now as the consistency of a philosophical *name*, which is "infinity". In the present of Badiou's nomination, torn from the developments of 'modern' mathematics, the so-called Greek past of a mathematical impasse (which is the *problem* of infinity) finds its conceptual future. Thus, in a present time, when the philosopher unleashes the divisive eternity of a concept-name or a definition (of "infinity"), she brings into existence the future of all those pasts when the thought of that concept was denied passage by the Real of an impasse. Exactly like the Freudian unconscious, which surfaces in and divides a present in the mode of a symptom, solicits the psychoanalyst's intervention so as to seize and bring into existence in the present the future of all its repressed 'pasts' by access to symbolization, the philosophical intervention into the mathematical impasses of its history is oriented to a passage to a 'new truth' or 'new immemorial' of thought by the consistency of a new 'name'. Thus, the decision of the philosopher in the present makes the past pass into its future of a true thought in the mode of a future anteriority. Just like the mathematical instance of the decision on "infinity", we can consider the example of "equality" that 'modern' politics thinks and which solicits, nay, *demand*s, that philosophy decide and name its consistency as an immemorial,

eternal equality that makes all the pasts of inequality and injustice pass into *their* futures where “equality” is declared, nay, *enforced*, as axiomatically true. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* trans. Oliver Feltham (London: continuum, 2005), pp. 142-160.

8. “Philosophy is the place of thought where both the ‘there are’ [*i y a*] of truths and their compossibility is stated. In order to do this, philosophy sets up an operating category, Truth, which opens up an active void within thought.... Philosophy is never an interpretation of experience. It is an act of Truth in regard to truths. And this act, which, according to the law of world, is unproductive (it does not produce even one truth), places a subject without object, open solely to the truths that pass in its seizing”. See Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 124-125.

## APPENDIX

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# St. Paul, Gabriel Naudé, Antonin Artaud: Three Violent and Delicate Exceptions to Law and Liturgy

St. Paul arrives to make a departure from the Graeco-Roman sense of *nomos* and its corresponding liturgical obligations; he departs as well, in significant ways, from Judaic law and the liturgy of the Jewish congregation. In the seventeenth century Gabriel Naudé praises and challenges what could be called the ‘secular’ liturgy of Machiavelli, a liturgy in the service of the Prince’s survival and power. In the period roughly between 1930 and 1935, Antonin Artaud shatters the overall liturgical logic of western theatre and its Law of the Text in a series of essays and manifestos that might be seen to have an errant historical origin in the creative ‘auto-mockeries’ of Alfred Jarry towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Vast differences in their contexts and visions notwithstanding, these three figures exemplify the rare and precarious point of separation, of cutting-off, not only from an external inheritance we might call “culture” but from the continuity and development of their *own* path and passion, their path of passion. I will use a word from the Bible to name this point of division and cutting off, and the name, in its general appropriation by language, will reveal its great violence and “monstrosity”, especially when directed towards the very self who uses it: the word used by Paul in the Letter to the Romans (9-11), is “anathema”.



In Romans (9-11), Paul says:

I am speaking the truth in Christ – and I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accused and cut-off [*anathema*] from Christ<sup>1</sup>

Paul would make himself anathema of Christ. I will not ask the specific question, why Paul wants to cut himself off from Christ's love – it is a complicated and fascinating investigation Jacob Taubes conducts – but make the more general enquiry as to what does it mean to make oneself anathema in the moment, and at the conjuncture, of one's *decision* to affiliate (*pistis*) oneself to that very 'event' of which one makes oneself anathema. What are the stakes of the affiliation and the self-anathematization? Of the faith and the abandonment? And if, going back to Paul, the decision is one unto a new 'power' and sovereignty – the power of weakness against the imperial sovereignty of Rome – then can such sovereignty further exceed and dis-figure its traditional (liturgical) stakes to reach across to the side of anathema and abandonment? Is this possible?

### PAUL: 1 CORINTHIAN. 7:29-32

Now to read the following passage from a Letter to the Corinthians: "But this I say, Brethren, Time contracted itself, the rest is, that even those having wives may be as not [*hōs mē*] having, and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, and those buying as not possessing, and those using the world as not using it up. For passing away is the figure of this world. But I wish you to be without care."<sup>2</sup> What has this passage to do with the paradoxical stakes of anathema and a new power? Well, clearly the connection has something to do with what political philosophical since Carl Schmitt frequently calls the fundamental status of the "exception" as an impasse *and* as a passage vis-à-vis the pre-giveness of the sovereign apparatus (*dispositive*). And surely everything also hinges on the access of the above "and" to any consistent if a 'forcing' thinking.<sup>3</sup>

Now it seems that Paul, in the Letter to the Romans, makes himself the accused or anathema of Christ under the terrible pressure of the circumstances of the *congregation* from which he comes – and from which he never ceases departing. This is the congregation of a people which has sinned. Now, for a sinful people, God has undertaken the most vengeful and punishing oaths. But, as Taubes points out, the real task for Paul is not to *continue* the history of enforcement of oaths and laws within the liturgical discipline of the community<sup>4</sup>. Between Moses and Paul, the real point of ruptural transformation that is being created is the wagering of what could be called ‘counter-circumstances’ or an ‘event’, if you will, which will make possible the ‘un-doing’ of sovereign oaths, their in-effectuation as the ciphers of sovereign performativity. The self-avowal of “anathema” is a step in that direction – but it is a complicated point which I am only hinting at here for its broad implications.

I think it is important to repeat the paradoxical stakes that come out in Paul: on the one hand they express a decisive intervention in the structure of divine commandment and its opaque obverse contained in the prescription “obey!”; at the same time the stakes are not only in counter- or in-effectuating sovereignty, they also pertain to the eventative basis for the creation of a *new people*. And to that extent, sovereignty – whether gnominically compressed into the ‘power of weakness’ formula or not – must go over to the side of this post-abyssal ‘people’. To the daunting question, how is such a thing possible, let us pick up a few leads in the terrain of Graeco-Roman or *Hellenist* law and liturgy that Paul seems to arrest *and* pass in the *hōs mē* part of the Letter to Corinthians quoted earlier.

Giorgio Agamben has interpreted the passage (and impasse) as the messianic revocation of all vocations<sup>5</sup>. Indeed it can be shown from a brief genealogy of Greek and Roman *civic* practices that the subjective association of a “vocation” is deeply entrenched in a *liturgical* and *incorporeal* (-Stoic) logic of public debt and civic obligation. The so-called Hellenist and sovereign subject – distributed between its early democratic locus of 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Athens and its later personification of Roman legal *potestas* – can

be shown to be subject to a certain undifferentiated sovereign capture (*nexum*) and a subject of a certain attenuated ‘credibility’ (Adam Smith’s word which can be substituted for a certain “credit-worthiness”) and civic solvency. The Romans, in the context of law and attenuated payment of debts in installments, called the late moment of subjectification, “*mutuum*”<sup>6</sup>. These technical references apart, the basic point is that the subject’s “vocations” which are several worldly instrumentalities (having wives, owning property, utilizing possessions etc.), are rooted in a logic, or should one say axiomatic, of debts that prescribes an *incorporeal* subjective payment by civic and political participation, of the liturgical pecuniary credits advanced to the Greek and Roman ‘congregation’. In the case of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian democracy, the credit is liturgical and cultural; in the Hellenist Roman era, the credit has a liturgical-legal modality. In Paul’s “revocation of all vocations”, the revocation applies to both the Greek and Roman groundings of worldly vocations. In the two cases taken separately and together, we are witness to Paul’s declaration of a *defaulting* on both these powers and obligations of the debt<sup>7</sup>.

But what is the logic of defaulting then if it is not simply a willful declaration? However we can’t assume that this logic simply *passes* from an earlier history to the event of revocation, *even if* at the end of the citation Paul joyfully declares the passing of this world. The whole question of anathema must return here though there is no apparent connection. “Anathema” represents the invention and wager of Paul’s “divine violence” (in Walter Benjamin’s terms)<sup>8</sup> as response to the messianic impasse brought upon Graeco-Roman *nomos* and liturgy, to ‘force’ a passage through this impasse.

This is a crucial stage of the argument : at the exact precipitation of the messianic ‘exception’ – the announcement of the Messiah upon the resurrection – we can either be launched into the *return* of the old (imperial) sovereignty in all its juridical, legal, mythic and liturgical insistences to hold back (*kat-echon*) the imminence of a new messianic people<sup>9</sup>; or we can be absolutely and unconditionally *abandoned* to the expiration of this imminence such that the wager becomes that the name of this infinitely imminent abandonment will be “a new people”<sup>10</sup>. In that sense the new people will not be

sovereign, will not be a liturgical congregation, will not have a unified *nomos* or Torah – will not be a people (*laos*). The “divine violence” thesis applied to Paul attaches to this strange, impassible yet joyously passing and ec-static thought of a messianic ‘non-people.’

If we are to think the meaning of “divine violence” as a recessive passion unto, not a futural horizon, but a void-point where stakes are unconditionally withdrawn and defaulting on debt is as much on behalf of the *creditor* as that of the debtor, then we must not confuse the above event of a “non-people” with what a constitutionalist like Polybius and Stoic philosophers of incorporeal congregations, called the “*ochlos*”<sup>11</sup>. “*Ochlos*”, translated popularly as “multitude”, stands for a *violent* notion in that the multitude are supposed to be an un-congregated mass of violent virtualities, which exigency demands a legal and liturgical – that is, sovereign – *constitution*, and so, congregation. Despite the intervention of the strange, and divine, violence of the anathema Paul directs at himself vis-a-vis Christ in the wake of an earlier people who have sinned, this is not the event of a passage from one people or one state-of-the-people to another. The event is the declaration of an ‘impasse’ of a non-people which is not the initial and virulent virtuality waiting for sovereign and constitutional capture but the culminating and imminent ‘dis-figure’ of an *actual* intervention.

Very briefly, even elliptically, let us state this mode of actuality in the light of the *hōs mē* passage from the Corinthians. I suggest, the antinomic pressure of the *synchrony* of a world-in-passage maintains that synchrony and that passage in the mode of the ‘as not’ (*hōs mē*). That is the meaning of ‘imminence’, a passage-to-come in its very passing along the contour of a void and impasse, a meaning which can be expressed in the mutilated term “monstration”. A term used by Jacques Lacan once in a mathematical mood and equally useful for several phenomenologies of ‘inappearance’ and abandonment, “monstration” is the self-showing of the passage in its imminent maintenance. That is its existential actuality<sup>12</sup>.

But the main question concerning us remains that how such a *monstrum* or ‘monster’ abandoned to the in-effectual element of existence re-lends itself, in that abandonment, to sovereign capture

(*nexum*) and the installation of sovereign debt (*mutuum*)? Because without such capture and installation the Pauline inauguration of an *oikonomia* yielding a ‘new people’ will stay in forever messianic suspension. Indeed that is not only an aporia and impasse of ‘thought’ that encounters the ‘event’, it is also the forced opening onto a certain global history of the Pauline *oikonomia*<sup>13</sup>. I think the real problem, which is also a singular opportunity for a wager of thought, is the following: how is it that the violent, delicate, almost *child-like*, in its self-anathematization, messianic annulment and re-vocation, played out so effectively and actively in the history of the Pauline *oikonomia* and its attendant sovereign *dispositifs*? How is the ‘infancy’ of the messianic passage characterized by abandoned ‘play’ of use-less, ‘illiturgical’ and scintillating gestures, play out as the history of the most adult economy of strategy and tactics, sovereignty and power? Instead of offering any hypothesis by way of solution(s) to this problem – though such hypotheses are not unthinkable – let us look at its articulation at another level and position of history – which are definitely not ‘messianic’.

**GABRIEL NAUDÉ: EXCERPTS FROM CONSIDERATIONS POLITIQUES SUR LES COUPS D’ETAT, CITED IN MICHEL FOUCAULT’S SECURITY, TERRITORY, POPULATION**

Gabriel Naudé (1600-1653), at one place in his text, with regard to the coup d’Etat writes “(----) with *coups d’Etat*, we see the thunderbolt before we hear it rumbling in the clouds...Matins are said before the bells are rung, the execution precedes the sentence; everything becomes Jewish; (---) who thought to strike receives the blow, who thought himself safe dies, another suffers what he never dreamed of, everything is done at night, in the dark, in the fog and shadows”<sup>14</sup>. Admittedly, these reversals of the coups d’Etat do not have the ‘child-like’ non-orientation and suspension of Paul’s declaration. The coups d’Etat is surely a reversal of gestures and indices unfolding in time, born of an dis-orientation of predicates that compose a ‘world’. But the crucial point is that Naudé’s definition of coups d’Etat is included in the *raison d’Etat*, the Reason of the State, that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century is emerging as

a possibility of thinking the question of power which escapes the dominant discourse of sovereignty at that time, that is, the discourse under the sign of Machiavelli<sup>15</sup>.

Two aspects of the above proposition need to be highlighted. First is the Machiavellian background: it has to be understood that Machiavelli, though through a tortuous and elusive passage which is nothing but the passage(s) forced out of a historical and theoretical impasse, ended up creating the prescription of a kind of 'secular liturgy' to subjectify and enforce debts of sovereignty<sup>16</sup>. This means that the relationship of the Prince and the people is prescribed to be mediated by a structure of free and public obligation of the citizen to participate in the affairs of sovereignty and law, that taken together, comprises the space of the state. This 'liturgical' obligation of the citizen, which is always (at least in the best case scenario) by *right*, not coercion, is exemplified by such free and obligatory practices as defending one's country as a soldier does during war or performing jury-service in public litigation. The military liturgy is particularly illustrative because its practice, which is born of public obligation and public *love*, is conducted in the situation of the exception, which is war<sup>17</sup>.

This brings up the second aspect of our earlier proposition. Gabriel Naudé's vivification of the coups d'Etat is *not* the table of reversals during a war or a seizure of power by a pretender against the sovereign, etc. It is the self-showing of the state itself, the point of intensification of the Reason of the State so as to vivify it as a splendour and a theatre. The exceptionality of the coup d'Etat is not one which is either an external provocation to law and liturgy or an exigency already subsumed by the foresight of sovereign wisdom; it is the constitutive exceptionality of the *state itself*. How is that possible? How to pass this thought which is thought come upon an impasse? I think it might be an interesting risk to take to articulate this self-showing or "monstration" of the state during the coup d'Etat with the wounding self-abandonment of the Pauline anathema. What this might mean in the context of the irreducible exigency of "everything becomes Jew..." is that the becoming-Jew is the point of immanent and self-anathematizing exception of the *raison d'Etat*." The 'Jew' is not outside the thought of the state but is

the included remainder and exception. And it is not even the ‘figure’ of the Jew that is in question but the naming of a *torsion* cutting of the self of the subject from the very ‘love’ which constitutes it – for the sake of that very love’s exceptional splendour indiscernible from its greatest distress. The name given to the “torsion” is “Jew” in Naudé’s text.

The above analysis has a specific bearing on the status of western theatre. The theatrical and gestural localization of the *raison d’Etat* in the coup d’Etat when refracted back through the political theatre of these times, or through the theatre of sovereignty of which Shakespeare, Racine, Corneille, etc., provide exemplary texts, show lines of escape from liturgical as well as Baroque theatre<sup>18</sup>. We are not witness to some *other* theatre here – let that be clear – but what we encounter are a series of irreducible exigencies, immemorial monstrations that taken together, in their emergent escapes, escape the *debt* of theatre-participation and the *mourning* of Baroque lamentation. At the level of the emergence of the theatre as well as the state, what emerges is a kind of *new immemorial* which configures this theatre and this state as belonging to an infinite imminence – which is the same thing as the ‘world’ with no eschatology envisagable but with every moment of this worldly infinity containing an eschatological exigency. The name for that exigency contained in the immanence of the world is the coup d’Etat in political terms – and in theatrical terms, the coup d’Etat is the intensive self-showing of a potentially *useless* sovereignty, a ‘Jewish’ one, in all its shame and splendour. In Shakespeare’s history plays, the uselessness is either given the shape of a Richard II crumbling under the weight of ‘mortal’ delicacy in the face of the enforced immortality of sovereign power, or gifted the words of absolute exigency on the edge of defaulting on sovereignty itself, as in Richard III’s “A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!” Really, there is no liturgical audience for this theatre; for such a theatre, which is one of the coups d’Etat and not of sovereignty *as such*, the audience is included in the violent and delicate logic of the immanent exception. In seeing the state’s self-anathematization in the wounding scintillations of the coups d’Etat in the theatre, the audience, to form itself, must anathematize itself.

## ANTONIN ARTAUD: *THEATRE AND THE PLAGUE*

“Once the plague is established in a city, normal social order collapses. There is no more refuse collection, no more army, police or municipality. Pyres are lit to burn the dead whenever men are available...too many corpses...the houses are thrown open and raving plague victims disperse through the streets, their minds full of horrible visions...plague victims who, without bubos or delirium, pain or rashes, examine themselves proudly in the mirror, feeling in splendid health, only to fall dead with their shaking dishes in their hands, full of scorn for other victims...The scum of the populace... enter the open houses and help themselves to riches they know will serve no purpose or profit. At this point theatre establishes itself. Theatre, that is to say the momentary pointlessness which drives them to useless acts without immediate profit...The remaining survivors go berserk; the virtuous and obedient son kills his father, the continent sodomise their kin. The lewd became chaste. The miser chucks handful of his gold out of the windows, the Soldier Hero sets fire to the town he had formerly risked his life to save. Dandies deck themselves out and stroll among the charnel houses...” [“Theatre and the Plague” in *The Theatre and its Double*, 1938]<sup>19</sup>

Can one speak of a messianic plague in light of the long citation? Possibly not but one can risk a Stoic plague because according to Antonin Artaud, the subtle origin and point of irreducible localization of the plague is not organic and gnological but *incorporeal* and *spiritual*. If the plague is a re-vocation of all vocations, a forfeiture and defaulting on liturgical debts, obligations and ‘uses’, it is not so by the in-effectuating procedures of the Pauline *hōs mē* that the declaration holds in suspensive non-orientation. Clearly the incorporeal dis-orientation (as varying from non-orientation and simple functional or temporal reversal) of the plague is the disease of uncontrolled *incorporeal transformations*. Which in Stoic terms means, that during the plague the subjective delirium consists in an incorporeal and spiritual activation beyond the limits of civic and cultural participation. “Theatre” is the event of the spiritual gesture of this excess over liturgy and its sovereign virtuality of the theatre text (“No more masterpieces!”, Artaud’s



slogan)<sup>20</sup>. Gilles Deleuze has taught the art of this Stoic delirium, this counter-effectuated theatre of the plague that mobilizes the violence and distress of the miasmatic illness into the delicacy of the mime's gestures that return the dis-orientation of the state of the plague into the abstract and self-showing non-orientation of the monstrative exception<sup>21</sup>.

I suggest that Antonin Artaud's fantastication of the plague follows the logic of anathema at a *world-historical* level – and in that shifts from both the subjective intervention of Paul that is the self-abandoning condition of messianic neutralization (or non-orientation) and the *raison d'Etat's* self-showing in the objective intensifications of the coups d'Etat. At the level of the self-anathematization of the world itself, the incorporeal-objective correlative of this anathema is the natural historical motif of the plague. For the paradoxical function of in-effectuation performed by the plague, we have the virulent un-doings of the Indo-European “scourges” that un-do oaths, pledges, sacraments – and which scourges these performative acts return to seize and re-bind – as structural homologues (so well analyzed by Georges Dumezil)<sup>22</sup>. But that is not the trajectory I want to develop here. What, in Artaud's incorporeal scenarios of theatre and the plague, theatre *of* and *as* plague, stirs the most ineluctable response from us, is the *repudiation* of the overall world-historical context of both the subjective option of a local and enigmatic fidelity (*pistis*) to the impasse *and* passage of a “new (non) people” and the option of objectively ‘conserving’ the necessary *and* exigent self-abandonment of the state to the intensifications of the coups d'Etat.

Surely the name of this world-historical context is “Europe”. While, I think, in the aspects of reversal, inoperativity and immemorial exigency, Artaud does share with Paul and Gabriel Naudé the declaration of a ‘defaulting’ on liturgical and sovereign debt(s), the former still essentially repudiates the imminent passage of *this* world in Paul and the infinite impasse of *this* world encoded in the *raison d'Etat* of Naudé – both of which passage and impasse describe the potentiality and stagnant crisis of *this* Europe, according to Artaud. A Europe, where, as he says speaking as an

actor and audience of its age-old liturgy and law, no one knows how to scream anymore<sup>23</sup>.

In the last part of the nineteenth century, Alfred Jarry, in his play *Ubu Roi* and other scenarios which he used to call 'pataphysical' and 'auto-mockeries – pataphysical auto-mockeries –', had shown the destiny of sovereignty in a situation of extreme self-anathematization and self-abandonment – which simply means a situation of near-total withdrawal of the stakes of legitimacy – to be one of "grotesque sovereignty"<sup>24</sup>. Abandoning the juridical and liturgical axiom of apodeictic, self-showing legitimation, the grotesque sovereign, enacted in the dis-figure of Ubu the King, becomes that much more effective and powerful as he gets further and further useless as a self-legitimator of his actions. This is the grotesque limit of the structural violence that once exposed in the theatre of the west, which is dominantly liturgical and statist, exposes that very liturgy and law to historical and meta-physical ruin. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Antonin Artaud's declaration of theatre as an event of plague declares, violently and delicately, the absolute repudiation of the structural violence of the Europeanist induction of a global debt of sovereignty. This repudiation on a world-scale, and implemented in the vital tissue of European culture, is the 'call' (again a word from Paul!) to wager a new immemorial giving birth to and affirming, along with a non-people and a non-audience, a non-Europe. A Europe as not [*hōs mē*] Europe...

### A BRIEF EXCURSUS IN CONCLUSION ON PLATO, PATOČKA AND THE TRAINING OF GUARDIANS

A brief excursus in conclusion: Jan Patočka, a thinker abandoned to the streets and rooms of Prague at a certain stage of history, which stage itself lies abandoned today in a state of strange monstration, practised a thought joined in 'faith' (*pistis*?) to the heritage of Europe. But what is that heritage? For Patočka, it is a heritage of sovereignty *and* abandonment, of faith, love, hope... *and* anathema – and the wandering heritage of the thought of that violent and

delicate “and” .... In any case, Patočka says to his interlocutors in a ‘non-public’ philosophy discussion in Prague that Plato prescribes something for those youths who will be trained as the guardians of the city that is of paradoxical interest: in the *Republic* it is said that the guardians should be given nothing by the community who they are being trained to rule, except basic nutrition<sup>25</sup>. Now this is an anti-liturgical prescription. Because in 5<sup>th</sup> century democratic Athens – of which Plato is a derisive opponent – public procurement of grains along with other modes of collective existence are part of the liturgical funding of the city’s citizens. By that logic, the guardians are *not* to be treated as citizens in their period of education since the nutrition they get is only to sustain their ‘natural’ (*zoe*) lives in a situation of studied abandonment.

But this wouldn’t be so extraordinary because it could be treated in line with a strategy of training through deprivation and isolation that carries on up to the modern military liturgy. Patočka’s point becomes extraordinary – and self-anathematizing from the point of view of a ‘proud’ European sovereignty to which the world today is as if *indebted* for the very idea of sovereignty! – because he says the guardians are taught, in their isolation, to risk their lives and to think ... for the sake of what? Not simply for the sake of society’s functioning, its primitive circuit of exchanges and communicative-civic actions, etc., but for the sake of society’s endemic ‘injustice’, its capacity for error, its defaulting capacities, which is to say, its generic in-capacity. But what are the guardians to do in the ‘event’ of error? Correct, punish, play juridical sovereign? No. Their primary role is to treat the crisis as a battle, to be ready to be anytime on battlefield and at war in a ‘crisis’. A war to be fought neither against the defaulters (which would be playing a juridical, legal and punitive role) nor on their behalf (which would either be to ‘privatize’ their roles as mercenaries aiding insolvents or to participate in revolutionary civil war, *stasis*) – but this is an education towards the readiness to be on battlefield on the ‘neutral’ behalf of the extreme partisan possibility of defaulting or in-capacity in society.

Very clearly, Patočka is already diagnosing in Plato’s prescriptions in the *Republic* a slippage from the guardians’ sovereignty-function

to their government-function for whose preparedness “war” and “crises” are the paradigms, not liturgy and law. This implies that the topology of the guardians’ place of education (*padeia*) is the fringe (*eschaton*) of the city, not its *agora* or *meson* (centre). The guardians are made ready not on behalf of a centered community but on behalf of the generic emergence of a kind of an ‘a-common’ in the order of the common.

*At the same time*, the guardians are not some sort of a military society – or crisis management group – trained to recognize and act upon the *signs* of a crisis, a war, an exception. The guardians are a “people”, a kind of “cultivated” (from *paideia*) throw of dice which yields decisions on the exception when there exists no “signs” to go by and interpret. The ‘decision’ of the guardian is fundamentally a decision of ‘any-one’ indiscernible from anyone else. Is it possible that an indiscernible anyone among any-ones, violently manifest as an instance of insupportable and decisive self-showing, is who Plato calls “the philosopher-sovereign”?

## NOTES

1. See Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, tran. Dana Hollander (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 27.
2. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, tran. Patricia Daily (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 23.
3. ‘Forcing’ is Alain Badiou’s extraction from Paul Cohen’s theorem on “forcing” of the real existence of generic sets into a new language for that type of set, which otherwise is strictly indiscernible from any other subset. In our very approximate use, ‘forcing’ is an act of thought crossing the threshold of ‘laws’ of thought which carry a legitimate violent potential for enforcing these laws in propositions of knowledge. Hence, ‘forcing’ here must be distinguished from ‘enforcement’.
4. See Taubes, *op. cit.*, pp.37-40.
5. See Agamben, *op. cit.*, 23-25.
6. See Georges Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representations of Sovereignty*, tran. Derek Coltman (New York: Zone Books, 1988), pp. 99-104.
7. Is there a contradiction between the proposition on Paul’s declaration of defaulting and Jesus’ exhortation to pay unto Tiberius-Caesar what is due to Tiberius Caesar? It is a precarious enquiry and requires extremely sure-

footed mobility between the *historical* submission to authorized debts and the *generic* defaulting on the very 'value' of the credit advanced.

8. See Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence", in *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz, tran. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), pp. 277-300.
9. For Carl Schmitt's crucial appropriation of the *kat-echon*, see the Foreword of Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* tran. George Schwab, Foreword by Tracy B. Strong, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. xxxii.
10. In this context, Agamben's technical point on the *hōs mē* as "tensor" can be applied to the "new people" as the name of an imminence maintained in its infinite passage and expiration by the work of the tensor. The "tensor" maintains the revocative structure not by opposing one concept to another but by intensifying a concept to the point of its revocation. The question Paul – and Agamben – lead us to ask is, can this revocation apply to the concept "people" and can the threshold of revocation be the threshold of the "new"? See Agamben, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
11. For sections from Polybius' *Universal History* in relation to constitutional forms including mob-rule or ocholocracy, See *From Alexander to Constantine : Passages and Documents & Illustrating the History of Social and Political Ideas 336 B.C. to A.D. 337*, trans. (with notes, essays and introductions) Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 105-124. In the introduction to this section (pp. 103-105), there is a very interesting comparison of the Greek and Hebraic (based on Book of Daniel) views of history.
12. Apart from the mathematical examples of non-oriented, monstrative figures – mobeiuis strip, torus etc. – that Lacan was so attached to, it is important to refer to the use of *monstration* in the much-debated discourse and "style" of a phenomenological theology. See, for example Michel Henry, *I am the Truth: Towards a Philosophy of Christianity* trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.14.
13. For this term in Paul and patristic history, among several sources, See Marie-jose Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, trans. Rico Franses, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005).
14. See Michel Foucault, *Security Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave, 2007), p.266.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-248.
16. The tortures of 'thinking alone' that Machiavelli experienced have been brought out with the force of articulated parallels of his own 'tortures', *anathemas*, by Louis Althusser in his interpretation of Machiavelli
17. Machiavelli, in more than one place, particularly in his *Discourses*, counsels the cultivation of 'good' soldiers to fight and win wars – where 'good' means

- the *public* capacity for active patriotic love and sacrifice. To this he opposes the mercenary-client relation on a kind of contractual basis.
18. While the departures from the liturgical and congregational model of western theatre have been part of the present argument on the theatre of exigencies in the *raison d'Etat*, the role of the baroque exception is another level of complication which is not really dealt with here. But Walter Benjamin's incomparable work remains at the tremulous center of our construction. See *Walter Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London and New York: Verso 1998)
  19. See Antonin Artaud, "Theatre and the Plague" in *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (London : Calder Publications, 1993), pp. 14-15.
  20. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-64.
  21. Gilles Deleuze brings a certain weightless beatitude, a pure pleasure of 'surfaces' to the Stoic linguistic events which produce incorporeal abstract 'objects' in the world to transform the world's contour every time anew. The paradigm for this art of surfaces is the mime. Antonin Artaud, who localizes the origin of the plague in some incorporeal region, still plumbs that region in the *depth* of crazened bodies. In this he does radicalize Augustine's suspicion of the theatre as acting on the morals as pestilence acts on the bodies, congregations and nations. But doesn't Artaud, in his *manifest* affirmation of another theatre as such, seek to redeem this suspicion by affirming its reality? Theatre does not act on the spirits of people and nations – and in the perpetration of the event of theatre, "spirit" is produced as the 'incorporeal' of bodies. This is Artaud's great repudiation of a *Christian* and *European* metaphysics of dualistic suspicion. See Gilles Deleuze *Logic of Sense* trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 148-153. See Antonin Artaud, "Theatre and the Plague", p. 17.
  22. Also See Giorgio Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath, Homo Sacer II*, 3, tran. Adam Kotsko (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 6-8.
  23. Yet the "scream" is not an expressionist climax in a logic of cathartic and mythic (from *muthos*) development of the theatre-plot virtualized in the "text". The scream is the strict alphabet of a world-historical and metaphysical necessity in respect of which European (or Western) theatre is illiterate. From his own 'illiterate' position then Artaud risks the name for a so-called truly 'literate' theatre, without the Law of the Text and devoted to the creation of an Alphabet of the Theatre-Body – the name "orient", "oriental theatre" (of which Balinese performance is an empirical instance).
  24. See for Ubuesque or "grotesque" sovereignty, Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France, 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York : Picador, 2004), pp. 11-12, Also Alfred Jarry, *The Ubu Plays*, trans. Curil Carnolly and Simon Watson Taylor (London: Methuen, 1968).

25. See Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, trans. Petr Lom. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002). For the point on the education of guardians, see pp. 106-108.

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