

RECOGNIZING POSSIBILITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE  
MESSIANIC DIMENSIONS OF BEING, LANGUAGE, AND SPACE

By

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THESIS Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts in English at The University of Texas at  
Arlington August 2023 Arlington, Texas

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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to reveal the messianic potentialities that inhere in the fundamental categories of experience. I analyze diverse sources in western intellectual history, from the classical period to our contemporary epoch, to discern techniques to think through our collective malaise, that is to both identify the dynamics that have produced our malaise and how to use thought and recognition as acts of generative resistance. I will argue throughout that the common modalities of experience: language, space, and historicity, even if they reveal themselves as lack, through their (dis)concealment gesture at messianic forms of life, and I will try to conceptualize these forms as dispositives we can use to renew existence.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee for indulging my ill-defined intellectual expeditions that sometimes have veered into dandyism. Thank you for seeing value in my investigations even when they have shared no affinity with the discipline of English, or even the English language. Thank you for tolerating me even when I could not tolerate myself. Special thanks to Dr. Fay for intermittently saying nice things to me.

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For All-time and Every time

In a splendid article on Agamben and Paul, Alain Gignac provides a possible but not obvious interpretation of the relationship between Agamben's magnum opus, *The Omnibus Homo Sacer*, and his shorter works, here singling out *Le Temps Qui Reste* as an exemplar. Seeing the Homo sacer series as a diagnostic and the other class of works as a solution, he writes:

Comment s'extirper de cette impasse totale? Le messianisme en Romains révélerait une « forme de vie » réconciliant zoè (la vie naturelle) et bios (la vie politique) dans la création du sujet biopolitique véritable... et « viable », capable de renverser le nihilisme contemporain. Cette « forme de vie » ou son équivalent, « la vie heureuse », est difficile à comprendre : elle sera l'objet d'un nouveau (et dernier ?) volume de la série Homo sacer, mais on en a déjà un aperçu dans *Le temps qui reste*. Chose certaine, le messianisme de Paul constitue le remède à la maladie incurable de la modernité. (19) <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ENG: "How can we extricate ourselves from this total impasse? Messianism in Romans would reveal a "form of life" reconciling zoè (natural life) and bios (political life) in the creation of the true... and "viable" biopolitical subject, capable of overturning contemporary nihilism. This "form of life" or its equivalent, "the happy life", is difficult to understand: it will be the subject of a new (and final?) volume in the Homo sacer series, but we already have a glimpse of it in *Le temps qui reste*. One thing is certain, Paul's messianism is the cure for modernity's incurable disease"

On balance this is appropriate, but this is to identify the primary paradigm of the disjunctive figure, the reconciling figure, with modernity. To proclaim a special bond between the messianic and a historical epoch, in the ontological sense, is mistaken. This equivocation is surprising given that Gignac rightfully describes the Pauline time as “*ho nun kairos*” (20), the time of now. Relatedly, Agamben’s description of the church’s parochial time in *The Church and the Kingdom* is described by a similar phrase, “*ho chronos te paroikias*” (2). Agamben takes this description from Peter’s first letter and gives the following commentary that it “can be translated as 'parochial time' on the condition that we recall that parish originally meant 'the sojourn of a foreigner’” (2). Further on in *The Church and the Kingdom* Agamben makes the obvious connection that these two times are analogous or dual aspects:

The expression he [Paul] uses to refer to this time is always *ho nyn kairos*, 'now time'. As he writes in the Second Letter to the Corinthians, 'Idou nyn, behold, now is the time to gather, behold the day of salvation' (2 Cor. 6.2; 231). *Paroika* and *parousia*, the sojourn of the foreigner and the presence of the messiah, have the same structure, expressed in Greek through the preposition *para*: a presence that distends time, an already that is also a not yet, a delay that does not put off until later but, instead, a disconnection within the present moment that allows us to grasp time. (26)

Considering the syntactic unanimity between the two times, which considering the preceding excerpts are coincident in terms of an indiscriminate presentism, it is more appropriate to say that the messianic is foreign to modernity rather than belonging to it without remainder.

Here it should be said that the series of analogies between the varying Agambenian figures do not tend towards absolute sympathy, interchangeability, or a spectacular metonymy. Christ is not a Roman citizen, but that does not render him a *Homo sacer* because this describes a

figure disjoined from the law by a positive legal operation whereas Christ is subject to a refusal, a situation Agamben describes in detail in *Pilate and Jesus*. A Homo sacer is not a refugee because the refugee is a citizen of another place. Primarily, Christ is not a refugee because his kingdom is not of the world as is clearly stated in John, “Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36). He, and his kingdom, dwell as foreigners. Each of them is not a Pulcinella, and the Pulcinella is not the Muselmann. Consequently, given the staggering historical range of Agamben’s works, it would be inappropriate to impute to him a disposition that sees modernity itself as a sacrament, which is Gignac’s disposition by virtue of positing a special affinity between Pauline time and modernity. More egregiously in another excerpt he reads history backwards, orienting the classical figure as a sort of a sleeper agent to be awakened and play the liberator in the modern epoch, “L’expression *Homo sacer*, homme sacré, est empruntée au droit romain par Agamben pour désigner *l’objet* de cette biopolitique, véritable antipolitique modern”<sup>2</sup> (18). Modernity holds no ontological superiority, but it remains significant for being a time of krisis, certainly not the first time of crisis, which is surely why *The Church and the Kingdom* is less an academic musing than a direct critique of the church, and it is thematically important that conceivably it could have been written at any time after the institutionalization of the church under the formal baggage of the Roman imperial schema. Recalling Adorno’s notion of critique as something that requires temporal affinity, we may read Gignac’s supposed error more graciously. Perhaps a heightened Pauline affinity with modernity is not an ontological claim about modernity, but an epistemic claim about the moderns, or the identification of an affective dimension. This is to say at this point of modernity, we are prepared

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<sup>2</sup> ENG: “The expression Homo sacer, sacred man, is borrowed from Roman law by Agamben to designate the object of this biopolitics, a veritable modern antipolitics”

to discern the modern declension of the messianic function, which for Agamben is the archaic tendency for possibility. Thus, we may say that each paradigm or singularity has its time analogously within the caesura of the arche. Nonetheless, it is correct, “ : la structure paulinienne du temps peut nous permettre de subvertir l’aliénation politique que nous subissons <sup>3</sup>(20). This is, again, because every time has a Pauline potentiality, though in a different paradigmatic form because all these figures emerge immanently from the arche. Modernity is just another declension in the unfolding of the arche, and the Pauline kairos in modernity is available to us because it is our time, no different from its ever-present availability for every past epoch.

Before expounding on these matters, it is worth taking up the point of what it would mean to take modernity as a sacrament. In the titular essay of *The Signature of All Things*, Agamben describes the sacrament as “the elusively stated idea of an indelible character imprinted by the sacrament on the person who receives it” (44). Then, Agamben configures it as a semiotic issue with reference to medieval theology, citing Hugh of St. Victor, “In the sacrament, instead, there is not only signification but also efficacy, such that it signifies by means of institutions, represents by means of similarity, and confers by means of sanctification” (45). Given the sacrament’s property of efficacy, we can deduce that the sacrament of modernity would mean that modernity confers an imprint inscribing the subject in a particular network of relations. It is not a sacrament because modernity is not the bearer of efficacy, but a secondary expression of the arche. Modernity is ill-equipped to metonymically embody the messianic arche. Thus, when Gignac writes, “L’expression Homo sacer, homme sacré, est empruntée au droit romain par Agamben pour désigner l’objet de cette biopolitique, véritable antipolitique

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<sup>3</sup> ENG: “the Pauline structure of time can enable us to subvert the political alienation we are undergoing”

modern (18)<sup>4</sup>, this is misleading without further explication. The verb *emprunter* means “to borrow”, but this does not accurately describe the relationship between the *Homo sacer* and modernity. Without delving into the history of property law, what is not at play is the suspension of the possession of the *Homo sacer* from the rightful owner—Roman law, the exchange being marked as valid by a guarantor. Rather, we see a co-ownership in advance validated by the archaic guarantor. This is further understood if we look for linguistic clarity in another romance language, Portuguese. If one were to borrow an object, they would *pedi-lo emprestado*, that is to request or ask it lended, which coincides with the Latin origin *promutuor*, to lend in advance. Without commenting on whatever it could mean for anything at all to be anti-political, Agamben can borrow this figure, in the originary sense, only because it has been lent in advance. Thus, a positive operation of carrying it across domains as a *translatio* has not occurred, which is what the modern sacrament would require, the modern translation of the *Homo sacer*. It has not been wrangled from Roman law as if to this domain the figure solely belongs, but it has shown itself pertinent at this time. As a parallel, on the macro-level, Pauline potentiality does not belong to modernity; rather, it merely shows itself at this time in some historically appropriate way. Furthermore, a loan in its etymology has its most original root in the gift, specifically one from God. A gift is not only the temporary suspension of possession, but is the suspension of ownership altogether, while in every anthropological analysis being the harbinger of a debt, an announcement of the lack of self-sufficiency. Therefore, we arrive at the formulation that the *Homo sacer* has been lent or has rather lent itself in advance from Roman law to modernity, or more originally has been gifted or gifted itself to modernity. It must appear in modernity, but it is owing or in debt to Roman law, such that it acts as a *caesura* marking the relation of the two

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<sup>4</sup> ENG: “The expression *Homo sacer*, sacred man, is borrowed from Roman law by Agamben to designate the object of this biopolitics, a veritable modern antipolitics”

times and establishes a cooperative being with modernity within the messianic-archaic orbit, referring them to their common end and source. Notice, this is precisely the model of historical continuity and interpretation, and it is for this reason that Christianity is a historical religion. The epochs of Roman law and the modern moment both play a decisive function in the unfolding of the arche, and it would be a mistake to gesture at Roman law's hegemony over this process, or modernity as the site of efficacy. This is a primordial syntax as it is the form of semiotics by which a signified must show itself as veiled in the signifier, while the signifier must pay fidelity to the signified in referring to it, and even reference means, originally, to trace back to an origin, or even more forcefully, to trace one's assignment to an origin. Gignac had spoken correctly the first time, as it is better characterized as a revelation, or perhaps even more rightly in Derridean parlance—the word had been subject to a conjuré—conjured and banished.

Agamben claims as much in the third essay of *The Signature*. The arche is analogized to the historic-linguistic fringe of the Indo-European languages, described as:

The "oldest history," the "fringe of ultra-history: "that archaeology seeks to reach cannot be localized within chronology, in a remote past, nor can it be localized beyond this within a metahistorical atemporal structure (for example, as Dumézil said ironically, in the neuronal system of a hominid). Like Indo-European words, it represents a present and operative tendency within historical languages, which conditions and makes intelligible their development in time. (92)

Perhaps, then, it is fitting to describe terms like modernity as declensions, but to ascribe to them the sort of decisive generativity that Gignac gives is undue. The *Homo sacer* is not emprunté from Roman law, nor was it waiting for modernity to provide its efficacious signature. It is rather a particular in an archaic process that, owing to the arche, has a caring relationship with

modernity. If we have conceded that modernity is a Pauline time in some measure, we are left with a host of questions. How does each paradigm find its efficacy and singularity? It is clear accounting for the rest of Agamben's work that the messianic could already be invoked because it antedates modernity. Clearly, the early modern Pulcinella is a messianic being, and the adventure is a form of life belonging to messianism. We take the claim seriously that Pauline theology has truly modern exigence, or better yet as Gignac writes almost in passing, an exigence "contemporaine". How can that which is not ontologically modern find its place within modernity. Here we ask, how does the messianic arche activate a historical particularity? If we cannot figure out the possibility of messianic time as a particular at all, then we certainly cannot figure it out as something modern.

The task is how to discern the possibility of a coming time, without chronology, which is to investigate how it emerges—to catch it in the act rather than *ex post facto*. Paul's Areopagus speech addresses the theme of archaic recognition and dwelling and thus provides a point of departure and reference for our investigation. The Speech is as follows:

Then Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and examined your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore what you worship as something unknown, I now proclaim to you.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by human hands. Nor is He served by human hands, as if He

needed anything, because He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands.

God intended that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.' Therefore, being offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by man's skill and imagination.

Although God overlooked the ignorance of earlier times, He now commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead."

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some began to mock him, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this topic. "At that, Paul left the Areopagus. But some joined him and believed, including Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others who were with them. (Acts 17:22-35)

The word that Paul uses for religious is deisidaimonesterous. Deisidaimonesterous has the connotation of superstition, which itself describes a sincere yet misplaced zeal. Sincerity is a thematically important term. Sincere, which in Greek is eilikrinés, is an odd adjective referring to that which is judged appropriately due to it being seen in full relief. We may succinctly put it that what is sincere is amenable to judgment through its transparency. However, the term in

theological context connotes that which is blameless and therefore not amenable to judgment. In one way this explains why these Greeks could worship Christ without knowing him, and why Apollos could accurately describe Christ whilst only knowing the baptism of John (Acts 18:25). The difficult question is why God cannot remain unknown. These times of ignorance, agnoias, are juxtaposed with repentance, metanoein. This event demonstrates a syntactic parallel to Genesis because banishment from paradise is not a punishment but a corollary. Ostensibly this is due to the introduction of the day of judgment, krinein, according to which things will appear eilikrinés. Again, considering that deisidaimonesterous implies sincerity, it appears odd at first glance that Paul would jeopardize their sincerity through the nullification of the unknown God. It is so counterintuitive that we observe the following in Philippians that would suggest that the proclamation conflicts with Christ's word, "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to test and prove what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1: 9-11). The further difficulty in this picture is that metanoein, taken as the sum of its parts, does not have a cogent English meaning. Meta, contrary to its common usage as being that which stands above, or acts as a centralizing unit, means both along and after, and noein does not mean to know, but to intend or perceive, and in this context, to acknowledge. Thus, it is the decisive constitutional change after acknowledging Christ. However, given our foregoing discussion, what is to change? Just as eilikrinés belongs to that which nullifies judgment, to acknowledge Christ is to know the Being that is not amenable to knowledge. Why else would Christ, more than any other sin, disavow the sign? Thus, we set the task to discover what it means to change from acknowledgement in the form of an additional, corollary, command that one change who

they are while precisely remaining themselves? What is the status of the subject, the act of acknowledgment, and the event acknowledged? In answering this question, we will have a model to apply to the relation between the arche and the paradigm, a syntax of salvation.

The question of the inert change may be restated as “how to become oneself?”, a long tenured project in the history of western thought, but three figures stand out as especially significant: Mirandola, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Those who declare the excellence of the west almost invariably invoke renaissance humanism, of which Mirandola has long been taken as an exemplar. However, to contemporary minds this work would appear rather mystical. The primary thesis is that man is the most blessed of beings, i.e., in the double sense of the being that is consecrated but also praiseworthy. When it comes to the attributes of man, the first description is that when God created man there “remained no archetype according to which He might fashion a new offspring” (6). This is rather Talmudical because anything that is archetypal is without dignitas. Further, it is to announce the impossible task of assuming the archaic dignity. As opposed to God giving a nature to man, “...He could give nothing wholly his own, should have a share in the particular endowment of every other creature”(6) , and moreover, “if, dissatisfied with the lot of all creatures, he should recollect himself into the center of his own unity, he will there, become one spirit with God, in the solitary darkness of the Father, Who is set above all things, himself transcend all creatures”(9). This mysterious excerpt must be taken with the former. Man is without an archetype, thus man cannot already be himself, which is to say man is not a role that one is brought into by default, like a nationality or a class, the misconception of which is the ferocious evil of fascism. Rather, man is given an assignment as a sending-forth, here spatially described as “into the center of his own unity” (9). Still, what ought we to make of his ability to assume the lot of creatures, both animal and angelic? We must say

that these merely gesture at the dignitas of man rather than fulfilling it. All too often, particularly within Italian theory, the singular focus is on possibility, or in the Franco-German tradition—power. To assume the rank of a beast or of an angel is a possibility or power that man possesses, and it can even be interpolated as intermediately felicitous when rendered a developmental matter, as in a sort of stadial history; however, this is not man’s deputation, meaning that this assumption would be without dignity. So, we must flesh out the content of man’s dignity.

The meaning of this dignity, “And if, dissatisfied with the lot of all creatures, he should recollect him- self into the center of his own unity, he will there, become one spirit with God, in the solitary darkness of the Father, Who is set above all things, himself transcend all creatures” (9) is still occluded from us. Firstly, there is an element of dissatisfaction presented as a point of departure, a “way” into one’s dignity, paralleling the opening stanza of the *Inferno* in which the two apparently oppositional lines are given “mi ritrovai per una selva oscura/ “ché la diritta via era smarrita”<sup>5</sup> (2-3). This dissatisfaction is directed towards the “lot of creatures”. This is an enigmatic phrase. It could either mean that the creatures take the form of a lot, which sounds like a mass, or it could be the lot that belongs to the creatures. We know what creatures are, those entities that are created, but what is a lot? *Multum* or *sorte* means that which is apportioned by God. Read in this way, man would then be dissatisfied with what God has apportioned to the creatures of creation. What is most exemplary and enduring of this work is Mirandola’s eclecticism. There are frequent allusions to classical philosophy, Christian, Hebrew, and Arabic thought. Given this intellectual milieu, it is not a stretch to think that he is thinking of the Hebrew tradition. Lot, lat, and la’t, are all thematically connected as concealing. The original reads, “ si nulla creaturarum sorte contentus in unitatis centrum suae se receperit, unus cum Deo

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<sup>5</sup> ENG: “I found that I was in a gloomy wood/ because the path which led aright was lost”

spiritus factus, in solitaria Patris caligine qui est super omnia constitutus omnibus antestabit” (106). Through the word *sorte* we clearly see that Mirandola does mean “fate”. What does this mean? Most originally it traces to *for*, describing the act of speech, but then it more familiarly traces back to *Fatus*, that which is spoken. Then, we must read it, discontented with the speech of all creatures. This is obvious because the word belongs to man. It was given to man by God from whom the word originates; this is the unity. Man cannot help but be dissatisfied with the speech of all creatures because they do not have it. We have almost reached the heart of the dignity, but we run into a complication. We will skip over the most decisive part to clear up a potential misunderstanding of, “[God] Who is set above all things, himself transcend all creatures”. These two elements are closely related, but the latter is not a restatement. The first must be understood philologically, not spatially, so it is not therefore the tautology that God is set above all where one could substitute in “transcend” for “set above all”, a sort of spatial morality. This is clear once we remember that trans-scend cannot in any way mean that which is above and peeks down from a higher vantage. If Heidegger sees the transformation of the essence of truth into certitude as the primary cause of the debasing of occidental thought, the misunderstanding of transcendence is surely second. Transcend literally means to climb across. Scendere has other meanings and has been used in slightly different ways. However, it is sufficient to restate the matter literally as “Who is set above all things, himself climbs across all creatures”. It is hard to think of this primordially because climbing is always thought of as an ascension, but this is only ever a tool. One who climbs into a window enters through it, by virtue of it. One who climbs a ladder reaches a point of departure or entry through the ladder; and so, climbing is always an entry and across is always a way. It is why Christ is referred to as the way of truth—*aletheia*. The meaning becomes clear, God climbs across all creatures in the sense of a self-disclosive

correspondence, and this is what Jakob Boheme would later recognize as the signature, the divine source of efficacy:

For though I see one to speak, teach, preach, and write of God, and though I hear and read the same, yet this is not sufficient for me to understand him; but if his sound and spirit out of his signature and similitude enter into my own similitude, and imprint his similitude into mine, then I may understand him really and fundamentally, be it either spoken or written, if he has the hammer that can strike my bell. (20)

God is who exists across all things in the self-disclosure of the open, which lets beings come into Being. This corresponds to the original act of creation,” In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2). The Hebrew “al-P'nëy haMäyim”, across the face of the waters, has a similar function to transcendence because “al” means above or over, but here means “upon”, in the sense of a belong or alongside, or relating to a permeation.

There is still a further difficulty. We have cleared up the use of the word “transcend”, but this is the same word in Latin and English. We do not find *transcendere* in the original; rather, we find an ostensibly radically different word, “antestabit”. Why are we so sure that *antestabit* refers to *antestare* and not *antestor*? *Antestare* can be translated as transcend, but *antestor* means to call as a witness. Thus, why do we not read, “he will testify to all”. Furthermore, this is much more appropriate to *sorte*. In taking up the dignity of speech, that which does not belong to any other creature, man is unified with God in the act of testimony. How else could Christ be the word? Clearly, the fact that God climbs across the beings of Being is why he testifies to all, as a witness must be included in an event through language. Precisely, this is how God witnesses

beings come into the fray of Being. We read, therefore, the repeated formula “said, let there be”. Literally, it is the word, indelible from God, that lets beings come into Being. Now we can move to the most obscure portion of the dignity, “he should recollect himself into the center of his own unity, he will there, become one spirit with God, in the solitary darkness of the Father”. This advice or command is what connects the dissatisfaction with the lot of creatures to the unity with God in testimony, taking up the dignity of speech and thereby the word. However, what do we make of reception as a recollection? What is a collection in the first place? Even in the familiar sense of gathering, this gives the suggestion that man is distributed amongst each discrete creature and must seek out and possess each one to extract, distill, and expropriate his essence from them, which is precisely the history of the animal. This is not it. Rather, we understand this event as man retrieving himself back as a discrete creaturely entity in the world. This is not the birth of subjectivity, and it is even less a tragedy where man is a subject set off against the objects of the world. When man takes himself back as a discrete creature in the world, a being-in-the-world, he can take up the divine dignity as that which exists between and testifies to all beings. There is a final element, “the solitary darkness”. What is this and how does it relate to the testifying of beings of Being through the word? Again, man has no archetype. He must retrieve himself as a discrete creature because in assuming any creature he will be assuming that which is not himself. On this basis, what is at the unitary center? Nothing. This sounds familiar as it is the nothing that Heidegger speaks of, that nothing that when one tries to discern it, they find something and not nothing, confirming the primordial role of the nothing in emerging beings as beings. Does this not sound like, “the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep”?

Allow us to take an aside and return to Mirandola. Our previous point was that man takes up his dignity in finding unity with God within the nothing through transcending, and thereby climbing across all beings. Man does this by taking up the mantle of the word in testifying to all the beings of Being. In his discussion of Rilke in *Parmenides*, Heidegger comes to this conclusion, but rejects it as the essence of the open. Rilke first juxtaposes us with the “creature”, here meaning the animal, and it is the creature who sees the open. Heidegger realizes the stakes, “The "open" is accordingly that which pervades both and all beings. Is it therefore Being itself? To be sure” (154). Despite recognizing that Rilke’s open and aletheia’s open belong together and are the same, he curiously notes that they are also irreconcilably different because, “Man sees the open so little that he is in need of the animal in order to see it” (155). For Heidegger this is impossible because the animal does not possess speech, which we have already noted as the reason that man is dissatisfied with the fate of creatures:

The essence of speech, however, is for the Greeks and still for Plato and Aristotle... — the letting appear of the unconcealed as such, which both philosophers express..., the revealing of the open. Because he has the word, man, and he alone, is the being that looks into the open....The animal, on the contrary, does not see the open, never does, not with a single one of all its eyes. Now the start of Rilke's eighth elegy says exactly the opposite.

(155)

Heidegger goes on to characterize Rilke’s open as the infinite proliferation of beings and reiterates that the animal cannot have its essential relation to the open:

There is, of course, a gaping abyss between what Rilke names the open and "the open" in the sense of the unconcealedness of beings. The "open" that dwells in aletheia first lets beings emerge and come to presence as beings. Man alone sees this open. More

specifically, man gets a glimpse of this open while comporting himself, as he always does, to beings, whether these beings are understood in the Greek sense as what emerges and comes to presence, or in the Christian sense as *ens creatum*, or in the modern sense as objects. In his comportment to beings, man in advance sees the open by dwelling within the opening and opened project of Being. Without the open, which is how Being itself comes to presence, beings could be neither unconcealed nor concealed. Man and he alone sees into the open—though without beholding it. Only the essential sight of authentic thinking beholds Being itself. But even there the thinker can behold Being only because he as man has already glimpsed it. (157)

Again, Heidegger thinks the animal does not see the open because it does not have the word—thinking. Heidegger argued in “What is Metaphysics” that it is in the nothing that beings come into Being. Here, in *Parmenides*, it is argued that the open does this. This is clearly because they are indissoluble. Nothing dwells more intimately in the open than the nothing—oblivion because its concealment is not shown as concealment and therefore dwells serenely in the open. We have also already admitted that man in his unity with God investigates the nothing and testifies to the beings of Being through the *logos*. How is it possible for the animal to see the open without *logos*? The answer is clear, because we testify to it. The animal has seen what we cannot see, but we see it also, that is bring into the open from oblivion—*anamnesis*, through our witnessing within language.

The syntax of the animal bearing witness to the open through sight, and man bearing witness to it through language parallels the syntax Agamben deploys for the survivor testifying for the *Muselmann* in *Remnants of Auschwitz*. The *Muselmann* is the being who has lost the

faculty of speech, completely catatonic, and dwells as a living corpse. Nietzsche had described this figure in advance in *Ecce Homo* when he had written of an odd resistance:

The invalid has only one great remedy for it—I call it Russian fatalism, that fatalism without rebellion with which a Russian soldier who starts finding the campaign too hard finally lies down in the snow. Not taking, taking on, taking in anything at all any more—no longer reacting at all... The great good sense about this fatalism (which is not always just courage unto death), what makes it life-preserving amidst the most life threatening of circumstances, is the reduction of the metabolism, the slowing of its rate, a kind of will to hibernation (13).

These figures have been described as those who have seen the gorgon, that which is impossible to see, and therefore cannot speak of it. It is left to the survivor to testify. Any survivor who testifies to the Muselmann, witnesses him, brings his sight into the matrix of Being through language. The witnesses “articulate a possibility of speech solely through an impossibility and, in this way, mark the taking place as the event of a subjectivity” (164). Subject is understood here not as in the sense of a narrative subject, or stream of consciousness, but possibility. The animal has always been impossible, the one who cannot do this or that, while man is the animal for which this or that is possible. While messianic time is that time indelible from its end, what Heidegger gets right in *Parmenides* is that the beginning comes last in essential history, that it is the truth that comes out. Each end testifies to its beginning. We testify to the animal in every act of speech in the same way that the open testifies to the nothing. If Agamben argues in *The Open* that the animal moves past Being and nothing into a realm of indifference, it is only because he fails to recognize that the nothing is not juxtaposed to Being because it is a counter-essence but that it dwells indelibly within it precisely for this reason.

We know it is possible to become oneself and the theoretical stakes, but not the concrete techniques. Now we return to Mirandola who gives the following course on attaining the dignity:

We, therefore, imitating the life of the Cherubim here on earth, by refraining the impulses of our passions through moral science, by dissipating the darkness of reason by dialectic—thus washing away, so to speak, the filth of ignorance and vice—may likewise purify our souls, so that the passions may never run rampant, nor reason, lacking restraint, range beyond its natural limits. Then may we suffuse our purified souls with the light of natural philosophy, bringing it to final perfection by the knowledge of divine things. (16)

It may appear that there is a juxtaposition between the holy and profane by a spatial ontology, the one we previously discussed through our clarification of transcendence, because we imitate the Cherubim on earth, as if the Cherubim is non-earthly despite its first function being the guardianship of Eden, described in the *Old Testament* as a place on earth. The original does not dispense with this phrasing, “Ergo et nos Cherubicam in terris vitam aemulantes” (112). We will set this to the side for now, but it is important to note at the outset that this is not decisive. There is a dual operation at work to tame the animal and assume the angelic. The first is accomplished through the moral sciences, the preparation for philosophy, and then one finally reaches “final perfection by the knowledge of divine things”.

At this point the suggestion is that the animal is rejected while the dignity coincides with the assumption of the angelic, which we have previously dispensed with. A few pages later Mirandola gives us a deeper account of the technique to assume the dignity:

When we shall have been so prepared by the art of discourse or of reason, then, inspired by the spirit of the Cherubim, exercising philosophy through all the rungs of the ladder—

that is, of nature—we shall penetrate being from its center to its surface and from its surface to its center. At one time we shall descend, dismembering with titanic force the "unity" of the "many," like the members of Osiris; at another time we shall ascend, recollecting those same members, by the power of Phoebus, into their original unity. Finally, in the bosom of the Father, who regions above the ladder, we shall find perfection and peace in the felicity of theological knowledge. (19)

We see that our previous mention of climbing and ladders, ascending, and the rest, was not contrived. Firstly, we are "inspired". An inspiration usually announces a mimesis, confirms that one seeks sympathy, and then initiates a sort of copying. Rather, what occurs here is a generative event, a being-created. The original reads, "iam Cherubico spiritu animat" (116). More clearly, this is animated by the breath of the Cherubim. We understand this in the same way of God's act of creation, "formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae et inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae et factus est homo in animam viventem" <sup>6</sup>(Gen 2:7). Thus, it is redundant; we are only inspired by the Cherubim because it makes us the object of spirat. Obviously, it is only by the breath because spiritus inspirat—the spirit inspires, and the breath breathes. This could felicitously be read that we are breathed by the breath of the spirit, in the sense of given life,

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<sup>6</sup> ENG: "Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being"

enter a new life. Then we engage in philosophy through all the rungs of the ladder—nature. This philosophical life is the life we enter when the Cherubim breathes and gives us life. The philosophy exists through all the rungs of nature, which is curiously like our previous formulation of man transcending all creatures, climbing between the beings of Being, which is nature. It is when man engages in philosophy that this occurs, and more forcefully the location is the center, that which is between extremities. We then move from the universal to particular by philosophy, reconciling things with their ends, putting them in a messianic state. The only matter we do not yet understand is the “final perfection”.

The decisive passage is given:

so that, too, when the soul, by means of moral philosophy and dialectic shall have purged herself of her uncleanness, adorned herself with the many disciplines of philosophy as with the raiment of a prince's court and crowned the pediments of her doors with the garlands of theology, the King of Glory may descend and, coming with the Father, take up his abode with her. If she prove worthy of so great a guest, she will through his boundless clemency, arrayed in the golden vesture of the many sciences as in a nuptial gown, receive him, not as a guest merely, but as a spouse. And rather than be parted from him, she will prefer to leave her own people and her father's house. Forgetful of her very self she will desire to die to herself in order to live in her spouse, in whose eyes the death of his saints is infinitely precious: I mean that death—if the very plentitude of life can be called death—whose meditation wise men have always held to be the special study of philosophy. (22-23)

When the soul has been sufficiently prepared, purged of its animality, and when the faculty of reason is exercised rightfully, not as a mean but as an end, a marriage will occur. This marriage

is between the soul and God, initiated by theology and confirmed in God's "descent". This must be taken up heuristically. Descent has remained largely unexplored in the history of western thought. Heidegger only glimpsed the question when he realized that *The Republic* is inexhaustible. What is the essence of a catabasis? A catabasis, a descent, refers to an undertaking for understanding, especially a descent into the underworld. In the marriage, God is not descending into Hades. What would it mean for God to take a journey of understanding? "Understanding" in English is too tightly fixed to knowledge, manipulation, and domination, that is, always a not-letting-be. God is already omniscient and gives us our being amongst beings and connects us to Being. Therefore, this common understanding of understanding will not work. French and German have more inclusive meanings of understanding that are much more amenable to the situation. Comprendre is used idiomatically to express inclusion, y compris, and the German verstehen, a concept of profound importance in the German tradition of human sciences, is always given in mood of empathy. If God undertakes a catabasis directed at our souls, then it is to recognize himself within us and include us within himself. This is a marriage. The essence of God is Being, thus, to be joined to God in marriage is to take up the dignity as a being of Being permanently. This is the only way man could be the being for whom Being is at stake. Tellingly, Hades, the underworld, etc., is generalized as Lethe—oblivion. We are saved from oblivion in this marriage. The counter to Lethe is anamnesis, memory. This is also the paradigm of salvation, being saved from oblivion. Thus, Christ says, "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance [anamnesis] of me" (Luke 22:19). Only by recognizing God are we recognized by God in the open of Being.

It is in this way we must understand the double death. The plenitude of life is described as death, and this is the goal of philosophy. The plenitude of life is death, and the flux of life is oblivion. It is death because each discrete object on its own does not enter the open as it is severed from Being. As such, it is not at stake. The end of philosophy is the re-collection, most of all the re-collection and re-covering of man himself from Lethe. When this is accomplished, the being no longer exists in solipsism. The solipsism dies, and the being takes its place amongst beings in Being. This notion is fully disclosed in a later passage:

Then the leader of the Muses, Bacchus, revealing to us in our moments of philosophy, through his mysteries, that is, the visible signs of nature, the invisible things of God, will make us drunk with the richness of the house of God; and there, if, like Moses, we shall prove entirely faithful, most sacred theology will supervene to inspire us with redoubled ecstasy.(27)

The muses of which Mirandola speaks are the muses of Helicon described by Hesiod. They are the owners of truth, as Hesiod explains beautifully, “then on the highest slope of/ Helicon they make their dances, fair and lovely, stepping/ lively in time. From there they go forth veiled in thick/ mist, and walk by night, uttering beautiful voice, singing/ of Zeus who bears the aegis” (6-10). This means that the muses, who have song, are veiled in the open. Could it be any other way? The muses exist between the veiled and the open of palpable air, embodying this primordial relation. They ascend between them, i.e., transcend them. This is not a contradiction because everything veiled is in the open. Obviously, otherwise its veiling would be hidden as in the nothing of oblivion. Here is the thick of things. We already admitted that oblivion is most in the open because it has hidden its own concealment, and if its concealment is hidden to us, it must be in the open. It is now clear why the question in *Brothers Karamazov* is so important,

does hell have a ceiling? Who could recollect something from a closed receptacle? The beings could not be subject to anamnesis if they were closed off. Thus, what dwells in oblivion, which is a state more than a location, is in the open without having been dis-closed. We mean this in two senses, firstly without having been brought into the open, and precisely because they have not been closed. The oblivion is in the open, and we must bring beings out of oblivion by the opposite operation, closure; but, at the same time, to disclose is to bring into the open. This is the matter, what is already in the open is in oblivion. It is in the open without having been brought into it. That is, it dwells without possibility. If something is in the open without having been brought into the open, this is impossible. We do not say impossible to deny this event. This is a real, existing impossibility. Thus, when we bring beings into the open, we re-store them with possibility. This does not mean to give them a pre-existing possibility, but in re-storing, bringing them back into the open, for the first time, the first time they have entered the open, they are re-stored with possibility. The crux is not that beings are, but that they emerge as the beings of Being through disclosure and being brought into the open; therefore, they must be closed so that they can enter. This is the inert event of the metanoein.

Before moving on to Nietzsche, we must learn one more lesson from Mirandola. We highlight the passage:

Then the leader of the Muses, Bacchus, revealing to us in our moments of philosophy, through his mysteries, that is, the visible signs of nature, the invisible things of God, will make us drunk with the richness of the house of God; and there, if, like Moses, we shall prove entirely faithful, most sacred theology will supervene to inspire us with redoubled ecstasy. (27)

The phrase “moments of philosophy” will have to remain obscure for now, but we can still bring to light the complete state, the “final perfection” of man’s dignity. We can understand the play of the visible and invisible. The visible signs are the death, the plenitude, and the difference. The invisible is reconciliation. It is clear, the invisible things are what exist between plenitude and unity. We gestured at this but did not explain it because the *kairos* was not appropriate. Recall “every aspect” is given by *panta*. When we say the Greeks were in every aspect religious, we mean that the religious is what exists between every aspect, the signature of all aspects by which they can dwell together. Man, when he is conjoined to God, becomes the signature of all things, on account of which beings enter Being. We do not immediately see the divine unity, the one, nor are we condemned to the many. Rather, we are in *ek-stasis*, experiencing ourselves amongst the beings of Being, the caesura between them all by which they may be related, and in the marriage to God, we forever exist inseparable from this moment of reconciliation. Every moment will be a moment of philosophy.

We now know the meaning of the dignity, and the technique of the dignity, but we have still not discerned the phenomenological coming of the dignity, how those moments of philosophy come to us. To understand this, we will turn to Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*. In some ways Nietzsche and Mirandola go together well. Nietzsche also does not see man as an archetype, but as a dignity, and for this reason he rejects idols—ideals because, “The lie of the ideal has till now been the curse on reality; on its account humanity itself has become fake and false right down to its deepest instincts—to the point of worshipping values opposite to the only ones which would guarantee it a flourishing, a future, the exalted right to a future”(3). Man does not fulfill an archetype, a dignity that cannot be assumed. Furthermore, “The like of this reaches

only the most select” (5). This is not the time to discuss Lutheran theology, but select, or elect in other editions, is a significant word, signifying that dignity is not achieved, but received.

It is of extreme thematic importance that this is a psycho-biographical work. Nietzsche comments on the double origin of his existence:

The fortunate thing about my existence, perhaps its unique feature, is its fatefulness:\* to put it in the form of a riddle, as my father I have already died, as my mother I am still alive and growing old. This twofold provenance, as it were from the top and bottom rungs on the ladder of life, both *décadent* and beginning—this, if anything, explains the neutrality, the freedom from bias in relation to the overall problem of life, that perhaps distinguishes me. (7)

Problem of existence sounds a bit too abstract. The original reads, “Gesammtprobleme des Lebens”, the common problem of life. This provides a much more immediate coloring. How is it possible for Nietzsche to exist in such a way? The first decisive passage we are provided is as follows:

The following winter, my first in Genoa, the sweetening and spiritualization that are more or less bound to result from extreme anaemia and atrophy of the muscles produced Daybreak. The consummate brightness and cheerfulness, even exuberance of spirit which this same work reflects can coexist in me not only with the most profound physiological debility, but even with an excessive feeling of pain. Amid the torments brought on by three days of unremitting headache accompanied by the arduous vomiting of phlegm, I possessed a dialectician’s clarity par excellence and very cold-bloodedly thought through things for which, in healthier circumstances, I am not enough of a climber, not cunning, not cold enough. My readers perhaps know how much I consider dialectics to be. (7-8)

Nietzsche has seemingly juxtaposed two aspects, the spiritual and the material. This does not accord with the rest of the work, but this is only to announce a messianism that establishes Nietzsche, incidentally, as a Christian philosopher. It is only in serious illness that the spirit respirates. Furthermore, this coincides with “lucidity” and “dialectical clearness”. For Nietzsche, experience precedes abstraction, so perhaps it is possible that the oddity and strangeness of sickness is inherently philosophical. This is a minor factor. The decisive function is this, “I consider dialectic a symptom of decadence”. The dialectic is a state in which something is related to its end, something put into play by the end. A dialectic is the process by which particulars lose their specificity and gain a universal status, and the dialectic is what exists between them; therefore, for Plato philosophy is dialectic, something paradigmatic. Sickness is that state of Being in which beings are related to their ends, and accordingly can transcend the beings of Beings by becoming detached from the rigidity of their own being. Recognizing that the time of the end is proper to the philosopher, Nietzsche can shortly thereafter write:

Even that filigree art of grasping and comprehending in general, those fingers for nuances, that psychology of ‘seeing round the corner’, and whatever else is characteristic of me, was learnt only then and is the true gift of that time when everything in me was being refined, observation itself as well as all the organs of observation. Looking from the perspective of the sick towards healthier concepts and values, and conversely looking down from the fullness and self-assuredness of rich life into the secret workings of the *décadence* instinct—this is what I practised longest, this was my true experience; if I became master of anything then it was of this. I have my hand in now, I am handy\* at inverting perspectives: the foremost reason why for me alone perhaps a ‘revaluation of values’ is even possible. (8)

The shades of difference that one sees in sickness, when one is related to their end—decadently, are delicate. Dare I even say diaphanous, the differences being only seen by the light, the byword of disclosure. Differences and similarities are indelible. Anything that can be said to be similar is different, and anything that can be said to be different is amenable enough to be related. All relations are only possible based on difference. Differences tend towards death, while similarity tends toward the one. Only in sickness, when one enters the relation with their own end can they see the end of beings—Being. Only by discerning this archaic secret signature that relates things to their end and thereby others within sickness one enters life.

The moment at which this sickness comes is a rupture. The most important passage follows:

the ideal of a spirit who plays naively, in other words without deliberation and from an overflowing plenitude and powerfulness, with everything that has hitherto been called holy, good, untouchable, divine; for whom the highest thing which the people naturally enough take as their yardstick of value would mean something like danger, decay, abasement, or at least recuperation, blindness, temporary self-forgetting; the ideal of a human-overhuman well-being and benevolence which will often enough appear inhuman, for instance when it sets itself up beside all previous earthly seriousness, beside all previous solemnity in gesture, word, tone, glance, morality, and task as the very incarnation of its unintentional parody—and with which, in spite of all that, perhaps the great seriousness at last begins, the true question-mark is at last set down, the destiny of the soul changes direction, the hand on the clock moves round, the tragedy begins. (67-68)

The ideal of a spirit is one that plays with everything sacred. Nietzsche is surely a Christian because there is no way to read this passage in a way that denigrates God; rather, it plays with God, placing it alongside the holy, dwelling indissolubly with, as in Titian's *Sacred and Profane* playing to the point of indistinction. This play is an involuntary rupture. Is this not the position of Hesiod in the *Theogony*, like the rhapsode in *Ion*, while these idols place one within oblivion—a forgetting. This humanly superhuman, the human who has taken up Mirandola's dignity, will seem inhuman because the human is empty. This manner of conduct is different, but it is most lifelike; this superhuman has entered life, but the rest, the masses, cannot recognize this life, or any life at all, because they have not discerned the signature of philosophy. Thankfully, though, it is an unintentional parody, indicating the superman exists within everyone, as does the Muselmann. In the original this is a "unfreiwillige Parodie". This is not an unintentional parody, but an unwilling parody, meaning it cannot be invoked even affectively. It must just come as an event, as the impossible. Only in this way does the fate (speech) of the soul change, emerge, and enter tragedy.

Let us now return to Paul. We first recall that Paul describes the Athenians as in every aspect "deisidaimonesterous". We decided to understand this as a sincere yet misplaced sentiment of religiosity. What is a misplacement? As revealed from our investigation, it is not a violation of veritas. The Greeks have not merely placed their sentiment in the incorrect religious object. It has been misplaced in the same sense in which something is misunderstood. When something is misunderstood, an understanding cannot be said to have taken place. The misplaced religious sentiment is the sentiment that was never placed, the religious impossibility. It may parallel Christ, but parallel lines never intersect. Therefore, it cannot enter a having-to-do-with. The cause of this is that Christ is unknown. Let us not misunderstand this event. Christ is

unknown, but he is not the one who is disclosed. He makes himself known to them. Christ is the word and the way, and thus Paul furnishes to them the word and the way, the techniques by which one enters the open amongst the beings of Being. The word and the way are inseparable from disclosure and therefore cannot be severed from the open. They are disclosed into the open and included within Christ. Paul explicitly gives this interpretation when he writes:

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'. (Acts 17: 26-28)

Each one of these elements are connected. God assigns that man live on the face of the earth, not in Lethe, and has given to man *kairos* and boundaries of his dwelling, meaning that he is assigned an appointed time of dwelling, when he will dwell in the open. Christ is the cipher, the Being and time of this dwelling, and this is how he is not far, not far spatially because he is always at-hand, but also not historically far for the time has already come. The *kairos* is always propitious. We enter our being through him, for we are of his *genos*, which both means that we are of his type of being, but also of his age.

When it is said that God had overlooked the times of ignorance but now issues the command to repentance, this cannot be understood punitively as it has been in part due to the Latinization of truth. He commands, *parangellei*, does not mean we are chastised or face a grave punishment. This word firstly means to provide direction, attunement, orientation, and moreover, to provide a way. God has provided the way out of ignorance. This is an assignment or deputation. What else could this be other than the truth, the truth of Christ's kingdom, revealed

in John's version of the trial? God overlooking those previous times does not mean that we had been in moral infelicity and God merely chose not to interject, but rather that God still presided over such times, preparing the time, for the kairos was not yet propitious, coinciding with an impossible knowledge without efficacy. Thus, God's provision of the way determines a new temporal declension that God does not overlook, but looks, provides us with the look, the word, and the way into the open, and allows us to take up the dignity of our proper dwelling here on earth as opposed to Lethe. This is the transition from the impossible knowledge to recognition. Sure, we had dwelled on the earth, and some had already supposedly worshiped Christ. Some even derived it from John's baptism, but this is impossible for how can we have been married with Christ without having been married? How could we dwell in the open without having entered the open? God has (re)-stored us with possibility, restored us from the impossible of the already open, which is the closure beyond closure. He has disclosed us to him, allowing the perverse open of Lethe to be closed, and allowing us to be enclosed within him in the open! This is why through faith all things are possible, because faith is the essence of the possible which renders the impossible possible. The moment between the impossible and the possible is the repentance, the metanoein, which is the alongside and after of the perception or acknowledgment of God, the exemplar of those moments of philosophy where we become ourselves as what we already were but could not have been. This is the double death of philosophy by which one dies, but enters a relation with their end, rendered at stake amongst beings.

With this passage interpreted we can return to the original task, discerning the possibility of a coming time. The messianic is an arche, an originary force, yet it is not possible as it is already there, the universal, but also particular in this universality and cannot be directly grasped. On the other hand, chronological time is the discrete particular. It is a being, but not yet disclosed

amongst the beings of Being. The universal cannot be put into the stakes of the open because it is already at stake. The particular cannot be put at stake because it has no relation to Being. The messianic time or being is what marks the caesura that makes the two of them relatable, like a gift or a loan word. This time and this being discharge the arche in a paradigmatic fashion, rendering the universal intelligible in chronology, and relating chronology to its universal end, performing the temporal function that man performs for beings, enacting Being. When the messianic arche enters as a being of Being, it performs the rendering of the chronological at stake in the eternal, making what is parallel to it intersect with it. Every time or age furnishes a messianic syntax automatically by virtue of being any time, and the messianic arche grasps onto it, bridging the two, along with each historical epoch, and therefore making a dialectical and foremost paradigmatic appearance. It appears in its full relief each and every time. This is how a time can come and does come. As Pindar had discerned many years ago, each generation on grounds of a techno-historical particularity has a unique entelechy which when sufficient activates and is discharged into a state of being at stake for destiny. This is the majesty and divination of Christ. In his divinity he reconciles time. In his humanity he reconciles beings. In summation, that is in his messianism, he reconciles beings to eternity, their end, for each and every time according to the entelechy.

### Language and Experience

Previously, we enumerated the relationship between aletheia, possibility, and impossibility, essentially in their composite emergence in the open. However, it is not yet possible to enumerate the messianic temporality of modernity which attends to a certain entelechy. The lingering matters are that firstly although we have expressed the instrumentality of the word, this is not in any form coterminous with ordinary human language, and secondly that if one thinks that anything is at stake in humanistic speech then one is dreaming. Christ himself is the word, and God created the world through the word, thus although Mirandola rightly establishes that the inner unity of man is an indissoluble relation with God, what does not occur is a replicative distribution of language without remainder, which is the form we had described pertaining to the discrete messianic character belonging to any epoch. This divine language is the heart of messianism because it ruptures the most rigid distinction in western intellectual history, the binary between knowledge and experience, a distinction that is itself created by the purely human linguistic function of descriptive language and does not implicate an experience of Being. This is why Mirandola points out that man is not content with the fate of any other animal. Remembering that fate is speech, man is dissatisfied with the animal speech-non-speech that rejects Being and announces confinement. Furthermore, it is why Nietzsche announced that tragedy begins with a change of the soul's fate. To ultimately arrive at the inefficacy of language that rejects Being and prevents coming-to-terms with the messianic and entering the messianic form of life, it is first necessary to take up the theme of fate.

As with most pressing issues that implicate human experience, Walter Benjamin has written a brief essay of untraversable density on the topic. In "Fate and Character" Benjamin writes:

For it is impossible to form an uncontradictory concept of the exterior of an active human being whose core is taken to be character. No definition of the external world can disregard the limits set by the concept of the active man. Between the active man and the external world, all is interaction; their spheres of action interpenetrate. No matter how different their conceptions may be, their concepts are inseparable. Not only is it impossible to determine in a single case what finally is to be considered a function of character and what a function of fate in a human life (this would make no difference here if the two merged only in experience); the external world that the active man encounters can also in principle be reduced, to any desired degree, to his inner world, and his inner world similarly to his outer world, indeed regarded in principle as one and the same thing. Considered in this way character and fate, far from being theoretically distinct, coincide. Such is the case when Nietzsche says, "If a man has character, he has an experience [Erlebnis] that constantly recurs." This means: if a man has character, his fate is essentially constant. Admittedly, it also means: he has no fate—a conclusion drawn by the Stoics...It was not in law but in tragedy that the head of genius lifted itself for the first time from the mist of guilt, for in tragedy demonic fate is breached. But not by having the endless pagan chain of guilt and atonement superseded by the purity of the man who has expiated his sins, who is reconciled with the pure god. Rather, in tragedy

pagan man becomes aware that he is better than his god, but the realization robs him of speech, remains unspoken. (202-203)

Taking this excerpt line-by-line, we first notice that character is the core of the active human but is recognized exterior in fate. Thus, we may otherwise phrase this relation as the un-objectively lived essence of the active human which forms and delimits the external world. Because of this framework, the epistemological distinction between character, the essence of the subject, and fate, the essence of the world, is nullified. In dramatic works, fate closes in on the subject from afar, constricting it, which is why it cannot be outrun. The subject runs forward and because fate comes from the future, the subject runs into it, meeting it in an unavoidable coincidence.

Furthermore, character pushes the subject outward. Thus, character and fate move in on the subject, equidistant, though from different directions, such that any event can be attributed to either pole. It is an epistemic reduction, not an ontological reduction. Now, we must clarify that the next thesis is theoretical, that character acts as a guarantee of experience, which is here described as a constant fate. This is a theoretical pole because we have already described fate as an undecidable essence, thus this possibility is an asymptote which nevertheless holds open the door for entry into the messianic and the reconciliation but is not an immediate experience.

Therefore, it is better rendered, if a man were to be reconciled without remainder to his character, he would escape fate. Going forward, in the rejoinder, if one is not familiar with the classical religion this point could be confused that in tragedy demonic fate is breached. Firstly, this is not a latinized moralistic judgment that demonic fate has been breached, as to liken the scenario to the *Inferno* such that in comedy one regains the moral path. A daemon is the tutelary deity that presides over one's birth and accompanies one through the adventure of life, and it is

from this force that one's character is given. So, when daemonic fate is breached, it marks the alienation of the subject from the daemon. The fate takes character as a departure and then a subsumption, thus a representation and thence a sleight-of-hand, closure, or misleading, and in tragedy, in an act of *aletheia*, one is brought back into the open of the daemon. *Prima facie*, it looks like we have contradicted the final lines, but the matter is quite consistent. All Benjamin establishes is that tragedy is *not* salvation but is its possibility and the essence of every mystical experience. Paul tells us, "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." (Romans 10:9-10). Salvation is founded on confession and speech, and although this is a different manner of speech, a speech which is efficacious and decisively different from alienating speech, it can only be so based on a radically different experience, an experience that has its formal conditions in tragedy. Fate and speech are coterminous, thus in rejecting speech, one is launched into infancy. This is why he also writes:

of its single trait, which allows no other to remain visible in its proximity. The sublimity of character comedy rests on this anonymity of man and his morality, alongside the utmost development of individuality through its exclusive character trait. While fate brings to light the immense complexity of the guilty person, the complications and bonds of his guilt, character gives this mystical enslavement of the person to the guilt context the answer of genius. (205)

It is well known that genius is nothing but another name for the daemon. It is precisely for this reason that Agamben, in *The Adventure*, may cite Heidegger's disciple Oskar Becker as such,

“the security of the genius has something of the *sleepwalker* [my italics]; he is vigilant and enlightened by extreme clarity, yet not simply vigilant and sober but enraptured by divine mania” (57). The perverse version of such an event is all too familiar in Greek tragedy, take the fate of Ajax for example. Whereas for Christian salvation speech is saved, and language and experience are reconciled. Thus, we will have to delve deeper into the heart of tragedy, infancy, and work from infancy to the transformation of speech and the grounds of experience. To be clear, fate is the event that separates man from his character.

Agamben’s *Infancy and History* takes as its point of departure the notion of human voice and if this thing is identical to language. The importance of this question for Agamben is that it poses the pure experience of language. This may at first appear odd, given infancy is defined by the inability to speak; however, in juxtaposing human voice against the bray of a donkey, the framework becomes clear. There are three divisions: language, voice, and speech. This is a reflection on the voice. The gap between language and speech is infancy, the inability to speak, but one can only be said to be unable to speak on the foundation of language because otherwise it would be illegible. One does not say a shoe, or even an elephant, cannot speak in the way of being an infant. So, if one only spoke without the grounds of language itself, it would be non-deliberate activity, without contemplation, without possibility. It would be the possible that is impossible, because it is non-contemplative, marked by necessity, a possible impossibility. This is the fate or speech of all animals in which man cannot take up his dignity. This activity of language corresponds to what we defined as alienation. While language without speech is a pure possibility that cannot come to pass, that which is truly impossible. It is the impossibility that always gestures towards possibility. Thus, the beacon of possibility must be the gap between the

two, between language and speech, which is the voice, the speechless voice, which is the state called infancy. This is the basic framework. From here Agamben sets out in another direction, the history of the relation between knowledge and experience. This ends up forming an analogy of the initial distinctions we sketched out. He begins by observing the destruction of experience proper to modernity, and that this began with the decision of modern science that experience must be quantified, meaning that experience does not suffice for knowledge. Furthermore, this establishes every experience as a non-experience and merely a manufacturing ground for knowledge. This has linguistic ramifications as the test of experience used to be its communicability, which is attested to by the former primacy of forms such as psalms, maxims, and aphorisms (17). Thus, knowledge and experience used to belong to the same event, experienced by the same subject and was verified by communicability. However, the change is not quite as simple as Agamben leads on. He argues that the change is that experience and knowledge were conferred in a single subject in modern science, whereas it used to be that the heavens were knowledgeable and the subject experienced. In some sense, this is true because empirical science requires the subject to render the epistemic verdict, that is constructing it in some discursive parlance, mathematical or some sort of microscopic or computational analysis—some domain that escapes ordinary experience, and to experience it. The sort of experience here, though, is decisively different as conducting experiments is not quite the same as ordinary experience. It stands outside and configures experience and delimits it. What else could be more fateful? Thus, one change is that experimentation has replaced experience as epistemically eligible. Therefore, what occurs is not the conjoining of knowledge and experience to a subject as a simple matter, which would have done nothing other than announce a revolution in what it

means to be human; rather, modern science marks a caesura within the same subject. One function of the subject is to experience, the other to know, and this experience can never amount to knowledge because it is anathema to the experiment (28-29). The experience still accords to language, but language cannot speak the truth.

We now arrive at the clear central problem of modernity. Recall, in Benjamin we discerned that fate, speech, is what befalls the man who has been separated from his character and genius. In the history of science, we have discerned that we have arrived at a point at which speech can now only ever attest to its separation from the truth. Thus, when Agamben points out that the heavens used to know and man used to experience, this only reconfirms that man used to experience the truth. If today language is separated from the truth and before fate marked a separation from character, has there then been a continuity? No, and the reason for this is that there were special circumstances under which the truth could be spoken, and man could be restored to his character within speech, and that is the theoretical limit of which we spoke regarding the constancy of character and the potential nullification of fate. This limit is the dream.

The status of the dream cannot be understated, and this was conveyed by Freud in two excerpts. Firstly, “dreams are a liberation of the spirit from the power of external nature, and a freeing of the soul from the bonds of the senses” (2). Secondly:

As every one knows, the ancients before Aristotle did not consider the dream a product of the dreaming mind, but a divine inspiration, and in ancient times the two antagonistic streams, which one finds throughout in the estimates of dream life, were already

noticeable. They distinguished between true and valuable dreams, sent to the dreamer to warn him or to foretell the future, and vain, fraudulent, and empty dreams, the object of which was to misguide or lead him to destruction. (2)

The first quote is reproduced from the obscure German intellectual Gotthilf Schubert. What does he intend here? The dream alters the relation between the spirit and external nature. This can easily be translated as that character is freed from fate; however, it is also integrated into our previous epistemic discussion. External nature means the nature separated from the spirit. A domain of experience defined by alienation is precisely the world of experimentation that we mentioned before. Thus, the dream restores the original relation between experience and knowledge, which thereby restores knowledge to truth and truth to language. This is expounded further in the second quote. As E V E R Y O N E knows, the pre-Aristotelian structure of the dream resembles the original force of language. The dream as divine inspiration perfectly resembles the existence of the rhapsode. In a parallel example, Ion's mastery of rhapsodie, Socrates says:

You see, it's not mastery that enables them to speak those verses, but a divine power, since if they knew how to speak beautifully on one type of poetry by mastering the subject, they could do so for all the others and also. That's why the god takes their intellect away from them when he uses them as his servants, as he does prophets and godly diviners, so that we who hear should know that they are not the ones who speak those verses that are of such high value, for their intellect is not in them: the god himself is the one who speaks, and he gives voice through them to us. (942)

To liberate the spirit and “takes their intellect away” are equivalent statements insofar as the state of being enraptured or in ecstasy and dreaming bely conscious-ego experiences of the external. Thus, returning to Freud’s first brief historical detour, he firstly remarks that the dream was the product of the divine, not the irrational conjuring of hidden mystical forces or residue. Then, again, rhapsodes, the original literary figures, are the product of the divine. In rhapsody, the gods speak through us, and in dreams the gods create the future through us.

Later in *Infancy* Agamben gives a brief history of modern experience, highlighting Dilthey and then the phenomenologists, to show the attempt to turn experience into a field and not just this thing that accrued knowledge, i.e., take experience as an end. This project itself derived from Montaigne and Rousseau (the book is tellingly titled *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*) who found that the paradigm of experience is the state of a hazy twilight (37-41). Montaigne sees it as that asymptote of death, while Rosseau sees it as the beginning of a new life. These are experiences where the self, the traditional ego, is left behind. One is liberated from it and plays with the world of sense-datum. One is diverted from it or carried away. This being freed from identity resembles the characterization of character by Benjamin. Furthermore, this is an experience without objects, not only because in this playful, dazed state the boundaries are less rigid or functional, but precisely because of the subject-less entity experiencing the world. Things do not exist for-us and thereby conceal themselves, but as soon as the ego recedes and one slips into the subject pure and simple without specific content, objects also cease to be objects for us and play alongside us, i.e., they are connected to Being themselves. This Ur-

subject and its experience of this hazy world of possibility is like the psychoanalytic unconscious, which Lacan described as like a language. So, we have established both the original divinity of dreams and language, and that they save the subject from fate, and we have also correlated these with infancy. At this point, however, we are not capable of describing the interactions in detail, especially the squaring of the ostensible contradiction of infancy and speech. Part of the cause of the occlusion is that the dream needs to be generalized as a paradigm of possibility for each moment, each event of existence, which means nothing less than converting it into the messianic arena.

Before we excavate the dream, let us gesture at this reaction through citing Han's *Burnout Society*:

Deep tiredness loosens the strictures of identity. Things flicker, twinkle, and vibrate at the edges. They grow less determinate and more porous and lose some of their resolution.

This particular in-difference lends them an aura of friendliness. Rigid delimitation with respect to one's surroundings is suspended: "in such fundamental tiredness, the thing is never manifested alone but always in conjunction with other things, and even if there are not very many, they will all be together in the end. (37),

and shortly before "This tiredness founds a deep friendship and makes it possible to conceive of a community that requires neither belonging through a friendly *and*" (33). Tiredness binds waking life and sleep and here is revealed as the quality that defines inspiration, dreams, and any semblable hazy-state characteristic of the heart of all experience. Let us venture further by analyzing a particularly decisive dream in western intellectual history.

Early in the lost seventh book of Cicero's Republic, which only remains in Macrobius's commentary, it is written:

When your age has completed seven times eight recurring circuits of the sun, and the product of these two numbers, each of which is considered full for a different reason, has rounded out your destiny, the whole state will take refuge in you and your name; the Senate, all good citizens, the Allies, and the Latins will look to you; upon you alone will the safety of the state depend; and, to be brief, as dictator you must needs set the state in order, if only you escape death at the hands of your wicked kinsmen"...."BUT THAT YOU may be more zealous in safeguarding the commonwealth, Scipio, be persuaded of this: all those who have saved, aided, or enlarged the commonwealth have a definite place marked off in the heavens where they may enjoy a blessed existence forever. Nothing that occurs on earth, indeed, is more gratifying to that supreme God who rules the whole universe than the establishment of associations and federations of men bound together by principles of justice, which are called commonwealths. The governors and protectors of these proceed from here and return hither after death. (71)

These two extracts give a mosaic synthesizing all aspects. Take heed of all the theoretically charged terms: safeguarding, full, recurring circuits or elsewhere—revolutions, nature, safety, commonwealth, state. Furthermore, we must notice the domains at play here. There is astronomy, theology, law, and political science. The decisive and elusive question here is if we are observing an Ur-domain, a series of relations at this point displaying heightened sympathy, or something immanent, akin to a signature stretched out and in full-relief. Perhaps we will arrive at

a provisional answer if we perform a closer analysis of this excerpt. For when Scipio's age has attained 56 years, and this is expressed in astronomical terms, nature has fulfilled the destiny. This is quite dense. Firstly, let us start with the term age. What is "age"? This term has long been at stake; however, if we cannot discern a provisional answer, all is lost. We can derive some insight from how actions attributed to age are described. This is described within a conditional zone as having completed "seven times eight" cycles. As noted, this means when Scipio is 56, but this is an esoteric way to describe this event. In fact, one could venture to say that life is not lived according to such a rhythm, and this is what is decisive. If we say that to speak in such a parlance, to give such an index, to evoke such a domain, is to evoke the unlived. We have done nothing other than reveal that character is at stake, per our reading of Benjamin. We have also said that modern science has usurped experience and wrested away knowledge from simple experience in such a way that language is unable to transmit the truth. Thus, what we find is an originary correspondence between these two dissociations. Both character and science are distant from the fated subject, and in this dream, we see that science and character are restored.

Next, it is the numbers which become subjects. These two full, or in other editions—perfect, numbers in the revolution of nature have fulfilled Scipio's destiny. To describe numbers as perfect appears obscure because it has nothing to do with the definition of perfection given within number theory. These two numbers, which are perfect—complete within the revolution of nature, reveal and accord destiny. Perfect has the same quality as revolution here, and it is Janus-faced. Revolution both means a serious rupture and departure from the ordinary flow of things, but also to arrive back at the origin. In this way a revolution is a setting straight

and revelation of first principles. This is analogous to the function of these perfect numbers vis-à-vis Scipio's life in the form of destiny. At this point of fifty-six years Scipio's life will take a radical departure and be re-stored in a disclosive correspondence for the first time with its purpose. This is precisely what a revolution is, as even radical means something that implicates the roots. At this point, the original task and genius of his life, destiny, is revealed to him, and this is a departure from the ordinary flow, and restores character, which is the unlived life now to be lived. Therefore, we know why "person" originally denotes a dramatic role. Furthermore, in a perfect point of parallelism, the unlived life is lived for the first time, the life proper. However, the lived life was not ever life and in some way was never lived, and if the subject lived at all it must have been living some life, even if it was hidden, and here it comes to the fore for the first time. This is all implied within the designation of a "revolution". It is never an epistemological act, but an ontological one, and hence it would be more appropriate to characterize the event as subject to aletheia rather than a rupture. This event perfectly resembles being put into the open, brought back into the open for the first time. Therefore, we say that any event in which something is brought into the open is a revolutionary act, for it is brought back into the open for the first time.

After this, we move into the specific zone of manifestation. Let us state it again since the entire remainder will be taken together, "the whole state will take refuge in you and your name; the Senate, all good citizens, the Allies, and the Latins will look to you; upon you alone will the safety of the state depend; and, to be brief, as dictator you must needs set the state in order, if only you escape death at the hands of your wicked kinsmen". Firstly, the relation between

language and Being is emphasized by according the destiny to Scipio and his name. Furthermore, on these grounds, the state can be implicated. The precise relationship to the commonwealth is not discernable at this point. It is said that the Allies and Latins will turn to him, in other editions—community. We can faithfully take turning to in a more or less immediate way. When one says that they will turn to the Lord, they mean that they will take the Lord for guidance, perhaps to become a vessel of the lord. Perhaps, even more forcefully and of more theoretical significance, they might take the lord as an exemplar. Provisionally, or even as an axiom, we may say that the community is that which takes after the same example, thus we can liken the community to a paradigmatic case, as Agamben does in *The Theory of Signatures*, writing, “We can therefore say, joining Aristotle's observations with those of Kant, that a paradigm entails a movement that goes from singularity to singularity and, without ever leaving singularity, transforms every singular case into an exemplar of a general rule that can never be stated a priori”(22). In this way we see clearly how Scipio can be the cipher of a community. It is precisely because at this point of perfection his life had been revealed to him, taken up as a revolution, and therefore it could serve as a paradigm. This is why Kuhn's history of science is demarcated by a series of paradigms. The dream is not a form continually instantiated within wakeful life, returned to as a doppelganger, or returned to as a reference, but is singular and paradigmatic. At this point it is revealed that the commonwealth is a theological site that is indexed in heaven. Those who both preserve and enrich it will have a place in heaven. We can say those who preserve and enrich the commonwealth make their place in heaven. What this means is that those who enrich the commonwealth, the earthly commonwealth, preserve their place in heaven, yet they are still making it because the guardians of the fatherland depart and

return from heaven. This is a common sort of relation in the apocryphal theological texts relating to Saint Paul.

One recalls “The Apocalypse of Saint Paul” when he is ascending the heavens and reaches the seventh heaven and encounters a holy man. Paul is ascending the heavens, and we read, "I am going to the place from which I came." And the old man responded to me, "Where are you from?" But I replied, saying, "I am going down to the world of the dead in order to lead captive the captivity that was led captive in the captivity of Babylon." The old man replied to me saying, "How will you be able to get away from me? Look and see the principalities and authorities." The Spirit spoke, saying, "Give him the sign that you have, and he will open for you." And then I gave him the sign. He turned his face downwards to his creation and to those who are his own authorities.” We recognize this indistinction of ascending and descending, just as we recognize the indistinction of rupture and return. They depart from heaven unaccounted, and return to it for the first time, exactly a revolution. The linguistic relation is merely gestured at, but what we can say is that only within the space of the dream can these matters have been spoken and have the quality of truth attributed to them. At this point it may seem simple. We have identified that the dream is what rejoins one to their character and reconciles experience and experiments, and in such a way restores language to truth. Furthermore, we have said that in acting within a commonwealth one keeps and makes their spot in heaven, through the notion of revolution, which is a messianic dimension. It would appear everything is in place, and that what would be left would be a minor work of revision, merely clarifying relations, forming a somniatic theory of history by which the messianism of historic-temporality is related to the messianic-spatiality of the dream. There is a glaring deficiency present. Recall, we had said that

the dream is the site where language is efficacious as there it can speak the truth, character being restored, and experience being reconciled with experiment. The reason everything is not tidy is because there is a glaringly obvious and well-known counter example in western intellectual history, Shakespeare's *Midnight Summer's Dream*.

In this play we encounter an example in which language is anything but efficacious. Let us examine one of the instances where thanks to Puck's incompetence the lovers' destiny is nullified. After Puck misapplies Oberon's potion, Lysander directs his love to Helena, saying, "Why should you think that I should woo in scorn? Scorn and derision never come in tears: Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born, In their nativity all truth appears. How can these things in me seem scorn to you, Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?" (124-129), to which she replies: "You do advance your cunning more and more. When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray! These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er? Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh: Your vows to her and me, put in two scales, Will even weigh, and both as light as tales" (130-136). When Demetrius who had previously spurned her also joins in the suiting, her reply is the most telling utterance of the play:

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent To set against me for your merriment: If you we're civil and knew courtesy, You would not do me thus much injury. Can you not hate me, as I know you do, but you must join in souls to mock me too? If you were men, as men you are in show, you would not use a gentle lady so; To vow, and swear, and super praise my parts, When I am sure you hate me with your hearts. You both are rivals, and love Hermia And now both rivals, to mock Helena: A trim exploit, a manly enterprise, To

conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes With your derision! none of noble sort Would so offend a virgin, and extort A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport. ( (148-164)

The broken vows and oaths make it known at the outset that language has lost its efficacy. Our Helena says as much, pointing out that the two competing oaths, which owing to their status must each be true, are in fact mutually exclusive, and this nullifies all language. This is why they are “light as tales”, the nullification of all narrative power that sits as the original form of language. Thus, Agamben can write in *The Sacrament of Language*, “The testimony that is in question in the oath must therefore be understood in a sense that has little to do with much of what we normally understand by this term. It concerns not the verification of a fact or an event but the very signifying power of language” (33). Nonetheless, when our fair Helena finally gets up to responding, she responds in a peculiar way. She announces a zone of “merriment”. What is merriment, festival, carnival, ceremony, tiredness, intoxication? This is the key, but we must flesh this out some. One recalls that Bakhtin had written of the carnival in *Rabelais and His World*:

This temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. A special carnivalesque, marketplace style of expression was formed which we find abundantly represented in Rabelais' novel. (10)

This encapsulates the problem but let us wait until the end of the analysis to address it, as we will come to a similar conclusion and then achieve a theoretical integration which will disclose the next task. She concludes that they hate her, the utter opposite of what the language signifies, and furthermore this contradicts her knowledge. This is even more severe than the problem by which we began this chapter. We found that language had become no longer applicable to experience, however here language is diametrically opposed and hostile to experience. Most importantly, this is all for sport. This is a restatement of the “merriment” that introduced the conversation. So, for Bakhtin, the carnivalesque, the hierarchy is irrelevant here, but there are special gestures, gestures with empty significations. For sport means for merriment, but the etymology is *deporter*, which means diversion or play, but literally to carry away. The dream has been tainted.

Language is no longer efficacious. It has been carried away. The carnival had been at play in the first dream, recapturing a true communicable mode of language unavailable in everyday life, but now this quality has been lost. Our dream has been carried away and language with it. Let us set out to re-cover it.

Homeless

In his most recent work, *Quand La Maison Brûle*, Agamben describes the consequences of the technicalization of western civilization and proffers the hope that only mired in impossibility can the autoreferential enunciation, the originary liaison between poetry and philosophy, save us. These are the only languages existent at the end of the world, where one can no longer enter a having-to-do-with. When subjects and objects can no longer correspond, the auto-reference which subtends all speech reveals itself without remainder because it constitutes hope itself, which is the remainder of all things. These are remnants that Agamben describes in his work on Auschwitz as that which “designates the consistency assumed by Israel when placed in relation with an eskhaton, with election or the messianic event. In its relation to salvation, the whole (the people) thus necessarily posits itself as remnant” (163). It is for this reason, the messianic reason, these dead languages only reveal themselves when the maison brûle. This is repeated multiple times throughout the work, however in the following it is especially enigmatic, “Si ce n’est que dans la maison en flammes que devient visible le problème architectonique fondamental, alors tu peux aujourd’hui voir ce qui est en jeu dans histoire de l’Occident, ce que celui-ci a cherché à tout prix à atteindre et pourquoi il ne pouvait qu’échouer”<sup>7</sup> (11). This term “architectonique” is notoriously airy for Kant specialists. It refers to something like that which permits and cuts across the unity of human cognition and perceptions, that which permits a unified experience. It is also not agreed upon the degree to which the architectonic has to do with architecture, as the former might be characterized as creation as recognition with the latter being creation as production. Agamben describes this problem in a way reminiscent of our discussion

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<sup>7</sup> ENG: “If it’s only in the burning house that the fundamental architectural problem becomes visible, then today you can see what’s at stake in the history of the West, what it has sought to achieve at all costs, and why it could only fail”

of Scipio's dream, writing, "L'autre maison, celle qui je ne pourrai jamais habit , mais qui est ma v ritable maison, l'autre vie, celle que je n'ai jamais v cue alors que j' pelais syllabe apr s syllabe sans jamais r ussir   la parler– si bien miennes que jamais je ne les poss derai"<sup>8</sup> (12). La v ritable maison is something immanent but unrecognizable, or recognizable but unlivable. In any case, it cannot be attained. This poses the question, how can my space be unattainable, that place where I dwell? This is nothing less than the unsayable foundation of possibility. What is even more curious is the imagery of a spatial or even architectural object succumbing to this genre of Heisenberg uncertainty. Therefore, if it is true that, "il [le langage] est notre visage, l'ouvert dans lequel nous somme"<sup>9</sup> (12), which can be nothing more than the annunciation of our spatial being in its relation to language, how can we recognize, live, and speak this irreducibly outward architectonic? Or better yet, to appropriate the lyrics from a Fran oise Hardy song "O  est ma maison?"

Ma maison where I can say I feel chez moi is somewhere. It must be perceptible in some form. However, its evasiveness admits of a novel self-destruction. One way to phrase this is it is actually impossible that our maison, that which we inhabit, remains totally elusive to us, that it is un-lived, especially put into dialogue with the messianic. Therefore, we may turn to someone who has denied the possibility of impossibility before the Lord, Jean-Luc Marion. Marion starts with an architectonique gesture describing that intuitions are joined to concepts mediated by space and time, but then describes God as an exception, "Ainsi Dieu se distingue par l'impossibilit , pour nous, d'en recevoir la moindre intuition"<sup>10</sup> (22). Two coterminous processes

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<sup>8</sup> ENG: "The other house, the one I'll never be able to live in, but which is my true home, the other life, the one I've never lived as I spelled syllable after syllable without ever being able to speak it - so much mine that I'll never own it"

<sup>9</sup> ENG: "it [language] is our face, the open space in which we are "

<sup>10</sup> ENG: "God is thus distinguished by the impossibility, for us, of receiving the slightest intuition of him"

are severed when it comes to God. This can possibly be a knot, as we have already established that we cannot arrive at our maison by the procedure. Without an intuition, *prima facie*, we have an empty, dare we say— auto-referential, concept of God, and therefore in the act of reflection we realize an impossibility. This paradox is fundamental in its syntax as a paradox, thus he writes, “l'impossibilité même d'un tel phénomène pourrait encore relever d'une expérience crédible, sinon indiscutable de Dieu, sous la figure d'un paradoxe”<sup>11</sup> (24). We have no intuition, so we have an unjustified concept that we experience the impossibility of; however, rather than deny God, we positivize this: “mode négatif, une expérience positive de l'infini”<sup>12</sup> (25). This is precisely how Marion proceeds:

Le seul chemin possible vers Dieu s'ouvre dans et passe par l'impossible. Ainsi, suivant cette fois-ci Tertullien, parviendrait-on à "...connaître Dieu, qu'il ne faut croire pour aucune autre loi que celle-ci - on croit qu'il peut tout". D'où suit par exemple que l'on doit croire la recit de la résurrection du Christ, précisément parce qu'il s'agit d'une impossibilité, qu'il appartient à Dieu et Dieu seul d'accomplir- mais précisément il s'agit ici de Dieu : “C'est certain, parce que c'est impossible.”<sup>13</sup>(31)

Thus, what we see is that God is entangled in every impossibility, founding it. God is what renders possible every impossibility and in our adjoining to him he banishes the impossible back through hope. Only in this indissolubility by which the possibility of God confronts the

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<sup>11</sup> ENG: “the very impossibility of such a phenomenon could still be a credible, if not indisputable, experience of God, in the form of a paradox”

<sup>12</sup> ENG: “negative mode, a positive experience of infinity”

<sup>13</sup> ENG: “The only possible path to God opens in and passes through the impossible. Thus, following Tertullian this time, we come to "...know God, whom we must believe for no other law than this - we believe that he can do all things". From which it follows, for example, that we must believe the story of Christ's resurrection, precisely because it's an impossibility, which it's up to God and God alone to accomplish - but it's precisely God we're talking about here: "It's certain, because it's impossible”

impossibility of the world are we adjoined to him in the hope of salvation, the eternal way out. It is for this it is often recited, “For no word from God will ever fail” (Luke 1 :37). This is salvation, « La conversion de l'impossible en possible se joue donc par le passage des hommes à Dieu. Mais cette conversion et ce passage se font à partir de Dieu »<sup>14</sup> (32). This is the diagnosis of our contemporary period. We have failed to recognize the salvation inherent in all impossibility, i.e., we confront an impossibility proper, rather than the messianic mélange of all things, and it is for this reason our dwelling place in salvation is unlivable. We cannot dwell in the fire.

The relation between possibility and space and place has been gestured at by many, but none more prescient than Henri Lefebvre's *Le Droit à la Ville*. In contradistinction to our contemporary cities of malaise, Lefebvre describes the pre-capitalist cities' as favoring the, “L'usage éminent de la ville, c'est-à-dire que des rues et des places, des édifices et des monuments, c'est la Fête (qui consomme improductivement, sans autre avantage que le plaisir et le prestige, des richesses énormes en objets et en argent)”<sup>15</sup>(12). These cities are characterized by uses, where one appropriates or puts oneself into an urban dialectic. Furthermore, the use is immanent, not an exception, not a technique of management, and not discrete. It accords to a default way of life, something that cannot be referred to or singled out in speech or act. When the maison brûle, one can no longer appropriate it. Here we admit the possibility of the impossible. We cannot speak of it by virtue of immanence. In our contemporary city, we can only speak of the impossible, when the possible becomes impossible, and the language is certainly indissoluble from this complex. Lefebvre is a Marxist; thus, he is no doubt familiar with Marx's

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<sup>14</sup> ENG: “The conversion of the impossible into the possible takes place through the passage of men to God. But this conversion and this passage are made starting from God”

<sup>15</sup> ENG: “The eminent use of the city, i.e. streets and squares, buildings and monuments, is the Fête (which consumes unproductively, with no other benefit than pleasure and prestige, enormous wealth in objects and money)”

linguistic consciousness in the *Les Manuscrits de 1844*. It figures so largely for Marx that the first sentence of the vaunted “Le Travail Aliéné” section reads:

Nous sommes partis des prémisses de l'économie politique. Nous avons accepté son langage et ses lois. Nous avons supposé la propriété privée, la séparation du travail, du capital et de la terre, ainsi que celle du salaire, du profit capitaliste et de la rente foncière, tout comme la division du travail, la concurrence, la notion de valeur d'échange, etc.<sup>16</sup>(28)

Whereas our premise was the indelible possibility of God, and the imminent usage of labor and space, through a linguistic denigration we have delivered ourselves to impossibility. This imminent usage of the city, the fact that we are always already chez nous in this old city, is attested to by the fact that epiphenomenal conflicts do not circumvent our collective belonging to it. For Lefebvre, the city transcended the struggle of classes in the medieval period, “Les violents contrastes entre la richesse et la pauvreté, les conflits entre les puissants et les opprimés, n’interdisent ni l’attachement à la ville ni la contribution active à la beauté de l’œuvre”<sup>17</sup> (13-14). This l’œuvre is revealed forcefully in the fêtes. Burekhardt describes these emblematic practices in some minute detail. The fêtes arise from the common life of all the classes. In this act ordinary life becomes art in the double theologization and secularization process of all the coronations. There are dances, costumes, songs, and masks. Notably the fêtes reconciled the individual to a general form of life by the display of mythical figures who take on a meta-historical character, and the mise en scene must be careful not to do harm to the integrity of the fêtes, that is, to not

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<sup>16</sup> ENG: “We started from the premises of political economy. We accepted its language and laws. We assumed private property, the separation of labor, capital and land, as well as the separation of wages, capitalist profit and land rent, along with the division of labor, competition, the notion of exchange value, and so on”

<sup>17</sup> ENG: “The violent contrasts between wealth and poverty, the conflicts between the powerful and the oppressed, do not preclude an attachment to the city or an active contribution to the beauty of the work”

be gratuitous. All these religious and mythical scenes incorporate the profane in a narrative. This is emphasized by the mask that described immanent participation in the sacred narrative of all things, where everything is at stake. The fête as the paradigm of spatial belonging is revealed here:

La procession religieuse pouvait non-seulement être embellie par des additions de tout genre, mais encore être remplacée purement et simplement par un cortège de personnages travestis. Cette dernière coutume s'appuyait peut-être sur l'exemple du défilé des acteurs qui, avant de jouer dans un mystère, traversaient les principales rues de la ville ; mais il est aussi possible qu'un genre de cortège composé de personnages religieux se soit formé spontanément.<sup>18</sup> (173)

This idea that a coronation can arise spontaneously is key, as the spontaneous, or the event proper, betrays all trace of technicity or dispositive. This assemblage of elements can only be produced spontaneously if it belongs to the place itself, the principal streets that can metonymically embody the efficacy of the city. The Italians, taking after the 15th century Florentines who mimed tyrannicide following Brutus, loved to see life as recapitulation. This is why the procession can be embellished; however, not as a denial of the true individual nature of an object, but its subordination to the mystery, attesting to its eclectic charity to life.

Furthermore, this is mirrored in the syntax of the state itself. It was Frédéric who for the first time had erected a reign founded on personal excellence. He loved his library and promoted commerce to the end of assuring the well-being of all his subjects so that no one would beg and for that reason he could walk without fear. He was responsive and kind and desired that the

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<sup>18</sup> ENG: “The religious procession could not only be embellished with additions of all kinds, but also replaced purely and simply by a procession of cross-dressing characters. This latter custom was perhaps based on the example of the parade of actors who, before performing in a mystery, crossed the main streets of the town; but it is also possible that a type of procession composed of religious figures was formed spontaneously”

people know him. He was in fact, and perhaps for the first time, a truly public figure, one amongst the people, concretely amongst his subjects.

This spontaneity and a public that encompasses the ruler rather than the ruler reigning over it is essential to the production of a public space that coincides in every instance with immanent usage, which furthermore is essential to our primordial belonging to the city. It is for this reason that we began with Agamben. Philosophy is intimately related to the city, produced by the development of the city, a division of labor which separated intellectual and non-intellectual work, producing the intellectual as such. Heidegger discerned the logos as the essence of the Greek city, as well as the key faculty of Being, thus the city is co-emergent with the intellect and the logos. See the agora. Every key philosophical and political change, the stream of essential history, is co-emergent with a spatial, urban, process. Lefebvre recognizes the ontologico-political stakes of the city as such:

A cette unité primordiale de la forme urbaine et de son contenu, de la forme philosophique de son sens, peut se rattacher l'organisation de la cité elle-même : un centre privilégié, noyau d'un espace politique, siège du logos et régi par le logos devant lequel les citoyens sont "égaux", les régions et répartitions de l'espace ayant une rationalité justifiée devant le logos (pour et par lui). Le logos de la cité grecque ne peut se séparer du logos philosophique.<sup>19</sup> (39)

This inseparability between the city and logos and philosophy is demonstrated and is revealed in full relief when the home burns. However, we are confronted with a matter of impossibility. Our

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<sup>19</sup> ENG: "This primordial unity of the urban form and its content, of the philosophical form and its meaning, can be traced back to the organization of the city itself: a privileged center, the nucleus of a political space, the seat of the logos and governed by the logos before which citizens are "equal", with the regions and divisions of space having a rationality justified before the logos (for and by it). The logos of the Greek city cannot be separated from the philosophical logos"

relation to primordial space is revealed but it cannot be recognized. It is all there is to see, yet we cannot see it, or discern it in any way. This primordial city is justified before the logos, whereas now the logos is itself subjected to justification.

This severance manifests itself concretely. The main idea is that there is an essential line between industrialization and urbanization from the point of view of capitalist rationalist ideology. In the feudal form there was a strong distinction between urban and rural, despite their interactions, and the elite were distant from the city, which permitted autonomy to the urban artisans who owned their means of production and had a right to the city and belonged to it. Capitalism removed production from the city, for numerous reasons, and technical advances in agriculture and distant economic exchanges disempowered local artisanal production and encouraged an agricultural exodus to the city, creating an urban poor. As this industrial process went on, the form of the city was overseen by a capitalist aligned state that put into process the urban dimension of this overarching rationalization process, zoning, which is an affront to the authentic diverse form of urban life which characterized the medieval period. Lefebvre notes the prolegomena to a future authentic urbanism is found in the fissures of the spatial form of the industrialization-urbanization process, which must be the Bohemian neighborhood. This divvying up of the city has a corollary in urban studies, some studying it from functionalist view, the ideological view, or even the philosophical-global view. It has since the time of the fêtes become anything but its original lived totality. These mistaken metonyms therefore have their fissures in moments of totality, which are described in moments of new fêtes by Elsa Vivant:

Venir assister à des spectacles sur ce terrain vague transformé en terrain de jeu poétique devient une véritable expérience urbaine, marquant les mémoires et les imaginaires.

L'ambiance festive créée par les lampions et guirlandes colorées du café en plein air, le

spectacle d'une trapéziste sur un canuon avec, en arrière-fond, le coucher de soleil sur le Sacré-Cœur et, en contre-champ, les lueurs des trains partant de la gare de l'Est, effacent le souvenir d'un trajet anxiogène entre immeubles à l'abandon et squats.<sup>20</sup>(36)

How perfectly does the resurrection of these lost industrial battlegrounds by the bohemian population resemble the early modern fête? This is why we recover the city in the fissures. The city fractured from its totality in which capitalists and the state extract from it, destroying its immanent usage for exchange value, only has its reverse in its lost totality. The city can only re-emerge on those abandoned capitalist spaces which have lost their exchange value. This is how we try to escape the fire. It is for this reason, in a topically titled work— *Le Feu et Récit*, Agamben writes:

Si l'autoréférence implique donc un excès constitutif de la puissance sur toute réalisation en acte, il faut donc à chaque fois ne pas oublier que penser de manière adéquate l'autoréférence implique avant toutes choses la désactivation et l'abandon du dispositif sujet/objet... C'est précisément et uniquement ceci qui définit la dignité du poète et du philosophe, à savoir qu'ils parlent seulement au nom de la langue.<sup>21</sup>(60)

The failure of language to mediate between subject and object attests to a polarization between the two such that objectification has come to metonymically express the totality, and the related urban problem is that the objectification of the city has banished subjectivity. However, objects

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<sup>20</sup> ENG: “Coming to see shows on this wasteland transformed into a poetic playground becomes a real urban experience, marking memories and imaginations. The festive atmosphere created by the lanterns and colorful garlands of the open-air café, the spectacle of a trapeze artist on a canoe with the sunset over the Sacré-Coeur in the background, and the glow of the trains leaving the Gare de l'Est in the background, erase the memory of an anxiety-inducing journey through abandoned buildings and squats”

<sup>21</sup> ENG: “If self-reference thus implies a constitutive excess of power over any realization in act, then we must always remember that to think adequately about self-reference implies above all the deactivation and abandonment of the subject/object device... It is precisely and solely this that defines the dignity of the poet and the philosopher, namely that they speak only in the name of language”

are delivered into stasis without subjects, attesting to the originary indissolubility between the two which is re-discovered in the désœuvrement of all things.

The general form of this alienation may be designated as a spectacle. The first maxim of Debord's seminal work forms a *grundrisse* from which one can proceed, "Toute la vie des sociétés dans lesquelles règnent les conditions modernes de production s'annonce comme une immense accumulation de *spectacles*. Tout ce qui était directement vécu s'est éloigné dans la représentation"<sup>22</sup> (10). The spectacle opposes lived experience, the lived totality of which we have spoken, that which characterizes the authentic city. Not only is this characteristic of capital but is also political. This is the truth of Frederic's excellence. He did not merely represent the people, but in his publicness, being a subject amongst subjects, he delivered his representing function over to those who he represents. Every representation is a distancing from life, hence why Marion was careful to marry each concept to an intuition. In the following maxim, Debord continues:

Les images qui se sont détachées de chaque aspect de la vie fusionnent dans un cours commun, où l'unité de cette vie ne peut plus être rétablie. La réalité considérée *partiellement* se déploie dans sa propre unité générale en tant que pseudo-monde *à part*, objet de la seule contemplation. La spécialisation des images du monde se retrouvent, accomplie, dans le monde de l'image autonomisé, où le mensonger s'est menti à lui-même. Le spectacle en général, comme inversion concrète de la vie, est le mouvement autonome du non vivant.<sup>23</sup>(10)

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<sup>22</sup> ENG: "The whole life of societies in which modern conditions of production prevail is shaping up as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that used to be directly experienced has been distanced in representation"

<sup>23</sup> ENG: "The images that have become detached from each aspect of life merge into a common course, where the unity of this life can no longer be re-established. Reality, partially considered, unfolds in its own general unity as a separate pseudo-world, the object of contemplation alone. The specialization of the world's images is found,

All these representations form a force field of dissociation over every lived totality and for beings like us who are invariably alive, a life without use is produced, and it is for this reason it is the autonomy of the non-living. This is not like Feuerbach's alienation, which is a displacement and projection. Rather, the totality becomes shrouded. The difference between these false spectacles and the fêtes, which one would casually call urban spectacles, is most clearly expressed here:

Quand l'idéologie, devenue absolue par la possession du pouvoir absolu, s'est changée d'une connaissance parcellaire en un mensonge totalitaire, la pensée de l'histoire a été si parfaitement anéantie que l'histoire elle-même, au niveau de la connaissance la plus empirique, ne peut plus exister. La société bureaucratique totalitaire vit dans un présent perpétuel, où tout ce qui est advenu existe seulement pour elle comme un espace accessible à sa police. Le projet, déjà formulé par Napoléon, de « diriger monarchiquement l'énergie des souvenirs » a trouvé sa concrétisation totale dans une manipulation permanente du passé, non seulement dans les significations, mais dans les faits. Mais le prix de cet affranchissement de toute réalité historique est la perte de la référence rationnelle qui est indispensable à la société *historique* du capitalisme. On sait ce que l'application scientifique de l'idéologie devenue folle a pu coûter à l'économie russe, ne serait-ce qu'avec l'imposture de Lyssenko. Cette contradiction de la bureaucratie totalitaire administrant une société industrialisée, prise entre son besoin du rationnel et son refus du rationnel, constitue une de ses déficiences principales en regard du développement capitaliste normal. De même que la bureaucratie ne peut résoudre comme lui la question de l'agriculture, de même elle lui est finalement inférieure dans la

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accomplished, in the autonomized world of the image, where the liar has lied to himself. The spectacle in general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the non-living”

production industrielle, planifiée autoritairement sur les bases de l'irréalisme et du mensonge généralisé.<sup>24</sup>(84-85)

This fragmented power becomes the totality, a managerial practice that Lefebvre also warned of, and as such history is annihilated. This is also an annihilation of time, which is described by Debord as a perpetual present, that is a situation in which all hope is extirpated, but not just hope, also any justification. The logos has fallen truly silent, not a silence that announces itself in the manner that for Heidegger things coming into the open present themselves camouflaged in simple presentation. The logos without history is completely silent without remainder. The a-historicity of the spectacle annihilates all justification of speech and spatial being. Agamben, usually sufficiently pessimistic, is far too optimistic when he writes:

Il est possible de lire cette anecdote comme une allégorie de la littérature. L'humanité, dans le cours de son histoire, s'éloigne toujours davantage des sources du Mystère et perd peu à peu le souvenir de ce que la tradition lui avait enseigné sur le feu, sur le lieu et la formule - mais les hommes peuvent encore raconter l'histoire de tout cela."<sup>25</sup>(8)

Rather les hommes ne peuvent plus raconter l'histoire de tout cela. We've lost the relic of the fire, and that is the downside to totems, relics, and divination objects— we can lose them. This is

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<sup>24</sup> ENG: "When ideology, made absolute by the possession of absolute power, has been transformed from fragmentary knowledge into a totalitarian lie, the thought of history has been so perfectly annihilated that history itself, at the level of the most empirical knowledge, can no longer exist. Totalitarian bureaucratic society lives in a perpetual present, where everything that has happened exists only for it as a space accessible to its police force. Napoleon's project of "monarchically directing the energy of memories" has found its total concretization in the permanent manipulation of the past, not only in meaning, but also in fact. But the price of this liberation from all historical reality is the loss of the rational reference that is indispensable to the historical society of capitalism. We know what the scientific application of an ideology gone mad has cost the Russian economy, if only through Lyssenko's imposture. This contradiction between a totalitarian bureaucracy administering an industrialized society, caught between its need for the rational and its rejection of the rational, is one of its main deficiencies in relation to normal capitalist development. Just as the bureaucracy cannot solve the question of agriculture, so it is ultimately inferior to it in industrial production, authoritatively planned on the basis of unrealism and generalized lies"

<sup>25</sup> ENG: "This anecdote can be read as an allegory of literature. Humanity, in the course of its history, is drifting further and further away from the sources of the Mystery, and is gradually losing the memory of what tradition had taught it about fire, place and formula - but men can still tell the story of all that."

the urban problem with discrete spectacles, they can be lost. With the impossibility of any content or intuition of the logos we are abandoned to auto-reference : “Recueille-toi, mon âme, en ce grave moment,/ Et ferme ton oreille à ce rugissement./C'est l'heure où les douleurs des malades s'aggravent!/La sombre Nuit les prend à la gorge; ils finissent/Leur destinée et vont vers le gouffre commun”<sup>26</sup> (29-33).

Without a course of action, what can we do? Chat. Hervè Pasqua in an introduction to Heidegger's *Being and Time* extolls the bavardage. Language has been so closely related to communication that the two are often conflated. But how can we communicate in these spectacular times when subjects and objects have no more relations to each other, “On comprend la parole, on ne comprend qu'approximativement l'objet de la parole ». Or, en s'attachant davantage au parlant qu'au parlé, la communication cesse de communiquer. [...] Le discours oublie le rapport d'être à l'étant dont il parle et la communication se réduit à répéter le discours lui-même<sup>27</sup> (80).” The bavardage is not a messianic figure, but an apocalyptic figure. Pure means without ends :

Quand ce qui se transmet n'est que la répétition du discours dans l'oubli total de l'objet de ce qui est dit, alors nous avons le bavardage. Le bavardage ne se contente pas de répéter l'ouï-dire, il n'est pas seulement répétition verbale, mais aussi répétition écrite comme lors de lectures faites machinalement par exemple. Le lecteur moyen, dans ce cas, « comprend tout », sauf ce qui a été créé et conquis par l'écrivain. – La scission entre les mots et les choses, entre le discours et son objet, voilà donc ce qui constitue le bavardage. Le

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<sup>26</sup> ENG: “Meditate, O my soul, in this solemn moment,/And close your ears to this uproar;/It is now that the pains of the sick grow sharper!/Somber Night grabs them by the throat; they reach the end/Of their destinies and go to the common pit”

<sup>27</sup> ENG: “We understand speech, but only approximately the object of speech". But by focusing more on what is spoken than on what is spoken, communication ceases to communicate. Discourse forgets the relation of being to the being of which it speaks, and communication is reduced to repeating the discourse itself”

bavardage est une répétition de mots. Il croit tout comprendre, mais il n'est que vacuité.<sup>28</sup>(80)

When we enter the common gulf of which Baudelaire had spoken, we find the bavardage always already there, the gap in every annunciation that grows to the point of complete nullification. However, it is only the nullification of specificity, i.e., of epistemology. A civilization devoid of the word having its speech vacated is left with the originary inoperable ontological dimension of the word:

Le bavardage est la possibilité de tout comprendre sans appropriation préalable de la chose ». Et puisqu'il n'y a rien à comprendre, tout le monde peut comprendre ! D'où le succès des bavards auprès du public ! Ce qui se dit en se répétant, se généralise et en se généralisant accroît l'écart entre le parlant et le parlé. Cela transforme le révélé en dissimulé. Et cette dissimulation n'est pas feinte, elle n'est pas consciente, elle est naturelle au bavardage.<sup>29</sup> (80-81)

It is only by this empty and non-delimited speech without pretense can we retake our place in our maison.

The intimate relation between the home and language was Heidegger's fundamental discovery, expressed famously in the "Letters on Humanism": "Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of being insofar as

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<sup>28</sup>ENG: "When what is transmitted is merely the repetition of discourse, with total oblivion of the object of what is said, then we have gossip. It's not just verbal repetition, but also written repetition, as in the case of readings done mechanically, for example. The average reader, in this case, "understands everything" except what has been created and conquered by the writer. - The split between words and things, between discourse and its object, is what constitutes chatter. Chatter is a repetition of words. It thinks it understands everything, but it is nothing but vacuity"

<sup>29</sup> ENG: "Chatter is the possibility of understanding everything without prior appropriation of the thing". And since there's nothing to understand, anyone can understand! Hence the success of chatterboxes with the public! What's said is repeated, generalized and, in so doing, widens the gap between the spoken and the spoken. It transforms the revealed into the concealed. And this concealment is not feigned, it's not conscious, it's natural to gossip"

they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying” (239). However, before we accomplish this task, we require “The liberation of language from grammar into a more original essential framework is reserved for thought and poetic creation” (240). This is the dead language we commenced with. Thinking itself since the Socratic period has been procedural and goal-oriented and has therefore abandoned its own essence. Perhaps we are no longer able to say because we are no longer able to think. “The rigor of thinking: in contrast to that of the sciences, does not consist merely in an artificial, that is, technical-theoretical exactness of concepts. It lies in the fact that saying remains purely in the element of the myth of being and lets the simplicity of its manifold dimensions rule” (241). If Heidegger can claim that disciplinization, i.e., the parcellation of philosophy is owed to the loss of the essential nature of thought, perhaps this inability to speak is due to the same phenomena:

Language still denies us its essence: that it is the house of the truth of being. Instead, language surrenders itself to our mere willing and trafficking as an instrument of domination over beings. Beings themselves appear as actualities in the interaction of cause and effect. We encounter beings as actualities in a calculative businesslike way, but also scientifically and by way of philosophy, with explanations and proofs. Even the assurance that something is inexplicable belongs to these explanations and proofs. With such statements we believe that we confront the mystery. As if it were already decided that the truth of being lets itself at all be established in causes and explanatory grounds or, what comes to the same, in their incomprehensibility. But if the human being is to find his way once again into the nearness of, being he must first learn to exist in the nameless. In the same way he must recognize the seductions of the public realm as well as the impotence of the private. Before he speaks the human being must first let himself be

claimed) gain by being, taking the risk that under this claim he will seldom have much to say. Only thus will the pricelessness of its essence be once more bestowed upon the word, and upon humans a home for dwelling in the truth of being. (243)

Everything that applies to language applies to space. The instrumentalization of language and the management of space are co-detriments. Instrumentalization is defined by causes and effects, a play in which beings are withdrawn from themselves. Again, he underscores that the logos must be justified. Thus, he gestures at the bavardage, the one who does not appropriate language, but lets it be, as it lets us be. Thus, the problematic emerges as one of recognition, as Malpas writes, “In this fashion, only the one who is already at home, can be 'homeless'; only the one who is already housed can be in need of 'housing'” (2). Language, that which we already possess, is lacking from us. It is no wonder we have both a crisis of space and of language. There is a multi-directional process of the linguistification of space and spatializing of language: “Understood thus, language already seems to depend on a certain sort of placing, even as it is itself a form of placing or bringing near – and so any sort of speaking opens into a space in which that speaking takes place, even while such speaking itself depends on being already 'placed' as a condition of its possibility”(4). Acts of language place things in the open, but the open must already be placed for language to express itself.

We have highlighted this multi-directional process between space and language, but in this ahistorical epoch, we no longer can dwell, that is we are without primordial space, and we speak the language of capital. Each attempt to recapture the fête is parody and each attempt at serious speech is ironic. But there remains a way out. As aforementioned, it is well known in Pauline theology salvation applies to the remnant, or the rest. We used this term to announce the messianic dimension of poetry and philosophy as that which remains when the house burns,

and we choke from smoke inhalation. But, in *Le Temps Qui Reste* Agamben merely gestures at a much darker potential. The house burning announces a crisis but not a definite destruction. Every burned object leaves its remnants, and of course there are varying degrees of arson. In this work he cites Amos, “Haïssez le mal et aimez le bien. Observez la justice qui est à la porte, et peut-être que l'éternel, le dieu des armées, aura pitié du reste de Jacob”<sup>30</sup> (91). The context of this exhortation is a complete destruction of the people of Israel. It is certain that Agamben is aware of Amos’s special place among the prophets, so it is confusing as to why he did not make note of his special pessimism, as one Old Testament scholar has:

Amos has given up the hope of earlier prophets. He wished to set up no new king. But he looked forward to a time when the nation should be sifted and the evil elements—the object of his attack, the present ruling classes—would be eliminated, and the deserving remnant—the poor and needy, the men of his own class—should at last receive their rights and that in multiple measure. (341)

If the society of spectacle and the interstices of capital have shrouded the lived totality that accords to Being such that no solution can be found, just as Amos lost hope in hope itself, perhaps everything is to be destroyed and we must kill the parasite along with the host, even hope. Perhaps here, and only here, left with nothing at all, we confront the deepest penumbra in intellectual history.

The place of the nothing in Heidegger’s thought is well known. It constitutes the primordial ground on which beings come into Being because every time one attempts to discern the nothing, they find that it is something. This is to say that nothing is not an epistemological

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<sup>30</sup> ENG: “Hate evil and love good. Observe the justice that is at the door, and perhaps the Eternal, the god of hosts, will have mercy on the remnant of Jacob”

concept. If ideology has been totalized as Debord has affirmed, and he and Lefebvre have nothing but airy workers councils and some metaphysical versions of already-existent participatory urban planning, not only do we not have an intuition of a prolegomena, but not really any concept either. If all beings have receded, we must return to nothing. God and the nothing coincide, as both permit the Being of beings. Each Opus Dei has a genealogy tracing back to the state of the nothing. If Stalinism is a mirror of capitalism, then the complete erasure of history applies to our neoliberal society as well. We must recall, Christianity is a historical religion whose edifice is founded on hope. If the lived totality proceeding from the dual processes of the humanization of time and the temporalization of the human is shrouded by spectacle, what hope can we hope for? The conclusion is clear and hard to admit, we are beyond salvation. This is the deepest theological paradox in which we return to the grand exception, the Cherubim that guards hope and love from all epistemological vulnerability. Only on these grounds can Agamben affirm at the end of *The Adventure*:

This is the case not because they do not desire to obtain their object, but because, insofar as it is imagined and hoped for, their desire is always already satisfied. Saint Paul's claim that "in hope we were saved" (Romans 8:24) is therefore both correct and incorrect. If the object of hope is that which cannot be satisfied, it is only as unsavable—that is, as already saved—that we have hoped for salvation. Just as hope overcomes its satisfaction, so too does it surpass salvation (and love). (91)

Only when we lose everything, every relic, and even ourselves, marking a deeper exigence than Mirandola's call to retreat into our divine inner recesses, and we find the nothing do we encounter God as the radically inextinguishable flame of hope. Amongst the flames everything has lost its exterior sense, no more subjects and objects, spatially nor linguistically. Every word

is an auto-reference of love, all spaces restored to the primordial architectonique of dwelling. This is the end of all things and the prolegomena to any future messianism, any felicitous political paradigm. Only here can our thanato-politics of malaise be countered, by configuring how to make the end, the nothing, immanent in every step from the outset. Every word must be a love letter and space must be our maison, both coinciding in the end, how it began, with God as our guardian, then as now, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1: 1-2).

It Can be Renewed

When there is the nothing left, at the ground-zero of Being, but hope, we see what was lingering beneath our noses the entire time. Although the society of spectacle grasped onto a multi-generational entelechy of impossibility furnished by capitalism so long ago and has since swelled into an omnipresent veil, in doing so, the community of evil has been avowed, and thus just like Blanchot's executioner, it destroys itself in self-revelation. Blanchot concludes his influential work on the nature of community with an exigence to a new speech that renders silence and speech indistinct, and ultimately with a gesture at the political project of such a speech: "Ainsi trouvera-t-on qu'elle a aussi un sens politique astreignant et qu'elle ne nous permet pas de nous désintéresser du temps présent, lequel, en ouvrant des espaces de libertés inconnus, nous rend responsable de rapports nouveaux, toujours menacés, toujours espérés, entre ce que nous appelons œuvre et ce que nous appelons désœuvrement »<sup>31</sup>(93). What could it mean to be interested in the present in such a way that working and idling become indistinct. In the historical sense, this cannot be the course of history, nor can it be post-historical or a-historical. I contend that it is the silent retrieval of possibility from the universalization of impossibility. If "il faut taire", then we cannot put any additional content into the scene. Thus, the matter becomes that of how to create something new without creation, which is just the rephrasing of the task that Blanchot left. The answer to such a demand appears to us immediately as defamiliarization; however, we actualize the simile. Shlovsky had written, "Tolstoy makes the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object. He describes an object as if he were seeing it for the first time, an event as if it were happening for the first time." (16). He is hesitant because he has

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<sup>31</sup> ENG: "So we'll find that it also has a compelling political meaning, and that it doesn't allow us to lose interest in the present, which, by opening up unknown spaces of freedom, makes us responsible for new relationships - always threatened, always hoped for - between what we call work and what we call idleness"

not grasped the immanent generativity of defamiliarization and thus he restricts himself to parallels and conditionals, but we must be thankful to him for the gesture. The revivification of our spatio-linguistic being can be found in many literary examples, though none accomplishes it so gracefully as one unsuspecting poet, Baudelaire.

“Paysage” defamiliarizes the urban landscape, but in doing so estranges it from estrangement itself. He deploys many of the themes already discussed here, but places the agency on the city rather than the human subject:

Je veux, pour composer chastement mes églogues,  
 Coucher auprès du ciel, comme les astrologues,  
 Et, voisin des clochers écouter en rêvant  
 Leurs hymnes solennels emportés par le vent.  
 Les deux mains au menton, du haut de ma mansarde,  
 Je verrai l'atelier qui chante et qui bavarde ;  
 Les tuyaux, les clochers, ces mâts de la cité,  
 Et les grands ciels qui font rêver d'éternité<sup>32</sup> (1-8)

He commences by the invocation of the dream state of the bells who launch religious verse carried by the wind. Not only are the objects of the city perceived, but they are described in a

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<sup>32</sup> ENG: “I would, to compose my eclogues chastely,  
 Lie down close to the sky like an astrologer,  
 And, near the church towers, listen while I dream  
 To their solemn anthems borne to me by the wind.  
 My chin cupped in both hands, high up in my garret  
 I shall see the workshops where they chatter and sing,  
 The chimneys, the belfries, those masts of the city,  
 And the skies that make one dream of eternity”

theological drama. Truly, these entities being defamiliarized are also de-objectified, as they are shown to be essential to produce urban space, and this is extended par excellence in the following lines. The workshop “sings”, the verb we used to describe the muses who are indelible from the truth, and “bavarde”, chats. To bavarder is to deconstruct the difference between silence and speech and allow the creativity of the pure voice to take hold, one that not only belongs to the animals, but also to all our worthy co-creators in the world. After democratizing the linguistic creativity amongst beings, he then deploys a fascinating metaphor to equalize land, sea, and sky which amounts to the wholesale reconceptualization of the city as such. The pipes and bells are described as the masts of the city, that which propels the functioning of the city. This is an infrastructural description, but also synthesizes movement and sound, positing the city as an irreducibly kinetic and sonorous entity. The sensory element is decisively related to the messianic time as the skies cause one to dream of eternity. The heart of the city is a dream space. The skies, the space that presides over the city, transcends it, encircles, and permeates it, in a permanent dream space that redeems and transforms the particulars, animating them, and puts them into the stakes of eternity.

This dynamic is exalted in the second part:

Il est doux, à travers les brumes, de voir naître

L'étoile dans l'azur, la lampe à la fenêtre

Les fleuves de charbon monter au firmament

Et la lune verser son pâle enchantement.

Je verrai les printemps, les étés, les automnes ;

Et quand viendra l'hiver aux neiges monotones,

Je fermerai partout portières et volets

Pour bâtir dans la nuit mes féeriques palais.  
 Alors je rêverai des horizons bleuâtres,  
 Des jardins, des jets d'eau pleurant dans les albâtres(?),  
 Des baisers, des oiseaux chantant soir et matin,  
 Et tout ce que l'Idylle a de plus enfantin.  
 L'Emeute, tempêtant vainement à ma vitre,  
 Ne fera pas lever mon front de mon pupitre ;  
 Car je serai plongé dans cette volupté  
 D'évoquer le Printemps avec ma volonté,  
 De tirer un soleil de mon coeur, et de faire  
 De mes pensers brûlants une tiède atmosphère<sup>33</sup> (9-26)

In a sweet moment through the mist, he “voir naître”, sees beings being born, emerging, and tellingly uses theological language, “les brumes” recalls the hazy site of theological creation, and

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<sup>33</sup>ENG: “It is sweet, through the mist, to see the stars  
 Appear in the heavens, the lamps in the windows,  
 The streams of smoke rise in the firmament  
 And the moon spread out her pale enchantment.  
 I shall see the springtimes, the summers, the autumns;  
 And when winter comes with its monotonous snow,  
 I shall close all the shutters and draw all the drapes  
 So I can build at night my fairy palaces.  
 Then I shall dream of pale blue horizons, gardens,  
 Fountains weeping into alabaster basins,  
 Of kisses, of birds singing morning and evening,  
 And of all that is most childlike in the Idyl.  
 Riot, storming vainly at my window,  
 Will not make me raise my head from my desk,  
 For I shall be plunged in the voluptuousness  
 Of evoking the Springtime with my will alone,  
 Of drawing forth a sun from my heart, and making  
 Of my burning thoughts a warm atmosphere”

the rivers of coal rise to the firmament, the edge of the sky, while the moon pours its enchanting light. When the winter comes, the omnipresence and immanence of the city is revealed, not as a metaphor, but as a creation we belong to and belongs to us, solidified through the defamiliarized recognition as a form-of-life. When the winter comes, he will shut the extremities of his lodging to construct an iron palace in the night, and then dream of blue horizons, gardens, water jets, kisses, and the singing of birds, everything that is idyllic. This is a dream, not a fantasy, in which one recognizes all that can be through what is, seeing through walls and remembering them, saving them, and keeping them as something truly idyllic—little images, and “enfantin”, something in which infancy is at stake. It is internal as in the fashion of Cusa he invokes a sight deeper than sight as he will not raise his forehead from the desk, plunged in the voluptuous internal landscape where he evokes spring through his will and retrieves the son from his heart, i.e., both through the mechanism of his heart, but also the sun that dwells within. Lastly, he will externalize his thoughts. At last, we end just how we began. This is the inert act par excellence. In externalizing what is already recognized, one is acting hopefully, realizing that which is already realized, as realization covers both meanings. But to be clearer, we can say that one acts such that they bring to realization what is recognized and recognizes that which has been realized in advance. This is why the modernist slogan is, “make it new”.

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