DREW UNIVERSITY

THE DESTRUCTION OF LANGUAGE:
THE CHALLENGES OF TRAUMA FOR LANGUAGE, PHILOSOPHY, AND POLITICS

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BY

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To the lost

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Preface

I think it a fair critique of my writing that, though I hope my passion regarding that of which I write remains clear, my works do not reveal much of in terms of autobiography. In some ways, this is deliberate. I am concerned that too often autobiography overshadows the argument(s) offered forth for consideration, reducing contemplative exploration to psychosocial analysis of the speaker. While I remain deeply committed to starting almost any project with a robust hermeneutics of suspicion, my hope is that truly general concepts actually exist, can be apprehended, and that access to the same cannot be reduced to solely demographic factors. As such, I tend to focus much more on the arguments put forth, rather than how I come to argue such, in the first place. This is even evident in my choice against using first-person language throughout this work, as I ultimately understand the unfolding argument to be a joint experience of reasoned inquiry shared between writer and reader: thus, "we," and not, "I."

Some backstory and insight are nonetheless warranted, to justify the reader's trust at the onset of our forthcoming relationship. In this work, I suggest that trauma philosophically implicates at least three things. First, it is itself a human experience of something that very literally should not exist, in that it is an experience of something outside the world itself. "World," is understood here in the Heideggerian sense, as the sum of all that reveals itself as actuality out of the depths of possibility. In this way, trauma is an experience of the literally unthinkable. Confronted by such nonsense, discursive language breaks down. This leads to the second of trauma's philosophical implications. The category of trauma also attends to how the world attempts to correct the aberration of the literally unthinkable, through abjection of both trauma itself and the traumatized through which trauma is known. Nonsense such as trauma

cannot be assimilated into normative systems, yet trauma exists in such an embodied way that it cannot simply be annihilated without contradicting constitutive and essential legal commitments. As such, the world profoundly turns away, abjecting that which is revulsive in its sight. In this act, trauma's third philosophical implication becomes available, as we gain some way into discovering the very limits of human power. Whatever trauma might be, it exists beyond the grasp of human agency, equitable encounter, and technological innovation. Through the nullity of trauma, we learn only one thing: we cannot go there, *be* there, without being undone.

So much for summary. I come to these suggestions over a long period of personal experience with deprivation and violence, which certainly predates my joining the United States Army in 2004. However, it was as a chaplain on the burn wards of the Brooke Army Medical Center in 2005 that I began conceiving the explicit trajectories that developed into this project. In caring for patients recovering from blasts, burns, and amputative injuries, I watched human beings grapple with whether they remained functionally human. Certainly, DNA testing would continue to reveal their species as *homo sapien*. Likewise, almost no commentator would ever fail to explicitly affirm their humanity, if directly challenged. Yet, in their own words and silences, the traumatized on the burn wards attested to their own experiences of crisis: absent the faces, limbs, genitalia, sensory organs, etc., with and through which human life is lived, what did being human in the wake of trauma *mean*? Furthermore, the extent of such injuries went beyond physical damage, as presumably definitional capabilities were catastrophically damaged, including such ostensibly human capacities as space-time recognition, temporal continuity, emotional connectivity, discernment of shared reality, and the development of trust. Even worse, as all these injuries implicated intensely complex social matrices of interconnectivity, the damage seemed not confined to the patient alone. Instead, trauma somehow harmed, in intensely

transformative ways, those anywhere near its destruction. Strangely, though, for something so graphically, grotesquely, and violently significant, the response from those beyond its immediate reach seemed to me consistently one of avoidance, dismissal, and comprehensive rejection. The horror was too great, the implicated problematic too vast, to permit more than truly sincere expressions of condolence. Somehow, someway, trauma seemed to me almost taboo.

I arrived at Drew University to explore these points, in order to challenge whether or not I was mistaken in my initial observations. During my coursework, I ended up being sent to Europe for education and training, as well as Iraq in support of the American war effort there. During this time away, as well as the many months upon return that I spent in and out of Veterans Affairs hospitals as a patient myself, I found philosophy the best disciplinary venue for my work. Trauma seemed to me to be a breakdown of an essentially human phenomenon, a null horizon over against which the limits of human power contended and became known. That phenomenon was language, especially given its political implications via Heidegger and Schmitt.

Language remains a tricky thing to discuss. The bulk of this dissertation, consisting of the second third of the work, is perhaps ultimately as much a theory of language, as it is a theory of trauma. The first third of the dissertation sets up the central arguments and concepts, while the final third remains inherently incomplete, as it only begins to suggest what ways (if any) might lead out of trauma's destruction of language. This dissertation is therefore certainly not a book, in and of itself, but hopefully it can serve as reference and resource for future considerations on the matter present-at-hand. With it, I simply hope to start a conversation and speak into a particularly disturbing and uncomfortable silence.

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To be clear, this dissertation would not exist without the long encouragement and support of Heather and Bill Elkins, Anne Yardley, Gary Simpson, and Arthur Pressley. Though it sounds far too dramatic, I very well would not, either. Especially in the wake of my own recovery after military service, these individuals were incredibly significant in my personal growth and professional development. Whatever becomes of the arguments contained in this dissertation, and should they or I amount to anything further, any success either achieves will first be because of these outstanding examples of what education and humanity can and might yet be.

I am also indebted to Michael LaBossiere, my old friend and mentor, who believed in me and personally invested energy and time into my undergraduate success when he had absolutely no reason beyond intuition to do so. I have been the recipient of such blessed grace many times in my life. Chaplains Irving Bryer and Lyn Brown were among some of the finest officers under which I ever had the privilege to serve, and I continue to treasure the insights gained from conversations and friendships shared with them, as well as my battle buddy Toby Burk. My gratitude to the Central European University's Summer University class and instructors of 2013,

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Ultimately, while I am quite proud of this work, it is entirely overshadowed by the pride I have for the relationships of which I remain a part and from which I have so greatly benefitted. Nothing is better than family and nothing is more essential than friendship. With both, and the Lord's grace for which I give thanks, I am blessed and I pray the blessings of the same for those to whom this work is dedicated.

With this work, I say thank you and truly hope to make the aforementioned proud.

Abstract

This work advances a single claim: trauma *is* an exception. While that claim might appear to be simple *prima facie*, its repercussions require intense reconsideration of Western philosophical and, especially, political traditions. The task is to explore trauma beyond its origins denoting a psychological condition, delving into the individuated and communal silences indicative of traumatic injury. Recast as a philosophical category, trauma signifies the possibility, actuality, and aftermath of phenomena of languagelessness. Language becomes a technical term to denote discursive modalities of communication (including self-communication), inclusive of all means for delineating and proposing boundaries. Yet, the null horizons implicated by trauma's languagelessness upend philosophical anthropologies inherent to Western political thought, necessitating new structures with which to address the discursive limits of individual and collective power.

In our first chapter, we frame the contemporary context, which denies the possibility of any exception, and introduce Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger as our main interlocutors. We establish the term, "trauma," and track its interdisciplinary development through psychology, literary criticism, and theology. We pursue our methodological way forward with an examination of the, "incomprehensible event," and the *scelus infandum* addressed by Schmitt.

In our second chapter, consideration of logic via Heidegger leads us to discover the origins of discursive language in the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state's power, *the power to continue as such*. This reveals the extraordinariness of discursive language, its relationship to historical past, present, and future, and its role in world creation. All of these are

endangered by the destruction of discursive language, which occurs in the chthonic encounter introduced by trauma's injury-as-event.

In our final chapter, bereft of discursive language, we explore whether mythic language remains as a possibility for disclosure and self-disclosure. Its affinity for judgment in the aesthetic mode is conducive to healing traumatic injury, opening up new opportunities for expression. However, moving in scope from individual to multitude, myth is revealed as a treacherous resource that can lead to further trauma, if the operative mode of political discourse. In this way, trauma as languagelessness implicates the apocalyptic, revealing itself as the exception and concluding our investigations.

TRAUMA AS LANGUAGELESSNESS

Section 1.1: Framing the Contemporary Context

This work advances a single claim: trauma *is* an exception. While that claim might appear to be simple *prima facie*, its repercussions require intense reconsideration of Western philosophical and, especially, political traditions. The task is to explore trauma beyond its origins denoting a psychological condition, delving into the individuated and communal silences indicative of traumatic injury. Recast as a philosophical category, trauma signifies the possibility, actuality, and aftermath of phenomena of languagelessness. As will be developed later in this work, language serves here as a technical term to denote discursive modalities of communication (including self-communication), inclusive of all means for delineating and proposing boundaries. Yet, the null horizons implicated by trauma's languagelessness upend philosophical anthropologies inherent to Western political thought, necessitating new structures with which to address the discursive limits of individual and collective power, as well as a means of creatively engaging whatever might lay beyond what can ever be said.

That last line might appear too poetic for a philosophical dissertation. In what fashion is trauma explicitly related to the political, at all, let alone defined amongst its essential elements? This requires attention to precisely what dimension of life might be defined as, "the political," among the vast constellation of existential categories. Such issues will be engaged directly later in this chapter, as we explore what constitutes a truly political antithesis, the nature of the exception, and how trauma is to be understood within these terms. Beforehand, it seems of more immediate concern as to whether our contemporary context even permits an exception, at all. Is a true exception conceivably possible, given present commitments to human agency, equality, and technological innovation?

For our purposes and throughout this work, two main interlocutors facilitate a way forward. Carl Schmitt's extensive inquiry into the concept of the political, in both his book by that name and his later works, provides a framework wherein the forthcoming arguments can unfold within the parameters of well-established and contemporary discourse on international relations and political theory. As will be examined shortly, Schmitt's theory of sovereignty grounds itself in the necessity of the, "genuine decision,"[1] which is provoked by the possibility of the exception, "Sovereign is he that decides on the exception."[2] Further, it is essential that sovereignty, while residing in concrete persons, is not reducible to such persons themselves; sovereignty resides in definitive sovereign acts:

> Thus, as Schmitt notes in *Political Theology*, the sovereign decision has the quality of being something like a religious miracle: it has no references except the fact that it is, to what Heidegger would have called its *Dasein*. (It should be noted that the sovereign is not like God: there *is* no "Sovereign." Rather, sovereign acts have the quality of referring only to themselves, as moments of "existential intervention."[3]

The dynamic tension of sovereignty not residing inherently in persons, yet requiring and actualized only in the personal decision, provided the motive force for Schmitt's project, "The connection of actual power with the legally highest power is the fundamental problem of the concept of sovereignty. All the difficulties reside here."[4] Schmitt claims that the importance of reconciling these two phenomena, "actual power," with, "legally highest power," cannot be overstated. This is concurrently a descriptive and prescriptive challenge: the ability to accurately apprehend sovereignty directly impacts the deployment of sustainable political systems. Nonetheless, since at least the establishment of the Westphalian nation-state system, the

[1] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 3.
[2] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 5.
[3] See foreword by Tracy Strong; Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. xiv.
[4] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 18.

sovereign deliberative act of deciding the exception has become anathema to the progression of Western juristic thinking. Culminating conceptually in the Enlightenment and actualized in the French Revolution, this dominant trajectory of thinking systematically rejected the very possibility of any exception, obscuring from consideration sovereignty and what might lay beyond its purview:

> The idea of the modern constitutional state triumphed together with deism, a theology and metaphysics that banished the miracle from the world. This theology and metaphysics rejected not only the transgression of the laws of nature through the exception brought about by direct intervention, as is found in the idea of the miracle, but also the sovereign's direct intervention in a valid legal order. The rationalism of the Enlightenment rejected the exception in every form.[5]

The historical ramifications of this rejection are both our contemporary context, as well as the constraints against which any challenge to our context must contend, "This is our situation. We can no longer say anything worthwhile about culture and history without first becoming aware of our own cultural and historical situation."[6] Political discourse cannot escape the impossibility of saying, "anything worthwhile," without first acknowledging the fact of the Enlightenment's essential normalizing project. The innate lawfulness of nature is set as *a priori* to any independent and potentially conflicting experience with specific phenomena:

> As said above: all concepts such as God, freedom, progress, anthropological conceptions of human nature, the public domain, rationality and rationalization, and finally the concepts of nature and culture itself derive their concrete historical content from the situation of the central domains and can only be grasped therefrom.[7]

If all of nature is defined as lawful, and if knowledge of such is a matter reducible to having enough resources and time to track such causal relationships, one can arrive at the Enlightenment's presumption that all of nature lay within the technocratic scope of human

[5] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 36.
[6] Carl Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," in *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 80.
[7] Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," p. 87.

understanding. Within such a framework, the metaphysical or epistemological challenges posed by an exception are concurrently and concretely a political crisis, "If everything is strictly regulated by legal normativity, exceptions are condemned, mutations suspect, and miracles are seen almost as acts of sabotage."[8]

Even the act of normalization nonetheless remains a decisive act, only made nefarious as it seeks to end all future decisions. The norm and the decision are equally essential concepts; the contemporary danger of the norm is in forgetting that it, too, is grounded on preceding decisions:

> The two elements of the concept *legal order* are then dissolved into independent notions and thereby testify to their conceptual independence. Unlike the normal situation, when the autonomous moment of the decision recedes to a minimum, the norm is destroyed in the exception. The exception remains, nevertheless, accessible to jurisprudence because both elements, the norm as well as the decision, remain within the framework of the juristic.[9]

Schmitt's contention with his contemporary Hans Kelsen centered on just this issue, "Schmitt's decisionism derives its meaning from his polemics against Kelsen's pure normativism. Schmitt argued that in itself the norm is insufficient and becomes actual only by decision and interpretation."[10] In pursuing normative law, Kelsen and likeminded jurists fail to truly engage what is essential in the political analysis, mistaking competency for sovereignty:

> The controversy always centered on the question, Who assumes authority concerning those matters for which there are no positive stipulations, for example, a capitulation? In other words, Who is responsible for that for which competence has not been anticipated?[11]

Schmitt asks these questions not to undermine the possibility of law itself, but to recover it. Much of the contemporary crisis of sovereignty conceptually arose from failure to nuance the

[8] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of any Political Theology* (Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press, 2014), p. 120.
[9] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 12.
[10] George Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception: An Introduction to the Political Ideas of Carl Schmitt between 1921 and 1936* (New York, Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 44.
[11] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 10.

interdependencies shared between right and law, creating instead a dangerous false dichotomy wherein the two categories were pitted against one another, "Unfortunately, the conception of law is mortgaged in a particularly tragic way to very old theological and metaphysical antitheses, which seem to become even more impenetrable due to a modern scientific 'law of nature', because right (in the sense of freedom) is juxtaposed to law as a means of force."[12] Schmitt works to recover some interpretive element of law beyond its contemporary reduction to mere bureaucratic (and, as noted below, *mechanistic*) function. This rejuvenation is positioned by Schmitt to counter those who, in misapprehending the contemporary crisis of the political, "…have contributed to the fact that legality is nothing more than a synonym for mob rule."[13]

As noted above, both norm and decision are inescapable elements of Schmitt's concept of legal order. His inquiry reinforces that the political cannot easily be subordinated to homogenization or miscategorization. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the political possesses its own substantively distinct form, different from other natural and social phenomena. It is not reducible to universalized causal categories, "In political reality there is no irresistible highest or greatest power that operates according to the certainty of natural law."[14] While not necessarily claiming that all decisions are essentially *sui generis* (elsewhere Schmitt discusses arbitrariness and anarchy), the legal order is reliant upon personal decisiveness to have any coherent meaning or practical utility. Indeed, the decision and its maker are *essential* references for further legal interpretation. This does not reduce juristic thinking to merely a hermeneutics of suspicion, but rather expands its logical analysis to include a potentially broader range of novel connotative implications. Such novelty is an essential trait of the decision. It remains an

[12] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 118.
[13] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 119.
[14] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 17.

inescapable element of the decision's nature, as well as origin of the norm's antipathy to the decision's irreducibly personal character:

> That constitutive, specific element of a decision is, from the perspective of the content of the underlying norm, new and alien. Looked at normatively, the decision emanates from nothingness.[15]

Critiquing the elimination of the personal by normative Enlightenment thinking and its echoes within contemporary projects, Schmitt claimed that the loss of the personal as a conceptually essential element impacts both legal theory and political praxis:

> Blended with a specific kind of positivism, it was merely a degenerate decisionism, blind to the law, clinging to the "normative power of the factual" and not to a genuine decision. This formless mixture, unsuitable for any structure, was no match for any serious problem concerning state and constitution.[16]

Thus, Schmitt's succinct summarization of his ultimate concern regarding normative projects, "They agree that all personal elements must be eliminated from the concept of the state."[17]

The legal question of sovereignty now gives way to an inquiry regarding the state and its contemporary context. Schmitt claims the prior discussion was necessary because, since at least the Enlightenment, secularization has involved more than just the retention of autonomous theological concepts by the state, albeit translated into non-confessional terms. Rather, the state has also retained entire, and inherently theological, systematic structures:

> All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts. The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries.[18]

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[15] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 31.
[16] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 3.
[17] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 29.
[18] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 36.

This development includes the privileging of natural law as the resource not only for theology, but jurisprudence, "The juridic formulas of the omnipotence of the state are, in fact, only superficial secularizations of theological formulas of the omnipotence of God."[19] The history of ideas here finds normative expectations of natural law taking root in nascent theories of democratic representation and nation-state. General categories are asserted that restrict not only the *actions of individuals*, but *the need for any specific individual*, at all. While such might be a methodologically useful move in other fields, it is catastrophic for analysis of law, the political, and the state (a point vital to Schmitt's concept of the political as friend-enemy distinction):

> The distinction between the substance and the practice of law, which is of fundamental significance in the history of the concept of sovereignty, cannot be grasped with concepts rooted in the natural sciences and yet is an essential element of legal argumentation.[20]

Schmitt found Kelsen's neo-Kantian approach demonstrative of an ongoing and systemic confusion of form within the contemporary context, a mistake rooted in Enlightenment thinking:

> At the foundation of his identification of state and legal order rests a metaphysics that identifies the lawfulness of nature and normative lawfulness. This pattern of thinking is characteristic of the natural sciences. It is based on a rejection of all "arbitrariness," and attempts to banish from the realm of the human mind every exception.[21]

This leads to Schmitt's critique of Kelsen's justification for democracy as insufficient. Schmitt is not necessarily arguing against democracy itself. However, he is challenging a particular kind of Kantian and neo-Kantian democratic theory, which Schmitt considers generally dubious and, in his context of Weimar, especially destructive:

> When Kelsen gives the reasons for opting for democracy, he openly reveals the mathematical and natural-scientific character of his thinking: Democracy is the expression of a political relativism and a scientific orientation that are liberated from miracles and dogmas and based on a human understanding and critical doubt.[22]

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[19] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 42.
[20] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 42.
[21] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 41.
[22] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 42.

Schmitt sees in this rationalism a characteristic negation of the personal through its removal of deity from the divine. There is an attempt to conserve both teleology and transcendence, while simultaneously excising from either any invasive personal particularity. Potential and purpose no longer are understood to be externally granted via a god's prerogative, but are discovered within self and world by individual encounter with both. Paradoxically, there is no need for the personal, as accessibility to, and the drive for, meaning are universalized. This move fails to recognize a critical, interpretative feature of the state, "The sovereign state power alone, on the basis of its sovereignty, determines what subjects of the state have to believe to be a miracle."[23]

Schmitt's reliance on Hobbes and the Leviathan myth is examined at length in Chapter Two. For now, extrapolating from Hobbes' exhortation, "auctoritas non veritas facit legem,"[24] Schmitt observes that Hobbes provides an origin point for the Enlightenment's fatal error. Schmitt agrees, "Auctoritas, non Veritas. Nothing here is true: everything here is command."[25] He tracks how this creates for Hobbes functionally oppositional categories of public and private reason, "In essence, whether something is to be considered a miracle is decided by the state in its capacity as the exemplar of the public reason in contrast to the private reason of subjects."[26] The state, as "exemplar of the public reason," and manifest in the sovereign, arises from itself to decide the potential for meaning in any single particularity. Yet, it is in Hobbes' development of these two categories that Schmitt finds error:

> At this point enters the differentiation between inner faith and outer confession into the political system of the *Leviathan*. Hobbes declares the question of wonder and miracle to be a matter of "public" in contrast to "private" reason; but on the basis of universal

[23] Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 53.
[24] This quote from Chapter 26 of Hobbes' *Leviathan* usually only appears in such form within Latin versions of the text. Other renderings, including the English, lack the Latin's concise, yet penetrating character. The Latin phrase has such longstanding use in the public domain, with universal acknowledgement to Hobbes, that it is deployed here without specific citation, as we lack access to an unabridged Latin text with which to provide specific reference.
[25] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 55.
[26] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 55.

> freedom of thought – *quia cogitation omnis libera est* – he leaves to the individual's private reason whether to believe or not to believe and to preserve his own *judicium* in his heart, *intra pectus suum*. But as soon as it comes to public confession of faith, private judgment ceases and the sovereign decides about the true and the false.[27]

This tension between public and private reason is used from the Enlightenment onward to tear apart the unity of the political. Hobbes' project depended on a unity of the diverse aspects of Leviathan, expressed in mythological terms, "In the forefront stands conspicuously the notorious mythical *leviathan*, that has assimilated god, man, animal, and machine."[28] However, Schmitt claims Spinoza, Locke, and others would echo Hobbes' oppositional categories to develop distinct, "inner," and, "outer," components of being, without necessarily sharing Hobbes' regard for how such demarcations of the political nevertheless reinforce its essential unity. In doing so, the state begins to become something belonging to the, "outer," dimensions of life: a *mere* mechanism.

Prior to the arguable culmination of the Enlightenment in the French Revolution, Hobbes' *Leviathan* retained its identities as both creator and legislator; both were self-justified and self-justifying. However, the, "outer," sphere of life rapidly ceased being considered such: "life," was an inner reality, distinct from the increasingly objectified world:

> The sharp differentiation between "organism" and "mechanism" finally prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century. The philosophy of German idealism, first Kant in *Critique of Judgment* (1790), distinguished "inner" from "outer," culminating in the distinction between living being and dead matter and thus draining the image of "mechanism" from all mythical, all living character. Mechanism and machine thus became inanimate, utilitarian bodies. To this must be added the further differentiation of dead mechanism from animate work of art in the sense of aesthetic productivity, a conceptualization made current by Schelling and the Romantics.[29]

[27] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 56.
[28] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 32.
[29] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 41.

Reduced to merely a mechanism, the sovereign modern state is undermined as to its core interpretative function: to decide on the exception and the miracle. Since the Enlightenment, such activity is no longer deemed necessary. The contemporary context has dismissed with these seemingly anachronistic categories. Schmitt addressed such in the following critical passage:

> Since then the consistency of exclusively scientific thinking has also permeated political ideas, repressing the essentially juristic-ethical thinking that had predominated in the age of the Enlightenment. The general validity of a legal prescription has become identified with the lawfulness of nature, which applies without exception. The sovereign, who in the deistic view of the world, even if conceived as residing outside the world, had remained the engineer of the great machine, has been radically pushed aside. *The machine now runs by itself*.[30][31]

As the system is self-regulating, there is no need for the personal decision. This is not to say *choices* are not necessary. Clearly, the increasingly diversifying deployment of this system requires innumerable responses to infinite stimuli. That is the point, though: the system is total and universal. There is nothing presumably beyond the scope of the mechanized system, once it is divorced from intimate connection to, "living," restraints. Hence, there is no need for the genuine decision on the unforeseen. Any available choices, to include their expressible outcomes, are already constitutive of the system itself. Without need for the decision, and pressed by an ever-totalizing system seeking universalization, talk of sovereignty becomes increasingly problematic:

> The metaphysical proposition that God enunciates only general and not particular declarations of will governed the metaphysics of Leibniz and Nicholas Malebranche. The general will of Rousseau became identical with the will of the sovereign; but simultaneously the concept of the general also contained quantitative determination with regard to its subject, which means that the people became the sovereign. The decisionistic and personalistic element in the concept of sovereignty was thus lost.[32]

[30] Italics mine.
[31] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 48.
[32] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 48.

Thus, the contemporary crisis: the state is reduced to a mere mechanism for the deployment of goods and services, as if such activity is itself value neutral and outside the scope of the state's essential interpretative task, "Western liberal democrats agree with Bolshevist Marxists that the state is an apparatus that the most varied political constellations can use as a technically neutral instrument."[33] As argued above, this presumption of value-neutrality is erroneous; the state never fully divests itself of its broader aspects, even as the unity of the political is never truly fractured. However, within the contemporary context, the presumed, "value-and-truth neutrality," of the technological means that the political has fewer resources from which to enrich itself and fewer checks against which to restrain its inclinations, "It is in this vein that the neutralization process has taken place since the seventeenth century, a logical process that culminates in a general technologization."[34]

Such, "general technologization," is ultimately deficient in its ability to resource a genuine decision. Unlike previous epochs defined by theological, ethical, aesthetic, and economic domains that Schmitt addresses elsewhere, technology has no explicit horizon towards which it unfolds and against which it defines itself, "Consequently, no conclusions which usually can be drawn from the central domains of spiritual life can be derived from pure technology as nothing but technology – neither a concept of cultural progress, nor a type of *clerc* or spiritual leader, nor a specific political system."[35] Technology cannot be an end, in itself, as its very proffered universal accessibility prevents it from serving as a basis for true political distinction, yet its equal capacity for peace and war exacerbates conflict.

[33] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 42.
[34] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 42.
[35] Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," p. 92.

Nonetheless, even though, "Neither a political question nor a political answer can be derived from purely technical principles and perspectives,"[36] the technologization of the contemporary context gave rise to certain imperialistic metaphysics and politics, which culminate in a, "religion," and, "spirit," of, "technicity:"

> It is perhaps something gruesome, but not itself technical and mechanical. It is the belief in an activistic metaphysics – the belief in unlimited power and the domination of man over nature, even over human nature; the belief in the unlimited "receding of natural boundaries," in the unlimited possibilities for change and prosperity. Such a belief can be called fantastic and satanic, but not simply dead, spiritless, or mechanized soullessness.[37]

Schmitt's critique of legal and political theory therefore implicates substantive challenges not only to those disciplines, but to broader metaphysics within the Western philosophical tradition:

> But whether the extreme exception can be banished from the world is not a juristic question. Whether one has confidence and hope that it can be eliminated depends on philosophical, especially on philosophical-historical or metaphysical, convictions.[38]

We will return to Schmitt shortly in this chapter. The centrality of metaphysical, "convictions," in moving forward a discussion on the exception leads to this work's use of its second main interlocutor. Martin Heidegger's analysis of metaphysics vis-à-vis language and technology, especially in his later works mid- and post-*Kehre*, provides a philosophical foundation from which to conceptualize trauma. Prior to such creative engagement, it is necessary to address Heidegger's historical context, his own conceptualization of the same, and how both enrich a nuanced understanding of Schmitt's more explicitly political contributions.

To juxtapose Schmitt and Heidegger is admittedly to locate these men within their particular cultural-historical context: Weimar Germany, the rise of Nazism, and the horror and aftermath of the Second World War. Heidegger's relation to and interdependence upon his

[36] Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," p. 92.
[37] Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," p. 94.
[38] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 7.

contemporaries is remarked upon often enough; Pierre Bourdieu discusses such in his rather polemical critique of Heidegger:

> The discourse of academics like Werner Sombart, Edgar Salin, *Carl Schmitt*,[39] or Othmar Spann, or essay writers likes Moller van den Bruck, Oswald Spengler, Ernst Junger, or Ernst Niekisch, and the countless variants of 'conservative ideology' which the German professors produced every day in their lectures, offered Heidegger, as he did for them and as they did for each other, food for thought, but of a very specific kind, since (despite their different thought-patterns and modes of expression) they provided an objectification which echoed his own politico-moral moods.[40]

Julian Young nuances Bourdieu's perhaps reductionist treatment of Heidegger, noting that when:

> …Heidegger's style – is concerned, what needs to be said is that, though that style is indeed of a 'conservative revolutionary' type – it has strong affinities with the style of Junger and Schmitt, for example – Heidegger has a remarkable gift for transforming the meaning of words, for pouring novel wine into familiar bodies.[41]

While intimately tied to the prevailing discourse of his day, Heidegger's work is not reducible to his own political activities, nor should such be considered an extension of the explicit political exhortations of his contemporaries. It is sufficient to observe that Schmitt and Heidegger were both aware of the works of the other, and understood each to benefit his own respective project:

> Around the time they both joined the Nazi Party, Schmitt initiated contact with Heidegger by sending him a copy of *The Concept of the Political*. Heidegger responded warmly and indicated that he hoped Schmitt would assist him in "reconstituting the Law Faculty."[42]

Thus established as a contemporary to Schmitt, related both conceptually and historically, Heidegger's utility to our project is as a philosophical resource through which the philosophical foundations of Schmitt's political theories can be more thoroughly examined.

Such examination focuses on Heidegger's scholarship regarding two aforementioned loci: first, the relationship of language to Being; second, the crisis of nihilism that gives way to a

[39] Italics mine.
[40] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 15.
[41] Julian Young, *Heidegger, philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 83.
[42] Notes from foreword by Tracy Strong; Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. xii.

destructively technological world. The former will be addressed later in this work. For now, interested in the expressly political, we attend to the latter issue.

Like Schmitt, Heidegger finds that contemporary humanity has dispensed with the concept of miraculous divine intervention, whether in terms of theistic deity or simple wonder:

> The default of God means that no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself, visibly and unequivocally, and by such gatherings disposes the world's history and man's sojourn in it. The default of God forebodes something even grimmer, however. Not only have the gods and the god fled, but the divine radiance has become extinguished in the world's history. The time of the world's night is the destitute time, because it becomes ever more destitute. It has already grown so destitute, it can no longer discern the default of God as a default.[43]

Worse, in the absence of the gods, humanity not only loses access to the divine, but also forgets its terrible loss, "Then the destitute time is no longer able even to experience its own destitution. That inability, by which even the destitution of the destitute state is obscured, is the time's absolutely destitute character."[44] Humanity ceases to be aware of alternatives to its predicament.

Full treatment of Heidegger's *Seinsgeschichte* is beyond the scope of our present work. Relevant for us is Heidegger's claim that *Dasein*, Being as concretely realized by and in humanity's active existence within the world, has reached a watershed moment in this, "destitute time." Indeed, the origin of such destitution lay within the, "withdrawal," of the, "question/ing," of Being behind and beyond extrapolations of Plato's erroneously definitive, "answer/ing:"

> Heidegger locates the source of this misconception of Being in the thought of the Greeks and especially Plato. The forgetfulness of being that ends in nihilism is the result of Plato's redefinition of Being as eternal presence, or what stands in place unchangingly forever. This notion was so persuasive that it seemed to provide the definitive answer to the question of Being, and as a result the question itself was forgotten. In Heidegger's view, however, this Platonic answer is insufficient. The forgetfulness of the question of Being that it engendered, however, subsequently made it impossible even to recognize this insufficiency. The Platonic conception of Being thus became the guiding premise of

[43] Martin Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Harper Perennial, 2001), p. 89.
[44] Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" p. 91.

> the Western tradition. The ever-deepening error that this insufficient premise engenders culminates in nihilism.[45]

Tracking elsewhere in his history of the West's, "forgetfulness of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*), Heidegger develops how the metaphysical instincts of the classical Greeks and medieval theologians were sublimated into the modern theory of a secularized nation-state. Itself therefore a conveyer of Platonic value claims, even the state is put at risk by Nietzsche's death of God. Modernity thus confronts humanity with not only a metaphysical nihilism, but a nihilistic *crisis of the political* in terms of authority. At first consideration, the political crisis is one of purpose, in which any will towards anything except pleasure is discarded due to the lack of offsetting definitive standards. This, "gentle," nihilism rapidly collapses into a more, "brutal," sort, as hedonism organizes unto itself the means to perpetuate its own self-fulfilling ends:

> Concomitant with this "gentle" nihilism is a "brutal" nihilism that seeks to destroy all standards and to establish itself as the be-all and end-all of human activity. This is nihilism as the will to power that in the form of science and technology aims at the conquest of nature and in the form of a politics of power at the subjugation of mankind. In these two "practical" forms of nihilism, the most abstract and remote metaphysical doctrines come to have real and quite ominous moral, ethical, and political implications.[46]

For Heidegger, this, "brutal," nihilism lay bound up in what he considered the, "cybernetic," character of the contemporary technological world. The cybernetic becomes a posture towards existence that continues in the Platonic misapprehension of Being, through which Being is pursued via the mere ordering of beings, extrapolated to a world-historical scale:

> This science corresponds to the determination of man as an acting social being. For it is the theory of the steering of the possible planning and arrangement of human labor. Cybernetics transforms language into an exchange of news. The arts become regulated-regulating instruments of information.[47]

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[45] Michael Gillespie, "Martin Heidegger," in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 890.
[46] Gillespie, "Martin Heidegger," p. 889.
[47] Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *On Time and Being* (New York, Evanston, San Fransisco, London: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 58.

Schmitt observes that the progression of Western thought consistently attacks the concept of sovereignty by denying the possibility of an exception that would require personal (thereby genuine) decision. Heidegger goes further, claiming that the current trajectory of the West endangers not only the exception that provokes decision, but the very capacity of humanity to act decisively, at all. Even if exceptions could exist in an ever-technologizing world, within such confines humanity is losing the capacity to freely decide and thereby define the exception's terms. Instead, humanity's freedom has been subjugated to a relentless cybernetic will, problematizing its political context:

> But the fundamental characteristic of this scientific attitude is its cybernetic, that is, technological character. The need to ask about modern technology is presumably dying out to the same extent that technology more definitively characterizes and regulates the appearance of the totality of the world and the position of man in it.[48]

The momentum of technological innovation now locates humanity within its own self-justifying trajectory, becoming the definitive reference for all future human modalities of expression.

Note that science and technology are not understood to be universally destructive, nor should they be an insurmountable threat to humanity's political and social survival. Heidegger grants as much, noting that the aforementioned danger both arises from and extends the contemporary context. These otherwise ostensibly neutral tools attain catastrophic significance when deployed within parameters established by the West's foundational misapprehension of Being:

> The greatness and superiority of the natural sciences during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rests in the fact that all the scientists were philosophers. They understood that there are no mere facts, but that a fact is only what it is in the light of the fundamental conception, and always depends upon how far that conception reaches. The characteristic of positivism – which is where we have been for decades, today more than ever – by way of contrast is that it thinks it can manage sufficiently with facts, or other and new facts, while concepts are merely expedients that one somehow needs but should not get too involved with, since that would be philosophy. Furthermore, the comedy – or rather the

[48] Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," p. 58.

> tragedy – of the present situation is that one thinks to overcome positivism through positivism.[49]

As a mode of, "enframing" (*Gestell*), knowledge, it is in the nature of technology to perpetuate itself, creating evermore extensive categories within which to order content. Indeed, it is important to understand enframing as simply another mode of, "revealing," or, "unconcealment" (*aletheia*), accessible to humanity's pursuit of knowledge of Being. Heidegger's issue therefore is not solely in modernity's prioritization of technology as the preferred modality acquiring knowledge. Rather, "What is dangerous is not technology. Technology is not demonic, but its essence is mysterious. The essence of technology, as a destining of revealing, is the danger."[50] At the center of technology in the contemporary context is not just the tool itself, but an entire world-historical trajectory which culminates in the privileging of technology to the functional exclusion of all other modes of world-encounter.

"Destining," (*Geschick*) originates in and unfolds onward from a particular moment, itself simultaneously content, interpretive lens, and motive force:

> It is from this destining that the essence of all history [*Geschichte*] is determined. History is neither simply the object of a written chronicle nor merely the process of human activity. That activity first becomes history as something destined.[51]

The denial by the Greeks of the question/ing of Being, in favor of an answer/ing, provoked a trajectory for Western thought that Heidegger claims could only result in the crisis of nihilism, "And yet a *question*, *the question*: 'Is 'Being' a mere word and its meaning a vapor, or is it the

[49] Martin Heidegger, "Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Harper San Fransisco, 1993), p. 272.
[50] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Harper San Fransisco, 1993), p. 333.
[51] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 329.

spiritual fate of the West?'"[52] The initial discovery and concurrent rejection of Being defines the West, "That it occurred is the central and decisive fact of all Western history."[53]

Technology is therefore merely and damnably the mode through which the crisis of the West achieves both world-historical domination and its most dehumanizing accomplishments:

> The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potential lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already afflicted man in his essence. The rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth.
> Thus where enframing reigns, there is *danger* in the highest sense.[54]

Echoing influences of Ernst Junger's "Der Arbeiter"[55], Heidegger resonates with Schmitt as regarding how sovereign power, and thus the political, could ever be contemporarily ascertained:

> What threatens man in his very nature is the view that technological production puts the world in order, while in fact this ordering is precisely what levels every *ordo*, every rank, down to the uniformity of production, and thus from the outset destroys the realm from which any rank and recognition could arise.[56]

Such a perspective provides metaphysical grounds from which to question how a, "general technologization," of the contemporary context might impact the explicitly political, per Schmitt. Heidegger himself is blunt in his own application of the above to an analysis of geopolitics:

> This Europe, in its unholy blindness always on the point of cutting its own throat, lies today in the great pincers between Russia on the one side and America on the other. Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and the rootless organization of the average man. When the farthest corner of the globe has been conquered technologically and can be exploited economically; when any incident you like, in any place you like, at any time you like, becomes accessible as fast as you like; when you can simultaneously "experience" an assassination attempt against a king in France and a symphony concert in Tokyo; when time is nothing but speed, instantaneity, and simultaneity, and time as history has vanished from all Dasein of all peoples; when a boxer counts as the great man of a

[52] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 40.
[53] Gillespie, "Martin Heidegger," p. 900.
[54] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 333.
[55] Bourdieu helpfully traces the relationship between Heidegger's above concerns regarding technology and Junger's philosophical anthropology of the modern person as essentially worker, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, p. 32.
[56] Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" p. 114.

> people; when the tallies of millions at mass meetings are a triumph; then, yes then, there still looms like a specter over all this uproar the question: what for? – where to? – and what then?[57]

These questions challenge the breadth of existential categories. Like Schmitt, Heidegger frames the contemporary context within the constraints of modernity's denial of the exceptional. The contemporary context instead favors normative predictability. Such predictability enables control, presuming human agency extensive enough to master all possible phenomena. Per Heidegger, this agency is manifest in a cybernetic posture that enframes all encounters as merely matters for quantification within the remnants of sublimated Platonic hierarchies of Being. Even qualitative differences can presumably be accommodated through recourse to either substantive analogy or logical extrapolation from established categories.

This conceptual framework allows for neither the possibility of the truly novel, nor the truly unique. Absent exceptions and miracles, Schmitt notes, "Then the question evidently arises of how that which is continually new could emerge within such a legal framework."[58] Resonating with his jurist contemporary, Heidegger aims through his metaphysics to confront a context that is inherently imperialistic, one which advances a crushingly universal egalitarianism:

> The end of modern subjectivity and freedom in this sense is a universal homelessness and alienation under the hegemony of an ideological totalitarianism that aims at the universal mastery and exploitation of both man and nature. Under such conditions, *homo sapiens* is reduced to *homo brutalitas*.[59]

This debasing outcome is precisely why the, "philosophical-historical," and, "metaphysical," matter so profoundly to an otherwise ostensibly political project. Both Schmitt and Heidegger insist that any substantive political analysis requires attention to the philosophical foundations of our contemporary context. Any substantive and sustainable change to the political situation must

[57] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 40.
[58] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 120.
[59] Gillespie, "Martin Heidegger," p. 898.

ground itself in such analytic work. Further, Schmitt and Heidegger understand their own works both in light of, and to themselves be, such radical activity, "We are thinking of the possibility that the world civilization which is just now beginning might one day overcome the technological-scientific-industrial character as the sole criterion of man's world sojourn."[60]

With main interlocutors and contemporary context framed, we now return to the term, "trauma." The next section engages how the term developed in previous scholarship. This clears the way forward for the final section of this chapter, in which we argue that conceptual space exists for a distinctly philosophical category of trauma, as well as how such a category is grounded in the political.

[60] Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," p. 60.

Section 1.2: Establishing the Term

It might be helpful to first justify the endeavor itself: why trauma? Any such justification seems to require attention to at least two questions. The first, in terms of discipline: why are the multifaceted dimensions of trauma a matter for *philosophical analysis*, rather than just another (albeit complex) variable in the execution of *psychological praxis*, *literary criticism*, or *theological reflection*? As follows, the study of trauma originates in these disciplines and its bibliography within them is well documented. If philosophy is a distinct discipline unto itself, any philosophical analysis of trauma should presumably provide an examination of traumatic phenomena not adequately duplicated within other disciplines, if at all.

The second, in terms of field: how is any of this inherently, even tangentially, *political*, except in the most general of ways? A generous reader might grant that trauma provokes profound metaphysical and epistemological concerns, even before encountering our own arguments. However, such is not enough to establish trauma as a philosophical category, because a category necessarily exists within matrices of definitional interrelationships. A robust category does not only *mean things*; it means *this* or *that kind of thing*, referenced *over against* other such delineations of kind. Even if trauma is shown to be due for philosophical analysis, the new category must be located within the vast constellation of philosophical loci to be of future use.

Our task in this section is to lay the groundwork for a specifically philosophical kind of political analysis to be brought to bear upon trauma, one made both necessary and possible by the contemporary context as previously outlined. In order to do so, the term must first be established in a manner that honors its own conceptual integrity. Scholarly discourse on trauma already exists; philosophical conversation grows outward from this preceding point of departure.

From *whence* trauma, or at least talk of the same? If considered as a general concept, trauma certainly has deep roots within what is often collectively referred to as the humanities. When taken at this surface level, trauma shares conceptual space alongside alienation, anxiety, and the vocabulary of theodicy within the nomenclature of human suffering. However, it is a contemporary move to understand trauma not only as a synonym for tragedy, nor as just a term connoting grievous harm, but rather as a word to denote a peculiar set of distinct phenomena. Traumatic phenomena cause, arise from, and are left in the aftermath of catastrophically transformative injury to the physical and social bodies of individuals and communities. The term can thus facilitate discussion on multiple levels at once, drawing attention to both trauma's content (via the traumatic injury) and context (via the traumatized survivor). Such strange multivalence led to the study of trauma benefiting from a variety of disciplines since its inception in the modern age. As a foundation for our philosophical work on trauma, this section will briefly track how psychology, literary criticism, and theology each contributed to development of the topic, as well as its current interdisciplinary discourse.

The economic, political, and social conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries played out across conceptual and physical terrain of ever-increasing complexity. During this period, a particular kind of injury was identified, one which operated on individuated and corporate bodies simultaneously, transforming both in radical ways. Manifestations of such injuries could not be adequately addressed as simple mutations of known maladies, necessitating the creation of entirely new theoretical and practical tools with which to diagnosis and treat such afflictions. "Trauma," begins to take on its own lexical meaning during this time, with its earliest use appearing in the development of psychology.

The use of trauma to denote a specific set of phenomena, rather than a term used to convey an intensification of other factors, can find antecedents in 19th century psychological work on what was then dubbed hysteria. Mental health was not yet necessarily considered a matter for scientific exploration, nor was insanity conceived of as an infliction that could confound human agency or religious intervention. As noted by Judith Herman, herself a pivotal figure in the growth of trauma studies, Jean-Martin Charcot and his work at the Salpetriere can be identified as a point of origin in a genealogy on this topic. Charcot's influence, and professional interest in this topic, can be seen in the Salpetriere's reception of visiting dignitaries and guests, which included William James and Sigmund Freud:

> Charcot was credited for great courage in venturing to study hysteria at all; his prestige gave credibility to a field that had been considered beyond the pale of serious scientific investigation… On Charcot's death, Freud eulogized him as a liberating patron of the afflicted: "No credence was given to the hysteric about anything. The first thing that Charcot's work did was to restore its dignity to the topic. Little by little, people gave up the scornful smile with which the patient could at that time feel certain of being met. She was no longer necessarily a malingerer, for Charcot had thrown the whole weight of his authority on the side of the genuineness and objectivity of hysterical phenomena."[61]

At times both collaboratively and independently, Freud and his contemporaries developed a prototypical theory of trauma within the parameters of their burgeoning discipline. From the start, the peculiarity of trauma as injurious event is observed, "Unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events produced an altered state of consciousness, which in turn induced hysterical symptoms. Janet called this alteration of consciousness 'dissociation.' Breuer and Freud called it 'double consciousness.'"[62] Herman, in her own groundbreaking work, Trauma and Recovery, notes the importance of this early research in framing the topic for future consideration:

> Both Janet and Freud recognized that the somatic symptoms of hysteria represented disguised representations of intensely distressing events which had been banished from

[61] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence- From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (BasicBooks, 1992), p. 10.
[62] Herman, p. 12.

> memory. Janet described his hysterical patients as governed by "subconscious fixed ideas," the memories of traumatic events. Breuer and Freud, in an immortal summation, wrote that, "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences."[63]

The interplay between past events, present afflictions, and future possibilities also was and remains observed beyond the Freudian schools. Carl Jung noticed the same dynamics:

> For Jung, affect is the *central organizing principle of psychic life* because it links together otherwise discrepant components of the mind (sensations, ideas, memories, judgments) by lending them each a common "feeling-tone." If a life experience (such as an early trauma) is accompanied by a strong affect, all the associated perceptual and mental elements of that experience will accumulate around this affect, thereby forming a *feeling-tone complex*. Feeling-tone complexes are the basic functional units of the psyche and, because human affects are universal, these complexes tend, in their most regressed form, to take on certain "archaic," "typical" – hence "archetypal" – forms.[64]

Jung further described a kind of complex tied to both individual and communal forces. He ties these observations to his overarching theory of the collective unconscious. For our purposes, what is noteworthy is how Jung discusses the interrelation of individual and corporate injury:

> So far as I can judge, these experiences occur either when something so devastating happens to the individual that his whole previous attitude to life breaks down, or when for some reason the contents of the collective unconscious accumulate so much energy that they start influencing the conscious mind. In my view this happens when the life of a large social group or of a nation undergoes a profound change of a political, social, or religious nature. Such a change always involves an alteration of the psychological attitude.[65]

Early psychologists documented a range of symptomatic expressions that would eventually inform contemporary criteria for diagnosis of posttraumatic disorder. However, it was not until the World Wars that trauma received categorical significance. As noted below, prior to the observation of traumatic responses among soldiers and veterans, discourse on trauma remained predominantly framed in terms of hysteria and thus often dismissed due to entrenched

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[63] Herman, p. 12.
[64] Donald Kalsched, *The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 88.
[65] Carl Jung, "The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits," in *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 8: Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 314.

gender bias. The World Wars denied the possibility of further dismissal, as the rampant proliferation of, "shell shock," necessitated immediate and systematic response:

> Gradually military psychiatrists were forced to acknowledge that the symptoms of shell shock were due to psychological trauma. The emotional stress of a prolonged exposure to violent death was sufficient to produce a neurotic syndrome resembling hysteria in men.[66]

Unfortunately, like previous diagnoses of hysteria, the psychological dimensions of trauma were obscured by an interpretation of such phenomena along explicitly moral and religious lines, "Medical writers of the period described these patients as 'moral invalids.'"[67] Another characteristic for a contemporary understanding of trauma is revealed in this history of ideas: the alienation of the traumatized and their displacement within the established order. Such incompatibility rises beyond mutual exclusivity towards outright antagonism against the traumatized by normative society. We will return to this concept; for now, it is enough to observe its presence early on in the psychological literature. Abram Kardiner, author of the watershed The Traumatic Neuroses of War, chronicled such antagonism towards his patients while writing in the midst of the Second World War:

> Kardiner went on to develop the clinical outlines of the traumatic syndrome as it is understood today. His theoretical formulation strongly resembled Janet's late nineteenth-century formulations of hysteria. Indeed, Kardiner recognized that war neuroses represented a form of hysteria, but he also realized that the term had once again become so pejorative that its very use discredited patients: "When the word 'hysterical'… is used, its social meaning is that the subject is a predatory individual, trying to get something for nothing. The victim of such a neurosis is, therefore, without sympathy in court, and… without sympathy from his physicians, who often take… 'hysterical' to mean that the individual is suffering from some persistent form of wickedness, perversity, or weakness of will."[68]

Despite Kardiner's crucial and informative groundwork, little was done immediately after the World Wars to continue systematic research on trauma. Treatment for trauma had been seen

[66] Herman, p. 20.
[67] Herman, p. 21.
[68] Herman, p. 24.

purely as a practical matter undertaken for combat expediency, in order to sustain the operational fighting force. Once the Second World War ended, "Systematic, large-scale investigation of the long-term psychological effects of combat was not undertaken until after the Vietnam War."[69]

During and after the Vietnam War period, trauma research received renew attention and sustained institutional support. Data was now available for systematic collection, not only through official government channels, but directly from veterans' organizations eager for help. Such organizations actively involved themselves in the creation of case studies and documentary histories vital to the establishment of posttraumatic stress disorder as a formal mental health diagnosis.[70] That first came to pass in 1980; the argument for traumatic disorders as *bona fide* medical conditions continues today:

> The concept of PTSD was first described in 1980 in the 3rd edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-III). This was revised in 1987 and again in DSM-IV which was published in 1994 (7). In 1992, the World Health Organization included the concept of PTSD in ICD-10, the tenth revision of the International Classification of Disease system (350).[71]

The pernicious difficulty in getting trauma accepted as a psychiatric and psychological medical condition, both in general and in particular when on behalf of specific patients, can further be seen in the troubled growth of the diagnosis to demographics beyond veterans. Herman's work brought attention to the traumatic aftermath of violence against women, noting how Freud and others had abandoned the entire subject. Despite early and substantial investigations into hysteria, Freud dismissed his own findings when the realities of traumatic violence problematized normative structures:

> Perhaps the sweeping character of Freud's recantation is understandable, given the extremity of the challenge he faced. To hold fast to his theory would have been to

[69] Herman, p. 26.
[70] See Herman's discussion throughout Chapter 1 of *Trauma and Recovery*, especially p. 26-28.
[71] Peter E. Hodgkinson and Michael Stewart, *Coping with Catastrophe: A Handbook of Post-Disaster Psychosocial Aftercare* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 11.

> recognize the depths of sexual oppression of women and children. The only potential source of intellectual validation and support for this position was the nascent feminist movement, which threatened Freud's cherished patriarchal values. To ally himself with such a movement was unthinkable for a man of Freud's political beliefs and professional ambitions. Protesting too much, he disassociated himself at once from the study of psychological trauma and from women.[72]

This abjection of trauma features prominently in our next chapter. It is significant now to observe that the creation of trauma is possible through human agency manifest in violent acts upon another. Humans can and do create trauma. Such violence injures both individual and corporate bodies, in ways that defy easy acknowledgement by, let alone acceptance within, the ordered systems once considered their home. The systematic resistance to *articulating* the trauma allows both violence to continue and wounds to fester. Herman claims it is this characteristic of trauma, its quality that renders it inarticulate, that functionally institutionalizes violence against women, enabling what she calls a, "war between the sexes:"

> The implications of this insight are as horrifying in the present as they were a century ago: the subordinate condition of women is maintained and enforced by the hidden violence of men. There is a war between the sexes. Rape victims, battered women, and sexually abused children are its casualties. Hysteria is the combat neurosis of the sex war.[73]

The content of Herman's work is noteworthy in itself. However, her juxtaposition of combat and domestic violence also advanced a new methodological possibility stemming from the DSM-III's definition of posttraumatic stress disorder. Trauma could be understood as arising from human encounters with violence of any truly catastrophic kind. This moved discussion of trauma beyond its original battlefield context. Trauma was now defined not by its originating context, nor any quantitative measure, but through an experience of a qualitative kind:

> **A.** The person has experienced an event that is <u>outside the range of usual human experience</u> and that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone, e.g., serious threat to one's life or physical integrity; serious threat or harm to one's children,

[72] Herman, p. 19.
[73] Herman, p. 32.

> spouse, or other close relatives and friends; sudden destruction of one's home or community; or seeing another person who has recently been, or is being, seriously injured or killed as the result of an accident or physical violence.[74]

This requirement is intensely problematic. Classicist and psychiatrist Jonathan Shay notes, "Criterion A is not at all as straightforward as the others. The linchpin of this diagnostic standard is its implicit claim to ethically and culturally neutral knowledge of '*usual* experience.'"[7576] This component of the diagnostic criteria has both impeded and supported the acknowledgement of traumatic violence. In it reverberates the kind of normalizing motive force addressed by our engagement with Schmitt and Heidegger in the previous section. The norm seeks to define the permissibility of its exception. Shay addresses how this risks abjecting those persons traumatized while operating on behalf of normative society, "'Outside the range of usual human experience' pretends that the 'usual' deployments of social power have nothing to do with events that cause psychological injury."[77] This abjection of institutionalized trauma by and through social norms, which nonetheless benefit from the traumatizing acts, will be a critical component of our arguments later in this work.

For now, through Herman's methodological move, it is helpful to note that the above criterion can be read in a way that broadens the conversation's scope. Lenore Terr's work on childhood trauma expanded the discourse by considering what, "usual," meant in reference to children, beginning analysis with their experiences, rather than defining a child first through recourse to the child's potential for categories of adulthood, familial ties, or sexuality:

> It was becoming clear that horrible life experiences could scar the minds of children. Many youngsters were living for years with unrecognized traumatic effects. One could not pick up a newspaper without finding a new day-care center expose, a child-witnessed

[74] Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: Scribner, 1994), p. 166.
[75] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 167.
[76] Emphasis his.
[77] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 168.

> shoot-out, or a kidnapping. I began to wonder if a generalized epidemic of psychic trauma was rampant in the world of kids.[78]

Terr also helpfully draws attention to another aspect of trauma. The complex interrelation of event, experience, and injury inherent in trauma creates a wide zone of harm for humanity. Those very features also render traumatic phenomena extraordinarily relevant to interdisciplinary exchange. While psychology first explicitly engaged and thereby coined the term, understanding trauma seems to require conceptual and methodological tools beyond psychology's scope as a formally constituted discipline. Terr claims to have needed to supplement her psychological analysis with an almost anthropological study of cultural artifacts, which included folklore, literature, and various modes of artistic and performative expression:

> My curiosity about psychic trauma in children, thus, started out as a study of the kidnapped kids of Chowchilla, but as time went on it broadened to other victims, like Charlotte Brent and Alan Bascombe, to their families, and their contacts – and then, to literature, folklore, and film. A traumatic event, because it remains so well-impressed in the child victim's mind, may appear later in all sorts of guises – both symptomatic and creative. If one knows the general effects of childhood psychic trauma, one is able to find these effects where they are least expected – in the normal nursery school, on the neighborhood playground, in the bookshelf, and at the Saturday afternoon matinee.[79]

Terr was not alone in this move, as trauma studies gradually transitioned into an interdisciplinary endeavor after the Vietnam War. The inclusion of traumatic disorders as explicit diagnoses within the DSM-III in 1980 created a new locus around which to reconceive violent phenomena. "Trauma," (or at least talk about trauma) became a, "thing," something that could now have the potential for conceptual integrity apart from other afflictions, mental illnesses, or categories of suffering. Trauma was now something *qualitatively* distinct.

Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, the study of trauma developed its own center of gravity, pulling upon other disciplines to contribute to its own ongoing conversations.

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[78] Lenore Terr, *Too Scared to Cry: Psychic Trauma in Childhood* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), p. 25.
[79] Terr, p. 25.

The extensive reach of traumatic violence and its aftereffects required analytical frameworks beyond what psychological categories alone could provide. Further, the systemic questions of institutionalized violence implicated by trauma suggested a need to facilitate new modalities for human socialization. All but the most liberal understandings of psychological inquiry found these new tasks beyond the purview of the originating discipline. On this shift in the development of trauma studies, theologian Shelly Rambo provides clarity:

> One of the critical aspects of this history is that the study of trauma moved off the psychoanalytic couch, so to speak, and beyond strictly clinical fields to fields like literature, history, politics, and religion. The study of trauma was no longer the exclusive domain of therapists, psychoanalysts, and workers in the social science or medical fields. Analysis of trauma began to move into multiple disciplines, as each attempted to understand the nature and impact of violence in its social, historical, and political dimensions.[80]

The study of trauma's destruction was no longer primarily reducible to the damage done to behavioral and mental processes. Such survivors existed within social systems implicated by the trauma itself. The concern becomes not merely a matter of the traumatized harming society. Somehow, society is discovered to be a source, or at least an intensifier, of the ongoing violation experienced by the traumatized, "Not only a single entity experiences a violent event; instead, communities, institutions, and nations experience violent events and manifest symptoms of an overwhelming experience."[81] Yet, even when conceived in (or perhaps due to) this social framework, trauma remains evasive:

> Rare is the phenomenon that is a legitimate object of study not only to the traditional branches of the university (the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities) but to medicine and law as well. Trauma, it would seem, has something of a privileged and paradoxical relationship to interdisciplinary studies. Cutting-edge trauma research is being pursued in numerous fields across the university (including psychology, psychiatry, sociology, public health, history, and literature), yet none of these disciplines alone can

[80] Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), p. 26.
[81] Rambo, p. 27.

> explain or contain the phenomenon of trauma. The very notion of trauma defies simple definition and escapes the confines of known categories.[82]

As its complexity compelled greater and more diverse scholastic attention, several features of trauma took on renewed significance during this disciplinary expansion.

Vital to our project, the linguistic character of trauma came to the forefront through the scholarship of literary criticism. The discipline's significant contributions to and interest in the study of trauma might initially be met with some mild degree of skepticism, "It might come as something of a surprise to learn that some of the most influential and far-reaching new insights about trauma have come from a field that might appear to be far removed from it: literature and literary theory."[83] Nonetheless, the study of trauma rapidly advanced through its encounter with literary criticism, especially after the Cold War and towards the end of the 20th century. What were previously framed as disjointed recollections that invaded consciousness, sense memories of violations not adequately processed in ways conducive to behavioral and mental health, were now conceived of as damages to the essential continuity of a living narrative, as both individually and socially construed:

> Clinicians have long noted that traumatized individuals have difficulty recalling traumatic events in coherent ways; their accounts of trauma tend to be fragmented and chaotic. Literary approaches to trauma further theorize that trauma exists in the space between experiences, that trauma is defined by the hole in what the individual remembers.[84]

The turn to considering narrative facilitated exploration of how trauma moves beyond the individual. The destruction of trauma might originally manifest in the specific scars born by concrete persons, but its zone of harm both implicates a preceding chain of events and endangers the surrounding environment moving forward. Through its disruptions of history, memory, and

[82] Elissa Marder, "Trauma and Literary Studies: Some Enabling Questions," *Across Academe*, no. 5 (2005): p. 9.
[83] Marder: p. 9.
[84] Robyn Fivush and Beth Seelig, "Interdisciplinary Responses to Trauma: Memory, Meaning, and Narrative," *Across Academe*, no. 5 (2005): p. 5.

narrative, Cathy Caruth notes that traumatic injury gravely wounds the temporal experience of the traumatized, thereby problematizing otherwise presumably universal epistemological categories:

> At the heart of this volume is the encounter with a peculiar kind of historical phenomenon – what has come to be called "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD) – in which the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them. This singular *possession of the past*…extends beyond the bounds of a marginal pathology and has become a central characteristic of the survivor experience of our time.[85]

This observation is critical to our work. If time is the definitive shared experience, then the fracturing of its apparent unity challenges well-established presumptions regarding causality, linearity, and normative law. If categories of past, present, and future are at least somehow socially experienced (if not socially constructed), trauma's violent flashbacks and recurrences signify a rupture and systemic vulnerability that transcends mental or public health:

> By showing that the onset of traumatic pathology ("PTSD" or "post-traumatic stress disorder") cannot be fully determined by or located in a given traumatic event, Caruth proposes that trauma compels us to imagine that traumatic events do not simply occur in time. Rather, they fracture the very experience of time for the person to whom they "happen."[86]

Here is the possibility that trauma is an experience dislodged from time or space as previously understood. The Freudian discourse on whether experiences are, "inside," or, "outside," the psyche is translated in a way that opens up a damnably vaster conversation, "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time."[87] Trauma becomes known to humanity precisely as the phenomenon, or set of phenomena, that *lacks any ground*.

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[85] Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 151.
[86] Marder: p. 10.
[87] Caruth, p. 9.

Among literary criticism's contributions to trauma studies is therefore found its development of trauma's essential *absence*, a void that is both a motive force *over against* which the traumatized contend and a loss *from* which arises further violent dispossession:

> A traumatic event is, therefore, a strange sort of an event because once it is understood as a belated consequence of a "missed encounter," trauma itself must be understood in terms of "absence" – the absence of something that failed to become located in time or place – rather than as a "positive" presence. This absence at the heart of the traumatic event lends it its constitutive ghostly quality. And because of this absence, people who have suffered traumatic experience can become so "possessed" by them that they frequently describe themselves as living "ghosts."[88]

This attention to the absence of trauma manifested in a shift from psychological inquiry into the survivor's experience, towards narrative consideration of just what the survivor might have lost, "Different fields of study began to assess what it means not to have straightforward and simple access to past events."[89] The move also opened up opportunities to consider the transgenerational nature of trauma. Attention turned to how trauma spreads not only across geographic areas, but across lifetimes. Psychological praxis benefited from literary criticism's reconceptualization of trauma, while the latter discipline's orientation enabled discovery of new resources upon which to apply its critical scrutiny. Often, both approaches were deployed simultaneously:

> I began to think about very old traumas, the historical ones – the plagues, sieges, and such. Did the classics, myths, and the old childhood games carry along with them traces of these old traumas? As I searched Poe, Virginia Wolf, Ingmar Bergman, and others, I began to find some traces of childhood ordeals in their works. I began to see that old disasters could lead to long-standing superstitions. To ghosts. To fortune telling and omens. To horror books and movies. Childhood traumas seemed not to die – nor did they fade "away."[90]

As we will explore more thoroughly later in this work, the absence at the center of trauma defied propositional expression. This creates an immediate stumbling block for scholarly inquiry: how

[88] Marder: p. 11.
[89] Rambo, p. 27.
[90] Terr, p. 25.

might one seriously encounter what is to be considered trauma's radical absence, if one's professional task is to speak into that very emptiness? More poetically, further interdisciplinary examination of trauma struggled with how one addresses absence, "If an event is, in some way, missed in its actual occurrence, accessing that event is going to be a significant challenge."[91] This difficulty lay in, "the nature of trauma that both demands and resists discursive construction."[92] Significantly, the shift in focus towards trauma's loss therefore also required a shift in the identity of the scholar towards scholarship, "Rhetoric began to shift from one of comprehension and understanding to one of witnessing and testifying; this shift takes into account a more complex relationship to violent events."[93] The rise of interdisciplinary efforts regarding trauma cast and recast this critical problem from a variety of methodological perspectives, "Scholars rallied to address the question: how can we speak, write, communicate, and teach given the profound shattering of language and meaning in trauma?"[94]

Testimony became a critical category in this broader interdisciplinary approach to trauma studies. We will deal at length with testimony later in our work. For now, it is important to emphasize how testimony become a defining element for the contemporary study of trauma. Conceptualizing material provided through encounter with the traumatized as testimony attempts to respect the validity of traumatized utterances, while acknowledging trauma's profound resistance to historical, literary, or even logical categorization. With its lack of ground in space and time, trauma literally *makes* no *sense*:

> The history that a flashback tells – as psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and neurobiology equally suggest – is, therefore, a history that literally *has no place*, neither in the past, in

[91] Rambo, p. 27.
[92] Peter N. Goggin and Maureen Daly Goggin, "Presence in Absence: Discourses and Teaching (In, On, and About) Trauma," in *Trauma and the Teaching of Writing*, ed. Shane Borrowman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 30.
[93] Rambo, p. 27.
[94] Rambo, p. 28.

> which it was not fully experienced, nor in the present, in which its precise images and enactments are not fully understood. In its repeated imposition as both image and amnesia, the trauma thus seems to evoke the difficult truth of a history that is constituted by the incomprehensibility of its occurrence.[95]

The senselessness of trauma, or what we will call trauma's *nonsense*,[96] is a critical component of this work. It is mentioned here because of its role in enriching the already sizable body of work relating trauma to language. Psychology and literary criticism had established the linguistic character of trauma, casting its intrinsic absences as a deafening silence. With the interdisciplinary study of trauma came increased attention to the relationship of language to traumatic experience, both in terms of its disruption within the traumatized and its risks for further harm when treating the same. Regarding the former:

> For the survivor of trauma, then, the truth of the event may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension. The flashback or traumatic reenactment conveys, that is, both *the truth of an event*, and *the truth of its incomprehensibility*.[97]

While something ostensibly, "true," might be present in the catastrophic transformation of the traumatized, in the sense of a vital relevance as to the traumatized's experience of humanity (and, perhaps, relevance for humanity itself), it is in the nature of trauma to render such communication inarticulate, nonsensical, and therefore mute. The horror of trauma, however, is not only in the awareness of an incomprehensible and inexpressible truth; it also lay in the inescapable and perpetual confrontation of the traumatized with such an unattainable prize.

Testimony becomes relevant here as a consequence of this horror. Even if unattainable, any potential significance (or realization of lack thereof) to be found in the traumatic event

[95] Caruth, p. 153.
[96] It is important to point out from the onset that neither Heidegger nor Schmitt routinely engage this concept, at least not through this specific word. Both discuss how comprehension is made possible via language and social structures, but discussion of sense and nonsense is a contribution we bring to this discourse, unless otherwise noted.
[97] Caruth, p. 153.

properly arises first from the traumatized themselves. "Belongs to," is too simplistic or vulgar a phrase to accurately express our intent here, but it does convey something of the sentiment. If language is to be extended externally into the absence of trauma, an absence concretely manifest in the traumatized person, such *outside* extension also necessarily extends *into* the very person of the traumatized him- or herself. Done without permission, such results in yet another violation. This is the dilemma of talking about trauma: language can neither dependably extend outward from within trauma, nor can it safely connect from beyond:

> The danger of speech, of integration into the narration of memory, may lie not in what it cannot understand, but in that it understands too much. Speech seems to offer only, as Kevin Newmark says, the attempt "to move away from the experience of shock by reintegrating it into a stable understanding of it."[98]

Resonances with Schmitt and Heidegger are clear in this claim: the rush to speech is a push towards overthrowing the calamitous alternatives evidenced by trauma's exception, in favor of restoring normative (and, thus, normalizing) structures. Speech serves as a technology which is put to work correcting the impossibility of an incomprehensible event. This trajectory of thought is developed at length later in our work, as its repercussions are central to our overarching analysis of trauma's philosophical significance.

For now, this horrific problem provides a way forward for discussing testimony, "The impossibility of a comprehensible story, however, does not necessarily mean the denial of a transmissible truth."[99] Given concerns for temporal structure and spatial place, narrative might have limits, but it is not the sole modality of human disclosure and self-disclosure. The silence inherent to trauma, made manifest in the traumatized, seems to forcefully necessitate expression:

> Although distinctions can be drawn in the abstract among national, natural, and personal traumas, these all converge in significant ways on an epistemic level. The process of

[98] Caruth, p. 154.
[99] Caruth, p. 154.

> learning, knowing, coming to grips with, and attempting to comprehend trauma of any kind requires encountering individual discursive constructions of the trauma.[100]

We stridently disagree with Goggin's characterization of such constructions as, "discursive." In fact, we argue that trauma's essential nonsense destroys language, with language understood as a technical term for discursive communication. We will later argue that the kinds of constructs Goggin intends are therefore available only through recourse to non-discursive resources (namely, myth), expressed in the mythic mode through an aesthetic turn. However, Goggin's larger point is well made: while trauma's greatest harm might be in its deafening and dehumanizing silence, any healing seems to require a response to and within the same.

Testimony becomes the mode of such a healing response. Shoshana Felman's Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History provides a classic example of the interdisciplinary turn to testimony, and remains relevant in contemporary discourse on trauma:

> But the most urgent and essential claim of *Testimony* is to show that even though we do not "recover" from our traumatic past – nor can we "cure" it, "overcome" it, or even fully understand it – we can and we must *listen* to it and *survive* it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors.[101]

Talk of testimony necessarily implicates the need for a, "witness," who testifies. The notion of witness further transformed the study of trauma, given the term's plethora of applications. "*Witnessing* trauma," "to be a witness *of* trauma," and, "to be a witness *to* trauma," all intend subtly different things. All *attest*, however; "*to attest*," is what a witness does.

There is a personal element to the witness's disclosure. The attestation of the witness is not necessarily intended as proposition, nor as component within an argument (though it certainly can be used by various parties to support another's argument). The attestation of the witness simply, "is," with its entire potential and purpose found simply in being *heard*. From this

[100] Goggin, p. 31.
[101] Marder: p. 13.

perspective, it is sometimes enough to proverbially be, "on the record," in a nod to the legal and religious homes of the sentiment. Indeed, the concept of witness is organic to a variety of fields, but perhaps none more so than law and theology. Our examination of the witness in terms of law and trauma occurs later in this work. As we move to conclude this section, we now turn instead to theology's contributions to current and ongoing scholarship on the topic of trauma.

Recent 21st century theological discourse explicitly on trauma most often grows out of the interdisciplinary discussions advanced by literary criticism, as addressed above. Preliminary trajectories are nonetheless established for such works' horizons of theological possibility by earlier theologians such as Leonardo Boff, who conserve a historical orthodox commitment, "The starting-point is the conviction that has guided all debates on the Trinity: that the fact that the eternal God is three- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- has to be presented in the most real way possible."[102] "The most real way possible," whatever such might mean, must take into account humanity's experiences with real pain, not via abstraction, but through the variety of concrete forms in which humanity, individually and collectively, is challenged throughout embodied life:

> Although theology is by its nature an abstract and conceptual exercise, we cannot allow ourselves to forget that the reality of evil is not present in ideas, but is borne by the fragile bodies of utterly unique persons existing in concrete situations of ambiguity, pain, and betrayal.[103]

In some ways, theology has always dealt with trauma. At the very least, both post-Holocaust theology and black theology speak from and to trauma as manifest within their respective horrific points of origin. The influence of Holocaust survivors such as Elie Wiesel upon current theological reflection is noteworthy, especially in how his deployment of the term witness renewed its relationship to world-historical claims, "Through this term he articulated a

[102] Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1988), p. 123.
[103] Wendy Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), p. 52.

relationship to radical suffering – a relationship to events that fall outside the sphere of what is ethically imaginable."[104] Similarly, James Cone and his contemporaries transformed the political and social implications of witness, grounding their broader arguments in the claim that entire peoples can bear witness to a traumatic event in ways profoundly relevant to theology. Such a witnessing might ultimately reveal otherwise inaccessible absolutes, which redefine theodicy and the sources available for theological reflection:

> In contrast to the spectator approach of the Western theological tradition, the black religious perspective on suffering was created in the context of the human struggle against slavery and segregation. Whether we speak of the spirituals or the blues, the prayers and sermons of black preachers or the folkloric tales of Br'er Rabbit and High John the Conqueror, black reflections about suffering have not been removed from life but *involved* in life, that is, the struggle to affirm humanity despite the dehumanizing conditions of slavery and segregation.[105]

Neither post-Holocaust theology, nor black theology, explicitly or implicitly engage trauma as it denotes a particular set of phenomena which destroy language, upend time, etc. Our work must remain focused on these phenomena alone. We mention post-Holocaust theology and black theology simply to acknowledge that while specific identification of trauma *qua* trauma is a modern development, theology has been maneuvering within its related phenomena long before Charcot's work at the Salpetriere. Likewise, at least tangentially, the relationship of theology to the institutional church means that theology has had to relate itself to liturgical practice, religious ritual, and pastoral care; all of which often are deeply involved in care of the traumatized. As such, theology is one of the humanities wherein trauma's deep resonances with other expressions of suffering problematizes tracking its conceptual history within the discipline.

Explicit theological reflection on trauma is thus more helpful for our purposes. Particularly since the turn of the 21st century, trauma has received intensive theological scrutiny.

[104] Rambo, p. 23.
[105] James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), p. 169.

The religious overtones of terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001, along with the subsequent American war on terror, created the impetus for new theological investigations into traumatic violence and its aftermath. While previous theological work on trauma had primarily dealt with domestic violence, the new works referenced and addressed a variety of traumatized contexts. Methodologically, these works often employed the trauma theory developed by literary criticism (complete with its inherent Freudian remnants), while also drawing from either liberation theology, a deconstructionist approach, or both.

Interestingly, the growth of theological reflection on trauma occurred concurrent with the discipline's renewed attention to disability studies. Relevant to the study of trauma, the latter's reconciliation of embodied testimony to historic doctrinal affirmations of faith finds expression in Nancy Eiesland's The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability. Her connection of liberation theology to the embodied particularity of the disabled occurs because of and through her insistence on resymbolization. Resymbolization is necessary in order to best describe, let alone express, the actualities and variety of human experience revealed by, in, and through disability, "The disabled God provides a new way of identifying with the physical reality of Jesus... The disabled God embodies the ability to see clearly the complexity and the 'mixed blessing' of life and bodies, without living in despair."[106] The end of theology is the transformation of society into a more representative whole, one necessarily more inclusive of disabled peoples. The Trinity is known via the disabled God's traumatic experience at the Cross.

Resymbolization is a feature of many theological works regarding trauma, though Eiesland's particular term is rarely used. Serene Jones describes a, "healing imagination:"

> I began to think about theologically engaging the traumatized mind as a challenge of *healing imagination*. By "imagination" I do not mean to imply any complicated

[106] Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Towards a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 102.

> abstraction of experience; I use the word to refer to the fact that as human beings we constantly engage the world through organizing stories or habits of mind, which structure our thoughts. Our imagination simply refers to the thought stories that we live with and through which we interpret the world surrounding us. Imagination is an old category and raises interesting questions for us about the relationship between trauma and grace.[107]

Dirk Lange notes that such reimagining can move beyond theological reflection into liturgical practice, in ways that enable trauma to radically challenge foundational components of identity. For instance, when considering the Christ event as traumatic, "The cross is understood as originary violence/sacrifice that demands, in turn, 'sacrifice on our parts. It is as if the 'sacred' required some form of violence."[108] Rambo's work is particularly insightful:

> Theology hears itself differently in the language of trauma; in turn, trauma theory hears itself differently in the language of theology. This witness from within a discourse is made possible through another, but this meeting point is the site of trauma. At the site of trauma (with its epistemological ruptures, etc.), discourses are pressed to their limits and become something new in this encounter. The language of trauma turns theology to its own language and texts, illuminating aspects that would not otherwise be noted or recognized.[109]

In all these theological engagements with trauma, trauma is juxtaposed with absolute categories. "The language of theology," cannot but talk in absolutes, given the metaphysical implications of its confessional identity. A result of this is trauma, "reimagined," in relationship to concepts of perfect beauty, perfect goodness, perfect knowledge, and even perfection itself. Yet, trauma remains innately destructive and defined by its profound absences, so any relationship to such loci is always adversarial. Discourses on the very possibility of eternity are, "pressed to their limits," by trauma.

This juxtaposition is significant and opens up new vistas of (null) possibility for the study of trauma. Previously, psychology implicated trauma's dual individuated and socialized origins,

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[107] Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p. 20.
[108] Dirk G. Lange, *Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), p. 11.
[109] Rambo, p. 32.

while literary criticism opened up the possibility of trauma's transgenerational transmission. Alone, either of these would justify a reconsideration of well-established philosophical commitments vis-à-vis epistemology, ethics, philosophical anthropology, etc. Theological reflection potentially takes the unique radicality of traumatic destruction even more seriously than its disciplinary peers, thereby necessitating a thorough philosophical response. Through reference to its existential categories, theology functionally reconceives trauma as existential crisis and threat.

Theology grapples with this totalization of trauma in various ways. Attempts are made to recast the divine as traumatized, thus redefining trauma itself by changing the terms of the discourse. Others deny the possibility of a qualitative difference in human suffering, resulting in a dismissal of trauma's radicality which thereby subjugates it to the old theodicies. Perhaps most compelling are those works that appeal to divine mystery when confronting the profound absence of trauma. None of these replies are exhaustive, however, as none of them engage the *philosophical* ramifications of what the null horizon of trauma might itself signify. By becoming a problem *for* God (or at least God-talk), trauma also necessarily becomes a problem *within* the metaphysics which enables theological reflection in the first place.

We follow both Schmitt and Heidegger in their respective differentiations between theology and philosophy. For Schmitt, theology develops alongside politics into modernity. More precisely, theology is often erroneously, "transposed," into nascent theories of the state:

> It should have been noticed that my elaborations on political theology are not grounded in a diffuse metaphysics. They bring to light the classical case of a transposition of distinct concepts which has occurred within the systematic thought of the two – historically and discursively – most developed constellations of "western rationalism": the Catholic *church* with its entire juridical rationality and *the state of the ius publicum Europaeum*, which was supposed to be Christian in even Thomas Hobbes' system.[110][111]

[110] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 117.
[111] Emphasis his.

As discussed in our outline of the contemporary context, the relationship between theology and politics has developed in ways that reduce the plurality of institutions by collapsing a bevy of existential antitheses into what Schmitt claims should otherwise be the state's sole concern: the friend-enemy distinction discussed in our next section. In this collapse, the political is lost as a conceptual locus for discerning the boundaries of state power, putting at risk the framework for society. This is because the political is not drawn from natural or normative law, positively expressed, but from decisiveness manifest *in* sovereign acts that decide *on* concrete exceptions. With the dominance of a Western theological tradition that rejected the miracle, came also a misapprehended Western political tradition that rejected the very possibility of the exception. As such, while politics (at least in the West) retains an almost inescapable theological pedigree, it is crucial to subject theology's superstructures to philosophical analysis, "All de-theologised concepts carry the weight of their scientifically impure origins."[112] Such a philosophical kind of political analysis ensures that the political retains its own conceptual integrity, so not to be subordinated to any confessional ends which lay beyond its own intrinsic interests:

> This understanding of the state has achieved, to date, the greatest rational "progress" of humanity in the definition of war as it appears in the theory of international law: namely, the distinction between the enemy and the criminal, and therefore the only possible basis for the theory of the neutrality of states in times of war between them. *That, for me*, is part of my political theology and it indicates the paradigm shift of modernity. On the "threshold" of this shift, we hear Alberico Gentile's *Silete theologi!* [Theologians, keep quiet!] – he who was a contemporary, countryman and companion in fate – although much luckier than him – of Giordano Bruno of Nola [in Campania].[113]

Heidegger mirrors Schmitt in asserting the disciplinary distinctiveness of theology and philosophy, "Our thesis, then, is that *theology is a positive science, and as such, therefore, is*

[112] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 128.
[113] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 118.

absolutely different from philosophy."[114][115] Heidegger also insists that the former necessarily depends upon foundations only first provided by the latter, "If faith does not need philosophy, the *science* of faith as a *positive* science does."[116] These foundations are provided through a kind of analysis available only through philosophy, "*the* science of being, the ontological science, philosophy,"[117] so that any theological claim first implicates a host of metaphysical presumptions, "Rather, all such explication must takes pains to envision and hold constantly in view in its original totality the primary, self-contained ontological context to which all the basic concepts refer." Heidegger later, post-*Kehre*, commented on how this relationship was particularly complicated by the contemporary context of the cybernetic world, which results in needing to engage, "the problem of a nontechnological, non-natural-scientific thinking and speaking in today's theology."[118] Theology therefore depends upon philosophy for correction.

Returning to our discussion of trauma, it becomes for theology the anti-miracle. Trauma is the *injurious* radical breaking of natural law that actively defies, and cannot be reconciled to, the norm, which includes normative theological expectations. Anti-miracle, it remains miraculous nonetheless.

In its nature as miraculous, as *exceptional*, we now find cause to pursue an explicitly *philosophical* consideration of trauma. When found to exist by normative forces within the contemporary context, trauma must be destroyed, its further breach prevented, and any witness of its existence suppressed. The current technological stance of the world, structured by and upon natural and normative law, remains antagonistic towards the exception and the miracle.

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[114] Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 41.
[115] Emphasis his.
[116] Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," p. 50.
[117] Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," p. 41.
[118] Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," p. 61.

Existence or evidence of such must be driven out. Yet, a problem arises: in trauma there is nothing to concretely destroy, as trauma is an absence. Lacking substance which could be assimilated or annihilated, trauma's denial by world-technological forces is achieved only through its abjection.

This is inherently an interpretative task, but of a particular kind. Such abjection is achieved through a variety of forces, which find their origin in the cosmogonic nature of the state in relation to language itself. The linguistic nature of trauma, with its characteristic silences, thus locates the question of praxis, "from *whence* trauma?" within the philosophical question, "from *whence* language?" Further such inquiry requires we (re)conceptualize trauma vis-a-vis the political.

Section 1.3: Applying a Methodology to an "Incomprehensible Event"

A philosophical kind of political analysis understands trauma to reveal and ultimately upend the political itself: trauma problematizes the distinction between friend and enemy. Throughout our work, we depend upon Schmitt's concept of the political, "The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy."[119] This claim is based on overarching arguments examined shortly, which begin with Schmitt's observation that, "A definition of the political can be obtained only by discovering and defining the specifically political categories."[120] In this section, we track Schmitt's attempt to do just that, with attention to how such categories are further complicated by a philosophical consideration of events whose horror, "transcends normal human comprehension."[121]

Trauma's problems for philosophy and politics arise due to its very existence *as an exception*, as well as because of the issues *its existence creates* for the friend-enemy distinction. The resultant *content* and *context* of trauma jointly impact the political realities both in and of the human beings through which politics manifests. Trauma is therefore always simultaneously a *human experience* of destruction, as well as an experience of *human destruction*.[122]

This inescapably *human* quality of traumatic experience and destruction turns the study of trauma to a philosophical kind of political analysis:

> Precisely a philosophy of concrete life must not withdraw from the exception and the extreme case, but must be interested in it to the highest degree. The exception can be more important to it than the rule, not because of a romantic irony for the paradox, but

[119] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 26.
[120] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 27.
[121] See p. 49.
[122] We are aware of the positions of primatologists such as Frans de Waal concerning the possibility of discursive language, empathy, and even observable prototypical political behavior among primates. However, at this time, such research is early in its development and still compiling foundational data sets. Should substantive evidence to the contrary later arise, we might revisit our admittedly anthropocentric claims. However, in the present absence of such, we feel it a sustainable position to assert that only humans robustly engage discursive language, politics, etc.

> because the seriousness of an insight goes deeper than the clear generalizations inferred from what ordinarily repeats itself.[123]

Recast as an example of Schmitt's, "extreme case,"[124] trauma illuminates the ends of human power, both in a practical and teleological sense. Via its relation to the political, trauma reveals the purpose, extent, means, and risks through which human power enacts (or fails to enact) itself:

> The exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything: It confirms not only the rule but also its existence, which derives only from the exception. In the exception the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by repetition.[125]

Schmitt's own intensely metaphysical concerns nuance these ontological issues and render the study of trauma even more relevant to politics and international affairs. Though himself critical of Schmitt's assertion of the friend-enemy distinction as political locus, Hans Morgenthau's metaphysical characterization of Schmitt's work reinforces the above:

> If we believe that we should proceed here with an in-depth exam of the logical merits of Carl Schmitt's concept, it is not only because of the considerable agency it has exerted on public opinion, but also because it has served as a basis for a metaphysics of the role played by elementary forces in international relations; metaphysics which, according to Schmitt, would result with inescapable necessity from his concept of the political driven to its most final consequences.[126]

With recourse to Heidegger for later clarification, Schmitt provides us a model for a philosophical kind of political analysis regarding trauma as, "incomprehensible event."[127] This is possible through his work on the *scelus infandum*, the command, and the friend-enemy distinction. This section's development of these terms, their interrelationships, and their use in

[123] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 15.
[124] See p. 13.
[125] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 15.
[126] Hans Morgenthau, *The Concept of the Political and the Theory of International Disputes* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 108.
[127] See Caruth on p. 36.

political theory and international relations will resource the way we conceive of and engage trauma itself in later chapters.

Schmitt never addressed trauma directly, in the denotative sense outlined in the previous section. However, he did engage the possibility of incomprehensibly horrific acts when differentiating between the various kinds of prosecutable war crimes, as well as their potential to problematize normative categories relevant to law and politics, "These are atrocities in a specific sense, planned killings and inhuman atrocities whose victims were defenseless humans."[128] Here, Schmitt does not intend violations of the Hague Conventions or failure to comply with international treaties which restrict the specific means of military action. Neither does Schmitt allow all killing to be evocative of an incomprehensible horror beyond the categories of law. Quite the contrary, the existence of the Hague Conventions themselves reveal, "Such laws presuppose war to be permitted and legal,"[129] and thus that wartime killing exists within legally apprehensible horizons. In his treatment of atrocities, Schmitt instead provides for the possibility of a *qualitative* difference which sets apart particularly horrific acts, locating these, "inhuman," exceptions beyond the horizons of possibility permissible by any enabling legal discourse.

Such atrocities arise from and create an experience of (in)humanity that is and must remain unforeseen by jurisprudence, as the very social (and, for Schmitt, Hobbesian) foundations upon which jurisprudence is made possible exist in *existential* opposition to such activity:

> The rawness and bestiality of these crimes transcends normal human comprehension. They are parts of and manifestations of an iniquitous "*scelus infandum*" in the full sense of this word. They explode the framework of all the usual and familiar dimensions of international law and penal law.[130]

[128] Carl Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression and the Principle 'Nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege," in *Writings on War*, ed. Timothy Nunan (Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press, 2011), p. 127.
[129] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 126.
[130] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 128.

The *scelus infandum* does not simply make a criminal out of its perpetrator. Rather, due to their radical nature, "Such crimes proscribe the perpetrator in his or her entirety by placing him outside the law and making him or her into an outlaw."[131] This creates an especially problematic situation for law, as the features that differentiate the *scelus infandum* from other potential war crimes nonetheless magnify certain aspects of shared theoretical and procedural concern:

> Then the legal difference in the circumstances becomes relevant in all relevant points, as well as in the questions of material justice: what are the elements of the crime? Who is the perpetrator? Who is the accomplice, accessory, and abettor? The same is true for questions concerning the process: who is the plaintiff? Who the defendant? Who is the party? Who is the judge and the court, and in whose name is the judgment issued?[132]

It is here that the nonsense of the *scelus infandum* has practical effect. The *scelus infandum* requires a response, "It goes without saying that – at the end of this second world war – mankind is obliged to pass a sentence upon Hitler's and his accomplices' '*scelus infandum*.'"[133] Yet, the qualitative horror of such acts cannot be reconciled within jurisprudence, as its inexpressible magnitude constitutes not just enumerable violations of the *ordinances* of law, but of *law itself*:

> Furthermore, it is evident, that Hitler's "*scelus infandum*," and especially the monstrous atrocities of the SS and the Gestapo, cannot be classified in their real essence by the rules and the categories of the usual positive law; neither with the help of the old municipal criminal or constitutional law, nor with the help of the present international law, that has its origins in the *jus publicum Europeaum*, i.e.: the relations between the Christian sovereigns of Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.[134]

Any response, including the necessary response, to such acts is therefore always *sui generis*:

> A "*scelus infandum*" must by no means become a precedent. A term such as "crime" belonging to criminal law evokes the use of other terms of criminal law such a principals and accessories, aids and abets, complicity, concealment, etc., terms that, when applied to actions of foreign policy – e.g. the partition of Poland in September 1939 – imply further questions of unheard of consequences.[135]

[131] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 128.
[132] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 126.
[133] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 196.
[134] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 197.
[135] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 197.

It is beyond the bounds of normative law to permit even the possibility of these atrocities into its conceptual horizons. This is not to say awareness of historical and contemporary commissions of *scelus infandum* does not exist. However, awareness of something does not necessitate functional comprehension of the same. Such horrors are not within the scope of law's framework, at least not when law functions in the normative mode (as it increasingly does in the contemporary context). Theft, rape, even murder: law can proscribe these acts precisely because their commission is conceivable within the bounds of society formally constituted. The existence of these violations is a foreseeable, logical extension of existent human passions of greed, jealousy, lust, etc. That these passions would manifest in proscribed ways is still within the apprehension of law, hence the proscription. Yet, the *scelus infandum* is characterized by inherently *inhuman* impulses, motive forces presumably beyond reasonable foresight. The incorporation of such crimes as that of the *scelus infandum* into law would functionally undo the legal project itself, by requiring law to acknowledge that its justifying (and self-justifying) norms lack predictability and universal application:

> Schmitt's sentence that "*scelus infandum* must by no means become a precedent, as well as his insistence that "Hitler's *scelus infandum* and especially the monstrous atrocities of the SS and the Gestapo cannot be classified in their real essence by the rules and the categories of the usual positive law", represent the conditions for the perpetual reconstruction of procedures and judgments of a tribunal and international law. It is precisely a crime, a monstrous and unforgivable and always unimaginable one, a crime which exceeds crime and then any adequate punishment, obligations and accountability, which introduces group, collective or state responsibility.[136]

The, "great crime," implicates not just *a society*, but *societies* and the very possibility for the same. Though the *scelus infandum* originates within a context of social order, its incriminating implications extend beyond the reach of that order's (perhaps any) provision of legal security:

[136] Petar Bojanic, "Will the Judgment in the Hague Trial Constitute a Precedent in International Law? On the Great Crime (mala in se; scelus infandum) and Sovereignty," Sociological Review, Belgrade, Vol. 40, n. 1 (2006): p. 94.

> Although covenants are concluded in the state of nature, they always reflect great existential reservations that prevent a rational and legal security from emerging in place of a state of insecurity. Security exists only in the state. *Extra civitatem nulla securitas*.[137]

In response to the *scelus infandum*, action must be taken. Yet, while arising from concern for law, such action cannot be *justified* by law's normative resources. The law's foreseeable (and, thus, practical) extent ends at the incomprehensible horror of the atrocity and its aftermath, "There exists no norm that is applicable to chaos."[138] Thus, further action is not justifiable by reference to truths derived or extrapolated from normative expectations. This instead becomes another opportunity to consider Schmitt's reading of Hobbes', "auctoritas non veritas facit legem," in light of the personal decision required by the exception. With the absence of normative references, the nature of any response to an exception is revealed to essentially be a *command*.

Before we discuss the command, we should note that our extreme exception above is different from the state of exception directly addressed by Schmitt throughout his works. Taken narrowly, Schmitt's state of exception deals with the possible constitutional declaration of emergency powers within the Weimar Republic, through which its constitution would be suspended ostensibly to better protect its continued existence. The exception was the unforeseen event that requires an unrestrained response, a genuine and personal decision, which remained somehow tied to the law it nonetheless exceeds:

> What characterizes an exception is principally unlimited authority, which means the suspension of the entire existing order. In such a situation it is clear that the state remains, whereas law recedes. Because the exception is different from anarchy and chaos, order in the juristic sense still prevails even if it is not of the ordinary kind.[139]

[137] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 48.
[138] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 13.
[139] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 12.

Our consideration of the *scelus infandum* considers the exception more broadly than Schmitt's narrower focus on the state of exception. It is Schmitt's original work, however, that permits our liberties at this time. In arguing the state of exception, Schmitt crafts a framework in which to discuss how law can create within itself requirements for activity beyond its bounds:

> The specific contribution of Schmitt's theory is precisely to have made such an articulation between state of exception and juridical order possible. It is a paradoxical articulation, for what must be inscribed within law is something that is essentially exterior to it, that is, nothing less than the suspension of the juridical order itself (hence the aporetical formulation: "In a juridical sense, an order still exists,… even if it is not a juridical order").[140]

In response to the extreme exception of the *scelus infandum*, the only action possible is in the form of a command. The *scelus infandum* remains, "crime," and thus suggests some transgressed order, even if beyond the normal juridical order established by and within nation-states. Nonetheless, the incomprehensibility of the, "great crime," defies reduction into preexisting systems that otherwise exist to punish transgressions and justify their disposal. That such horrors exist contradicts normative expectations, yet their immediacy and totality overwhelm normative recourse. Only action understood as command, "reaches," the *scelus infandum* and thus any response rendered must be understood in light of a command's sovereign, personal character.

There is no reference for the command beyond its own existential nature. As such, the command arises from itself and is justified by the same. Though recourse to command might be understood as the logical response to an otherwise exceptional situation (note, again, the paradoxical possibility of an order prevailing, "even if it is not of the ordinary kind"), it is not properly a logical extrapolation of preceding norms: it is neither an argument by analogy, nor authority, through reference to anything beyond itself. Of course, the normative law is itself a

[140] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 33.

command, but one whose nature as command has receded from view, "The law is not a norm of justice, but a command…"[141] It is only the exception that brings the command back into focus. Its presence reminds that it is from the capacity of the state to command that law receives its content, rather than from the capacity of the state to ascertain some external, preceding truth:

> The natural law of justice, as it occurs in the monarchomachs, was developed by Grotius. It assumes that a law with a certain content exists prior to the state, whereas the scientific system of Hobbes is based, with absolute clarity, on the axiom that there is no law prior to the state and outside of it, and that the value of the state resides precisely in the fact that it creates the law by settling the dispute over what is right.[142]

Schmitt is clear on the difference between the systems and the practical result of such difference:

> The difference between the two schools is best illustrated by saying that one system takes its start from interest in certain understandings of justice, and therefore from a certain *content* of the decision, whereas for the other the interest only consists in the fact that a *decision* has been made at all.[143]

Bereft of normative trappings to moralize the command, its declaratory nature is stark:

> The law, which is essentially a command, is based upon a decision related to the public interest; but the public interest only comes into being through the fact that the order has been given. The decision contained in a law is, from a normative perspective, borne out of nothing. It is, by definition, "dictated".[144]

The command literally *is*, evident in and justified by its own existence. Schmitt intends all this within a Hobbesian framework, which we will engage in the next chapter. For now, though the command is originally understood in Schmitt as a state function directed inward, the *scelus infandum* requires us to consider the command beyond and despite such borders.

Even absent the justification of the interpretative state, phenomena such as the *scelus infandum* nonetheless provoke action. While the provocation requiring its response might be,

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[141] Carl Schmitt, *Dictatorship: From the origin of the modern concept of sovereignty to proletarian class struggle* (Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press, 2014), p. 16.
[142] Schmitt, *Dictatorship,* p. 16.
[143] Schmitt, *Dictatorship,* p. 17.
[144] Schmitt, *Dictatorship,* p. 17.

such action is neither anarchic nor chaotic, because it is still related to the order for which it exists solely to restore. Necessitated by the extreme exception, the genuine decision of the restorative command, perhaps originating amidst the normative forces provoked, does not extend from such forces in any justifiable fashion. Rather, should the command share features with normative constructs, such similarity must be understood to be *incidental* and not *inherent*.

The command is a genuine decision to act in a distinctly novel way in response to an extreme exception. It is action taken *beyond* and *over against* the norm, even if to preserve the norm's future. The restored space cleared in the wake of the command might give rise to new normative commitments and processes; in fact, it almost certainly will. Nonetheless, the command itself is always, only, and purely from and unto itself.

The relationship between normative forces, their underlying resources, and the nature of command will be critical later in our work. For now, this clarity regarding the command is needed to determine the *mode* in which the *scelus infandum* is addressed. Incomprehensible, they defy logical appeal to any relatable analogy or authority. The *scelus infandum* exists in a way that cannot be the *subject* of discourse, but only the *object* of command.

Critical for our own work, it is nonetheless problematic for Schmitt that such a command might extend into the context inhabited by nation-states. Justification remains needed. However, reference to normative forces alone cannot justify action here. Again, in the Hobbesian understanding, the command is conceived as directed inward, creating the possibility of society. States lack such a prepared clearing for encounter:

> There is no state between states, and for that reason there can be no legal war and no legal peace but only the pre- and extralegal state of nature in which tensions among leviathans are governed by insecure covenants.[145]

[145] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 49.

Without common references through which to inform interaction, "The thoroughly rationalized mechanisms of state command confront one another 'irrationally.'"[146] This, "irrationality," is characterized by the inescapable violence definitional of a Hobbesian, "state of nature:"

> Hobbes was the first to state precisely that in international law states face one another 'in a state of nature." In Hobbes' theory of state, this is conceptually significant, for it illuminates the distinction between the legal state and the extralegal state of nature.[147]

A command into such an, "extralegal state of nature," has no sense if justified from within particular states' structures of rationality. In this existential reading of Hobbes, these structures gain the quality of being, "rational," only in and through the interpretative intervention of the state (a point we will return to in the next chapter). This is not to say that states cannot or should not act *over against* one another. Quite the contrary, the irrational activity of states is an essential element of human existence in the contemporary context. Acknowledgement of the irrationality of state interaction, even unto the violence of war, is not pejorative; it simply *is*:

> War, the readiness of combatants to die, the physical killing of human beings who belong on the side of the enemy – all this has no normative meaning, but an existential meaning only, particularly in a real combat situation with a real enemy.[148]

Normative claims are rendered rational and, "make sense," only within the confines of a state, "The state absorbs all rationality and all legality."[149] Such normative discursive trajectories are therefore nonsense in the, "extralegal," event of interstate violence. One never kills, "for freedom," or, "for justice," as the blood of one's enemy is always on one's own hands and never, "freedom's," or, "justice's." Sarah Pouricau notes, "The potential for spilling real blood defines the concept of the political in its 'original existential sense' by tying it definitively to that which

[146] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 49.
[147] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 48.
[148] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 49.
[149] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 48.

indisputably *exists*."[150] Normative constructs might provide abstract motivation, but never justification:

> There exists no rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social idea no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy nor legality which justify men in killing each other for this reason. If such physical destruction of human life is not motivated by an existential threat to one's own way of life, then it cannot be justified.[151]

Presuming the action is taken only when justified as above, one kills simply as a matter of existential fiat, "The justification of war does not reside in its being fought for ideals or norms of justice, but in its being fought against a real enemy."[152] Interstate violence might be normatively seen as, "irrational," but it is innate to human existence and the existence of states themselves:

> War is neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics. But as an ever present possibility it is the leading presupposition which determines in a characteristic way human action and thinking and thereby creates specifically political behavior.[153]

This, "specifically political behavior," is found in the creation (or, perhaps, discovery) of friend-enemy distinctions, and the resultant formation and sustainment of diverse political entities embodying such distinctions. It is thus from such, "specifically political behavior," that the command derives justification.

To exist as a human is to exist within political entities *over against* other such entities, a circumstance which must foresee the possibility of violent conflict, "War as the most extreme political means discloses the possibility which underlies every political idea, namely, the

[150] Sarah Pourciau, "Bodily Negation: Carl Schmitt on the Meaning of Meaning," MLN, Vol. 120, n. 5, Comparative Literature Issue (2005): p. 1069.
[151] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 49.
[152] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 49.
[153] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 34.

distinction of friend and enemy."[154] The political entity exists with other existential and social groupings, such as the aesthetic, the economic, the religious, etc. It can manifest in a variety of modes and execute its function through various available means, "This provides a definition in the sense of a criterion and not as an exhaustive definition or indicative of substantial content."[155] Certainly, the political entity is enriched by a diverse constellation of other groupings, but its constitutive friend-enemy distinction is reducible to none, "It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions."[156] It substantively differs from other entities due its decisive antithesis:

> Insofar as it is not derived from other criteria, the antithesis of friend and enemy corresponds to the relatively independent criteria of other antitheses: good and evil in the moral sphere, beautiful and ugly in the aesthetic sphere, and so on. In any event it is independent, not in the sense of a distinct new domain, but in that it can neither be based on any one antithesis or any combination of other antitheses, nor can it be traced to these.[157]

The political entity is thus the social grouping which secures the friend-enemy distinction and safeguards its friends from its enemies. In a single space and time, other entities may exist; only one is political:

> The political entity by its very nature is the decisive entity, regardless of the sources from which it derives its last psychic motives. It exists or does not exist. If it exists, it is the supreme, that is, in the decisive case, the authoritative entity.[158]

The peculiarities of individual political entities are irrelevant as to their essential nature, "The political can derive its energy from the most varied human endeavors, from religious, economic, moral, and other antitheses."[159] It is possible that economic, religious, and other kinds

[154] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 35.
[155] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 26.
[156] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 26.
[157] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 26.
[158] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 44.
[159] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 38.

of entities might themselves become a political entity. Yet, they never challenge the existential categories of friend and enemy, and merely define their distinctions of such in their own image:

> It does not describe its own substance, but only the intensity of an association or dissociation of human beings whose motives can be religious, national (in the ethnic or cultural sense), economic, or of another kind and can effect at different times different coalitions and separations. The real friend-enemy grouping is existentially so strong and decisive that the nonpolitical antithesis, at precisely the moment at which it becomes political, pushes aside and subordinates its hitherto purely religious, purely economic, purely cultural criteria and motives to the conditions of and conclusions of the political situation at hand.[160]

It is from these concretely existential categories of friend and enemy that Schmitt claims a philosophical anthropology is possible without needing recourse to external normative forces:

> Unlike conventional, sign-governed meaning, which functions perfectly even in the absence of an actual speaking agent, political meaning requires the rooted perspective of the political self, for the awareness of otherness that generates selfhood depends on a participatory openness to the world, on a capacity for being affected, that no objective standpoint can possibly provide.[161]

The political entity, its friend-enemy distinction, and its existential pending conflict all frame the possible horizons for its constituents, by being methodologically drawn from human experience:

> The friend and enemy concepts are to be understood in their concrete and existential sense, not as metaphors or symbols, not mixed or weakened by economic, moral, and other conceptions, least of all in a private-individualistic sense as a psychological expression of private emotions and tendencies. They are neither normative nor pure spiritual antitheses.[162]

Functionally, befitting its existential concerns, the political entity is intensely practical. Its actions, when not compromised as, "…can be explained as results of blendings of some sort of abstractions or norms,"[163] aim to preserve the defining friend-enemy distinction that

[160] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 38.
[161] Pourciau: p. 1073.
[162] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 27.
[163] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 50.

actualizes, justifies, and makes possible the political entity itself. Such actions can and must include war:

> In any event, that grouping is always political which orients itself toward this most extreme possibility. This grouping is therefore always the decisive human grouping, the political entity. If such an entity exists at all, it is always the decisive entity, and it is sovereign in the sense that the decision about the critical situation, even if it is the exception, must always necessarily reside there.[164]

Further facets of the killing event might appear *ex post facto*, but only in ways that locate killing and war within normative frameworks established and facilitated by a preceding, interpreting state, "Just as little can war be justified by ethical and juristic norms."[165] Any such norms (whether aesthetic, economic, moral, religious, etc.) come into existence only *after* the enabling question of the friend-enemy distinction has already been decided:

> For as long as a people exists in the political sphere, this people must, even if only in the most extreme case – and whether this point has been reached has to be decided by it – determine by itself the distinction between friend and enemy. Therein resides the essence of its political existence.[166]

So it is that states, acting to safeguard populations defined by friend-enemy distinctions, maneuver in the, "extralegal state of nature," space of international relations.

Returning to the question of the *scelus infandum* and command, it is appropriate to act, to *command*, when such action is necessitated by existential concerns, "Political disputes are fundamentally not litigable or arbitral. The fact that war is a political and even highly political affair goes without saying."[167] Nonetheless, successful navigation is not guaranteed and depends upon a thorough appreciation of the above dynamic, "The powers that wrestle with one another act in a zone that is continuously in danger. They will be lost if they cannot correctly distinguish

[164] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 38.
[165] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 49.
[166] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 49.
[167] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 169.

between friend and enemy."[168] To take action beyond one's own borders is to put at risk one's capacity to safeguard the same in the event of failure, as it is only the protector who, "then decides who the enemy is by virtue of the eternal relation of protection and obedience."[169] Such activity can and must be justified only through the existential needs of the friend-enemy distinction itself. If the incomprehensible, "great crime," is to warrant the restorative command, the *scelus infandum* must be shown to be an existential threat to the political entity's defining, enabling concept.

Schmitt does not engage this task himself. Nonetheless, we are able to move forward through use of his work thus far. That the friend-enemy distinction be conserved is paramount:

> The "real possibility of physical killing" distinguishes the political opposition friend-enemy from its debased metaphorical counterparts within the favored liberal spheres of economics and academia, where a lack of intensity renders the most extreme consequences unthinkable. The emphatically literal character of combat as bodily destruction thus comes to stand guarantor for the theory of the enemy with which Schmitt wages his theoretical war on liberal abstraction.[170]

For this reason, Schmitt argues against a Kantian and neo-Kantian cosmopolitanism which advances the concept of, "humanity," as politically self-sufficient. Schmitt references Proudhon, "Here one is reminded of a somewhat modified expression of Proudhon's: whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat,"[171] and points out the absurdity of humanity as a functional political category:

> Humanity as such cannot wage war because it has no enemy, at least not on this planet. The concept of humanity excludes the concept of the enemy, because the enemy does not cease to be a human being – and hence there is no specific differentiation in that concept.[172]

[168] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 49.
[169] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 52.
[170] Pouricau: p. 1068.
[171] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 54.
[172] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 54.

Any claim to wage war on behalf of humanity, "has an especially intensive political meaning," found in the act by which, "a particular state seeks to usurp a universal concept against its military opponent."[173] "Humanity," becomes at best empty when applied to the political; at worst, it becomes a weapon for a warring party which, "tries to identify itself with humanity in the same way as one can misuse peace, justice, progress, and civilization in order to claim these as one's own and to deny the same to the enemy."[174]

Schmitt also notes dire risks stemming from wars waged on behalf of, "humanity:"

> To confiscate the word humanity, to invoke and monopolize such a term probably has certain incalculable effects, such as denying the enemy the quality of being human and declaring him to be an outlaw of humanity; and a war can thereby be driven to the most extreme inhumanity.[175]

Even a war fought ostensibly on behalf of a militant pacifism, not unthinkable after First World War rhetoric of wars, "to End War," is itself ironically perhaps more of a threat than the continuance of wars declared for far less noble reasons:

> Such a war is necessarily unusually intense and inhumane because, by transcending the limits of the political framework, it simultaneously degrades the enemy into moral and other categories and is forced to make of him a monster that must not only be defeated but also utterly destroyed.[176]

This last nuance is crucial: when the political is properly understood, the enemy exists to be, "defeated," and *not*, "utterly destroyed." Schmitt notes that because, "The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor,"[177] the enemy's ultimate destruction is not necessary. Rather, to be an enemy, it is sufficient simply, "that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the

[173] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 54.
[174] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 54.
[175] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 54.
[176] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 36.
[177] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 27.

extreme case conflicts with him are possible."[178] This, "different and alien," characterization of the enemy need not render the enemy so monstrously inhuman, that, "In other words, he is an enemy who no longer must be compelled to retreat into his borders only."[179] War is therefore not properly total (in the sense of obliteration), if merely acting from political categories. "War is the existential negation of the enemy,"[180] but it need not be the enemy's existential eradication. Indeed, it is important to remember that one need not always be enemies with the same political entities, as the situations which warrant such decisive characterization might change:

> The criterion of the friend-enemy distinction in no way implies that one particular nation must forever be the friend or enemy of another specific nation or that a state of neutrality is not possible or could not be politically reasonable.[181]

As war need not be, "common, normal, something ideal, or desirable,"[182] it is enough that the present enemy is prevented from further endangering one's friends, "The enemy in the political sense need not be hated personally."[183] Further, just acknowledging that, "For to the enemy concept belongs the ever present possibility of combat,"[184] is not sufficient to make one a warmonger, since, "The definition of the political suggested here neither favors war nor militarism, neither imperialism nor pacifism."[185] War is simply a human existential condition:

> One may or may not share these hopes and pedagogic ideals. But, rationally speaking, it cannot be denied that nations continue to group themselves according to the friend and enemy antithesis, that the distinction still remains actual today, and that this is an ever present possibility for every people existing in the political sphere.[186]

[178] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 27.
[179] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 36.
[180] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 33.
[181] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 34.
[182] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 33.
[183] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 29.
[184] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 32.
[185] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 33.
[186] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 28.

Attempts to do away with war, due to pacifist leanings or distaste for friend-enemy distinctions, only exacerbate conflict by collapsing the political into other antitheses, "To the extent that wars today have decreased in number and frequency, they have proportionally increased in ferocity."[187] Erroneous prioritization of normative categories above expressly political ones does not end up subjugating the political; it drives the latter beyond apprehension and thus control:

> The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend-and-enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics.[188]

The contemporary context of world, "general technologization,"[189] increases both the intensity and pace of such conflicts' escalating viciousness. Without appreciation for the distinctly political concepts inherent in war, and given the emptiness of technology as a domain for political correction, restraint fails. Dehumanizing the enemy, or dehumanizing war itself through attempts to criminalize it, does not overcome the friend-enemy distinction, but merely intensifies it through other means:

> A country that does not abdicate from war and a martial disposition places itself outside the modern "*conscience universelle*" and makes itself into the debased enemy of humankind, just as the pirate did before his methods were civilizationally superseded.[190]

Ultimately, and relevant to us, Schmitt notes it is absolutely necessary to defend the friend-enemy distinction from collapse into nebulous, noble cosmopolitanism, "It is a manifest fraud to condemn war as homicide and then demand of men that they wage war, kill and be killed, so that there will never be war again."[191]

[187] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 35.
[188] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 35.
[189] See p. 12.
[190] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 169.
[191] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 48.

In the *scelus infandum*, we see the same risk to categories of friend and enemy, only now from the most debased of sources. Like those who would collapse all human beings into a single cosmopolitan mass, the *scelus infandum* destroys the friend-enemy distinction by eradicating its constituent parts. However, instead of overemphasizing humanity at the expense of substantive organizing difference, all pretense to humanity is discarded. The enemy is not just hounded, "to retreat into his borders." The enemy is obliterated. This actual obliteration of *an enemy* necessarily creates the possibility of the obliteration of *enemies as an entire existential category*. The atrocity permits no reasonable expectation that it will stop of its own accord. Beyond any normative constraint, there is nothing in the *scelus infandum* that allows for self-restraint, let alone external certainty regarding such. The, "great crime," glaringly exists and its existence risks becoming self-perpetuating. In the contemporary context, technology accelerates this process. By jeopardizing humanity's existential categories, the *scelus infandum* becomes a world crime.

Just as misguided attempts at militant pacifism justify a response by the state, for putting at risk friend-enemy distinctions, so also does the *scelus infandum*. Into the, "extralegal state of nature," a restorative command is existentially justified in the defense of the state's own constitutive friend-enemy distinction. Each respective political entity has an individual interest in responding to this existential threat posed by the *scelus infandum*.

If the challenge of the *scelus infandum* was left unanswered, then the definitive distinction around which the political entity coalesces would dissolve into meaninglessness, taking the political entity (and its guarantee of protection) with it. This is how the restorative command is both existentially justified and an, "order in the juristic sense still prevails even if it

is not of the ordinary kind." To retain the possibility of normative law, which is enabled through a preceding decision on the friend-enemy distinction, the state must act.

Here is also where, if anywhere, concern for the, "*conscience universelle*," properly arises, "But in reality, this can only concern the real atrocities."[192] Yet, any move to action by particular states is not on behalf of, "humanity," since the enabling categories of friend and enemy ensure that, "One cannot get rid of the enmity between human beings by prohibiting wars between states in the traditional sense, by advocating a world revolution and by transforming world politics into world policing."[193] There might be a universal need to respond, given the existential threat, but every response to the *scelus infandum* is justified *individually* within each political entity, on their own respective behalf. Politically, it makes no sense to speak of humanity as political entity, "A world state which embraces the entire globe and all of humanity cannot exist."[194] There can be only be the sum of human beings, existentially manifest in their respective political entities. Therefore, "humanity," does not respond to the *scelus infandum*. Human beings constitutive of diverse political entities do.

In this way, we suggest that a method exists to describe the otherwise, "incomprehensible event," of the *scelus infandum*. We conclude by commenting on the state's response. The restorative command destroys the exception that is the, "great crime," conceivably through either assimilation, annihilation, or abjection, or some combination of these three destructive modes.[195] The restored clearing might yet serve as a basis for the creation of new norms, once all traces of the exception have been disposed, and so achieve what had originally justified the command:

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[192] Schmitt, "The International Crime of the War of Aggression," p. 169.
[193] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 125.
[194] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 53.
[195] We admit that we cannot presently conceive of any additional modes of destruction beyond these three: something is destroyed either through (1) assimilating it into a subsuming entity, (2) annihilating its constitutive component(s), or (3) abjecting it so to deny it systemic accessibility. If other modalities are later shown to exist, we might revisit our claims. For now, we limit our discussion to these three.

> As a figure of necessity, the state of exception therefore appears (alongside revolution and the de facto establishment of a constitutional system) as an "illegal" but perfectly "juridical and constitutional" measure that is realized in the production of new norms (or of a new juridical order)…"[196]

What of trauma, though? Like the *scelus infandum*, trauma is an exception of a horrific kind. Its inhumanity is incomprehensible in nature, depth, and scope. As an exception, trauma breaks and extends beyond the correctives of normative forces. The human beings through which trauma manifests are likewise subsequently located beyond the bounds of normative law. They exist as evidence of the failure of a certain kind of order, which necessitates a response from the cosmogonic state. Bereft of normative options, only action taken in the form of command is available. As such, trauma and its provoked response are properly understood as novel events, both elements of, and necessitating, a moment of genuine decision.

In response, the restorative command that addresses trauma as its object arises from and is justified by concern for its distinction between friend and enemy. As will be explored in our next chapter, trauma's exception jeopardizes this distinction by putting at risk the very possibility of such categories. Similar to the *scelus infandum*, trauma constitutes an existential threat to the very categories that enable and facilitate human political entities. Response from the state is therefore structured into the state's very existential being: it is immediate and inevitable.

Of course, unlike the *scelus infandum*, trauma is not a crime. There remain substantive differences between the *scelus infandum* and trauma. The point in this section was not to directly contrast the two, but to demonstrate that despite trauma being an, "incomprehensible event," there exist methodological ways through which to interrogate trauma within a philosophical kind of political analysis. While trauma as a philosophical category is not yet established (such is a task of this work), there does already exist a category of the horrific exception that, "transcends

[196] Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 28.

normal human comprehension," an example of which is the *scelus infandum*. From the model provided by examining the interrelationships of the *scelus infandum*, command, and the friend-enemy distinction, a methodological way forward is inferred for our own constructive work on trauma itself.

Due to its nature as exception, trauma remains an offense to the state, but not because it *intentionally* violated any particular normative constraints. Like the *scelus infandum*, the offense of trauma is not in any particular normative transgression, but in its existential breach of normativity itself. Witness of both the *scelus infandum* and trauma attests to the conceptual and practical limits of normative forces. Both the aforementioned therefore must be destroyed, and their breach of normative constraints corrected, by the state, which, as addressed earlier in this section, "absorbs all rationality and all legality:"[197]

> Such a state exists as a state, and in that case it functions as an irresistible instrument of quietude, security, and order and has all objective and subjective rights on its side because, as sole and highest lawgiver *it makes all the laws or it does not exist*[198] and therefore cannot fulfill its function as the defended of peace, in which case the state has returned to a state of nature, and the state as such ceases to exist.[199]

Yet, unlike the *scelus infandum*, trauma's violation is manifest not by an incomprehensible *presence*, but an incomprehensible and characteristic *absence*. Trauma has no perpetrators or parties to either assimilate (via rehabilitation) or annihilate (via retribution). It is a void and a loss that cannot be tolerated, yet its lack of concrete form defies physical, procedural remedies. The restorative command can therefore only effect trauma's destruction indirectly via its abjection.

[197] See p. 56.
[198] Italics mine.
[199] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 46.

Arising from the very existential structure of the state, this abjection is not merely enacted through any particular quantifiable act. Rather, the abjecting command to, "*turn away!*" is manifest as a decisive posture or stance systemically evident in all acts arising within the space made possible by the state's restorative command. Trauma provokes a genuine decision, which then institutionalizes itself as a normative force by means of the state's interpretative function.

The abjection of trauma requires a far more complex analysis than that of the assimilation or annihilation of the *scelus infandum*. Certainly, the *scelus infandum* can also be abjected; how such might manifest can be inferred from our work here. However, trauma uniquely requires attention to the ways in which human beings, vis-à-vis their political entities, must grapple with an, "incomprehensible event," which has no concrete form except through its survivors' bodies.

This is the essence of trauma as languagelessness. Language (more precisely, the violent creation of its absence) is the means through which both trauma's destruction and abjection is realized. Through the destruction that is innate to its nature, and due to the abjection its existence provokes, trauma destroys the capacity of human beings *towards* discursive disclosure and self-disclosure. Language becomes for us a technical term to denote discursive modalities of communication (including self-communication), inclusive of all means for delineating and proposing boundaries, *including the friend-enemy distinction*.

In our next chapter, we will argue that language, like law, is a normative force that only arises through the interpretative function of the cosmogonic state. In our reading of Hobbes, language is a *structure of behavior*, itself only made possible via a preceding, mediating ground upon which the available *structures of meaning* have already been decided. Crucially relevant to us, language is the behavior through which all other behavior, even political behavior, is made possible:

> Is the human being that being that has language in its possession? Or is it language that "has" human beings, insofar as they belong to, pay heed to language, which first opens up the world to them and at the same time thereby their dwelling in the world?[200]

Yet, the destruction and abjection of trauma reveals that language, or at least talk of language, might be debased in the contemporary context, rendered unable to encounter trauma's, "incomprehensible event," "Language is deformed into an instrument of reportage and calculable information."[201] We enter into the next chapter confronted by trauma's revealing question: if language itself is not an indispensable foundation, what lay before language and how does such impact the world created within language's limits?

[200] Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," p. 59.
[201] Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," p. 60.

ORIGINS OF LANGUAGELESSNESS

Section 2.1: The Interpretative State

Having characterized trauma as languagelessness, we return to a question asked in the previous chapter: from *whence* language itself? If languagelessness is an exception that provokes a decision, from and against what does such a decision arise? As noted earlier, a decision does not simply manifest during the routine deployment of normative forces; instead, it is defined by the failure of such processes and the need to respond to the same. It is therefore helpful to note that the decision provoked by an exception does not exist within a world of limitless possibility:

> Rather, the world is the clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies. Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision.[202]

In this section, utilizing Heidegger[203], we explore a theory of language and its origins. Through such, language is shown to be both this, "something not mastered," as well as the means by which something far more both destructive, and yet somehow essential, remains, "concealed."

Previous engagements of trauma, by diverse disciplines, consistently failed to comprehensively engage this crucial linguistic issue at the core of trauma. Certainly, language was addressed in some fashion by the aforementioned works cited from psychology, literary studies, and theology. Our own methodological approach builds upon those attempts to comprehend the, "incomprehensible event," which sought to provide some sort of reconciliation

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[202] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), p. 53.

[203] It is perhaps helpful to again clarify which of Heidegger's works we suggest best support our claims. We are predominantly interested in Heidegger mid- and post-*Kehre*, particularly during and after his time as rector at Freiburg. While we prominently engage Heidegger's lectures from 1927, which culminated in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, we are less curious about the Heidegger circa *Being and Time*, finding the later Heidegger, for whom language became a paramount concern, far more compelling. This approach to the Heideggerian bibliography seems reasonable to us, as Heidegger himself understood his later works to be corrections, extrapolations, and contiguous outgrowths of his earlier unfinished work. We will thus explicitly engage the categories and concepts set forth in his later years, while keeping the framework of *Being and Time* in mind, if uncommented upon in our text.

or restoration for those left in horror's wake. However, to squarely locate trauma's origin in language's absence requires of us a theory of language itself. Pursuit of such a theory is why this project on trauma is necessarily a philosophical one: the question of language *qua* language is a foundational inquiry which, depending on how it is answered, shapes the horizons for all further questioning, "How are we to put questions to language when our relation to it is muddled, in any case undefined? How can we inquire about its nature, when it may immediately become a matter of dispute what nature means?"[204]

To some extent, it is unfair to expect psychology, literary studies, or even theology to have engaged language directly, if thereby one is hoping to move beyond the prescriptive to the truly descriptive. Each of those disciplines arises as a technology, as a mode of enframing, from particular points of conceptual departure and towards specific discursive ends. Each therefore arises only after foundational questions already are answered in ways unique to each discipline. While these disciplines can provide information and impetus for future philosophical inquiry, they cannot themselves pierce beyond their own respective organizing commitments; they cannot violate through further scrutiny the foundational claims that enable and justify their deployment:

> Philosophy cannot be based upon history- neither on the science of history nor on any other science. For every science rests on presuppositions which can never be established scientifically, though they can be demonstrated philosophically. All sciences are grounded in philosophy, but not *vice versa*.[205]

That these disciplines focused on conversations regarding praxis, in the form of reconciliation and restoration, is therefore neither surprising, nor unhelpful within the context of their respective technical purposes. As this chapter will argue, acknowledgement of trauma alone is a significant act that defies extraordinarily complex and essential structures. However, what is now

[204] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1971), p. 71.
[205] Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, New Delhi, Auckland: Harper Perennial, 2004), p. 131.

required is to ask not, "what is language?" nor, "when and where is language?" nor even, "why language at all?" Our essentially philosophical question remains, "from *whence* language?" More precisely, we seek to discover from what necessities and resources, and towards what ends, does language exist… in ways that its absence could yield such devastating results for humanity?

It seems reasonable to differentiate our pursuit regarding the relationship shared between humanity and language, which we identify as humanity's capacity *towards* language, from a discussion regarding merely humanity's capacity *for* language. By the former, we intend an exploration of the fullness and limits of humanity's relationship with discursive disclosure and self-disclosure, which necessarily investigates the ways in which language is actualized:

> To see this, only the right concept of language is needed. In the current view, language is held to be a kind of communication. It serves for verbal exchange and agreement, and in general for communicating. *But language is not only and not primarily an audible and written expression of what is to be communicated*.[206][207]

This move beyond the study of mere (albeit admittedly seemingly miraculous) communication is what takes our project not only outside the aforementioned disciplines of psychology, literary studies, and theology, but also outside the cognitive sciences, at least as presently and institutionally constituted. Attention to the latter's relation to this work now seems warranted.

While we agree with Steven Pinker that, "Language is no more a cultural invention than is upright posture,"[208] we disagree with his further claim that, "Once you begin to look at language not as the ineffable essence of human uniqueness but as a biological adaptation to communicate information, it is no longer as tempting to see language as an insidious shaper of thought, and, we shall see, it is not."[209] Language is an adaptation of humanity, perhaps even, "a

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[206] Italics mine.
[207] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.
[208] Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1994), p. 18.
[209] Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p. 19.

magnificent ability unique to *Homo sapiens* among living species,"[210] yet the study of evolutionary processes is insufficient for comprehensively engaging language as social phenomena. Indeed, more than the study of humanity's capacity *for* language is needed to address our primary question: from *whence* language? To pursue humanity's capacity *towards* language, we must complement biological and even evolutionary considerations.

This is because the cognitive sciences (and, to some degree, linguistics) remain, at least at present, primarily concerned with the ways and means through which linguistic communication manifests and occurs, rather than the possibilities manifest in the deployments of language itself. The nuance we are attempting to identify here is subtle, but crucial to our overarching critique. Pinker, in summarizing the contributions of Noam Chomsky, observes the following regarding his own disciplinary commitments and genealogy; relevant to us is the first of his points:

> But Chomsky called attention to two fundamental facts about language. First, virtually every sentence that a person utters or understands is a brand-new combination of words, appearing for the first time in the history of the universe. Therefore a language cannot be a repertoire of responses; the brain must contain a recipe or program that can build an unlimited set of sentences out of a finite list of words. That program may be called a mental grammar (not to be confused with pedagogical or stylistic "grammars," which are just guides to the etiquette of written prose.[211]

This extraordinary observation regarding humanity's vast capacity *for* language is profound, so much so that it might cause us to miss what is otherwise evident: that *any* of the presumably countless responses Pinker suggests are themselves necessarily evidence of a *preceding series of constraints and possibilities*. Language therefore does not only implicate a speaker and an audience; it also *always* implicates itself. Regarding the experience of a poet to the creative

[210] Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p. 19.
[211] Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p. 22.

process inherent in crafting a poem, Heidegger observes, "It is thus necessary first to mention the relation of language in which the poet stood *before* the experience."[212]

To speak of the capacity *for* language primarily addresses the *users of language*, their (atomized) experiences of each other by means of language, while the existence of the deployed *language itself* becomes incidental, obscured, and presumed. When pursuing the above, the concrete and perpetual relationality inherent to language passes more easily without remark, whether in regards to itself or vis-à-vis the human beings through which language exists. As such, the ultimate stakes which can be discussed via this mode of inquiry are largely constrained to those involving a conceptualization of humanity truly *en masse*: the impact of language and its speculative absence viewed at an evolutionary level.

To be clear, such an evolutionary inquiry is sincerely beneficial to facilitating contemplation of language with regards to its biological constraints. This is a point dearly needed when discussing trauma, "Understanding how these faculties of the mind work is a frontier of modern science. Among these faculties, pride of place must go language – ubiquitous across the species… devastating when lost or impaired."[213] However, regarding our project, the above (at least presently) simply lets us know that language *can* happen, that language is available to humanity in a variety of forms tied to biological processes.

Study of the language's deployed content, insight into the potential meaningfulness of language (distinct from its constituent and technical biological apparatuses), lay beyond the disciplinary bounds of the cognitive sciences. In quantifying the mechanics of humanity's linguistic apparatuses, pursuit of humanity's capacity *for* language struggles to transcend the fundamentally technological nature of such an approach. Methodologically, its exploration

[212] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 67.
[213] Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature* (Viking, 2007), p. 28.

succumbs to the contemporary world-technological moment and cannot access more than what Heidegger referred to as, "calculative thinking":

> Such thinking remains calculation even if it neither works with numbers nor uses an adding machine or computer. Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.[214]

Admittedly, Pinker grapples with just this issue in his later works, "The way in which we understand 'your own words' – as referring only to how you combine them, not to what they are – shows that words are owned by a community rather than an individual."[215] Indeed, Pinker's exploration of semantics resonates with our own linguistic journey vis-à-vis Heidegger:

> Semantics is about the relation of words to thoughts, but it (*sic*) also about the relation of words to other human concerns. Semantics is about the relation of words to reality – the way that speakers commit themselves to a shared understanding of the truth, and the way their thoughts are anchored to things and situations in the world.[216]

We nonetheless press beyond semantics, moving away from considering humanity's capacity *for* language onwards to humanity's capacity *towards* the same, as the study of words alone is insufficient for our purposes, "To pay heed to what the words say is different in essence from what it first seems to be, a mere preoccupation with terms."[217] While it is necessary to address the biological context through which humanity's capacity *for* language manifests, such does not grant insight into the horizons of possibility which are and are enabled by language itself. Rather, we agree with Heidegger, "Language is neither merely the field of expression, nor merely the means of expression, nor merely the two jointly."[218]

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[214] Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 46.
[215] Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought*, p. 15.
[216] Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought*, p. 3.
[217] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 130.
[218] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 128.

Though our following comparison is somewhat rough, study of the biological processes that enable vision, even the study of the eye itself, does not reveal the horizons opened up by and inherent within access to the world of sight. Observing that humanity *can* see only provides the context, but not content, to further explore what lay within humanity's field of vision. As such, "To speak language is totally different from employing language,"[219] since the former seeks an apprehension of language beyond its functionary deployment. As an object of study, language therefore extends beyond the comprehensive grasp of both biology and semantics, as the very possibility and significance of words within the larger realm of language requires attention to additional, and inescapably philosophical, fields of study:

> Words are not terms, and thus are not like buckets and kegs from which we scoop content that is there. Words are wellsprings that are found and dug up in the telling, wellsprings that must be found and dug up again and again, that easily cave in, but that at times also well up when least expected. If we do not go to the spring again and again, the buckets and kegs stay empty, or their content stays stale.[220]

Appreciation of humanity's capacity *towards* language certainly requires attention to words themselves; how could it not? However, such must be complemented by a consideration of language as a totality which is more than the sum of its constitutive parts. Words, terms, even spoken sound; all of these taken separately are abstractions, as each of the above derive actual existence and functionary meaning only within their simultaneous deployment with the totality of language. Atomized, "Sound, which in the conceptual field of this supposed 'at first' is regarded as immediately given, is an abstract construct that is at no time perceived alone, by itself, nor ever at first, when we hear something spoken."[221] To consider any of the above separately is to necessarily concede that language, the phenomena within which the above are

[219] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 128.
[220] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 130.
[221] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 130.

observed, *already exists*, "If we put questions to language, questions about its nature, its being, then clearly language itself must already have been granted to us… Every posing of every question takes place within the very grant of what is put in question."[222] The discursive horizons of possibility created by words somehow also and always seem to precede them, "What we speak of, language, is always ahead of us. Our speaking merely follows language constantly."[223] So, pursuit of our question, "from *whence* language?" requires an inquiry into humanity's capacity *towards* language, with language conceived of as a discursive and existent totality tied, and yet somehow not reducible, to its biological and semantic mechanisms.

Consideration of such totality moves us beyond biology and semantics. In his analysis of Stefan George's "The Word," Heidegger comments on the nature of words themselves:

> We have already had converse with it, we recall, with this result: the closing line, "Where word breaks off no thing may be," points to the relation of word and thing in this manner, that the word itself is the relation, by holding everything forth into being, and there upholding it. If the word did not have this bearing, the whole of things, the "world," would sink into obscurity, including the "I" of the poem, him who brings to his country's strand, to the source of names, all the wonders and dreams he encounters.[224]

Heidegger's claim, "that the word itself is the relation," emphatically grounds language as a co-relationality, an inescapable experience of interpenetration not only of the constitutive parts one with the other, but of each with the greater whole. This interpenetration simultaneously binds and liberates, as it transforms all involved through mutual shared discovery, "To undergo an experience with something means that this something, which we reach along the way in order to attain it, itself pertains to us, meets and makes its appeal to us, in that it transforms us into

[222] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 71.
[223] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 75.
[224] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 73.

itself."[225] The capacity *towards* language therefore is the availability of such transformative interpenetration, made possible through a particular index of language's discursive potential:

> To undergo an experience with language, then, means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language by entering into and submitting to it. If it is true that man finds the proper abode of his existence in language – whether he is aware of it or not – then an experience we undergo with language will touch the innermost nexus of our existence. We who speak language may thereupon become transformed by such experiences, from one day to the next or in the course of time. But now it could be that an experience we undergo with language is too much for us moderns, even if it strikes us only to the extent that for once it draws our attention to our *relation to language*, so that from then on we may keep this relation in mind.[226]

This admonition to reflect upon, "our *relation to language*," especially in light of language's transformative interpenetration, brings us to consider Heidegger's treatment of the aforementioned poem's closing line. Heidegger restates the line, "No thing is where the word is lacking, that word which names the given thing."[227] When considered in light of language's transformative interpenetration, languagelessness is not simply a descriptive void. Heidegger must be heard here quite literally, "Where there is no language, as in the being of a stone, plant, and animal, there is also no openness of what is, and consequently no openness either of that which is not and of the empty."[228] Languagelessness is a *philosophically significant crisis* with implications for actual human beings: where there is no capacity *towards* language, there is nothing *human* present. Further, the contemporary context only exacerbates and occludes this threat, "The widely and rapidly spreading devastation of language not only undermines aesthetic and moral responsibility in every use of language; it arises from a threat to the essence of humanity."[229]

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[225] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 74.
[226] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 58.
[227] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 61.
[228] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.
[229] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Harper San Fransisco, 1993), p. 222.

This, "threat to the essence of humanity," Heidegger claims is the encroaching world-technological moment outlined in the previous chapter, "Technology, conceived in the broadest sense and in its manifold manifestations, is taken for the plan which man projects, the plan which finally compels man to decide whether he will become the servant of his plan or remain its master."[230] The devastation of language is different from our claim to its destruction in trauma, though we will demonstrate later how both are related to one another. Heidegger's use of the term, "devastation," goes farther than, "mere destruction," in that the devastation perpetually annihilates all consumed, obstructing any future reconciliation, restoration, or growth:

> The world, men find, is not just out of joint but tumbling away into the nothingness of absurdity. Nietzsche, who from his supreme peak saw far ahead of it all, as early as the eighteen-eighties had for it the simple, because thoughtful, words: "The wasteland grows." It means, the devastation is growing wider. Devastation is more than destruction. Devastation is more unearthly than destruction. Destruction only sweeps aside all that has grown up or been built up so far; but devastation blocks all future growth and prevents all building. Devastation is more unearthly than mere destruction. Mere destruction sweeps aside all things including even nothingness, while devastation on the contrary establishes and spreads everything that blocks and prevents.[231]

Further analysis of this claimed devastation is beyond the scope of our project, though we will return to certain overarching themes in Heidegger's work throughout the following chapters. For now, it is sufficient to reconsider the outline of the contemporary context provided in the previous chapter. The risk of technology is not in its devices themselves, nor even humanity's utilization of such devices, "We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our natures."[232] Rather, humanity's contemporary devastation arises from a fundamental error which conceives of the technological in ways that reduce it as *merely* technical, "Let us at long last stop

[230] Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 34.
[231] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 29.
[232] Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 54.

conceiving technology as something purely technical, that is, in terms of man and his machines."[233] As noted in the previous chapter, such conceptualization does not acknowledge the metaphysical grounds from which technology arises; indeed, it might be unaware of its own agency, "and can haunt us everywhere in the most unearthly ways – by keeping itself hidden."[234] In all cases, such ultimately fails to account for its own philosophical presuppositions and teleological ramifications:

> By this conceptualization of the totality of the technological world, we reduce everything down to man, and at best come to the point of calling for an ethics of the technological world. Caught up in this conception, we confirm our own opinion that technology is of man's making alone. We fail to hear the claim of Being which speaks in the essence of technology.[235]

What is crucial here for our project is Heidegger's continual focus on the concrete state of human life and world affairs being utterly symptomatic of particular metaphysical commitments. As noted earlier, Heidegger asserts that the contemporary triumph of technology has its origins in preceding misconceptions of Being put forth by Plato, Aristotle, and their classical contemporaries. Their error became a threat to humanity because their arguments somehow became incorporated into the life of (and conceptualization of life within) the proverbial West, and from there onwards to most of humanity, so that almost none can now escape the ramifications of the Greeks' original mistake. Relevant to our project, Heidegger claims that such an error became institutionalized, in ways that now threaten the catastrophic failure of Western systems, through language:

> It simply no longer occurs to us that everything that we have all known for so long, and all too well, could be otherwise – that these grammatical forms have no dissected and regulated language as such since eternity like an absolute, that instead, they grew out of a very definite interpretation of the Greek and Latin languages. This was all based on the assumption that language, too, is something in being, something that, like other beings,

[233] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 34.
[234] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 30.
[235] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 34.

> can be made accessible and circumscribed in a definite manner. How such an undertaking gets carried out and to what extent it is valid clearly depends on the fundamental conception of Being that guides it.[236]

Language becomes not only a conveyance of metaphysical concepts, but metaphysics itself, vis-a-vis the relationship of language to both the structure of thought and awareness of the same, "All metaphysics including its opponent positivism speaks the language of Plato."[237] The errors of Plato and Aristotle, codified in their perpetuated works, created the means by which humanity henceforth experienced language, "In this regard 'subject' and 'object' are inappropriate terms of metaphysics, which very early on in the form of Occidental 'logic' and 'grammar' seized control of the interpretation of language."[238] Because of this, language could be conceived of only through such normative constraints, which themselves reinforced and perpetuated the original metaphysical misapprehension committed by the Greeks:

> Language and the study of language have gotten stuck in these rigid forms as if in a net of steel. Beginning with the spiritless and barren language instruction in the schoolroom, these formal concepts and grammar-book labels become empty shells for us, understood and understandable by no one.[239]

The current world-technological moment is the product of an extrapolation of erroneous metaphysics institutionalized in language, "The fact that the development of Western grammar began with Greek meditation on the *Greek* language gives this process its whole meaning."[240] Its institutionalization vis-à-vis language exerts such inertia that even attempts to counter these normative forces might be coopted by them, reinforcing their influence and sway:

> Instead, the rule of metaphysics may rather entrench itself, in the shape of modern technology with its developments rushing along boundlessly. Or everything that results

[236] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 57.
[237] Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," p. 67.
[238] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 218.
[239] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 56.
[240] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 60.

> by way of the step back may merely be exploited and absorbed by metaphysics in its own way, as the result of representational thinking.[241]

To avoid such a fall into, "representational thinking," "the first thing we need is a real revolution in our relation to language."[242] However, "But this, to undergo an experience with language, is something else again than to gather information about language."[243] Such an, "experience with language," remains extraordinarily difficult to apprehend, let alone achieve:

> Yet at whatever time and in whatever way we speak a language, language itself never has the floor. Any number of things are given voice in speaking, above all what we are speaking about: a set of facts, an occurrence, a question, a matter of concern. Only because in everyday speaking language does *not* bring itself to language but holds back, are we able simply to go ahead and speak a language, and so to deal with something and negotiate something by speaking.[244]

Language, or at least critical components of it, "holds back," from, "calculative thinking," and, "representational thinking," so that, "Because this withdrawal prevails, that for which the craft of technological manipulation reaches out remains hidden."[245] A result of such, "withdrawal," is that otherwise promising inquiries into language and its relation to humanity are compromised:

> Of late, scientific and philosophical investigation of languages is aiming ever more resolutely at the production of what is called "metalanguage." Analytic philosophy, which is set on producing this super-language, is thus quite consistent when it considers itself metalinguistics. Metalinguistics is the metaphysics of the thoroughgoing technicalization of all languages into the sole operative instrument of interplanetary information. Metalanguage and sputnik, metalinguistics and rocketry are the Same.[246]

Again, Heidegger (and we) must be clear and insist that these explorations have utility:

> Science does not think in the sense in which thinkers think. Still, it does not at all follow that thinking need pay no attention to the sciences. The statement 'science does not think' is not a license under which thinking is free to set itself up out of the blue, so to speak, simply by thinking something up.[247]

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[241] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 73.
[242] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 56.
[243] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 58.
[244] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 59.
[245] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 25.
[246] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 58.
[247] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 134.

Nonetheless, it is necessary for our purposes to acknowledge the technological modality within the metaphysical superstructure of Western thought, "Modern science is grounded in the nature of technology."[248] Attention is required, so that talk of humanity's capacity *for* language not further obfuscate much needed consideration of humanity's capacity *towards* language during this world-technological moment:

> However, we must not give grounds for the impression we are here passing negative judgment on the scientific and philosophical investigation of language and of languages. Such investigation has its own particular justification and retains its own important. But scientific and philosophical information about language is one thing; an experience we undergo with language is another.[249]

"A real revolution," that entails informed reflection on, "an experience we undergo with language," thus becomes the goal. Informed reflection can be achieved only by an endeavor to think and create anew, "The liberation of language from grammar into a more original essential framework is reserved for thought and poetic creation."[250] However, "Such reflections impose themselves easily, but they carry no weight compared with an entirely different difficulty through which the step back must pass."[251] The capacity to think, like the capacity to truly create, is compromised by the constraint of normative forces manifest in language:

> In order to learn how to experience the aforementioned essence of thinking purely, and that means at the same time to carry it through, we must free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking. The beginnings of that interpretation reach back to Plato and Aristotle. They take thinking itself to be a *techne*, a process of reflection in service to doing and making.[252]

[248] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 135.
[249] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 59.
[250] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 218.
[251] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 73.
[252] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 218.

The stubborn resistance of the contemporary context to inquiry therefore is not only found in the insufficiency of available instruments with which to challenge its dominance, but also in the metaphysical relationship intrinsically shared between language and thought:

> That difficulty lies in language. Our Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking, each in its own way. It must remain an open question whether the nature of Western languages is itself marked with the exclusive brand of metaphysics, and thus marked permanently by onto-theo-logic, or whether these languages offer other possibilities of utterance – and that means at the same time of a telling silence. The difficulty to which thoughtful utterance is subject has appeared often enough in the course of this seminar. The little word "is," which speaks everywhere in our language, and tells of Being even where It does not appear expressly, contains the whole destiny of Being – from the *estin gar einai*[253] of Parmenides to the "is" of Hegel's speculative sentence, and to the dissolution of the "is" in the positing of the Will to Power with Nietzsche.[254]

This observation of Heidegger's regarding, "is," becomes his main contribution to this section and to any response to our question: from *whence* language? As we turn away from Heidegger's overarching themes towards specifically his treatment of logic, "The little word, 'is,'" now receives our scrutiny. At issue is no longer just the peculiar way in which, "is," has been routinely deployed in discursive language in the proverbial West, but also what is inherent to the construct itself. In this way, Heidegger seeks to maintain his critique of the Greeks and their contemporary impact, while retaining a possibility for logic beyond its current form:

> This thinking alone reaches the primordial essence of *logos*, which was already obfuscated and lost in Plato and in Aristotle, the founder of "logic." To think against "logic" does not mean to break a lance for the illogical but simply to trace in thought the *logos* and its essence, which appeared in the dawn of thinking, that is, to exert ourselves for the first time in preparation for such reflection.[255]

Similarly, Heidegger's conceptualization here allows him to simultaneously attempt to explore distinct languages, while still keeping general applicability across languages in view:

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[253] This rendering of Parmenides into Latin letters is somewhat imprecise, but the consensus of available sources that do not themselves use the Greek letters consistently offer this translation.
[254] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 73.
[255] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 251.

> However, this word "thinking," as it is sounded in speech, obviously belongs to one particular language. Thinking, however, is a matter common to all mankind. Now it is impossible to glean the nature of thinking from the mere signification of one solitary word in one particular language, and then to offer the result as binding. Surely not. The only thing we can glean that way is that something remains doubtful here. However: the same doubt affects the common, human, logical thinking – provided that henceforth we make up our minds no longer to ignore the fact that logic, all that belongs to *logos*, is also only a single word in the singular and particular language of the Greeks – and not just in its sound structure.[256]

Heidegger claims that the misapprehension of Being by the Greeks necessarily derailed logic at its very inception as a field of study, "Being, as the element of thinking, is abandoned by the technical interpretation of thinking. 'Logic,' beginning with the Sophists and Plato, sanctions this explanation."[257] Any engagement with language and thought therefore now necessarily requires a recovery of logic as a philosophical enterprise, since language and thought become inseparably intertwined in logic:

> Why is thinking determined on the basis of assertion? This is by no means self-evident. Just above, we explicated "thinking" without reference to assertion and discourse. Meditation on the essence of thinking is consequently a truly unique sort of meditation when it is undertaken as a meditation on *logos*, thereby becoming logic. "Logic" and "the logical" are simply not *the* ways to define thinking without further ado, as if nothing else were possible. On the other hand, it was no accident that the doctrine of thinking became "logic."[258]

Heidegger can now continue his assessment of a specific trajectory of Western logic that he claims results in the, "devastation of language," and yet nonetheless conserve the possibility of logic as a philosophical category and field, "It may be noted that the same *logos*[259] also contains within itself the essential origin of the character of all languages, and thus determines the way of utterance as a logical way in the broader sense."[260] In doing so, he redefines logic along these,

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[256] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 133.
[257] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 219.
[258] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 127.
[259] Like the Parmenides' fragment cited by Heidegger earlier, the Greek letters are here rendered into their Latin counterparts, as they will be from this point on whenever sources cite Heidegger's spelling of *logos* in the Greek.
[260] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 69.

"broader," lines, "'Logic' understands thinking to be the representation of beings in their Being, which representation proposes to itself in the generality of the concept."[261] This allows Heidegger to claim that logic can yet defensibly transcend a merely, "technical interpretation of thinking," for, "Can then the effort to return thinking to its element be called 'irrationalism'?"[262]

Important here is the point, identified through logic, wherein normative forces originate within the clearing that is, and is provided by, language itself. Our differentiation between capacities *for* and *towards* language becomes clearer now. Asking about humanity's capacity *for* language is necessarily inquiring into a relationship of human agent to tool: the relation is purely instrumental. No matter how dear or necessary the tool, such a conceptualization of language remains inherently mechanistic. Language is therefore taken on by humanity, lifted up, deployed, etc.; it is not conceived of as something in itself, encountered as a presence grounded in its own integrity. Even in Pinker, the ubiquitousness of language is that of an evolutionarily developed tool: a biologically adapted apparatus, developed for a particular task, remains an instrument, no matter how intimately it is tied to the human form. As such, the study of humanity's capacity *for* language is itself a study of language as technology. As outlined above, technology arises from a particular metaphysical trajectory, codified into particular commitments and structures of logic. Hubert Dreyfus, in his own comments on Heidegger, suggests similar:

> Our technological clearing is the cause of our distress, yet if it were not given to us to encounter things and ourselves as resources, nothing would show up *as* anything at all, and no possibilities for action would make sense. And once we realize – in our practices, of course, not just as a matter of reflection – that we *receive* our technological understanding of being, we have stepped out of the technological understanding of being, for we see that what is most important in our lives is not subject to efficient enhancement – indeed, the drive to control everything is precisely what we do not control. This

[261] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 251.
[262] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 219.

> transformation of our sense of reality – this overcoming of thinking in terms of values and calculation – is precisely what Heideggerian thinking seeks to bring about.[263]

The danger of, "thinking in terms of values and calculation," is that such thinking renders all relationships into instrumental relationships, dependent upon human agency:

> Rather, it is important to finally realize that precisely through the characterization of something as 'a value' what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for man's estimation."[264]

"To think against values," is not necessarily to claim a nefarious agenda lurks behind such thinking, nor is such itself an attempt to descend further into nihilism, "To think against 'values' is not to maintain that everything interpreted as 'a value' – 'culture,' 'art,' 'science,' 'human dignity,' 'world,' and 'God' – is valueless."[265] Indeed, "values," are among the prime conceptual constructs that enable nihilism in the first place, "Heidegger claims that thinking about our deepest concerns as values *is* nihilism."[266] Reconsideration of values here (perhaps as opposed to Nietzsche) instead simply is an acknowledgement of what the logical constraints of metaphysical constructs inherent to such language *do*, "Logic relieves us of the trouble of asking elaborate questions about the essence of thinking."[267] Logic itself is an already-provided set of answers to preceding, enabling questions, "Instruction on what to understand by 'thinking' is given by logic."[268] As such, "thinking in terms of values and calculation," can be considered, "proper thinking," in that it arises from a particular logic peculiar to the metaphysics of Plato, Aristotle, and their contemporaries; yet, it can still be found to be inexhaustive and insufficient

[263] Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger on the connection between nihilism, art, technology, and politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 363.
[264] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 251.
[265] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 251.
[266] Dreyfus, "Heidegger on the connection between nihilism, art, technology, and politics," p. 349.
[267] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 127.
[268] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 153.

for questions outside their own commitments. To observe the limits of certain logical deployments does not defy logic itself; nonetheless, here normative forces begin to resist us:

> With the assistance of logic and *ratio* – so often invoked – people come to believe that whatever is not positive is negative and thus that is seeks to degrade reason – and therefore deserves to be branded as depravity. We are so filled with "logic" that anything that disturbs the habitual somnolence of prevailing opinion is automatically registered as a despicable contradiction.[269]

As discussed in the previous chapter, the normative excludes consideration of alternatives. "Alternatives," do not exist, as to concede to such would be to concede to the existence of resources beyond the totalizing systematization of the norm. The only, "alternative," is the exception. This is intensely problematic because the exception, also engaged previously throughout our analysis of the, "incomprehensible event," is itself unthinkable. Of course, *choices* exist *within* the system, but such can never directly implicate trajectories *beyond* the boundaries of the norm's totality.[270] At best, one can discover that the choices available are insufficient and/or unnecessary. This discovery can then implicate the limits of the normative discourse, "Overcoming traditional logic does not mean the abolition of thinking and the rule of mere feelings. Instead, it means a more originary, rigorous thinking that belongs to Being."[271] More to our purposes, such an, "overcoming," might provide a way to investigate the possibilities from which normative forces arise and against which normative forces struggle:

> As long as *ratio* and the rational remain questionable in what is their own, talk about irrationalism is unfounded. The technological scientific rationalization ruling the present age justifies itself every day more surprisingly by its immense results. But these results say nothing about what the possibility of the rational and the irrationaal (*sic*) first grants.[272]

[269] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 250.
[270] See p. 11.
[271] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 130.
[272] Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," p. 72.

Our question for this section, "from *whence* language," now finds its target in the host of possibilities first granted at the inception of the rational. Earlier in this section, we claimed that humanity's capacity *towards* language was found in its potential availability for transformative interpenetration through a particular index of language's discursive potential. Somehow, someway, language "reaches," and, through its reach, connects and transforms, "It not only puts forth in words and statements what is overtly or covertly intended to be communicated; language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time."[273] This transformative interconnectivity, in which language clears the way for disclosure and self-disclosure, mediates all discursive encounters within human experience. Further, the same occurs with such frequency that the boundaries of discursive possibility (which are themselves normative and not existential) become almost imperceptible:

> In any case this first interpretation of the thingness of the thing, the thing as bearer of its characteristic traits, despite its currency, is not as natural as it appears to be. What seems natural to us is probably just something familiar in a long tradition that has forgotten the unfamiliar source from which it arose. And yet this unfamiliar source once struck a man as strange and caused him to think and wonder.[274]

At some point, someone was, "struck," by the thing, in a way that disclosed both human and thing to one another in an immediate and total fashion. The aforementioned, "habitual somnolence," had not descended yet, wherein we would expect the thing to be experienced only in passing, as a sleepwalker retains passing awareness of surroundings. Instead, the claim here is that both human and thing are experienced directly and in their unmediated totality… yet something changed.

At some point, the thing was incorporated by a particular subset of humanity into their broader relationship with language. The, "with," here serves two functions: the thing becomes

[273] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.
[274] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 24.

related to humanity *through means of* language, and the thing becomes related to humanity *and thus* language. The former considers an instrumental dynamic; the latter observes an existential condition. To some degree, both mean that the thing surrenders a portion of itself in the process of its linguistic transformation into a, "thing-concept," as language conforms the thing to language's own normative expectations. No matter how gentle, no matter if purely conceptual, this act of force, by which the thing is made agreeable and thus admissible to language's logical constraints, is itself inescapably a reductive violation of the fullness of the thing:

> But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid – solely as the objects of its doing.[275]

The way of the thing to language is therefore inescapably tied to a consideration of violence:

> Yet even before all reflection, attentive dwelling within the sphere of things already tells us that this thing-concept does not hit upon the thingly element of the thing, its independent and self-contained character. Occasionally we still have the feeling that violence has long been done to the thingly element of things and that thought has played a part in this violence, for which reason people disavow thought instead of taking pains to make it more thoughtful.[276]

This violence, preceding as it does normative forces, exists solely in the form of a command. The command addresses its object in the exceptional thing, either bringing it into language or dismissing it away in its entirety. We deal with violence more thoroughly in the next section.

Language thus becomes the presence or absence of human relationship among phenomena, with humanity's capacity *towards* language a measure of the availability of human beings for such transformative interpenetration by and with phenomena. The rational becomes that which is agreeable and admissible to language and its inherent logic. However, that things

[275] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 251.
[276] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 24.

are addressed by, and are thus within the bounds of, language does not mean that there cannot exist things outside of language's discursive horizons. Such things would literally defy language:

> Perhaps however what we call feeling or mood, here and in similar instances, is more reasonable – that is, more intelligently perceptive – because more open to Being than all that reason which, having meanwhile become *ratio*, was misinterpreted as being rational. The hankering after the irrational, as abortive offspring of the unthought rational, therewith performed a curious service. To be sure, the current thing-concept always fits each thing. Nevertheless it does not lay hold of the thing as it is in its being, but makes an assault upon it.[277]

In this violent, "assault," we finally approach a response to this section's question: from *whence* language? In the violence inherent in language's genesis, we find language's source: *power*.

Language and violence are inescapably linked, because language is itself a legacy of a violent act: the command. As noted earlier, our next section will deal with this claim more thoroughly. For now, violent acts can likewise be seen as a strange struggle of interpretation, "A conflict is always a struggle between organizations and institutions in the sense of concrete orders. It is a struggle of *institutions* over *stances*."[278] Conflict (as far as one can be identified as such) therefore requires some sort interpretative structure which seeks to exert its dominance, either actively or passively, over other interpreters. This often is itself seen as a contestation of the authority and competency of the actors involved:

> If both parties in the conflict are unable to negotiate their right of co-determination in terms of a concordat, the conflict of competencies must end in the same way as the confessional civil wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth century: *either* in a precise answer to the big question *quis judicabit* ['who will decide'] *or* in an equally precise *itio in partes* ['return to the region'] – that is, in a spatially clear territorial or regional demarcation, in accordance with the principle *cuius regio eius religio* ['who rules defines the creed'].[279]

[277] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 25.
[278] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 114.
[279] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 114.

However, authority and competency must be considered differently in regards to the violence at language's conception, at least in terms of the agency of the actors. The authority and competency of language itself, or at least humanity's capacity *towards* language, is implicated:

> That something is, and that it is such and such, is what we usually designate as a fact. "Fact" is a beautiful and beguiling word… What we are to think of the explanation which traditional thinking gives of the existence of a fact, is something that can be decided only after we consider *that* distinction *by* which both *existentia* and *essentia* first achieve their determination. By what authority, and on what grounds, is that distinction made? How and in what way is thinking called to this distinction?[280]

Note that we retain institutions and stances, but that they are fundamentally linguistic and manifest in, yet are not reducible solely to, individual human agents. Furthermore, in the realization of power that is language, language retains a sense of *cuius regio eius religio*: the undisputed rule of language, "language is monologue,"[281] inescapably defines the discursive horizons of possibility for its subjects, "In order to be who we are, we human beings remain committed to and within the being of language, and can never step out of it and look at it from somewhere else."[282] Logic, as a means of arbitrating fact, arises concurrently with the very possibility of the institutions and consolidation of institutionalized power that secures its own existence. Through an analysis of logic's structuring of language, we can discuss the power underpinning humanity's capacity *towards* language, in ways which neither abstract away the concrete human beings involved, nor reduce our findings to a mere quantification of individual violent acts. Beforehand, though, more on the relationship that is language is needed.

To exist as and to humanity is to be in relation *towards* language, "Language is, as world-moving Saying, the relation of all relations."[283] Language is the index of the sum of humanity's

[280] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 161.
[281] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 134.
[282] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 134.
[283] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 107.

interpenetrating relationships: through language, humanity relates. Furthermore, as index, language grounds human relationships in concrete ways. As we conclude this section, consideration of Heidegger's entire analysis of logic is unnecessary for our purposes. Instead, we return to, "The little word, 'is,'" addressed earlier. We will focus on what grants the index its concreteness and how such relates to institutions and the consolidation of institutionalized power. "The little word, 'is,' requires attention to Heidegger's treatment of Thomas Hobbes.[284]

Heidegger understands the contributions of Hobbes to be a critical step in the development of Western logic, one which reinforces the fatally flawed, "Aristotelian-Scholastic tradition," but also one which can be repurposed to oppose the same, should we remember that, "Not every logos or discourse is exhibitive discourse."[285] This particular remark regarding, "exhibitive discourse," is an extraordinary observation and one that will remain crucial for us throughout our project. Discursive language does not monopolize disclosure and self-disclosure, though the pressure of Western logic, derived from the metaphysical weight of the, "Aristotelian-Scholastic tradition," consistently attempts to assert otherwise. Heidegger suggests that attention to Hobbes' work reveals how and why such pressure occurs through, "The little word, 'is,'" illuminating the origin of normative forces in the interplay of logic and power:

> We shall purposely treat Hobbes' concept of copula and assertion in somewhat more detail, not just because it is less well known but because this extreme nominalistic

[284] It is worth briefly noting that while Hobbesian themes are commonly observed in the "conservative revolutionary" bibliographic community within which Heidegger is often located by commentators (Bourdeiu, for example), very little is to be found regarding how these broader themes contribute, implicate, and relate to Heidegger's own individual engagement with Hobbes and his theories. While a few works do exist, we suggest many more are needed. As we show in this section, it is significant that Heidegger grounds his engagement of Hobbes' in that latter thinker's logic, and not Hobbes' far better known political theory. That Hobbes arguably does the same is often overlooked and has profound implications for political theory. Unfortunately, further tracking of such is beyond the scope of our project at this time. It is enough for us to note that we understand our brief treatment of the matter in this section to be novel and look forward to further discourse on the topic beyond this work.
[285] Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 180.

> formulation of the problem is carried through here with unsurpassable clarity in which – quite apart from the question of its tenability – philosophical power is always manifest.[286]

Heidegger reads Hobbes as support for his own emphasis that it is the verbal component that is operative in logic, far beyond any specific nominal constructs. This initially seems somewhat counterintuitive:

> Let us go straight to the decisive point and ask: what do *logos* and *legein* mean, if they do not mean thinking? *Logos* means the word, discourse, and *legein* means to discourse, to talk. Dia-logue is reciprocal discourse, mono-logue is solitary discourse. But *logos* does not originally mean discourse, saying. What the word means has no immediate relation to language.[287]

Heidegger observes that *logos*, its root, and its derivatives actually originally conveyed a sense of collecting and collection in Greek and Latin, so that:

> *Lego, legein*, Latin *legere*, is the same word as our *lesen* <to collect>: gleaning, collecting wood, harvesting grapes, making a selection; "reading <*lesen*> a book" is just a variant of "gathering" in the authentic sense. This means laying one thing next to another, bringing them together as one – in short, gathering; but at the same time, the one is contrasted with the other. This is how Greek mathematicians used the word <*logos*>.[288]

Two aspects of language are revealed here as inescapably discursive: language gathers and language contrasts. Whatever it is that language claims is not immediately disclosed, but brought into disclosure through discursive mediation. This discursive mediation inevitably involves contrast, as that which is gathered is differentiated from what precedes it and what might be foreseen to extend beyond it. The discursive act of naming is inseparable from the more primary revelation of relationship; surprisingly, naming is *necessary*, yet strangely *incidental*:

> In the expression "analogy" (correspondence) we even find both meanings side by side: the original meaning of *logos* as "interrelation" or "relationship," and its meaning as "language" or "discourse" – although in the word "correspondence" <*Entsprechung*> we hardly think any more of "responding" <*Sprechen*, speaking>, just as "correspondingly,"

[286] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 183.
[287] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 131.
[288] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 131.

> and in contrast, the Greeks did not yet necessarily think of "discourse" and "saying" in connection with *logos*.[289]

With Plato, Aristotle, and their contemporaries, the previous Greek thinking was changed and *logos* became strongly associated with its nominal commitments, so much so that the denotative and connotative meanings of *logos* itself changed. This change allowed logic to develop into a technical enterprise centered not primarily on the original relationality of its constituent parts, but on the parts as atomized entities. Such carried into the contemporary context, "The standard way of examining language is the grammatical way."[290] "Logic," in the West was born and took unto itself, "The little word, 'is,'" in a way that problematized any future reconsideration of its own conceptual foundations:

> Corresponding to the fundamental position in which the "is" occurs in the logos or assertion, and in conformity with the progress of the problem's development in ancient ontology, this "is" as copula was dealt with in the science of the logos, logic. Thus it came about that a very central and by no means arbitrary problem of being *was forced aside into logic*. We say "forced aside" because logic itself developed into a separate discipline within philosophy and because it became the discipline that most of all succumbed to induration and separation from the central problems of philosophy.[291]

Philosophy, at least in the West, has struggled to recover the relational dimensions of logic, over against its nominal focus; for instance, "The nineteenth century is not at all able to maintain itself at the level of Hegel's approach to the question but relapses into academic logic and, in fact, in such a way that questions of an epistemological and psychological nature get confused with specifically logical problems."[292] The relationality implicated by, "The little word, 'is,'" remains obscured within logic, to the detriment of comprehensive philosophical exploration, "This crude sketch of the fate of logic is intended to indicate that *because* the problem of the copula, the 'is,'

[289] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 131.
[290] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 68.
[291] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 177.
[292] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 177.

is treated in logic, it necessarily gets detached from the truly relevant problems of philosophy as the science of being."[293] Thus, for Heidegger, to move forward, "Our *problem* is to answer the *question of the connection between the 'is' as copula and the basic ontological problems*."[294]

This is a turn away from names and naming, as such, towards that which somehow precedes both. The relationship is brought into consideration, for which sake names are deployed, in order to establish the extent and parameters of the parties involved. Heidegger deploys a variety of approaches to describe this concept; "coordination," resonates with our own intent:

> When we name a thing, we furnish it with a name. But what about this furnishing? After all, the name is not just draped over the thing. On the other hand, no one will deny that the name is coordinated with the thing as an object. If we conceive the situation in this way, we turn the name, too, into an object. We see the relation between name and thing as the coordination of two objects. The coordination in turn is by way of an object, which we can see and conceive and deal with and describe according to its various possibilities. The relation between what is named and its name can always be conceived as a coordination. The only question is whether this correctly conceived coordination will ever allow us, will allow us at all, to give heed to what constitutes the peculiar property of the name.[295]

So, we must attend to the, "correctly conceived coordination," and how the coordination enables relationship vis-à-vis language, since, "Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to* their being *from out of* their being."[296] Yet, while naming, "nominates," it does so only due to the potential for relationship. It is the relationship which empowers the nomination, while the name is but the actualization; the latter is necessary, but incidental. For this reason, naming is a valuing, which attempts to somehow encapsulate its object within the object of a name. Yet, to claim values are

[293] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 178.
[294] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 179.
[295] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 120.
[296] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.

themselves the thing, rather than indicative of a preceding coordination of interpenetrating relationship, is a source of logical confusion, "The bizarre effort to prove the objectivity of values does not know what it is doing. When one proclaims 'God' the altogether 'highest value,' that is a degradation of God's essence."[297]

"Values," become abstractions which fail to implicate their preceding coordinated relationality. Heidegger claims their danger is in that they are too often deployed as if they were, in fact, self-sufficient, "To think against values therefore does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and nullity of being. It means rather to bring the clearing of the truth of Being before thinking, as against subjectivizing beings into mere objects."[298] This observation is an attempt to restore logical focus back to that which enables and makes sense of a subject and its predicate, when for too long attention has been monopolized by the atomization of each. Concrete life-and-death stakes are present in this issue:

> Value is the objectification of needs as goals, wrought by a representing self-establishing within the world as picture. Value appears to be the expression of the fact that we, in our position of relationship to it, act to advance just that which is itself most valuable; and yet that very value is the impotent and threadbare disguise of the objectivity of whatever is, an objectivity that has become flat and devoid of background. *No one dies for mere values*.[299][300]

"No one dies for mere values," returns us to Hobbes. Heidegger's claim observes that the act of dying (and its related act of taking life) is never on behalf of, "values," as if such were self-sufficient. Rather, any loss of life only occurs on behalf of and through the preceding relationships, *from* and *over against* which values themselves arise. The normative force of values arises from a preceding, mediating existential possibility of relationship.

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[297] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 251.
[298] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," p. 251.
[299] Italics mine.
[300] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), p. 142.

We quickly note that the claims of Schmitt explored in the previous chapter are supported and expanded upon through the above, further relating Heidegger and Schmitt through Hobbes:

> How should a theology, which explicitly separates itself from politics, be able *to put an end*, theologically, either political authority or a political claim? If *the theological* and *the political* are two substantively separate spheres – *toto caelo* [completely] different – then a *political* question can only be dealt with *politically*. The theologian can reasonably declare the closure of issues of political significance only by establishing himself as a political voice which makes political claims.[301]

The logical justification for political acts lay only in the sustainment of the friend-enemy distinction existentially constitutive of political entities, not in any normative claims within such entities. These entities are defined solely by the relationship of friend and enemy; it is upon the sole basis of this relationship that the lives and deaths of friends and enemies are secured.

Logic is the means by which this relationality, the relation between friends and enemies, *comes to know itself and manifest nuance* via discursive disclosure and self-disclosure. This preceding, mediating relationship is the necessary and sufficient precondition for all other human relations. For Heidegger, (re)conceptualizing logic as such[302] reveals its urgent relevancy, "Logic is then, however, all the more no undisciplined idle talk about *Weltanschauung*, but sobering work that is bound in the genuine impulse and in essential need."[303] For Schmitt:

> Who answers *in concreto*, on behalf of the concrete, autonomously acting human being, the question of what is spiritual, what is worldly and what is the case with the *res mixtae*, which, in the interval between the first and the second arrival of the Lord, constitute, as a matter of fact, the entire earthly existence of this spiritual-worldly, spiritual-temporal, double-creature called a *human being*? This is the big question posed by Thomas Hobbes, which is at the centre of my treatise *Political Theology* from 1922 and which led to a theory of decisionism [*Dezisionismus*] and of the inner logic of the act.[304]

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[301] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 113.
[302] It is important to note that Schmitt's categories are not ones Heidegger himself deploys. However, as we will address in the next section, Heidegger's deployment of, "We," "*Volk*," and similar concepts can be seen to substantively resonate with Schmitt's own framework, enough (we argue) to support our initial claim here.
[303] Martin Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 8.
[304] Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 115.

We return to Heidegger's analysis of Hobbes. Despite his, "extreme nominalism," Hobbes allows that focus on the names of things is insufficient; consideration of the logical proposition requires more. While, "In obvious adherence to Aristotle, he starts with the delineation of possible forms of speech, logos, oratio," Heidegger notes of Hobbes, "He starts out from the *verbal character* of these forms of speech: they are *signs* for something physical."[305] What is of significance within the proposition posed in logic is not so much the names themselves, but the linguistic and logical processes which somehow juxtapose these disparate parties. Heidegger cites Hobbes, "For example, this utterance, 'Man is an animal,' in which two names are coupled by the verb 'is.' This speech states a proposition."[306]

Clarity on what utterances constitute propositions is extraordinarily important: such establishes the horizons of possibility for discursive disclosure and self-disclosure, *over against* other non-discursive modes of the same, "Every proposition is *ipso facto* a sentence. But we need to give thought to the question whether every statement is a proposition – indeed, whether the statement can at all be defined in terms of the sentence, as the grammarians believe."[307] In Heidegger's reading of Hobbes, not every sentence or statement rises to being a proposition. A proposition contains a mutually informing subject and predicate, so that, "the whole of this verbal sequence is a sign (significat) that the one who employs these words understands something."[308] This is not uniquely novel, yet it is significant because, "In Hobbes this sign-relation is even more externalized."[309] Heidegger notes Hobbes' next and more influential move:

> How can the "is" as combining-concept be determined more precisely in its sign-function? The coupling, says Hobbes, does not necessarily have to be expressed by the *est*, the "is," *nam et ille ipse ordo nominum, connexionem suam satis indicare potest for*

[305] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 184.
[306] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 185.
[307] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 162.
[308] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 185.
[309] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 185.

> *the very order of the names itself can indicate the connection sufficiently*.[310] The sign of the coupling itself, if expressed, the copula or an inflexion form of the verb, has on its part a specific indicative function.[311]

This, "specific indicative function," makes all the difference in the forthcoming analysis:

> …the coupling itself, however, or its sign, the copula, likewise induces a thought, in which we think the reason why the two successive names are assigned to one and the same thing. The copula is not simply the sign of a combination, a combining-concept, but the index of that *on which the combinedness is grounded*, causa.[312]

It is possible, perhaps, to juxtapose two names to the same thing in a somewhat propositional way without the copula, "The little word, 'is.'" However, the presence of the copula in the properly constructed and identified proposition does more than juxtapose. It provokes thought:

> Hobbes traces the indicative function of the copula back to the indication of the entity meant in the nomina copulate, back to the question of what it is *in the thing named* that makes the difference on the basis of which it is named precisely that way and not otherwise as compared with other things. In asking about the esse aliquid we are asking about the quidditas, about the whatness of a being.[313]

Yet, to either inquire into or reference the, "whatness of a being," posits a preceding question:

> It now first becomes clear what functional sense Hobbes assigns to the copula. As indication of the thought of the *ground* of the coupling of the names, the copula is the *index of this*, that *in the proposition*, in the assertion, we think the *quidditas*, the whatness of things. The propositio is the answer to the question *What is* the thing? From the nominalist viewpoint this means: What is the reason for the assignment of two different names to the same thing? To utter the "is" in the proposition, to think the copula, means to think the ground of the possible and necessary identical relatedness of subject and predicate to the same thing. What is thought in the "is," the ground or cause, is whatness (realitas). Accordingly, the "is" announces the essentia or the quidditas of the res which is asserted about in the assertion.[314]

This is problematic, however, because Heidegger claims, "Hobbes denies that the 'is' expresses in any sense 'exists,' 'is present,' or the like."[315] Mere existence is not necessary and

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[310] Where Heidegger cites and then translates Hobbes' Latin, we have used italics to differentiate such from Heidegger's own comments. The same is done later in this section whenever Heidegger translates Hobbes at length.
[311] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 186.
[312] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 186.
[313] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 186.
[314] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 187.
[315] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 188.

sufficient to provoke consideration of, "whatness," and thereby propose a confluence of qualities brought together in a thing. A concession as to existence is not the thought provoked by, "The little word, 'is.'" As such, "This confronts us with a question. Given that the copula expresses whatness, what then is the relation of its expressive function to the phenomenon or to the expression of extantness, existence?"[316]

Rather than indicating, "existence," the copula is properly understood to indicate, "cause." There exists that which compels the proposition, turning the copula into an index which grounds the claim and thereby unifies its constituent parts, "The copula indicates the *cause* of the assignment of different names to the same thing. This determination must be retained. The 'is' says that there subsists a cause for this identifying relatedness of the subject-name and the predicate-name to a single thing."[317] So, if cause and not existence is signified by the copula, "The question arises, How does Hobbes conceive of the veritas and falsitas, truth or falsehood, belonging to the propositio?"[318] Hobbes' reply to this question has profound implications for our question: from *whence* language? According to Heidegger's analysis of Hobbes:

> Hobbes sees the truth of the proposition as lying in a correct identifying reference of the propositional terms to the same thing as the *unifying* reason for their being combined. He defines the copula in the same sense as truth. As copula, the "is" is at the same time the expression of being-true in the proposition.[319]

Truth and truth-claim collapse into one, not due to nihilism, but because, through discursive language, the possibility of the latter creates the possibility of the former:

> Hobbes says without qualification: Truth is always a true proposition. *Veritas enim in dicto, non in re consistit, truth has its subsistence in the said as such, but not in things*. This reminds us of the Aristotelian statement: Aletheuein, being-true, is not en pragmasin, in things, but en dianoia, in thought. In line with his extreme nominalistic

[316] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 188.
[317] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 188.
[318] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 188.
[319] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 188.

> tendency, Hobbes says in contrast that truth lies in *articulated* thinking, in the proposition.[320]

In this way, Hobbes notes that our relationship with things is not only mediated by language, which is the discursive mode of disclosure and self-disclosure that enables assertion; language *is* what actualizes the possibility of any such relationship. Language, as the medium for proposition, renders truth, "We call a *thing* true only because the *assertion* about it is true. The ascription of truth to things is a secondary mode of speech."[321] Of course, Heidegger immediately challenges, "But the question immediately arises, Why is the assertion about this being true?"[322] One dimension of this question Heidegger briefly comments upon, "Nevertheless, a puzzling connection shows up here between the *actuality* of a being and the *truth of the assertion* of this actual being – a connection that impressed us in the interpretation of the Kantian view of being: being equals perceivedness, positedness."[323] We will return to this possible point of departure later in this work. For now, what is most significant is Hobbes' own reply, followed by Heidegger's summation:

> *Intelligitur hinc veritati et falsitati locum non esse, nisi in iis animantibus qui oratione utuntur, from this it becomes intelligible that the place of truth and falsity is only in such living beings as make use of speech*. Because assertion is speech, a contexture of words, and the place of truth lies in assertion, there is truth only where there are living beings making use of assertion.[324]

The question regarding why the assertion is true is defied by language itself: truth *is* language *in* relationship with humanity. There is no referent outside humanity's own capacity *towards* language against which to verify the assertion. The thing must be heard, but only humans are

[320] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 188.
[321] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 189.
[322] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 189.
[323] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 189.
[324] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 190.

present for the hearing: only their causes provide motive for the copula and only their plight is, "that *on which the combinedness is grounded*, causa." Heidegger cites Hobbes directly[325]:

> …just as for men [and with this he sharpens the fundamental distinguishing characteristic of language] it is to well-understood speech that they owe everything they know rationally, so they are indebted to the same speech and language, when badly understood, for their errors. Just as the ornament of philosophy belongs solely to man, so also does the ugliness of meaningless assertions. …language and speech are like the webs of spiders, which was also said of Solon's laws. Tender and squeamish minds stick to the words and get ensnared in them, but strong minds break through them. …it can be inferred from this that the first *truths* sprang from the free judgment of those who first imposed names on things or received them from others as already imposed. For, to take an example, the proposition "Man is a living being" is true because they were pleased to impose the two names on the *same* thing.[326]

We now begin to break somewhat from Heidegger as we conclude this section. We certainly agree with aspects of his characterization of Hobbes and questions left for exploration:

> Despite his whole nominalistic attack on the problem, the "is" means, for Hobbes, too, more than a mere phenomenon of sound or script which is somehow inserted between others. The copula as a coupling of words is the index of the thought of the cause for the identical referability of two names to the same thing. The "is" means the whatness of the thing about which the assertion is made. Thus beyond the pure verbal sequence there emerges a manifold which belongs to the assertion in general: identifying reference of names to a thing, apprehension of the whatness of the thing in this identifying reference, the thought of the cause from the identifying referability.[327]

Indeed, Heidegger develops these very themes in other works, echoing (without crediting) Hobbes' distinction between, "exist," and, "cause," within the copula. Heidegger notes that there is a concreteness to, "The little word, 'is,'" that transcends all its, "manifold," deployments, a provocation suggestive of the Hobbesian understanding of, "cause," outlined above, "However, a definite, unitary trait runs through all these meanings. It points our understanding of 'to be'

[325] Due to length, Hobbes' Latin is omitted here and only Heidegger's translation provided.
[326] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 191.
[327] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 192.

towards a definite horizon by which the understanding is fulfilled."[328] The similarities accrue when we consider Heidegger's insistence that the verbal nature of the proposition is primary:

> This all points in the direction of what we ran into when we first characterized the Greek experience and interpretation of Being. If we follow the usual explication of the infinitive, then the expression "to be" gets its sense from the unity and definiteness of the horizon that guides our understanding. In short, we thus understand the verbal noun "Being" on the basis of the infinitive, which in turn remains linked to the "is" and to the manifoldness we have pointed out in this "is."… To put it the other way around, we involuntarily explain the infinitive "to be" to ourselves on the basis of the "is," almost as if nothing else were possible.[329]

We will abandon Heidegger's further critique, necessary to his own project, in order to continue pursuit of our own. Heidegger's observation regarding the copula, that humanity, "involuntarily," grounds its discursive disclosure and self-disclosure, "on the basis of the 'is,'" compels our interest. More compelling is what follows: "almost as if nothing else were possible." What is it that might provide the copula's cause such definitive and dispositive power?

When considering Hobbes' treatment of truth in Hobbes' logic, Heidegger failed to consider an overarching theme of Hobbes' work: auctoritas non veritas facit legem. The proposition does not exist merely to assert truth. In fact, the assertion of truth is incidental. The proposition exists to *command*. The logical collapse of truth into assertion occurs *concurrent* with the political implementation of assertion as command. The command is the copula's causa, bringing various names into agreement on the same thing by virtue of its preceding, mediating authority, one which originates solely from its existential nature. From *whence* language? Power.

Hobbes states such in the quote already cited above, "it can be inferred from this that the first *truths* sprang from the free judgment of those who first imposed names on things or received them from others as already imposed." The copula *is* the command which enables the index of

[328] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 96.
[329] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 96.

humanity's discursive horizons of possibility. Humanity's capacity *towards* language, its availability for transformative interpenetration through a particular index of language's discursive potential, *is* therefore its availability for transformative interpenetration through a particular index of a specific cosmogonic command. "The little word, 'is,'" *is* itself either the command or the legacy of such a command, and provides language the logic of its structure.

For this reason, "There is something fundamentally tragic about the way and how of communal semiosis, no matter how much counterpressure is exerted through the fitful tools of democratic reconstruction (which belong to the inner momentum of interpretive communities)."[330] As noted in the previous chapter, the command has and needs no justification beyond its existential requirements. Therefore, what underpins language is not a series of, "values," but a set of constraints. Language is a normative behavior grounded in the encounter of a specific instance of human power *over against* a particular context. The command itself is beyond language, in that it is not discursive, but cosmogonic. Heidegger can be helpful here[331]:

> Heraclitus says… Confrontation is indeed for all (that comes to presence) the sire (who lets emerge), but (also) for all the preserver that holds sway. For it lets some appear as gods, others as human beings, some it produces (sets forth) as slaves, but others as the free.
> The *polemos* named here is a strife that holds sway before everything divine and human, not war in the human sense. As Heraclitus thinks it, struggle first and foremost allows what essentially unfolds to step apart in opposition, first allows position and status and rank to establish themselves in coming to presence. In such a stepping apart, clefts, intervals, distances, and joints open themselves up. In con-frontation, world comes to be. [Confrontation does not divide unity, much less destroy it. It builds unity; it is the gathering (*logos*). *Polemos* and *logos* are the same.][332]

"*Polemos* and *logos* are the same," reinforces our claim: the context of language's deployment is that of command answering exception. We disagree with Heidegger, however, in

[330] Robert Corrington, *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 128.
[331] Due to length, Heraclitus' Greek is omitted here and only Heidegger's translation provided.
[332] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 65.

that there is at least one, "war in the human sense," as noted by Hobbes, which also rises to functionally being, "a strife that holds sway before everything divine and human," "Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man."[333] This is not a war in the sense discussed by Schmitt in the previous chapter; in fact, this is the kind of conflict Schmitt seeks to ensure never occurs. The war here is not a political conflict, as it precedes the establishment of political entities and their constitutive friend-enemy distinctions. Indeed, there can be no such distinctions (and, thus, no political entities), because there is not yet a command which enables the discursive coupling that is language: *there is no ground* upon which to establish an index of relationships. In such a condition as outlined by Hobbes, there is therefore nothing normative that could be considered divine or even (we argue in the next section) human:

> Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall. In such a condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require more force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.[334]

Lacking the above, there are no normative behaviors, as there is no command through which to consolidate power and thereby exert normative force. Important for our purposes, this also means there is no ground that might provide necessary and sufficient cause for the copula. As the copula does not attest to the actual existence of its names, but only the cause that relates the two,

[333] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or The Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 77.
[334] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 78.

there exists no logic without such ground. Without logic, language cannot index humanity's relationships in a discursive fashion and therefore falls apart into its constitutive components. Without discursive language, the first normative behavior, all other normative forces fail:

> To this warre of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be Unjust. The notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there no place. Where there is no common Power, there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice. Force, and Fraud, are in warre the two Cardinall vertues. Justice, and Injustice are none of the Faculties neither of the Body, nor Mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his Senses, and Passions. They are Qualities, that relate to men in Society, not in Solitude.[335]

In the absence of normative forces, there are no discursive boundaries; the two are intertwined:

> It is consequent also to the same condition, that there be no Propriety, no Dominion, no *Mine* and *Thine* distinct; but onely that to be every mans, that he can get; and for so long, as he can keep it. And thus much for the ill condition, which man by meer Nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the Passions, partly in his Reason.[336]

This, "possibility to come out of it," is, of course, the rise of Hobbes' titular Leviathan, which is the cosmogonic state:

> This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMON-WEALTH, in latine CIVITAS. This is the Generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speake more reverently) of that *Mortall God*, to which wee owe under the *Immortall God*, our peace and deference. For by this Authoritie, given him by every particular man in the Common-Wealth, he hath the use of so much Power and Strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is inabled to forme the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutuall ayd against their enemies abroad.[337]

Further repercussions of this issue are addressed in the next section. For now, it is sufficient to observe that it is in the state that the first command is given: *here are friends, there be enemies*. This distinction, secured by the existential purpose of the state, provides the grounds for future transformative, interpenetrating relationships. Yet, the peace provided by such clarity unfolds in

[335] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 79.
[336] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 79.
[337] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 105.

unique ways specific to the encounter of that manifestation of human power *over against* its particular historical context. Its relationships are themselves indexed through the preceding relationship shared between the same. As such, the state is more than just institution and the consolidation of institutionalized power, "What comes about as a result of this social covenant, the sole guarantor of peace, the sovereign-representative person, does not come about as a result of but because of this consensus. The sovereign-representative person is much more than the sum total of all the particular participating wills."[338]

The state becomes an interpreter whose cosmogonic command establishes the trajectories for normative forces rendered out of existential conditions, "The struggle meant here is originary struggle, for it allows those that struggle to originate as such in the first place; it is not a mere assault on the present-at-hand. Struggle first projects and develops the un-heard, the hitherto un-said and un-thought."[339] Without the state and its existential struggle to assert its cosmogonic command, there may be life, but there is no language in the sense of discursive disclosure and self-disclosure, "Where struggle ceases, beings indeed do not disappear, but world *turns away*."[340][341] As such, "If this construct were viewed from its result, from the perspective of the state, what it would reveal is that the state is something more than and something different from a covenant concluded by individuals."[342] However, failing to consider the normative force of language that originates in the state, Schmitt errs when claiming:

> To be sure, the accumulated anguish of individuals who fear for their lives brings a new power into the picture: the leviathan. But that affirms rather than creates this new god. To that extent the new god is transcendent vis-à-vis all contractual partners of the covenant and vis-à-vis the sum total, obviously only in a juristic and not in a metaphysical sense.[343]

[338] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 33.
[339] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 65.
[340] Italics mine.
[341] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 65.
[342] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 33.
[343] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 34.

Yet, as a normative force, language arises from the command of the cosmogonic state; more, language *is* itself metaphysics. The breadth of metaphysics is implicated in the state's generation of language's discursive horizons of possibility, so that its origin is inherently metaphysical:

> Individual liberty does not constitute a sufficient condition for the hermeneutic community. Some form of conscious convergence must also prevail as the locus of future aspiration for the members of the social order. A democracy is not merely the sum total of liberated individuals but requires institutional and social convergences around shared values and goals. Without this common future the sign process would degenerate into a pluralistic cacophony of discordant and competing sounds.[344]

The state has metaphysical significance, as its command (and simultaneous friend-enemy distinction) provides the ground through which language enacts discursive disclosure and self-disclosure. In this regard, Schmitt does not adequately investigate a point better investigated by Heidegger's treatment of the relationship between the advent of language and its required encounter of human power *over against* particular context:

> One translates *polis* as state <*Staat*> and city-state <*Stadstaat*>; this does not capture the entire sense. Rather, *polis* is the name for the site <*Statte*>, the Here, within which and as which Being-here is historically. The *polis* is the site of history, the Here, *in* which, *out of* which and *for* which history happens. To this site of history belong the gods, the temples, the priests, the celebrations, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, the council of elders, the assembly of the people, the armed forces, and the ships.[345]

In the next section, we pursue the legacy and setting of the state more thoroughly. We disagree with Heidegger's verdict on Hobbes, "Subjected to the constraint of the phenomena involved in the interpretation of the assertion as a sequence of words, Hobbes more and more surrenders his own initial approach."[346] Rather, Hobbes provides us the possibility of understanding the state beyond merely quantifiable institution. Through its consequent creation

[344] Robert Corrington, *The Community of Interpreters: On the Hermeneutics of Nature and the Bible in the American Philosophical Tradition* (Mercer University Press, 1987), p. 58.
[345] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 162.
[346] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 192.

of language vis-à-vis its cosmogonic command, the state is (among all its other identities) an interpretative perspective, a *point of view*. The state attests to a particular encounter of human power *over against* a concrete context, through which normative forces are rendered out of existential conditions.

Our next task is to track the violence inherent in the origins of language and the state, as well as how the legacy of such violence inescapably perpetuates itself after the cosmogonic command. Against what is this violence directed and towards what end is such violence deployed? If language is the ever-increasing indexing of transformative, interpenetrating relationalities within the discursive horizons *that are the state*, the absence of language manifest as trauma and its, "incomprehensible event," seems to attest to the presence of something *antithetical* not only to the individuals bound by language, but to *the entire system* built upon language's discursive facilitation. To this end, if language is inherently that which accesses and arises from the cosmogonic interpretations of the state, what finally is languagelessness?

Section 2.2: The Limits of Language

Having sought to locate the origins of language in the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, it now seems necessary to further examine the nature of command itself. As discussed in the previous chapter, a command either establishes a system, or restores one that is confronted by a, "genuine decision."[347] Both originary and restorative commands are self-justified and self-justifying, in that they are each grounded in the existential power of the state, *the power to continue as such*. Yet, though we must move forward with our examination, we encounter a stumbling block: it is difficult to assess the command through any normative framework manifest within states, except insofar as commands enable normative discourse itself.

This is problematic. Any further discussion will be vis-à-vis discursive language, yet discursive language itself is a normative force arising from the originary command of the cosmogonic state. Hence our preceding section: how to talk about humanity's capacity *towards* language, when language itself gets in the way? Continued exploration of logic in this section provides a way forward, as we explore existential structures presumably inherent to all such communication, "Thus, we stand before the facts that now logic, for which we first wanted to create the vestibule by making language a topic, itself is the site of origin of language."[348] Though discursive language is a normative behavior manifest in various forms within diverse states, the reality *that* languages exist is an existential facet of states themselves:

> Logic is for us nothing that an individual could manufacture overnight and bring to the market as [a] text manual. Logic is not, and never is, for the sake of logic. Its questioning happens as the care of knowing about the being of beings, which being comes to power as the ruling of the world happens in language.[349]

[347] See p. 6.
[348] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 14.
[349] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 145.

Prior to and dispositive of any normative trajectories, language arises from the power manifest in this very, "ruling of the world." "Ruling," is not only intended here in terms of consolidated domination; nonetheless, such connotations are never absent. For our purposes, "ruling," is understood in the sense of a facilitative, "judging," rather than a deliberative, "governing." In this section, we will explore this peculiar aspect of, "the ruling of the world," the violence inherent in its creative task, and how both relate to what we call *languagelessness*.

The moment wherein a state's birth renders existential conditions into normative frameworks is precisely when a nascent state, "rules," upon the discursive horizons of possibility progressing out from its own unique struggle.[350] This struggle is the encounter of human potential, actualized by and in a particular population, *over against* its specific context. From such struggle arises the aforementioned conceptualization of the state as an interpretative perspective, as a *point of view*, "This struggle is then sustained by the creators, by the poets, thinkers, and statesmen. Against the overwhelming sway, they throw the counterweight of their work and capture in this work the world that is thereby opened up."[351] Relevant to us, this, "world," manifests, and is manifest in, the normative boundaries of language, "This becoming-a-world is authentic history."[352]

We will return to, "world," later in this section. Beforehand, attention to the nature of the relation between history, power, and state is needed. What is, "authentic history," and how is it formed in the turbulence of, "becoming-a-world?" From onset, it is important for us to be clear: power is present not only in the *quantitative acts*, but also in the *qualitative stance* of a state:

> …the State is essentially necessary – the State, not as an abstract, and not [as] derived from a right [that is] invented and relative to a timeless human nature that is in itself, but

[350] See p. 106.
[351] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 65.
[352] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 65.

> the State as the law of the essence of historical being, by virtue of whose decree the *Volk* first secures for itself historical duration…"[353]

While the problematic concept of *Volk*[354] (addressed later in this section) often overshadows it, the concept of duration is the more immediately relevant notion here.

From the state arises the power to not only define, but to provide definition: its *establishing* act is always and inherently a *normalizing* one. This is what we intend by claiming that the state's commands are grounded in its power, *the power to continue as such*. At the existential level, power is understood as the ability not only *to surface*, but *to sustain*, "Only in duration does time approach the irrational abyss that brings forth the cosmic event out of itself."[355] This, "cosmic event," is not merely an occurrence among others, "History is not only a succession of occurrences."[356] Indeed, it is precisely such an atomistic and erroneous approach to time which plays into the world-technological crisis of the contemporary context, discussed previously, "We should not, however, understand every historical point in an isolated fashion and in terms of itself. Otherwise we would be back in the atomistic-analytical rationalism of the eighteenth century."[357] The cosmogonic command of the interpretative state is instead both formative and transformative: time *becomes* history. Time is reckoned differently, given the reality which is, and is imposed by, the state, "Admittedly, it seems indisputable that that which

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[353] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 140.
[354] Throughout this section, we maintain the use of, "*Volk*," wherever translators retained it in the move from German to English. As the word has dimensions not comprehensively accessible through any single or few English counterparts, we avoid the use of synonyms even in our own analysis. This is difficult, as we are aware of the troublesome, if not outright horrific, connotations of the word, given its deployment throughout the 20th century into the present. However, while the concept of *Volk* is central to German fascism (especially Nazism), the concept of *Volk* also predates and is not reducible to that system or Nazism's contemporary legacies. To be certain, we are cognizant of the risks and trajectories inherent in the concept, as observed by commentators such as Bourdieu and Hans Jonas. Throughout this work, we continue the deployment of *Volk* with these concerns in mind, in order to combat through argument how *Volk* has previously been cast and used to ill effect.
[355] Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism* (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 1986), p. 62.
[356] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 74.
[357] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 62.

goes by, immediately belongs to the past; however, not everything that passes by and belongs to the past needs to enter into history."[358]

This *becoming* of time into history is not a gradual adaptation or evolution; such would likely (though not necessarily) require us to postulate an overarching intent into the existential conditions from which states arise.[359] The *becoming* of time into history is instead an act of making by, and constitutive of, the state, "And the *Volker* do not enter history, as if that were an available space in which they find lodging, a present-at-hand path, which they only would have to traverse, but 'making history' means: *first to create the space and soil*."[360] The state, an outcome of a human population struggling with its own potential within the crucible of its specific context, *makes* history in its arrival within space and time, "Man becomes the relational center of that which is as such."[361] *Everything* is not innately historical, for everything is not in equivalent relation to the struggle from which arises the state:

> In every happening, there is that which makes noise and racket, there is window-dressing, idle talk, bustle, machination, enterprise, semblance of accidents, passion of the unrestrained, the formless, the daily ascertainable events. All of that belongs to history as necessarily as the valley to the mountain. And yet, that is not in the proper sense history, but unhistory.[362]

This is an awkwardly complicated matter, "To enter into history means, therefore, not simply that something is bygone, merely because it is bygone, is classed with the past."[363] We are compelled to admit, "History is ambiguous. And, how confusedly do we think about history and

[358] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 73.
[359] The imputation of such intent is precisely what we consider the dangerous risk inherent whenever history is collapsed into teleology, whether through confessional claims, Hegelianism, or even Heidegger's own *Seinsgeschichte*. Of course, talk of adaptation and evolution does not necessarily require a conversation on teleology. That expectation is common, however, though pursuit of such is tangential to our own project. Therefore, we find it appropriate to simply acknowledge the issue, before moving on to matters more relevant to our focus.
[360] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 74.
[361] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 128.
[362] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 82.
[363] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 73.

our own being, assuming history constitutes the most proper character of our kind of being!"[364]

Clarity is needed, if we are to ask how it is something might be, "historical," later in this section:

> What we name unhistory here should not be, in spite of the negative expression, perhaps disparaged or morally devalued. That which is historical cannot be comprehended by the standards of *good* and *evil*. Something morally good can be very unhistorical, and something immoral can be very historical. Good and evil are just as little standards for the happening as progress and regress.[365]

Addressing the aforementioned, "relational center," which enables the above, Heidegger observes, "But this is possible only when the comprehension of what is as a whole changes."[366] The later Heidegger suggests the possibility of an overarching Western civilization (specifically, the technological trajectory of the West since Plato) as the structure mediating (for good and ill) such a change of awareness. We suggest that Schmitt provides a more convincing argument vis-à-vis Hobbes: the normative forces which originate with and within the state provide the transformation Heidegger otherwise rightly notes, "All order and all legal guarantees of the system of international law reside in the concept of the state."[367] The existential condition of the state is that it continues to be *only so long* as it normalizes all relations within it. We cite Schmitt's claim, explicitly referenced earlier in our discussion of the *scelus infandum*,[368] again here to emphasize and nuance this crucial point regarding the state's existential predicament:

> Against the irresistible, overpowering leviathan "state," which subjugates all "law" to its commands, there exists neither a discernible "stance" nor a "resistance" ("*Wider-Stand*"). Such a state exists as a state, and in that case it functions as an irresistible instrument of quietude, security, and order and has all objective and all subjective rights on its side because, as the sole and highest lawgiver *it makes all the laws or it does not exist*[369] and therefore cannot fulfill its function as the defender of peace, in which case the state has returned to a state of nature, and the state as such ceases to exist.[370]

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[364] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 73.
[365] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 83.
[366] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 128.
[367] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 47.
[368] See p. 68.
[369] Italics mine.
[370] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 46.

The state exists as long, and only for so long, as it *rules*. Yet, given history, the rule of the state can neither be reduced to its quantifiable acts of governance, nor to its qualitative stance. Both are integral parts of its whole. Here is where Heidegger and Schmitt complement one another. Heidegger consistently locates the possibility of normative behavior (including discursive language) on a necessary preceding, mitigating, "ground," from which the former springs. Certainly, Heidegger might eventually forsake the explicit category of states in favor of broader notions of, "Western civilization" (especially late-*Kehre* and after the Second World War). However, he maintains that history exists in and through the normative forces only first enabled via discursive language, which arises as index from the preceding, mitigating, "ground:"

> But in the inception, this is what happens: *logos* as the revealing gathering – Being, as this gathering, this fittedness in the sense of *phusis* – becomes the necessity of the essence of historical humanity. From here one need take only a single step to grasp how *logos*, so understood, determines the essence of language and how *logos* becomes the name for discourse. Being-human, according to its historical, history-opening essence, is *logos*, the gathering and apprehending of the Being of beings: the happening of what is most uncanny, in which, through doing violence, the overwhelming comes to appearance and is brought to stand.[371]

Where Heidegger provides Schmitt the further metaphysical analysis the latter repeatedly claims is necessitated by his own work, Schmitt can be understood to clarify, via the state, Heidegger's claim of a concrete, "ground," from which arises normative behavior. States, in both being and providing the possibility for normativity, are beyond reduction into normative categories. In fact, the normative forces constitutive and definitional of states are often what exacerbate conflict, "The more complete the internal organization of a state is, the less feasible it is for it to engage in mutual relations on an equal basis. The more thoroughly each state is developed, the less it is able to maintain its state character in interstate relations."[372] As for war:

[371] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 182.
[372] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 49.

> In contrast to religious, civil, and factional wars, wars between states cannot be measured with the yardsticks of truth and justice. War between states is neither just nor injust; it is an affair of state and as such does not have to be just. *Ordo hoc non includit*. The state has its order in, not outside, itself.[373]

Any normative claims therefore, "break down," in the extralegal state of nature. This, "extralegal," context includes all space and time beyond not merely the *physical*, but also the *conceptual* protection of each state's reach:

> In view of such technically complete armatures, the question of right and wrong breaks down. It used to be said that even though there certainly are just wars, there are no just armies. That observation can be made of the state as a mechanism. Considering the leviathan as a great command mechanism of just or unjust states would ultimately be the same as "discriminating" between just and unjust machines.[374]

We return to duration. The protection that is the rule of the state is therefore first found not in its defense against physical threats, but in its opposition to the anarchic *nonsense* of structureless space and time, "It is only the condition of continuous duration that justifies every state of affairs."[375] It is over against the limitless possibilities of such unstructured nonsense that the state arises via its population's, "foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby."[376] The structuring of what is otherwise nonsense, rendering its resources into sense, is the task of discursive language. The power existentially present in the state is not manifest as an immediate remedy, but as a remedy in perpetuity. Its very duration is what makes it, "power," and not yet another symptom of flux. Due to its foundation as power, *the power to continue as such*, the state renders sense, in the form of normative forces, out of existential conditions of *mere* space and time: this cosmogonic act grounds all its claims *of* protection and thus all its claims *to* obedience:

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[373] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 48.
[374] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 50.
[375] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 62.
[376] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 102.

> The Soveraignty is the Soule of the Common-wealth; which once departed from the Body, the members doe no more receive their motion from it. The end of Obedience is Protection; which, wheresoever a man seeth it, either in his own, or in anothers sword, Nature applyeth his obedience to it, and his endeavor to maintaine it.[377]

Herein lay a new difficulty: the state, "makes," history, in that it is only through the state that the *nonsense* of time is rendered into the discursive *sense* of history. Before moving on, a quick note: by claiming this, we do not intend any elevation of history to the level of metanarrative, akin to Hegelianism. Rather, within each state, the definitional encounter of the particular population involved (its struggle with both its own human potential and specific context) *makes sense* of their experience and therefore *makes history*. Yet, now a problem emerges for us: a state is itself historical. It is never an outside observer, but *an* event which always understands itself to be *the* event:

> "Making" [*Machen*] does not mean here to produce, in the sense in which one can produce and preserve a thing. Although a *Volk* makes [*macht*] its history, this history is not, however, the work [*das Gemachte*] of the *Volk*; the *Volk* for its part is made [*gemacht*] by history.[378]

The birth of the state and its delineation of a friend-enemy distinction occur at once, as the *literally definitive* event, each dependent on and indicative of the other, "The Distribution of the Materials of this Nourishment, is the constitution of *Mine*, and *Thine*, and *His*; that is to say, in one word *Propriety*; and belongeth in all kinds of Common-wealth to the Soveraign Power."[379] In the establishment of these categories is the start of history, the consolidation of the state, and the realization of power. Yet, a complication is discovered when, while the state is *making history*, it also finds itself in the midst of *making itself*. The state's arrival is the moment,

[377] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 134.
[378] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 74.
[379] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 149.

too, that its own actual and potential limits are revealed. Here, again, the interpretative function of the state is an inescapable component of its existential power, *the power to continue as such*:

> For where there is no Common-wealth, there is (as hath been already shewn) a perpetuall warre of every man against his neighbour; And therefore every thing is his that getteth it, and keepeth it by force; which is neither *Propriety*, nor *Community*; but *Uncertainty*… And this they well knew of old, who called that *Nomos*, (that is to say, *Distribution*,) which we call Law; and defined Justice, by *distributing* to every man *his own*.[380]

Again, too, our claim is that the state both defines and provides definition. Its command directly defines the context *over against* which it arises. In so doing, the consequent horizons of possibility *over against* which normative forces will now operate are also established. Yet, the power which realizes both, *the power to continue as such*, is simultaneously infinite and ultimately finite. It must somehow be understood as timeless, even while temporally constrained:

> And though Soveraignty, in the intention of them that make it, be immortall; yet it is in its own nature, not only subject to violent death, by forreign warre; but also through the ignorance, and passions of men, it hath in it, from the very institution, many seeds of a naturall mortality, by Intestine Discord.[381]

Attention is needed to these issues, before directly addressing the historical nature of the state. History, power, state: each presumes continuity, yet all are intimately and ultimately tied to the human beings through which alone each manifests. Each is bound by the existential conditions of human beings; namely: their existence vis-a-vis politics, mortality, and death. These constraints are components of the specific contexts encountered by particular populations.

As such, while history, power, and state are in some ways correctly considered infinite, each is but a finite infinity. This seems paradoxical, if not outright contradictory. Nonetheless, though the order inherent to each state is ever-growing and unique, there are common limits intrinsic to all available contexts. This is not a claim to any normative content regarding such

[380] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 149.
[381] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 134.

limits, only that limits *existentially exist*. We risk accusations of redundancy in the previous sentence simply to emphasize what follows. Such limits as we note here precede and trump (and thereby themselves condition) human power. Interrogation of such limits, beyond ascertaining their logical necessity, seems outside the scope of any available tool. Regarding politics, mortality, and death, the reality of these limits for human beings one must seemingly either accept or (erroneously) not accept:

> There is only *one* thing against which all violence-doing directly shatters. That is death. It is an end beyond all completion, a limit beyond all limits. Here there is no breaking forth and breaking up, no capturing and subjugating. But this uncanniness, which drives us simply and suddenly out and away from everything homely once and for all, is not some special event that we should also mention among other events because in the end it, too, is going to occur. The human being has no way out in the face of death, not only when it is time to die, but constantly and essentially. Insofar as the human *is*, each stands in the no-exit of death. Thus, Being-here is the happening of uncanniness itself (The happening of uncanniness must for us be grounded inceptively as Being-here.)[382]

We turned to these matters because of the issue of the state as historical. Through consideration of these kinds of limiting factors, we attempt to further differentiate between existential conditions and normative forces. Such clarity is critical if we are to later understand the political implications of these discussions and resources. For instance, if states have something to do with freedom, via their relation to human power, *the power to continue as such*, Schmitt asks pointedly, "For what would they be free? This can be answered by optimistic or pessimistic conjectures, all of which finally lead to an anthropological profession of faith."[383] He pushes farther, "The problematic or unproblematic conception of man is decisive for the presupposition of *every further political consideration*,[384] the answer to the question whether man is a dangerous being or not, a risky or harmless creature."[385] For our purposes, how this

[382] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 169.
[383] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 58.
[384] Italics mine.
[385] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 58.

question is answered immediately implicates our bibliography, "These political thinkers are always aware of the concrete possibility of the enemy."[386] More specifically, "Political thinkers such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and often Fichte presuppose with their pessimism only the reality or possibility of the distinction of friend and enemy."[387] The existential constrains the possible.

We now return to the matter of the state as historical. While the normative forces of states, "make history," they are also products of the same. Their root is admittedly in the peculiar power manifest in their state's struggle. However, more exists within space and time than just their originary command; indeed, more must. We have already argued in the previous chapter that there is always something to which the command is addressed. Further, the existential conditions of politics, mortality, and death[388] all necessarily implicate the existence of vast constellations of additional and diverse phenomena, all of which impact the contexts available. States and their constituents are therefore never alone, but arise within an already populated and vibrant cosmology. In this way, upon arriving, the state discovers that its history precedes itself.

The state's history must contend with the possibility of a past that is already populated. However, the preceding history of the state is not set by these earlier entities. Suggesting such would locate the cosmogonic act outside human power and therefore the state. This would contradict our earlier claims. As already argued, in its cosmogonic command, the rise of the state is concurrent with the execution of its interpretative function: the state *rules*. Greater attention is therefore needed to address exactly what is intended by, "history," so that we might better

[386] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 65.
[387] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 65.
[388] Some of these we have already addressed in this work, while others will be addressed later. The existence of human life via political entities means that any state arises within the context of an already inhabited cosmos of competing state interests. This extralegal state of nature presumes mortality: the concrete possibility of either subjugation to another power, or the end of the state and the return of its constituents to a lethal state of nature. Either of these presumes the possibility of an ending of existence, of death. For now, we simply mention these broader issues, to better frame the proverbial stakes of our current concern.

understand how this history precedes, and yet remains defined, solely by the state itself, "With resoluteness, we stand in the region of history, not in any arbitrary realm of incidents, but in that which we in an emphatic sense call history and now have to deal with."[389]

We continue to follow Heidegger's progression here, for it mirrors our own:

> What is history? It seems as if we were going farther and farther away from our theme. We began with the question: "What is language?" This led us to the questions: "What is the human being?" – "Who is the human being?" – "Who is the self?" – "What is *Volk*?" – "What is decision?" – "What is history?" How do we arrive in the process at the theme of logic: "What is the essence of language?" – We are dealing continuously with the essence of language, without it being transparent to us.[390]

Heidegger's broader project is his own and extends beyond our own concerns regarding trauma's exception and the origins of languagelessness. However, here Heidegger's insights remain helpful, as the tie between discursive language and history is noteworthy. We claimed earlier that discursive language was a normative behavior that enabled all further normative forces. It exists both *because of* and *for* the state, not simply in the form of a mere technology,[391] but as the necessary consequence of the interpretative state's rendering of existential conditions into normative forces. As the index of all transformative, interpenetrating relationships grounded in a particular struggle between human power and a specific context, discursive language *is* the horizons of possibility foreseeable from the midst of such confrontation.

Though we will address the issue more when we explore the concept of, "world," it is important now to reassert how discursive language is intimately related to command:

> To name something – that is to call it by name. More fundamentally, to name is to call and clothe something with a word. What is so called, is then at the call of the word. What is called appears as what is present, and in its presence it is brought into the keeping, it is commanded, called into the calling word. So called by name, called into a presence, it in turn calls. It is named, has the name. By naming, we call on what is present to arrive.[392]

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[389] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 69.
[390] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 69.
[391] See p. 88.
[392] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 120.

History arises from the arrival of the state via the state's originary command. This observation, combined with history itself being a normative force, frames history's intrinsic relation to discursive language and its similar problematics, "The question concerning the essence of history is subject entirely to the same difficulties as the guiding question."[393] As discursive language is dependent on the unique struggle of a particular human power with a specific context, so too does history require attention to its point of departure, "The determination of the essence of history is grounded in the respective character of history of the era from which this determination is carried out."[394] With this question, we entangle ourselves again in our contemporary context:

> When we reflect on the modern age, we are questioning concerning the modern world picture [*Weltbild*]. We characterize the latter by throwing it into relief over against the medieval and the ancient world pictures. But why do we ask concerning a world picture in our interpreting of a historical age? Does every period of history have its world picture, and indeed in such a way as to concern itself from time to time about that world picture? Or is this, after all, only a modern kind of representing, this asking concerning a world picture?[395]

Heidegger, keeping with our characterization earlier in this section, will identify the concept of, "world picture," as simultaneously a facet of the modern period's technological context and thus a culmination of the West's trajectory since Plato. While this might be accurate, we echo Schmitt by suggesting that if a, "West," exists, it only exists as such through the states from which it is constituted. Therefore, we read Heidegger's concern for, "world picture," in the context of the state itself and the unique ordering of the normative forces dependent upon its power, *the power to continue as such*.

We will attend shortly to the, "world." For now, it is relevant to discuss that we locate history within it. We stay with Heidegger, "'World' serves here as a name for what is, in its

[393] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 69.
[394] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 70.
[395] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 129.

entirety. The name is not limited to the cosmos, to nature. History also belongs to the world."[396] Yet, this does not mean history exists outside humanity. Rather, by locating history within the world, we read Heidegger to suggest that the world, too, is brought forth by the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. Of course, we are not making a claim as to the physicality of things. Instead, we are noting that history, like discursive language, is a normative force that renders structureless nonsense into comprehensible sense. We are also attempting to avoid a fall into Hegelianism, in which all existence collapses into some kind of teleologically significant metanarrative.[397] For us, while history exists within the world brought forth by the state, the motive force for each state is nothing more or less than power itself, *the power to continue as such*. The application of any normative expectations to state power, beyond its constitutive covenants, is an error of category.

Our concern is more direct. If history exists within the world made possible by a cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, "There is no downright binding circumscription of the essence of history in itself."[398] History has no external referent: it exists solely as a relation of human experience, "History begins only when beings themselves are expressly drawn up into their unconcealment and conserved in it, only when this conservation is conceived on the basis of questioning regarding beings as such."[399] In this claim, we intend a double-sense to, "relation:" history is certainly a *communicative* relating, but only because of its prior and normalizing *associative* relating. History simultaneously speaks and structures. It originates and gains motive force with the emergence of world via a cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. Thus:

[396] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 129.
[397] See p. 120.
[398] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 70.
[399] Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Harper San Fransisco, 1993), p. 127.

> However, then there is really no absolute truth![400] Of course not. It is time that we cure ourselves of the consternation over this and finally take seriously that we are for the time being still human beings and no gods.[401]

Such should not be construed as a lapse into nihilism or any form of relativity. "Truth," here, like the category of, "humanity," in the previous chapter, must differentiate between the existential and the normative. We have already claimed in this chapter that the existential constrains the possible. If a claim is shown to arise out of an existential condition, then it certainly concerns us. However, "truth," existing as it does within the relational framework of normative forces, intends more than accuracy alone. "Truth," is not solely interested in the existential, "ground," from which claims might arise, but how that ground is *in relation to*, "world." As discussed in the preceding section, logic does not convey mere existence, but relationship. At issue is not validity, but sufficiency. This is the case whether we discuss, "truth," inside or outside the bounds of any specific state. "Common ground," could substantively exist, so that certain existential conditions might inform the struggles of two cosmogonic states, in similar enough trajectories, sufficient to provide complementary horizons of discursive possibility. In this way, both Heidegger and Schmitt can be correct, when the former speaks of, "the West," and the latter insists on the essential category of specific states. Yet, even if the validity of, "truth," beyond the conceptual protection of the state is questionable, within the state's boundaries the question of validity is answered from the start: the state *rules*. Ultimately:

> From the fact that there is no absolute truth for us, however, we may not infer that there is in general no truth for us. By truth, we understand the manifestness of beings, which manifestness fits and binds us into the being of beings – in each case, according to the kind of being of beings that enter here into manifestness. What for us is true in this sense of truth is quite enough for a human life.[402]

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[400] Heidegger addressed the contradiction inherent in asserting this claim later in the same piece. That argument moves beyond the scope of our project, so we simply note what he calls, "a small formal piece of art," and press on.
[401] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 70.
[402] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 70.

That, "human life," as noted by Schmitt, always and only exists within political entities. From the perspective of the interpretative state, history is therefore always and only, "our history." The passing of incidents into the past receives historical recognition only insofar as it is relation to us. So, to claim that, "Although a *Volk* makes [*macht*] its history, this history is not, however, the work [*das Gemachte*] of the *Volk*; the *Volk* for its part is made [*gemacht*] by history,"[403] is to claim that the *Volk* is made by *its* history, yet such is not merely a product of its own activity.

In order for history to be more than merely the passing of noteworthy activity into the past, "making," must be shown to extend to all temporalities. Causation is not enough here: we do not intend by, "making," a chain of reactions *ad infinitum*. Rather, history must properly be shown to exist alongside and in front of its actors, informing their discursive horizons of possibility in reciprocal ways. History and its actors are, "made," in every moment: past, present, and future. History is therefore not relegated to the past, but enters then only because its continuity also exists elsewhen:

> Yes, it is, generally speaking, questionable whether the entering into history always means to be sent to the past, as it were. If a *Volk* without history enters into history, we mean by "history" not the past, but the future, which co-determines the *Volk* entering into history.[404]

As it enters history, the population has a future. The availability of that future via power in the present, *the power to continue as such*, permits the possibility of a distinct and noteworthy past, "This 'We are here' does not mean a plurality of human beings is present-at-hand, but 'We are here! We are ready! Let it happen!'"[405] History is across past, present, and future, "It will become clear that being-historical is nothing that one carries around with oneself like a hat; it is

[403] See p. 120.
[404] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 73.
[405] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 51.

rather a deciding that is continually renewing between history and unhistory in which we stand."[406]

From the historical future, the interpretative state commands a response: *decide*. This decision is not necessarily the, "genuine decision," of the sovereign, but collectively it is the *perpetual decision* which *enables* sovereignty: the ongoing decision to sustain a historical future:

> Now we see that the We is more than something that is merely nugatory: the We is no pushing together of persons into a mere sum, the We is a decision-like one. *How* the We is, respectively, is dependent upon our decision, assuming that we decide.[407]

Like command, this decision has nothing to do with right, even in matters of life and death:

> To resist the Sword[408] of the Common-wealth, in defence of another man, guilty, or innocent, no man hath Liberty; because such Liberty, takes away from the Soveraign, the means of Protecting us; and is therefore destructive of the very essence of Government.[409]

Rather, this decision is a matter of deciding for or against a particular history, peculiar to the cosmogonic act of the interpretative state. The decision nonetheless exists within its very history, never outside it. Though here we move beyond Hobbes, this means that even revolt remains within the normative bounds of the system, as it merely extends into the same historical future, though perhaps by other means. It is also for this reason that revolt is far more common than revolution: the former realigns structures extending into a historical future still bound by entrenched discursive horizons of possibility. Only outright revolution, a full decision to deny the historical future, would end it. Yet, as such an act could only occur within that history, such a revolution is *literally unthinkable*, "It follows that one of the monsters, the leviathan 'state,' continuously holds down the other monster, the behemoth 'revolutionary people.'"[410]

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[406] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 96.
[407] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 52.
[408] Hobbes is, of course, intending concrete rebellious acts against the institutional state. Our application of Hobbes, in dialogue with Heidegger and Schmitt, intends more given our claims regarding the cosmogonic state. We note this explicitly here to simply bring attention to our use of Hobbes, in order to respect his original intent and project.
[409] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 133.
[410] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 21.

As for this particular decision, related as it is the, "genuine decision," of the sovereign, "A decision in the sense of the self-deciding of each individual is present, but not so that the one decides against or for *the other*, but for or against *himself*."[411] Like all decisions, this is a personal act, attributable to no one beyond, and definitional of, oneself, "He becomes in this decision he who he should be, he becomes *he himself*."[412] Only now do we discover the individual, "For there is no such thing as a man who exists singly and solely on his own."[413] One does not decide to join with others, but to already, "act jointly," having discovered oneself within the historical future secured by the interpretative state's power, *the power to continue as such*, "It is not a matter of decision whether we are here factually present-at-hand, but it is a matter of decision whether we want to act jointly, whether we want to act jointly or contrariwise."[414]

This decision to, "act jointly," is a *perpetual* decision-making, "This decision is not coming to an end at the moment; it is set, but it begins only then and lasts on, it becomes *decisiveness*."[415] Such decisiveness is always within context: it always has concrete outcomes in view and is always inescapably impactful, "A decision just in general is always *no* decision; we can always only decide for *this* and *only* for this."[416] Decisiveness therefore presumes continuity; it extends into the historical future, "This 'I have decided' is pronounced in the form of the past tense, but it is in essence oriented toward that which occurs and how it occurs…"[417]

The past ceases being stagnant, becoming an ongoing resource from which normative forces arise to structure all within its discursive horizons of possibility. The decision to, "act jointly," and share in the interpretative state's cosmogonic power, *the power to continue as such*,

[411] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 63.
[412] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 62.
[413] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 337.
[414] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 63.
[415] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 63.
[416] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 63.
[417] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 63.

creates the possibility of a historical past necessary to reach the historical future. This nuances the reciprocal, "making," of history and *Volk*, as its reciprocity occurs over time, "A *Volk* carries its history before itself in its willing and yet, on the other hand, is carried by history."[418] Decisiveness gains its proverbial stakes here, "Every individual *participates* in this decision, even he, and indeed especially he, who evades it."[419] While the decision itself is clear, as one always decides *for* or *against* something, the extent of its commitments defies quantification.[420] One either decides *for* the future ("our future"), which thereby extends onward forever, or one decides *against*… towards the *literally unthinkable*, "However, we cannot emphasize enough that history – as well as time – is conceived here as course, as course, which we set away from ourselves…"[421] This ongoing momentum into future or dissolution is intrinsic to decisiveness. One never simply, "decides;" rather, one, "has decided."

Normative forces further complicate any grasping of such extents, as normative forces exist in ways that occlude these very processes.[422] There is nothing readily apparent about the pervasively normal, hence Heidegger's concept of unhistory.[423] Yet, as we will address when discussing, "world," normalcy is itself a consequence of the decision to share in the interpretative

[418] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 74.
[419] Martin Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," "The Self-Assertion of the German University and The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts," Review of Metaphysics, 38:3 (1985: March): p. 467.
[420] Here is an example of where Bourdieu, Jonas, and presumably others find fault with Heidegger. It appears that this, "decision," is no decision at all, if the only options are affirmation or dissolution. Though we are reducing well-nuanced arguments in the following summation, Bourdieu and Jonas offer the critique that such a framework is ultimately neither fair, nor free; it is therefore politically invalid *prima facie*. Within certain normative expectations, their claims are compelling, even more so if Heidegger himself was assigning any normative weight to the matter. However, the decision here is neither praiseworthy, nor contemptible; laudable, nor damnable; good, nor evil… except that the decision enables those categories. Like all decisions, this decision is an existential condition: one either decides *for* or *against*, but one always decides. To even exist in any encounterable way (for instance, in history), one *must* decide. Certainly, fascism (especially Nazism) does collapse the existential into the normative, turning metaphysical survival into an ethical good. While Heidegger can be read, especially in earlier works (including the one just cited), as resonate with this move, we argue that enough substantive difference exists in Heidegger's works to resist easy dismissal as, "merely," fascist (and Nazi) political philosophy.
[421] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 93.
[422] See p. 17.
[423] See p. 116.

state's cosmogonic power, *the power to continue as such*. Reintroduction[424] of Heidegger's concept of, "destining," is therefore appropriate.

It seems counterintuitive to claim that the historical past arises to meet the historical future. However, the notion of, "destiny," (more precisely, "destining") aids us in exploring both this move in Heidegger, as well as how such a move can become so strange. History itself is defined by it, "'To start upon a way' means 'to send' in our ordinary language. We shall call the sending that gathers [*versammelnde Schicken*], that first starts man upon a way of revealing, *destining* [*Geschick*]."[425] The cosmogonic power of the interpretative state, *the power to continue as such*, consequentially establishes a, "destining," in its projection of the historical future and its requirement of a historical past. "Destining," is the aspect of the interpretative state's power which, via normative forces, allows from out of unstructured space and time a *sense* of history:

> And it is only the destining into objectifying representation that makes the historical accessible as an object for historiography, i.e., for a science, and on this basis makes possible the current equating of the historical and that which is chronicled.[426]

The historical future brings out of chronicled events the historical past, as the, "destiny," within that which is bygone seeks actualization in the cosmogonic power of the interpretative state, *the power to continue as such*:

> That which is bygone is not simply that which goes by, but that which still remains, that which continues to be effective, from earlier on still being somehow, which from earlier on still essences, goes on in its own way, that which *still essences* or *that which has been*. That which has been is, to be sure, always something that is bygone, but not everything that is bygone is that which has been in the sense of that which essences from earlier on; therefore, on the one hand, that which is *bygone* and, on the other hand, *that which has been* and *still essences*.[427]

[424] See p. 18.
[425] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 329.
[426] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 329.
[427] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 88.

This provides the culmination of how history inescapably and concurrently both makes, yet is made by, a population. The decision to, "act jointly," in accordance with the interpretative state's cosmogonic power, *the power to continue as such*, manifests the continuity of its, "destiny:"

> With this, it should become clear that we cannot take up our essence in the sense in which we reach for the door handle. We can gain our essence only from that which is essential to us in the historical moment. That which is essential to us determines itself in a kind of knowing of its own, and it is not knowable as physical data are knowable. We experience that which is essential only from the How and For What of our self-decision, *who* we want to become in the future, what we want to place under our command as that which is our future. *That which essences from earlier on determines itself from our future*.[428]

Such continuity is tied to a cosmogonic act by which the interpretative state executes, "the ruling of the world," "That which essences from earlier on has its peculiarity to it in that it has always already grasped over [*hinweggegriffen*] every today and now: It *essences as tradition*."[429]

In, "tradition," we finally have a way forward to describe the interpretative state's creation and sustainment of, "world," "The State is the historical being of the *Volk*."[430] This observation clarifies and reinforces what we have already suggested: in history, the world is brought into focus. For us, tradition now becomes more than mere reenactment or recitation. Instead, "We are the temporalizing of time itself,"[431] in that, "all of that which is grounded in the original essence of time – history, *Volk*, human being, language – is also included in this happening of time."[432] The interpretative state not only creates world, but *perpetually* creates; it does not only interpret, but *perpetually* interprets. Through tradition and the decision to avail

[428] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 99.
[429] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 100.
[430] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 140.
[431] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 102.
[432] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 102.

oneself of it, one accesses the world manifest in and through the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state's power, *the power to continue as such*:

> This tradition [*Uberlieferung*] is no inventory of experiences or reports, but it is the innermost character of our historicity. Through it, our own determination is carried off over [*uber*] ourselves, through it we are delivered [*ausgeliefert*] into the future. That which essences comes up toward us [*kommt auf uns zu*] in this reaching over [*Ubergriff*] from the future. [*Zukunft*]. For this reason, we name this happening *die "Zukunft*" [the "future"]… Our being-thrown-ahead into the future is the future of the beenness: It is the *originally singular and proper time*.[433]

There is a damnable consequence to all this being accessible through tradition, since, "It comes to us not of itself, but only when we are capable of following the tradition, of taking it over [*sie zu ubernehmen*]…"[434] This intends something very specific for Heidegger within his own project. Our interests differ, as will be seen, but Heidegger shares with us concern regarding the repercussions of how others access history and world via tradition, "The questioning concerning our self-being originates from the essence of historical being as futurality, as care."[435] Having addressed history at length, we are now prepared to discuss the world brought forth at the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state via its power, *the power to continue as such*.

All of history is located in the world,[436] the world brought into focus by the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. This has a striking consequence for us and our interest in languagelessness. Given the relation shown between history, power, and the state, it seems that, "History is a distinctive character of human being."[437] As above, history is enabled through the existential power of the state, *the power to continue as such*. Only with the availability of a historical future, possible and present solely in the state itself, emerges a historical past that extends into and beyond the present. Its continuity, its, "destining," manifests the peculiarities of

[433] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 100.
[434] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 100.
[435] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 141.
[436] See p. 125.
[437] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 75.

that cosmogonic command by which the interpretative state renders existential conditions into normative forces, the first of which is discursive language, "Language lies in the realm of the being of the human being."[438] So, with the state, history. With history, discursive language, "Only where temporality temporalizes itself, does language happen; only where language happens, does temporality temporalize itself."[439] Our earlier claim, via Heidegger, is now refined, "History is the distinctive being of the human being and, with this, of language."[440]

History and language are therefore of, "the distinctive being of the human being," and each exists in the world. The world itself is created via the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. The power displayed in this command, *the power to continue as such*, gives us occasion to remember that even here, at the purported beginning, power is always power *over against*. *The power to continue as such* is the power to emerge and sustain *over against* all other possibilities, including *nonexistence*. Framing the power of the interpretative state's cosmogonic command in this way betrays that while it is originary, it is not alone:

> This is because only one of the numerous possibilities is ever realized. In the moment of realization, all of the other infinite possibilities are precluded. A world is destroyed for a narrow-minded reality. The "fullness of the idea" is sacrificed to a wretched specificity. In consequence, every spoken word is already a falsehood. It limits unbounded thought. Every definition is a lifeless, mechanical thing. It defines indefinite life. Every foundation is false; for with the foundation, a limit is always given as well.[441]

Schmitt's summation of the romantics' complaint resonates with our point: just as there is no, "history," but always, "our history," so too is there no, "world," but, "our world." Even romanticism and its attempts, "to put an end to the mysterious irrationality of real being,"[442] as

[438] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 97.
[439] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 144.
[440] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 97.
[441] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 66.
[442] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 66.

discussed next chapter, either collapses under the weight of its world's categories or, at best, merely creates a new prison for itself of its own design. The existential constrains the possible.

We have claimed such before in this section: *the existential constrains the possible*. How is this the case? Normative forces we have addressed since the start of this work, as the contemporary context itself resists the predicate of our thesis: trauma is an exception. However, in this section we earlier sought to differentiate between existential constraints and normative forces. The latter arise only in and with the arrival of the state, history, discursive language, etc. They necessarily and only exist in the world. Yet, while the former might exist *in* the world, inescapably incorporated into it via the state's rendering of normative forces, such is not quite correct. Rather, existential conditions unavoidably *enter* the world. They are intrinsic to the, "ground,"[443] out of which the world arises and it is only ever *over against* world that each is known:

> The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*. It clears and illuminates, also, that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*.[444]

The earth is not understood here as any *specific* thing, space, or time, except that it is the context and resource of the world's emerging, of *phusis*. "Earth," thus implicates the possibility of the above:

> What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent.[445]

Earth is thereby the, "ground," *from* and *upon* which created works occur, serving as context and resource:

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[443] See p. 123.
[444] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 41.
[445] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 41.

> That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself we called the earth. Earth is that which comes forth and shelters. Earth, self-dependent, is effortless and untiring. Upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world.[446]

This, "dwelling in the world," is concurrent with the emergence of the human out of this preexisting earth, by which the earth itself (as both context and resource) is revealed, "This emerging and standing-out-in-itself-from-itself may not be taken as just one process among others that we observe in beings. *Phusis* is Being itself, by virtue of which beings first become and remain observable."[447] Only via this emergence is there any differentiation, any substance, any *sense*. In the earth are sheltered all possibilities, undifferentiated, and thus in the earth is *nonsense*. Emerging from the earth enables an interpretative perspective, a *point of view*:

> *Phusis* means the emerging sway, and the endurance over which it thoroughly holds sway. This emerging, abiding sway includes both "becoming" as well as "Being" in the narrower sense of fixed continuity. *Phusis* is the event of *standing forth*, arising from the concealed and thus enabling the concealed to take its stand for the first time.[448]

Heidegger's concern for why something, and not nothing, exists begins with the relationship of earth, world, and sway. His question is beyond the scope of this work. However, an important methodological consequence is shared between us. If trauma, that, "incomprehensible event," that is itself languagelessness, somehow implicates factors that extend beyond the normative world and onward into the existential ground, our investigation, "will take shape about a twofold character of metaphysical investigation:"[449]

> First, every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole. Therefore, second, every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such is present together with the question, that is, is placed in question. From this we conclude

[446] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 45.
[447] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 15.
[448] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 16.
[449] Martin Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Harper San Fransisco, 1993), p. 93.

> that metaphysical inquiry must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [*Dasein*] that questions. We are questioning, here and now, for ourselves.[450]

To search regarding trauma in and via *metaphysics*, to make this a *metaphysical* issue, literally implicates everything. If trauma is related to the unmitigated ground, if trauma is beyond the world, it breaks the world. This is not meant figuratively, let alone dramatically. The world, as a, "standing forth," over against the earth, has its own systematic and totalizing integrity, "The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home."[451] The world is a rendering of the availability of the earth, a comprehensive rendering in a peculiar and precise way, "World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being."[452] Most importantly and by definition, it is whole, "Wherever those decisions of our history that relate to our very being are made, are taken up and abandoned by us, go unrecognized and are rediscovered by new inquiry, there the world worlds."[453] For world, there is nothing outside: such is *literally unthinkable*. This methodological consequence here reminds of us of the potential radicality inherent to our thesis' predicate: trauma is an exception.

Back to the discussion of earth, world, and sway. The, "emerging sway," is not yet delineation. It is not the rendering of sense, but it is the beginning and opportunity of such a feat:

> This sway is the overwhelming coming-to-presence that has not yet been conquered in thinking, and within which *that which* comes to presence essentially unfolds as beings. But this sway first steps forth from concealment, that is, in Greek, *aletheia* (unconcealment) happens, insofar as the sway struggles itself forth as a world. Through world, beings first come into being.[454]

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[450] Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?" p. 94.
[451] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 43.
[452] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 43.
[453] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 43.
[454] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 64.

The struggle inherent to and when, "this sway first steps forth from concealment," is the struggle between human power and specific context.[455] For us, it is the struggle of the interpretative state to issue its cosmogonic command and can be characterized with, "The originally emergent self-upraising of the violent forces of what holds sway, the *phainesthai* as appearing in the broad sense of the epiphany of a world…"[456] Elsewhere, again, "What does the work, as work, set up? Towering up within itself, the work opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force."[457]

Violence and force are inherent and inescapable traits of this world-creation, "World and earth are always intrinsically and essentially in conflict, belligerent by nature. Only as such do they enter into the conflict of clearing and concealing."[458] Our work moves beyond Heidegger's own project with the following claim, however, by juxtaposing the above with Schmitt's observation that human life exists only within its constitutive political entities. The rendering of world out of earth, the rendering of normative forces out of existential conditions, the rendering of sense out of nonsense: these are all ways of expressing what occurs through the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, upon its arrival into the presence of history:

> The world is the self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world.[459]

The cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, in it *the power to continue as such*, binds:

> But the relation of between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. As self-opening it cannot endure anything closed. The earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there.[460]

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[455] See p. 107 and 110.
[456] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 66.
[457] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 43.
[458] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 54.
[459] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 47.
[460] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 47.

This binding is itself the relation of world and earth, manifest in the struggle of the state to emerge from its encounter of human power and specific context, "The opposition of world and earth is a striving."[461] As with all creation and with all striving, there is an inescapable decision involved, requiring the necessary act of deciding either *for* or *against*, "Con-frontation, that is, not mere quarreling and feuding but the strife of the striving, sets the essential and the unessential, the high and the low, into their limits and makes them manifest."[462]

The decisions integral to this binding, the decisions regarding the relations of that which is unconcealed, now permit us to talk about sense and, thus, logic. Note that we only now get to this point through metaphysics first. This is why our work, which claims to be on language and trauma, has thus far spent little time explicitly engaging trauma's common homes in ethics, psychology, etc., "'Ethics' and 'psychology' are grounded in metaphysics."[463] Even logic was not fully ripe for consideration, until this groundwork of metaphysics was first addressed, "The idea of 'logic' itself disintegrates in the turbulence of a more original questioning."[464]

Now we have an understanding of what is meant by logic, "As maintaining, *logos* has the character of pervasive sway, of *phusis*."[465] Logic is the structure of language that enables and preserves index, gathering, and relating. It is the relating of world out of its concealment, through the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, so that, "It does not dissolve what it pervades into an empty lack of opposites; instead, by unifying what contends, the gathering maintains it in the highest acuteness of tension."[466] Logic is related to the, "destining," that was

[461] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 47.
[462] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 120.
[463] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 89.
[464] Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?" p. 105.
[465] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 142.
[466] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 143.

made, "to start upon a way," by the interpretative state's cosmogonic command. Logic empowers a population to preserve the world that is created, allowing that which is opened to the world to remain so, while simultaneously honoring the still-concealed earth, "Just as a work cannot be without being created but is essentially in need of creators, so what is created cannot itself come into being without those who preserve it."[467] Logic, like, "destining," is best understood as a structure of more primal forces: it is both an opening and closing, a creating and preserving, a granting and denying of access. Structuring the index of all the interpenetrating relationships *that are the state*, logic echoes and reinforces the originary structuring of world from earth:

> How can fact show itself if it cannot itself stand forth out of concealedness, if it does not itself stand in the unconcealed? A proposition is true by conforming to the unconcealed, to what is true. Propositional truth is always, and always exclusively, this correctness. The critical concepts of truth which, since Descartes, start out from truth as certainty, are merely variations of the definition of truth as correctness. This nature of truth which is familiar to us – correctness in representation – stands and falls with truth as unconcealedness of beings.[468]

"Truth," whatever it might later entail, at least involves the possible as unconcealed, "To be possible, the proposition must from the start avoid self-contradiction. This is why the law, that contradiction must be avoided, is considered a basic tenet of the proposition."[469] Of course, as suggested in the preceding section, to consider logic is to consider language, and *vice versa*, "Logic, as the doctrine of the *logos*, considers thinking to be the assertion of something about something. According to logic, such speech is the basic characteristic of thinking."[470] To relate that which is unconcealed, to discover oneself involved in logical analysis, is to think; to think is

[467] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 64.
[468] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 50.
[469] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 155.
[470] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 155.

to somehow, someway, be on the way to language, "Only because thinking is defined as *logos*, as an utterance, can the statement about contradiction perform its role as a law of thought."[471]

We now finally reach a discussion of discursive language. Discursive language is a normative force, *the* normative force which enables all others. As established from the start of this work, normative forces are systematic and totalizing; it is in their nature to define all that they encounter. In the richness of earth, within the bounds established by the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, discursive language can apply itself *ad infinitum* and thus participate in the perpetual creation of world, "Such saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open *as*."[472] In this way, there is actual infinity implicated by the power present in the struggle of a particular population and its specific context.

Discursive language, as the normative behavior which enables all others, inherently indexes all relationships shared between its population and their context. As the means through which all relationships are comprehended, there is an infinite quality to the normative forces at work: within the bounds of the originary command's horizons of possibility, discursive language seems inexhaustible, "Projecting is the release of a throw by which unconcealedness submits and infuses itself into what is as such."[473] This, "projecting," includes the forecasting of the historical future, which necessitates the historical past, which empowers the present… this, "projecting," opens up the possibility of continuity, duration, and, "destiny." Through the aforementioned, human beings can therefore make sense of themselves and their context via the index of this seemingly inexhaustible resource, which is grounded on peculiar relationalities unique to the

[471] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 155.
[472] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.
[473] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.

encounter of each with the other, "This projective announcement forthwith becomes a renunciation of all the dim confusion in which what is veils and withdraws itself."[474] Discursive language is the renunciation of the earth's essential, eternal, and inherent *nonsense*.

Enabled by those logical structures which facilitate the indexing of human relationships, the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state is two-part: Decide! Make sense! This two-in-one cosmogonic command provides normative forces their motion, none more so than discursive language. It is this pursuit of sense for the world and in it, *over against* the nonsense of the earth from which the world arises, which drives discursive language to newer, vaster vistas:

> Actual language at any given moment is the happening of this saying, in which a people's world historically arises for it and the earth is preserved at that which remains closed. Projective saying is saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world. In such saying, the concepts of an historical people's nature, i.e., of its belonging to world history, are formed for that folk, before it.[475]

Discursive language strangely brings us back again to the inescapable violence of the cosmogonic act. Discursive language is a normative force: it does not ask, suggest, or politely inquire as to willing acquiescence. Discursive language is a normative force: it imposes, it quite literally forces, it *compels*. While there might exist choices within the infinite horizons of discursive possibility, to discursive language itself there is no alternative. Discursive language is the means by which world renders sense out of nonsense, and it is violent:

> However, this violence with which philosophy uses words and determines words belongs to its essence. Only in the eyes of the philistine and columnist is word-determination arbitrariness and violence. One does not see that precisely the veiling of language and the random use of words is a much greater violence than a regulation of the meaning of a word arising from inner necessity, whereby it is not about a changing of a word as an empty garment, but about the essence of the matter.[476]

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[474] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.
[475] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 71.
[476] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 108.

Heidegger presents us with two kinds of violence here. One is the violence of unsubstantiated words: nonsense. He suggests this is the more dangerous, and by definition the more unreasonable, of the two. The other is a constraining, structuring violence: the violence inherent in sense. Sense becomes a substantiated relation enabled by logic among that which is revealed. Yet, in its very relationality is found its propensity for violence.

Earlier, we resonated with Heidegger's framing of history and language as, "the distinctive being of the human being." However, Slavoj Zizek problematizes this claim:

> What if, however, humans exceed animals in their capacity for violence precisely because they *speak*? As Hegel was already well aware, there is something violent in the very symbolization of a thing, which equals its mortification. This violence operates at multiple levels. Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous. It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it.[477]

In this, Zizek echoes Heidegger's aforementioned concerns regarding values:

> Where anything that is has become the object of representing, it first incurs in a certain manner a loss of Being. This loss is adequately perceived, if but vaguely and unclearly, and is compensated for with corresponding swiftness through the fact that we impart value to the object and to that which is, interpreted as object, and that we take the measure of whatever is, solely in keeping with the criterion of value, and make of values themselves the goal of all activity.[478]

This ongoing violence of valuation (against whatever is present-at-hand) is only a reenactment, a reinforcement of the originary violence inherent in the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. A command is always a violent imposition upon its object, but here originary violence must be substantively differentiated from all other kinds. It is a violence expressed *over against* the violence of nonsense. As such, it is a violence which enables sense. Its gains motion solely from the power of the interpretative state, *the power to continue as such*.

[477] Slavoj Zizek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008), p. 61.
[478] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 142.

As such, this violence is uniquely human and "uncannily" so, "The human being is *to deinotaton*, the uncanniest of the uncanny."[479] Heidegger's translates *deinon* as, "uncanny," with a particular intent in mind, relating *deinon* and *phusis* to accentuate the character of creative, cosmogonic violence. Such character is multifaceted; for instance:

> The *deinon* is the terrible in the sense of the overwhelming sway, which induces panicked fear, true anxiety, as well as collected, inwardly reverberating, reticent awe. The violent, the overwhelming is the essential character of the sway itself. When the sway breaks in, it *can* keep its overwhelming power to itself. But this does not make it more harmless, but only *more* terrible and distant.[480]

There is nothing existentially intrinsic within the normative forces of the world to regulate their violence. Rather, Giorgio Agamben helps us note that constitutive, existential violence is what allows normative forces to actualize their regulatory function, "Just as between language and world, so between the norm and its application there is no internal nexus that allows one to be derived immediately from the other."[481] Any actual application of a norm occurs within those normative structures first created and upheld by cosmogonic violence… or as an exception, which suggests that such structures somehow catastrophically failed. Violence is an existential condition manifesting, at least in part, from the power of the interpretative state, *the power to continue as such*. All that arises from such power is therefore, "destined," towards one end: "the ruling of the world." Self-justified and self-justifying, the content of this end is found only in itself: the state *rules*.

This, too, is, "uncanny." Another facet of its, "uncanniness," is revealed:

> But on the other hand, *deinon* means the violent in the sense of one who needs to use violence – and does not just have violence at his disposal, but is violence-doing, insofar as using violence is the basic trait not just of his doing, but of his Dasein. Here we are giving the expression "doing violence" an essential sense that in principle reaches beyond

[479] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 159.
[480] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 160.
[481] Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 40.

> the usual meaning of the expression, which generally means nothing but brutality and arbitrariness.[482]

By binding world and earth together, in and through the interpretative state, "humanity is also *deinon* because it is violence-doing in the sense we have indicated. [It gathers what holds sway and lets it enter into an openness.][483] This multifaceted creative, cosmogonic violence is unique:

> Humanity is violence-doing not in addition to and aside from other qualities, but solely in the sense that from the ground up and in its doing violence, it uses violence against the over-whelming. Because it is doubly *deinon* in an originally united sense, it is *to deinonaton*, the most violent: violence-doing in the midst of the overwhelming.[484]

This violence, *this uniquely human violence*, is what is actualized in the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. Yet, it was crucial that to arrive at this point in our arguments, we engaged in a *philosophical kind of political analysis*. A metaphysical groundwork was required, to better understand that in the cosmogonic command is only power, *the power to continue as such*:

> All this does not first belong to the *polis*, is not first political, because it enters into a relationship with a statesman and a general and with the affairs of state. Instead, what we have named is political, that is, at the site of history, insofar as, for example, the poets are *only* poets, but then are actually poets, the thinkers are *only* thinkers, but then are actually thinkers, the priests are *only* priests, but then are actually priests, the rules are *only* rulers, but then are actually rulers. *Are* – but this says: use violence as violence-doers and become those who rise high in historical Being as creators, as doers.[485]

The foundational political act, *creation*, retains intrinsic metaphysical significance. Creation has no reference, no justification via normative claims, no resource beyond what the, "violence-doer," brings to the moment, "because they *as* creators must first ground all this in each case."[486]

[482] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 160.
[483] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 160.
[484] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 160.
[485] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 163.
[486] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 163.

The (re)turn to ground breaks the preservation which is the earth. The shelter of the earth is upended, so that its existential conditions can be rendered into normative forces conducive to sense, "Let us mark it well: here the earth is called the highest of gods. Violence-doing, the human being disturbs the calm growth, the nourishing and enduring of the tireless one."[487] Nonetheless, this turn to the earth is only en route to greater consideration of those means by which the earth may yet again be bound: foremost among them, discursive language:

> This breaking forth, breaking up, capturing, and subjugating is in itself the first opening of beings *as* sea, *as* earth, *as* animal. A breaking-forth and breakup happen only insofar as the powers of language, of understanding, of mood, and of building are themselves conquered in doing violence. The violence-doing of poetic saying, of thoughtful projection, or constructive building, of state-creating action, is not an application of faculties that the human being has, but is a disciplining and disposing of the violent forces by virtue of which beings disclose themselves as such, insofar as the human being enters into them.[488]

Of course, this violence is rarely welcome; in fact, it cannot be, "In the shattering of the wrought work, in knowing that the work is unfit and a *sarma* [dungheap], the violence-doer leaves the overwhelming to its fittingness."[489] As relates to the cosmogonic command, there is no norm against or with which either violence-doer or the recipient of violence might appeal. Only the originating power, *the power to continue as such*, invigorates here. Heidegger deploys his concept of, "Being," (a substantively different notion than our concept of power) in a fashion that helps address our point here, "Being itself throws the human being into the course of this tearing-away, which forces the human being beyond itself, as the one who moves out to Being, in order to set Being to work and thus hold open beings as a whole."[490] At the base, at the foundation of things, there is only the basest *over against*: *what was* and *that which will be*:

[487] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 164.
[488] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 167.
[489] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 174.
[490] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 174.

> Therefore the violence-doer knows no kindness and conciliation (in the ordinary sense), no appeasement and mollification by success or prestige and by their confirmation. In all this, the violence-doer as creator sees only a seeming fulfillment, which is to be despised. In willing the unprecedented, the violence-doer casts aside all help.[491]

Yet, in sweeping aside all reference beyond itself, the violence-doer creates something truly new, "The overwhelming, Being, confirms itself in works *as history*:"[492]

> As the breach for the opening up of Being in beings – a Being that has been set into work – the Dasein of historical humanity is an *in-cident*, the incident in which the violent forces of the released excessive violence of Being suddenly emerge and enter the work as history.[493]

With such an observation, our section here has come full circle. Through the violence of discursive language, the state *rules*. As noted by Zizek:

> Consequently, we should not immunize ourselves against the effects of the violence Heidegger is talking about by classifying it as "merely" ontological: although it is violent as such, imposing a certain disclosure of world, this world constellation also involves social relations of authority.[494]

From discursive language, world emerges from and is bound to earth, history forms, and sense is made possible out of the cacophonic nonsense of limitless possibilities. All of these arrive concurrent with the arrival of the state and out of its struggle. Zizek reiterates for us the nature and legacy of the interpretative state's cosmogonic command, "it cannot be further grounded in reasons. It is the point at which one can only say that 'the buck stops here'; a point at which, in order to stop the endless regress, somebody has to say, '*It is so because I say it is so!*'"[495][496] Thus, the centrality of that definitive and first of the interpretative state's rulings delineated by discursive language: the friend-enemy distinction observed by Schmitt:

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[491] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 174.
[492] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 174.
[493] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 174.
[494] Zizek, p. 70.
[495] See p. 55.
[496] Zizek, p. 62.

> Because the sphere of the political is in the final analysis determined by the real possibility of enmity, political conceptions and ideas cannot very well start with an anthropological optimism. This would dissolve the possibility of enmity and, thereby, every specific political consequence.[497]

Only a few more comments are needed here, as we conclude this section. Of our initial points presented at the section's start, we have explicitly addressed the state's, "ruling of the world," and the violence inherent in that task. How all this relates to *languagelessness* was hopefully implicated throughout the section, "However, everywhere that whatever is, is *not* interpreted in this way, the world also cannot enter into a picture; there can be no world picture."[498] The matter now warrants explicit attention. At this juncture in our work, a recapitulation is in order.

Our thesis remains: trauma is an exception. In the previous chapter, we argued that trauma is languagelessness, an, "incomprehensible event," of language's absence. We suggested that this, like the horror of the *scelus infandum*, existed outside the bounds of any normative system and therefore outside rectification via available normative forces. It was, therefore, an exception, though it remained to be seen why normative forces did not extend to such a void. Any response was to be made in the form of a command, an existential decision bereft of any normative resources and restraint. The only resources and restraint informing the command were those of its own existential identity, manifest in its decisiveness. Further, the, "incomprehensible event," required a response; responding was not optional, but necessary. Trauma somehow endangered the entire categorical possibility of friends and enemies, by rendering the distinction itself nonsensical. In doing so, the defining, enabling characteristic of political entities would

[497] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 64.
[498] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," p. 130

dissolve into meaninglessness, upending the political. This cannot be borne: the state existentially acts, in this case in the form of an abjecting command.

Now we can develop this structure. Trauma is languagelessness, in that we suggest that trauma is an encounter with some existential condition not consolidated into the revelation of the world by discursive language. Outside discursive language, traumatic phenomena are not experienced in any discursive way, in that they are not delineated, mediated, mitigated, etc. This also means they are experienced as an absence, a crushing absence that upends the world.[499] Like a black hole in physics, trauma is an absence of what should be and therefore a null presence of that which should not. Trauma becomes the actual presence of that which is *literally unthinkable*.

Existing as an absence of discursive language, languagelessness is intimately tied to human beings. If history and language are, "the distinctive being of the human being,"[500] what is to be said of the human being absent the same? In this section, we have demonstrated via argument the vastness of discursive language, not least being its relation to history and world. Yet, if trauma seems to be just what we claim, *languagelessness*, what are the repercussions of our argument on these essential and enabling categories?

Our claim includes the notion that trauma is somehow an encounter with an existential condition beyond the world. There exist a variety of possibilities for how such could happen: as we discussed, it is the nature of the earth to conceal, to shelter, to withhold. However, such usually stays that way; for lack of a better expression, such stays buried. Here, that which was buried, "juts," out of the underground into the world, *without the world's acknowledgement and therefore consent*. It *literally* has no relation to the world, existing beyond the scope of the index of interpenetrating relationships. Again, *literally*, it should not be. Its presence breaks language's

[499] See p. 138.
[500] See p. 135.

index of interpenetrating relationships within the world, by undoing logic's inherent structure. The traumatic phenomena extend beyond themselves and destroy discursive language itself.

This ultimately leads to the question of how and why such an existential condition was not consolidated into the world. Certainly, it arose from the earth, from the specific context at the grounding of the world. Yet, as this section discussed, any such consolidation of world occurs only through human power. The possibility of trauma relating to the existential implicates additional questions: are there existential conditions, beyond death, that are outside the extent of human power to affect and yet nonetheless, inescapably, remain on the threshold of worlds? If so, what are the consequences of such for human beings? How can and should human beings respond, if traumatic phenomena truly are from, "outside?" If any response to these questions is possible, in light of our previous investigations, we argue that such a response could only engage traumatic phenomena as exceptions, threatening to the very concept of, "the ruling of the world."

In the next section, we address these themes in far more detail. Introduced is our concept of the, "chthonic:" the conceptualization of those phenomena, "underground," which must always remain buried and locked away. We also engage with accounts of the traumatized themselves, in order to better understand, "being traumatized:" the initial experience, its resultant abjection by the state, and the fullness of that expression itself. Lastly, we will explore if there is a way forward, should trauma truly achieve the destruction of discursive language for and in those afflicted by it. This will require us to return to the questions of the exception, violence, and what disclosure and self-disclosure might be absent logic.

Of course, our use of the exception will differ from the, "state of exception," discussed by Schmitt, Agamben, and others. However, a commonality we focus on in the next section pervades both our deployment and historic treatments of the concept: wherever there is

exception, there is what we suggest is best characterized as violent nonsense, *mere violence*. Given the exception in other contexts, we must remain concerned, "In every case, the state of exception marks a threshold at which logic and praxis blur with each other and a pure violence without *logos* claims to realize an enunciation without any real reference."[501]

[501] Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 40.

Section 2.3: The Concept of the Chthonic

We have argued that trauma is *languagelessness*, by which we intend the absence of a human capacity *towards* discursive language. This absence is the empty core of trauma's, "incomprehensible event," the void into which collapse those normative forces enabling history and world. As such, trauma threatens something profoundly, perhaps definitively,[502] human.

Trauma upends the relationality of discursive language by catastrophically discrediting the possibility of relation, at all. Following the concept of logic tracked earlier in this chapter, the proposition does not reveal existence, but relationship. Logic becomes the structure of discursive language's index of interpenetrating relationships, the means through which discursive language traces the horizons of possibility that extend out from the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state's power, *the power to continue as such*. Only within the delineation of discursive language is the possible brought into an actual world, allowing the creation of a systemizing, totalizing whole. Logic serves as the structure of that linguistic enterprise, so that, "We turn in a circle insofar as every access to language is already determined by logic."[503]

The turning Heidegger mentions above reinforces our previous contention that the question of trauma is not primarily one of human capacity *for* language, but one of its capacity *towards* language. Trauma becomes an inaccessibility *towards* language, a lack of connection to the index of transformative, interpenetrating relationality that literally draws world out from mere earth. Certainly, terms and words still remain.[504] The traumatized can talk, of course; we are not suggesting that trauma is catatonia. Our claim is that an essential aspect of discursive

[502] See p. 135.
[503] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 14.
[504] See p. 75.

language is lost to the traumatized: its logical relationality no longer, and in a debilitating way, *makes sense*.

In this section, we explore the failure of discursive language to make sense, the consequence of that failure for both the state and the traumatized, and what the repercussions of such might mean for metaphysics. These three tasks are interrelated. Before moving forward, a brief outline of each seems reasonable, to better frame the section and its forthcoming arguments. Doing such also provides us an opportunity to consider how our earlier discussions throughout this work led us to the matters present-at-hand.

To consider trauma as a failure of the human capacity *towards* language requires us to explore the event of trauma itself, via the testimony[505] of the traumatized. We begin there precisely because trauma, as it is related to discursive language, exists only in and through the concrete persons of the traumatized themselves. This presents us with a complication: any observations which we ourselves might make about trauma are already, "third person," and therefore seemingly removed from our target of inquiry. The traumatized, in their own testimony, have always already interpreted their encounter with the traumatizing phenomena.

We overcome this concern by noting that the traumatized themselves, "become," for us an inescapable component of the traumatic event. Trauma is an essentially human thing. An experience with the former is only ever possible through a simultaneous experience with the latter. Trauma thus, "collapses," the encounter and the encountered into its event. When we discuss the event of trauma, both the traumatizing phenomena and the traumatized themselves are jointly implicated. Both become redefined by the other: whatever *is* traumatic enters into world, *through* the vessel of the traumatized. While the following sounds dramatic, we intend it

[505] See p. 35.

quite literally: the traumatized becomes *someone* that *somehow* incorporates *something* beyond their world, which has no relation to anything within it. As we noted in the preceding section, if trauma is related to the unmitigated ground, if it is beyond the world, it breaks the world.

To be traumatized is to be a contradiction, evidence of that which was excluded from possibility by the violence-doing inherent in the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. This originary violence-doing, which Zizek characterizes as, "the heroic-criminal state-founding violence celebrated by Heidegger,"[506] is reasserted by the normative forces it renders from the existential conditions out of which the state arose. Its world has therefore already decided for itself what is possible out of the earth from which it emerged; anything else is an intrusion of impossibility, of *nonsense*. This nonsense is inherently violent, in that it resists the systematic and totalizing nature of those normative forces that sustain world.[507] In this way, the traumatized are a radical other, an exception to the world revealed by their provocation of the state to decide.

Like the *scelus infandum*, trauma's, "incomprehensible event," threatens the meaningfulness of the very categories that enable human life, to include the friend-enemy distinction. The violent presence of trauma's absence, manifest in the traumatized, thus requires a response from the state. The state must decide as to how existence can continue in light of these mutually exclusive phenomena. However, unlike the *scelus infandum*, trauma cannot be engaged directly by the state without further contradicting itself: the traumatized violate without committing any crime. This should not be construed merely as a matter of semantics. The traumatized are an affront to the state due to their very existence, yet the state cannot decide against them in a fashion that further undoes the identity of the state as a thing of law.

[506] Zizek, p. 201.
[507] See p. 11.

Whomever is sovereign in the state has the authority to decide the exception as necessary, whatever such might be determined to mean vis-à-vis the decision enacted. That descriptor of, "necessary," can even include suspension of the state apparatus in the assertion of emergency powers, as occurs in the state of exception. Agamben is both clear and relevant:

> *The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life – that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed – is the life that has been captured in this sphere*.[508][509]

Agamben neglects what we consider to be a critical consideration, however. The only constraint upon the sovereign is that whatever decision is enacted, it cannot reasonably be one which undoes the state itself. The state is a thing of law: it *binds* all things within its reach, including (and, perhaps, nothing more tightly than) itself. The state exists to *be* an interpretative perspective, a *point of view*, bound and guaranteed by its essential, compelling power, *the power to continue as such*. Even the state of exception, in its suspension of various state apparatuses, still maintains the state (albeit in a drastically changed form). For the same reason that the *scelus infandum* is anathema, the state cannot actively rule against mere existence: mere existence itself never constitutes a political transgression in terms of explicit transgressive act. To claim otherwise moves the actions of the state beyond the concept of the political and into more nebulous delineations, while putting the very categories which enable the friend-enemy distinction at risk.[510] Despite its authority, the state must not simply kill if such an act would undo itself.[511] This relates to Hobbes' discussion of David's killing of Uriah. Hobbes observes that the actions of the sovereign are not restricted by the innocent, but by, "the law of Nature:"

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[508] Italics his.
[509] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 83.
[510] See p. 65.
[511] Of course, states have and continue to do so. We are not naïve to such. However, our claim here is that states cannot act in such a fashion and maintain logical consistency as political entities coalesced around friend-enemy distinctions.

> For though the action be against the law of Nature, as being contrary to Equitie, (as was the killing of *Uriah*, by *David*;) yet it was not an Injurie to *Uriah*; but to *God*. Not to *Uriah*, because the right to doe what he pleased, was given him by *Uriah* himself: And yet to *God*, because *David* was *Gods* Subject; and prohibited all Iniquitie by the law of Nature. Which distinction, *David* himself, when he repented the fact, evidently confirmed, saying *To thee only have I sinned*.[512]

Lacking recourse to assimilate or annihilate the traumatized, as such action would undo its own consistency as a thing of law by actively undermining its constitutive categories, the state is left with only one mode of destroying the threat: abjection.

Though we ultimately intend something different from Julie Kristeva's overarching project on abjection (we utilize different sources and pursue different interests), resonance yet exists with her characterization of abjection as to help us draw out some of our own central themes:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects.[513]

Further, we agree with Kristeva that:

> The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is ***abject***, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses.[514]

This, "place where meaning collapses," is not itself first any spatial or temporal location, nor does it arise from the inherent traits of concrete things, but rather, "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order."[515] Like the

[512] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 129.
[513] Julie Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 1.
[514] Kristeva, p. 1.
[515] Kristeva, p. 4.

horrific *scelus infandum*, that which must be abjected challenges entire existential categories, "The abjection of Nazi crime reaches its apex when death, which in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things."[516] The abjected therefore both exists and does not exist, as world *turns away*:[517]

> Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture.[518]

Trauma's destruction of the human capacity *towards* language gains a second double-sense. The first double-sense is in the notion that to discuss trauma is always already a matter of discussing both *that which is traumatic* and *those who are traumatized* by the same. In significant ways, the event of trauma is only known through its, "collapse," of the former and the latter into one another. Now, the second double-sense implicates further destruction of the human capacity *towards* language: it is both *the destruction of the connectivity* of the traumatized to the transformative, interpenetrating relationality that is world, as well as *the resultant experience* of an abjecting world *further receding from view*. It is the consequent destruction inherent in the world's "safeguarding" *turn away*. In the wake of trauma, world is not only beyond reach; it is actively *turning away* from the traumatized, to "safeguard" itself and thereby continue on without them.[519]

If this is the case, trauma provokes a profound metaphysical question: are there things that exist in the earth that defy human power? An affirmative answer seems obvious, yet other than perhaps death, the contemporary context concedes to no such opposition. An affirmative

[516] Kristeva, p. 4.
[517] See p. 110.
[518] Kristeva, p. 2.
[519] See p. 69.

response might seem obvious, but contemporary commitments to human agency, equality, and technological innovation render it insincere. In the sight of such, all existence lay within the technocratic scope of human mastery, if one is simply skilled, strong, and subtle enough to master whatever lay present-at-hand. This, "general technologization,"[520] innate to the contemporary context's philosophical anthropology presumes a human capacity *for* not only language but all things. Failure of mastery thus becomes at least partially revelatory *not* of the inherent power against which one contends, but of one's own weakness in the presence of the same. Nacunan Saez develops this critique in remarks regarding the context of torture, "Those who have never suffered intense physical pain seem to believe that it is always possible to resist it."[521] There is a misguided sense that, given enough resources, that which is endured might yet be overcome through the application of human power. Failure becomes evidence of deficiency.

Within such a context, there is also the characterization of every experience as valuable, as it can be put to work in the furtherance of calculable thinking. Everything therefore acquires a value[522] determined over against the historical future. Within this conceptual superstructure, meaning is sought in experience. Yet, if trauma is from, "outside," if its null presence is inherently that which world *preserves against*, then there is no instrumental relationship possible: trauma signifies nothing other than the *literally unthinkable*. Trauma has no utility to master. It becomes an experience of the limits of being human, the very concept of which causes world to turn away. Such limits problematize ontological and cosmological concepts of what is, "human."

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[520] See p. 12.
[521] Nacunan Saez, "Torture: A Discourse on Practice," in *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text*, ed. Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 138.
[522] See p. 89.

To complete our outline of this section's forthcoming arguments, we introduce our concept of the *chthonic*. Whatever might exist in the earth, which is in itself completely antithetical to human life, we call the chthonic. This is a nod to the Greek root of the word, *chthon*, meaning the earth. However, with the Greeks, the word came to signify in the West not simply the terrestrial, but those things somehow *below* it, "The old religion, deriving from the period before the advent of Zeus and the Olympians, was in origin probably a worship of the dead, and therefore was concerned with placating the powers that live under the earth, the "chthonian gods" (from *chthon*, the earth)."[523] The chthonic deities were not (necessarily or only) gods and goddesses of the dead, the harvest, or the Underworld. They were those divine things which must be kept locked away, whose worship was a matter of placation, not supplication, "…the worship of chthonian powers was more generally associated with fear and mourning."[524]

Philosophically, the chthonic is of the earth, in the sense of, "earth," vis-à-vis Heidegger in the preceding section, "Earth, bearing and jutting, strives to keep itself closed and to entrust everything to its law."[525] If, "The origin of something is the source of its nature,"[526] our use of chthonic is best understood given its origins in the earth outside world. The chthonic is that which is beyond human reach; it is, "outside," in a very literal way. Intrinsically of the earth itself, the chthonic belongs to that realm of possibility which world concurrently preserves and is *preserved against*, "Being a work, it always remains tied to preservers, even and particularly when it is still only waiting for preservers and only pleads and waits for them to enter into its

[523] See introduction by Philip Vellacott; Aeschylus, *The Oresteian Trilogy: Agamemnon, The Choephori, The Eumenides* (Penguin Books, 1959), p. 16.
[524] See introduction by Philip Vellacott; Aeschylus, *The Oresteian Trilogy*, p. 16.
[525] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 61.
[526] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 17.

truth."[527] The world's horizons of discursive possibility must be understood to innately implicate two, "sides." *Within* these horizons is the world itself, the systematized totality of all that is possible. *Without* these horizons is all that is not possible and therefore lacks any connection to the world. Beyond the horizons of discursive possibility lay the existential nonsense of the *literally unthinkable*.

In this way, world once again signifies a finite infinity, "Preserving the work means: standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work."[528] Significant for us is that existence within such a finite infinity is the only existence known to human life. In this, "openness," presumably lay trajectories for relationality that have no bounds within world. There is therefore true novelty available to human life. However, the infinite openness of world only exists within the peculiarity of its work. Such world-as-work is itself born of a unique struggle between human power and specific context, as discussed in the preceding section. Strangely, the work's infinity is not *first* defined by its ever-extending opportunities for relation as ordained within, but by those enabling limits *over against* which world preserves its own discursive horizons:

> This "standing-within" of preservation, however, is a knowing. Yet knowing does not consist in mere information and notions about something. He who truly knows what is, knows what he wills to do in the midst of what is.[529]

The chthonic, "exists," as the breach of that preservation. It disables any such, "knowing," by drawing into question the relationalities which constitute world itself. The chthonic defies the framework of world and, in doing so, undoes it. World itself *is* framework, *is* the totality of revealed relationalities emerging from the earth. The index of these

[527] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 65.
[528] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 65.
[529] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 65.

interpenetrating relationships is the very discursive language through which world manifests. World arises upon the revelation of compatibility, commanded by the interpretative state, in which diverse things are drawn (via discursive language) into relation with one another. In this drawing of relation, sense prevails *out of* and *over against* nonsense:[530]

> In order for such speech to be possible in the first place, the something about which something is said – the subject – and that which is said – the predicate – must be compatible in speech. Incompatible things cannot be made into a unit by a spoken statement: take, for example, "triangle" and "laughter." The sentence "The triangle is laughing" cannot be said. It can be said, of course, in the sense that it can be pronounced as a mere string of words; we just did so. *But it can not be said really, in terms of what it says*.[531] The things that are evoked by "triangle" and "laughing" introduce something contradictory into their relation. The terms do make a declaration, but contradict each other. They thus make the proposition impossible.[532]

This is the commonality between the *scelus infandum* and trauma: if left unchecked, *they risk making proposition impossible*. As noted by Schmitt, human life is political life, in that human life exists only within its political entities. The friend-enemy distinction is the delineation that enables such life, through its provision of conceptual and actual boundaries to violence. All of the above presumes that the means to make such a distinction exist and lay within human reach. World as relationality must be affirmed and then reaffirmed, if world is to be preserved:

> Willing is the sober resolution of that existential self-transcendence which exposes itself to the openness of beings as it is set into the work. In this way, standing-within is brought under law. Preserving the work, as knowing, is a sober standing-within the extraordinary awesomeness of the truth that is happening in the work.[533]

Regarding trauma, the chthonic cannot be maintained within the bounds of the world. Claiming that the chthonic necessarily questions the legitimacy of world does not convey the

[530] As noted earlier in this work, we bring these explicit categories of sense and nonsense to our juxtaposition of Heidegger and Schmitt. They each are only used in passing, if at all, by the two respective figures themselves. However, we argue that sense and nonsense are essential categories with which to consider their collective work.
[531] Italics mine.
[532] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 155.
[533] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 65.

intensity we intend regarding their irreconcilable antagonism, while also suggesting an intent to each which we do not postulate. As those aspects of earth which world *decided against* at the cosmogony of the interpretative state, it is simply in the nature of the chthonic to oppose world. The chthonic enacts the dissolution of the world's constitutive relationships by undoing its preservation. Such preservation exists solely in and vis-à-vis human life, "acting jointly:"[534]

> Preserving the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work. Thus it grounds *being for and with one another*[535] as the historical standing-out of human existence in reference to unconcealedness.[536]

In trauma, the chthonic dissolves the revelation of world by reasserting the concealment of earth, denying access to the facets of things and therefore to their potential relationalities. Logic, the structure of the index of these relationalities, breaks down. There is no nuance in the chthonic, no subtlety, "In larger terms, then, the old religion is no safe moral guide in urgent situations which involve life and death; the quest for justice receives no solution from the chthonian gods."[537]

By definition, the chthonic relates to *nothing*, both in the descriptive and substantive senses. To be clear, it is not the demonic, if by such one means to introduce to our work Christian cosmology. It lacks the demonic because even the demonic (unless one professes a dualism considered heretical in Christianity since the earliest church councils) exists within the world. Like the angelic, the demonic exists within the proverbial order of things. Except when such creates trauma, the chthonic is not related to the repressed, destructive trajectories of possibility existent within the institutions of the world, which Zizek calls the, "institutional

[534] See p. 130.
[535] Italics mine.
[536] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 66.
[537] See introduction by Philip Vellacott; Aeschylus, *The Oresteian Trilogy*, p. 17.

unconscious," "Such an *institutional unconscious* designates the obscene disavowed underside that, precisely as disavowed, sustains the public institution."[538]

Clarity is important here, as it certainly can be easy to conflate these two concepts. The forces implicated by both concepts seek to destroy the world as it is, in woefully cruel ways. However, Heidegger's admonition regarding origins as *revealing of nature* is helpful. That which exists as demonic originates within creation, or at least alongside it. The demonic becomes indicative of the self-destructive within creation and thus belongs to the, "self," of creation. The demonic underworld is a land of the damned and dead, an observation that allows Zizek to claim:

> This obscene underground, the unconscious terrain of habits, is what is really difficult to change. This is why the motto of every radical revolution is the same as the quote from Virgil that Freud chose as the epigraph for his *Interpretation of Dreams: Acheronta movebo* – I will move the infernal regions. Dare to disturb the underground of the unspoken underpinnings of our everyday lives![539]

In contrast, there is no place for the chthonic in the world. The chthonic is not the demonic precisely because the chthonic is that which the cosmogony of the interpretative state commanded *against*. The demonic exists within the world enabled by the cosmogonic command; self-destruction, the willful pursuit of nonexistence, is still contained within world. As such, the demonic is an affront to the normative forces of human life. For all its bluster, it does not transcend them. The chthonic is an existential threat. We therefore suggest that Zizek (and arguably Freud) are discussing topics substantively different from us when speaking of their respective, "undergrounds."

This is important to note now also because of Zizek's claim regarding revolution. Zizek intends something different than Schmitt's identification of revolution with, "the more 'chthonic'

[538] Zizek, p. 168.
[539] Zizek, p. 168.

behemoth,"[540] though both cast revolution as an explosion of underground violence against an established and institutionalized state. Briefly and perhaps predictably, we resonate more strongly with Schmitt's claims. In the next chapter, we explore the political repercussions of the chthonic destruction of language and its resulting languagelessness. For now, it suffices to note there are aspects of Zizek's arguments which we find compelling, especially regarding the nature of divine violence. However, it is important to be clear that the chthonic is never an instrument to be channeled, drawn upon, or put to use. As such, the chthonic cannot itself give rise to a rallying cry. Attempting to position the chthonic in such a way presumes the chthonic to be a resource at hand. The chthonic is *essentially* useless: it is in its nature as earth unincorporated into world to be of no use within the world. Very literally, *it should not be*.

Yet, the chthonic is divine, in the sense that the chthonic is a radical Other which cannot be reduced to the order of things. What can said of the chthonic is as simple as it is mysterious: it exists as the antithesis of human life. As such, by definition, it is not a resource to be engaged instrumentally by human ingenuity. The chthonic is never appropriate.

The, "appropriate," is a critical category for Heidegger, one which is relevant and useful for our work at this point. In his later works, Heidegger begins to use, "Appropriation," in ways he earlier deployed, "Being," in order to avoid some of the metaphysical connotations of the latter, as well as to stress the activity, the active process, he sought to convey. Here Heidegger's overarching project of *Seinsgeschichte* invades our own project, if only briefly:

> The *belonging* together of man and Being in the manner of mutual challenge drives home to us with startling force that and how man is delivered over to the ownership of Being and Being is appropriate to the essence of man. Within the framework there prevails a strange ownership and a strange appropriation. We must experience simply this owning in which man and Being are delivered over to each other, that is, we must enter into what we call *the event of appropriation*.[541]

[540] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 7.
[541] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 36.

Heidegger intends, "event of appropriation," as singularly important; we intend less. However, relevant for us is Heidegger's further explanation of what he intends by the concept, "The event of appropriation is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them."[542] Somehow, someway, a fuller disclosure of world and human life within it is accessible to be deeply and truly known. It is, in a very real way, the fulfillment and fullest realization of the interpenetrating relationality intrinsic to world, "The appropriation appropriates man and Being to their essential togetherness."[543] As discussed throughout this chapter, language remains an indispensable aspect of the exploration and reality of relationality:

> To think of appropriating as the event of appropriation means to contribute to this self-vibrating realm. Thinking receives the tools for this self-suspended structure from language. For language is the most delicate and thus the most susceptible vibration holding everything within the suspended structure of the appropriation. We dwell in the appropriation inasmuch as our active nature is given over to language.[544]

Even though, "Logical classifications mean nothing here,"[545] in regards to Appropriation itself, language remains central to Appropriation, because Appropriation is the heart of relationality itself. Appropriation becomes, in a strangely literal way, the discovery of not just relationships, but the ultimate appropriateness of relationships within world in the fullest possible sense. It is a culminating revelation which renders human and Being appropriate, one to the other:

> We now see: What lets the two matters belong together, what brings the two into their own and, even more, maintains and holds them in their belonging together – the way the two matters stand, the matter at stake – is Appropriation.[546]

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[542] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 37.
[543] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 38.
[544] Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 38.
[545] Martin Heidegger, "Time and Being," in *On Time and Being* (New York, Evanston, San Fransisco, London: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 21.
[546] Heidegger, "Time and Being," p. 19.

The relationship remains indexed by discursive language. As such, Appropriation is inescapably linked to the human capacity *towards* language, "That Appropriation, seen as it is shown by Saying, cannot be represented either as an occurrence or a happening – it can only be experienced as the abiding gift yielded by Saying."[547] Heidegger is quite insistent on this point, on which we agree, "There is nothing else from which the Appropriation itself could be derived, even less in who terms it could be explained."[548] Yet, Appropriation is not a normative force, but it is akin to a transformative appreciation of the fullness of one's relationality vis-à-vis language:

> Appropriation grants to mortals their abode within their nature, so that they may be capable of being those who speak. If we understand "law" as the gathering that lays down that which causes all beings to be present in their own, in what is appropriate for them, then Appropriation is the plainest and most gentle of all laws, even more gentle than what Adalbert Stifter saw as the "gentle law." Appropriation, though, is not law in the sense of a norm which hangs over our heads somewhere, it is not an ordinance which orders and regulates a course of events:
> Appropriation is *the* law because it gathers mortals into the appropriateness of their nature and holds them there.[549]

In this sense, Appropriation is not merely the quantification of relationships, as made possible via the logical structures inherent in discursive language. Through the relationships discursive language brings into the, "Open," of world, one might further begin to realize the qualitative appropriateness of such relationships for all parties involved, allowing such to truly interpenetrate, "Relation is thought of here always in terms of the appropriation, and no longer conceived in the form of mere reference."[550] We discover in the event of appropriation a fuller sense of who we are, what world is, and how to more richly involve ourselves in both simultaneously, "Our relation to language defines itself in terms of the mode in which we, who

[547] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 127.
[548] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 127.
[549] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 128.
[550] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 135.

are needed in the usage of language, belong to the Appropriation."[551] The significance of world itself is brought into the, "Open," in an incredibly poetic way:

> Language has been called "the house of Being." It is the keeper of being present, in that its coming to light remains entrusted to the appropriating show of Saying. Language is the house of Being because language, as Saying, is the mode of Appropriation.[552]

This implicates a transformation of the human's experience of its own language, tied intimately to the, "destiny," inherent to any particular human's history and world:

> In order to pursue in thought the being of language and to say of it what is its own, a transformation of language is needed which we can neither compel nor invent. This transformation does not result from the procurement of newly formed words and phrases. It touches on our *relation to language*,[553] which is determined by destiny: whether and in what way the nature of language, as the arch-tidings of Appropriation, will retain us in Appropriation. For that appropriating, holding, self-retaining is the relation of all relations. Thus *our* saying – always an answering – remains forever relational.[554]

The chthonic is never appropriate. It reveals nothing about the appropriateness of one's place in world. Quite the contrary, in its destruction of language through the dissolution of relationality, the chthonic actively impedes the event of appropriation. The contemporary context, in its abjection of the chthonic via its denial of the exception, only exacerbates this threat. Schmitt reminds us again of the concrete importance of context, "The basic concepts that rule and uphold every system of international law, *war* and *peace*, become visible in the concreteness of their era, and the specific conception of the globe, of a spatial division of the earth, that characterizes every system of international law becomes fully evident."[555] The, "general technologization," of the contemporary context empowers the chthonic through its very abjection of the same. The damage of trauma, the wake of languagelessness, is permitted to

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[551] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 136.
[552] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 135.
[553] Italics mine.
[554] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 135.
[555] Carl Schmitt, "The Grossraum Order of International Law with a Ban on Intervention for Spatially Foreign Powers: A Contribution to the Concept of Reich in International Law," in *Writings on War*, ed. Timothy Nunan (Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press, 2011), p. 112.

fester, so that it remains abject. Heidegger remarks that in the contemporary context, relation is already, "conceived in the form of mere reference," "The power concealed in modern technology determines the relation of man to that which exists."[556] With relationality already framed in a dehumanizing way, the chthonic inherent in trauma becomes an even more destructive threat.

We will soon turn in this section to the testimony of the traumatized themselves. Should their testimony reveal an experience of the chthonic, we will presumably have a more comprehensive understanding of discursive language. Further, philosophy will open up for us, should Heidegger be correct, "That philosophy originates only out of a sufficient understanding of language."[557] The tie of both to the state, as discussed in the preceding section, would presumably problematize our concept of that entity, as well. The interpretative state brings world into existence through its command of discursive language, with command here intending both the cosmogonic command and its echoes within normative structures. The interpretative state commands language into existence and normalizes its command, via logic, into the projection of the historical future revealed by discursive language. Heidegger's observation about origins and nature is once again helpful: originating in the interpretative state's power, *the power to continue as such*, language, philosophy, and politics are intimately joined. The challenges of trauma thus pervade all three.

We claimed that for our purposes, trauma is accessible for consideration only vis-à-vis the testimony of the traumatized. The ongoing event of trauma, as an experience and resultant languageless aftermath of the chthonic, is endured by concrete persons and only manifests through their lives. While we can observe the proverbial outer dimensions of such living, access to its inner dimensions requires an acceptance of the unique authority possessed by the

[556] Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 50.
[557] Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, p. 12.

traumatized as to their own experience. This hearkens back to the concept of, "witness," discussed in the previous chapter.[558] An observation by theologian Wendy Farley is helpful even in our philosophical work, as her claim regarding theology also resonates for philosophical systems:

> Confidence in cosmic justice cannot completely obscure the rapacity of suffering as it devours the innocent and the helpless. Hopes in future vindication do not make hunger, racism, war, and oppression theologically irrelevant. It would be consoling to believe that suffering is a consequence of wrongdoing. But the correlation between suffering and punishment is exploded by the genocide in Germany and Cambodia, by the torture of prisoners of conscience, by battered women and abused children – by the "human tears with which our earth is soaked from crust to core."[559]

Farley's following assertion is itself *first* a metaphysical claim, *before* enabling its ethical one: "The cruelty of human suffering defies attempts to incorporate it into any order of justice."[560] It is beyond the scope of this work to engage the possible reality of (and, "reality," inherent in) the Idea of such orders. However, Farley notes, "No conceptual scheme can thoroughly expel the bewilderment suffering evokes."[561] With this point, Farley provides us a justification for accepting testimony, especially in the tragic mode, as a source for further philosophical inquiry, "Instead of the just world we might envision, we seem to live in a tragic one. At least, a study of tragedy may enable theology to look at the problem of evil in a new light and to take suffering more seriously."[562] We engage tragedy more directly later via our examination of myth and the aesthetic turn. For now, in the move beyond theology, our philosophical use of testimony warrants attention.

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[558] See p. 38.
[559] Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, p. 19.
[560] Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, p. 19.
[561] Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, p. 19.
[562] Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, p. 19.

If Farley is correct, certain philosophical categories (evil, suffering, etc.) are only first accessible to scrutiny via the accounts of those who endure them. While risk of the logical fallacy of anecdotal evidence remains, testimony should not simply be discarded as a resource for philosophical inquiry because it is not easily reconciled with Cartesian or Lockean methods. Nor does availing of such resources necessarily mean philosophy ceases being, "philosophy," and becomes, "social science." It seems enough for us to observe that some phenomena are known only through the related experience of another, problematic as that might be for independent verification. We take time to address this point from the onset of our examination of testimonies.

We are concerned, for instance, that our concept of the chthonic might appear fanciful, in that we are hypothesizing the existence of existential conditions that somehow encounter and are encountered by human life, yet simultaneously have no relation to world. Quite directly, and like all that is of the unmitigated earth, the chthonic simply *is*. Confusion is risked by noting that the earth also *is* concealing, conserving; it sustains, but in a passive way. How *is* it with the earth?

The earth can be made known and yet remain incomprehensible; our examination of the *scelus infandum* explored such. The strange invasions of earth into world do not mean that the world successfully incorporates the former into itself. Such only means that world is challenged and that the power from which arises the cosmogonic command must enact itself in a new decision. Furthermore, certain constraints arise out of earth and are already, "known," to human life, yet only through their essential absence and non-disclosure. We are thinking here of death.[563]

[563] See p. 122.

To suggest that death is, "in," the world seems an overreach. Rather, world is forced to acknowledge death as a limit *over against* which its horizons of discursive possibility are set.[564] Death remains a constant, an intrinsic aspect of the earth out of which world vis-à-vis human power emerges. Death (at least, death itself) cannot therefore be destroyed by any application of the interpretative state's existential power, *the power to continue as such*. Yet, even death is abjected within world, insofar as it can be, by what the early Heidegger calls, "idle talk," and, "everyday fashion:"[565]

> As such it remains in the inconspicuousness characteristic of what is encountered in everyday fashion. The "they" has already stowed away [gesichert] an interpretation for this event. It talks of it in a "fugitive" manner, either expressly or else in a way which is mostly inhibited, as if to say, "One of these days one will die too, in the end; but right now it has nothing to do with us."[566]

We see here to a lesser degree what we will later observe about trauma: the nature of abjection, "In such a way of talking, death is understood as an indefinite something which, above all, must duly arrive from somewhere or other, but which is proximately *not yet present-at-hand* for oneself, and is therefore no threat."[567] The dead are likewise trivialized, not for any active transgression except for being dead, "In Dasein's public way of interpreting, it is said that 'one dies,' because everyone else and oneself can talk himself into saying that 'in no case is it I myself', for this 'one' is *the* 'nobody'."[568] Death no longer belongs to the life which ended, "Dying, which is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative, is

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[564] See p. 114.
[565] One of our uses of Heidegger circa *Being and Time* beyond his *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. While we agree that his characterization and deployment of certain concepts changed over the course of his life (we find the claim of a *Kehre* compelling), death remained an important limiting factor that framed Heidegger's work throughout his life. As such, even though we predominantly engage the mid- to late-*Kehre* Heidegger, we argue that the early Heidegger's treatment of death can still inform the above without creating for us substantive issues of continuity.
[566] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, New Delhi, Auckland: Harper Perennial, 2008), p. 297.
[567] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 297.
[568] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 297.

perverted into an event of public occurrence which the 'they' encounters."[569] Thus, death and dead are abjected, as world *turns away*. Heidegger's claim here resources our own work, even if it extends past our concerns towards his own interests in his *Seinsgeschichte*:

> Death gets passed off as always something 'actual'; its character as a possibility gets concealed, and so are the other two items that belong to it – the fact that it is non-relational and that it is not to be outstripped. By such ambiguity, Dasein puts itself in the position of losing itself in the "they" as regards a distinctive potentiality-for-Being which belongs to Dasein's ownmost Self. The "they" gives its approval, and aggravates the *temptation* to cover up from oneself one's ownmost Being-towards-death.[570]

This, "cover up," is not only a personal act of turning away from death, "In this manner the 'they' provides [besorgt] a *constant tranquilization about death*."[571] The constancy of this tranquilization is significant for our work. The, "cover up," is reasserted and reinforced via normative forces seeking to reestablish the continuity of world, "At bottom, however, this is a tranquilization not only for him who is 'dying' but just as much for those who 'console' him."[572] The abjection is not restorative in any fashion for the dying or the dead, who themselves constitute a *problem* for world, not in the sense of any intention activity on their part beyond merely existing. Their existence draws attention to the existential conditions of that human power as constituted in the state, *the power to continue as such*. Death is one of the things *against which* world is set to protect, yet as death is an inescapable existential condition apparently permeating the earth from which world emerges, death is a true inevitability. Confronted with this contradiction, world exerts itself via normative forces to *turn away*:

> And even in the case of a demise, the public is still not to have its own tranquility upset by such an event, or be disturbed in the carefreeness with which it concerns itself. Indeed the dying of Others is seen often enough as a social inconvenience, if not even a downright tactlessness, against which the public is to be guarded.[573]

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[569] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 297.
[570] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 297.
[571] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 298.
[572] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 298.
[573] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 298.

Trauma only complicates this observation about death and its, "cover up." The nature of languagelessness is to be abjected, to be *turned away from* by world. The encounter with the chthonic that results in languagelessness, for lack of a better word, *taints*. Its horror, as will be shown, lingers. That which is chthonic does not, "act," for Heidegger's observation at the start of this section remains relevant: origins and nature are tied. The chthonic is *of* the earth, so while it breaches world, it simply and profoundly *is*. The chthonic does not encounter, it *is* encounter. Further, that which encounters the chthonic cannot be reconciled back into world, for that one now no longer exists solely within the systematic and totalizing grasp of normative forces. That one carries with it a, "loose end," an experience that cannot be referenced through the index of interpenetrating relationships that is discursive language. As such, the chthonic is doubly horrifying: it is itself an encounter with unmitigated earth, and also an encounter which results in one becoming outcast. Regarding the trauma of war and a lack of greater attention to its realities, Dave Grossman notes, "There is instead, in the words of philosopher-psychologist Peter Marin, 'a massive unconscious cover-up' in which society hides itself from the true nature of combat."[574] That nature, we argue, exposes (or at least greatly increases the risk of exposing) one to the chthonic, so much so that, "As a psychologist I believe that Marin is quite correct when he observes, 'Nowhere in the [psychiatric and psychological] literature is one allowed to glimpse what is actually occurring: the real horror of the war and its effect on those who fought it.'"[575]

Furthermore, death itself is chthonic. Its constancy makes it easy to confuse for a normative force, but death is an existential condition. Simply because it occurs to all known sentient things does mean that death is a norm, as norms arise through enactment within world.

[574] Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York, Boston, London: Back Bay Books, 1996), p. 36.
[575] Grossman, p. 36.

Normative forces are rendered out of existential conditions, yet the existential conditions themselves can remain. To talk about death rights, death beds, death tax, fear of death, trappings of death is to *not* talk about *death*, except incidentally, *abjectly*. Like with all chthonic encounters, death is known by its impact, its proverbial, "blast radius," rather than by any direct experience to be rendered into discursive language: we experience death only through witness of the chthonic encounter (and consequent suffering) of another.

All this does not necessarily impute to death agency, intentionality, personality, or any other anthropomorphic or even bestial characteristic. Like all that is chthonic, death simply *is* and its existence *is* antithetical to human life. To claim that, in regards to the chthonic, "here there be dragons!" is not to signify the existence of a flight of dragons, but to expand cosmology beyond normative world into existential earth. Any (including our own) ontological speculation into such is problematic, but not dismissible *prima facie*. As such, given our methodological point of departure via concrete human lives, praxis, and testimony, we understand our concept of the chthonic to be resistant to critiques like Gaunilo's refutation of the Anselm's ontological argument.

Having attempted to address potential concerns regarding our concept of the chthonic, we continue to attend to the question of our use of testimony as philosophical resource. Literary critic Elaine Scarry, in her groundbreaking work, The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World, provides us with a way forward:

> Though the total number of words may be meager, though they may be hurled into the air unattached to any framing sentence, something can be learned from these verbal fragments not only about pain but about the human capacity for word-making. To witness the moment when pain causes a reversion to the pre-language of cries and groans is to witness the *destruction of language*;[576] but conversely, to be present when a person

[576] Italics mine.

> moves up out of that pre-language and projects the facts of sentience into speech is almost to have been permitted to be present at the birth of language itself.[577]

Scarry's concept of the, "destruction of language," develops differently from ours, given (among other things) our respective disciplinary commitments. For us, "language," thus far intends discursive language within an admittedly Heideggerian metaphysical framework, in conversation with a political realism substantively indebted to Schmitt. While Heidegger is not a main interlocutor for Scarry, she does engage Schmitt and his concept of the political.

Scarry notes Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction to observe that war seems to be defined by two characteristics, which when considered jointly lead to a provocative question, "With these two premises in place – that the central activity of war is injuring; that war is in its formal structure a contest – it is possible to begin to assess the nature of war by approaching it through the question, what is it that differentiates war from other kinds of contest?"[578] She notes that the primary function of war, to injure the opposition within the contest, seems to implicate more than just the means to establish the contest's winner:

> It is, then, once again, the depth, massiveness, intensity, or speed of injuring that is central and the feat of out-injuring that determines the winner.
> What is most crucial to see is that so far nothing differentiates war from any other form of contest. Injuring has made it possible to arrive at a winner and a loser; but the work of arriving at a winner and a loser is an achievement common to *every* act and attribute on which a contest has ever been based…[579]

Still within a trajectory resonate with Schmitt, Scarry recasts her original question about war:

> We must identify a *second* function accomplished by out-injuring, a function other than determining a winner and a loser, and so answer the question, Is there something that differentiates war from all other contests, is there something that differentiates injuring from every other act or attribute on which a contest can be based?[580]

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[577] Elaine Scarry, *The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 6.
[578] Scarry, p. 88.
[579] Scarry, p. 90.
[580] Scarry, p. 90.

In the presence of a compelling answer to this question, Scarry suggests:

> We may be required to conclude that wars, of the past and of the future, are necessary and must be accepted as performing a work that has can have no equivalent in any other form of activity. Or, it may instead be the case that being able to identify and articulate that "something" could enable us to locate an equivalent that perhaps only at first appeared not to exist, or that is could enable us (once the "something" is precisely defined and understood) to invent its equivalent if none already exists."[581]

We digress here to observe a few important points. Note that while there is perhaps a technocratic optimism (characteristic of the contemporary context) at work in Scarry's consideration of alternatives to the injurious contest of war, the reality of violence remains consistently present. Violence is not a secondary or unintentional effect of primary causes; violence is constitutive of the (perhaps any) experience itself. At question is not the end of violence, but its management. This acceptance of violence as essentially and inescapably *of* the earth, *from* which world emerges via the delineating violence-doing inherent to the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, is a characteristic of a political realism substantively differentiated from projects that could be called more idealistic[582]. For this strain of political realism, the existence of violence might be a *problem*, but it is not an *accident*. The eradication of violence is not something that can be achieved, no matter how precise and refined the tools deployed to achieve that goal. This is because the tools themselves, like everything else that exists, are essentially and inescapably *violent*: to exist is necessarily to exist *over against* not only something else, but the *very possibility* of something else. The task is thus not to eradicate violence (and in doing so the friend-enemy distinction), but to restrain violence within manageable and less catastrophic ways.

[581] Scarry, p. 91.

[582] Rawls comes to mind here, yet he is not alone. We suggest that both liberal interventionists and neoconservatives have idealistic trajectories, though substantiation of this claim is unfortunately beyond the scope of this work. We mention these simply to provide greater awareness of where we locate our own work in regards to other offerings.

We mention this now to highlight what philosophical exploration of trauma brings to, "openness."[583] To consider violent injury merely as an accident potentially relegates the traumatized to being statistically insignificant, unworthy of substantive consideration. An accident is known precisely because it is a disruption of the processes intrinsic to an otherwise orderly system. Yet, our claim is that trauma (conceived as languagelessness) is not an accident. It is an exception. An exception is not reducible to accident. An exception is not a disruption of processes, except insofar as processes are disrupted in the event of the exception's challenge to the *entire* enabling, overarching system itself. Framing the matter present-at-hand as a *problem* of violence, rather than an *accident* of violence, brings attention to the fact that, while trauma is characteristically violent, trauma's violence is *incidental* and not uniquely *definitive*. If trauma has been shown to relate to language, philosophy, and politics, of course it is violent. From the standpoint of political realism (or, at least, our understanding of such via Schmitt), violence is existential. Through a philosophical kind of political analysis, however, trauma is found to be incidentally violent because of its nature as languagelessness, its nature as the result of chthonic experience. Trauma is a wounding, one originating from and in the violence inherent to discursive language, as well as from the rending that occurs as discursive language is destroyed by chthonic encounter. With all its existentially problematic complexity, it is this wounding that seems to identify a particular injury as a traumatic one.

To define trauma vis-à-vis languagelessness implicates a differentiation within the category of violence. Trauma is not simply a matter of quantitative suffering. Rather, somehow, someway, trauma implicates a violence that includes the originary violence-doing of the cosmogonic command. The event of trauma is an injurious event implicating a *range* of violence.

[583] See p. 161.

It is important that we be explicit: to speak of trauma is not necessarily to speak of all disability or injury. Rather, while not all injuries result in trauma, all those suffering traumatic injury are by definition wounded in some shape or form, to an extent that substantively distances them from previous expectations of ability. "Trauma," becomes a way of designating a particular category of disability or injury. It becomes a technical, philosophical term. It designates those specific, "kinds," of injury which are qualitatively different from others that might harm specific processes, yet leave broader aspects of identity and relationship intact.

More consideration of what is meant by, "body," is due us at this point, since, "We know by now perhaps a great deal – almost more than we can encompass – about what we call the body, without having seriously thought about what *bodying* is."[584] Heidegger rightly observes in his commentaries on Nietzsche that, "Life lives in that it bodies forth."[585] Bodies are an existential condition that literally carry, and are carried on in, knowledge, "The bodying of life is nothing separate by itself, encapsulated in the 'physical mass' [*Korper*] in which the body can appear to us; the body [*der Leib*] is transmission and passage at the same time."[586] The essentiality of the body is an important component of our further arguments in this section. Trauma, in its injury-as-event, breaks the body to such a degree that it cannot but break more than just the physical processes regularly attributed to body, to *mere* body. Yet, it is an inescapable existential condition that it is through the body that human life is lived, "It may be that *bodying* is initially an obscure term, but it names something that is *immediately* and *constantly* experienced in the knowledge of living things, and it must be kept in mind."[587]

[584] Martin Heidegger, "The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics," in *Nietzsche: Volumes Three and Four*, ed. David Farrell Krell (HarperOne, 1991), p. 79.
[585] Heidegger, "The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics," p. 79.
[586] Heidegger, "The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics," p. 79.
[587] Heidegger, "The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics," p. 79.

Trauma designates those injurious events that have semiotic significance, impacting the survivor's potential for world disclosure (and, tragically, world closure). It is indeed injury-as-event, transforming identity on all possible levels within which the individual is embodied. All possible levels are impacted because trauma, as an experience of the chthonic, renders the index of interpenetrating relationships untrustworthy at best, shattered at worst. In the chthonic, the traumatized have already encountered that which exists beyond the bounds of world as encapsulated and manifest in discursive language. As suggested by Herman, the foundations of world are shaken, shaking all that is built upon them:

> Traumatic experiences are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptions to life. Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the response of catastrophe. According to the *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, the common denominator of psychological trauma is a feeling of "intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation.[588]

The harm to identity plays out on many, if not all, levels, including interpersonal. The embodied context of trauma is not solely a biological (or even holistically individuated) issue, but a social and socializing one. Traumatization potentially annihilates not only body parts and processes, but via languagelessness aspects of the corporate body. It redefines one's worth in the world, one's ability to produce not only labor, but connectivity (both to oneself and the humanity of Others). The decision to, "act jointly," and thus achieve the historical future is compromised:

> The "body"- of individuals and the body of populations- appears as the bearer of new variables, not merely as between the scarce and the numerous, and the submissive and the restive, rich and poor, healthy and sick, but also as between the more and less utilisable, more or less amenable to profitable investment, those with greater or lesser prospects of survival, death and illness, and with more or less capacity for being usefully trained.[589]

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[588] Herman, p. 34.
[589] Michel Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980), p. 172.

Consider here that a hypothetical amputee, say a male United States Marine laid in a burn ward due to severe combat wounds. With the above, the phenomena he represents is now understood to have lost more than "just" limbs: he is no longer one who can physically labor in the stockyards back home, he is no longer a husband that can embrace his wife, he is no longer a father that can pick up and hold his children. This list is not exhaustive; in fact, that is the point. Traumatic injury is never exhausted, because its experience of the chthonic is an encounter with what is by definition a limitless challenge. Traumatic injury is not a matter of enduring violence of a quantitative amount, but rather of a qualitative kind. It challenges not only particular possibilities for restructuring identity, even should we consider those identities most cherished and constitutive of self. This Marine's trauma requires us to consider the possibility that, in the wake of trauma, identity cannot be restructured, *at all*. This Marine no longer exists as he did within world as previously known.

There is a further complication. The move here is not simply in the relation of Marine-to-world. Philosophically, we are now also confronted with the move of world-to-Marine. How is it possible that such a catastrophe could occur that does not simply break identities, but the potential for identity itself? How is it that world, the totality of all relations, can include a possibility wherein which there is no ground for relation?

These reductions of identity and potential extend beyond surface political and socioeconomic concerns to the deepest of socializing possibilities. Indeed, the disenfranchisement from one's previous matrices of identity after traumatic injury can include an alienation of those very capacities from which one derives understanding at all. As implicated in the preceding section, history and world, at least in a discursive sense, are literally taken away.

If trauma annihilates the relationships and societal connections resourcing human life (in the Heideggerian sense), then, bereft of such reference points, disclosure and self-disclosure cannot exist. Trauma, from this philosophical perspective, is therefore the destruction of language understood in the broadest sense: the shattering of semiosis which leaves only a profound Silence (capitalized here to denote not an absence of sound, but an utter absence and unavailability of meaning vis-à-vis world and its historical past, present, and future). It is a designation for human phenomena that remain concurrently individuated and societal, like all semiotic phenomena, yet defined by the profound breach of a reciprocal relationship between individual and community. Trauma is thus a political event with socioeconomic dimensions.

This is why discussion of war is so intimately tied to exploration of trauma. As Scarry addresses, there is often an observable qualitative difference in the kind of violence enacted in war. Not all violent acts of war are traumatic, but the context of war seems to supply more opportunities for traumatic injury. The broader political and socioeconomic contexts of war seem to provide an answer as to why this is the case. The above gives us a way to address why trauma and war are so readily related. Yet, the same observation also ensures that trauma is not reducible only to wartime phenomena. By postulating a qualitative difference, rather than quantitative difference, with which to differentiate traumatic injury from other injury, we preserve Herman's contribution[590] that the possibility of trauma exists across the range of human life, "The severity of traumatic events cannot be measured on any single dimension; simplistic efforts to quantify trauma ultimately lead to meaningless comparisons of horror."[591]

[590] See p. 28.
[591] Herman, p. 34.

Enough digression; back to Scarry and her question of what is definitively unique about war. She rightly notes that, "Only at the end of war does the benefit of injuring occur."[592] Thus:

> There is essentially only one answer…: a military contest differs from other contests in that its outcome carries the power of its own enforcement; the winner may enact its issues because the loser does not have the power to reinitiate the battle, does not have the option further *to contest* the issues or *to contest* the nature of the contest or its outcome or the political consequences of that outcome. Thus injuring as the activity on which a contest is based not only designates a winner and a loser and in so doing brings about the cessation of its own activity (a description that would so far apply to most contests), but also (unlike other contests) ensures that one of the two participants will no longer have the ability to again perform the activity.[593]

However, in her critique of the above, itself a claim with widespread acceptance since at least Clausewitz, Scarry immediately and rightly points out that the presumption of, "enforcement," might very well be an overreach. To win a war through the imposition of violence, and thus quell opposition, does not necessarily mean the successful imposition of issues, if the latter are intended to encompass anything more than mere subjugation. The above Clausewitzian conceptualization is possible only if one presumes two equal combatants locked in mortal combat, similar to the war of all against all discussed in a Hobbesian state of nature:

> That is, it may be that the widely shared assumption that war carries the power of its own enforcement arises from the mental reflex of thinking about war by holding steady the contest activity as injuring but conceiving of that activity as occurring between two people each working to kill the other.[594]

Enforcement thus collapses into enactment, as death ensures disposal of the issues present-at-hand:

> In mortal combat between two persons, the outcome *does* carry the power of its own enforcement; the designation of a winner and a loser also endures and transfers to the enactment of the no longer contested issue because the contest has eliminated the capacity of the loser to protest or even wonder about his own version of those issues which, importantly, have died with him.[595]

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[592] Scarry, p. 95.
[593] Scarry, p. 96.
[594] Scarry, p. 99.
[595] Scarry, p. 99.

Yet wars are more than the sum of pitched battles (events ever rarer in the contemporary context), and therefore, "show that the character of injuring is altered when the context is altered from two people to two multitudes of people, and the first is not an accurate model for the second."[596] The Clausewitzian conceptualization is not universal, if indeed it is ever actually applicable at all. Certainly, the imposition of violence does linger onward past, "victory," but not essentially in the form of a thoroughly imposed and entrenched imposition of issues. Should the latter ever take hold, such might occur within the security afforded by the former's act, but this is hardly guaranteed. That which lingers in the violence of war must be something else:

> Of the many things that might be said about the nature of injury in war, a small number may begin to lead to an explanation for the overarching question that confronts us here: the question of how injuring creates an abiding outcome, an outcome that is "as though" the losers were deprived of the capacity to renew the activity of injuring, even though in almost no case is the losing side actually placed in that position.[597]

Scarry goes on to discuss how injury itself, through its fluidity, both exacerbates conflict and strangely brings about the cessation of conflict:

> The fifty million deaths of World War II after the war substantiate the outcomes determined by the winners rather than half of them substantiating the only once "wished-for" issues or "once believed-in beliefs" of the loser. Together they confirm the abiding reality of one set of issues and the disappearance of another.[598]

It is not that victory secures the issues present-at-hand. Rather, "*the injuring* not only provides a means of choosing between disputants but also *provides, by its massive opening of human bodies, a way of reconnecting the derealized and disembodied beliefs with the force and power of the material world*."[599] Upon war's conclusion, the issues that were fought over no longer

[596] Scarry, p. 99.
[597] Scarry, p. 111.
[598] Scarry, p. 119.
[599] Scarry, p. 128.

exist, though the wounds linger. As such, the defeated are robbed of motive force, even while their wounds, "memorialize," a world which no longer exists:

> Thus, the declaration of war is the declaration that "reality" is now officially "up for grabs," is now officially not only to be suspended but systematically deconstructed, a deconstruction that will be carried far enough on both sides so that either one, if designated the loser, will have less difficulty reimagining itself as "without" its disputed aspect of self-definition than it would prior to the war.[600]

Here is why war seems to so often be a venue for trauma: it is in the nature of war to already bring into question the relationalities that are world and which are indexed by discursive language. War itself becomes a breaking of that which sustains normative forces, so that the, "openness,"[601] provided by discursive language is exposed. In this context, the chthonic is all the more prevalent precisely because there is less of world (in form of normative restraints) to preserve *against* it. As we noted regarding Herman in the previous chapter, trauma is *not* relegated solely to war. However, observing how war makes trauma more prevalent, how war *lets the chthonic in*, helps further our understanding of the existential conditions present. It also implicates one of our metaphysical concerns regarding this entire issue: the power that underpins world, *the power to continue as such*, has within its grasp (via war) the capacity to create the conditions within which the destruction of language is likely, yet the capacity to restore the same remains elusive. These observations only heighten the stakes of warfare, torture, and other similar modes of violence, by drawing out that the damage inflicted by such far exceeds the physical.

Scarry provides another point for our consideration, prior to the testimonies of the traumatized themselves. When addressing torture, she explores one of the definitive characteristics of trauma: "the idiom of 'betrayal:'"

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[600] Scarry, p. 137.
[601] See p. 161.

> It is the intense pain that destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe. Intense pain is also language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject.[602]

It is this loss of one's world, the discovery that neither self nor world cannot be trusted in the presence of pain and the chthonic, which casts trauma's loss as a betrayal by and of all involved, "World, self, and voice are lost, or nearly lost, through the intense pain of torture and not through the confession as is wrongly suggested by its connotations of betrayal."[603]

Such pain does not belong in this (or any) world, as such pain is not *of* this (or any) world. The reality of such things is an intrusion *into* world *from* outside. Like all nonsense, these things *can* be done, as we discussed earlier in this section.[604] However, to actualize the existence of such is to *risk making proposition impossible*. Gabriele Schwab expands on this:

> Meaning, thoughts, and words are eliminated. The destruction of language is meant to last beyond the confines of actual torture, rendering torture unspeakable, if not unmemorable. The destruction of language is a second crime.[605]

Schwab resonates with Scarry's use of the phrase, "destruction of language," here and provides much for our own, as well. Trauma, whether in torture, war, or some other context, appears as a betrayal of the body, self, and world, both individually and collectively. The, "crime," of the traumatized, as it were, was to fail in sustaining *over against* the pain. With that failure, they fail the power that underpins world itself, *the power to continue as such*. In the vacuum of where the traumatized themselves once were, in the very nullity of the vacuum *itself,* lay the chthonic. Schwab continues to account for the loss, failure, and betrayal:

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[602] Scarry, p. 35.
[603] Scarry, p. 35.
[604] See p. 156.
[605] Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 174.

> The attack on language entails an attack on memory; the victim's catastrophic regression and helplessness prevent her memory of torture from being integrated into the story of the self. If it does not succumb to amnesia, memory remains experiential and corporal rather than verbal.[606]

The wounding is written in such a way that breaks discursive language. It is accessible to recall, to utterance, not through proclamation, but only via performance:

> While torture memories leave a hole in mind and self, the unconscious inscription of torture in the body may, as recent research in the neurosciences shows, permanently alter the processing of danger and pain signals in the brain as well as the hormonal responses to threatening stimuli. This is why traumatic body memory and its effects on neurological and hormonal functioning belong to the lasting effects of torture.[607]

The traumatic injury (for Schwab in the context of torture) is one wherein the entirety of self and world is wounded at an essential level. Herman's work suggests such is true of trauma in all contexts, "Traumatic memories lack verbal narrative and context; rather, they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images."[608] If Heidegger is correct that, "Our body itself is admitted into this stream of life, floating in it, and is carried off and snatched away by this stream or else pushed to the banks,"[609] here the body is either dashed upon the rocks or drowned, betrayed by and betraying that very stream. Trauma, languagelessness, is experienced at least in part as an ultimate betrayal of traumatized and world to the nonsense of the chthonic, precisely because of what Heidegger reminds us regarding the centrality of discursive language, "We are, then, within language and with language before all else."[610]

The traumatic injury-as-event is a betrayal of world wherein which the traumatized live. This is one of the reasons the traumatized experience difficulty systematically understanding their own trauma, as traumatic existence plays out outside the relationalities previously

[606] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, p. 174.
[607] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, p. 174.
[608] Herman, p. 38.
[609] Heidegger, "The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics," p. 80.
[610] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 112.

accessible to him or her. Trauma is without relation, as noted by Herman in her examination of trauma's catastrophic disconnect:

> The damage to relational life is not a secondary effect of trauma, as originally thought. Traumatic events have primary effects not only on the psychological structures of the self but also on the systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community. Mardi Horowitz defines traumatic life events as those that cannot be assimilated with the victim's "inner schemata" of self in relation to the world.[611]

While others can ask, "Why can't you just move on?" those inquiring such still exist outside the injury-as-event and can therefore draw upon broader resources. The traumatized, having had their ability to comprehend and trust others betrayed in the most intimately personal way, now relate to world through what we earlier noted Scarry called the, "idiom of betrayal." The chthonic encounter catastrophically questions the relationality that *is* world:

> Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis.[612]

The systematic totality of the betrayal is complete, exacerbated by the very systemizing and totalizing nature of world itself. The originating violation expands past the moment of harm to become a betrayal implicating the very categories of trust and meaning. Relationality itself is impacted by trauma:

> Above all, in psychological terms, they lose faith- not religious faith, but faith in the fact that life has a certain consistency and meaning. The fabric of everyday existence is torn away to reveal danger and risk. For the survivor, the encounter inevitably involves corruption of innocence. Once something of this nature has happened to a person, it is very difficult for them to believe that life can ever be the same again.[613]

[611] Herman, p. 51.
[612] Herman, p. 51.
[613] Hodgkinson, p. 1

The pervasiveness of betrayal is almost impossible to overestimate, "Betrayal of 'what's right' is particularly destructive to a sense of community of value in ideals, ambitions, things, and activities. When some major ideals have been betrayed, the trustworthiness of every ideal and activity may be called into question."[614] The response can be anything and everything from the aforementioned symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder to even more severe bouts of suicidal depression, criminal rage, or development of addictive personality traits. Each further and only exacerbates the lingering pain, "Severe prolonged traumatization can bring wholesale destruction of desire, of the will to exist and to have a future."[615] Traumatization therefore opens into the greater degradation of self, which harms both self and all those around:

> Jim's guilt feelings isolated him from his own children, who consequently felt that he hated them. But his feelings reflected his self-hatred and inability to forgive himself for his "war crimes against children." A "bipolar perceptual and emotional conflict" causes the veteran to swing from perceiving his child as totally helpless and innocent, to perceiving the child as able and blameworthy. When perceived as helpless, the concomitant emotion is warmth, overprotectiveness (often in an aggressive manner), and nurturing. On the other hand, when the child is viewed as blameworthy, the emotion generated in the father is anxiety, vindictive anger, and withdrawal.[616]

In this way, the proverbial, "blast radius," of trauma extends beyond the traumatized and onward to their inaccessible world. In doing so, even the most presumably compelling categories are recast:

> For some men like Jim, this stems from a basic "conviction" that children cannot be trusted; "they can kill you," as they did in Vietnam. The other side of the bipolar conflict is the veteran's conviction that all children are innocent and must be protected from "people like myself; people who could kill children." It is not that Jim is totally unaware of the difference between the past and the present, or between his children and the Vietnamese children, but rather he is stuck in the emotional quagmire of a painful past, relived repeatedly in the present.[617]

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[614] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 178
[615] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 178
[616] Joel Osler Brende and Erwin Randolph Parson, *Vietnam Veterans: The Road to Recovery* (New York & London: Plenum Press, 1985), p. 112.
[617] Brende, *Vietnam Veterans*, p. 112.

Yet the event of having been betrayed only reinforces the need not to betray others, even as similar idealistic constructs are breaking down. However, the category of, "others," implicated here narrows precisely by trauma's chthonic destruction. These, "others," which exist not to be betrayed, exist through the locus of the traumatic event. In the context of child abuse and domestic violence, these others can be fellow family and friends who endured the same suffering, though such is not necessarily the case. In the context of war, our primary focus, these others are often fellow servicemembers. Regardless, the ultimate act of betrayal for the traumatized, especially in light of trauma's wounding and its destruction of discursive language, is to forget and be forgotten, "Soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, no matter how humble and undistinguished, abhor being *forgotten*."[618] This potentially taps into the nature of memory: lacking the ability to draw upon outside resources (world) to provide an imaginative reference back to oneself, memory becomes a way by which the traumatized are able to keep these, "others," (and, perhaps, themselves) "alive", or at least in as close to an approximation of a sustaining relationship as possible:

> The families of combat veterans, and sometimes even their therapists, demand in frustration, "Why can't you put it behind you? *Why can't you just forget it?*" Odysseus' vow, "I won't forget a thing," is a vow of a combat soldier to his dead comrades to keep faith with them, to their memory alive. Bewildered families, hurt and feeling cheated by the amount of energy their veterans pour into dead comrades, apparently do not realize that to forget the dead dishonors the living veteran. In asking the veteran to forget, the family asks him to dishonor himself.[619]

To betray the dead only reinforces the betrayal so pervasive in every other aspect of the traumatized subject's life. Also, the dead serve as a reference point in the absence of lifeworld, though in a way which only affirms the traumatic injury's definitional power: the difference

[618] Jonathan Shay, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Scribner, 2002), p. 80.
[619] Shay, *Odysseus*, p. 80.

between the dead and the traumatized is that the latter are yet living, but somehow not yet alive. The traumatized are not what they used to be (a whole person, vis-à-vis access to world and historical future), but neither are they the, "honored dead". They are somewhere in-between, not fully living, not dead, and now a shameful failure to both. The traumatized are left to try to articulate how it feels to live with their trauma, but remain stymied in that one cannot discursively communicate any of the traumatic experience except through continual reference to the broken, injured self. Meanwhile, "For the veterans, the unanchored dead continue to hover. They visit their surviving comrades at night like the ghosts… The returning Vietnam soldiers were not honored. Much of the public treated them with indifference or derision, further denying the unanchored dead a resting place."[620]

The abjection noted here we addressed at the start of this section. Trauma seems to have a double-sense: there is the chthonic encounter that injures, which in doing so also renders one anathema in a way that leads to further injury by the abjecting state. Wallace Terry's, Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans, provides an account of this double-sense. Despite being removed by a generation, these testimonies remain helpful, both as a way into a particular conflict and its traumatic aftermath, as well as to, "add to the pages of universal understanding of man's most terrible occupation."[621] As we move to conclude this section, it seems appropriate to tie together the themes addressed throughout by giving space for such witnesses to identify and speak for themselves, as it were. After each, we comment when helpful.

Reginald Edwards (Marine Rifleman in Danang, June 1965 – March 1966) still deals with the social stigma of being a combat veteran. While popular opinion, expressed through

[620] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 7.
[621] Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984), p. xvi.

common parlance and the media, questions the sanity of men who charge into combat, he asserts, "But we were not insane. We were not insane. We were not ignorant. We knew what we were doing,"[622] because, "Kill, kill, kill. That's what we got in practice. Kill, kill, kill."[623] As noted above, the context of war is conducive to trauma precisely because it is, always already, a venue within which world is quite literally under assault.[624] However, a problem of war, at least in the contemporary context, is that warfighters are expected to rejoin world, after fighting to defend it.

In doing so, the warfighters bring back to world, in their very person, the reality of transgression. Much of this is a matter of the violation of taboo, a matter beyond the scope of (though related to) this work. However, Edwards' claims regarding accusations of, "insanity," are striking. The presumption here is that the kind of encounters inherent to war include those that either (or both) cause insanity or are the acts of the insane. Either way, such encounters are cast as nonsense and war as the realm of the nonsensical. While this might be accurate, Edwards suggests such language was not levied against him and his experience merely in the manner of description, but rather these accusations were rendered judgment, and a pejorative one at that: somehow, Edwards must be insane because of the insanity inherent in the context. Edwards became *tainted*.[625] Another betrayal is enacted: as Grossman notes, the warfighter fights the wars ordered by the state, yet in doing so becomes (or at least risks becoming) outcast:

> No, it is not a military conspiracy. There is, indeed, a cover-up and a "conspiracy of silence," but it is a cultural conspiracy of forgetfulness, distortion, and lies that has been going on for thousands of years. And just as we have begun to wipe away the cultural conspiracy of guilt and silence concerning sex, we *must* now wipe away this similar conspiracy that obscures the very nature of war.[626]

[622] Terry, p. 14.
[623] Terry, p. 6.
[624] See p. 185.
[625] See p. 174.
[626] Grossman, p. 36.

Abjection seeks to destroy the, "incomprehensible event," through neglect, as those who abject deny any opening to the experience, outlook, or wounds of the traumatized. In its response to preserve world, world *turns away*.[627] However, the damage such a turn inflicts on the confidence and identity of the abjected is pervasive, especially as it only exacerbates the harm inflicted by the initial traumatic event of chthonic encounter. Robert Mountain (Army Mortarman in Cu Chi and Dau Tieng, June 1968 – December 1968) observes how in his own life, "When I got back to the real world, it seemed nobody cared that you'd been to Vietnam."[628] Injuries, physical and psychological, take their toll. Robert Daniels (Army Howitzer Gunner in Pleiku, September 1967 – November 1968) suffered third degree burns from a chemical fire over his entire body and lost limbs from enemy mines:

> I know you gotta help yourself, but you can't do everything. I can't hire me…I wish I-I would've-I would've come back the way, you know, I went. I might have realized which way my life would've went. All I did was lost a part of my body. And that's the end of me."[629]

Here trauma is not only problematized by the taboo of killing, but also the taboo of disability. It is important to observe how trauma always already exists within a matrix of intense and intensely complicating additional factors, each of which is destructively dehumanizing in its own way. We suggest this is part of the reason trauma remains so elusive to sustained inquiry, as its harm is attributed to other seemingly mitigating factors.

Regarding Daniels and others like him, perhaps taboo is operative in cases such as his, but then a discussion of if and how taboo and trauma are interrelated seems due. Even this observation, though, implicates a sense of urgency to these kinds of deliberations: while we

[627] See p. 158.
[628] Terry, p. 181.
[629] Terry, p. 235.

investigate, Daniels still *hurts*. Stephen Howard (Army Combat Photographer in Bien Hoa, January 1968 – August 1969) affirms this point:

> And I'm still on the outside looking in. I know that if I go someplace and I tell this employer I'm a Vietnam vet, it don't mean shit…It's the depression. And you can't identify what the depression is…This psychological thing, we try to suppress it. But it kills us quicker than if somebody just walked up to you and put a bullet in your head. 'Cause it eats away at your inner being. It eats away at everything that you ever learned in life. Your integrity. Your word. See, that's all you have.[630]

Haywood Kirkland (Army Infantryman in Duc Pho, May 1967 – April 1968) recounts how, "When I got home, I really got upset about the way my peers would relate to me. They called me a crazy nigger for going to the war. And I was still dealing with Vietnam in my head."[631] Harold Bryant (Army Combat Engineer in An Khe, February 1966 – February 1967) grapples with his trauma, "Today I'm constantly thinking about the war…And I dream of helicopters coming over my house, comin' to pick me up to take me to a fire fight…And I have to shoot our own soldiers to put them out of their misery."[632] He continues, "I guess deep down in my head now I can't really believe in God like I did because I can't really see why God would let something like this happen…I guess I got kind of really unreligious because of my Vietnam experience…But each year since I've been back I have read the Bible from cover to cover. I keep looking for the explanation. I can't find it. I can't find it."[633] William Norman (Navy Commander in South China Sea, November 1963 – June 1970) echoes this sentiment when discussing a fallen servicemember, "I thought about him. Thought about all the people being maimed and killed. And you kept saying, 'Why?'"[634]

[630] Terry, p. 127.
[631] Terry, p. 99.
[632] Terry, p. 27.
[633] Terry, p. 30.
[634] Terry, p. 195.

In all these accounts, there is an absence of history and world. The traumatic event remains definitive: there is, inescapably, the tyranny of the moment, *that* moment. However, this is not a historical past cast back from a projected historical future, in which the historical present can find in its, "destiny," both resource and trajectory. The traumatic past is a void, devoid even of the, "honored dead," whom the traumatized seek to erroneously recover. Very literally, in that defining traumatic moment, *nothing is there*. Such an, "incomprehensible event," is *literally unthinkable*, however. The traumatized return over and over again to a past without relation to anything at all, in search of a significance that very simply and profoundly is not there. Per Shay:

> Despair- suffocating despair- occurs in every therapeutic relationship with survivors of severe trauma. This is true in group therapy, in individual therapy, and in every relationship the survivor manages to sustain. Despair is communicable… Veterans speak of losing their innocence and longing to regain it. They ask: "Why can't I just go back to the way I was?"[635]

Herman attests to the same, "Long after the event, many traumatized people feel that a part of themselves has died. The most profoundly afflicted wish that they were dead."[636]

While we have focused primarily on the trauma of war, the above seems to hold true about trauma, regardless its origins. To be traumatized is to be without (or, at best, with in a significantly damaged way) language, logic, history, world, *Volk*, destiny, and all those other things which in this chapter we argued are made accessible to human life only vis-à-vis discursive language. Though peculiarities exist characteristic of various traumatic contexts, the broader nature of trauma remains the same: a violent languagelessness which signifies nothing and thus remains in opposition to world.

Herman notes that childhood trauma is indicative of this uniformity of trauma's nature:

> The pathological environment of childhood abuse forces the development of extraordinary capacities, both creative and destructive. It fosters the development of

[635] Shay, *Achilles*, p. 184.
[636] Herman, p. 49.

> abnormal states of consciousness in which the ordinary relations of body and mind, reality and imagination, knowledge and memory, no longer hold.[637]

Again, though trauma often exists within a matrix of violent factors, it remains its own threat:

> These altered states of consciousness permit the elaboration of a prodigious array of symptoms, both somatic and psychological. And these symptoms simultaneously conceal and reveal their origins; they speak in disguised language of secrets too terrible for words.[638]

In children, trauma can be observed in a particularly vivid fashion. The formative encounters with discursive language have not yet necessarily taken place, so to some degree children are resistant to trauma's chthonic encounter in unique ways. Nonetheless, the antithetical nature of trauma *over against* human life still results in massive harm, often in the form of further violence. Terr provides a particularly stark example of such through her account of a case study which involved an abused eight-year-old, one who witnessed his father's murder:

> "Tell me about your future, Roosevelt? What would you like to be?" I interrupt, this time closer to the beginning of the list than before.
> Suddenly the child opens up and you can feel his rage pop the room with a horseshoe-stuffed glove. "What I want to be, Mrs. Doctor, is a cop. A cop. Right, that's what I want to be. A cop. A killer cop. I'm gonna kill people. That's what I want to do. Kill people. Be killin'. Be killin'." The boy begins to dance a little…
> …Roosevelt chants, "They gonna die. Die. Die. They gonna die. Die. Die. With blood everywhere. Lots of blooooooood."
> …Then Roosevelt says, "They gonna move jus' a little then. And then they be still." The boy lets out a long death rattle: "Rghghghorr," and yet another. "They be still- they be still," he hisses. The child whispers the phrase again and again. He looks spent. The room is silent. Roosevelt Long has just reenacted for a group of about forty mental health professionals the bloody family murder he witnessed when he was only three years old. I dread the thought of Roosevelt Long as an adult. Murder is very much on his mind.[639]

The increased availing of oneself to violence is a component of chthonic encounter. In the absence of those structures constituted and upheld by the violence-doing of world, the traumatized have ever fewer channels through which to act that are alongside, in tandem with,

[637] Herman, p. 96.
[638] Herman, p. 96.
[639] Terr, p. 65.

and thus not oppositional to those channels for action already constitutive of and ordained by world. We remember here that to act, absent world, inescapably is to act *violently*, and unmistakably so. It is only the existence of normative forces that provides access to those channels for action that *seem* nonviolent, as all action, all motion, all *existence* is always already intrinsically violent. Such a seeming of nonviolence is only possible because nonviolent activity in-the-present reasserts and reinforces the paths made by the originary violence-doing of the cosmogonic command. "Normal" action is not, in fact, nonviolent, but violence-in-tandem.

Absent world, there are no shared channels through which to act, so every act is *mere violence*. This perpetual exposure to violence grinds away, "numbing," the descriptor in human life:

> The most benumbed survivors tend to emerge from the most extreme situations- the Holocaust, Hiroshima, Central American war zones, and the Cambodian "killing fields." Some American ghettoes, in which murder, rapes, robberies, and fires go on with the regularity of the garbage collection, also qualify. Psychic numbing occurs when horrors are extreme, long-standing, variable, and repeated- in other words, when a state of horror becomes predictable.[640]

This, "numbing," only further increases the proclivity to violence, creating an extraordinarily vicious cycle. The double-sense of trauma intensifies this cycle, as abjection casts out the traumatized back into venues in which chthonic encounter is increasingly likely. When such encounters happen again and further taint the outcast, the original abjection is now seemingly justified and reinforced. Yet, all this viciousness, all this violence, *signifies nothing*. Grossman:

> When a soldier shoots a child who is throwing a grenade the child's weapon explodes, and there is only the mutilated body left to rationalize. There is no convenient weapon indisputably telling the world of the victim's lethality and the killer's innocence; there is only the dead child, speaking mutely of horror and innocence lost. The innocence of childhood, soldiers, and nations, all lost in a single act reenacted countless times for ten endless years until a weary nation finally retreats in horror and dismay from its long nightmare.[641]

[640] Terr, p. 80.
[641] Grossman, p. 267.

No world emerges in or through this *mere violence*. This is not even revolutionary violence, for there is no historical future affirmed, no decision rendered to, "act jointly."[642] No normative force is reasserted, whether in the form of the beautiful, the good, or the just. It is not even necessarily suicidal. Somehow, someway, what Grossman describes has become what we call *merely killing*. It is nonsense. It is traumatic. It is chthonic.

In this section, we sought to develop three main themes. The first was that to talk of trauma is necessarily to talk of an ongoing injury-as-event, in which trauma is both the moment of traumatic injury and the lingering aftermath of that injury, which lingers in the flesh of the traumatized. This was the first of trauma's two double-senses. The second theme was that trauma results in abjection, which required of us an account of the ways in which such abjection manifests. This provided the second of trauma's two double-senses, this time in reference to the interpersonal dynamics of traumatic injury. Here the original traumatic event is itself injurious, yet trauma also signifies the injury caused and exacerbated by being abjected. Our third theme was that trauma, in all these instances, remains an, "incomprehensible event." We call this event an encounter with the chthonic. The chthonic attests to the presence of something *antithetical* not only to the individuals bound by language, but to *the entire system* built upon language's discursive facilitation. Such somehow, "exists," in a way which can be encountered, and yet *should not be*.

In our next chapter, we explore what might be done in the wake of trauma, if our claims thus far withstand scrutiny. We have laid waste to much, in our presentation of trauma's destruction of language. Yet, we intentionally used, "destruction," in our title and not,

[642] See p. 130.

"devastation," intending Heidegger's distinction between the two.[643] Perhaps a way forward exists, as Shay suggests, "Recovery is possible in many areas of life, perhaps in the most important ones for a fulfilling existence. I have seen it. A small number of veterans in our program have achieved lives of great value to others and satisfaction to themselves."[644] Nonetheless, he immediately notes, "By DSM-III-R standards, however, *they remain highly symptomatic*."[645] What avenues, promising and problematic, might extend out of trauma's wake?

[643] See p. 81.
[644] Shay, *Achilles*, p. 186.
[645] Shay, *Achilles*, p. 186.

POLITICAL LANGUAGELESSNESS

Section 3.1: Myth and the Political Underground

In the wake of trauma's destruction of language, this section explores whether opportunities still exist for the traumatized regarding disclosure and self-disclosure of world. While the normative force of discursive language is the most refined mode of communication, in that it both is and enables the horizons of discursive possibility which give rise to all other normative forces, other communicative modalities exist. In our engagement with myth, we argue that the traumatized might still retain some capacity for relation, even if such is perpetually assaulted in a double-sense first by their lingering chthonic encounter and then again by the resultant abjection of the interpretative state.

The contexts in which trauma is likely to arise evoke the mythological, if such are not in fact themselves mythic in some strange, archetypal sense. Violence against and by children echoes with notions of the sacrifice of the young, while domestic abuse reenacts the victimization and risk of consequent victim-to-victimizer found in Medea and other tragedies. For our purposes, war remains a central focus, as Schmitt notes, "A myth arises only in the real war."[646] Edward Tick, writing on post-traumatic stress order, suggests, "War is a mythic arena. In its noise and grandiosity, its manipulation of the forces of life and death, and its irrevocable shaping of history and destiny, war transforms the mundane into the epic and legendary."[647]

To some degree, we turn to myth at this time because myth has already asserted itself into the conversation. Our concept of the chthonic respects this observation, in its nod to that which must remain locked away, deep below. Discursive language breaks down in these contexts,

[646] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 160.
[647] Edward Tick, *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Wheaton & Chennai: Quest Books, 2005), p. 25.

leaving only mythic language as the means by which to communicate that which arises uninvited from the depths of the earth. For those still with recourse to discursive language, what is revealed through myth might somehow later be delineated into some form of instrumental sense. Yet, the traumatized do not seem to have easy access to that future outcome. For the traumatized, whatever mythic language might be, it seems to exist as the ultimate means at their communicative disposal through which to address the unwarranted, unlooked for intrusion of the chthonic and its concurrent, dehumanizing taint:

> Veterans with PTSD are people whose belief systems have been shattered. They no longer believe their nation and its values and actions are inherently good. These survivors often feel outcast because they no longer share the country's mythology. "I'm not an American," says Scott, a helicopter gunner who has never voted, paid taxes, or obtained a driver's license in the thirty-seven years since he returned from war. "*I'm a citizen of the underground*."[648][649]

Myth is a problematic resource, however. New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann's observation on the topic, when discussing the contours of discussing myth in the contemporary context, summarizes our concerns, "Myth talks about transcendent powers, about demons and gods as powers on which we know ourselves to be dependent, of which we do not dispose, whose favor we need and whose wrath we fear."[650] Available for encounter, yet lacking discursive limits by which it can internally check itself, myth remains *treacherous*. The remainder of this work tracks how the turn to myth in trauma's wake opens up trajectories both beneficial and intensely dangerous to human life and its constitutive political entities.

This section thus begins our final chapter by providing only an initial entry into myth as a conceptual category, since full treatment of the topic could constitute a book in itself. We will

[648] Italics mine.
[649] Tick, p. 170.
[650] Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing," in *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 98.

explore how myth exists as nondiscursive disclosures and self-disclosures of existential conditions. These do not yet delineate themselves into comprehendible parts, and yet possess such an immediacy and totality as to somehow rise out of their surrounding nonsense in a manner that conveys profound meaning. Joseph Campbell provides us a sense of their scope when discussing the relation of myth to cosmogony, "Like the trivialities of dream, those of myth are big with meaning."[651] Myth becomes that which, and whose communication, precedes discursive language and the reach of the power of the interpretative state, *the power to continue as such*. As the injury of trauma is defined[652] as one of discursive language, myth should be found to lay outside trauma's wake. We will thus need to determine how myth, "exists," beyond world, in that world is built upon it. This inquiry should lead us to conclude by seeing whether myth's constitutive *structures of meaning* survive chthonic encounter, when we have already discussed how the latter undoes those normative *structures of behavior* built upon the former.

We have so far worked to develop how trauma, framed as languagelessness, constitutes an exception that provokes a decision by the interpretative state. Trauma is an exception because it constitutes a chthonic encounter, an injury-as-event that dissolves the world's index of interpenetrating relationships into nonsense. This destruction of language undoes that first normative force (discursive language) through which all others spring forth, creating a threat to the very categories which enable the concept of the political. As such, trauma's chthonic encounter provokes the state to act. The chthonic, whatever it is, *should not be* in an essential and literal way. It has *no relation* to human life and therefore obliterates it when the two are exposed to one another. Such takes the form of a catastrophic questioning of relationality itself.

[651] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1949), p. 270.
[652] See p. 180.

The facets of things once revealed to, "openness,"[653] are re-concealed in the wake of trauma, discursive horizons recede, and logical structures decay. Metaphorically, the freezing, "absolute zero," of the chthonic withdraws sense from world by failing to reciprocally relate to anything at all. Into this resultant vacuum of signification drains logic's motive force of structural connectivity, and with its loss discursive language ceases to have form. Worse, this chthonic encounter lingers in the traumatized as nonsensical taint.[654] The traumatized themselves are and carry a testimony as to the limits of language and the failure of the human power underpinning the interpretative state, *the power to continue as such*. The very presence of the traumatized bears witness to the falsehood[655] of world, in ways similar to how the, "heroic-criminal,"[656] violence-doers, whose originary violent works first actualized the interpretative state's cosmogonic command, nonetheless transgressed against their own co-creation, "Rising high in the site of history, they also become *apolis*, without city and state, lone-some, un-canny, with no way out amidst beings as a whole…"[657] Yet, unlike those violence-doers, nothing underpins the violence testified to by the traumatized. Being of the earth, the chthonic creates nothing.

In addition to the traumatized themselves and those explicitly writing within that locus, Heidegger and Schmitt have been our primary interlocutors throughout these investigations. We have engaged Heidegger for his understanding of language, Schmitt for his concept of the political and the friend-enemy distinction. Juxtaposition of these two led us doubly back to Hobbes, to benefit from both Hobbes' logic of relation and Hobbes' theory of the state.

[653] See p. 161.
[654] See p. 174.
[655] See p. 131.
[656] See p. 146.
[657] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 163.

However, our present turn to myth requires additional resources, as neither Heidegger nor Schmitt explicitly dealt with myth *qua* myth at great length.

This is not to say these two do not explicitly engage the category and concept of myth, at all. Quite the contrary, the collected works of both figures deeply explore and resonate with mythic concerns and themes. We have already extensively cited Schmitt's reflections on the role of myth in relation to Hobbes' Leviathan. Schmitt certainly has a theory as to what myth is and what its deployment and disclosure entails, "Numerous interpretations and transformations belong to the nature of mythic images; continuous metamorphoses, *in nova mutatae formae*, are in fact sure signs of their vividness and effectiveness."[658] Our concern is simply that neither of our interlocutors addressed myth itself as a topic for their own comprehensive inquiry. For each, myth was a means towards better explaining a larger, overarching set of issues. While we hesitate to speculate too widely, we suggest one of the reasons for this absence of attention is because, to some degree, certain aspects of myth were presumed as given. As we will address in the next section, myth was a prominent category within German philosophical and political discussion throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Both Heidegger and Schmitt must be read with this consideration in mind, as their works (at least, those works prior to 1945[659]) presume certain shared commitments about the nature and role of myth, as it relates to human life. This is a widely enough remarked upon observation regarding the intellectual history of German philosophy, that we understand it sufficient to note the point and move onward.

As to their explicit dealings with myth as a specific category for examination, Heidegger seems to use the word less. Nonetheless, his deployment of myth resonates with our own, "Myth

[658] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 7.
[659] After 1945, further discussion explicitly on myth, like *Volk* and other topics closely associated with Nazism, becomes intensely problematic for Heidegger and Schmitt, for reasons we suggest are obvious and thus unnecessary to examine further.

means the telling word."[660] This, "telling word," is not explicative; it exclaims, but does not explain. As has been seen, his next move is characteristic of Heidegger: he addresses myth's etymological origin in classical Greece, "For the Greeks, to tell is to lay bare and make appear – both the appearance and that which has its essence in the appearance, its epiphany."[661] Note that in myth, appearance and essence collapse into one another for Heidegger. Their disclosure and self-disclosure is immediate and total. This will be a recurrent theme throughout this section. Such also leads back to Heidegger's conceptualization of myth as the, "telling word:"

> *Mythos* is what has its essence in the telling – what is apparent in the unconcealedness of its appeal. The *mythos* is that appeal of foremost and radical concern to all human beings which makes man think of what appears, what is in being.[662]

Heidegger also notes the relationship between myth and discursive language:

> *Logos* says the same; *mythos* and *logos* are not, as our current historians of philosophy claim, placed into opposition by philosophy as such; on the contrary, the early Greek thinkers (Parmenides, fragment 8) are precisely the ones to use *mythos* and *logos* in the same sense. *Mythos* and *logos* become separated and opposed only at the point where neither *mythos* nor *logos* can keep to its original nature.[663]

Of course, for Heidegger, this failure can either be found originating in or reinforced by Plato's early misapprehension of Being, "In Plato's work, this separation has already taken place."[664] The neglect of myth can be seen as part of the collective failures inherent in Western thinking since the time of the classical Greeks, so that, "Historians and philologists, by virtue of a prejudice which modern rationalism adopted from Platoism, imagine that *mythos* was destroyed by *logos*."[665] However, though myth is denigrated in the contemporary context, "But nothing religious is ever destroyed by logic; it is destroyed only by the God's withdrawal."[666] This kind

[660] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
[661] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
[662] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
[663] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
[664] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
[665] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
[666] Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.

of framing of myth by Heidegger relates myth to those pre-world forces and resources that inform the struggle from which emerges world itself; as noted by Julian Young, "Heidegger's Being is, I have suggested, God."[667] Thus myth somehow exists and extends both in and beyond world.

Schmitt's work on the topic of myth is much more extensive. The explicit use of the word can be found throughout his collected works. He does not craft a theory of myth as such, though Schmitt does observe, "…the creation of a political or a historical myth arises from political activity, and the fabric of reasons, which myth cannot forgo either, is the emanation of a political energy."[668] Schmitt certainly has and conveys a clear sense of myth's power, "No clear chain of thought can stand up against the force of genuine, mythical images."[669] Our own characterization of myth as *treacherous*, given at the start of this section, is shared by Schmitt:

> Whoever utilizes such images, easily glides into the role of a magician who summons forces that cannot be matched by his arm, his eye, or any other measure of his human ability. He runs the risk that instead of encountering an ally he will meet a heartless demon who will deliver him into the hands of his enemies.[670]

In all these observations, Schmitt draws extensively from and resonates with Georges Sorel, who we will take up directly later in this chapter as we bring this work to conclusion, "Of interest to note here is his debt to Georges Sorel."[671] The social theory of myth, to which Sorel contributed significantly, was important to Schmitt, "The great psychological and historical meaning of the social theory of myth cannot be denied."[672] However, while he agreed with Sorel's conceptualization of a social theory of myth itself, Schmitt opposed Sorel's application of

[667] Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 35.
[668] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 160.
[669] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 81.
[670] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 82.
[671] Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception*, p. 59.
[672] Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 73.

the concept due to the internationalism inherent in the mythic language of Sorel's Marxism. Schmitt suggested that national myths remain the more compelling communication, as George Schwab observes:

> Instead, he made the point that in a conflict between national feelings – the state as the God – and the proletarian image of the bourgeois class, the former is victorious. The state as an organ has a much more forceful mythic attraction to most people, according to him, than any kind of internationalist movement.[673]

Schmitt also considered a rise in the activity of mythic language within the structuring of communities to be extraordinarily significant, in that it *presages a shift in political thinking*, "The theory of myth is the most powerful symptom of the decline of the relative rationalism of parliamentary thought."[674] Mythic language becomes a response to the, "general technologization," of the contemporary context. It serves as a challenge to the political theology this context has advanced for millennia, having after the French Revolution simply translated the overtly Christian political theology into the secularly normative expectations of Enlightenment and Western democratic states. The challenge of mythic language to normative forces is thus broader than the mere taking up of arms against specific systems, as mythic language inherently brings into question issues of enabling authority and source:

> If anarchist authors have discovered the importance of the mythical from an opposition to authority and unity, then they have also cooperated in establishing the foundation of another authority, however unwillingly, an authority based on the new feeling for order, discipline, and hierarchy.[675]

Myth therefore implicates worlds, rather than world, and calls into question the very foundations for the political and social ordering of human life:

> Of course the abstract danger this kind of irrationalism poses is great. The last remnants of solidarity and a feeling of belonging together will be destroyed in the pluralism of an unforeseeable number of myths. For political theology that is polytheism, just as every

[673] Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception*, p. 59.
[674] Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 76.
[675] Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 76.

> myth is polytheistic. But as the strongest political tendency today, one cannot simply ignore it.[676]

Thus, for Schmitt, there is a concern for how the national myths and the international myth interrelate, in increasingly problematic and potentially violent ways. His later works can be seen as extrapolations upon these earlier concerns regarding the social theory of myth.

With Heidegger and Schmitt addressed, we can now introduce another interlocutor for this issue. Ernst Cassirer's treatment of myth is extensive and evocative of the German context that Heidegger and Schmitt share, "In Germany the person who did the most to reinstate the philosophy of myth, legend, and symbol was Ernst Cassirer."[677] All three knew of each other, though Cassirer's neo-Kantianism[678] meant that his relation to the other two would be strained, if not antagonistic.[679] However, Cassirer's comprehensive treatment of myth, combined with his shared context, makes him an ideal interlocutor for us in an otherwise broad field of options. His neo-Kantianism is more overt in other aspects of his collected works; his work on myth is novel, even as it is also characteristic of a philosophical trajectory we will discuss at length in the next section. In light of the range of ways myth continues to be explored, we find it best to now constrain ourselves to one primary thinker and perhaps those who further develop his work, before returning explicitly to the question of trauma.

Discursive and mythic language seem to share a variety of subtle, yet extraordinarily significant traits. In some ways, one seems to be a kind of the other (the subordination dependent on the moment of analysis), to the point that any difference blurs past the point of distinction.

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[676] Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 76.
[677] See introduction by Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward; Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, p. 21.
[678] It is necessary to also note that anti-Semitism might have informed the response Cassirer received.
[679] For instance, much literature is available regarding the Cassirer-Heidegger debate in Davos. For commentary on the event and the personalities involved, Bourdieu's account in *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* can be an interesting, if partisan, read.

However, it might be more precise to consider for our purposes that discursive language and mythic language constitute radically different modes of the same communicative, human impulse. It is important to stress their respective integrity from the onset of our investigation, regardless of their similarities. Each conveys and is conveyed in distinct ways:

> Descartes said that theoretical science remains the same in its essence no matter what object it deals with- just as the sun's light is the same no matter what wealth and variety of things it may illuminate. The same may be said of any symbolic form, of language, art, or myth, in that each of these is a particular way of seeing, and carries within itself its particular and proper source of light.[680]

As distinct modalities of, "symbolic form," both the discursive and the mythic are communications, disclosures and self-disclosures, yet they are not reducible to one another. This suggests there is something that distinguishes one from the other beyond the task to which each is set. Especially problematic, as addressed in the previous chapter, is how either the discursive or the mythic enable awareness of themselves, when they are the very means by which awareness is facilitated.

Such concerns turn us towards consideration of thought itself. Thought is understood to be both the *recipient* and *processor* of symbols, through which symbolic forms are discovered, comprehended, and affirmed. Susanne Langer is helpful here, as she will remain throughout:

> Every mode of thought is bestowed on us, like a gift, with some new principle of symbolic expression. It has a logical development, which is simply the exploitation of all the uses to which that symbolism lends itself; and when these uses are exhausted, the mental activity in question has found its limit.[681]

Considered as "modes of thought," the discursive and the mythic both share a common utility in the human disclosure and self-disclosure with world, while remaining distinct as to each other:

> Either it serves its purpose and becomes truistic, like our orientation in "Euclidean space" or our appreciation of objects and their accidents (on the pattern of language-structure,

[680] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1953), p. 11.
[681] Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy In a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 201.

> significantly called "logic); or it is superseded by some more powerful symbolic mode which opens new avenues of thought.[682]

Just because material is passed between modes of disclosure does not mean one mode becomes the other. Again, this distinction is necessary to provide us the possibility of conserving mythic language from the fate of its discursive counterpart. We have claimed in the previous chapter that whatever is dependent on discursive language is endangered by trauma's destructive chthonic encounter. Mythic language will need to have its own conceptual integrity, if it is to serve as some sort of option for utterance during and after trauma's injury-as-event.

For Cassirer, the division between discursive and mythic is clear, no matter the commonality of their communicative tasks, "For now we see in language, art and mythology so many archetypal phenomena of human mentality which can be indicated as such, but are not capable of any further 'explanation' in terms of something else."[683] Each can therefore be put to use within philosophical investigation without fear of contradicting one another, as they have unique horizons towards which to explore. In fact, the mythic itself might be necessary to further inquiry when the discursive has exhausted itself, even without the baleful threat of trauma.

Philosophy, as a structured discipline of inquiry, might encounter things that simply cannot be engaged through discursive methodological probing. Trauma is presumably only one of such challenges. The tools deployed must suit the task. Mythic language may be needed:

> This insight into the determining and discriminating function, which myth as well as language performs in the mental constructions of our world of "things", seems to be all that a "philosophy of symbolic forms" can teach us. Philosophy as such can go no further; it cannot presume to present to us, *in concreto*, the great process of emergence, and to distinguish its phases for us. But if pure philosophy is necessarily restricted to a general, theoretical picture of such an evolution, it may be that philology and comparative mythology can fill in the outline and draw with firm, clear strokes what philosophical speculation could only suggestively sketch.[684]

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[682] Langer, p. 201.
[683] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 12.
[684] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 15.

As discussed previously, discursive language and its mythic counterpart do not need to comport themselves to philosophical categories: the discursive and mythic are not, "logical", "true", or "truths" (in their categorical generality), *except* that they might enable the same. Thus, they are not, "right," or, "wrong," or subject to normative criticism, *except* insofar as they might violate their own structures. In the case of discursive language, these constraints are its logical structures, which is why chthonic encounter destroys such by violating the constitutive relationalities. What the structures of mythic language might be, however, seems elusive.

As mythic encounter is always immediate and total, the very concept of structure seems overwhelming. There are no, "parts," whose limits combine to frame the mythic conveyance and that which is conveyed. The very unity of mythic language seems to suggest it has no structures to break. Unlike discursive language, the mythic does not seem to arise from the interpretative state's power, *the power to continue as such*. "*As such*," presumes a differentiation that is not present in mythic revelation. Rather, mythic language seems to arise from *mere power* itself. To exist is to cast out into existence. This casting, which does not yet differentiate, is what we intend by mythic language. As such, both discursive and mythic language retain a core trait: neither is reducible to human imagination or acts of mere human creativity, but constitute an existential condition of human life:

> Such ideas, no matter how manifold, how varied, how heterogeneous they may appear at first sight, have their own inner lawfulness; they do not arise from a boundless caprice of the imagination, but move in definite avenues of feeling and creative thought. This intrinsic law is what mythology seeks to establish.[685]

If structures exist for and within both the discursive and mythic, each ensuring the conceptual integrity of these distinct phenomena, what is the nature of that which differentiates

[685] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 15.

the communications of the former from the latter? We have already suggested one difference is that the structure of the mythic is not necessarily found in its, "parts," but rather in the way its motive force casts it out into existence. Mythic language encapsulates without any objective end.

Discursive language does more. Its, "inner lawfulness," structures its content of, and encounter with, information in a particular way, somehow relating information to knowledge via a discursive format. If such a linear avenue is not available, discursive language seemingly cannot facilitate the communicative task. As earlier addressed, discursive language both is and moves along relationalities. It exists as a reciprocity that delineates, parcels, and returns back again to itself. Alternatively, the mythic operates at existential levels which seem inaccessible to discursive language. Myth seems to "take in," towards thought, those non-discursive encounters that elude its discursive counterpart:

> The origin of myth is dynamic, but its purpose is philosophical. It is the primitive phase of metaphysical thought, the first embodiment of *general ideas*. It can do no more than initiate and present them; for it is a non-discursive symbolism, it does not lend itself to analytic and genuinely abstractive techniques. The highest development of which myth is capable is the exhibition of human life and cosmic order that epic poetry reveals. We cannot abstract and manipulate its concepts any further *within the mythic mode*. When this mode is exhausted, natural religion is superseded by a discursive and more literal form of thought, namely philosophy.[686]

Mythic disclosure thus provides discursive language the content of its future conversations. Mythic structures provide the frameworks that require clarification, the initial structures around which behavior will be set. The initial mythic discoveries are revelations of constellations peculiar to the particular earth in which these discoveries are made. They attest to something, "out there," that can be disclosed via human power. However, these discoveries do not rise to the level of discursive language. No clarity, no delineation, and no relationality is yet revealed. Nonetheless, unlike pure nonsense, which renders all encounters into autonomous and

[686] Langer, p. 201.

completely unrelated moments, mythic language takes what are otherwise autonomous encounters and totalizes them. That which can be apprehended in mythic language becomes infinite, removing the possibility of autonomy by becoming all. By becoming infinite, there is a *kind of sense* now available, a *kind of relation* that mythic language makes accessible. In the shadow of this totalized presence, mythic language discovers the possibility of its own voice.

Mythic speech is talk of that which is encountered initially, by which we mean before all other interpretations. Note that myth might therefore be inaccessible in the clearing provided by the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state. To some degree, this is the crisis of the contemporary context: that which is initially met is cut off from encounter. Normative forces now get in the proverbial way and prevent transparent encounter. Discursive language, with its normative expectations and its index of interpenetrating relationality, literally cannot see the metaphorical forest through its pursuit of endless trees.

It is only because of the awareness enabled by myth that originary violence-doing awakens to its context. Myth is not nonsense, even if that which it discloses is, for the mythic attests to the breadth of its surroundings, in the fullest sense of such. As such, mythic language seems to encounter in immediate and totalizing ways, leaving for discursive language further elucidation of detail and, most importantly, significance. What is to be, "said of," something is left to discursive language. The myth simply and profoundly, "says," in the broadest and most infinite of ways.

Such breadth prevents the narcissistic self-reference of autonomous nonsense. Even the self is subsumed into that which mythic language discloses. In this way, void becomes accessible to mythic language, as the mythic is not tied to relationalities and therefore not undone by the void's lack thereof. However, by stretching the void to infinity, void becomes something

accessible. Mythic language does not quantify significance and thereby order its disclosures and self-disclosures. For myth, the encounter itself *is* significant in its entirety. The moment both *signifies itself and its witness*:

> For in this mode, thought does not dispose freely over the data of intuition, in order to relate and compare them to each other, but is captivated and enthralled by the intuition that suddenly confronts it. It comes to rest in the immediate experience; the sensible present is so great that everything else dwindles before it.[687]

Since myth is unmitigated disclosure and self-disclosure, there are weaknesses to such pervasive vision. In taking in the totality, not only is the entirety of the phenomena experienced by the observer, but *the observer is totally disclosed to the phenomena, as well*:

> Here thought does not confront its data in an attitude of free contemplation, seeking to understand their structure and their systematic connections, analyzing them according to their parts and functions, but is simply captivated by a total impression. Such thinking does not develop the given content of experience; it does not reach backward or forward from the vantage point to find "causes" or "effects," but rests content with taking in the sheer existent.[688]

In all forms of communication, there is the interplay of giving-and-taking that is semiotic exchange. Discursive language regulates, regiments, and segments such exchange, serving as a mediator in the disclosure of participants, one to the other. The discursive provides for, and is itself, the delineation of boundaries, facilitating encounter without the immersion of one into another. Self is possible only because of the discursive: inquiry is towards its target, away from the inquirer, and those distinctions preserve the integrity of both.

Mythic language has and is no such mediator. In mythic language, the inquirer and that about which it inquires blend in potentially problematic ways. In myth, the semiotic exchange is total for all parties. As a true totality, myth's communication becomes immersive:

> This focusing of all forces on a single point is the prerequisite for all mythical thinking and mythical formulation. When, on the one hand, the entire self is given up to a single

[687] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 32.
[688] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 57.

> impression, is "possessed" by it and, on the other hand, there is the utmost tension between the subject and its object, the outer world; when external reality is not merely viewed and contemplated, but overcomes a man in sheer immediacy, with emotions of fear and hope, terror or wish fulfillment: then the spark jumps somehow across, the tension finds release, as the subjective excitement becomes objectified, and confronts the mind as a god or a daemon.[689]

The interplay and interdependency shared by the discursive and mythic modes of communication is extraordinary. In the totality of myth, there is no detailed specificity; such is the delineating task of discursive language. The totality of myth's disclosure could therefore be simultaneously *cosmically significant* and nonetheless *utterly nonsensical*, if it were not for discursive language's capacity for further and immediate analysis and elucidation, "The spiritual depth and power of language is strikingly evinced in the fact that it is speech itself which prepares the way for that last step whereby it is itself transcended."[690] Myth might be able to communicate *meaning*, through the encounter of self within unique totalities, but it is the discursive property of language that seems to enable *sense*, or to at least to, "make sense," out of the possibilities inherent in relating one mythological communication and/or experience to another:

> Ideas first adumbrated in the fantastic form become real intellectual property only when discursive language rises to their expression…
> The first inquiry into the literal truth of a myth marks the change from poetic to discursive thinking. As soon as interest in factual values awakes, the mythic mode of world-envisagement is on the wane.[691]

Discursive language becomes contingent on and yet precursor to the mythological communication, which itself, "already was," and is still, "not yet". The grand expanse that myth communicates, and communicates with, is deafeningly quiet absent the discursive:

> Thus all mysticism is directed to a world beyond language, a world of silence. As Meister Eckhardt has written, God is "the simple ground, the still desert, the simple silence" ("der

[689] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 33.
[690] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 74.
[691] Langer, p. 201.

> einveltige grunt, die stille wueste, die einveltic stille"); for "that is his nature, that he is one nature."[692]

Nonetheless, it is only from this mythic encounter with raw, unmediated reality (perhaps, realities) that discursive language has anything at all to "talk about"; from silence flows sound and thought:

> That is why myth is the indispensable forerunner of metaphysics; and metaphysics is the literal formulation of basic abstractions, on which our comprehension of sober facts is based… Only language has the power to effect such an analysis of experience, such a rationalization of knowledge. But it is only where experience is already presented- through some other formative medium, some vehicle of apprehension and memory- that the canons of literal thought have any application. We must have ideas before we can make literal analyses of them; and really new ideas have their own modes of appearance in the unpredictable creative mind.[693]

The creations of the mind, expressed through and with discursive language (even if only in thought), perpetuate this cycle, preparing again to seek new material with and within which to better actualize, encounter, and ultimately understand themselves, "Some day when the vision is totally rationalized, the ideas exploited and exhausted, there will be another vision, a new mythology."[694] This mythical move once more pushes beyond the discursive into the non-discursive, reentering the realm of the gods and expanding the mythological world:

> Here, again, the mythmaking mind exhibits a sort of consciousness of the relationship between its product and the phenomenon of language, though characteristically it can express this relationship not in abstract logical terms, but only in images. It transforms the spiritual dawn which takes place with the advent of language into objective fact, and presents it as a cosmogonic process.[695]

Such a, "cosmogonic process," is itself the origin of and resource for discursive language; it is from this event that discursive language arises. As discursive language arises from mythic contributions to the cosmogonic command of the interpretative state, discursive language

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[692] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 74.
[693] Langer, p. 202.
[694] Langer, p. 202.
[695] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 81.

immediately reflects back on itself in order to differentiate the immense totality of mythic communication into component structures comprehendible to sense. *The totality is potentially preserved*, but only *in* and *through* its fracture into interrelated parts. Thus, the birth of discursive language through the fracturing of mythic disclosure promises both the reward of comprehension and the risk of occlusion. The very processes by which myth is rendered into sense, also creates the possibility of missing or misunderstanding the relationality of its constituent parts:

> The logical form of conception, from the standpoint of theoretical knowledge, is nothing but a preparation for the logical form of judgment; all judgment, however, aims at overcoming the illusion of singularity which adheres to every particular content of consciousness… The will to this totality is the vivifying principle of our theoretical and empirical conception. This principle, therefore is necessarily "discursive"; that is to say, it starts with a particular case, but instead of dwelling upon it, and resting content in sheer contemplation of the particular, it lets the mind merely start from this instance to run the whole gamut of Being in the special directions determined by the empirical concept. By this process of running through a realm of experience, i.e., of discursive thinking, the particular receives its fixed intellectual "meaning" and definite character.[696]

From observing the interpenetration of discursive and mythic language, a concept of human freedom is made available, one that grounds itself in overcoming the parsing inherent in language's pursuit of "sense," in favor of the broad vistas implicated in myth's, "truth." Even in the absence of discursive language, at least some content for mutuality might exist through mythically accessibly resources. In trauma's wake, mythic language becomes the modality of disclosure and self-disclosure.

This has powerful implications for the healing of the traumatized. Traumatic injury does not get, "better," in the sense of any restoration of or to one's pre-traumatic identity. Even those who regain some semblance of interconnectivity remain scarred in definitive ways, as Shay notes, "Their lives include some very sharp limitations; for example, some recovered veterans

[696] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, p. 26.

are still unable to tolerate public places."[697] However, if new, post-traumatic disclosure and self-disclosure is available, then perhaps one might yet be changed. "*Better*," here simply and profoundly for the traumatized becomes, "*different*." In this way, some form of expression is regained beyond exclamations via nonsensical violence, the most extreme of which we suggest is found in *mere killing*.

If expression is therefore accessible through mythic language, healing becomes an intrinsically creative act, as Gabriele Schwab notes, "If torture attacks memory and language, it would seem that telling torture helps the healing process."[698] Such healing originates at least in some fashion from the wounded themselves, only if and when able. There seems to be a strange muse in this creation:

> The essential injuries in combat PTSD are moral and social, and so the central treatment must be moral and social. The best treatment restores control to the survivor and actively encourages communalization of the trauma. Healing is done *by* survivors, not *to* survivors.[699]

Creation might take a variety of forms, as mythic language is restrained even less than discursive modes as to the avenues its expression might explore, as noted by Bultmann, "Are mythological representations and concepts really indispensable? They may be so in a provisional sense insofar as truths are intended in them that cannot be expressed in the language of objectifying science."[700] However, it seems that in this case, the mythic mode results in the telling of a story. The mythic communication is both individuated and communal:

> Trauma narrative imparts knowledge to the community that listens *and* responds to it emotionally. Emotion carries essential cognitive elements; it is not separable from the knowledge. Something quite profound takes place when the trauma survivor sees enlightenment take hold. The narrator speaks as his or her free self, not as the captive of

[697] Shay, *Achilles*, p. 186.
[698] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, p. 175.
[699] Shay, *Achilles*, p. 187.
[700] Bultmann, p. 100.

> the perpetrator. The aloneness is broken in a manner that obliterates neither the narrator nor the listener in the reenactment.[701]

There is an important nuance here: this mythic creation is not a movement back in time (into a time that no longer exists), but rather the novel assertion of a new thing, *a new temporality*:

> The paradox disappears when we look at narrative as a step in the survivor's larger move to communalize the trauma by inducing others who were not there to feel what the victim felt when he or she was going through it. The character damage of a trauma survivor can be understood as a reflection both of his or her radical aloneness and of the continued presence of the perpetrator in the victim's inner life.[702]

Mythic resources enable a telling that can be shared and that realizes a particular feeling that transforms identity. On an individual level, myth becomes a helpmate, an opportunity to express and receive expression when that which is most natural, discursive language, fails.

However, as noted early in this section, myth is *treacherous*. This same transformative resource that might alleviate the void and loss left by traumatic injury, can elsewhere and even concurrently create and perpetuate extraordinary violence. Remember that myth operates in a conceptual realm wherein there are no inherent limits. Boundaries are the stuff of discursive thought, wherein relationalities are structured by virtue of beginnings and endings, proper places and times, and assessable extents. Myth simply, solely, and truly only communicates what *is*, in the broadest of ways.

If trauma creates and perpetuates opportunities for mythic language, the same language that might become healing for those silenced by trauma can, itself, become an instrument in the creation and perpetuation of further trauma. As Gabriele Schwab offers regarding child soldiers, "Unless they find a way to work through the trauma, however, their past will remain a haunting

[701] Shay, *Achilles*, p. 191.
[702] Shay, *Achilles*, p. 191.

legacy passed on to the next generation."[703] Mythic discourse provides a way of externalizing the trauma into what almost amounts to an artifact that can be inflicted upon others. In this way, trauma can become transgenerational. Vamic Volkan provides the following:

> I use the term *chosen trauma* to describe the collective memory of a calamity that once befell a group's ancestors. It is, of course, more than a simple recollection; it is a shared mental representation of the event, which includes realistic information, fantasizied expectations, intense feelings, and defenses against unacceptable thoughts.
> Since a group does not choose to be victimized, some of my colleagues have taken exception to the term *chosen trauma*. But I maintain that the word *chosen* fittingly reflects a large group's unconsciously defining its identity by the transgenerational transmission of injured selves infused with the memory of the ancestors' trauma.[704]

In the next section, we will explore the aesthetic turn that connects myth and trauma. The conceptual and historical example of German *Kunstreligion* provides us an opportunity to see how myth invigorated a discourse after a period of intense and horrific trauma (the Napoleonic Wars), in which aesthetic categories came to replace (or at least deeply influence) previously ethical and legal categories. Myth, art, and the political intermingle in ways that will be seen to have intensely problematic consequences for the traumatized, their potential for and in world, and that remainder of human life which must respond to the traumatized's destabilizing exception.

[703] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, p. 181.
[704] Vamic Volkan, *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (Westview Press, 1997), p. 48.

Section 3.2: The Aesthetic Turn

It is not only that mythical language displaces discursive language in the wake of trauma. With mythic language, aesthetic judgment comes to the forefront, opening and closing trajectories of thought and action in ways unique to itself and foreign to delineations of ethical and legal expectations. In this section, we continue to trace how myth facilitates a different kind of human experience when operative in the void left by the destruction of discursive language. Myth's propensity for aesthetics is noted through consideration of a conceptual and historical example: the *Kunstreligion* of the 19th and early 20th century German states.

We examine the contributions and reactions of a variety of this period's thinkers, in order to prepare for the final section of this work and its discussion of the failure of politics. Romanticism becomes that which ties myth, aesthetics, and politics together in extraordinarily problematic ways. In romanticism's engagement of myth, concretely actualized through a politics articulated in an aesthetic mode, the traumatic absence of the individual can be observed. Bereft of discursive language and all that it entails (especially the capacity to, "act jointly"), the traumatized individual is given up to broader forces, to now move at the whim of mythic trajectories. Schmitt summarizes the field:

> An unconscious and higher necessity hovers over the freedom of the individual human being. Transcending the conscious will of the individual, history realizes itself involuntarily (Schelling). Persons, peoples, and generations are nothing but necessary tools that the spirit of life requires in order to temporarily manifest itself in them and by means of them (Luden). Peoples are instruments of that world spirit. They stand at its throne as the agents of its realization and the witnesses of its splendor. The individual becomes the victim of the "cunning of reason." His understanding and what he conceives with it is "deception" (Hegel). Or human beings and classes are simultaneously tools and consequences of the vast processes of production in whose relations they are impelled, above and beyond their calculations (Marx). Or an unconscious, enigmatic, oppressed will directs at its own expense the entire tragedy and comedy of the world with all its

details and events, and it treats itself as a spectator at the same time. Thus "life is a continual deception" (Schopenhauer).[705]

All of these are a problem for the political. Schmitt claims with theories such as these, "In consequence, the truth never lies in what the individual person comprehends or wants because everything is the function of a reality that acts beyond him."[706] Without individuals to enact clear decisions and thus both exert and locate sovereignty, political entities decay and the friend-enemy distinction is rendered meaningless. In the absence of that critical delineation, there is nothing to restrain violence to solely political tasks. As we will address in the final section, trauma's affinity for myth, and thus romanticism, carries at the communal level dangerous apocalyptic connotations, risks, and significance. For now, though, we briefly leave trauma to explore the unique juxtaposition of myth, art, and politics to be found in *Kunstreligion*.

Friedrich Schiller might be counted among the first in the trajectory of *Kunstreligion*, explicitly juxtaposing art and freedom, "This Art must abandon actuality and soar with becoming boldness above necessity; for Art is a daughter of Freedom, and must receive her commission from the needs of spirits, not the exigency of matter."[707] Even before the 19th century, aesthetics had therefore found its way to the heart of philosophical systemization. It was throughout the 19th century, though, that philosophers in the German-speaking states attempted to reevaluate and advance beyond what they perceived to be aspects of human existence left poorly addressed or further problematized by Enlightenment philosophy and society (in either its empirical or Kantian modes).

Perhaps our bracketing of, "philosophers in the German-speaking states," is too sweeping, as there were certainly vast differences between various figures of that period. Hegel

[705] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 80.
[706] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 80.
[707] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), p. 26.

is hardly Marx, no matter the reliance of the latter upon the former. The anarchists, communists, monarchists, and democrats were diverse and often opposed to collaboration. Nonetheless, there are some common traits expressed by a significant number of these figures, if admittedly not all. Beyond German ethnicity and language, certain themes can be observed as operative during this time, permitting us to frame the span as an identifiable period within an intellectual history of the contemporary context and thereby opening it up to us for further study in this work.

For the philosophers we intend, "One of the most important political issues in Central Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century is what attitude to take toward the ideals of the French Revolution and toward the fact of Napoleon."[708] What seems at first to be a matter of "mere politics" implicates the larger philosophical arena. The political realities of 19th century German-speaking Europe were expressly related to a shift in philosophical theory and method during Enlightenment: the "proofs" of philosophy were to be found in manifest action, "The merit of Rousseau and his contemporaries lies in a different field. They were much more concerned about political *life* than political *doctrine*. They did not want to prove, but to affirm and apply the first principles of man's social life."[709] The metaphysics explored in the 17th century, the respective works of Descartes, Spinoza, and others, were put to the simultaneous task and test of actualizing human potential at the end of the 18th century:

> The period of the Enlightenment had lost interest in these metaphysical speculations. Its whole energy was concentrated upon another point, not so much an energy of thought as of action. "Ideas" were no longer regarded as "abstract ideas." They were forged into weapons for the great political struggle. The question never was whether these weapons were new but whether they were efficient. And in most cases it turned out that the oldest weapons were the best and most powerful ones.[710]

[708] Raymond Geuss, *Morality, Culture, and History* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 35.
[709] Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 176.
[710] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 177.

Moving into the 19th century, discussions regarding the particularities of humanity and its society shifted to a questioning of any essential ideals supporting such concepts, as well as the methodologies employed to arrive at, justify, and sustain them. This expansive and severe shift in discourse can be understood to have a concrete, observable point of origin:

> How was it that all these great achievements were suddenly called into question- that the nineteenth century began with attacking and openly defying all the philosophical and political ideals of the former generation? There seems to be an easy answer to this question. The French Revolution had ended in the period of the Napoleonic Wars. The first enthusiasm was followed by a deep disillusionment and mistrust.[711]

This "deep disillusionment and mistrust" of rationalist and traditional philosophies, especially those claiming some sort of objective moral understanding, would continue throughout the century. Even the firebrands of the 1848 revolutions were challenged to justify their calls for change in light of the previous century's riotous culmination:

> Only revolution, the 'springtime of peoples', pointed exclusively to the future, and yet even the most utopian found it comforting to appeal to a precedent for the unprecedented. This was not easily possible until a second generation of romanticism had produced a crop of young men for whom the French Revolution and Napoleon were facts of history and not a painful chapter of autobiography. 1789 had been hailed by virtually every artist and intellectual of Europe, but though some were able to maintain their enthusiasm through war, terror, bourgeois corruption and empire, theirs was not an easy or communicable dream.[712]

A century after the storming of the Bastille, Nietzsche still resonated with several of his colleagues within this particular trajectory of German philosophy:

> I still hate Rousseau *in* the French Revolution: it is the world-historical expression of this duality of idealist and rabble. The bloody farce which became an aspect of the Revolution, its "immorality," are of little concern to me: what I hate is its Rousseauan *morality*- the so-called "truths" of the Revolution through which it still works and attracts everything shallow and mediocre.[713]

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[711] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 179.
[712] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 267.
[713] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer," in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 221.

It is critical to note that the German experience of the French regicide, riots, and empire is not simply reducible to challenges to and defenses of its various principalities' collective sovereignty. The impetus for so much groundbreaking work in philosophy during the 19th century was not interpreted as a "mere" struggle between leaders, as previous European wars had been chronicled. Precisely because of the revolutionaries' (and Napoleon's) claims of actualizing the tenets of Enlightenment through conquest, revolutionary violence was understood to be conceptual, as well as visceral: truly, the revolutionaries intended to lay waste to every vestige, including philosophical, of the *ancien regime*. The Germans had experienced centuries of the older style of war, in which, though territory passed between sovereigns, daily German life often remained unchanged.

The revolutionary fervor that swept in the 19th century was therefore experienced as something different, "Napoleon was taken by hostile Germans less as the symbol of dictatorship than as the symbol of the French Revolution's rationalism, liberalism, and legalism, as introduced into Germany by the Code Napoleon."[714] Furthermore, the Napoleonic Wars were largely fought on German land and therefore displaced and killed German speaking people in horrible and newly modernized ways. These wars were terribly and quite relevantly traumatic.

In this way, the German pursuit of freedom was not simply a militaristic, political, and (later) economic endeavor against the French occupiers: to be free necessarily meant to be *free to be oneself*. This was a claim of and on identity that begged whole new sets of questions and implicated radical new systems of thought:

> Pluralistic arguments like those one finds in Herder come to be deployed as *forms of resistance*[715] to the French: local German legal codes are not inferior to the Code Napoleon, although by Enlightenment standards they may seem less "rational"…

[714] Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler*. (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 60.
[715] Italics mine.

> Eventually the claims that German institutions and ways of doing things are as good as French, just different, get turned into claims of national superiority.[716]

Schmitt's observation regarding the compelling nature of the national myth resonates here:[717]

> One important step in this long process is the series of lectures the philosopher Fichte gave in French-occupied Berlin in 1807, the *Reden an die deutsche Nation*. Given the political situation Fichte had to express himself with some circumspection, but the basic point is unmistakable: the German "nation" is superior to the French on the grounds of it greater "primordiality" (*Ursprunglichkeit*) and this "primordiality" is a more or less fixed trait of the national character which finds its various expressions in customs, ways of feeling and thinking, attitudes, and so on.[718]

The political (and, later, economic) discourse instigated by the traumatic violence of the French Revolution and *La Terreur* became an opportunity for theoretical and methodological renewal: the political problem was seen not as a failure of instrumentation, but symptomatic of a greater malady within the body of philosophic knowledge bequeathed by the Enlightenment and the proverbial "West", "Moreover, from the very beginning their position on the margins of the area of whole-hearted bourgeois-liberal advance, and perhaps their inability completely to participate within it, made German thinkers much more aware of its limits and contradictions."[719] The political question confronting German philosophy at the onset of the 19th century occasioned a systematic, totalizing response.

The move to considering, "customs, ways of feeling and thinking, attitudes, and so on," developed as an intentional refutation of the ethical, legal, and technocratic categories that structured the Enlightenment.[720] Following Napoleon, what we identify as a German philosophical context, if not trajectory(s), emerged that was consistently unwilling to resume the empiricism and rationalism of the previous century (individual appreciation of Kant's *Critiques*

[716] Geuss, p. 35.
[717] See p. 208.
[718] Geuss, p. 35.
[719] Hobsbawm, p. 251.
[720] See p. 10.

notwithstanding). Turning away from natural law and social contract theory, the 19th century found articulations of ethics grounded in any transcendent metaphysical claim, entity, or phenomenon to be rapidly creeping out-of-fashion, if used as a foundation for explaining and justifying societal order. This dismissal was characteristic of the German romantics of the era:

> Precise social analysis was never the romantic forte, and indeed they distrusted the confident mechanical materialist reasoning of the eighteenth century (symbolized by Newton, the bugbear of both William Blake and Goethe) which they rightly saw as one of the chief tools with which bourgeois society had been built. Consequently we shall not expect them to provide a reasoned critique of bourgeois society, though something like such a critique wrapped in the mystical cloak of "nature philosophy" and walking amid the swirling clouds of metaphysics did develop within a broadly "romantic" framework, and contributed, among other achievements, to the philosophy of Hegel.[721]

Claims for and of the centrality of Reason were retained, but recast within aesthetic language. Schiller was characteristic of this systemic move:

> The eyes of the philosopher are fixed as expectantly as those of the worldling upon the political arena where at present, so it is believed, the high destiny of mankind is being decided. Would it not betray culpable indifference to the welfare of society not to share in this universal discourse?...
> The fact that I am resisting this delightful temptation, and allowing Beauty to have precedence of Freedom, I believe I can not merely defend by inclination but justify on principle. I hope to convince you that this subject is far less alien to the need of the age than to its taste, that we must indeed, if we are to solve that political problem in practice, follow the path of aesthetics, since it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom.[722]

In shifting from the Enlightenment's contractual and instrumental models of describing human interaction, German philosophy articulated the concrete realities and resources of its people through the pursuit of aesthetics. In doing so, the essential vocabulary for metaphysics (and concurrent philosophical anthropology) experienced a radical redefinition. The participants in this transition and expansion of philosophy explicitly understood their works as transforming the boundaries of what philosophy was and must be, despite traditional conversations or modes:

[721] Hobsbawm, p. 262.
[722] Schiller, p. 27.

> Since our view is so independent of philosophy it also cannot be contradicted because it does not accord with some sort of philosophical view (even if it were the almost universally valid one), and if no present and available philosophy is able to deal with this phenomenon, the it is not the once present and unmistakably known phenomenon that would have to let itself be brought back to the measure of some given philosophy, but rather conversely the factually grounded and substantiated view, whose unfailing effect on individual philosophical sciences we have shown, can claim to possess the power also to expand *philosophy* and *the philosophical consciousness itself* or to determine them to an expansion beyond their current limits.[723]

For many of this period's figures (including, but not limited to, Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Nietzsche, and Wagner) the reality of the Idea of Beauty was often simultaneously the reality of humanity's ultimate end: Freedom. Freedom was concurrently a rarified Idea, a concept apprehended only via thought, as well as a concrete, tangible experience: *one could be more or less free*. Such duality of experience found its expression in aesthetic parlance: the artwork was always a, "thing," in itself, as well as signifier of a plethora of other, "things," both real and imaginary, throughout one's temporal experience. To ever capture this dual reality in thought, the philosopher must make the development of aesthetics a central component of his or her own office and project:

> Finally the idea which unites all [previous ones], the idea of beauty, the word understood in the higher, Platonic sense. I am convinced now, that the highest act of reason, which- in that it comprises all ideas- is an aesthetic act, and that *truth and goodness* are united as sisters *only in beauty*. The philosopher must possess as much aesthetic capacity as the poet. The people without an aesthetic sensibility are our philosophical literalists. Philosophy of the spirit is an aesthetic philosophy. One cannot be full of spirit, one cannot even reason about history with wit and spirit- without an aesthetic sensibility.[724]

If the co-mingling of artist and philosopher blurred the boundaries of both occupations, aesthetics provided the two professions a clearing for collaborative world-building (in both the

[723] F. W. J. Schelling, *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 175.
[724] Fragment, author unknown, often attributed to Schelling, less frequently to Hegel or Holderin, "The Oldest System-Program of German Idealism," in *Philosophy of German Idealism: Fichte, Jacobi, and Schelling*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 1987), p. 161.

conceptual and literal senses) during at least two distinct German romantic movements: the first near the opening of the 19th century, the second towards its close. In total, the unique context of this revolutionary period in German history made these kinds of opportunities for both action and discourse possible, "If a single misleading sentence is to sum up the relations of artist and society in this era, we might say the French Revolution inspired by its example, the Industrial Revolution by its horror, and the bourgeois society, which emerged from both, transformed his very existence and modes of creation."[725] Wagner resonates with this claim, demonstrating how the complex economic, political, and social challenges of German life after the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars informed a lifetime of aesthetic exploration and interpretation:

> Wagner's project had its many acknowledged and unacknowledged precursors. He worked closely with the writings of Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Feuerbach, and Schopenhauer, but the ever-present though unacknowledged shadow behind his German canonic line was *the French influence of Rousseau*.[726][727]

The move to locate exploration of aesthetics as a point of origin for philosophy (opposed to an outlaying subfield) through such a quasi-mystic analytic of freedom risked collapsing the boundaries between art and religion. To the thinkers of this time, such a risk was precisely the goal and the method: the discovery (perhaps even creation) of new myths, new truths, and new values, all of which might yet be profoundly, "German," and, therefore, "human:"

> The context in which Wagner addressed these issues developed in the later eighteenth century, when the notion of art as a potential savior of religion arose in response to the perception that German society was yielding its national identity to foreign, secular-Enlightened influences and the belief that religion must play a crucial role in Germany's national redemption. "More than anything else, the sight of a great and sublime work of art can accomplish… the miracle of religious conversion," averred Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1799. His essay *On Religion: Addresses to Its Cultured Despisers* inaugurated the German-Romantic intellectual movement now known as *Kunstreligion*

[725] Hobsbawm, p. 255.
[726] Italics mine.
[727] Lydia Goehr, *The Quest for Voice: Music, Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 97.

> (the "religion of art," a Hegelian formulation first applied to Hellenic art and its social functions).[728]

It seems appropriate to engage a sample of figures representative of this period. While Hegel's approach was perhaps the most influential of these new philosophies (both in his own time and since), questions regarding the nature and role of myth are taken up by Schelling, Marx, and Nietzsche. Brief consideration of these figures seems appropriate at this point, to address how they might concur with the relationship between language and myth claimed above, or how their own works problematize such conceptualization.

For Schelling, the relationship between language and mythology is clear, "One is almost tempted to say: language itself is only faded mythology; what mythology still preserves in living and concrete differences is preserved in language only in abstract and formal differences."[729] Elsewhere, Schelling affirms the reverse, "The same would hold true if one maintained that mythology is merely a *higher* language."[730]

Schelling insists that neither language, nor mythology can be "inventions"; they are *conditions* of human existence, irreducible aspects of humanity, and a way into the necessary question, "*How did peoples emerge into being*?":[731]

> Because not only no philosophical consciousness, but rather also no human consciousness at all, is thinkable without language, the ground of language could not be laid consciously; and yet, the deeper we inquire into language, the more definitely it becomes known that its depths exceed by far that of the most conscious product.[732]

In this way, language and mythology are not only intrinsic to humanity, but also natural and organic. Similar to mythology, "Yet language is not that accidental. There is a higher necessity in

[728] Glenn Stanley, "*Parsifal*: Redemption and *Kunstreligion*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 154.
[729] Schelling, *Historical-critical*, p. 40.
[730] F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 47.
[731] Schelling, *Historical-critical*. p. 69.
[732] Schelling, *Historical-critical*. p. 40.

the fact that sound and voice must be the organ that expresses the inner thoughts and movements of the soul."[733]

Schelling finds that the diversification of peoples only further supports his relation of language and mythology, at which point he expands into a discussion on human consciousness, "For a confusion of language cannot be conceived of without an *internal* process, without a tremoring *of consciousness itself*."[734] From his exposition on the Genesis Babel story, Schelling argues that both language and mythology serve as identifiers of particular peoples and, perhaps most importantly, both serve as the very mediums through which philosophical investigation can be known and conducted. If mythology is the more profound of the two, the difference does not undo their mutual relationship. Nor does the potential illogic of mythology overly distress Schelling: logical narrative is not necessary within Schelling (or, more precisely, the later Schelling) in order to effect the communication of truth.

Like language, "…mythology is a true totality, something complete, something held in certain limits, a world for itself."[735] For of language:

> Each language is a universe if taken by itself, and is absolutely separate from the others-which nonetheless are *essentially* one, not merely according to the expression of reason, but also as regards the elements that, except for a few nuances, are similar in all languages. That is, this external body is itself soul and body. The vowels are, we might say, the immediate breath of the spirit, the forming form (the affirmative). The consonants are the body of language or the formed form (that which is affirmed).[736]

Schelling's final conclusion affirms the relationship of language and mythology vis-à-vis their necessity to humanity's philosophical capacity:

> Ultimately, what is dead, stagnant, is opposed to philosophy. But mythology is something essentially mobile and indeed is something essentially mobile of itself according to an immanent law, and it is the *highest* human consciousness that lives in it and that, by

[733] Schelling, *Art*, p. 102.
[734] Schelling, *Historical-critical*, p. 75.
[735] Schelling, *Historical-critical*. p. 154.
[736] Schelling, *Art*, p. 101.

> overcoming the contradiction itself, in which it is entangled, proves itself to be true, as *real* [*reell*], as necessary.
> *You* see, the expression Philosophy of Mythology is entirely proper and understood just like the ones similar: Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Nature.[737]

The interplay between language and mythology receives much less explicit treatment in Marx. The origin of human communication, whether in its linguistic or mythic modes, is simply not as much an issue as the purposes towards which human communication is set. That humanity can communicate, and be communicated to, establishes its ultimate social reality; the utter absence of any potency beyond human artifice and freedom seemingly reduces the cosmogonic possibilities found in other philosophers. The mythological might yet exist, but it is subordinated to Marx's absolute anthropocentrism and materialism, "Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, wants [*sensuous*] *contemplation*; but he does not conceive sensuousness as *practical*, human-sensuous activity."[738]

However, if the totality of Marx's analytic itself and ultimate conclusions are considered, the potential for juxtaposing language and myth is vast. The mythological is encountered here, in intensely *meaningful*, *significant*, and *transformative ways*, through the non-discursive communications of revolutionary violence. The turn to the mythic mode of communication is necessitated by Marx's foundational analytic of alienation. The very notion of Marx's philosophical anthropology, which rests on the complete alienation of the proletariat, understands the linguistic resources of the working class to be utterly annihilated by the silencing exploitation of capital. In their alienation, the working class cannot even articulate their own desperate state, neither to others nor even to themselves. Through this lack of language, the proletariat worker is alienated from its labor, its fellow proletariat, and even itself. The

[737] Schelling, *Historical-critical*, p. 155.
[738] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *The German Ideology, including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 570.

revolution comes in many ways as an eschatological revelation, a cataclysmic rupture of history, and any communication from, or of, the revolution *must thereby take place in the mythic mode*:

> The only practically possible emancipation of Germany is the emancipation based on the unique theory which holds that man is the supreme being for man. In Germany emancipation from the Middle Ages is possible only as the simultaneous emancipation from *the partial victories over*[739] the Middle Ages. In Germany no form of bondage can be broken unless every form of bondage is broken. Germany, enamored of fundamentals, can have nothing less than a fundamental revolution. The emancipation of Germany is the emancipation of man. The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat. Philosophy cannot be actualized without the abolition [*Aufhebung*] of the proletariat; the proletariat cannot be abolished without the actualization of philosophy.[740]

Consequently, this mythic communication is also a transformation. The revolution for Marx is not and cannot be about the formulation or restoration of just systems out of contemporary human society. That resource is found to be irredeemably broken. The revolution is not a transformation of systems, but a transfiguration of humanity itself, by itself and for itself. The performative violence that is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is itself mythic discourse, written and read in the flesh. Robert Tucker comments on this point:

> It is readily understandable in this light why Marx dismissed the slogan of "fair distribution" as "obsolete verbal rubbish", and violently rejected all suggestion that the struggle raging in the world had something to do with distributive justice… The issue for Marx was not justice by man's loss of himself under enslavement to an *unmenschliche Macht,* and his recovery of himself by the total vanquishment of this force. The ending of the worker's material impoverishment was incidental to the real goal- the ending of his dehumanization.[741]

As noted by Georges Sorel, the mythic communication of societal revolution is concurrently and necessarily the long-awaited restoration of the individual back into a now seamless society of equals, "consequently, a new analogy has been discovered between religion and the revolutionary Socialism which aims at apprenticeship, preparation, and even

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[739] Italics mine.
[740] Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 142.
[741] Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), p. 223.

reconstruction of the individual,- a gigantic task."[742] The appropriate response as understood by Marx to this non-discursive language was as singular as it was visceral, as noted by Tucker:

> This is the special logic (or "psycho-logic") of mythic thinking as it relates to practical action. The answer to the question as to what should be done is given in the mythic vision itself, and can be summed up in a single word: "Participate!" In so far as the mythic thinker gives any recognition at all to the problem of conduct, he answers immediately, emphatically and categorically in this vein.[743]

The problematic limits of language, which give way to mythological encounter, are therefore found in Marx to be no less or more present than in his philosophical and religious contemporaries. Juxtaposing Marx's thought and the contributions of Henri Bergson, Sorel notes, "But Bergson has taught us that it is not only religion which occupies the profounder region of our mental life; revolutionary myths have their place there equally with religion."[744]

Nietzsche's balance of language and myth is perhaps the most complicated. There are points where Nietzsche seems to despise grammar and finds the Apollonian risks inherent in discursive propositionalism to unhelpfully threaten the communication of any substantial truth. The aesthetic nature of the will to power's call for the revaluation of values is inherently non-discursive; it is anything (even, perhaps, *everything*) *except discursive*. The turn to myth is not a choice, but a necessity for the Overman, in order to actualize its will and enact the process of mythification that is the revaluation of values. This is the aesthetic act of creating the world in, and for, the Overman's own image, in response to and defiance of the death of God. Myth is not merely an alternative or superior means of disclosure and self-disclosure. For the Overman accessing, operating in, and seeking the Dionysian, it is the only means of real communication:

> The *tragic myth* is to be understood only as a symbolization of Dionysian wisdom through Apollonian artifices. The myth leads the world of phenomena to its limits where

[742] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1925), p. 35.
[743] Tucker, p. 229.
[744] Sorel, p. 35.

> it denies itself and seeks to flee back again into the womb of the true and only reality, where it then seems to commence its metaphysical swansong, like Isolde…[745]

The discursive trajectories characterized by and inherent in the Apollonian simply cannot vitalize the world which the human, as creator-artist, must populate. It is not in the nature of the Apollonian impulse, which calcifies, to then *push beyond*; the Apollonian may be the *actual*, but it is never the *authentic*:

> Music and tragic myth are equally expressions of the Dionysian capacity of a people, and they are inseparable. Both derive from a sphere of art that lies beyond the Apollonian… Thus the Dionysian is seen to be, compared to the Apollonian, the eternal and original artistic power that first calls the whole world of phenomena into existence- and it is only in the midst of this world that a new transfiguring illusion becomes necessary in order to keep the animated world of individuation alive.[746]

Nietzsche's complicated relationship with Wagner informed his stance on language and myth. Nietzsche claimed it was in Wagner's art, "'to restore to myth its manliness, and to take the spell from music and bring it back to speech.'"[747] The move towards a greater clarification of his analytic of the will to power, along with the removal of anthropocentric elements from his understanding of myth, all influenced Nietzsche's extended experience of Wagner's work:

> It is commonly believed that some particular thought lies at the bottom of a myth, but according to Nietzsche this is an error. A myth "is itself a mode of thinking; it communicates an idea [*Vorstellung*] of the world, but as a succession of events, actions, and sufferings." The *Ring of the Nibelungen*, for example, constitutes "a tremendous system of thought without the conceptual form of thought"- a system whose appeal is not to the "theoretical man" but to "the folk."[748]

That Wagner had succeeded in facilitating thought among the Volk was precisely Nietzsche's hope for his own work: through the mythological, the aesthetic might be able to force calcified

[745] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), p. 131.
[746] Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," p. 143.
[747] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987), p. 80.
[748] Megill, p. 80.

philosophy to get out of its own way and permit a greater encounter with world, an encounter that could provoke a response to the death of God vis-à-vis the will to power:

> Wagner had "forced language back into a primordial state in which it hardly yet thinks in concepts and in which it is itself still poetry, image, and feeling." In doing so, he had transported us into a realm that Nietzsche views as far more vivid and immediate, and in consequence far more authentic, than the "non-mythical sphere"- the sphere of concepts and theories- that we customarily inhabit.[749]

Language consistently entraps for Nietzsche. It is both the eternal recurrence that threatens the ongoing work of revaluing values, as well as the necessary medium through which the work must be conducted. Language is less than the mythological and therefore a remnant of dead gods, "'Reason' in language- oh, what an old deceptive female she is! I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar."[750] That language is, by definition, commonly accessible, is a root of its inferiority: the noble human ought to strive to define the world on his or her own terms, creating and expanding their own mythology by incorporating all into their own aesthetic, rather than condescending to the values and vernacular of others, "The values of a human being betray something of the *structure* of his soul and where it finds its conditions of life, its true need."[751] As a structure of value, even language must be revalued and transformed in the Overman's image, and therefore subjected to the process of mythification:

> In this vein, the truth of language is *in* language, not outside it. Language is a prison from which escape is utterly impossible… For a language is nothing other than *a system of interpretation* or (what amounts to the same thing) *a set of illusion*; and just as Nietzsche sees interpretation and illusion as aesthetically self-justified, so also does he see language itself.[752][753]

[749] Megill, p. 80.
[750] Nietzsche, "Twilight," p. 483.
[751] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), p. 407.
[752] Italics mine.
[753] Megill, p. 95.

This is why Nietzsche finds the mythological mode of communication superior to the common language: it is superior because it proceeds from, and further reinforces, the mythological superiority of the speaker. Recourse to common parlance would be just that, common, "With language the speaker immediately vulgarizes himself."[754]

As seen in Schelling, Marx, and Nietzsche, the sheer variety of trajectories through which the category of myth might yet be deployed warrants greater scholarly attention and discourse. However, we are particularly interested in a deployment of myth that operates along explicitly aesthetic modes. For us, Wagner provides a vivid example of *Kunstreligion* and the interplay of myth, aesthetics, and the political, before we turn once more to our central question of trauma.

Wagner begins his analysis of world with the question of Art, asking from whence and to what end does art arise, especially in the context of his time, "for our object will naturally be, to discover the meaning of Art as a factor in the life of the State, and to make ourselves acquainted with it as a social product."[755] From the onset, Wagner's project presumes a human context and preceding history. Humanity arose from a past in which art not only was fractured and silenced, but its inherent social qualities were inhibited, diminishing humanity itself. Any restoration of art would necessarily have social (and, thus, economic and political) ramifications:

> Thus the Poet's art has turned to *politics*: no one can now poetise, without politicizing. Yet the politician will never become the poet, precisely until he ceases to be a politician: but in a purely political world to be *not* a politician, is as good as to say one does not exist at all; whosoever at this instant steals away from politics (*wer sich jetzt noch unter der Politik hinwegstielt*), he only belies his own being. The Poet cannot come to light again, until we have no more Politics.[756]

Wagner finds this political context to be essentially a web of capricious artifice, undergird by the contracts of bourgeois systems (economic, political, and social) embodied by

[754] Nietzsche, "Twilight," p. 531.
[755] Richard Wagner, *Art and Revolution* (Dodo Press, 1849), p. 2.
[756] Richard Wagner, *Opera and Drama* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1900), p. 178.

the French Revolution. Theories of contracts underpinned both the ethical and legal systems of the Enlightenment. To Wagner, contracts were the ultimate expression of the Intellect's artifice and capricious Luxury (each technical terms for Wagner). There was nothing natural (and, thus, Necessary) about them. Furthermore, contracts were necessarily delineating and divisive: they required clear and ever-increasing clarification, atomizing collectives into component parts, each much less than the whole. Even the arts were not free from the shattering atomization occasioned by contracts, resulting in the fracturing of humanity's artistic modes into diverse practices (none of which alone could rise to the Gesamtkunstwerk). This condemnation of human order established on the artificial, technocratic basis of contracts informs all of Wagner's works, including the Ring cycle:

> In this context it is relevant to recall that in *The Essence of Christianity* Feuerbach had equated Odin, whom Wagner now renames Wotan, with the "primeval or most ancient law". His law is the first law, the beginnings of law *as such*. In other words, his rule constitutes the first step out of a state of Nature and towards civilization. It is based entirely on peaceful consent, agreements, contracts and treaties.[757]

This antagonism against contracts, and their location at the heart of external, oppressive power structures, opens the Ring: Fasolt addresses Wotan (and thereby informs the audience), "Son of light, lightly swayed, listen and beware: keep your faith with contracts! What are you, you are through contracts alone: your power, mark me well, is bound by your sworn agreements."[758] Wotan's power, which upholds religion, politics, and societal expectation, is identified with and executed through contracts; it is through such artificial relationships that the opera's tragedy and death unfolds. In place of contracts, and thus the Enlightenment's ethical and legal constructs based on a theory of contracts, Wagner chooses to ground human relationships in aesthetics.

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[757] Magee, Bryan, *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt & Co., 2000), p. 111.
[758] Richard Wagner, "Ring of the Nibelung," in *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung*, ed. Steward Spencer and Barry Millington (Thames & Hudson, 1993), p. 75.

Wagner, influenced by Feuerbach and interpreting the same, defines the human condition as one of essential, "need" (*Not*). This need (elsewhere alternatively translated as "necessity," "longing," or, "yearning") identifies humanity as such. Being itself Natural, need also brings Nature to consciousness within humanity. In knowing its need, humanity knows its imperfect condition:

> Man will never be that which he can and should be, until his Life is a true mirror of Nature, a conscious following of the only real Necessity, the *inner natural necessity*, and is no longer held in subjugation to an *outer* artificial counterfeit,- which is thus no necessary, but an *arbitrary* power. Then first will Man become a living man; whereas till now he carries on a mere existence, dictated by the maxims of this or that Religion, Nationality, or State.[759]

Humanity is thereby driven to exceed, "mere existence," pursuing a more real, "living," that discovers and actualizes itself, bereft of external societal structures. It is from this drive that the work of art manifests through human means. As such, art is not a voluntary activity or vocation, in that its manifestation does not and cannot derive from human intentionality. At best, humanity channels art into existence, but the resource for art lay within humanity's essential, existential need. The complications of the human condition derive from misapprehending this fundamental dynamic, confusing the one's intentional activity in Science for one's participation in Art:

> True that the artist does not at first proceed directly; he certainly sets about his work in an arbitrary, selective, and mediating mood. But while he plays the go-between and picks and chooses, the product of his energy is not yet the Work of Art; nay, his procedure is that rather of Science, who seeks and probes, and therefore errs in her caprice. Only when his choice is made, when this choice was born from pure Necessity,- when thus the artist has found himself again in the subject of his choice, as perfected Man finds his true self in Nature,- then steps the Art-work into life, then first is it a real thing, a self-conditioned and immediate entity.[760]

It is *from* the, "caprice," of, "science," *from* humanity's audacity to act on its own volition, that the dangers and fallacies of religion, economics, and states arose, each impatient of and with Art:

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[759] Richard Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1895), p. 71.
[760] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 73.

> The great instinctive errors of the People- which found their earliest utterance in Religion, and then became the starting-points of arbitrary speculation and system-making, in Theology and Philosophy- have reared themselves, in these Sciences and their coadjutrix and adopted sister, Statecraft, to powers which make no less a claim than to govern and ordain the world and life by virtue of their innate and divine infallibility.[761]

Against this threat, Wagner sets the Volk, as Nature's irrepressible self-corrective within humanity *en masse*: a creative and destructive resource beyond the capricious reach of Intellect.

Wagner directly asks, "Who is then the Volk?" and, similar to his contemporaries, tracks this phenomenon throughout human history. Where once it simply meant, "the inclusive term for *all the units* which made up the total of a *commonality*,"[762] the Volk have progressed through familial, tribal, and religious bonds to mean something greater. In this way, Wagner conserves a place for European and Christian (if not all human) history, while simultaneously setting up to discard it. By his time, however, the Volk had expanded beyond such jurisdictions, and required a new mode of demarcation and address, derived from this "world-historical sense:"

> The "Folk" is the epitome of all those men *who feel a common and collective Want* ("*gemeinschaftliche Noth*"). To it belong, then, all those who recognize their individual want as a collective want, or find it based thereon; ergo, all those who can hope for the stilling of their want in nothing but the stilling of a common want, and therefore spend their whole life's strength upon the still of their thus acknowledged common want. For only that want which urges to the uttermost, is genuine Want; but this Want alone is the force of true Need ("*Bedurfniss*"); but only he who feels within him a true Need, has a right to its assuagement; but only the assuagement of a genuine Need is Necessity; and it is *the Folk alone that acts according to Necessity's behests*, and therefore irresistibly, victoriously, and right as none besides.[763]

Wagner, again, takes time to nuance the difference between need and caprice, the latter the voluntary decision that might associate one with the Volk, but never raises one to participate in the Volk's common, definitional necessity. Indeed, caprice is what gives rise to "luxury," "*Luxury* is as heartless, inhuman, insatiable, and egoistic as the 'need' which called it forth, but

[761] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 74.
[762] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 74.
[763] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 75.

which, with all its heaping-up and over-reaching, it never more can still."[764] Religions, states, and bourgeois commerce all arise from the caprice of humanity, resulting in the pursuit of luxury; such arbitrary relationships are founded on capricious agreements, *contracts*, which carry no metaphysical or natural weight. Nonetheless, due to the caprice that culminated in the Enlightenment, "And this fiend, this crack-brained need-without-a-need, this need of Need,- this *need of Luxury*, which is *Luxury itself* withal,- is sovereign in the world."[765] In a world ravaged by the French Revolution and Napoleon, humanity celebrates the Intellect's conquest of Science, manifested in the opulence of Industry and State, all at the expense of Art.[766]

Over against all this, Wagner champions a time when luxury simply will no longer be sufficient, "Want will cut short the hell of Luxury; it will teach the tortured, Need-lacking spirits whom this hell embraces in its bounds the simple, homely need of sheer human, physical hunger and thirst…"[767] Luxurious Culture cannot sustain humanity and is itself unsustainable:

> In the man-destroying march of Culture, however, there looms before this happy result: the heavy load with which she presses Nature down, will one day grow so ponderous that it lends at last to down-trod, never-dying Nature the necessary impetus to hurl the whole cramping burden from her, with one sole thrust; and this heaping up of Culture will thus have *taught* to Nature her own gigantic force. The releasing of this force is- *Revolution*.[768]

Moreover, though instigated by the immediate needs of physical nourishment, bodily sustainment will not be enough for a humanity newly awakened to its true Necessity, "In

[764] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 76.
[765] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 76.
[766] Regarding the bourgeoisie and what Wagner characterizes as the, "bourgeois," luxuries enabled, facilitated, and perpetuated by Enlightenment thinking, it is appropriate to briefly note here the similarities shared between Wagner and his contemporaries (including Marx) on this point, many of whom were influenced by Feuerbach. The influence of Feuerbach, whether amongst Wagnerians, Marxists, or even anarchists like Mikhail Bakunin, can be seen in this kind of revolutionary critique. As we have argued earlier in this section, however, such an analysis (and resultant polemic) was not unique to Feuerbach, but common to trajectories of discourse pervasive throughout German thought at the time. We take note now simply to emphasize such, and to suggest opportunities for further research.
[767] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 77.
[768] Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, p. 23.

common, too, shall we close the last link in the bond of holy Necessity; and the brother-kiss that seals this bond, will be the *mutual Art-work of the Future*."[769] The return of Art is thus concurrently the means, end, and reward of the Volk's revolution.

It is precisely this organic totality, identified within the Volk, which provides humanity its creative vitality. From the Volk flow individuals, from whom individual accomplishments such as speech, religion, and state might derive. Always, the Volk *addresses*; it is not *addressed*:

> Therefore it is not ye that should presume to teach the Folk, but ye should take your lessons from it; and thus it is to you that I address myself, *not to the Folk*,- for to *it* there are but scant words to say, and e'en the exhortation: "Do as thou must!" to it is quite superfluous, for of itself it does that which it must.[770]

This is the theme Wagner shares with Hegel and many of their contemporaries: a postulated organic, irrepressible, and inevitable force (here, of art) that both justifies and thereby enacts its own ongoing self-justification, "*Life is law unto itself*,"[771] so that:

> The *Folk* will thus fulfil its mission of redemption, the while it satisfies itself and at like time rescues its own foes. Its procedure will be governed by the instinctive laws of Nature; with the Necessity of elemental forces, will it destroy the *bad coherence* that alone makes out the conditions of Un-nature's rule.[772]

The, "redemption," is nothing less than the discarding of all those creations of caprice, luxury and mere, "fashion," and the establishment of Art as the ordering force for human relations, in place of Industry, Religion, and State:

> …this specific garb of the *Hellenic Religion*, we have to stretch it out until its folds embrace the Religion of the Future, the Religion of *Universal Manhood*, and thus to gain already a presage of the Art-work of the Future. But this bond of union, this *Religion of the Future*, we wretched ones shall never clasp the while we still are *lonely units*, howe'er so many be our numbers who feel the spur towards the Art-work of the Future.

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[769] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 77.
[770] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 80.
[771] Richard Wagner, "The Revolution," in *Posthumous, Etc*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1899), p. 236.
[772] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 81.

> The Art-work is the living presentation of Religion;- but religions spring not from the artist's brain; their only origin is from the *Folk*.[773]

Note here the overarching themes addressed earlier. The presumptive organic origin of identity, articulated from Hegel through to Nietzsche, is present in Wagner. Further, this organic origin of identity is irrepressible. It, and not humanity, chooses its course, its means, and its time. From such, art (and the identities it demarcates) becomes *inevitable*: history's purpose is the culmination of the Volk *as* and *in* the Work of Art and resulting Art-Work. Echoing Feuerbach, history becomes the tableau for and of humanity's creative energies, as all historical events derive from that Necessity which manifests, and is manifested through, human action. Yet, even as the previous claims potentially uplift humanity, there is simultaneously an unknowable, uncontrollable dynamic operating, "beneath," it, one resonating with Schopenhauer's bleaker vision (this, arguably humbling, latter quality would be drastically softened in the kaiserreich, and later Nazi, deployment of Wagner's work).

The vastness of the Volk demands ever-greater modes of expression, "for the Poet's path leads out of Philosophy and into Art-work, into a *realisement of the thought* in physical presence."[774] Unfortunately, the arts were rent asunder during their suppression by luxurious caprice, diminishing their ability to provide full realization of the artist's vision. The Gesamtkunstwerk was not coined by Wagner; it appeared in the writings of the philosopher Trahndorff in 1827.[775] It is Wagner who invigorates the concept and provides it its historical significance. The creation of the Gesamtkunstwerk was concurrently the path towards, and the actuality of, the Volk's own self-making redemption:

> The Gesamtkunstwerk would foster a more direct artistic communication between the creative artist, the work of art, and the audience: three elements that would combine

[773] Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future*, p. 90.
[774] Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, p. 327.
[775] Juliet Koss, *Modernism After Wagner* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 13.

> during the process of aesthetic engagement to achieve the grand unifying experience at which Wagner believed all artistic creation was ultimately aimed. Interweaving aesthetic, national, and political aspirations, conflating production and reception, and utopian in orientation, Wagner's discussion of the communal activity of artistic production and spectatorship that helped create both the total work of art and its audience would prove central to modernism for well over a century.[776]

The Gesamtkunstwerk has its origins in Revolution, even as it is the culmination of the Revolution of the Volk itself, "Only the great *Revolution of Mankind*, whose beginnings erstwhile shattered Greek Tragedy, can win for us this Art-work."[777] In tragedy, specifically as rendered for opera, all the arts might find expression and release, "And finally, what suffering has the dramatist to bear, who fain assemble every art within Art's master-work, the Drama? The sufferings of all other artists combined into one!"[778] Opera, as combined music and drama, was the perfect Form for the Gesamtkunstwerk, the ideal manifestation of the Volk's essential myths:

> I therefore believed I must term the "mythos" the poet's ideal Stuff- that native, nameless poem of the Folk, which throughout the ages we ever meet new-handled by the great poets of periods of consummate culture; for in it there almost vanishes the conventional form of man's relations, merely explicable to abstract reason, to shew instead the eternally intelligible, the purely human, but in just that inimitable concrete form which lends to every sterling myth an individual shape so swiftly cognisable. To investigations connected herewith I devoted the second portion of my book, concluding it upon the question: What must be the most perfect Form, wherein to display this poetic Stuff?[779]

The creation of opera realizes the Volk in a way through which the Volk might yet transcend itself, further casting off the inauthentic caprice of luxury for the authenticity of its essential self. Wagner is being somewhat literal when he claims:

> The artist, too, may say of himself: 'My kingdom is not of this world'… And that's the hardship of it; for with this beyond-the-worldly realm of ours we stand amid a world itself so serious and careworn, that it deems a fleeting dissipation its only fitting refuge, whereas the need for earnest elevation (*Erhebung*) has quite become a stranger to it.[780]

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[776] Koss, p. 14.
[777] Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, p. 21.
[778] Wagner, *Art and Revolution*, p. 29.
[779] Richard Wagner, "Zukunftsmusik," in *The Theater* (London: William Reeves Bookseller, Ltd., 1907), p. 312.
[780] Richard Wagner, "On State and Religion," in *Art and Politics* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1912), p. 9.

There is almost an eschatology in Wagner. He certainly does not envision some cosmological or supernatural deliverance, but, like his fellow Feuerbachian Marx, the world after Wagner's culminating revolutionary Gesamtkunstwerk (similar to Marx's apocalyptic proletarian revolution) will be so drastically different from his own, as to constitute a new world altogether. The Gesamtkunstwerk is Wagner's justification, to himself and his fellow revolutionaries in the Volk: it is itself in their midst, and it is also the promise of their ongoing struggle for the future:

> *Two* peoples, only, are there from henceforth: the one, that follows me, the other, that withstands me. The one I lead to happiness; over the other grinds my path: for I am *Revolution*, I am the ever-fashioning Life, I am the only God, to whom each creature testifies, who spans and gives both life and happiness to all that is!...
> *...I am a Man*! the millions, the embodied Revolution, the God become Man, rush down to the valleys and plains, and proclaim to all the world the new gospel of Happiness.[781]

We begin to conclude this section by noting that Wagner's work spanned two German romantic periods, one at the start of his life, the other commencing at and just after his death, "This second romantic revolt triumphed in German literature in the 1890's, and in German politics (books into bullets) with Hitler."[782] It is first within his own context that Wagner must be examined, with due attention then given to how trajectories within his works extended beyond him. Specifically, Wagner's theories of Volk and Gesamtkunstwerk developed as a way to explore how a particular population becomes known, and comes to know itself, as a, "people." By the time of Wagner's death and the second German romantic movement, his theories were deployed to address such questions beyond their own unique geographic and historical origins:

> Where the second romantic revolution differs from the first is in political method. Here the romantic "will to power" no longer *rejects* the "uninspired" world of materialism-efficiency-industrialism but *swallows* it, swallows and thereby assimilates it. Thus, in the person of Wagner, the romantic "spirit of music" combines with a tough, practical, and politically shrewd nazism.[783]

[781] Wagner, "The Revolution," p. 238.
[782] Viereck, p. 145.
[783] Viereck, p. 147.

Wagner's anti-Semitism (readily observed in Judaism In Music, but not limited to that text) only grew over the length of his career, as noted by Nietzsche, "Wagner had acceded step by step to everything that I hate- even to anti-Semitism…"[784] Indeed, Wagner may be credited with translating anti-Semitism into an updated form particularly suited for modern demagoguery:

> Yet this artist confronted an absolutist state, an egoistic civil society, a fragmented public sphere, and an indifferent public, which Wagner blamed less on Judaism as a religion than on the modern "Jew," who stood outside the universal *Volk* that would be the audience of the future and who competed for its affections and its money. As Wagner came to envision the artist not just as a genius but as a fulfillment of human history, he began to equate his own success- envisioned as a kind of self-sacrifice- with the overcoming of this modern Jew. In a sense, anti-Semitism became more modern, more physiological, and ultimately more personal for Wagner than it had ever been for his early Romantic predecessors. This was the conception of religious history that underlay *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.[785]

We have attempted to outline the nuances of Wagner's own thought, which often gets collapsed into the larger, and much later, Nazi project. We are not blind to how the work of Wagner can give rise to the risk for violence, nor how Wagner's work might rightly be understood to contain an intentional incompatibility with core democratic, capitalist, and liberal principles. Joseph Goebbels claimed of Wagner's Die Meistersinger, "It is simply the incarnation of our national identity."[786] Wagner himself intentionally developed and deployed what we claim to be his romantic trajectories *over against* those Enlightenment systems that most resist mythic language and judgment in the aesthetic mode:

> Essential to the mythic formulation of politics was its basis, not in reason or careful observation, but in an "unconscious feeling," an "involuntary repellence," an "instinctive dislike" of the enemy- all notions supposedly rooted in the *Volk* and thus not subject to refutation. Just as his rejection of commodity culture as decadence found its ultimate

[784] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nietzsche contra Wagner," in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 276.
[785] George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 204.
[786] Thomas S. Grey, "Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* as National Opera (1868-1945)," in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 95.

> expression in a profitable and monopolized commodity produced only at Bayreuth, so his rejection of oppressive politics found its expression in a politics that openly advocated oppression.[787]

In Wagner's works, we find a response to extraordinarily traumatic events, in which an appeal to myth, executed through an aesthetic mode, informs a political structure that somehow gains the capacity to drastically encounter, change, and harm. While we concede that the prototypical language of what would coalesce into Nazism is present in the Wagnerian texts, nonetheless Wagner has his own project that is distinct from its later use by the kaiserreich and, more notoriously, the Third Reich. This disturbing ambiguity is the entire point of our engagement with Wagner as a figure relevant to *Kunstreligion* and therefore our interest in trauma, "The battle for Wagner is not over: today, after the exhaustion of the critical-historicist and aesthetic paradigms, it is entering its decisive phase."[788]

We return to Schmitt to close this section and move us forward to our last one. It is critical to remember that the arguments outlined in this chapter regarding language, myth, and romanticism all arose in the context of some of the most horrific violence the European continent had seen in centuries. The Napoleonic Wars, the Revolutions of 1848, the wars of German unification, etc.; the concepts of *Kunstreligion* rose to prominence in a context of trauma. The German states did not merely engage in conflict abroad: they were the site of horror and war.

This aspect of the intellectual history requires additional academic attention, as more scholarly work is needed which investigates the links between the origins of the concepts outlined in this section and the realities confronted by their thinkers. If we are correct and the various trajectories of *Kunstreligion* can be seen to be at least partially a response to the trauma

[787] Peter C. Caldwell, *Love, Death and Revolution in Central Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 118.
[788] Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), p. 165.

of its context, then our arguments regarding the dangerous links shared between myth, aesthetics, and the political gain that much more credibility.

Such links are dangerous because they put at risk the friend-enemy distinction by extrapolating trauma's nonsense beyond the individual to the multitude. First and foremost, Schmitt is clear, "This, therefore, is the core of all political romanticism: *The state is a work of art*."[789][790] As a work of art, it is not right or wrong, good or evil. It does not possess any inherent restraining force *over against* which its expansion must contend. While the friend-enemy distinction and its constitutive categories delineate the limits of political action, beyond which violence ceases having meaning and becomes nonsense, the work of art exists for and within a single purpose: to achieve the fullest realization of its own authenticity, "The state of historical-political reality is the occasion for the work of art produced by the creative achievement of the romantic subject."[791] The sovereign does not decide upon the exception in such a state, and thus does not through such means restore those state structures first established by cosmogonic originary violence, should harm befall them. Rather, Schmitt notes, "What the king and queen are in reality is intentionally ignored."[792] They solely exist as a tool through which feeling fractures and respawns:

> Their function consists instead in being a point of departure for romantic feelings. The same holds for the beloved. From the standpoint of romanticism, therefore, it is simply not possible to distinguish between the king, the state, or the beloved. In the twilight of the emotions, they blend into one another.[793]

As nothing is decided, there is only the eternal time of the work of art. Historical past, present, and future do not exist in the romantic unity. In his polemic against Muller, Schmitt

[789] Italics mine.
[790] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 125.
[791] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 125.
[792] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 126.
[793] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 126.

claims, "Muller needs a dramatic image in order to illustrate the relationship between past and future, which for him is also nothing more than an image."[794] While mythic language might provide for the *individual* a way to sustain life in disclosing and self-disclosing proximity with the Other, application of the same resource at the level of *multitude* is a categorical fallacy. There remain substantive differences between the capacities inherent to mythic language at various levels. That which comforts at the individual level, harms when its deficiencies come into view once extrapolated via a political romanticism, "Politics is just as alien to him as ethics or logic."[795] Romanticism ultimately falls back into nonsensical violence when its tableau is cast too large, since its only restraints are the very persons and worlds it is always already *over against*. For the traumatized, romanticism thus is not actually a liberating recourse. Romanticism is a mask for the further lingering of that which is chthonic:

> Everything that is romantic is at the disposal of other energies that are unromantic, and the sublime elevation above definition and decision is transformed into a subservient attendance upon alien power and alien decision.[796]

Actualized in the state, trauma becomes institutionalized. Its lingering *spreads*. It is transmitted, not only spatially, but transgenerationally, as suggested by Volkan:

> Transgenerational transmission is when an older person unconsciously externalizes his traumatized self onto a developing child's personality. A child then becomes a reservoir for the unwanted, troublesome parts of an older generation. Because the elders have influence on a child, the child absorbs their wishes and expectations and is driven to act on them. It becomes the child's task to mourn, to reverse the humiliation and feelings of helplessness pertaining to the trauma of his forbears.[797]

In this way, trauma gains access to political and social trappings, despite the abjection it normally receives. Through such access, harm is not only *perpetrated*, but *perpetuated*.

[794] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 138.
[795] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 146.
[796] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, p. 162.
[797] Volkan, p. 43.

This all eventually escalates into a dissolution of meaning that culminates in, and is itself, atrocity. Without boundaries, especially the boundaries of the friend-enemy distinction, violence has nothing *over against* which to discover restraint. The existential *problem* of violence, the violence inherent in simply being, breaks any remaining delineation that otherwise would provide shelter or structure. The inevitable result we discover to be apocalypse.

Apocalypse is therefore the topic of our last section. It seems fitting. However, the question we ask going into the last section is regarding its definitional revelation. What is to be revealed by the event and aftermath of the chthonic, which is characterized by concealment and as that which *should not be*? In the end, we have already suggested that, by virtue of being an exception, trauma reveals both who is sovereign and a moment of decision. However, as a harbinger of apocalypse, trauma reveals at least one more thing: the failure of politics and thus the existential limits of human power.

Section 3.3: The Failure of Politics

We conclude our work by returning to our thesis: trauma is an exception. At this point, we have argued that trauma is languagelessness brought about by a chthonic encounter, which destroys discursive language by breaking its systematic totality. The proverbial loose end exposed by the traumatic injury-as-event goes on to unravel the entire linguistic system. Instead of aid, however, the traumatized receive abjection. This is because their very bodies testify *against* the interpretative state's power, *the power to continue as such*. The, "incomprehensible event," of trauma attests to that which defies the consolidating power of the cosmogonic and restorative commands. The traumatized are not only scarred by trauma; in some unspeakable way, they are *tainted* by it. They exist as a testimony that has no willing audience. In fact, their continued presence constitutes a provocation to the state. In response to this provocation, a decision is made to abject, with the nature of sovereignty being revealed in this decisive act.

Yet, we have suggested there might be a way out of the double-sense of trauma's injury, or at least a way to bear the pain in a different way. Where trauma destroys discursive language, mythic language might remain accessible. Mythic resources underpin the discursive and normative forces, existing in their own immediate totality and yet obscured by world. However, in the destruction of discursive language, mythic language might arise as a renewed possibility for disclosure and self-disclosure, no matter how limited.

Myth is *treacherous*, though, as it has no innate delineations, borders, or boundaries beyond its own encounter. This makes myth particular amenable to expression and judgment in the aesthetic mode. With regards to such expression in relation to individuals and small groups, this poses little threat. However, political structures seem to require more than the judgment,

parlance, and theoretical resources available through aesthetics. Political romanticism, perhaps tame at the individual level, becomes an existential threat to the political and its constitutive categories when extrapolated to the multitudes. In this section, we explore the risk evident when political communication is found to speaking in the mythic mode. In doing so, we close our work with a final reinforcement of how trauma becomes the exception that might yet end world.

While apocalypse is often cast in the binary of ultimate good and evil, we hear it here in terms of sense and nonsense: apocalypse as the ultimate refutation of structured processes. Such refutation, though possessed of profound ethical resonance, is nonetheless devoid of nuanced and sophisticated recommendations for future society. Apocalyptic language is layered with meaning, yet intentionally irrational in its totalizing hyperbole: the world itself is discarded in the final cataclysm. While a vision of another world is often suggested, even promised, the content of that vision is more an expression of a destructive impulse within the present, rather than a constructive alternative to contemporary systems projected into the future.

Indeed, such a vacancy of proposition is the entire point, significance, and signification of apocalyptic language. Apocalypse arises when language in a propositional or rational form ceases to, "work," to "make sense," to meaningful *cohere* with, *correspond* with, and most importantly *reveal* phenomena encountered within the inescapably economic, political, and social dimensions of human life. Unable to access more openly comprehensible modes of articulation, for reasons we have earlier suggested are due to trauma, individuals and communities nonetheless find avenues to express what their institutional and linguistic systems have otherwise rendered inexpressible. The modality of apocalyptic exhortation appears as myth.

We further suggest the presence of apocalyptic language can identify communities divorced from substantial aspects of their economic, social, and political selves. The corporate

systems of such communities fail to apprehend, express, and/or deeply manifest essential elements of human experience: the structures of behavior (including political structures) become divorced from their undergirding structures of meaning. The public rituals lose their cultic significance, as daily corporate life seems unfulfilling, not sustaining, and ultimately nonsensical. The chthonic taint that *lingers*, now *spreads*.

From this disconnect arises the promise of apocalypse, to realize dimensions of human existence currently inexpressible in contemporary life, as well as to condemn human power itself for failing to be what it claims, *the power to continue as such*. This is a novel point. While extraordinarily complex, apocalyptic language is at the very least always already a political phenomenon, evidence of schism between governmental systems in a population and actual investment in such. These schisms, lacking other modes of articulation, become expressed and expressible only in the myths of their adherents. We return to Sorel here:

> In the course of this study one thing has always been present in my mind, which seemed to me so evident that I did not think it worth while to lay much stress on it- that men who are participating in a great social movement always picture their coming action as a battle in which their cause is certain to triumph. These constructions, knowledge of which is so important for historians, I propose to call myths; the syndicalist "general strike" and Marx's catastrophic revolution are such myths.[798]

The apocalypse(s) is, by definition, not a readjustment or realignment of contemporary systems. It is an attack, *the attack*, on the absolute foundations of human society itself. Human world not only is destroyed, but it *must* be destroyed and destroyed *to its roots*. For us, the question of what is the absolute foundation of human society therefore again becomes relevant: just what is the target of the apocalyptic attack? As already discussed in this work, such a question requires a philosophical kind of political analysis. From what does the possibility of human society arise, so that a target for apocalyptic destruction exists at all?

[798] Sorel, p. 22.

We have already answered this question: the foundation of political (and thus existential) human life is human power, *the power to continue as such*. So, from a philosophical kind of political analysis, if apocalypse is understood to be a totalizing attack, a comprehensive condemnation of socialized life in all its spheres, then it is not the ethical that apocalypse refutes. At least, it is not merely or even primarily the ethical that is condemned. From a political perspective, if the apocalyptic assault is truly comprehensive in its destruction, apocalyptic language is in relationship not with ethics, but with the organizing principle of human socialization that enables ethics at all: power. The break with the classical and medieval theories of society in "western" civilization, in which the study of ethics and the study of good governance were understood to be functionally the same, came at the onset of the Renaissance. It arrived not only with Hobbes, as discussed previously, but also with Niccolo Machiavelli.

The notion that power precedes ethics is not wholly created by or through Machiavelli and Hobbes, but their works provide a serviceable demarcation between the ethical theories of preceding generations and the attempts at a political science that would come after them. Prior to these figures and their time, western civilization collapsed political and religious frameworks:

> Time and again the medieval philosophers had quoted the saying of St. Paul that all power is of God. The divine origin of the state was generally acknowledged. In the beginning of the modern era this principle was still in full vigor; it appears, for instance, in its full maturity in the theory of Suarez. Even the strongest champions of the independence and sovereignty of the temporal power did not dare to deny the theocratic principle. As to Machiavelli he does not even attack this principle; he simply ignores it. He speaks from his political experience; and his experience had taught him that power, real and factual political power, is anything but divine.[799]

For Machiavelli, political consideration, the scientific observation of humanity's collective life, must do its best to reduce the amount of *a priori* claims that would influence one's descriptions of political phenomena. The question of right behavior primarily becomes one

[799] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 135.

of efficacy, not ethics. Any imposition upon behavior beyond that which is needed in the immediate and continual survival of the state draws from fundamentally absurd and superfluous sources: the state was, is, and must remain the origin of its own justification. Throughout this work, Machiavelli's following admonition here has been at the forefront of our thoughts:

> But since my intention is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seemed more suitable to me to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one. *And many writers have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that have never been seen nor known to exist in reality*;[800] for there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to make his vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.[801]

It is not the prince himself that attracts Machiavelli's attention, but the framework of states created by the prince, the possibility of the institutionalization of political power beyond the individual, "This is only understandable if we bear in mind that the real source of Machiavelli's admiration was not the man himself but *the structure of the new state* that had been created by him."[802] In the state, a new understanding of human origin and possibility is established, which overturns the philosophical anthropologies which came before.

Hobbes (inadvertently) echoes Machiavelli in providing a demarcation between the study (and imposition) of politics and that of ethics. Whether ethics as a historical discipline or ethics taken as the movement of a public, "good," throughout history, "The point at issue is not the history but the *validity* of the social and political order… it is the question of this legal basis that is answered by the social contract."[803] Hobbes and Machiavelli provide a way into our theory

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[800] Italics mine.
[801] Niccolo Machiavelli, "The Prince," in *The Portable Machiavelli*, ed. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 126.
[802] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 134.
[803] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 174.

that the foundations of collectivized human life, which the apocalypse(s) seeks to upend, are not *fundamentally* (or, rather, *initially*) ethical arrangements, in which questions of good and evil, justice and injustice, right and wrong living are paramount. If apocalypse is to be understood as a totalizing attack on the comprehensive manifestation of human life, in all its expressions (including and *beyond* the ethical), the apocalypse is seen not *primarily* as an ethical critique, but a criticism of the very organizational power at the root of, and that *itself* roots, human existential experience. Apocalypse becomes not just a critique of the *legitimacy* of power, a polemic *over against* the quantifiable parameters and horizons of possibility that a specific deployment of such power created. Rather, apocalypse becomes an indictment of the very *possibility* that human power, *the power to continue as such*, could comprehensively encounter, incorporate, and structure human potentiality at all. Apocalypse seeks to shatter that which it judges to have always already catastrophically and categorically *failed*.

It is important to note that there is a metaphysics at work in apocalypse. The apocalyptic destruction of systems is necessitated not simply because those condemned systems *did not* succeed at their tasks, but because they *cannot*. Apocalyptic condemnation is *total*: it is not merely the *deployment* of a system, but its *essence*, that warrants its categorical unmaking. Apocalypse is thus not revolt, in that apocalypse claims to break, and break beyond, the normative forces constitutive of, and inherent to, world.[804] As such, the freedom promised by apocalypse is one in which the very world will be changed. Such a metaphysics is common to apocalypse regardless of mode, whether via the confessional (Christian exhortations regarding the Parousia, the Norse Ragnarok, etc.) or, as noted in the previous section, the ostensibly secular (Marxism's proletarian revolution, the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk, etc.).

[804] See p. 129.

The liberation promised by apocalypse certainly might have ethical connotations that are attractively compelling to marginalized and oppressed populations. Nonetheless, those dimensions do not reduce or ameliorate the essential character of apocalyptic language as foremost a condemnation, and therefore *concurrent expression*, of power. The apocalypse audaciously destroys that which came before and institutes itself as the sole arbiter of right.

Apocalyptic utterance is not propositional. It cannot be; the very systems of value that create the horizons of possibility for discourse preclude the kinds of expressions from which arise apocalyptic communication. The very nature of apocalyptic language, as mythic language, is beyond the discursive horizons established and sustained by the cosmogonic and restorative commands of the interpretative state. Apocalyptic language is therefore nonsensical in the technical sense of the term: apocalyptic language has no rational meaning within the horizons of discursive possibility available its host populations, though it still retains meaning via its condemnation of those systems from which it derives justifying reference.

This is all not to say apocalyptic language is not an expression of some sort. In fact, it can be considered an articulation of profound information regarding a community's experience, but such articulation must be understood to be an expression in, and of, the absence of discursive language, rather than a proposition within established possibilities and systems. The apocalypse(s) therefore intimately expresses that which is beyond sensible codification within the discursive trajectories first established by its host community's collectivizing and socializing power, that very power that enables language at all, *the power to continue as such*. Given this point regarding the absence of discursive resources, it is important to note that apocalyptic utterance seems to take the form of mythic language. Such is needed because the mythic form of

apocalyptic utterance has concrete implications as to whether and how it might be substantively engaged. Sorel's social theory of myth is significant here:

> A myth cannot be refuted, since it is, at bottom, identical with the convictions of a group, being the expression of these convictions in the language of movement; and it is, in consequence, unanalyzable into parts which could be placed on the plane of historical description.[805]

As we have seen, the established modes of discourse within a society are, of course, discursive. They permit only so many possibilities within their varying trajectories. In apocalyptic myths, aspects of human life are raised to the forefront of thought which cannot otherwise be uttered within the institutional and linguistic systems founded, constituted, and propagated by the interpretative state's collectivizing power, *the power to continue as such*.

Apocalyptic language becomes an indicator of threats to present-day international order not because of a literal, "end of the world," but because the presence of apocalyptic language signifies a profound failure of political analysis to comprehensively conceptualize and engage the complex matrices structuring human meaning, from which human behavior (including political behavior) is derived. This failure, at least in part, permitted the blossoming of apocalyptic mythologies in the twentieth century: the communist, "proletarian revolution," the democratic, "end of history," the fascist, "blood and soil," and the jihadist, "universal caliphate."

This grounding of apocalypse in myth, implicating as it does concrete traumatic suffering, supports arguments for reinvigorated academic inquiry into the nature of mythic language in the contemporary context. Such a perspective serves as a point of departure for new interdisciplinary scholarship, provided that the metaphysical dynamics of the issue be addressed. Interdisciplinarity is nonetheless a problematic concept. It remains a challenge to curricula and scholarship that troubles historic models of inquiry, method, and professional expertise.

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[805] Sorel, p. 33.

The failure of politics to provide, in and of itself, a comprehensiveness through which human potentiality might be expressed only compounds the difficulty in studying the same. While a critical component of modern political theory, myth has seen a decline in substantive scholarly engagement, despite its potential relevance as a concept through which populations and policies might better be known. It is the very assertion of a political positivism that occludes an awareness of the power of myth., "The sudden rise of the political myths in the twentieth century has shown us that these hopes of Comte and of his pupils and adherents were premature. Politics is still far from being a positive science, let alone an exact science."[806]

Our suggestion as to myth's utility as means toward such conversations, however, has precedent in the earliest debates and developments of contemporary theory:

> I can understand the fear that this myth of the general strike inspires in many worthy progressives, on account of its character of infinity the world of today is very much inclined to return to the opinions of the ancients and to subordinate ethics to the smooth working of public affairs, which results in a definition of virtue as the golden mean; as long as socialism remains a doctrine expressed only in words, it is very easy to deflect it towards this doctrine of the golden mean; but the transformation is manifestly impossible when the myth of the "general strike" is introduced, as this implies an absolute revolution.[807]

One of the challenges to greater theoretical engagement of, and with, myth is that mythic language, apocalyptic or not, is fundamentally *practical* in its implications, in its call to act:

> To say that we are acting, implies that we are creating an imaginary world placed ahead of the present world and composed of movements which depend entirely on us…These artificial worlds generally disappear from our minds without leaving any trace in our memory; but when the masses are deeply moved it then becomes possible to trace the outlines of the kind of representation that constitutes a social myth.[808]

Yet confrontation with apocalypse must not involve falling into the rhetorical trap of being misunderstood to be Utopian, as Sorel advises:

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[806] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 295.
[807] Sorel, p. 27.
[808] Sorel, p. 30.

> …the myths are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act. A Utopia is, on the contrary, an intellectual product; it is the work of theorists who, after observing and discussing the known facts, seek to establish a model to which they can compare existing society in order to estimate the amount of good and evil it contains.[809]

This demarcation between analysis of myth and the creation of Utopian projects provides parameters for response. To not respond at all, however, is impossible. With this point, we now are forced to return explicitly to the question of trauma. Trauma is an exception which, if left unchecked, threatens world through the dissolution of meaning, in that its challenges to the constitutive categories of world catastrophically bring into doubt the most intimate of things:

> It has been observed also that Christianity tends at the present day to be less a system of dogmas than a Christian life, i.e., a moral reform penetrating to the roots of one's being; consequently, a new analogy has been discovered between religion and revolutionary Socialism which aims at the apprenticeship, preparation, and even reconstruction of the individual- a gigantic task. But Bergson has taught us that it is not only religion which occupies the profounder region of our mental life; revolutionary myths have their place equally with religion.[810]

We cited this passage by Sorel briefly earlier in this work.[811] We return to Sorel's claim here because it is just in that, "profounder region," that we might properly and convincingly find methodological ways to speak of the failure of politics. How can the topography of such a place be charted, what resources might be brought to bear for the task, and what discoveries might be found within those unexplored territories? Certainly, as Sorel notes, "A myth is in a sense invulnerable. It is impervious to rational arguments; it cannot be refuted by syllogisms."[812] However, the relevance of such a task cannot be overstated. Cassirer struggled with this issue:

> When we first heard of the political myths we found them so absurd and incongruous, so fantastic and ludicrous that we could hardly be prevailed upon to take them seriously. By now it has become clear to all of us that this was a great mistake. We should not commit the same error a second time. We should carefully study the origin, the structure, the

[809] Sorel, p. 32.
[810] Sorel, p. 35.
[811] See p. 235.
[812] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 296.

> methods, and the technique of political myths. We should see the adversary face to face in order to know how to combat him.[813]

The contemporary context increases the stakes confronting any opposition to apocalypse. Trauma, if left to linger, taints well beyond its place and time. The very interpenetration indexed by discursive language facilitates trauma's spread. As trauma, its destruction is both accelerated by technological innovation and obscured by technological thinking.

These two qualities of the contemporary context combine to ensure that the apocalypse implicated and threatened by trauma is not just the end of a world, but the end of worlds themselves. In this risk, the contemporary context seems unique. The reality of weapons of mass destruction, in a world wherein discursive language is destructible, means for us the possibility of a deployment of category-rending force without the bulwark of any conceptual restraint.

Again, what remains so incomprehensible about all this is that friends and enemies are not *just* under threat of horrific death. What is incomprehensible it that the very *concept* of friends and enemies might, in our lifetime, be extinguished. With that conceptual antithesis, goes all the rest.[814] Worse, trauma might achieve such before, and even without, the firing a warhead.

We close by considering Hans Morgenthau's work on nuclear war, which speaks to this dynamic of the contemporary context. Morgenthau observes:

> We think and act as though the possibility of nuclear death had no bearing upon the meaning of life and death. In spite of what some of us know in our reason, we continue to think and act as though the possibility of nuclear death portended only a *quantitative* extension of the mass destruction of the past and not a *qualitative* transformation of the meaning of our existence.[815][816]

[813] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 296.
[814] See p. 65.
[815] Italics mine.
[816] Hans Morgenthau, "Death In the Nuclear Age," *Commentary*, 32 (1961: October): p. 234.

If trauma is conceived of as a catastrophic violation of that which makes human life distinctly human, then Morgenthau's points resonate beyond the weapon systems which he explicitly addressed. Our concern is that trauma ultimately signifies the failure and futility of the boundaries by which human life limits itself. Within those limited possibilities, human life actually flourishes. Without, at least for human life, there is nothing.

This is why world emerges, why normative forces arise, and why there is only one proverbial side of the sky: human power, *the power to continue as such*, cannot and does not exist within the infinite. It certainly, "exists," within all potentially, but not in such a way with regards to *itself*, to human life. Human existence has existential limits. While the earth from which world arises might encompass all potentiality, world itself has, *world is*, boundaries. Its demarcations are what characterize and enable world itself. Much is rightly said regarding the grasping for power by human systems. We, however, suggest it also beneficial to turn the conventional wisdom regarding that relationship on its head: it is miraculous that power, human power, ever manages, however so frail, to manifest world and its systems at all.

We know that we can tear down these boundaries, these borders, these bodies. All their diverse accomplishments somehow rise and take form both in and through language. However, the destruction of language occurs. Worse, we can cause it. We *inflict* trauma. Even more damning, trauma is not a single event, but an ongoing injury-as-event that spreads, taints, and passes on to the next one. In so doing, trauma takes a bit more each time from the worlds constitutive of and inhabited by human life.

Morgenthau's event of nuclear warfare is another, "incomprehensible event," in that when actualized it literally undoes everything it encounters, by rendering categories meaningless:

> Nuclear destruction is mass destruction, both of persons and of things. It signifies the simultaneous destruction of tens of millions of people, of whole families, generations,

> and societies, of all the things that they have inherited and created. It signifies the total destruction of whole societies by killing their members, destroying their visible achievements, and therefore reducing the survivors to barbarism. Thus nuclear destruction destroys the meaning of death by depriving it of its individuality. It destroys the meaning of immortality by making both society and history impossible. It destroys the meaning of life by throwing life back upon itself.[817]

Trauma also can result in the eradication of entire interpretative communities, and can achieve such without the presumably welcome finality of death. More than any time in human history, we know just how much we can be broken; further, we know better than ever just how to break:

> To defend freedom and civilization is absurd when to defend them amounts to destroying them. To die with honor is absurd if nobody is left to honor the dead. The very conceptions of honor and shame require a society that knows what honor and shame mean.[818]

Confronting her own trauma while on the threshold of Agamemnon's palace, Cassandra put it another way: "And grief itself's hardly more pitiable than joy."[819]

[817] Morgenthau, "Death In the Nuclear Age," p. 233.
[818] Morgenthau, "Death In the Nuclear Age," p. 234.
[819] Aeschylus, *The Oresteian Trilogy*, p. 88.

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