

Heidegger and Carl Schmitt: The Historicity of the Political

(Part Two)

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In Part I of this article I concluded that Schmitt's account of the political suffers from an inadequate concept of the political inasmuch as he fails to establish the historicity of the political. The necessity of founding the political in historicity arises out of Schmitt's critique of the ahistoricity of liberalism and the socio-technical realm of universality it propagates.

Heidegger shares Schmitt's critique of liberalism and also seeks to determine the political as a category of limit and self-limitation. We have seen, however, that Schmitt and Heidegger already part company in their understanding of *Volk* as a ground of historicity. It now pertains to examine the three remaining grounds of historicity I anticipated in Part I: subjectivity and representation; State and *Volk*, and conflict or differentiation as an essential measure of the founded historicity and differentiation of beings.

I. Subjectivity and Representation

In his *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* of 1934, Schmitt reverses the emphasis of his earlier argument, as developed in the *Verfassungslehre* (*Theory of the Constitution*) (1928), that the *Volk* is in itself non-political, and becomes present to itself only by the mediation, or re-presentation, of the State. There is no State without representation: for a State cannot be without form, and form derives from the apprehension of political unity, which representation, as the space of mutual recognition, first constitutes (VL 207)¹. Representation – whether in the form of the symbolic and material identity of the sovereign with one person, or in the form of the delegation of the will of the people to an assembly – constitutes “the political sphere, because it manifests, or stages, political unity” (Kervégan 310). Representation constitutes the identity of a people through an act of self-objectification – a people goes on stage to enact itself, as it were. Short of being-represented, the unity and identity of a people is only a fictive idea, for as the realm of natural desires and private

¹ For abbreviations used in the text, see bibliography.

will the “people” is a non-political category (VL 215; cf. Kervégan 311). Schmitt stands fully in the modern tradition of thought of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Hegel. What one commonly understands as *Volk*, Hegel writes in the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, are “the many as individuals” who constitutes a collective, but as a “formless mass” whose “movement and action remains elemental, irrational wild and terrible” (sec. 303). As opposed to this realm of natural and particular desires, the State represents the “highest, concrete generality” of a will which consciously affirms itself (GPR sec. 303 and 270).

The modern tradition identifies representation with the sovereign power of a State; subordinates the merely “natural” and non-political realm of desire, as expressed in the inchoate mass of what is not yet a “people,” not yet historical, to the constituting act of representation; and defines political representation as the representation, or “staging,” of a founding or sovereign subject *of itself* (as “people”) *to itself* (as the Leviathan of State). In Schmitt’s terms *political* representation, moreover, is a form of *presentation* distinct from, and superior to, every form of delegation of powers or agency in the socio-economic realm (RK 26): representation makes present and publicly visible that which is invisible. The coming-forth and taking-form (*Heraushebung*) of the invisible into public manifestation (*in das öffentliche Sein*) is what Schmitt calls *Existenz* (VL 210). *Existenz* signifies the taking of form, of standing-forth into the open. Representation defines the realm of the political as the site of the emergence of a people’s communal being into the definitive outlines of a determinate form. Given the primacy of the socio-economic over the political under the “regime” of liberalism, it is evident why Schmitt insists that liberalism signifies the triumph of formlessness. Heidegger evidentially shares Schmitt’s critique of formlessness and seeks to give the “political” a gestalt in and through the presencing of being in the State as the articulate will of the *Volk* (GA 38, 165). The “presencing of being” (i.e., the event of truth) in Heidegger’s sense, finds, within limits, a corresponding measure in what Schmitt understands by “representation” and “*Existenz*.” Being presences – takes gestalt to manifest itself – in beings: in the work of art, acts of leadership, and in the founding of a State (“Ursprung,” 48/186; GA 65, 71/48).

Schmitt attaches himself to the tradition of representation only to seemingly abandon it in 1933–34 in favor of a theory of State founded on the “natural” and even racial “substance” of the *Volk*; the “substantial similarity and equality of kind” (*Artgleichheit*) of the *Volk* is interpreted racially (SBV 42–5). This recourse to *Volk*, to be sure, is anticipated in the *Verfassungslehre*, although in terms which betray no commitment to a natural or racial substratum of national identity such as founds the unity of the State. Identity, understood as the presence of a people to itself, is required by every State, to a greater or lesser degree. “With the word ‘identity’ we signify the existential reality of political unity as opposed to any sort of normative, formal, or fictive equality. Democracy [not to be confused with liberalism] presupposes in every part and in its whole political existence a people equal

in kind (*gleichartiges*), which has the will to political existence" (VL 208, 235). It is by no means self-evident, however, that the distinction Schmitt makes in the *Verfassungslehre* between polities founded in the *mediated unity of representation*, and those founded in the *unmediated unity of identity of a Volk*, calls for a "substantial" or racial theory of unmediated unity of identity (204–6).² The two ideas of unity are not even opposed to each other, for although one form of unity is liable to pre-dominate, both typically supplement each other in the historical constitution of any given State. The unity of identity, therefore, as presented in the *Verfassungslehre*, does not implicate a racialist interpretation. Schmitt, moreover, leaves open the possibility, on the Greek model, of an *identity of attunement* to the earth as homeland as the ground of unity of a *Volk* (see Schmitz 162n20). Yet in 1933, Schmitt capitulates, as it were, to the new orthodoxy of racial identity, and consequently fails to develop the notion of *Artgleichheit* in this direction. The representational unity of the state gives way to a spurious racial unity of identity.

Schmitt's incomplete development of the concept of the unity of identity has unfortunate consequences. In *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*, he insists that the idea of *Führung* "does not derive from baroque allegory and representation, nor from Cartesian general concepts," but signifies "unmediated presence and realized actuality" (*unmittelbarer Gegenwart und realer Praesenz*) (41). The condition of leadership is the *Artgleichheit* of leader and led: "commonality of kind" establishes a common attunement, a common way of knowing, feeling, existing, which alone allows the possibility of being understood by others, of coming into conversation with the other (SVB 45). Those alien to this community of understanding will feel and think differently. Political unity is produced (*hergestellt*) by representation; it is manifested or enacted (*dargestellt*) by a State founded in identity (cf. Schmitz 164n26). The *Führer*, consequently, is conceived as the incarnation, the manifested presence, of an identity of kind grounded in a common attunement. This position has evident weaknesses. The abrogation of the re-presentational space of the State as the public site of the conversation of leaders and led eliminates constraints on the misuse of power. The erasure of the distinction between the private person of the *Führer* and his public function as the enactor and author of the common attunement tends to uncouple the private will of the *Führer* from the general will. In his *Römischer Katholizismus und Politische Form*, Schmitt had argued that the Roman Catholic church, as an institution, manifests the transcendent reality of the incarnated God through the function of the priesthood – for example, in the administration of the Mass (26; cf. Kervégan 312). Function is subordinate to a superior, transcendent reality. If the leader, in turn, is conceived as a kind of priest, enacting the rites of state, as Kervégan suggests (314), he too must act in the name of the unitary will of the people. This demands a measure of accountability to which Schmitt fails to give concrete, institutional expression.

² For emphasis portions of the text are set in spaced type.

Heidegger's existential hermeneutic of *Befindlichkeit*, as the power of *φύσις* in us, shows that a deconstruction of the "natural," a retrieve of *Volksein* from the metaphysics of biologism and founded in historicity, is a possible path for the politics of *Volk*. Heidegger is able to commit himself to the political unity of identity, founded in the *Volk*, as opposed to the unity of representation, without committing himself, as Schmitt did in 1934, to a racial interpretation of identity. Since *Befindlichkeit*, moreover, is not identical with the realm of unreasoning feeling, but is constituted by understanding and discourse, the politics of identity demand, no less than the politics of representation, an open, public site of dialogue (SZ sec. 29). This would be one way in which the political takes definitive *gestalt*. Rhetoric is the articulation of this site: as a kind of *ἀληθεύειν* it brings the attunement of the *Volk* into the clarity of the concept, and grounds the concept in the fundamental, authentic attunement of a generation. The identity of a common attunement is the condition of dialogue and the possibility of mutual understanding in the public sphere (GA 38, 12–30; GA 39, 72); no less is the public sphere of dialogue the condition of the ongoing work of wresting truth from the distortions inherent in the common interpretation of the attunement of a generation (cf. Radloff 437–51). The dialogical space imposes reciprocal restraints on each participant in dialogue, inasmuch as each is bound by responsibility to the threefold temporalization of *Volk*. The politics of identity, therefore, do not necessarily implicate an arbitrary exercise of power. In Heidegger's terms, moreover, the identity of the *Volk* has to be understood as differentiated, or "fractured": this follows from the fact that identity is conceived as a movement of temporalization, as opposed to the self-presence of subjectivity. Therefore, Heidegger's understanding of *Volk* offers an explicit critique of subjectivity as the re-presentation of the subject to itself (GA 65, sec. 196).

What Schmitt, following the modern tradition, calls the self-objectification, re-presentation, or "staging" of the *Volk* to and for itself shows the derivation of *Volk*, or people, and the modern State from the founding metaphysics of Descartes. Heidegger's most explicit statement linking re-presentation to the metaphysics of the subject going on stage for itself is found in "The Age of the World Picture" (1936): under the regime of representation,

man sets himself up as the setting in which whatever is must henceforth set itself forth, must present itself [*sich ... praesentieren*], i.e., be picture. Man henceforth becomes the representative [*der Repraesentant*] of that which is, in the sense of that which has the character of object. (89/132)

Heidegger's rejection of the metaphysics of representation raises the question whether his position still allows for a public sphere, for the public is constituted by the self-representation of a people to itself. The rhetorical moment is one way a generation articulates its response to the claims of a heritage. Following *Being and Time*, we know that Heidegger attempts to break with representational subjectivity, understood also as the ground of political discourse, by establishing *Da-sein* as the

site (the *Da-*) of the unconcealment of the claim of being. This claim, which articulates itself as the “voice” of the tradition in its threefold temporalization, embodies itself as “language.” It is the condition of the self-presence of subjectivity. The public sphere must consequently be reconceived as the enactment and actualization of the power of language, as opposed to the self-realization of individual subjects or the collective subject of the nation. Language, as primordial λόγος, signifies the event of the differentiation of the being of beings. Heidegger attempts to reconceive the public sphere as the site of ongoing response to this event, wherein the response actualizes itself in questioning, works, and acts. For example, the community of research, as founded in questioning, wins its “actuality,” or being, from the deconstructive rebound of the question on the self-presence of the questioner (GA 27, 40–41; Rector’s Address 9/470). The “public space” of research gains its stability from the constancy of being-held-open by the question, and not by reference to the self-presence of subjectivity (“What is Metaphysics?” 119/109).

Only the deconstruction of the subject and the founding of *Da-sein* would allow the still metaphysical position of Schmitt’s concept of the historical specificity of rational humanity to be overcome. Therefore, from out of Heidegger’s perspective what is fundamentally lacking in Schmitt is a concept of historicity founded in the history of being. This history calls for the founding of *Da-sein* in the situated, concrete form of the temporalization of a *Volk*. In this sense the question of *Volk* is the gateway to the question of being. Only as founded, can the historicity of *Dasein* be brought to bear on the essential decision between techno-animality and mortality which arises with the technocratic totalization of the state. This decision is the response of a resolve which opens itself to the differentiation of being in beings, thus preserves each in its own being, and *Dasein* in its being-toward-death (cf. GA 65, sec. 44–6, 61). Decision and preservation are not derived from the re-presentation of the subject to itself: they are rather conceived as the condition and the enactment of the making-present of beings. The making-present of beings, thus to set each into the limits proper to it, is what Heidegger understands by “work.” *Volk* actualizes itself in the making-present of work. Consequently the *Volk* is constituted neither by the re-presentation of subjectivity for itself (and thus cannot be derived from the state), nor is it defined as the unmediated self-identity of presence to itself. As the concretely enacted temporalization of the situated finitude of being, *Volk* “is” in being in ek-static being-with beings, thus it actualizes itself as work (GA 38, 153–5).

II. State and Volk

The thematics of enactment and actualization, as attempts to break with the logic of representation, are supported by Heidegger’s effort to found the State itself in the temporality of *Dasein*. In the *Logik*, Heidegger insists on the necessity

of the State as the form of the “historical being of the *Volk*” (165). The passage reads as follows:

Because the being of the historical Dasein of man is founded in temporality, that is, in Care, therefore the State is essentially necessary. Not as an abstraction and a right derived from the imagined and timeless nature of man as existing in itself, but the State as the essential law of historical being. The force and order of this law first allows the *Volk* to secure for itself its historical duration (*Dauer*) – that is, the preservation of its mission and the struggle for its task. The State is the historical being of the *Volk*. (GA 38, 165)

A number of questions immediately arise. Why, in the first instance, is it necessary to make the move from *Volk* to State? How is the idea of State related to the governing principles of *Volksein as limit, withdrawal, differentiated disclosure and unity of comportment*? Why does Heidegger insist on opposing the State to society and how is this distinction significant? In what respects is Heidegger’s understanding of the State based on the existential analytic of *Being and Time*?

I will begin with a consideration of the last question. Heidegger holds that the State arises as an essential necessity because “the being of the historical Dasein of humanity is founded in temporality, that is, in Care” (165). We recall that the analytic of Dasein reveals the Care-structure as the condition of the unity (*Ganzsein*) and ability-to-be of Dasein (SZ 317/292–3). This structure articulates the selfhood of Dasein, hence deconstructs the metaphysically conceived subject and grounds it in the temporality of Dasein as a thrown project. Heidegger defines the Kantian subject as follows: “the I think is not something represented, but the formal structure of representing as such, and this formal structure alone makes it possible for anything to be represented” (319/294–5). Heidegger holds that Kant conceives the I as subject and thus in an “ontologically inappropriate” sense: for “the concept of the subject does *not* characterize the *selfhood of the I qua self, but the sameness and constancy of something always already objectively present*” (320/295; original emphasis). The deconstruction of the subject breaks with the substantiality of an abiding, underlying presence (322–323/296–7). This leads to the implication that if the State is founded in the non-substantiality of the structure of Care, then *the State cannot be conceived by analogy to the metaphysical subject*. This merely negative determination calls for considerable clarification.

Heidegger designates the State as a “*Fügung*” – an articulated, unifying structure. As *the articulation of unity* the State preserves a certain constancy. It is important to distinguish the constancy Heidegger imagines from that propagated by ideologues of the National Socialist regime such as Krieck, for example; for Krieck the unity of the State derives from the cultivation of a particular racialist form or character (81). This is not the case for Heidegger. Since the State is founded in the Care-structure, we must turn to Heidegger’s formulation of the non-metaphysical constancy of Dasein to gain insight into the unity and constancy of the State. Wherein is the authentic, existentially founded constancy of Dasein to be

sought? Heidegger answers: “in terms of Care the *constancy* [*Ständigkeit*] of the self, as the supposed persistence of the subject, gets its clarification (SZ 322/296; original emphasis). The constancy of the selfhood of Dasein implicates “having-won-a-stand” (322). Dasein stands in the resoluteness of its anticipation of death which opens up an authentic present for the thrown project that it is. Dasein wins a stand by grasping its finitude, and consequently the possibility of being-a-whole.

This allows a first, preliminary interpretation of Heidegger’s idea of the State: if the State grants a *Volk* its “historical duration” or constancy (*Dauer*) (GA 38, 165), then the state actualizes the principle of constancy: the State constitutes the temporalization of *Volk* to win a stand and hold a stand in the midst of the presencing of beings. The State is the *gestalt* (*Fügung*) of this stand (165). The thesis of the non-substantiality of the State – meaning that it is not derived from the metaphysics of subjectivity, hence of presence and representation – is confirmed by Heidegger’s insistence that the State is not founded in some atemporal law of man’s nature (165). The historicity of the State is confirmed in the rejection of the idea of State as “*Abstractum*”: the State as the representation of an ideal of being as conceived in the tradition of the metaphysical interpretation of Plato’s *Republic*. If, consequently, the State is conceived as the essential law of our historical being, then the State must arise as the authentic form which *Mitsein*, understood as *Volk*, gives to itself. The State must be founded in the existential determinations of *Volksein*, consequently determined as temporalization, as the delimitation of a unified comportment to being rooted in an earth-sited disclosure of the differentiation of being.

Heidegger poses the question of the unity of selfhood, understood as the unity of the Care-structure, in a more radical way, by unfolding the sense or direction (*Sinn*) of this structure (SZ 324/298). The structure of Care is an articulated, non-substantial, temporalizing whole. It is the “condition of possibility” of the differentiated presencing of the being of beings. If the State, consequently, is to be understood as the actualization of this structure, then the State must be constituted in such a way as to allow the differentiation of beings to manifest itself and to be founded. *This renders a norm for the evaluation of different kinds of States*. If, furthermore, the structure of Care is that of a thrown project, then the State must be understood as a founding project: as the retrieval of the authentic possibilities of the heritage to which a *Volk* is delivered over (325/299). The primacy of the project – hence of the dimension of the future (327/300–1) – implies, furthermore, that under certain conditions of historical necessity the State must become the founding project of the re-constitution of our communal being. Heidegger evidently believed that these conditions obtained in 1933; his openness to a new, revolutionary founding is based on the assumption that an “authentic” German State had yet to be founded, not on the abstraction of his supposed decisionism.

The present which arises out of the structure of Care is a letting-be-present: “only as the *present*, in the sense of making-present, can resoluteness be what it is,

namely, the undistorted letting what it grasps in action be encountered" (326/300; original emphasis). The "undistorted" letting-presence of beings *actualizes itself as work* in the sense of setting the presencing of being into the delimited gestalt of works and acts in our encounter with beings. This would call for the differentiation and delimitation of beings, and therefore for a rank order of modes of production.

Given that the State is founded in *Sorge*, the State becomes necessary as the articulation of a modus of temporalization. Evidently the temporalization of our being-in-the-world can be structured in many different ways. We know that Heidegger distinguishes, in the first and most primordial instance, between authentic and inauthentic modi (SZ 328/302). Consequently this distinction can offer a criterion for the evaluation of States as forms of the constitution of Dasein's being-in-the-world. The modus of a State's articulation of the finitude of Dasein, its articulation of being-toward-death in relative authenticity or inauthenticity, offers an essential indication of the "authenticity" of a State, and therefore a norm of evaluation of different kinds of political regimes. *Authenticity grounds in a recognition of finitude.*

Heidegger's concept of sacrifice as a "value" in and for itself, for example, follows from the need to give the authenticity of being-toward-death a public face. It is not simply or primarily a question of the assimilation of Nazi ideology. Consider another example: granted that there is an essential distinction between "health" and the technical prolongation of life, then the social articulation of this distinction gives expression to the way in which a community is attuned to death. If Dasein is authentic in being-toward-death, and inauthentic in everyday dispersal and flight from its ownmost possibility for being, then this provides an evaluative criterion for States, given that States "constitute" our relationship to death by a multitude of discourses and practices (cf. GA 16, No. 154).

The political projects of both Hobbes and Locke, for example, found the State in man's fear of death, and in his corresponding desire for acknowledgment and security. The fundamental attunement of Locke's Man – the "unease of desire" – is a response to the infinity of desire (which knows no highest good), and the finitude of our being (which has no transcendent destination). Our dispersal in the present, in the pursuit of objects of momentary desire, understood as the fundamental attunement of man, calls for a corresponding constitution, or articulating, unifying structure.

The State is founded in the temporalization of Care, Care in historicity as a more concrete elaboration of temporality (SZ 382/350). Let us briefly recall how Heidegger joins the issue of temporality to that of the historicity of the *Volk*. Historicity, Heidegger avers, poses the "riddle of being and ... of *movement*" (SZ 392/358; original emphasis). At stake is the unity of motion, and this is given in (to quote the Macquarrie and Robinson translation, which is superior here) "Dasein's primordial historizing, which lies in authentic resoluteness, and in which

Dasein hands itself down to itself, free for death, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen" (SZ 384/trs. MR 435). Given that

fateful Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, exists existentially in Being-with-Others, its historicizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as *destiny* (*Geschick*). This is how we designate the historicizing of the community, of a people. (SZ 384/MR 436)

Destiny is understood as the authentic and at the same time *finite temporality* of Dasein, which it actualizes in its *Mitsein* in taking over, or retrieving, the possibilities of its heritage (SZ 385–6/MR 437). The unity which arises out of the temporality of *Mitsein*

is in itself a *steadiness which has been stretched along* – the steadiness with which Dasein as fate ‘incorporates’ into its existence birth and death and their ‘between,’ and holds them as thus ‘incorporated,’ so that in such constancy Dasein is indeed in a moment of vision for what is world-historical in its current Situation (SZ 390–1/MR 442).

In the *Logik*, the State is explicitly defined as the means by which a *Volk* secures its “historical duration” (*Dauer*). In the terms of *Being and Time*, *Volk* is “as such” defined by primordial historicity, it does not require the “addition” of the State to become historical. To suppose otherwise would be to hold, in common with metaphysics, that the *Volk* is a construct of the State. In fact, the State “only *is* insofar as it *becomes, comes to be* the historical being of beings, called *Volk*” (GA 16, No. 158: 333; original emphasis). Consequently, the State arises out of the *Volk* as a structure of historicity. Nor can Heidegger consistently hold that the State grants the happening of the community, or destiny, its “steadiness,” or continuity (*Ständigkeit*). The State ‘secures’ the “duration” of the historicizing of the *Volk*. The duration Heidegger speaks of here cannot refer primarily to the formal continuity of forms of government, for example. Rather,

The State only *is*, insofar and so long as the will to rule, which arises out of a mission and a task, and which conversely is actualized in labor and in works, is carried out and accomplished. (GA 38, 165; original emphasis)

The will to rule is not its own ground – it arises out of the historicity of a mission, which is granted to a *Volk*. Heidegger holds that the State is the actualization of this will in works and action – it *is* in actualization. While the State secures the historical being of a *Volk*, it is not the origin of *Volk*, in the sense of producing *Volk* as a concept or ideal form, for this would indeed signify a fall back into the metaphysics of “national aestheticism.” Heidegger’s appeal to the “will,” nonetheless, appears to be a dangerous concession to the times, and to hark back to the metaphysics of the “common will.” Heidegger explicitly refers to the will *to rule* – that is, to decide. Decision would have to engage and respect both the unconcealment of being in beings and the resistance of *Volk* to rational transparency (i. e., ideological formation through the institutions of the State). The State signifies the will to be-in-historicity. Yet the question remains whether this clarification alone can suffice to extricate Heidegger from a metaphysics of the will. In the absence, or col-

lapse of this will, moreover, does a *Volk* decline into the status of an unactualized potential? Does the dissolution of this will into forms of socio-technical discourses characterizing a “self-managing society” signify the dis-integration of a *Volk* into a contractual society of individuals?

III. State and Society

It is characteristic of the movement of the *Logik* of 1934 that Heidegger attempts to answer the question of who we are by asking about *Volk*, and that the question of *Volk* emerges out of the concretely questioning “We” of the University as a community of inquiry into its present actuality, tradition, and future. This shows that *Volk* is not an abstract mystical body “behind” the phenomena of social institutions in which we are involved, but rather that it is a way of being, a sense of the *actualization* of these institutions.

Consequently, it is not a matter of discovering the linguistic, ethnic, or ethical reality of *Volk* in contradistinction to the practices and discourses which constitute our social being; it is rather a question of *bringing to light the structure of temporalization which gives these practices and discourses their horizon of intelligibility* and full, authentic sense. Fritsche’s contention that Heidegger simply insists on ‘canceling’ “society” (*Gesellschaft*) in the will to retrieve a mythical community or *Gemeinschaft* is misconceived (101, 121, 139–40). It is true that Heidegger identifies the advent of the “individual” and of the contractual theory of society as a key characteristic of modernity; the concept of the *Volk* which arose with German Romanticism already attempted to initiate a counter-movement to modern “society” (GA 16, No. 155: 290–1). But the Romantic notion of *Volk* also has to be deconstructed by uncovering the non-subjectivistic temporality of a *Da-sein* which founds both the contracting individual and the collective subject of the Romantic idea (GA 54, 204).

Heidegger holds that the State is the constituting, unifying will of a *Volk* to its own historicity. As opposed to the modern tradition from Hobbes to Hegel, this cannot mean that the *Volk*, “in itself,” signifies non-political, unreflective being. Because the political is a category of the differentiation of modes of being, then Heidegger’s understanding of *Volk* leads to the conclusion that he grants *Volk* “political” being in the most primordial sense: as the articulation of the differentiated and differentiating structure of time.

Heidegger insists that the State is not merely the “contemporary and at the same time calcified form of organization of a society” (GA 38, 165). The question therefore arises as to why society cannot realize the being of *Volk* in its historicity. The distinction of State and society, and with it the valuation of the State as a qualitatively higher will than the system of relations composing a society, is central to conservative discourse and the critique of Weimar. Heidegger also holds that the State is in being “only inasmuch and only so long as the will to rule – arising out

of a mission and a task and actualized in labor and in works – accomplishes itself” (165). “Society” is evidently determined, in the first instance, as the interplay of socio-technical discourses; it is the form of organization of the impersonal “they” and constituted by *Gerede* as the Already-said of stratified concepts, practices and forms of attunement. This is not to say that Heidegger denies the necessity and inevitability of social institutions and discourses in modern society – nor is the inauthenticity of these institutions an argument against them. Inauthenticity belongs to the structure of *Mitdasein*, and for the most part our social intercourse takes this form, whether in dealing with the nurse in the medical clinic, arguing with the taxman, or riding the bus with faceless “others.” Social institutions call for critique and authentic actualization, *just as Gerede calls for deconstruction and retrieval* through the enactment of authentic discourse. Were this not the case, then Heidegger’s commitment to university reform would make no sense whatsoever. But then how can Heidegger justify, on his own premises, a normative critique of society in favor of the State?

Heidegger implicitly appeals to the criterion of self-limiting wholeness as founded in historicity. Socio-technical discourses have no inherent limit, and tend to dis-integrate all realms of life into one integrated, functional system. The State is conceived as a counter-movement to the socio-technical tendency to transparency and a totally self-managing society. Because the State is understood as the will to rule grounded in the self-reserve of the *Volk*, it articulates the movement of withdrawal from the social system of rational transparency. As such, as the articulation of withdrawal, it preserves the site of truth as the strife of *ἀ-λήθεια*, of unconcealment and saving reserve.

Volk and State are of necessity allies as *counter-movements to the tendency toward rational transparency inherent in the social and technical discourses of a totally managed society*. The State enacts this counter-movement in the will to fulfil its own historicity. Nonetheless the question remains whether the appeal to the will does not signify a fall back into the metaphysics of subjectivity and representation. The will inherent in the State is itself in conflict with *Volk* as a movement of withdrawal from all forms of objectification, from what the will posits. Liberal theory ascribes to the atomistic individuals of the “state of nature” certain inalienable rights – finally and fundamentally, the right to self-preservation. Consequently it acknowledges the will to be of the individual. The State cannot abrogate this will, and therefore inscribes a moment of self-reservation, of withdrawal from the claims of the State into the constitution of the State. While the liberal tradition ascribes this moment to the individual, Heidegger understands it as belonging to the *Volk* in its authentic and unified structure of temporalization.

IV. Polemos (Πόλεμος)

Schmitt added a note on Heraclitus in the third edition of his text, published after Hitler's assumption of power. In the copy he sent to Heidegger, Schmitt presumably mentions frg. 53 of Heraclitus, and this serves Heidegger as the occasion of his letter (Editor's note, "Heidegger and Schmitt," *Telos* 72, 132). Based on the interpretation of *The Concept of the Political* I have offered, I conclude that Schmitt understands πόλεμος as the power of being, that is, as the power of bringing into being by the differentiation which generates entities and holds each in its being. As opposed to Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* (cf. 116, 249), we have to insist that the political distinction of friend and enemy as subjects presupposes this ontological thesis. The opposition of friend and enemy, in this sense, is not the enmity of already existing, substantial entities, but the relation which gives to each its limit, nature and rank, consequently its being as a way of unfolding. The relation is "prior" to the *relata*. If this is so, then friend and enemy cannot be conceived in terms of a metaphysical dualism. Schmitt writes, we recall, that in my enemy the question of my own being takes gestalt to place my being in question. The distinction of friend and enemy, therefore, is not simply an "external" mark of difference, but a movement of differentiation which issues in a call to self-discovery and self-limitation. Schmitt's response to National Socialism, however, will lead me to qualify this account in certain respects.

Heidegger's letter to Schmitt of August, 1933, refers explicitly to frg. 53 and therefore offers us a somewhat cryptic indication of how Heidegger might have read *The Concept of the Political*; and consequently what Heidegger might have understood by the distinction of friend and enemy as the founding distinction of the political. As a basis of interpretation to help us understand Heidegger's thoughts on Heraclitus at this time the letter offers equally cryptic pointers. For this reason I will draw Heidegger's Hölderlin lectures of the winter of 1934 and a number of other texts to our aid.

Fragment 53 of Heraclitus reads as follows: "War (πόλεμος) is the father of all and king (βασιλεύς) of all, and some he shows as gods, others as men; some he makes slaves and others free" (trans. Kirk 245). In his letter to Schmitt, Heidegger writes:

Your quote from Heraclitus appealed to me particularly, because you did not forget βασιλεύς [king], which gives definitive meaning to the whole maxim if one interprets it completely. I have had such an interpretation set down for years, with respect to the concept of truth – the εἰδείξε [proves] and ἐποίησε [makes] which appear in Fragment 53. But I myself am in the middle of πόλεμος [war] and all literary projects must take second place. ("Letter," 132)

Based on Heidegger's "commentary" of 1945 on the Rector's address, we have a sense of his interpretation of πόλεμος: πόλεμος is the *Aus-einander-setzung*, or differentiation, of beings into their being (Rector's Address 28). If we are correct

in assuming that Schmitt, no less than Heidegger, understands πόλεμος in this sense, then the differentiation of being is the common ground which allows Heidegger to read the friend/enemy distinction of Schmitt as an ontological thesis.

Differentiation separates, gives to each its rank, its own. The harmony of the cosmos arises out of the mutual delimitation of beings. Heidegger's *Die Grundbegriffe der Antiken Philosophie* (1928), tends to support this interpretation, although admittedly his commentary on Heraclitus consists largely of incomplete lecture notes (GA 22, 59). More substantial support can be found in lectures dating from the winter semester of 1933–1934 – *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (GA 36/37) – in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger's *Heraklit* of 1943–44 (GA 55), and the Heidegger/Fink seminar of 1966. The lectures of 1933–34 explicitly interpret the πόλεμος of Fragment 53 as that which gives rise to and preserves beings in their being (91–2). Πόλεμος shows and sets beings forth as beings by setting each into its determinate limit, for in and out of its limit it wins a stand, stands forth (GA 36/7, 93). Heidegger confirms this interpretation in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, referring directly to πόλεμος as “the conflict which sets (being) apart,” and adds:

It is only such conflict that ἔδειξε, that *shows*, that brings forth gods and men in their being. We do not learn who man is by learned definitions; we learn it only when man contends with the essent, striving to bring it into its being, i.e., into limit and form, that is to say when he projects something new (not yet present), when he creates original poetry, when he builds poetically. (GA 40, 153/144)

This passage brings the differentiation of being and the founding of differentiation in beings – in the site of the πόλις – into clear relation. Being is unequivocally understood as “limit and form.”

Turning to the *Heraklit* of 1944, the βασιλεύς of Fragment 53 is thought as lightning and fire in Fragments 64 and 66. Lightning “steers” the cosmos: in the light of this “fire” the whole (τὰ πάντα) is illuminated and differentiated in the sense that everything first appears in the ordered limits of its proper, spatio-temporal gestalt (*erscheint erst jedes Erscheinende in den gefügten Grenzen seines Gebildes*) (GA 55, 163). In Fink's words, as recorded in the seminar of 1966, just as “lightning tears open the field of πάντα and works there as the driving and reigning, so war as ruler directs and reigns over πάντα” (Heraclitus Seminar, 24/42–3). Heidegger responds by saying that for Heraclitus “the origin [ἀρχή] of movement is also the origin of ruling and directing” (24/43). Lightning/πόλεμος grants to each its “time” and “space” within the differentiated order of the whole: it “originates” in granting the measure of unfolding proper to a being. Secondly, Heidegger especially emphasizes the βασιλεύς understood as king or ruler, and πόλεμος that holds each being on the path of its unfolding. Strife is *integral to beings themselves* as the motion which grants them their being. In an address of May 1934 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of his *Abitur*, or graduation, Heidegger advances precisely this interpretation: “the power of strife [*des Kampfes*] in the being of all things and in man reigns in a double way: as the power of genera-

tion [*Erzeugung*] and as the power of preservation" (GA 16, No. 154: 283). On this point Heidegger would concur with Zeller (831); Guthrie also holds that war "is common because the Logos that is the law of all becoming (frg. 1) is a law of strife, of simultaneous opposite tensions" (447). The question at issue is how "tension," or motion, as opposite and simultaneous, belongs to the proper being of an entity. Heidegger's interpretation of βασιλεύς leads to the conclusion that he understands πόλεμος as the ἀρχή of κίνησις of entities. The interpretation of πόλεμος put forward by Kirk, that πόλεμος consists of the strife and unity of opposites deriving from the mere succession of states, fails to grasp πόλεμος as the principle of the differentiated unity, or motion, of each individual being (Kirk 216–7, 223). Rather, according to Heidegger, βασιλεύς is the name given to πόλεμος as the principle of individuation of beings. The letter, finally, introduces the question of truth, which for Heidegger means the question of ἀλήθεια: πόλεμος and βασιλεύς draw their full import from truth as unconcealment. What this implies for the character of "the political" is a question to which I will return shortly.

In the *Hölderlin*, Heidegger glosses Fragment 53 as follows:

Strife (*Kampf*/πόλεμος) is the power of the genesis of beings, but not in the sense that strife withdraws from beings once they have arisen out of it; but rather, strife precisely preserves and oversees beings in their essential being (*Wesensbestand*). Strife is indeed the genesis, but also the ruler. (GA 39, 125)

Translation of *Kampf* is a problem, since neither "war," nor "struggle," nor "strife" entirely catches Heidegger's meaning; no more does "*Kampf*" serve Heidegger well as a translation of πόλεμος. Yet evidently Heidegger understands πόλεμος, and *Kampf*, as the power of differentiation into being, and as the power of preservation within the limits of being. As the power of preservation proper to each being, πόλεμος is implicitly read as the "origin of movement" of beings. As *that which preserves and oversees*, πόλεμος is the ἀρχή of κίνησις which holds beings on the path of their being. In this sense "father and ruler" name the unity of temporalization (κίνησις) of beings: πόλεμος is the ἀρχή out of which things arise, not to abandon them to the in-difference of having-been-generated (along with all other beings), but to hold each being in the gestalt which grants to each the limit (πέρας) which preserves each in its way of unfolding. "*Wesensbestand*" refers to the rootedness, or stability of a being in its own "nature," where nature (*Wesen*) is understood as a way of coming to be. Πόλεμος consequently differentiates in two ways: (i) as genesis: by granting each its being, in and through distinction from other beings; (ii) as ruler: as the principle of differentiated unity and identity.

Πόλεμος is the power which differentiates-into-being by setting each being its own limit: only as differentiated, de-limited, does each entity first come to be: "there are no gods and humans, as such and in themselves," for each comes to be through being-as-differentiation. With reference to Fragments 48, 51, and 54, Hei-

degger holds that “strife opens up” the possibility of the harmony or co-responsibility of beings: the strife of contraries (*Widerstreit*) “sets the counterpoised powers each into its limits (*Grenzen*). This de-limitation (*Be-grenzung*) is no constraint, but release from constraint (*Ent-schränkung*), de-termination, and consummation of the being of a being” (124–5). An entity begins to be out of the internal, self-reserving limit which holds it on its proper path. In this sense, de-limitation (the rootedness of a being in its internal limit) is understood as the movement of release of a being into the full measure of its possible unfolding. The dissolution of internal limit – of ἀρχή and πέρας – signifies confusion, dis-integration, and death; the maintenance of an external, imposed limit signifies the sterility of a merely formal, functional order.

Therefore, πόλεμος is understood as the βασιλεύς or “ruler” of differentiated self-identity. It is not just that πόλεμος is the power of differentiation between entities, but “internally” to each being πόλεμος names a differentiated unity. That Heidegger interprets Fragment 53 in this sense is evident from the fact that he brings Fragments 48, 51, and 54 to bear on Fragment 53. Fragment 48 intimates that life and death, being and not being, belong together as one: “For the bow the name is life, but the work is death.” The “most extreme contraries of being” are brought together in a harmony, which is unapparent, but stronger than the apparent (124; cf. Fragment 54). Fragment 51, in turn, reads: “They do not apprehend how being at variance it agrees with itself: there is a connection working in both directions, as in the bow and the lyre” (trans. Kirk, 203). It is the tension of the strung bow, and of the strings of the lyre, Heidegger writes, which is the life of bow and lyre (GA 39, 124). Bow and lyre signify a movement of striving apart internal to the being of each; and it is precisely this strife which holds each in its *Wesensbestand*, or way of unfolding. Πόλεμος, consequently, has to be understood as the movement of the internal differentiation and unity of a being.

In his *Parmenides* of 1942/43, Heidegger will claim that the space of Da-sein institutes the site of the difference of mortals and divinities, of the strife of concealment and unconcealment which Heidegger calls ἀλήθεια. This space is the πόλις itself as the site of the presencing and differentiation (πόλεμος) of being. The letter to Schmitt already anticipates this interpretation. As the site of the differentiation of being in beings, which allows beings to enter into the limit of their own, the πόλις entails a concept of political pluralism, and cannot in principle tend, as Harries claims, toward “totalitarianism” (327).

The πόλις is said to be the site and axis of the manifestation of the being of beings (GA 54, 133). Thus beings appear in the historical depth of the possibilities of their being, not merely in the actuality of their availability, as cut off from the unity of their temporal unfolding. The tree, to recall Emerson’s *Nature*, is not merely or even primarily the lumber of the timber merchant, but the tree of the poet and the sagas of a people. As lumber, the tree is defined in terms of the commodity exchange of the international market. Its rhythmic specificity dissolves,

dis-integrates, into the cycles of exchange; its being is integrated into the hyperworld of international finance. Conceived as an electronic function of this “world,” an entity loses the specificity of its delimiting gestalt. Whereas the *πόλις* allows the emergence of entities into their determinate gestalt, the integration of entities into the hyperworld subjects them to the limitless (*des Grenzenlosen*). Gestalt signifies the coming-to-stand of a being out of the rhythm proper to it. In this sense it presences (*west an*) (121). Gestalt implicates the strife of unconcealment in emergence and withdrawal – it incorporates the *λήθη* of self-reserving concealment to which the *πόλις* gives a site (133).

Heidegger avers that the *πόλις* cannot be identified with the Greek city-state, and still less is it identical with the modern State. For “the *πόλις* is as little something ‘political’ as space itself is something spatial” (142). Yet the *πόλις* is called the place of the presencing of the polity (133). In some sense the *πόλις* is the precondition of what we call city and State. Heidegger does not elaborate this point. We may suppose, however, that in order for a polity to correspond in its nature to the *πόλις* as the site of unconcealment it would have to allow beings to presence and take a stand in the gestalt proper to them. But insofar as the artwork, for example, under modern conditions, becomes a function of discourse and commerce, the State reveals its deracination from the *πόλις*. The technical availability of the word as “information” generates a hyperworld of functions on call which conceals emergence into being.

The *πόλις* is the site of the differentiation of being which founds the realm of the friend-enemy distinction as a historical and existential distinction. The socio-technical regime of liberalism disallows even this secondary distinction between friend and enemy.

Consequently it denies the possibility of political leadership and decision in the strict sense in favor of the discursive management of the polity. While Schmitt still insists on the power of leadership to decide, this appeal to power and rank, according to Heidegger, does not reach the central issue of what “decision” means: the differentiation of being as founded through the rank order of the possibilities of saving unconcealment through work, in leadership, sacrifice, thought and works of art (GA 65, sec. 173). The “political” in Schmitt’s sense is one, derivative way in which being differentiates itself and founds itself, in the rituals of rule and rank. The “concept of the political” implicates the historical, existential difference and mutual limitation of polities as the ground of political being. This difference, however, is derivative of the differentiation of being itself in its founded specificity, in the *πόλις*. The condition of the modern State as an inherently imperial construct is the collective subjectivity of modern man. Because, according to Heidegger, metaphysics also defines the concept of people (*das Volkhafte*) which, deriving from Herder, arose in opposition to the institution of the State, the *πόλις* does not derive from the notion of the “people.” Without Descartes, Herder’s concept of *Volk* is not thinkable (GA 54, 204). Neither the State, nor the *Volk* as founded in subjectiv-

ity can found the *πόλις*. In the crucial period leading up to 1933, moreover, Schmitt fails to develop sufficiently the twofold sense of *πόλεμος* as the origin of differentiated unity, that is, in respect to the identity of the individual being as well as in respect to the identity of the whole. I suggest that this is the philosophical reason why Schmitt could allow himself to be seduced by the idea of a unity of identity founded in the “substantiality” of race, and thus fell back into the metaphysics of subjectivity. The issue, therefore, remains an adequate articulation of the historicity of *Volk* and State.

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