

Sovereignty in Derrida:  
In Relation to Democracy, Friendship, and Animality

by

Jeizelle Ann B. Solitario

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## Abbreviations

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The following abbreviations are used for works by Jacques Derrida:

- A*            *Aporias: Dying—awaiting (one another at) the limits of truth.* Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- ARS*            “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides—A Conversation with Jacques Derrida.” Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, ed. Giovanna Borradori, 85-136. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- ATT*            *The Animal That Therefore I am.* Trans. David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.
- BSI*            *The Beast and the Sovereign.* Vol. I. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- BSII*            *The Beast and the Sovereign.* Vol. II. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- C*                *Counterpath: Traveling With Jacques Derrida.* With Catherine Malabou. Trans. David Wills. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Cir*            “Circumfession.” In *Jacques Derrida.* Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- D*                “Différance” In *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs.* Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- DN*            *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida.* Ed. John D. Caputo. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997.
- DP*            *The Death Penalty.* Vol. I. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- FK*            “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of “Religion” at the Limits of Reason Alone.” In *Acts of Religion.* Ed. Gil Anidjar. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- FL*            “Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation of Authority.”” In *Acts of Religion.* Ed. Gil Anidjar. New York: Routledge, 2002.

- FWT*      *For What Tomorrow...: A Dialogue.* With Élisabeth Roudinesco Trans. Jeff Fort. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- M*            *Monolingualism of the Other; Or, The Prosthesis of Origin.* Trans. Patrick Mensah. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- N*            *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971-2001.* Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- OG*          *Of Grammatology.* Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- P*            *Points...Interviews, 1974-1994.* Eds. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- PF*          *Politics of Friendship.* Trans. George Collins. New York: Verso, 1997.
- PG*          *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy.* Trans. Marian Hobson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- R*            *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason.* Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- SM*          *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International.* Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- TOH*        *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe.* Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault And Michael Naas. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- TPF*        "The Politics of Friendship." *The Journal of Philosophy* 85 no. 11 (1988): 632-644.

## Introduction

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Since his death in October 2004, scholars have attempted to interpret, analyze, and translate Jacques Derrida's works, the level of profundity of which could match only the life of the man behind the texts. Born in El Biar in Algeria on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1930, Jackie, as he was called, was the third child of Haïm Derrida and Georgette Safar (Peeters, *Derrida* 12). Paul Moise, the second child, died when he was three months old, just less than a year before Jackie was born (12). The effect of his older brother's death is suggested in "Circumfession" where Derrida speaks of being "a precocious but so vulnerable intruder, one mortal too many" who felt he was a replacement for Paul Moise (Cir 51-52). Later, in 1940, another death in the family, that of his younger brother Norbert (1938-40) may have become a source of Jackie's lifelong preoccupation with finitude—a preoccupation based on his childhood anxiety about surviving and living after the death of a loved one (C 23). Reflecting on his grief, Derrida writes, "I remember the day I saw my father, in 1940, in the garden, lighting a cigarette one week after the death of my little brother, Norbert: "But how can he still do that? Only a week ago he was sobbing!" (23).

Growing up in the early 1940s meant that Jackie lived through the systemic discrimination against Jews that plagued Europe and its colonies. Although the religious life of the Derrida family is rather inconspicuous, Haïm would take his children to synagogues in Algiers during high days and holidays (Peeters 15). Some memories of these holidays of his youth, reflected upon later by the philosopher Derrida, are collected in *Diaspora: Homelands in Exile*, a two-volume photographic text by Frederic Brenner, which includes a reference to Derrida family rituals on Friday evenings: "I see again the moment when, all care having been taken, my mother having lit the lamp, *la veilluse*, whose small flame floated on the surface of a cup of oil, one was suddenly no longer allowed to touch fire, to strike matches, especially to smoke, or even to let one's finger touch a light switch" (Derrida qtd. in Peeters 15).

Although he does not subscribe to what he calls the "external signs" of Judaism such as the mechanicity of bodily "gesticulations" in the synagogues, Derrida acknowledges in his writing that throughout his life he remained inscribed by Judaism, particularly its Algerian inflection (M 46-54). It is in this context that he relates his first experience of anti-Semitism which proved to be acute; when he was ten years old Jackie became one of the recipients of the

Vichy Government's policy against Jews in Algeria in which a series of *numerus clausus* prohibited Jews from practicing certain professions and from attending certain schools (Peeters 16-17). On 30 September 1941, a new *numerus clausus* of 14 percent applied to primary and secondary schools in Algeria which meant that most Jewish children would have to be excluded (17). In November of that same year, both René and Janine—Jackie's older brother and younger sister—were expelled (18). It was in October 1942 when the adolescent Jackie was called by the *surveillant général* of the Lycée Ben Aknoun to inform him that he had to leave the academy (19). The *numerus clausus* of 1941 has narrowed from 14 percent to 7 percent in 1942, expelling most Jewish students from schools in Algeria. This incident, along with the daily vexations he suffered from other children by virtue of his religion and ethnicity left a deep mark on Jackie (18).

Shortly after his expulsion from his previous school, and despite being enrolled in Lycée Maïmonide (also called Lycée Émile-Maupas), Jackie often skipped classes to escape the exclusively Jewish environs of the *lycée* which he greatly abhorred (Peeters 20). Many years later, in a French radio interview, Derrida reflected on the unhealed wounds rendered by the anti-Semitism that he has suffered; he, however, refused “to exaggerate the seriousness of the experience” out of respect for the European Jews who suffered under Nazism (19). Nonetheless, in a text he co-authored with Élisabeth Roudinesco, Derrida likewise admits that his time in the Lycée Maïmonide was the beginning of his incapacity to become a member of a community that fosters group identification—another key concept that Derrida would challenge in his long career as a scholar of *différance* (FWT 111). Analyzing the self-evidence of the concept of a pure origin that dominates the Western philosophical tradition, Derrida reveals the aporia—tension or excess—within the concept itself by noting the deferred movement of different forces that precedes and enables any presence—including that of the notion of subjectivity inscribed within the idea of a solid and fixed identity (A 11-20). This sense of identity, in turn, facilitates hierarchization and oppositional structures.

Although he was able to return to Lycée Ben Aknoun in 1943, it was quite a while before Derrida regained his passion for learning, having “acquired a taste for a freer life” that the chaos of the war in Europe has afforded the environs of the young Derrida (Peeters 23). Nonetheless, in 1947, despite what Benoît Peeters calls a “very hit-and-miss education” because of his numerous absences, teen-age Jackie was able to secure a slot in Lycée Émile-Félix-Gauthier which

prepared him for his entrance to Lycée Bugeaud in 1949, a *hypokhâgne* in Algiers where he first heard of Martin Heidegger, whose work, among others, particularly such as those by Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre, proved influential in Jackie's life as a thinker (31-33).

After his extensive training in the *hypokhâgne* and another three years of philosophy in Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, Derrida matriculated in the prestigious École Normale Supérieure (ENS) in France in October 1952 (Peeters 59). Choosing philosophy as his focus, he studied under instructors such as Louis Althusser and Georges Canguilhem, among others (63-64). Similarly, in between attending classes and socializing with fellow *normaliens*, Jackie wrote his *diplôme d'études supérieures* (Master's dissertation) on Edmund Husserl titled, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy* (1953-54) which was eventually published in 1990. According to Peeters, this dissertation provides a glimpse of Derrida's framework of "deconstruction" in that here he closely examines Husserl's phenomenology by questioning the latter's notion of genesis as an objective and autonomous foundation of essence and knowledge (68). To quote from *The Problem of Genesis*:

Starting out from an intentional psychologism, Husserl had believed at the beginning of his career that the objectivity of essences and the validity of any knowledge was founded on an empirical genesis—that is, here, a psychological one. It was from natural operations of a psychological subjectivity that the concepts and meanings of experience were engendered. As Brentano had taught, the intentionality of consciousness was only a psychological "character" of thought. This intentionality was not yet a transcendental foundation of objectivity. The return to the becoming of perception, already sketched out, was going in the direction of an empiricism that was quite classical.

But to explain the genesis of number and elementary logical concepts, this psychologism already had recourse to the a priori idea of an "object in general," a condition of possibility for empirical genesis itself. More, into the themes from psychologist constructivism there was mixed the theme of an originary clear evidence, presupposed by every subjective operation. A new working out of intentionality seemed necessary. (PG 1)

Derrida's problematization of concepts such as the notion of "origin" which he questions,



in one form or another, in his subsequent texts, is already determined in his Master's dissertation on Husserl (Peeters 69). In his letter addressed to Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy states that *The Problem of Genesis* does not indicate a young Derrida, "the one you'd like to catch out committing some youthful error" (Nancy qtd. in Peeters 69). For him, the Derrida that one finds in the dissertation is already the Derrida that one has always read in later texts: "He's already there, fully armed and helmeted like Athena"—a statement that perhaps alludes to Derrida's non-Cartesian approach to metaphysical concepts that is irreducible to certain teleological expectations (69).

Challenging oppositional logic early on, he questions *sui generis* concepts through "deconstruction"—a positive critique of philosophy as phallogocentrism (D 282). Nonetheless, despite its description as a strategy of questioning the truth of essence of beings, Derrida states that deconstruction is a "strategy without finality," a statement that connotes its commensurability with uncertainty and openness towards the future which, in contrast, metaphysics aims to calculate and to master (282).

Having passed the highly competitive *agrégation* in his second attempt, Jackie, in 1956, left the ENS "on a somewhat bitter note" (Peeters 79). In spring 1955, in his first attempt, Jackie "suffered the same acute anxiety as he had when trying for the *École*" (73). The exams, for Jackie, were "terrifying ordeals, times of anguish and exhaustion" that turned those years in the academy "into years of hell" (Derrida qtd. in Peeters 73). As a result of his physical and mental state, he consulted a doctor who prescribed him "a mixture of amphetamines and sleeping tablets," which made Jackie shake all over until he was forced "to leave the third written exam halfway through, handing in an unfinished paper" (73). As a result, according to Peeters, Jackie was able to pass the written part but was among those who failed the orals (73).

Suffering, yet again, from anxiety in the face of the *agrégation*, Jackie in 1956 "was on the verge of nervous breakdown (Peeters 78). However, this time, unlike his first attempt, he was able to pass both the written and oral parts of the test, albeit "far from flying colors" (78-79). Reflecting on his rather "mediocre success," Derrida wrote to his friend Michael Monory that it feels like "he had been allowed to pass somewhat reluctantly" (Derrida qtd. in Peeters 79). According to Peeters, Derrida would remember it all as a real time of suffering, and continued to bear something of a grudge towards the French university system, in which, throughout his life, he would feel an outcast" (79).

Shortly after his marriage to Marguerite Aucouturier in 1957, Derrida started his academic career as a teacher in Kolea, Algeria—a teaching post that his father obtained for him in lieu of the usual military service (Peeters 90). Two years later in 1959, at the conclusion of his teaching service, Derrida accepts a *lycée* post in Le Mans, after being disqualified from a more prestigious post in Sorbonne (103). Although he seems initially satisfied in Le Mans, teaching two classes for fifteen hours each week, Peeters notes that Derrida’s students “were not all that brilliant” and “a little rustic” in comparison to those in the Sorbonne (109). Discouraged by his new situation, Derrida experienced severe anxiety which he would later call his “big depression” (110).

It was in 1961, the year after his appointment as a lecturer in Sorbonne, that Derrida completed his Introduction to *The Origin of Geometry* (Peeters 119). Published under the authorship of Husserl, the name “Jacques Derrida” appears after the title as its translator which, according to Peeters, confirms that Derrida had finally abandoned the first name “Jackie” (127). In *Points...Interviews, 1974-1994*, Derrida relates that he changed his first name to Jacques when he started to publish, “finding that Jackie was not possible as the first name of an author” (*P* 343). To quote Derrida:

I changed my first name when I began to publish, at the moment I entered what is, in sum, the space of literary or philosophical legitimation, whose “good manners” I was practicing in my own way. [...] By choosing what was in some way to be sure, a semi-pseudonym but also very French, Christian, simple [name], I have erased more things than I could say in a few words (one would have to analyze the conditions in which a certain community—the Jewish community in Algeria—in the ‘30s sometimes chose American names, occasionally those of film stars or heroes, William, Jackie, and so forth). But I never would have changed my last name, Derrida, which I have always found to be quite beautiful [...] (*P* 343-344)

Peeters notes the “fundamental ambiguity” of *The Origin of Geometry*: whereas in its first pages Derrida simply enunciates his aim of recognizing and situating “one stage of Husserl’s thought,” Peeters argues that the more one goes deeper into its “very lengthy footnotes,” the more it appears that Derrida is not merely trying “to get as close to Husserl’s

intentions as possible” (Peeters 127). According to Peeters, Derrida’s analysis of *The Origin of Geometry* reveals that he aims to present Husserl’s philosophy as a whole, “if not to raise questions about the whole enterprise”—an allusion to Derrida’s subsequent work concerning *différance* and his problematization of origin and pure identity (127).

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Twelve years after his death, Derrida continues to haunt us; his thoughts and questions have become more significant in recent years with the rise of issues concerning politics, colonization, globalization, and immigration. In this regard, academic followers as well as critics launched their accounts on Derrida based on how they understood his works. Some, without bothering to study Derrida’s actual works considered him obscure, incoherent, or contradictory. An example might be Jonathan Kandell’s 2004 New York Times obituary titled “Jacques Derrida, Abstruse Theorist Dies at 74.” Many other actual scholars of his work have published analyses and studies that address his important contributions for the contemporary times such as Geoffrey Bennington’s *Not Half No End: Militantly Melancholic Essays in Memory of Jacques Derrida* published in 2010.

But what is this legacy? Does inheriting this legacy imply a straightforward acceptance of Derrida’s philosophy? Or does it call for the relentless criticism of his works? In order to answer this, scholars of all stripes endeavor to understand Derrida’s oeuvre—understanding but also interpreting his work in the process. For Michael Naas, studying Derrida’s texts also involves a “rereading [and a] rethinking,” an approach that is consistent with the late philosopher’s questioning of the oppositional logic that pervades Western philosophy (Naas 7). In questioning and thinking of other ways of interpreting the traces that Derrida left in his texts, we, the heirs, remain faithful to his legacy for it is only through a countersignature that we bear witness to Derrida’s injunction towards the singularity of the other (9). In other words, it is through our own attempt at interpreting, at questioning, of not sparing even Derrida’s oeuvre, that we inherit his legacy of reading between and beyond presence and identity. As such, inheriting Derrida’s texts is not merely an exercise in passive acceptance or thoughtless criticism; rather, it is a critical responsible response towards the work of an absolute other whose thoughts no one can master or replicate.

As a way of inheriting Derrida’s legacy, my thesis considers first of all his works on the

concept of sovereignty that underlies Western concept of democracy, both in the religious and political spheres. Secondly, my thesis relates the Western tradition's premise of sovereign knowledge and the right to sovereign force to its brutal treatment of animals particularly over the last two centuries. As the third aspect of my thesis, I relate Derrida's analysis of sovereignty to his work on racism suggesting that the same logic that hierarchizes humans over animals has been used to justify human versus human violence. Basing my research on primary texts such as *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005), *Politics of Friendship* (2005), *The Animal That Therefore I am* (2008), *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Volumes I (2009) and II (2011), and *The Death Penalty*, Volume I (2014), I discuss Derrida's study of the development of sovereignty in the canonical tradition and more importantly how sovereignty becomes accorded with power and unconditionality that goes beyond and against the law. In these texts, Derrida investigates the contradictions within sovereignty, calling into question the definition that traditional philosophy accords to it. To quote Derrida:

To confer sense or meaning on sovereignty, to justify it, to find a reason for it, is already to compromise its deciding exceptionality, to subject it to rules, to code a law, to some general law, to concepts. It is thus to divide it, to subject it to partitioning, to participation, to being shared. It is to take into account the part played by sovereignty. And to take that part or share into account is to turn sovereignty against itself, to compromise its immunity. This happens as soon as one speaks of it in order to give it or find in it some sense or meaning. But since this happens all the time, pure sovereignty does not exist; it is always in the process of positing itself by refuting itself, by denying or disavowing itself; it is always in the process of autoimmunizing itself. (R 101)

The concept of autoimmunity plays a significant role in Derrida's thinking of sovereignty. In *Rogues*, as Naas points out, Derrida questions the notion of sovereignty by calling attention to the question within the concept itself: if sovereignty is, indeed, "indivisible and unspeakable" as thinkers from Plato to Carl Schmitt attest, to define its meaning by "justifying and providing reason for itself," is then to open itself "to law and to language, to the counter-sovereignty of the other, and so [it] begins to undo itself, to compromise or autoimmunize itself" (Naas 127). Sovereignty, as a concept in Western thought, is construed in

the theological image of a monotheistic God who is exceptional in his hyper-sovereignty and in his indivisible power—attributes that canonical philosophers transfer to the human sovereign by the use of textual techniques or figurative representations. However, following Derrida’s analysis of the movement of *différance* within any self-evident concepts, sovereignty—in Derrida’s analysis—has an autoimmune structure that threatens itself. Indivisible yet transferrable, unspeakable in its transcendence yet in need of words to explain and justify its excess of power, the concept of sovereignty is composed of non-homogeneous elements that threaten yet support each other. In other words, Derrida puts into question seemingly self-evident concepts such as sovereignty, the structure of which betrays the heterogeneity of what is thought to be a solid and homogeneous identity.

Derrida explores the structure of sovereignty further in relation to his analysis of democracy. In *Rogues* as well as in *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida maintains that democracy inexorably depends on the concept of sovereignty—an unlikely partnership that demonstrates the autoimmunity at work within the system. In other words, despite what the name implies, democracy involves the presupposition of the sovereignty and autonomy of every individual who—and this is where the problem within democracy lies according to Derrida—nonetheless participates in democracy by the sharing of this power, a notion that can be traced back to the concept of fraternity in Aristotelian philosophy. In this regard, in Chapter One, I follow Derrida’s genealogical study of the Western concept of sovereignty beginning with his discussion in *Politics*, a text in which Aristotle determines human speech as the basis of knowledge which opens the concept of the interpretation of the *logos* in terms of capacity or power that is exclusive to humans.

Similarly in this first chapter, I discuss how the notion of sovereignty is intertwined with theology. In *Metaphysics*, for instance, Aristotle speaks of the sovereign authority of Zeus who “declares itself by declaring the One, and the sovereignty of the One, of the One and Only, above and beyond the dispersion of the plural” (R 16). The Greek mythological drama between gods who reign as sovereigns only by putting an end to the other inaugurates the development of classical sovereignty which is centered on fraternity, patriarchy, and masculinity—a framework that according to Derrida leads to a politics of exclusion that operates even in democracy that is said to be founded upon equality (R 17).

Following the previous chapter’s discussion of the theological characteristic of

sovereignty, in Chapter Two I discuss Derrida's study of the Western theorizing of friendship in *Politics of Friendship*. Here, I follow Derrida's study of the relationship between democracy and sovereignty based on the Western tradition's interpretation of friendship as a relationship based on ipseity, masculinity, and reciprocity. After a survey of the dominant reading of philosophers from Plato to Schmitt on the parenthesis, "O my friends, there is no friend," I discuss Derrida's exploration of the aporia within the canonical interpretation and his related questioning of the logocentrism of the Western tradition. Also, in this chapter, I follow Derrida's analysis of the tradition's influence on the contemporary concept of democracy in its injunction towards a community based on similarities—a characteristic that is contrary to what Derrida calls "democracy-to-come," which acknowledges the *singularity* of the absolute other that is beyond the calculation and mastery of any human sovereign.

Continuing on with his discussion of friendship vis-à-vis politics, in Chapter Three I explore Derrida's thoughts on the Western philosophical tradition's influence on the contemporary concept of democracy in its injunction towards a community based on similarities. For Derrida, a community based on sameness is contrary to what he calls "democracy-to-come," which acknowledges the singularity of the absolute other that is beyond the calculation and mastery of any human sovereign. Basing this chapter on *Rogues*, I study Derrida's argument on the autoimmunity of the concept of democracy; for Derrida, democracy *as such* is a fiction because it harbors within itself two aporetic concepts: sovereignty implies exclusivity, self-sameness, and absolute power whereas equality affirms the "truth of the other" which implies heterogeneity and a sharing of power (*R* 127). In arguing for the inherent emptiness of the concept, Derrida proposes that democracy, as the Western tradition has defined it, is capable of change and is perfectible; in doing so, I demonstrate Derrida's attempt to rethink democracy in terms of unconditionality that implies that democracy is always "to-come" not because there is an ideal situation to be reached in the future but because the identity of democracy is a non-identity that challenges every *as such* accorded to it.

In Chapter Four, I base my analysis largely on Derrida's analysis of Martin Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Volumes I and II. My primary interest in this chapter concerns the link between the Western concept of sovereignty and the disenfranchisement of animals historically and in contemporary ethics and philosophy. Central to this chapter is the analysis of the man/animal binary that is dominant in the Western

tradition beginning with Aristotle. This binary, having hinged itself to the idea of the *logos* as proper to, and properly human, implies that “the animal” is inherently inferior to humans by its lack of speech, hence *logos*. Derrida’s analysis of the contradictions within the binary system suggests that humans do not necessarily possess the characteristics that they say render them sovereign over animals. Analyzing the history of the oppositional framework between humans and animals, Derrida questions the traditional interpretation of power as a force exclusive only to the human by pointing out the limits of human mastery and knowledge in the face of a violent force that is beyond control or calculation.

### **Genealogy as a Method of Study**

Tracing the history of Western thinking on sovereignty involves an exercise of memory that considers not only the objective facts or the logical and linear series of events. Human elements such as individual feelings and proclivities that elude rationality have their own consequences that must be considered and analyzed as possible contributors to a historical event—a possibility that is not analyzed in itself in the context of canonical historical analysis. Dismissing factors such as random occurrences in history in favor of solid, linear events that fit a certain narrative does not offer a rethinking of the concept of sovereignty; rather, it perpetuates the phantasm that events are reducible to an essential meaning that ultimately serves a metaphysical ideal (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 381).

In contrast to the traditional historical approach that extols objectivity and universality, a genealogical study on Western sovereignty involves an approach that does away with the search for the concept’s pure origin. Instead of looking farther back in time to identify a single, unified origin as a foundation for later history, genealogy, or what Foucault calls “historical sense,” studies the descent (*Herkunft*), “the beginning—numberless beginnings, whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by a historical eye” (Foucault 374). In examining *Herkunft*, the genealogist discovers accidents, biases, and clashes that do not propose continuity through history but those which suggest fissures and differences that destabilize the phantasm of unified origin often seen in traditional study of history (374-75).

As such, genealogy is suspicious of objectivity. According to Foucault:

[Objectivity] is only possible, however, because of its belief in eternal truth, the

immortality of the soul, and the nature of consciousness as always identical to itself. Once the historical sense is mastered by a suprahistorical perspective, metaphysics can bend it to its own purpose, and, by aligning it to the demands of objective science, it can impose its own “Egyptianism.” On the other hand, the historical sense can evade metaphysics and become privileged instrument of genealogy if it refuses the certainty of absolutes. Given this, it corresponds to the acuity of a glance that distinguishes, separates, and disperses; that is capable of liberating divergence—the kind of dissociating view that is capable of decomposing itself, capable of shattering the unity of man’s being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of his past. (Foucault 379)

Hence, the genealogical approach to history involves the relinquishment of the human propensity to master the past through which the present is validated. This mastery is closely linked with what Foucault calls “constants”—stable and predictable elements in history that traditional historians recognize as evidence of development and continuity, logical causes that have logical effects (Foucault 380). Nonetheless, in focusing on hard facts and objective data, traditional history ignores feelings and sentiments—forces that control history towards directions that are hardly linear or progressive (379-80). For Foucault, forces such as these are in constant battle with each other, giving rise to singular events that portray the rise and fall of powers, as well as the domination between different forces that resist any teleological or metaphysical control (381). In other words, genealogy, unlike traditional history, does not focus on objective facts alone such as “a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle;” rather, it also looks at forces behind events and the ways in which a force is subdued by another (381). Thus, instead of treating a series of events as a totality, genealogy acknowledges the singularity of events regardless of its seemingly random and illogical appearance.

As such, genealogy recognizes that traditional history’s propensity to objectivity is a result of powers working against powers: the historian’s unfeeling detachment towards what he studies is none other than the echo of Socratic propensity to ideals that are ungraspable to mere mortals (Foucault 383). To Foucault, such historians, convinced of their sovereign mastery over the workings of history, have decided to do away with the “false” longing for the past. By demonstrating, through the framework of objectivity, that the past is nothing more than



“pettiness, evil, and misfortune,” traditional history asserts that the present is inherently superior to what precedes it in that the former is the culmination of what has transpired in the latter (383). This sense of sovereignty, according to Foucault, is hiding “under the cloak of universals” in which the historian “invokes objectivity, the accuracy of facts, and the permanence of the past” (383). In so doing, the traditional historian not only forgets that facts are products of contesting forces, but that he, too, is bringing in his own individuality to his research (383). In his refusal to acknowledge his own presence and contribution to history, the historian is caught in the phantasm of possessing the power that is thought to have emerged from his capacity to restrain his senseless subjectivity and illogical sentiments (384). Having “consciously” chosen objectivity over his individual will, the historian now believes that he has gained mastery over the events in history so much so that “he becomes a guide to the inevitable law of a superior will” (384). In this manner, objectivity becomes the historian’s tool; a mask that he wears to propagate his sovereignty via the imposition of his universal yet subjective interpretation of events.

Extending the Foucauldian treatment of history, Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, relates the problem of historical totality with the structure of the text by investigating Western philosophy’s prioritization of the signified over the signifier (*OG* 3). Derrida states that, in what he calls “the epoch of the *logos*,” writing becomes “a fallen secondarity” in regard to the *phonè* or speech that is said to be in close proximity to the pure and non-material mind, the *logos* (7-14). For Derrida, the history of Western philosophy is inscribed within a metaphysico-theological tradition that assigns positive valuation to the signified, which is often identified in canonical texts as the truth—“the holy voice of nature that merges with the divine”—that resides in the interiority of the subject (13-18). This truth, which is beyond any material signification, is said to be expressed perfectly through speech viewed by tradition as “the unique experience of the signified producing itself spontaneously, from within the self, and nevertheless as signified concept, in the element of ideality or universality” (20). In other words, it is through the speech’s unmediated proximity to the truth found in the interiority of one’s consciousness that Western philosophy accords absolute value to the spoken over the written language (20).

Not unlike the Foucauldian non-linear study of history, Derrida’s framework studies the history of logocentrism in Western tradition through its analysis of the ideal/material, mind/body logic that pervades its philosophy. Recognizing that even Friedrich Nietzsche’s attempt for a

non-metaphysical interpretation of Western metaphysics is still inscribed within the logocentric determination of a totalizing truth, Derrida challenges self-evident concepts by working within the system itself and by following the implications of its logocentrism to its absolute limit (*OG* 19-22). Hence, in this context, Derrida analyzes the signified/signifier binary through his study of the construed hierarchical opposition between the *phonē* and the written word. Utilizing the Heideggerian determination of truth as beyond language but nonetheless identified historically through the *logos*, Derrida concludes that the essence or truth of being is “never simply and rigorously a signified,” demolishing the *sui generis* speech/writing binary that pervades Western philosophy (21-23).

### **Interpretation as Inheritance**

Analyzing the question on inheritance that Derrida raises in one of his last interviews in the spring of 2004 Naas stresses that the Derridean affirmation of the singularity of any event renders inheritance and inheriting beyond the parameters of absolute knowledge and certainty (8). In other words, being an heir to Derrida’s legacy does not involve a mere replication of his thinking; rather the inheritance of his legacy involves the acknowledgment of the absolute singularity of the other which implies an invention, an attempt to a countersignature that acknowledges the heir’s absolute otherness (Naas 9). Thus, it is only through one’s own writing that one becomes an heir to Derrida’s legacy of questioning absolute concepts—a gesture that may or may not lead to the heir’s success, but a gesture, nonetheless, that opens up the discussion geared towards the unknown future.

In accordance to the call towards inheritance I henceforth write a thesis that, on the one hand follows Derrida’s thinking on human sovereignty and its implication in issues pertaining to “the animal,” and on the other, attempts its application on the socio-political issue concerning Western democracy. Reflecting on Derrida’s thinking of the other in terms of irreducibility and singularity, I henceforth attempt to write without the phantasm of perfecting or repeating Derrida’s thoughts which I recognize are his and his alone; rather, I endeavor to inherit his legacy not by hindering my own thoughts but by allowing it to question and to look for new ways through which the thinking of unconditionality without sovereignty is made possible. This is, in other words, a work of inheritance that borrows thoughts as much as it develops ideas from a past that is aimed towards the future that holds limitless and incalculable possibilities of

thinking and re-thinking established concepts.

Finally, my attempt to inherit Derrida's legacy is likewise in conjunction with the idea of survival—of mourning the death of an absolute other whose singularity is still palpable in academic circles, in contemporary texts and media. Despite being a Derridean preoccupation, surviving loss—or in other words, attempting to negotiate the relationship between life and death—is each individual's experience of the other, an experience of “being with” that challenges the notion of hubristic self-sufficiency and sovereignty commonly seen in contemporary society.

However it is also vital to remember that being with the other is also an experience of the other's absolute difference that is irreducible to any categorization. In this sense, inheriting Derrida's legacy of absolute singularity paradoxically involves the recognition that human life is a constant being with the other, a relationship that inspires a re-thinking that considers and opens the possibility of a togetherness that respects alterity and difference.

## Chapter One: The Genealogy of Sovereignty

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In his 1999-2000 seminar at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS) in Paris, Jacques Derrida opens his lecture on the death penalty and its relation to sovereign power by reflecting on the different techniques of putting to death of a criminal—from tortures that render the worst brutality, to what he calls “the most sublimely mechanized torture[s]” that are refined even in their perversity (*DP* 2). However, regardless of the apparatus or techniques employed to execute a condemned criminal, the death penalty, is always a public event; for Derrida, it is a theatrical machinery that requires the presence of an audience so that they can witness and confirm the exceptional power of the sovereign over the life and death of his subjects (2).

Recalling the putting to death of “great condemned ones” in the history of Greek-Christian West such as Socrates, Jesus, Hallaj (922 CE), and Joan of Arc (1431 CE), Derrida discusses the theologico-political nature of the death penalty via the articulation of the theological basis of condemnation in these cases; in each of these cases, Derrida suggests that the accusation against the criminal is focused on his or her blasphemous obedience to a counter-sovereign that threatens the hegemony of the state power (*DP* 21-27). In tracing the trajectory of the death penalty in Western history via the narratives of the putting to death of these figures, Derrida recognizes the relationship of theology and politics in the conceptualization and development of sovereignty even as he presents a rethinking of its history in ways that put into question the meaning of the concept itself.

Following Derrida’s discussions in texts such as *The Death Penalty*, Volume I (*DP*) and *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Volume I (*BSI*) this chapter concerns itself with the concept of sovereignty, particularly its link with Graeco-Abrahamic religions and its development in Western philosophical thought. Moreover, in accordance with the genealogical framework that Derrida espouses in his texts, I explore the development of the concept in the context of political events such as the French Revolution that maintains classical sovereignty even as it ends the French monarchy through the decapitation of its king. In identifying how sovereignty has been translated, interpreted, and appropriated by thinkers who themselves are inscribed within historical and political contexts, I aim to respond to Derrida’s challenge to rethink the self-evident analogies between God, man, and beast that underlie the logocentric, hence

anthropocentric, concepts of sovereignty within the contemporary juridico-political systems.

### **The *Logos* as What is Proper to Man**

Derrida ends his March 27<sup>th</sup> 2002 lecture session on sovereignty through a discussion of Aristotle (b. 384/3 BCE) and his contribution to contemporary Western philosophical discourse. Having analyzed the different translations and interpretations of contemporary thinkers that uphold and maintain the Western canon, Derrida concludes that Aristotle opened the age old discussion on sovereignty through his articulation of the concept of the *logos*—the *logon ekhon*—that pertains to the unique human capacity of speech which renders man a political animal (*BSI* 343). To quote the pertinent passages in *Politics*:

When several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life. And therefore, if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end. For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best.

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like ‘Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one,’ whom Homer denounces—the natural outcast is forthwith a lover of war; he may be compared to an isolated piece at draughts.

Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animal is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the

association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state. (*Politics* 1252b 30-1253a 15)

Aristotle's oft quoted, "man is a political animal," forms a system of thought that characterizes Western political sovereignty—a thinking that is oriented towards the primacy of man over other beings by virtue of the *logos* usually translated and understood as language and speech. This orientation, at once anthropocentric and logocentric, gives rise to analogies that reduce complex differences into a system of simple binaries often encountered in Western philosophical discourse: man/animal, man/woman, mind/body, beast/sovereign, law/nature, among others (*BSI* 14-20). Although some contemporary thinkers, particularly Derrida, raise important questions concerning the thinking of dualism in philosophy, this framework—which accords a higher value on the upper element in the binary—remains the underlying logic in modern ethics, particularly in its conception and treatment of the rights of nonhuman animals (See for example, Dawne McCance, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction* 57-69).

For his part, Derrida investigates the trajectory of this dominant interpretation of *logos* in his final seminar in 2001-2003 titled *The Beast and the Sovereign*, published posthumously in two volumes in 2009 and 2010. Through a genealogical study of texts that span from Jean Bodin to Michel de Montaigne to Carl Schmitt, from René Descartes to Jacques Lacan to Martin Heidegger, *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminars investigate the history of the concept of sovereignty as it puts into question the ways in which it is translated and interpreted through time. In doing so, Derrida underlines the delicate and deconstructible structure of the seemingly self-evident concept of sovereignty as he confirms its ties with the onto-theological thinking of the immortality of the divine sovereign (*BSI* 46).

A series of interpretations follows Aristotle's pronouncement in *Politics* concerning the *logos* along with its consequences in the thinking of man as a political animal in the Western juridico-political tradition. Although Derrida states that the history of the concept of sovereignty in the West is relatively short, he nonetheless affirms its complexity as he reflects on its history's close relationship with the history of the law (*BSI* 16). Picking up from Schmitt's definition of sovereignty as an exception, which denotes "a certain power to give, to make, but also to suspend the law," Derrida asks whether or not the structure of sovereignty is "also to be found in the laws that organize the hierarchized relations of authority, hegemony, force, power, power of

life and death,” in all life forms (16). If indeed, according to Derrida, the history of classical concept of sovereignty and laws are closely linked to each other, it is likewise possible to say that the human sovereign “is above the human [who] respects nothing, scorns the law, [and] immediately situates himself above the law, at a distance from the law” (16-17). Similar to the divine, the sovereign is a “being-outside-the-law” in that he is “at a distant from or above the laws” which implies non-respect for the law as he is the Law as well as its origin and guarantor (16-17). Such recourse to the “beyond” guarantees that the sovereign is outside the law—hence, beyond what is proper to man—as he approximates the power of divine omnipotence which grounds the theological nature of the concept of sovereignty (16).

In this regard, the Western interpretation of sovereignty is inscribed within a system of power—of violent force—that is modeled after the hyper-sovereign force of a divine who has the power over the life or death of mortals. Here is where the Aristotelian passages mentioned above proves significant: while the *logos* ensures that man has the language and speech to participate in the life at the *polis*, the *logos* likewise gives them access to morality—to the knowledge of what is “good and evil,” and to what is “just and unjust” (*Politics*, 1253a 15). In this way, as I understand it, Aristotle not only accords to man the capacity to speak but also the capacity to judge between values, which according to him creates a society composed of “a family and a state” (1253a 15). In choosing what is lawful and just, the virtuous man creates a political society that is founded on principles of law and order (1253a 35). Hence, as a political animal (*zōon politikon*), man is naturally inclined to politics; to be unable to take part in it or to has no need of it because one is complete unto himself is, according to Aristotle, to “be either a beast or a god” (1253a 28-29). This intermediacy of man between god and beast is explored in *The Beast and the Sovereign* Vol. I. Here, Derrida identifies the tension inherent in the Aristotelian schema: on the one hand, man believes himself sovereign over “the beast that he masters, enslaves, dominates, domesticates, or kills,” but on the other hand, the human sovereign is also represented in literature in terms of animality and/or bestiality, making the claim for human sovereignty aporetic hence problematic (25-26).

### **The Legacy of Aristotle: The Human Sovereign as the Divine**

From this aporetic figuration follows a whole corpus of Western tradition that interprets the political sovereign as both animal and human but at the same time divine (*BSI* 26). Derrida traces

the canonical inclination to compare man to God to what he calls the “prosthetic logic of supplement” found in Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651) (26). In this text, Hobbes identifies man’s attempt to create the Leviathan (*civitas*) as an imitation of God in his power to create and govern the world (*Leviathan*, Introduction, para. 1). Whereas nature is the art of God through which he creates “the most excellent work” which is man, man—by virtue of his likeness to the Divine—imitates this art by creating the state or the commonwealth which Hobbes called the Leviathan or the artificial man (*Lev.*, Intro., 1). Although the Leviathan is prosthetic, Hobbes states that it is “of greater stature and strength than the natural,” because it functions to protect and defend what is natural (*Lev.*, Intro., 1).

Referring to this introductory passage, Derrida goes on to examine the frontispiece of the text which depicts the Leviathan as a “gigantic and monstrous man” whose figure literally dominates the state (*BSI* 27). The Leviathan is further described in the illustration through an inscription from the book of Job (41:24) which in its original Latin “Non est potestas super terram quae comparetur ei” translates to “Upon earth there is not his like.” From *Leviathan’s* appropriation of the biblical passage follows Derrida’s further analyses of the theological import of Hobbes’ interpretation of sovereignty—this albeit the latter’s claim of sovereignty’s artificiality that sets it apart from its theological source.

Beginning the first paragraph of the *Leviathan*, Hobbes, according to Derrida, makes it known that he intends to depart from Aristotle’s concept of nature or essence by arguing that the *civitas* is not natural to man but a mere fabrication that attempts to imitate the most excellent art of God which is man (*BSI* 26). Hobbes further attempts to up the ante of his imagined departure from Aristotle by emphasizing that the state is solely the creation and identity of man which implies that man has complete mastery over his own nature that allows him to choose to create a state (27). Unlike the Aristotelian concept of man whose nature designates him as a political animal, Hobbes identifies human political sovereignty as a prosthesis that is produced solely by man making his political power absolute (27). In asserting as such, according to Derrida, Hobbes suggests that sovereignty is not natural—it is historical and mortal, hence perfectible (27).

However, Derrida maintains that despite its artificial and mechanical property, Hobbes’ political discourse is “vitalist, organist, finalist, *and* mechanist” which betrays Hobbes’ adherence to the Aristotelian logic of natural order that the former claims to deconstruct (26-28). Similar to the human anatomy, the structure of the Leviathan is composed of parts that are



necessary for its proper maintenance—an analogy which Hobbes writes in detail in the opening passage of his text:

For by art is created the great Leviathan called a COMMONWEALTH, or state (in Latin, *civitas*), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defense it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body. The magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution [are] artificial joints. Reward and punishment (by which fastened to the seat of sovereignty, every joint and member is moved to perform his duty) are the nerves that do the same in the body natural. The wealth and riches of all particular members are the strength. *Salus populi* (the people's safety) [is] its business. Counsellors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory. Equity and laws [are] an artificial reason and will. Concord [is] health. Sedition [is] sickness. And civil war [is] death. Lastly, the pacts and covenants by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the let us make man, pronounced by God in the Creation. (*Lev.*, Intro., 1; emphasis and correction added by editor)

This analogy thus serves as the foundation through which Hobbes argues for God's exclusion from the state—an echo of the Aristotelian concept of nature which Hobbes attempts to reject in his discourse of the political. Accordingly, Derrida interprets the mimetic description of the Leviathan as an indication of its humanist, anthropologist, and theological structure (*BSI* 47). For Derrida, the absolute sovereignty of the modern state—which Hobbes relates to its artificiality—is nonetheless grounded “in a profound ontotheology, or even in religion,” the very concepts that Hobbes seeks to eschew in his study of politics (47).

As further evidence for his interpretation, Derrida refers to the concept of convention or contract which Hobbes elucidates in Chapter XVIII of *Leviathan*. Similar to the Aristotelian *logos*, Hobbes' idea of the covenant requires language that is proper to man, which thereby excludes God and animals from participating in politics (*BSI* 50-55). As such, by virtue of the *logos*, Hobbes denies any kind of immediate agreement between God and man, stating that it is only through God's lieutenants that his supernatural revelations are revealed to man (*Lev.*, XIV,

69). These mediators, according to Hobbes, represent the authority of God which renders man obedient only towards the sovereign state (*Lev.*, XVIII, 89).

Hence, Derrida contends that despite its avowed departure from theology, the Hobbesian secularization “remains essentially attached by the skein of a double umbilical cord” to theology: on the one hand, Derrida notes the analogy of divine art and human art right at the beginning of *Leviathan*, which makes God’s art or nature the model of the state; and on the other, Hobbes’ logic of mediation recalls the Judeo-Christian concept of the representation of God via human intermediaries such as Moses, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (53). For Derrida, the Hobbesian concept of God’s sovereign lieutenants implies that the proper place of human sovereignty is “that of an authority that is subject, subjected, submitted to, and underlying divine sovereignty,” rendering the human sovereign an absolute subject to a more sovereign other (53-54).

Notwithstanding Hobbes’ analogical attempt to conceive of sovereignty as a purely human phenomenon without recourse to a previous philosopher other than Aristotle, Derrida argues that the thinking of sovereignty that endeavors to depart from its divine model is already present in Jean Bodin’s *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1583). Predating *Leviathan* by almost a hundred years, the *Six Books*, particularly its chapter titled “On Sovereignty,” defines sovereignty in terms of the absolute power of the state in different languages: from Latin (*maiestas*), Greek (*akra exousia*, *kurion arche*, and *kurion politeuma*), Italian (*signoria*), to the Hebrew (*tomech shévet*) (*Six Books*, Chapter VIII, par. 345). Notwithstanding the implication of absolute sovereignty that these translations engender, Derrida notes the resemblance between Hobbes’ and Bodin’s concept of the sovereign in that they both built human sovereignty based on the divine model that ensures that “the sovereign remains the image of God” (*BSI* 48). Moreover, in the same chapter of the *Six Books*, Bodin also states that the absolute sovereign “recognizes nothing after God, that is greater than himself” making his claim of absolute sovereignty as contradictory as that of Hobbes who precedes him.

Another of Bodin’s significant influence to Hobbes and to other thinkers of sovereignty such as Carl Schmitt is the concept of the “marks of sovereignty” that he mentions at the end of *Six Books* (*BSI* 48). Quoting and analyzing Étienne Balibar’s article on Bodin titled “Prolégomènes à la souveraineté: la frontière, l’État, le peuple” (2000), Derrida states that Bodin’s “marks of the sovereign” indicates the exceptionality of the sovereign that “authorizes him to suspend right [that] place[s] him above the law that he embodies” (Balibar qtd. in *BSI* 48).

In opposition to Balibar who accuses Schmitt of “distorting the sense of Bodin’s construction,” Derrida argues that Schmitt’s theory on exceptionality is consistent with Bodin’s treatment of the concept of exception that involves going beyond the norm (49). For Derrida, classical sovereignty is indissociable from exceptionality in that the sovereign suspends norms and rights that renders him outside and even beyond the law—a position that is akin to the status of gods or beasts (49-50). Hence, despite Bodin’s and Hobbes’ claim of an absolute sovereignty that excludes man’s convention to God and to beast, Derrida underlines the aporia within the concept, arguing that the anthropocentric formulation of sovereignty denotes that the human sovereign is a sovereign subjected to and modeled after the divine, even as it “excludes from the political everything that is not proper to man” (50).

Notwithstanding their nuanced interpretations of the Aristotelian view of the nature of the *polis*, thinkers of classical sovereignty uphold the anthropocentric structure of the state by maintaining a division, albeit imaginary, between those that are outside or beyond the realm of the law and those who are subjects of the law. Based on capacities enabled by the *logos*, the history of Western politics is dominated by the whole logic of defining what is proper to man as opposed to what is proper to God or to the animal. Since to discuss sovereignty is to discuss the law, studying the genealogy of sovereignty via the *logos* further reveals the anthropocentrism inherent in politics particularly in the realm of contemporary ethics (*BSI* 43).

### **Cartesian Cogito: “I think therefore I am”**

While Aristotle’s *Politics*—or a certain reading of it— becomes the reference through which the Western thinking of politics developed, René Descartes’ *Discourse on Method* (1637) provides a systematic explanation on what is proper to man based on the concept of the *logos*. Abandoning the study of philosophy and theology, Descartes vows to tear down the old foundations of knowledge by ridding himself of claims that allow even the least of doubts, considering them as “no more true than the illusions” of dreams when one is asleep (Descartes 18). In other words, Descartes doubts all forms of knowledge that do not pass through the rigorous examination of the mind—*his* mind—which eventually leads him to conclude that everything must be false (18). However, despite the dubitable nature of all knowledge, Descartes realizes that he can be certain of at least one thing: that he, the thing that thinks, exist—the *Cogito ergo sum* that later defines man’s sovereignty over other beings that do not share his capacity to think.

Concomitant to the certainty of his *cogito* is Descartes' notion that the "I" or the soul, is disembodied (Descartes 19). For Descartes, the "I" "is distinct from, and is even easier to know than the body," adding that "even if there were no body at all, [the "I"] would not cease to be all that it is" (19). From this thinking emerges a clear elucidation of the mind/body binary that views the mind—or the capacity to reason—to be the domain of man, and the body as a mere mechanical structure that is associated with "mindless" animals. This belief holds throughout the history of Western philosophy despite the fact that both humans and animals have mechanical bodies as indicated by the Cartesian formula (31).

It is also through the context of dualism that Descartes constructs his two-fold argument concerning the inferiority of body machines (i.e. the animal) vis-à-vis the mind (man). In Part Five of *Discourse*, Descartes states that

[I]f there were any such machines that bore a resemblance to our bodies and imitated our actions as far as this is practically feasible, we would always have two very certain means of recognizing that they were not at all, for that reason, true men. The first is that they could never use words or other signs, or put them together as we do in order to declare our thoughts. For one can well conceive of a machine being so made that it utters words, and even that it utters words appropriate to the bodily actions that will cause some change in its organs (such as, if one touches it in a certain place, it asks what one wants to say to it, or if in another place, it cries out that one is hurting it, and the like). But it could not arrange its words differently so as to *respond* to the sense of all that will be said in its presence, as even the dullest men can do. The second means is that, although they might perform many tasks very well or perhaps better than any of us, such machines would inevitably fail in other tasks; by this means one would discover that they were acting not through knowledge but only through the disposition of their organs [...] (Descartes 32; emphasis mine)

Thus, regardless of his avowed misgivings on the nature of traditional philosophical discourse, Descartes remains a classicist in his argument concerning the *logos* as proper to man. If, on the one hand, thinkers such as Bodin and Hobbes relate law and convention to man's capacity to respond, Descartes, on the other hand, provides a systematic explanation of this

human capacity by grounding it on man's innate capacity to think (Descartes 32). For Descartes, animals cannot respond not because they "have less reason than men but that they have none at all" (32). In affirming as such, Descartes furthers his argument on the primacy of mind over the body—hence of man over the animal—by stating that the soul (or the mind) is rational and has feelings and appetites, which is in direct contrast to the body that is mechanical, therefore unable to experience "real speech [or] real pain" (McCance, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*, 49).

### **Jacques Lacan: The Beast Lacks the Superego**

In addition to its influence in the use of animal in scientific experimentations, Descartes' anthropocentric logic likewise finds its way into the ethical discourse of Jacques Lacan who defines man in relation "to the Law (with a capital L)" (*BSI* 102). A professed Cartesian, Lacan furthers the discussion on what is proper to man: for him, man's capacity to experience the Law, and his possession of the superego so as to freely commit a crime through his transgression of the Law renders man distinct from the animal (102). Since the Cartesian beast is inherently incapable of thinking, the animal, according to Lacan, is ignorant of the Law which impedes it from transgressing it (102). In other words, by virtue of the *logos*, Law and Crime are proper to man, an argument that he makes in his analysis of Sigmund Freud's concept of the superego in the latter's text titled *Totem and Taboo* (1912). For him, Freud's notion of the "first situation"—crime in the form of incest and parricide—"sustained everything right down to the very form of the individual—not only in his value to the other but in his erection for himself" (Lacan, "A Theoretical Introduction to the Functions of Psychoanalysis in Criminology," 106). It is thus from this "primordial crime" that Lacan argues for the emergence of the Law and the superego that is indissociable from it (106).

Although Lacan grounds his argument on the animal's lack of "I" or ego, he furthers this Cartesian formula by claiming that not only the beast lacks the "I" but that it also lacks the superego (*BSI* 103). For Lacan, the superego which "is the guardian of the law [...] can also be delinquent, that there can be felony and crime of the super ego itself" which implies a rejection of concepts thought to characterize humans such as drives and criminal instincts, associating them instead to the mechanicity of animals (103). Providing his own interpretation of Freudian texts, Lacan claims that psychoanalysis rejects the view that there is an innate or, in other words,

a genetic wiring of instincts that predisposes man towards criminality—this despite the Freudian theory of instincts or drives (*Triebe*) that clearly states otherwise (104).

Nonetheless, for Derrida, Lacan's interpretation of the unconscious implies that man possesses freedom by virtue of his relation to the law, whereas the animal is limited to the fixity of the innate (*BSI* 104). However, Derrida qualifies this by stating that Lacan does not fully reject the presence of animality in man; rather, Lacan claims that "crime, cruelty, and ferocity do not come from instinct, [and that] they transcend animality" (104). For Lacan, humans commit crimes not because they are being ruled over by their instincts, but because Crime and Law are essentially proper to man. To quote Lacan:

Let us note first the critique to which it is necessary to submit the confused idea that many decent people endorse: that crime involves an eruption of "instincts" that breaks down the "barrier" constituted by the moral forces of intimidation [...]

But if instinct does, in fact, signify man's indisputable animal nature, it is not at all clear why this animal nature should be less docile when it is embodied in a reasonable being. The form of the adage, *homo homini lupus*, deceives us as to its meaning, and Baltasar Gracián, in a chapter of his *Criticon* (*The Critick*), constructs a fable in which he shows what the moralist tradition means when it says that man's ferocity towards his semblable exceeds everything animals are capable of, and that carnivores themselves recoil in horror at the threat man poses to nature as a whole.

But this very cruelty implies humanity. It targets a semblable, even in [cases in which the cruelty more directly targets] a being from another species. Nothing has sounded more deeply than psychoanalysis the equivalence of self and other in lived experience which we are alerted by Love's moving appeal—it is yourself that you are striking—and by the Mind's icy deduction: it is in the fight to the death for pure prestige that man wins recognition from man. (Lacan, "A Theoretical Introduction to the Functions of Psychoanalysis in Criminology," 120)

For Derrida, Lacan's effort to distinguish human cruelty from animal violence marks an important point in the latter's ethics concerning the semblable or the fellow (*BSI* 104). Notwithstanding the fact that both cruelties involve harming or being harmed, Lacan claims that

human cruelty and animal violence are two distinct, heterogeneous attributes; for him, man alone has the capacity to be cruel because he alone “attacks his fellow,” whereas the animal cannot be cruel because it has no concept of the Other (104). But how does Lacan characterize man’s capacity to be cruel? And more importantly, how does this capacity continue to propagate the theologico-anthropocentric idea of human sovereignty?

Similar to other Western thinkers mentioned above, Lacan grounds his ethical view on the fellow through the Aristotelian thinking of the *logos* as proper to man. Having established Law and Crime as the beginning of man, Lacan further elaborates on human cruelty as an indication of man’s capacity to relate to his fellow in a manner that demonstrates his freedom. This freedom opens to man the possibility to commit sins and experience guilt “precisely because he is capable of good and of perfecting himself, amending himself, capable of confessing and repenting” (*BSI* 105). In other words, insofar as man is not a machine but a free agent who decides his action, man is not impeccable and can therefore commit crimes not because of his intrinsic animality but because he deliberately chooses to respond to his fellow in a criminal manner.

This is thus where the Lacanian concept of responsibility comes in—a concept which originated from man’s ability to freely respond and not merely react like the animal-machines that Descartes elucidates in *Discourse*. However, despite the ethical obligation towards the fellow brought by the unique human capacity for cruelty, Derrida points out that Lacan’s argument “comes down to giving an exorbitant credit to this value of the fellow,” implying that human cruelty can only be cruelty when it is directed to his fellow human being (*BSI* 106). In other words, cruelty to non-fellows such as animals or even to other humans who do not accede to the standard of being a fellow is not considered cruelty because according to this theory, “what [cruelty] is targeting in truth and at bottom is still the fellow” (106) or the Other whom one thinks to be most like him.

It is thus through the concept of the fellow that Derrida analyzes man’s sovereignty above other humans and non-human animals (*BSI* 108). Referring to another of Lacan’s article titled “Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,” Derrida discusses Lacan’s view of man as a subject that makes him the sovereign and absolute master (112). Moreover, through and because of the Lacanian concept of the Other, Derrida demonstrates the logocentric basis for man’s sovereign mastery through language that

characterizes Lacan's ethics of responsibility towards the fellow; for him, although Lacan seems to offer an ethics that is based on the Other, Derrida still detects an ipseity inherent in this ethics, which reveals its anthropocentric limitations and dangers.

Derrida thus begins his analysis of Lacan by quoting a passage from "Subversion of the Subject":

The Other, as preliminary site of the pure subject of the signifier, occupies the key position here, even before coming into existence here as absolute Master—to use Hegel's term with and against him. For what is omitted in the platitude of modern information theory is the fact that one cannot even speak of a code without it already being the Other's code; something quite different is at stake in the message, such that he receives from the Other even the message he himself sends. (Lacan 683)

Here, Lacan calls upon the importance of the Other in the context of man's identity as a subject which for Derrida seems to promise a different interpretation of man's sovereignty (*BSI* 112). In the passage above, the Other is necessary for one's identification as the subject, giving rise to the possibility that Lacan indeed recognizes the deficiency of a self-sufficient sovereign that dominates the Western corpus. However, Derrida later qualifies that Lacan's notion of man's relation to the Other is a "theoretical mutation and stagnant confirmation of the legacy" that ensures the continuation of tradition (113). In Lacan's ethics of response and responsibility, man is sovereign because his being subjected to language, paradoxically, enables him to respond to the (human) Other in ways that animals cannot—through thoughtful reflection and not merely through instinctive reaction. In this context, "the animal [not only] has neither the unconscious nor language, it does not have the Other, it has no relation to the other as such, except by an effect of the human order, by contagion, appropriation, domestication" (114). In other words, the Other is significant in Lacan's ethics not because he aims to present a critical interpretation of the classical concept of human sovereignty but because he is interested to maintain it via "the constitution of the subject as human subject" (118-119).

In relation to this, Lacan provides his own interpretation of the Cartesian response/reaction binary. For Lacan, man's subjectivity capacitates him to respond meaningfully to the Other, unlike the animal's senseless reaction to movements or what he calls signs (Lacan,



“The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” 245). In other words, reactions are fixed actions that do not require the animal to think whereas human response requires the use of the ego, the ‘I,’ or even the superego—abstract concepts within the mind that are said to be proper to man. Hence, although Lacan accords the animal a way of communicating to each other via codes or signs, Derrida argues that Lacan categorizes this way of communicating in the realm of captivity in which the animal reacts by virtue of its being delimited by “the specularity of the imaginary” (*BSI* 122). In contrast to this captivity, man, as the subject of the signifier, uses language which Lacan categorizes as the symbolic realm.

But what does being “subject of the signifier” mean and what does it entail in our discussion of the political sovereign? For Derrida, Lacan’s categorization of the animal signs or codes into the realm of meaningless automatizations implies the animal’s incapacity to relate authentically to concepts such as death, “of a testimony to a mortality essential to the heart of Truth or its Speech” (*BSI* 123). Conversely, man who possesses the *logos* has access to the symbolic realm which contains meanings or signifiers—Truths—that are beyond the mechanicity of biology or zoology, enabling him to lie or “feign feigning” (124). Related to its incapacity to commit cruelty, the animal is likewise incapable of lying—a “power” that man possesses. The symbolic realm—also called the realm of law—which enables man to relate and respond meaningfully to his fellow is accessed by man via his “passive finitude, this infirmity” demonstrated in his capacity to “feign the feint” that the animal does not suffer from” (*BSI* 125). In other words, according to Derrida, “it is via the power to “feign the feint” that one accedes to Speech, to the order of Truth, to the symbolic order, in short to the human order,” making lying, along with cruelty, proper to man—conditions that characterizes man’s access to the Law, hence to “sovereignty in general as to the order of the political” (125-126).

Similar to the Hobbessian sovereign who remains to be God’s subjected sovereign, the Lacanian sovereign is subjected to the signifier—to the domain of Speech and Truth—which is the real sovereign (*BSI* 123-125). Thus, in this context, man’s sovereignty is a limited sovereignty, despite it “being a superiority of man over beast [because] it is based on the privilege of defect, lack, or fault” (125). Lacan’s concept of sovereignty is a sovereignty that contains within it elements of inferiority and subjectivity that are nonetheless transformed into superiority via human vocabularies of power or capacity. In turn, this power maintains the

anthropocentric foundation of human sovereignty in the realm of the political as it disenfranchises human or non-human animals that do not possess these logocentric ideals.

### **The Phantasm of Sovereignty**

Having discussed the concept of lying and its connection to the *logos* in the thinking of sovereignty in the Western philosophical tradition, I now proceed to the discussion of the simulacrum-effect or the representation-effect that Derrida argues as “inherent and congenital to [sovereignty]” (*BSI* 289). Referring to the work of Louis Marin, titled “Le récit du roi ou comment écrire l’histoire,” Derrida investigates the significance of the use of representations in the context of sovereignty and how it underlines the element of the phantasmal inherent to the concept. In doing so, Derrida puts into question not only the concept of the *logos*, hence of sovereignty, as proper to man, but also the very concept of man as sovereign over other beings.

Similar to the scene of punishment and torture found at the beginning of this chapter, the decapitation of King Louis XVI during the French Revolution illustrates the importance of seeing or witnessing the death of the criminal as a means of affirming the sovereignty of the state. In *The Death Penalty*, Derrida inscribes this witnessing within the context of the sovereign’s “right of life and death over the life of citizens, by the power of deciding, laying down the law, judging, and executing the order”—powers of the sovereign that, as we have seen, are all associated with the *logos* (*DP* 5). However, for Derrida, sovereignty obtains “all its power, all its potency” from the public spectacles that come with it; without the visual illustrations of punishments such as decapitation, electrocution, or the use of lethal injection, sovereignty is nothing at all (*BSI* 289-290). Hence, in this regard, human sovereignty is dependent on these representations in that the fictions or the illusions effected by these visualizations are the very source of sovereignty, without which sovereignty loses its powers and potency and ultimately its own existence (289).

Related to this, Derrida refers to what Marin calls “the trap” or the “trap narrative” which refers to the illusion of one’s participation or sharing in the sovereignty of the sovereign (*BSI* 289-290). Whereas Marin’s scope of analysis is limited to the narrative written by the king’s appointed historian named Pélisson about King Louis XIV, the Sun King, to propagate His Majesty’s sovereignty through the use of narrative, Derrida further relates “the trap” to the illusion of the transfer of sovereignty during the French Revolution (290). For Derrida, the

decapitation of King Louis XVI does not end the sovereignty represented by the king; rather it is a ceremonial representation that shows the transfer of power from one sovereign to the other—from the monarchy to the people that further maintains the theological structure of political sovereignty (290). In order to substantiate his argument, Derrida cites Marin's notion of the division of the king's body into three: first, the physical thus mortal body of the king; second, the juridical and political body; and third, the semiotic sacramental body that ensures the exchange "without remainder" between the three bodies (295).

Derrida interprets the king's sacramental body—the body "sworn and legitimated by God himself"—as the location of the covenant or alliance between divine sovereignty and terrestrial sovereignty (*BSI* 295). To corroborate his interpretation, Derrida quotes— still from Marin's "Le récit du roi"—Bossuet and Pascal's explanation on the divine source of the king's sovereignty as well as the performativity that comes with it:

In 1662, in his sermon on the duties of kings, Bossuet exclaims: "To establish this power that represents his power, God places on the forehead of sovereigns and on their face a mark of divinity. [...] God has made in the Prince a mortal image of his immortal authority. You are gods, says David, and you are all children of the Most High. But, O, gods of flesh and blood, O gods of earth and dust, you will die like men. No matter, you are gods even though you die; and your authority does not die; this spirit of royalty passes entire to your successors and imprints everywhere the same fear, the same respect, the same veneration. Man dies it is true; but the king, we say never dies: the image of God is immortal."

A few years earlier, on a little scrap of paper, Pascal had analyzed the mechanisms of the representational apparatus, describing the effects produced and discerning their reasons in the configuration they sketch out on the political, juridical and theological planes: "The custom of seeing kings accompanied by guards, drums, officers, And all the things that bend the machine toward respect and terror, means that their face, when perchance alone and without these accompaniments, imprints on their subjects respect and terror, because one does not separate in thought their persons from their entourage, seeing them ordinarily together. *And society, not knowing that this effect comes from this custom, believes it comes from a natural force; whence these words:*

“*The character of Divinity is imprinted on his face,*” etc. (Marin qtd. in *BSI* 295-296; emphasis mine)

It is in this context that Derrida interprets the execution of King Louis XVI as a theatrical accompaniment to the phantasmatico-theological sovereignty—the sovereignty that the revolutionaries sought to be transferred to the people from the hands—or rather from the body—of the king that they judged to be a “criminal toward humanity” (*DP* 18). However disgusted with the frivolities and excess of the sovereign represented by institutions such as the Menagerie de Versailles, the French Revolution nevertheless maintain what Derrida calls the all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-seeing “autopsic” omnipotence of the ousted monarchy by creating other representations of absolute sovereignty such as zoological gardens and insane asylums (*BSI* 296-297).

For Derrida, these institutions of knowledge serve the new French Republic in the same way that the menagerie in Versailles did for the monarchy. Whereas Louis XIV displays the grandeur of his power by means of sponsoring public dissections of animals and collecting and exhibiting rare faunas that represent not only the king’s opulence but his sovereign knowledge, the set-up of zoological gardens and insane asylums promulgated by the revolution nonetheless mimics the monarchical model of knowing by seeing, of making known its sovereignty via its absolute knowledge and mastery of the bodies of animals and humans (*BSI* 283). In this context, both the zoological gardens and the insane asylums are likewise instituted by the now democratic France in view of demonstrating, through the public display of the beast and the insane, the sovereignty that the revolution has won from the decapitation of Louis XVI, the Sun King’s descendant. However, instead of a king presiding over a public dissection of an elephant to show his superior knowledge, the post-Revolutionary France now has the people as recipients of superior knowledge that can be obtained through the display and study of animals and psychiatric patients (282-283). Thus, similar to the king’s menagerie, both the animal and the insane become “curiosities for the eager, [of] those who are outside and approach them only within a certain distance to observe or inspect them in a sovereign manner from outside after having locked them up” (297).

The significance of the sovereign’s knowing through seeing is also demonstrated in Derrida’s *The Death Penalty*. Although Derrida does not explicitly relate this text to Marin’s “Le

récit du roi,” *The Death Penalty* traces the history of capital punishment in relation to the sovereign’s “phantasmatico-theological” right over the life and death of its citizens (DP 5). Inscribed within the history of executing a former sovereign or a common criminal is the history of political sovereignty that is closely linked with the Judeo-Christian prohibition on killing (11-14). Here, although the commandment “You shalt not kill” prohibits against taking the life of another human being, the Judeo-Christian tradition, including the Western philosophical tradition, does not see any contradiction between the death penalty and the sixth commandment, arguing that the death sentence is not synonymous with murder—the kind of putting to death that the commandment prohibits (11-13). As such, Derrida points out that right after the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17, God prescribes judgments or *michpat* concerning “justice, jurisprudence, [and] law” to his people through Moses (11). In this list of judgments, according to Derrida, God orders the condemnation to death of “all those who transgress one or the other of these ten commandments,” making the *michpat* a penal code with a prescription for death sentences (11-12).

Analyzing *The Death Penalty*, Naas argues that “the theologico-political concept of sovereignty that is unified or unitary, unconditional, and all-powerful” is at the very structure of the death penalty, along with “attendant notion of sacrifice, redemption, and the sovereign pardon” (Naas, “Philosophy and Literature of the Death Penalty,” 41). Referencing Schmitt’s concept of sovereign exceptionality that borrows from the Christian notion of the absolute power of God, Naas states that the death penalty best illustrates this state of exception insofar as it reflects the sovereign state’s right to decide on questions concerning the life and death of its citizens not only in terms of juridical putting to death but also in times of war in which the state forces its citizen to risk their lives in defense of their country and their ideology (41).

Central to Derrida’s discussion of the death penalty is the history of the debates between those who support it and those who are against it. Among the adherents of capital punishment are thinkers such as Emmanuel Kant, Charles Baudelaire, William Wordsworth, Jean Genet, and Maurice Blanchot, whereas those in opposition to the death penalty include Percy Shelley, Albert Camus, and Victor Hugo (Naas 47). Proponents such as Kant argue that “access to the death penalty is an access to the dignity of human reason, and to the dignity of man, who unlike beasts, is a *subject of the law who raises himself above the natural life*” (DP 8); on the other hand abolitionists such as Hugo appeals to the inviolable right to human life that is free from pain and

cruelty (104). Despite their opposing views on the death penalty, Derrida argues that both camps essentially ground their claims on the Judeo-Christian heritage that maintains God's sovereign power over the life and death of humans, which implies a non-deviation from the canonical view of anthropocentric sovereignty. Hence, notwithstanding the seemingly anthropocentric and humanistic rationale of both the abolitionist and the supporters of the death penalty, their respective discourses are still based on theological concepts that need to be analyzed if we are to create a future that is free, not only of death penalty, but also of an abolitionist theory that is nonetheless informed by theological and logocentric calculation.

As such, literature is of significance to Derrida's analysis of the theologico-political rootedness of the death penalty, including the abolitionist discourse that seeks to go beyond the law. In this regard, Derrida devotes his seminars on the extensive analysis of writings such as Hugo's, who in the year 1848, announces "the right of the writer to defy or to change the law" (*DP* 102). A defender of the abolitionist cause, Hugo appeals to the inviolability of the human life as a means to ground the writer's prerogative of "transforming the law in the direction of justice that is more than juridical" (102). Derrida, for his part, interprets this appeal in the context of force or power—of attack—that seeks not only to deconstruct the foundations of the law that assert and maintain the death penalty but the *destruction* of the "mechanisms, the supports, phantasms, and opinions, the drives, the conscious or semiconscious or unconscious representations, that work to legitimate the death penalty" (102-103). In order to do this, according to Derrida, Hugo exhorts writers to use their tool of trade—language—and its application in literature and public speech (103).

This call to destruction—or what Derrida terms as call "to engage in certain acts of civil disobedience" through the use of language—first sees the light of day in *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* (1829), a novel written by the then twenty-seven-year-old Hugo (*DP* 103). Already in place in this seminal work, according to Derrida, is Hugo's argument concerning the inviolability of life, as well as his refutation concerning the exemplarity of the sovereign state and the barbarity of the death penalty (103). Quoting Hugo's reference to "the divine hammer" that would "strike the wedge [of the guillotine] relentlessly," Derrida nonetheless identifies the Christian principle inherited within Hugo's libertarian abolitionism; despite Hugo's exhortation to writers to use their prerogative to disobey by rewriting the law, Derrida contends that Hugo does

so within the divine axiomatics, making his abolitionism profoundly Christian in its evangelical tone (104).

Analyzing Derrida's reading of Hugo, Naas clarifies that Hugo's approach is evangelical because he is on a "sacred, international mission, to spread the good word of abolitionism" (Naas 48). In conjunction with Derrida, he likewise emphasizes the divine basis of Hugo's assertion of the moral right of writers to criticize unjust and cruel laws—a right that implies the author's access to truth that is beyond the knowledge of ordinary statesmen who create the laws (49). In this regard, Derrida argues that Hugo's appeal for the abolition of the death penalty is rooted in the Christian notion of God and of Christ as "the life and the truth"—the truth that must reign sovereign over "the blind hardness of the law" that creates and maintains the death penalty (*DP* 104). Having the writer's access to higher knowledge via his conscience, Hugo thus exhorts other writers to apply "great blows of truth" to the chopping block of the guillotine using the divine hammer of the true teachings of Christ as their instrument of rebellion (104).

Thus, Derrida's criticism of Hugo is based on the latter's assertion of the inviolable right of human beings which is inscribed within the rhetoric of divinity and sovereignty (Naas 49). Similar to other thinkers of theologico-political sovereignty, including writer-abolitionists from Voltaire to Chateaubriand, Hugo likewise "gives [himself] the sacred right to make the law above the laws, to make [himself] the representatives of eternal justice above law, and thus of divine justice" which implies an appeal to a counter-sovereignty (*DP* 108). Thus for Derrida, Hugo's prerogative to rewrite the law is simply an appeal to a divine law that already exists; hence, "he does not invent or produce a new code of law except by listening [...] to a divine law that already speaks [...] that men, sometimes churches, have muffled, hidden, buried, or silenced" (108). In this regard, Hugo's claim to sovereign knowledge is hardly sovereign; rather, it is a sovereignty obtained through a divine source, making him an intermediary of a higher sovereignty that runs counter to nation-state laws—a concept that is in line with the tradition of Bodin and Hobbes.

Hugo's condemnation of terrestrial sovereignty's corruption of the original Christianity is also a condemnation of the death penalty in the name of the true essence of the French Revolution (*DP* 108). In other words, the inviolability of the human life is for Hugo, "the central lesson of the incarnation and the true Spirit of the French Revolution, a final rejection of barbarism and terror" which is an indication of human progress (Naas 49). Hugo likewise "poses

the inviolability of human life as an inalienable property, a right of property over one's own life," which is an indication, according to Derrida, of the theological trappings of the secular French Revolution (*DP* 120-121). According to Naas, Derrida's analysis of Hugo's abolitionism as a revolutionary Christian theodicy draws from the latter's view of historical progress that is the consequence of the true Christian teaching of the value of life (Naas 49). In this regard, continues Naas, Derrida observes a relationship between Hugo's appeal to a law beyond law and to his idea of development and justice that is in contrast to the secular state's laws (49). For Hugo, the abolition of the death penalty symbolizes human progress—a progress that is made by men-writers who are privy to God's thoughts and are thus guided by divine providence (*DP* 121-122). Because of this, abolitionist literature is thus a logocentric representation of divine sovereignty—a representation of a counter-sovereignty pitted against terrestrial sovereignty which is likewise linked to theology insofar as it based its power on the divine right over the life and limbs of its citizens.

Recognizing that the debate is not between a secular and theological idea but a debate between two interpretations of Christian theology, Derrida once again eschews an oppositional analysis of sovereignty in the context of the death penalty (Naas 50). Instead of pitting the secular abolitionist discourse against the divine discourse in support of capital punishment, Derrida demonstrates the Christian foundation of the two arguments: the divine law of abolitionism against the divine law of the death penalty (50). In so doing, Derrida likewise identifies the *aporia* within Christianity: the contradiction between the promotion of life and its simultaneous call for its sacrifice in the name of the sanctity of life (50).

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I end this chapter by reiterating the significance of representation in relation to sovereignty. Starting with Aristotle and his concept of the *logos* as a purely human characteristic, I follow Derrida's genealogical study of the theological structure of nation-state sovereignty and the means through which this power is transferred from God to the king and from the king to the people. Despite the Western tradition's endeavor to differentiate juridical laws from the divine law, Derrida demonstrates the indissociability of secular politics to its theological heritage through his analysis of juridico-political concepts such as sovereignty, law, rights, conventions, as well as responsibility, the death penalty, abolition, and the inviolability of human life. Despite its strictly theoretical framework, a genealogical study on the theological grounding of Western



secular political concepts provides an understanding of contemporary social and political structures through which one can assess its ramifications for philosophy, law, and ethics; for instance, a Christian-centric philosophy yields to a particular way of writing and interpreting law that may disenfranchise human or non-human beings that are not protected by the logic of Christian thinking. Hence, in recognizing the theological structure of seemingly secular concepts, Derrida paves the way for future philosophers to rethink philosophy in a way that reflects an ethos of inclusivity—an ethos that is possible only in a framework of differential non-mastery that recognizes differences in genus, culture, religion, gender, and capacities.

Likewise, Derrida's deconstruction of juridico-political concepts demonstrates the phantasmico-theological property of sovereignty that renders it susceptible to figurations and representations. Since sovereignty is not divisible, the human sovereign's claim of sharing in the divine's hyper-sovereignty is an illusion that he must maintain if he wants to retain his power as God's chosen intermediary. As shown in this chapter, philosophers since Aristotle utilize metaphoric figurations to present the force of sovereignty that is otherwise beyond any forms of the *logos*. Similar to Aristotle, thinkers such as Bodin, Hobbes, Descartes, Lacan among others use "the animal" as a means to identify sovereignty as proper to man. This practice, however, has consequences to the treatment of animals in Western discourse, particularly in contemporary ethics that views them as inferior machines in relation to the rational, sentient human beings. In maintaining this logic, man fails to realize the limits of his knowledge concerning the beings of other beings that do not share his genus, his language, his culture, or his nationality—concepts that nevertheless influence Western ethical standards.

Finally, as demonstrated in Derrida's discussion of the death penalty, particularly of Hugo's abolitionist discourse, representations of sovereignty is also seen in the writers-philosophers who view themselves as the source of true knowledge via their access to the divine law. Regardless of their appeal to a secular universal truth or right, Derrida has shown that Hugo's abolitionism, as much as Kant's support for the death penalty, is an appeal to a law beyond law that he claims to have access and knowledge of. In their self-confessed mastery of superior knowledge, proponents and abolitionists alike are representations of phantasmico-theological sovereignty that maintains the supremacy not only of the divine power but also of the male gender in its hegemonic access to the so called true and uncorrupted knowledge. In turn,

this privilege gives them the authority to inflict or to suspend the death of another, a privilege that assigns to them mastery over death that is ungraspable even to the most sovereign human.

## Chapter Two: Friendship and Sovereignty

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In *Politics*, Aristotle formulates the *telos* of human being in terms of its natural capacity for human language and rational thought (*Politics* 1253a 5-6). Arguing that nature “makes nothing in vain,” Aristotle states that man is by nature a political animal who is predisposed to belong in a state (*polis*)—an inclination that the human does not share with gods or animals. Unlike man, gods and animals do not require the state; both are naturally incapable of participating in the political life of the state by virtue of self-sufficiency, in case of the gods, or by inherent lack of the *logos*, in case of the animals (1253a 28-29). As discussed in the previous chapter, Aristotle’s anthropocentric and exclusivist view of politics continues to inform contemporary Western philosophy in its disenfranchisement not only of animals but also of humans who do not accede to a particular standard of language or culture. Notwithstanding the rise of inclusivist discourses that aim to promote the universal and inalienable rights of humans regardless of ethnicity and gender, the principle that underlies these egalitarian ideals are still informed by a theocentric and anthropocentric axiomatic that views the rational, virile man as the standard through which the value and the rights of other beings must be measured against (see for example McCance, *Critical Animal Studies*, 3). Accordingly, in this schema, women, children, and most non-human beings are left outside the protection of the law that renders them vulnerable to violence and abuse.

It is in regard to the Aristotelian legacy of similarity and self-sameness in the Western thinking of ethics and politics that Derrida traces the genealogy of the concept of friendship in relation to democracy and nationhood. In view of the Western political inheritance of phallogocentric principles, *Politics of Friendship* (2005) analyzes the canonical figure of the friend beginning with Aristotle’s formulation of friend as another self, a formulation that implies similarity and reciprocity between friends (*PF* 276). Unlike derivative or secondary friendships that are based on utility or desire, primary friendship is based on reciprocal virtue, the stability (*bébaios*) of which is tested through time. In this schema it is thus impossible for humans to be friends with God because friendship with God can never be proven in the same manner. Similarly, friendship between human and animal is an impossibility rooted in their differences in nature; for Aristotle, friendship with “children, animals and the wicked” do not imply virtue or equality in virtue because to be worthy of the name “friends” demands an autonomous and a

constant renewal of friendship—a constancy that is contrary to the reliability of nature or machine because it “is won [...] through the endurance of virtue” (23). Since *Politics* relates virtue to the apprehension of the *logos* via speech, friendship between humans and animals, as well as friendship between God and man, do not illustrate primary friendship but remain mere potentials—a possibility that is never seen in actuality because it can never be tested through time (23). Accordingly, Aristotle’s preference for the logic of sameness and reciprocity prevents the possibility of true friendship between a man and a woman; in his view, such is not a relation of virtue between equals but a relation between superior and inferior values (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1160b 32-35; 1161a 23-24). Thus, in this schema, friendship between male friends are considered primary friendship—an androcentric legacy that survives in the Western interpretation of friendship as the relationship between brothers who share not only symmetrical values but also a common origin that excludes outsiders who are of a foreign “race.”

In response to this tradition, Derrida reveals the aporias within the Aristotelian discourse on friendship, thereby questioning its homogeneous structure. Notwithstanding the dominance of the logic of reciprocity and equality of virtue between friends, there exist traces of dissymmetry and hierarchy within the system that threaten the stability of the concept; in the *Eudemian Ethics*, for instance, Aristotle defines *philia* in terms of the one who loves: “There are two kinds of people: some naturally aspire to friendship and others aspire to honor. A person of the first kind enjoys loving more than being loved; a person of the second kind prefers being loved” (*Eudemian Ethics* 1239a 28-29). In other words, the lover is a friend more than the beloved, an inequality that allows the concept to be interpreted beyond the canonical standard of self-sameness and reciprocity.

This chapter follows Derrida’s study of the supplement within the canonical interpretation of friendship beginning with the vocative “O my friends, there is no friend”—a parenthesis often attributed to Aristotle by philosophers such as Cicero, Michel de Montaigne, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Carl Schmitt. Derrida reads this vocative in terms of the political—a framework that involves an exploration of how the logic of sameness and consanguinity in the Aristotelian friendship is translated into politics as inherited by thinkers such as Hegel, Schmitt, and Heidegger. For Derrida, the fraternization of the concept of friends in the Western tradition has led to a friendship based on proximity and androcentric ipseity, criteria that are nonetheless aporetic. The ramification of the aporetic are discussed by Derrida through the framework of a

“democracy-to-come,” a structure of the *perhaps* which suggests the openness of the future which is free from any pre-programmed calculation and expectations.

The chapter also discusses Derrida’s dream of opening the concept of friendship towards a friendship that is not limited to similarity and reciprocity. In analyzing the aporias within the tight enclosure of Aristotle’s androcentric and self-same friendship, Derrida opens the thinking of a togetherness that is not limited by a specific standard of a cultural or racial sameness. In contrast to the self-centeredness that underlies the canonical concept of friendship, Derrida launches a reading of the tradition that acknowledges the Other whose absolute difference is not known. It is, in other words, an interpretation that does not conform to the canonical figure of the friend as a mirror image of one’s self; rather, Derrida gestures toward one’s responsibility to the other whom the tradition considers to be the enemy by virtue of his alterity. Not disregarding the fact that Derrida is also an heir of Aristotle, *Politics of Friendship* focuses on the rethinking of the concept of friendship to reveal its heterogeneous structure and the possibilities that may arise from an interpretation that deviates from tradition. In doing so, Derrida puts into question the dominance of a particular interpretation of friendship in the Western tradition—a dominance that accedes to the logic of mastery and binary that appears to negate and exclude the unknown and unknowable other in favor of the survival of the familiarity of self in the face of the indeterminate future.

### **The Aristotelian Concept of *Philia***

As discussed above, Aristotle’s preference for the lover over the beloved introduces a disturbance in the supposedly egalitarian relationship within a primary friendship (*PF* 10). According to Derrida, this dissymmetry complicates the concept of the friend as one’s “other self” because first, it implies that virtue between friends is not necessarily equal (10); second, since the person who loves does not necessarily bestow love to his equal—not even to an animate, living equal—the need to test the stability of friendship through time and proximity is put into question (15-17). For Derrida, these aporias within the Greek tradition suggest an interruption of certainty, a suspension that introduces a destabilization to the presupposed unity of the canonical concept of friendship (29). However, notwithstanding the inconsistency or inconstancy of the Aristotelian discourse on friendship, Derrida argues that the other “is not an indetermination, but supposes a certain type of resolution and a singular exposition at the

crossroads of chance and necessity” (30). In other words, for Derrida, the Aristotelian philosophy of friendship thrives on the combined action of the lover and the beloved, the stable and unstable, as well as active and the passive—partnerships whose differences allow for the possibility of primary friendship (30).

Although such heterogeneous concepts work together within the Aristotelian discourse, the dominant theme in the Western tradition associates friendship with the logic of sameness and proximity, as well as fraternity and consanguinity. In its dominant interpretation, friends are one’s other self, a framework of ipseity that seeps into the contemporary notion of nationhood and community. In Chapter One of *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida recounts the tradition that has erupted from Aristotle’s idea of friendship. Cicero and Montaigne, in their respective writings, maintain that a friend is one’s own portrait, an “exemplum, the duplicate, the reproduction, the copy as well as the original, the type, the model” (PF 4). For Cicero, Derrida points out, friendship is between good men—an idea that implies familiarity, proximity, and unity among friends (184). Similarly, Montaigne advances the logic of similarity and equality in his idea of friendship as expressed in his letter about his friendship with Etienne de La Boetie: “If you press me to say why I loved him, I feel that it can only be expressed by replying: “Because it was him; because it was I”” (Montaigne, “Of Friendship” 192).

However, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, a difference between and within these self-same friends appears: Aristotle defines friendship on the side of the lover because of the valuation of activity over passivity, of knowledge over ignorance (PF 11). The “logic of the first” pervades this reading of friendship “and that structure, that of the loving for the lover, will always—as Aristotle tells us—in sum—be preferable to the other, to that of being-loved as lovable” (11). In this interpretation, the *logos* underlies the preference for the lover: for Aristotle, loving consists of a way of behaving virtuously, of knowing that one loves the object of affection; in contrast, to be loved remains an accident which does not add anything to friendship (9). To be loved is possible without knowing that one is loved—even the dead can be loved without them knowing it—whereas loving is not possible without actively knowing that one loves (9-13). Moreover, the friend—the lover—does not need to be loved in return because such need for recognition is, for Aristotle, a passive enterprise that is not in accordance with the virtue of the lover: loving in action, active in loving, and not waiting to be loved in return (11).

Furthermore, Aristotelian friendship belongs together with time and death, whence the impossibility of being friends with God and animals, as well as being friends with too many others all at the same time (*PF* 19-20). As mentioned above, for Aristotle, friendship is about certainty and not possibility (*éxis*) because friends are tested through time and affirmed in death—a testing that is not possible due to the nature of gods and animals (12-13). It is in this regard, Derrida notes, that Aristotle praises those who love their deceased (“for they know but are not known”) because not only does death “[carry] this *philia* to the limit of its possibility” but also reveals that friendship is impossible “without projecting its impetus towards the horizon of this death” (12). Accordingly, death illustrates why friendship is on the side of the lover: there is rejoicing in loving but not in being loved because the activity of loving “belongs only to a being gifted with life or with breath (*en empsúkō*). Being loved, on the other hand, always remains possible on the side of the inanimate (*en apsúkō*), where [life] (*psukhé*) may have expired” (12-13). In juxtaposing the beloved with death, Aristotle, according to Derrida, provides a case for identifying friendship with the lover: *philia* lives—friendship is alive, “it stirs, [and] it becomes psychic from within this resource of survival. This *philia*, this *psukhé* between friends, survives” (13). *Psukhé* or animate life—the essence of friendship—is what remains when a friend dies; hence, friendship is best defined through an active agent, the one who does the loving and not through the beloved whose passivity opens “the possibility that the beloved might be dead” (13).

Accordingly, from the very beginning of friendship, the friend is aware that the other bears his death. In the Aristotelian schema of reciprocal and self-same friendship, Derrida points out, this dissymmetry seems to double itself: the lovers—in the impossibility of the beloved in primary friendship—bear the death of each other in advance, making the survival of one’s self through the other the beginning and origin of friendship (*PF* 12-14). As such, the “anguished apprehension of mourning insinuates itself a priori and anticipates itself; it haunts and plunges the friend, before mourning, into mourning [...] and this is the very respiration of friendship, the extreme of its possibility” (14). Without the possibility of death, in other words, primary friendship is not possible—a further indication of the necessity of both life and death in the Aristotelian philosophy of friendship that paradoxically sets a higher value on animate life over the passivity of death.

Derrida explains that the aporia within the structure of *philia* is further highlighted in the stabilization of friendship through time. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter,

Aristotelian philosophy does not allow friendships between human and gods or animals, or those between a man and a woman because of their differences in nature; primary friendship, according to Aristotle, is limited only to male friends whose virtue are equal and reciprocal with one another (*Nichomachean Ethics* 1158b 10-25). Accordingly, this androcentric friendship is primary—or the exemplary model to which lesser forms of friendships aspire to—because the virtues of these friends are proven through time (*PF* 14). Herein lies the paradox within the Aristotelian discourse on friendship: if stabilization through time is of the essence in determining primary friendship, how does one reconcile it with the thinking of the future, of the inevitable death and survival of the other that one begins a friendship with? Implicated in this disjunction is the stability of the hierarchical concept of friendship: if timelessness and temporality is both inscribed within the Aristotelian ethics, how does one justify the Western tradition’s interpretation of friendship not only in terms of opposition pertaining time and timelessness but also the opposition and exclusion between any differing values? How does one further justify the implications this binary framework has on ethics and politics? In this regard, Derrida heightens the aporia regarding time and timelessness in Aristotle by inscribing faith and uncertainty at the heart of the stability of friendship (*PF* 15). To quote Derrida:

In primary friendship, such a faith must be stable, established, certain, assured (*bébaïos*); it must endure the test of time. But at the same time, it this may still be said, *áma*, it is this faith which, dominating time by eluding it, taking and giving time in contrempeps, opens the experience of time. It opens it, however, in determining it as the stable present of a quasi-eternity, or in any case from and in view of such a present certainty. (*PF* 15)

Primary friendship is stable because it “implies decision and reflection: that which always takes time” (*PF* 15). There is stability in friendship because of the process of non-spontaneous and non-natural stabilization—correct decisions and judgments—that friends achieved through the passage of time (15). Paradoxically, according to Derrida, the “grieving survival”—the anticipation of the future that initiates friendship—is “concentrated in the ever-so-ambiguous value of stability, constancy and firm permanence that Aristotle regularly associates with the value of credence or confidence (*pístis*)” (15). In other words, the stabilization of friendship is composed not only of time and calculation, but also of faith and uncertainty in regard to the



future which carries one “beyond the present moment and keeps memory as much it anticipates” (14-15). In juxtaposing time with timelessness, as well as certainty with faith, Derrida demonstrates the roles played by these seemingly oppositional values in the process of stabilizing the stability that defines primary friendship. In doing so, Derrida underscores the autoimmune structure that threatens the stability of the dichotomies that dominate the Western tradition.

### **Genealogy of Friendship: Inheriting Aristotle**

In *Laelius de Amicitia*, Cicero writes about distinctions within friendship—between the “true and perfect or vulgar and mediocre”—as well as rarity and the necessity of proximity between friends (*PF* 4). In conjunction with Aristotle’s philosophy on the exemplarity of primary friendship, Cicero’s true and perfect friendship is “the kind that was possessed by those few men who have gained names for themselves as friends”—in other words, only a few men are able to illustrate “true and perfect friendship” and the rarity of its occurrence makes the name of these friends survive beyond death (Cicero qtd. in *PF* 3). Accordingly, Derrida contends, the projection towards the future via death provides the friend an “unequaled hope” because it lets one survive beyond life through the other who is his perfect image (3-4). In this regard, Cicero heightens the oppositional framework in the Aristotelian concept of friendship by focusing on the similarities between friends, which is rooted in one’s drive to master and to survive death—an interpretation that does not consider the different elements that are at work in order to set the criteria of friendship in the Aristotelian canon.

Hence, in addition to its meaning as “the model,” the Ciceronian concept of exemplarity also pertains to “the exemplum, the duplicate, the reproduction” of one’s self that implies exclusion and limit—in other words, a friendship that categorizes according to differences and similarities that ensures the survival of one’s ipseity through the projection of one’s self to the other (*PF* 4). Basing his philosophy on the logic of the same and the concomitant compulsion of surviving one’s own death, Cicero describes the true friend as one’s “ideal double, [one’s] other self, the same as self but improved” who ensures one’s immortality in an otherwise uncertain future that is beyond certainty and calculation (4-5). Thus, according to Derrida, “the Ciceronian variety of friendship would be the possibility of quoting [one’s self] in exemplary fashion, by signing the funeral oration in advance” which connotes an attempt to master what is beyond

human knowledge. Death, the horizon that demonstrates the limits of human mastery, remains the very possibility of friendship in Cicero's inheritance of Aristotle's philosophy.

Michel de Montaigne's inheritance of the Aristotelian legacy is evident in a chapter on *Essay* (1518) titled "Of Friendship" in which he undertakes an interpretation of the Greek vocative "O my friends, there is no friend" through the utilization of Cicero's concept of exemplary friendship. Referring to Aristotle as the "original spokesman" of the parentheses, Montaigne likewise reads friendship in the context of ipseity and self-sameness which best describes the chapters of *Essays*: "'I am myself the matter of the book,'" Montaigne declares in the preface to the first volume of essays (Montaigne qtd. in Pakaluk 185). He writes them, he tells us, "for his friends and relatives," so that "they may recover here some features of [his] habits and temperament, and by this means keep the knowledge they have had of [him] more complete and alive'" (Montaigne qtd. in Pakaluk 185).

In conjunction with Cicero's exemplary friendships, Montaigne differentiates "sovereign and masterful-friendship" from "ordinary and customary friendships" arguing that it is only the former that accedes to the Aristotelian standard of friendship (Montaigne 194). Considering his inheritance via Cicero of the Aristotelian logic of the same, Montaigne interprets Aristotle's "O my friends, there is no friend" in view of his preference for sovereign friendship over its lesser form (*PF* 236). According to Derrida, "common friendship," for Montaigne, is indeed what makes Aristotle sigh with regret: in not being a sovereign friendship, these common friendships are not perfect, hence "there is no friend" in the present; such preference implies futurity, which is a familiar theme in the Aristotelian philosophy of friendship (236). Accordingly, Derrida interprets Montaigne's analysis of the vocative by recalling the *contretemps* of time and timelessness, stability and faith in Aristotle: if there is no true friend in the present as Montaigne affirms, it is possible that true friendship belongs to the future, "to the experience of waiting, of promise, or of commitment" that involves responsibility between friends to make their common friendship "sovereign master friendship"—an echo of the process of Aristotelian stabilization of friendship through time (235-236).

However, the futurity of friendship is not without reference to the past; thus in this schema, the past and the future work in *contretemps* but never in opposition. For Derrida, the apostrophe "O my friends" also harkens back to the past; "it recalls, it points to that which must indeed be supposed in order to be heard" (*PF* 236). Without an experience of common friendship

or at least an idea—albeit lacking and imperfect—of how friends and friendships are, one cannot understand, hence answer to the invitation of the friend towards perfect friendship (236). The past, for Derrida, is as significant as the future in the thinking of friendship because without it, there would be no experience of a community, a sense of being-together which allows friends to share a certain commonality—a language or a concept of the future perhaps—that would make them cognizant of their responsibility of working towards a perfect friendship (236). In stating this, Derrida calls into question the hierarchy of values in the philosophy of friendship that tends to organize differences in a binary framework. Thus, instead of adopting a structure of opposition that prefers the future over the past or knowledge over faith, Derrida notes the movement of different values in Montaigne which structures his own reading of friendship: a relationship of incommensurable differences that is never grasped in the present because it belongs simultaneously to the past and to the to come, eluding the logic of presence that constitutes the tradition of Western philosophy (TPF 636-637).

In accordance with the issue at hand, Derrida discusses the concept of presence through Western philosophy's interpretation of friendship in oppositional terms. For Derrida, the question "What is friendship in the proper sense?" involves the question of presence—of being—that presupposes "a certain experience of *philêin* and *philia*" which in turn affirms the presence of a "friendship prior to friendships" (TPF 637). Such an advanced determination of the meaning of friendship, according to Derrida, "cannot be presented as a being present (substance, subject, essence, or existence) within the space of an ontology, precisely because it opens this space" (637). In other words, the *as such* of friendship can never be called "into the light of the phenomenal presence" because its essence itself—the meaning that the Western tradition provides it—makes friendship a concept that belongs to the "undeniable future anterior" that is paradoxically composed of traces from the past (637-638). As such, the proper being of friendship is never in the present but in some past-future dimension that is always "to come."

### **The Enemy is the Friend**

Focusing on the "to come" in friendship, Derrida interprets the vocative "O my friends" as a call for another concept of friendship and by extension, a call for "[a] friend who will not be weighed down by the classical axiomatic of friendship" (Caputo, "Who is Derrida's Zarathustra?" 187). Picking up from its preoccupation with the *as such*, from its incessant determination of the

proper meaning of friendship, Derrida analyzes Western tradition's conceptualization of *phusis*—nature—and how it is implicated in the thinking of democracy in terms of fraternity or brotherhood (188). Moving forward from Aristotle and from his mutation in Cicero and Montaigne, Derrida explores other interpretations of friendship and their connection to the thinking of democracy in the Western tradition: from Immanuel Kant to Schmitt, from Diogenes Laertius to Nietzsche. Although each one of these heirs inherits the politics of Aristotle in a different way and in a different context, the overriding theme of their discourse remains within the logic of self-sameness—a logic that determines the possibility of friendship between individuals who share not only a similarity of values but also a similarity in gender (188). For these heirs, according to Derrida, friendship remains androcentric; sisters, women are not fraternal enough to be friends in the Western tradition (*PF* 238-239).

In this regard, it is vital to underscore that Western philosophy's utilization of nature to distinguish genuine friendship from secondary and inferior friendship conveys a congregation of natural born brothers whose bond with each other ensures exclusivity; in other words, these *fraters* who share a natural affinity allows for the emergence of an exclusive community that is otherwise closed to all others who do not share this natural relation (Caputo 188). Recalling my previous discussion concerning proximity in friendship in the Aristotelian tradition in which “the friend is defined in terms of native ties and natural bonds, and the political in terms of the friendly natural bonds of a nation, of autochthony and native soil,” the concept of the political is imputed to the Western tradition's determination of friendship and friends in the terms of natural similarity (188). Consequently, in this regard, those who do not accede to this standard of similarity are deemed an outsider, a foreigner who is not considered a friend but an enemy.

The concept of the friend as “the natural born brother” and this concept's connection to politics is elucidated in Carl Schmitt's theory of the political. First published in 1922, Schmitt's *Political Theology* is “about nature, and thus about the prerogatives, of sovereign political authority as it develops in the West, about its relation to Western Christianity, and about some of its foremost exponents” (Strong, “Foreword: The Sovereign and the Exception: Carl Schmitt, Politics, Theology, and Leadership” vii). In the tradition of the Aristotelian exemplarity of primary friendship, *Political Theology* discusses the exceptionality of the sovereign in terms of a politics predicated on the friend/enemy distinction—“an us/them distinction, in which the “us” is of primary and necessary importance” (xi-xv). *The Concept of the Political* (1932), on the other

hand, discusses Schmitt's conceptualization of the friend/enemy distinction (Schmitt 37). In this schema, the enemy—"the other, the stranger"—determines the possibility of war, hence the political *as such* (27).

Although he professes a strong discomfort to any sort of exclusive community, and the sense of the natural and the familial that it implies, he is "not against brothers or families—but with the generalization of that model, with the exemplarity of the figure of the brother, which [he] calls fraternization" (Caputo 188). To quote Derrida:

In the androcentric family unit, the father-son relation is distinguished from the fraternal relation according to the type of equality involved: propositional or analogical equality in the first place, numerical equality in the second. That is why, Aristotle states, there is proximity between fraternity and comradeship. This proximity constitutes a major stake from the moment interest is taken in equality in the city, and an account is needed for the figurability of the brother: the possibility of calling a true comrade brother—legitimate brother, not bastard brother. For let us not forget that it is not the fraternity we call natural (always hypothetical and reconstructed, always phantasmatic, etc) that we are questioning and analyzing in its range and with its political risks (nationalism, ethnocentrism, androcentrism, phallogentrism, etc.), it is the brother figure in its renaturalizing rhetoric, its symbolics, its certified conjuration—in other words, the process of *fraternization*. (*PF* 202; italics in the original)

Schmitt constructs a concept of the political that is rooted in the determination of its pure and proper meaning via the friend/enemy binary (*PF* 112-116). For Schmitt, distinguishing the friend from the enemy is the key that unlocks the proper of the political, an indication that the Aristotelian preoccupation for the *as such* or the essence of friendship still persists in Schmitt albeit in another form (116). Similarly, according to Derrida, Schmitt's concept of the political is Platonic in the sense that for Schmitt, there is no politics of any kind that "has ever been adequate to its concept"—a paradoxical stance since he admits his inheritance of the Aristotelian reliance on the concept of real possibility or presence (114). This disjunction which manifests in the concept of politics itself indicates the elusiveness of what is proper to politics; for Derrida, it remains a perpetually deferred presence that is analogous to the past-future time of friendship

discussed above (114-115). Accordingly, since the pure concept of politics itself ensures that such politics is never grasped in a kind of presence, “it follows that even what is called politics [...] indeed, an idea of politics in general—could never regulate (itself on) such a “concept of the political”” (115).

However, despite the aporia that looms over the logic of presence, Schmitt nonetheless claims to have formed a “concrete, living, and relevan[t]” concept of the political which he initially argues to be unreachable (*PF* 115). Underlying this concrete idea of politics is Schmitt’s absolute demarcation of the friend from the enemy that Derrida problematizes. Revealing the aporia in Schmitt’s political philosophy, Derrida questions Schmitt’s clear identification of who or what the friend is if the proper of politics, hence the enemy, remains a specter but never a concrete presence (116). “If the political is to exist,” writes Derrida in response to the Schmittian binary, “one must know who everyone is, who is a friend and who is an enemy, and this knowing is not in the mode of theoretical knowledge but in one of a *practical identification*: knowing consists here in knowing how to identify the friend and the enemy” (116; italics in the original). Thus, if Schmitt professes that the *as such* of politics remains a pure concept that is never grasped and apprehended because it is never present, Derrida argues that by extension Schmitt will never grasp the proper of the enemy to an extent that it warrants a friend/enemy binary (116-117).

Consequently, Schmitt’s claim for the concrete apprehension of the *as such* of the political via an appeal to the proper nature of the friend and the enemy is rendered problematic. According to Derrida, Schmitt hinges his friend/enemy binary on the concept of fraternization, or to the naturalization of the friend as a kin through the “oath of fraternity” (*PF* 159). In making the friend a uterine brother, Schmitt claims to have distinguished war in the political sense from a civil war or a mere quarrel within a family—another dichotomy that seeks to identify with clarity the enemy from the friend in the political. As intimated earlier, the being-family-of-the-friend is not the main problem that Derrida sees in the Western philosophy’s conceptualization of the friend; rather the conflict lies in politics “which is made to imitate or resemble natural brotherhood taken as the political model par excellence” (189).

Accordingly, Derrida investigates the concept of the natural and the telluric in the context of Schmitt’s concretization of the ideal. For Derrida, Schmitt’s utilization of the natural and the familial bond to differentiate the friend from the enemy is problematic because kinship is a

fiction (*PF* 159). Already at work in the Schmittian process of transforming the friend into a natural brother, according to Derrida, is the de-naturalization of fraternity (159). In Schmitt's theory of the political, continues Derrida, fraternization itself presupposes that the brother figure [is] not a natural, substantial, essential, untouchable given" which implies that the process of de-naturalization is at work as soon as the process of fraternization begins (159). Similar to the movement of *démarche* of time and timelessness in the stabilization of friendship in Aristotle, fraternization in Schmitt is composed not only of the naturalization of the friend into a brother but also of the friend-brother's de-naturalization. Thus each time he appears in any political rhetoric, one must remember that the brother is a double-figure that eludes a proper presence; the *démarche* in the process of fraternization suggests that he is both natural and prosthetic but never one or the other (93).

Furthermore, Derrida demonstrates that Schmitt's conceptualization of the foreigner as the enemy does not clearly demarcate the enemy from the friend. Associated with this discourse on the enemy is Schmitt's identification of the enemy as an esteemed public enemy and never one's private enemy (*PF* 85). To quote Schmitt:

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 is an ever present possibility for every people existing in the political sphere.

The enemy is not merely a competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not a private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectively of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. (Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* 28)

According to Derrida, Schmitt states that the opposite of friendship in the political sphere is "not enmity but hostility" which implies purity or the absence of hatred or xenophobia (*PF* 87). In other words, the enemy in its pure form according to Schmitt is somebody whom one holds no personal hatred against because he is essentially a stranger (87-88). Consequently, since

the enemy in this schema is somebody that one does not necessarily hate, Derrida states that one “can also wage war on [a] friend, a war in the proper sense of the term” but without hatred (88). Here, Derrida identifies a supplement in what is supposed to be a concrete definition of the enemy in Schmitt: if the enemy in its proper political sense is the public enemy, but whom one has no hatred of, it follows that the enemy can be a friend in private—that is, a friend outside the political/public sphere (88).

Another aporetic instance in the friend/enemy distinction occurs in Schmitt’s conceptualization of the enemy as the foreigner (*PF* 89). Referring to the Greek differentiation between *polemos/ekhtros*, Schmitt creates a distinction between war (*polemos*) and civil war (*stasis*) stating that according to Plato:

Only a war between Greeks and barbarians (natural enemies) is actually a war, whilst struggles between Greeks are of the order of *stasis*. The dominant idea here is that a people cannot wage war on itself and that a civil war is never but a rending of self but would perhaps not signify the formation of a new State, or even of a new people. (Schmitt 29)

Referring to the Platonic distinction between a war and civil war, Schmitt argues that for Plato, an internal strife is never called a war but a discord involving members of the family who eventually reconcile among themselves; on the other hand, non-Greeks are their natural enemies whom they make war with as enemies (*PF* 90). Notwithstanding Schmitt’s reference to Plato, Derrida contends that such analysis is “hardly Platonic” because while Plato states that “the barbarians are natural enemies and that [...] the Greeks, are “by nature friends among themselves,”” Plato does not say that “civil war (*stasis*) or enmity between Greeks is simply outside of nature” (90). In other words, enmity to the Greek is as natural as friendship—an echo of the *demarche* in any concept that is assumed to have a concrete substance. However, more important than this, according to Derrida, is Plato’s prescription in the *Republic* concerning the erasure of the opposition between *polemos* and *stasis*, urging the Greeks to deal with foreigner enemies as they would between themselves—a passage in the *Republic* which, according to Derrida, involves Plato’s discussion of justice (90-91).



Finally, Derrida states that *polemos* and *stasis* indeed pertains to nature but in a manner which contrasts Schmitt's formulation (*PF* 91). According to Derrida, Plato assigns these two terminologies to two kinds of natural discord: *stasis* is for disagreements among Greeks whereas *polemos* is for strife between foreigners (91). In this regard, Derrida calls into mind the significance of context in analyzing such terminologies; for Plato, according to Derrida, "the Greek *genos* (lineage, race, family, people, etc.) is united by kinship and by the original community" which "remain intact in *polemos* as well as in *stasis*" (91). In this sense, Plato perceives the Greek community as natural kinship which no enmity can dissolve; but since the foreigner is outside the Greek community, the same naturalness cannot be said regarding their *genos*. Thus, in the Platonic worldview, as Derrida interprets it, there is an alterity between the nature of the Greek and the foreigner—an alterity that does not presuppose an Other in the manner in which Schmitt's oppositional framework describes it (91).

In this regard, Derrida problematizes the Platonic-Schmittian determination of the Greeks as uterine brothers and of barbarian-foreigners as natural enemies by going back to his discussion on the fiction of fraternization in politics. Studying Schmitt's use of these Greek binaries as models of his concept of politics, Derrida asks if anyone has "ever met a brother?" (*PF* 91). Since natural brotherhood in the political is phantasmatic, Derrida argues that there is no more distinction between them and their political enemy: de-naturalization now enables the Greeks to wage war on each other in the same way that they wage war against the barbarians. In other words, removing the fiction of consanguinity from the equation makes both the Greek and the foreigner equal: the "brother" transforms into a possible enemy as the foreigner is conceptualized to be (94-95).

Since the figure of the enemy determines the political *as such* in Schmitt, "the disappearance of the enemy would be the death knell" of such determinacy as it threatens the absolute and the concrete distinction between the friend and the enemy (*PF* 84). For Derrida, this indeterminacy demonstrates that a politics based on opposition cannot sustain itself as it consists of "a denial of the abyss"—denying the uncertainty inhered in any possibility by trying to fill it in with meaning (86). In other words, Schmitt conjures the *as such*, the essence, or the meaning of the political through the phantasm of knowing the rigorous distinction between the friend and the enemy. However, as Derrida demonstrates, this distinction does not hold because nature, which is its basis, suggests the *demarche* of both nature and prosthesis in the figure of the uterine

brother in the political. Thus, the political *as such* lacks the *as such*; its own oppositional structure ensures the inter-contamination of the pure and the impure.

### **Friendship without Sovereignty**

Looking back on the canonical lineage of friendship, one sees the inexorable link between sovereignty and friendship through the concept of the *logos*—an anthropocentric attribute that implies rationality, virtue, and virility. In Aristotle, for instance, only friendship between men is considered primary because their self-same virtues make their friendship a relationship between equals; similarly, Montaigne, in the tradition of Cicero, views friendship between virtuous men as the *exemplum* through which inferior kinds of friendship must measure against; Schmitt, for his part, defines friends in terms of their natural enemy: friends are brothers by virtue of their common citizenship and all who do not share their origin are their natural opponents. Thus, in all these interpretations, the concepts of fraternity and fraternization in the Aristotelian lineage further highlight the centrality of the male gender in friendship and by extension, its connection to the *logos* which is the source of human sovereignty in the Western tradition. In this regard, the interpretation of friendship is at once logocentric and androcentric and traces itself to the sovereignty of God whose power has transferred to the human sovereign as demonstrated in Bodin and Hobbes.

Accordingly, the dominance of men in the tradition is connected to the concept of ipseity or self-sameness which guides the Western thinking of friendship. In the Aristotelian schema, for example, equality between friends is founded on similarity between friends which remains the classic standard for primary friendship in the philosophy of Cicero, Montaigne, and Schmitt. In this regard, there is equality in friendship for as long as there is sameness between friends, and according to the Aristotelian schema, such equality is found only in men whose reciprocity in virtue is afforded by their *logos*. Thus, following the trajectory of friendship in the Western tradition, primary or exemplary friendships are composed of sovereign men whose apprehension of the *logos* allows them to determine the *as such* of beings—a determination that is nonetheless based on anthropocentric and androcentric qualities that disenfranchises non-humans and non-male humans. As such, gods and animals are refused the capacity for true friendship because the Aristotelian tradition accords them a particular essence or nature that makes them inherently incapable for perfect friendship (i.e. proximity, presence, speech).

Accordingly, the exclusion of women in the Aristotelian schema further illustrates the phallogocentrism of sovereignty in friendship. Picking up from the Aristotelian standard of reciprocal and similar values between male friends whose autonomy and freedom enable them to stabilize their virtues through the test of time, Derrida discusses the “double exclusion” at work in the Western philosophical tradition on friendship which ensures that friends remain in the image of a man: the exclusion of friendship between women and the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman (*PF* 278-279). Writing on women’s presumed incapacity for primary friendship, Caputo states that Derrida’s concept of “double exclusion” does not mean that women “were never actually friends, either with men or with one another but only that their relationship was not credited and legitimized in the classical axiomatics” (Caputo 189). In other words, in the canonical tradition, relationships that involved women are not viewed in terms of sovereignty or power but in terms of utility or pleasure (as slaves and wives)—a derivative kind of friendship in the Aristotelian schema that is secondary and necessarily inferior to primary friendship that dominates the tradition (189).

Similarly, Derrida argues that the double exclusion mentioned above privileges the name of the brother which necessitates an analysis of the political and its “discourses which reserve politics and public space for man, domestic and private space for woman” (*PF* 281). In this regard, according to Haddad, Derrida uncovers a recurring pattern in the tradition that persists despite the possibilities created by the aporias in the structure of canonical friendship (Haddad 106). He summarizes Derrida’s analysis of the aporia in friendship as follows:

For Aristotle, friendships of virtue must be between equals, and there is dissymmetry in his claim that it is better to love than to be loved (and he also articulates an aporetic relation between friendship and the political, arguing that friendship is necessary in the polis, while the best friendship lies above justice). Yet amid these complications he similarly excludes women, confining their relation to men within friendships of utility. Kant also negotiates the logic of sameness and difference, avoiding the dangerous fusion of love by promoting distance through respect. But he too appeals to fraternity, using the brothers as a figure for the friend of humanity. And Michelet states that “fraternity is the law beyond the law,” at the same time as he proposes that it is the basis of equality and democracy. But he also claims that women are never fraternal enough. (Haddad 106)

Since these thinkers capitalize on the logic of sameness to describe and uphold a certain view of friendship, Haddad states that Derrida turns to Nietzsche who promised to break with the homogenous tradition with his philosophy based on differences (106). However, as Derrida notes in *Politics of Friendship*, Nietzsche still remains within the tradition despite the “rupture” that his philosophy introduces in the Aristotelian schema; for Derrida, Nietzsche’s pursuit of dissymmetry and alterity in friendship through which he turns the loss of the friend into the loss of the enemy is not progress “or the opening of an era of peace” and solidarity but on the contrary, it unleashes an incommensurable violence that stems from the identification of the enemy in anyone, including the most familiar: the friend and the neighbor (*PF* 83).

Furthermore, according to Derrida, Nietzsche maintains the figure of the brother in Zarathustra’s call for a friendship “to come” that supposedly goes beyond the limitations of proximity and familiarity set by the Aristotelian tradition (*PF* 284-289). Similarly, the concept of fraternity continues to define contemporary thinkers such as Schmitt who identifies the enemy as the one who is not the brother, and Blanchot, who in the Nietzschean tradition of going beyond the limits of similarity, “retains the brother when describing relations to the other” (Haddad 106). Thus, according to Haddad, regardless of their basis on similarity or on difference, Derrida sees in them a continuation of the tradition through the maintenance of the figure of the brother in their conceptualization of friendship which prevents them from breaking the dominance of the ipseity of the masculine in the Aristotelian schema (106).

Notwithstanding the fact that he himself is an heir of Aristotle, Haddad argues that Derrida responds to the homogenizing effect of the figure of the brother by launching an investigation of the aporia found within the canonical structure of friendship (106-107). In *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida, according to Haddad, analyzes the aporias in the concept of friendship by “maintaining their tension by refusing to resolve them, in a movement of *surenchère* that aims to increase the openness and transformation in play” (107). In other words, instead of trying to reconcile the remainders and inconsistencies within a concept, Derrida heightens these aporias so as to reveal a particular concept’s incommensurabilities and dissymmetries that challenge its claim for homogeneity and unity.

In this regard, Derrida challenges the self-same configuration of tradition that considers friendship as proper only to humans, particularly male humans, whose possession of virtues through the *logos* enables them to attain perfect and sovereign friendship among themselves. In

analyzing the aporias that makes up the figure of the brother in the Aristotelian tradition, Derrida opens the possibility of a future that welcomes a community of friends that does not base itself on the logic of ipseity. For instance, according to Derrida, whereas in the old schema the sexual difference between women and men are neutralized so as to render the woman invisible or subsumed in the fraternity of male friends (*PF* 158), the friendship “to come” possesses an openness that is not limited to any *as such* or presence dictated by tradition (39). In other words, Derrida’s vision of the future does not follow the path of certainty and mastery that the canonical thinkers thread upon; rather, this future opens a radical politics that does not interpret friendship solely on the basis of fraternity or on any other established framework.

As such, Derrida introduces his view of this undetermined future through Diogenes Laertius’s “Cui amici, amicus nemo,” an interpretation of Aristotle’s “O my friends, there is no friend” (*PF* 209). Shifting the vocative into the constative, “He who has many friends can have no true friend,” the recoil version of the Aristotelian parenthesis does not suggest a return to self or an appeal to brotherhood; rather, for Derrida, “it reopens the question of multiplicity, the question of the one and that of the more than one,” including the possibility of friendship beyond the limits of fraternity (209).

In a perfunctory reading of *Politics of Friendship*, the difference between the two versions is hardly significant; indeed, Derrida himself explains in detail that the vocative and the recoil versions both contain within them an appeal towards a perfect and sovereign friendships in the future based on a minimum and imperfect kind of friendship in the present (214). For Derrida, whereas the vocative version “speaks *to* friends,” (“O my friends) the recoil version speaks *of* friends (He who has many friends...) which in turn describes and underlines in a seemingly neutral fashion the contradiction found within the canonical version regarding the friends (“O my friends”) that are not friends (“there is no friend”). Notwithstanding the reportive tone of the recoil version which seemingly avoids addressing anyone in particular, for Derrida, both versions are essentially saying the same thing—that there are no friends—albeit in different ways (212-213).

However, further into the *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida uncovers the significance of the recoil version in the thinking of a friendship beyond fraternity through its performative and reportive aspects. For Derrida, although the recoil version does not call anyone a friend only to disavow this friend as the canonical version does, the indirect address of the recoil version

nonetheless leaves open the possibility that, “independently of all determinable contexts,” there is never a “sole friend;” that regardless of gender or relationships, the one, perfect friend that the tradition speaks of does not exist because to have a friend already exceeds the closed circularity of ipseity that requires the friend to be one’s image (215). As I understand it, the recoil version, through its indirect address, performs as it reports—more than the canonical version does—that friendship and friends are not determinable and identifiable; and that by extension, true friendship, which the tradition accords to sovereign men, is never present because the friend is always an Other which hinders the perfection effected by similarities in gender and in virtue elucidated by the heirs of Aristotle (215).

Thus, the recoil version makes even clearer the vocative version’s lament on the absence of friends through its indirect, hence open address concerning the indeterminable multiplicity of friends. Because of its undetermined addressee, the recoil version effectively questions the presence of primary friendship not only in relationships concerning the female, but also in the friendship between men whose similar, equal, and reciprocal virtues became the foundation of the concept of fraternity. In doing so, Derrida demonstrates that friendship need not remain within the limits of androcentrism; by referring to another, yet less popular interpretation of Aristotle’s parenthesis, Derrida opens the possibility of a thinking of a friendship, hence politics that exceeds the exclusivity of fraternity—a friendship between sovereign men whose phallogocentrism seeps into democracy even in contemporary times.

## Chapter Three: Democracy and Sovereignty

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Responding to the query concerning the political in *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida acknowledges that he has discussed democracy in the context of friendship but only “very briefly” and through concepts that do not sufficiently define democracy (N 178). In this regard, Derrida adds that his engagement with “the given concept of democracy” is through an investigation of “how the idea of democracy arose in the West and what can and should be conserved out of it” (179). For him, the conceptualization of friendship in the Aristotelian tradition—despite its phallogocentric and fraternalist schema—continues to dominate democracy through the theories of thinkers such as Montaigne, Nietzsche, and Schmitt (179). Given the manner in which Derrida questions the oppositional framework within friendship, he develops the importance of “infinite heterogeneity” or “infinite distance” in the thinking of equality in democracy despite the fact that the current discourse in democracy is bound to “the concept of subjectivity or subjective identity” which is limited to the law of calculation and is therefore not hospitable to the idea of unconditional differences (179).

### Friendship and Democracy

How does democracy figure in Derrida’s analysis of friendship? For Derrida, the identification of friendship as an exemplum of politics, especially of democracy, can be traced back to *Eudemian Ethics* in which Aristotle picks out friendship between brothers as properly political (PF 197-198). Unlike the royal or monarchical relationship between parent and child, and the aristocratic relationship between husband and wife, Aristotle contends that the relationship between *brothers* is democratic because it involves sameness and equality in virtue (197-198). However, since equality in the Aristotelian sense denotes equality in excellence or superiority, primary friendship belongs specifically to men whose equality as “free and autonomous beings” is demonstrated in brotherhood—a political figuration whose naturalness Derrida questions through an analysis of the autoimmunity inhered within the process of fraternization (Caputo, “Who is Derrida’s Zarathustra?” 189). In doing so, Derrida opens the discussion on the concept of fraternity “as an appropriate trope for friendship and by implication, for a democratic politics” (Haddad, *Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy* 107). As such, in *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida asks if:

it is possible to think and to implement democracy, that which would keep the old name “democracy,” while uprooting from it all these figures of friendship (philosophical and religious) which prescribe fraternity: the family and the androcentric ethnic group? Is it possible, in assuming a certain faithful memory of democratic reason and reason *tout court*—I would even say, the Enlightenment of a certain *Aufklärung* (thus leaving open the abyss which is again opening today under these words)—not to found, where it is no longer a matter of founding, but to open out to the future, or rather to the “come,” of a certain democracy? (*PF* 306)

Similar to his manner of underlining the aporetic structure of friendship in the Western tradition, Derrida inherits the concept of democracy through an exploration of its dissymmetrical elements. Picking up from his problematization of the figure of the brother in Schmitt, Derrida develops the issue of fraternity by demonstrating how democracy is thoroughly engaged with the concept of brotherhood; consequently as shown in the passage above, Derrida reflects on the possibility of lessening the force of this engagement so that a different democracy emerges, one that would nonetheless take the name democracy, but without the values of exclusivity, similarity, sexism, and ipseity that fraternity implies. In this regard, Derrida puts forward his idea of the “to come” of democracy, a politics that is not yet present but one that is inexorably linked to tradition, which in itself necessitates the re-thinking of a democracy beyond the limits of fraternity (Haddad 108-109).

Referring to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* which partially recounts Homer’s *Iliad*, Derrida opens the topic of democracy with a discussion on the theological filiation of sovereignty and with it his reticence in regard to fraternity which for him is as phallogocentric as the “theogonic mythology of sovereignty” expressed in the primordial patricide of Cronos (*R* 17). According to Derrida, Zeus’s murder of his father Cronos, “who himself had emasculated his own father, Ouranos,” is perhaps the beginning of “a long cycle of political theology”—a genealogy of ipseity that “is at once paternalistic and patriarchal, and thus masculine, in the filiation father-son-brother” (17). Furthermore, according to Derrida, this political theology that demonstrates the “sovereignty of the One, of the One and Only” which is against the rule of the many, is “revived or taken over by a so-called modern political theology of monarchic sovereignty” of



thinkers such as Bodin and Hobbes, and by the “unavowed political theology [...] of the sovereignty of the people, that is of democratic sovereignty” (17).

Included in this theo-political genealogy, according to Derrida, is the concept of ipseity or self-sameness which, as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, is the standard through which primary friendship in the Aristotelian tradition is calculated (*PF* 11). Similar, and in connection to the primary friendship of exemplary men, democracy, for Derrida, involves power, force, and mastery in its ipsocentric identification of equality in similarity—a self-sameness that Derrida likens to the circular motion of the wheel which also refers to the medieval tool to punish criminals (8-11). Metaphorically analogous to the sense of sovereignty involved in the invention and use of this torturing device, power, according to Derrida, begins with man’s right to identify himself as “man,” by incessantly returning to himself “in a specular, self-designating, sovereign, and autotelic fashion” (10).

In this regard, the reign of the son—thus of fraternity—which is possibly inaugurated by Zeus is also a reign of sovereign power; despite having murdered Cronos, his father and ruler, the reign of the Zeus, the son, is also marked with sovereignty which is a rule of one over the many. Democracy, the politics of fraternity, therefore involves sovereignty which is expressed in the people who, theoretically, are individual heirs to the androcentric and ipsocentric rule of the monarch. Illustrated by Louis XVI, whose beheading in 1793 signaled the transfer of sovereign power from the king to the people, democracy is also a politics of sovereignty, which as Derrida puts it, is “as phallogocentric, phallo-paterno-filio-fraterno-ipsocentric” as the political theology from which it has developed (*R* 17). As such, sovereign democracy is a circular sovereignty; it turns itself to come back to itself, a movement that gathers each individual sovereign into a totality towards an end which is democracy or the sovereignty of the people itself (12-13).

Here then is an instance of *aporia* in democracy, an indeterminacy that threatens the stability of its essence that the tradition has ascribed to it. As a preamble to the discussion of its aporetic structure, Derrida underlines the emptiness at the heart of the concept of democracy, a “semantic vacancy” that nonetheless “makes its history turn” (*PF* 24). Haddad interprets Derrida’s refusal to inscribe a proper meaning to the concept of democracy as reflective of the concept itself; for Derrida, according to Haddad, democracy’s poverty in meaning “goes hand in hand with an abundance in its history” in that the multitude of meaning attached to it paradoxically renders it empty of proper signification allowing the concept to survive and to

proliferate (Haddad 113). From this “meaninglessness” of democracy, Haddad continues, Derrida “inherits free speech, hospitality, and self critique”—values that are incompatible with the concept of fraternity that ties the brothers together based on sameness of birth (113).

As mentioned earlier, fraternity in the Western tradition involves a long history of determining the essence of friendship; the value of self-sameness in this case finds its most perfect expression in the figure of the brother—a fictive figuration, which for Schmitt differentiates friend from the enemy with definite clarity. However, since the fraternization of the brother involves not only its aporetic denaturalization but also an exclusivist and delimiting ethos which are incongruent to the openness and “meaninglessness” of democracy, Derrida conceives of “democracy-to-come”—an “indeconstructible” concept that connotes a continuous striving for openness and inclusiveness as it reduces democracy’s engagement with the telluric and xenophobic fraternity (ARS 134).

How does Derrida arrived to the “to come” of democracy? To answer this question, it is vital to undertake a study of the genealogy of democracy in a manner that follows Derrida’s inheritance of the Western tradition. In line with what Haddad calls *surenchère* or Derrida’s method of “raising of the stakes, outbidding or upping the ante” of the aporias within a particular concept, this chapter aims to demonstrate how democracy contains within itself traces of its own ruin that are nonetheless essential to the survival of the concept (Haddad 35).

### **Democracy and Theology**

Discussing King Louis XVI’s decapitation in 16<sup>th</sup> century France, Derrida analyzes the persistence of theology in contemporary Western politics and its implication for the liberal concept of democracy. Referring to the French Revolution, which claims to have ended the monarchical hence theological rule of the king, Derrida analyzes the “fiction” of sovereignty that supposedly contradicts the freedom and equality of the people implied by democracy (*BSI* 290). In this regard, Derrida argues that “a political revolution without a poetic revolution of the political is never more than a transfer of sovereignty and a handling over of power”—a statement suggesting that absolute sovereignty, which the French has supposedly ousted through the trial and the decapitation of the king, is simply carried over and maintained by the secular subject of democracy (290).

Derrida illustrates the secularization of the divine sovereignty of the king by “dissecting” the latter’s body—the place in which “the pact or alliance between the politico-juridical sovereignty of terrestrial all-powerfulness and the celestial sovereignty of the all-powerful God” occurs (*BSI* 295). Referring to Ernst Kantorowicz’s “double body of the king,” which Louis Marin subsequently develops in his idea of the tripartite body of the monarch, Derrida states that the decapitation of Louis Capet—that is, dividing the body of the king in two—“is destined to put an end to [...] the king’s empirical and carnal body, mortal body on the side, and the body of the glorious, sovereign, and immortal function, on the other” (*DP* 100). Before the decapitation, according to Derrida, the divine and the mortal bodies of the monarch remain intact in such a way that when the mortal body dies, the divine body “lives” on and transfers to the living, mortal body of another king (101). Accordingly, when the head of Louis Capet separated from his body under the guillotine, the revolutionaries thought to have reduced it to a single body, that of a mere mortal whose act of treason deserved the punishment of death (101).

The beheading of Louis XVI provides a preview of Derrida’s analysis of democracy; the king’s death—the disintegration of the unity of his divine and mortal body—supposedly signals the end of the theological-patriarchal rule of the king as it transfers the king’s sovereign rule to the people. However, as I understand it, for Derrida, such transfer of power is problematic because it implies a purely secular sovereignty that is disconnected from theological sovereignty that undergirds the king’s rule. In line with this analysis, Caputo states that by ousting (or beheading) the king, we made ourselves believe that the revolution is more or less complete (Caputo, “Without Sovereignty, Without Being” 10). However, Caputo contends that despite the desirable effects of the revolution, giving power to the people does not do anything other than invert the old theological schema; for him, democracy maintains the old concept of sovereignty that the revolution has aimed to vanquish because it does not fully address the fact that the concept of sovereignty still operates in modern democracy as in “monarchies, aristocracies, and oligarchies, [...] all of which rely upon some version of a completely classical schema of God the Father” (10-11).

The bifurcation of secular and theological sovereignty is put into question in the collapse of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 (from here on, 9/11), an “event,” which according to Derrida, is “unprecedented” even as he expresses uncertainty on how the technical know-how of the media “conditioned, constituted, [...] constructed, circulated” the

event-ness of 9/11 in the context of international terrorism (ARS 86). For Derrida, to name an event a “major event” implies knowledge on what an event actually is; in other words, to interpret 9/11 in terms of a major terrorist activity is to claim to have grasped the singularity of this particular event, when the “very thing, the place and meaning of this “event” remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept, like a unity with no generality on the horizon or with no horizon at all” (86). Accordingly, the ineffability of an “event” renders a language powerless, as if it is “a kind of ritual incantation, a conjuring poem, a journalistic litany or rhetorical refrain that admits to not knowing what it’s talking about” (86). However, despite his reticence in naming 9/11 as a major and unprecedented event, Derrida clarifies that such an “event” calls for a philosophical reflection that involves a questioning of established concepts (ARS 100). For Derrida, concepts that are associated with the 9/11 “event” such as “war” or “terrorism” are “products of “dogmatic slumber” from which only a new philosophical reflection on political philosophy and its heritage can awaken us (100).

Derrida’s call for a philosophical response in the face of “unprecedented” violence against the United States is perhaps most aptly elucidated in *Rogues*, a two essay text written in 2002, “in the wake [...] of 9/11 and in anticipation of the U.S. invasion of Iraq” (Naas, *Derrida From Now On* 123). Working within the context of the United States’ use of the term rogue states to describe nations whose policies do not align with the former’s political interests, *Rogues* analyzes concepts such as sovereignty, democracy, and the relationship between politics and theology through a study of texts from Plato and Aristotle to Schmitt and Nancy (123). Identifying the aporias within the canonical concepts such as sovereignty, freedom and democracy, Derrida argues that “such aporias will and must remain irreducible, due to a “constitutive autoimmunity” that at once threatens them and allows them to be perpetually rethought and reinscribed” (124).

Contrary to Schmitt’s concept of the friend/enemy dualism, Derrida demonstrates in *Rogues* that 9/11 provides proof that the logic that determines the enemy based on the telluric—that is, based on his origin in a foreign state—is not viable, and is, in itself, under threat (Naas 124). For Derrida, 9/11 shows that the enemy is “within non-state networks and within the immune system of the nation-state itself,” and not outside like Schmitt proposes (124). Speaking of the role of the United States itself in perpetuating the violence of which they are the object, Derrida states that the hijackers “incorporate, so to speak, two suicides in one: their own but also

the suicide of those who welcomed, armed, and trained them” (ARS 95). According to Derrida, the United States not only created the political circumstances that shifted the alliances of Arab Muslim countries but also made possible the emergence of people like “bin Laden” (quotation marks in the original) by training them using American weapons right within the American soil (95). Such suicidal autoimmunity brings to the fore questions of subjectivity that implies a self that is undifferentiated, homogeneous, and the same, without considering the possibility of a divided self that harbors within itself not only the means to its survival, but also the means to its own ruin (Naas 126).

It is thus through the context of autoimmunity that Derrida approaches democracy, which, in its canonical conceptualization, is implicated with sovereignty and autonomy. Demonstrating its ipseity by beginning and ending in the self—“in a government of the people, by the people, for the people under God”—democracy operates within a perfect circle in view of returning to one’s self (Caputo 11). For Derrida, the self-referential movement of democracy indicates the presence of the sovereign self that contrasts with the other element of democracy: that of “the truth of the other, heterogeneity, the heteronomic and the dissymmetric, disseminal multiplicity, the anonymous “anyone,” the “no matter who,” the indeterminate “each one” (Naas 126). As such, despite its injunction towards freedom and openness, the concept of democracy is inseparable from sovereignty and the latter’s injunction toward autonomy and circular self-sameness (126)

### **The Concept of Autoimmunity**

Early on in *Rogues*, Derrida formulates democracy in terms of a double question that calls on theaporetic structure of democracy. To quote Derrida:

[T]he essence of such a politics, in its liberal form, is to authorize or call for free discussion or indefinite deliberation, in accordance, at least with the circular figure of the Athenian assembly in the agora or the semicircular figure of the assemblies of modern parliamentary democracy. In its very institution, and in the instant proper to it, the act of sovereignty must and can, by force, put an end in a single, indivisible stroke to the endless discussion. This act is an event, as silent as it is instantaneous, without any

thickness of time, even if it seems to come by way of a shared language and even performative language that it just as soon exceeded. (R 10)

Contradictory as it seems, Derrida demonstrates that freedom and sovereignty are both inscribed within democracy because democracy itself is made up not only of the people (*demos*) but also of force or power (*kratos*), “which also means “to prevail,” “to bring off,” “to be the strongest,” “to govern,” “to have the force of law,” “to be right””(R 22). Accordingly, Derrida argues that freedom—whether defined as liberty or license—is to be understood as another representation of power because in order to have the freedom to “do as one pleases, to decide, to choose, to determine oneself, to have self-determination, to be master, and first of all, master of oneself” is to possess the power that denotes an “I” that is self-determining (22-23). In other words, freedom presupposes ipseity, which suggests being, “as well as the power, potency, sovereignty, or possibility implied in every “I can”” (11). Thus, for Derrida, it is impossible to discuss democracy and the freedom associated to it without reference to democracy’s return to self and to the sovereignty that it implies (11).

Having recognized the concept of the sovereign self lodged within democracy, Derrida henceforth discusses the autoimmune structure of sovereignty and its implication for democracy’s perfectibility that stems from the fundamental undecidability of the concept (Naas 137). Naas, for his part, situates the concept of autoimmunity within the larger Derridean discourse, stating that the process itself is found “right back at the beginning of deconstruction, back to a critique of the integrity and self-identity of the living present” (128-129). Recalling how the term autoimmunity first emerged in *Politics of Friendship* and particularly in *Specters of Marx* in the context of the living body and the living ego, Naas emphasizes how the concept of autoimmunity works in deconstruction and in its analysis of differentiation and heterogeneity in a supposedly homogeneous and self-evident subjectivity (128-129). Writing about Karl Marx and Max Stirner, Derrida states:

They both share, apparently like you and me, an unconditional preference for the living body. But precisely because of that, they wage an endless war against whatever represents it, whatever is not the body but belongs to it: prosthesis and delegation, repetition, difference. The living ego is autoimmune, which is what they do not want to

know. To protect its life, to constitute itself as unique living ego, to relate as the same, to itself, it is necessarily led to welcome the other within (so many figures of death: difference of the technical apparatus, iterability, non-uniqueness, prosthesis, synthetic image, simulacrum, all of which begins with language, before language), it must therefore take the immune defenses apparently meant for the non-ego, the enemy, the opposite, the adversary and direct them at once for itself and against itself. (*SM* 141)

Hence, according to Naas, autoimmunity in the Derridean sense is not only about compromising the life of the self or the *ipse* by means of attacking it with autoimmune elements that are also within the body; rather, it also involves the manner “in which *life itself*, almost automatically, with the regularity, repeatability, and predictability of a machine, admits nonlife [...] in order to sustain itself, in order to live on” (Naas 129). Viewing autoimmunity as such, Naas underscores deconstruction’s questioning of the “very being or unity of self-identity, and [...] more provocatively, the notion of life as something opposed to the machine, life as opposed to death or absence” which renders autoimmunity a constant companion of deconstruction albeit not being termed as such (129). In other words, in addition to the harming or threatening of the self, the term “autoimmunity” in Derrida’s oeuvre is also concerned with “a critique of the integrity and self-identity of the living present” (129)—a topic that Derrida focuses on in *Rogues* via his analysis of ipseity and his question on the integrity of the sovereign self (*R* 45).

### **Unconditionality, Sovereignty, and Democracy**

Beginning with a discussion of rationalism and the teleology that direct its architectonic organization, *Rogues* demonstrates the autoimmune and heterogeneous structure of the concept of sovereignty, effectively putting into question the idea of pure presence proposed by the Western canon. Referring to *Crisis* (1935) in which Edmund Husserl critiques a “certain irrationalism” in rationalist objectivism, Derrida argues for the heterogeneity of reason through recourse to plural rationalities that resist the unifying and architectonic configuration prescribed by a particular *telos* (*R* 126). In *Crisis*, Husserl rejects “at one and the same time both irrationalism and a certain rationalist naïveté that is often confused with philosophical rationality” which, according to Derrida, contradicts Husserl’s own complaint on the role of reason itself in producing this irrational objectivism that for Husserl informs all rationalism since

the Renaissance (126). In this regard, Husserl asserts that “objectivist naïveté is no mere accident; [rather,] it is produced by the very progress of the sciences and by the production of ideal objects, which as if by themselves, by their iterability and their necessarily technical structure, cover over or consign to forgetting their historical and subjective origin” (127). In other words, the crisis of objectivism is not brought upon by an outside force; instead, it is reason itself that gives rise to both rationalism and irrationalism which, for Derrida, underscores reason’s autoimmune structure (127-128).

Derrida also considers Husserl’s injunction towards saving the honor of reason from irrational objectivism, stating that such injunction reflects Western philosophy’s “infinite, teleological task” of realizing the totality of reason by dismissing as irrationalities those that veer away from transcendental phenomenology’s configuration of unified rationality (*R* 128). For Derrida, Husserl’s imposition of the proper of reason sets limits to the unconditional truth—“the ultimate recourse, the absolute principle of pure reason”—which in its unconditionality, must remain beyond the certainty of calculative and definitive knowledge that is implied in the Husserlian preoccupation of identifying rationalities or irrationalities based on a preconceived teleology.

In relation to the autoimmune structure of Husserl’s concept of reason, Derrida investigates the Platonic-Aristotelian conceptualization of human reason (*logos* or *ratio*) and its propensity towards homogeneous and unified organization (*R* 120). Referring to *Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Derrida further discusses the concept of unconditionality in the context of the dignity of a reasonable human being (133). For Kant, according to Derrida, dignity (*Wurde*) “belongs to the order of the incalculable” which is in contrast to the exchange between calculable goods in the marketplace (133). Similar to the absolute principle of pure reason in Husserl, dignity in Kant is unconditional—hence beyond any calculation of reason—even as it “remains the indispensable axiomatic, in the so-called globalization that is under way, of the discourses and international institutions concerning human rights and other modern juridical performatives” (133). It is, in other words, the incalculable rationale behind the calculations of law that are reflected, for example, in the concept of crime against humanity which inspired the institution of the International Criminal Court (133). Thus, according to Derrida, the incalculable human dignity in Kantian ethics enables “the world of rational beings, the *mundus intelligibilis* as a kingdom of ends” (133); without the



unconditionality set by the incalculable, there is no *mundus intelligibilis* because there is nothing that binds practical reason (dignity of a human person) to theoretical reason (laws) that it subordinates (134).

Considering Husserl's and Kant's concept of reason that is based upon a particular ideal and its teleology, Derrida questions if the unconditional in this system of thought is still the experience of unconditionality when the concept of the ideal in itself limits the unconditionality of the unconditional (*R* 135). For Derrida, Husserl's injunction "to save the honor of reason" from irrational objectivism as well as Kant's concept of the regulative Idea that grounds calculative reason depend on a certain *telos* or *eidos* that sets limits on the unconditionality that is supposedly free from any conditions and calculations that it founds (135-136).

Following this, Derrida explores the Platonic idea of the Good which "orients or disorients our here and now" (*R* 137). Referring to the *Republic* in which Plato identifies the Good as the unconditional and invisible source of intelligible sensibility, Derrida discusses the way in which reason becomes associated with sovereign political power (137-140). In the *Republic*, Plato articulates the Good in terms of power through absolute knowledge; the Good, in the Platonic sense, is "the super-powerful origin of the reason that is right about everything and gets the better of everything (*a raison de tout*)" (Caputo 15). To quote some passages from the *Republic*:

The idea of the [G]ood, then, imbues the objects of knowledge with truth and confers upon the knower the power to know. Because the idea of the [G]ood is the very cause of knowledge and of truth, it is also the chief objective in the pursuit of knowledge. Yet as fair as truth and knowledge are, you will be right if you think there is something fairer still. In our analogy when we proposed knowledge and truth as the counterparts of vision and light, it was proper to consider the latter two as sunlike but wrong to assume they are the same as the sun. In just the same way, knowledge and truth are like the [G]ood, but it is wrong to suppose that they are the [G]ood. A still greater glory belongs to the [G]ood.

[...]

[...] Goodness makes them real. Still goodness is not in itself being. It transcends being, exceeding all else in dignity and power. (Plato, *Republic*, 198)

Thus, Plato formulates the idea of the Good “in the language of power, or rather superpower” that exceeds all other values that the Good has nonetheless created (*R* 138). In this regard, according to Derrida, the Good has the majesty and dignity of the *arkhe*—“the predecessor or forebear” that engenders, begins, and commands; it is “beyond being or beingness” (138-139). Accordingly, the sovereignty of the Good is justified through its comparison to the sun which Plato accords “the power and the right to reign” over the sensible world (138). On the one hand, the sun is *kurion* because it enables the eyes to perceive the sensible world that the shade of the night has hidden—an analogy that indicates the significance of the faculty of vision in possessing understanding, knowledge, and reason (Plato 198); the Good, on the other hand, is *kurion* over the intelligible world because it is the source of all reason (*R* 138). However, it is important to note that despite his analogy of the Good with the sun, Plato clarifies in the *Republic* that the Good exceeds the sun because the Good is beyond being—a characterization that emphasizes its hypersovereignty whose majesty and power surpasses that of the sun who merely reigns over the sensible world (138-139).

Having traced political sovereignty to the principle of Platonic idea of the Good, Derrida proceeds to investigate the identification of sovereignty with unconditionality in the Western tradition and its ramifications for the thinking of democracy. For Derrida, the “alliance between sovereignty and unconditionality appears forever irreducible as reflected in the thinking of political sovereignty in Bodin, Rousseau or Schmitt whose philosophies argue for the unconditionality, exceptionality and indivisibility of the sovereign (*R* 141). For instance, in the beginning of *Political Theology*, Schmitt states that the sovereign “decides on the exception [...] and that the exception “is the whole question of sovereignty” (Schmitt 5-6). Thus, the concept of sovereignty in the Western tradition is understood in the context of the unconditionality, an attribute that expresses itself in the sovereign’s right to decide on the exception and the right to suspend rights and law” (*R* 141). Accordingly, political sovereignty hinges on the concept of the self and the concomitant return to oneself in “a specular, self-designating, sovereign, and autotelic fashion” (10).

As such, Derrida emphasizes the power that is implied in one’s return to self. In *Rogues*, he contends that ipseity suggests “the one-self, being properly oneself, indeed being in person”—in other words, identifying oneself as an “I” who has “possession, property, and power” (*R* 11). Moreover, continues Derrida, *ipseity* “names a principle of legitimate sovereignty, the accredited

or recognized supremacy of a power or a force, a *kratos* or a *cracy*” particularly in the context of the masculine master: “the father, the husband, son, or brother, the proprietor, owner, or seignior, indeed the sovereign”—that presupposes “power, potency, sovereignty, or possibility” (11-12). Thus, in every ipseity, there is a oneself that is “the first, ultimate, and supreme source of every “reason of the strongest” as the right granted to force or the force granted to law” (12).

The circularity of ipseity illustrates the totalizing logic of sovereignty: similar to the motion of the wheel, the self, in its ipseity, rotates “to return to the self, toward the self and upon the self” (R 10-11); in other words, the self gives itself its own law “beginning by the self with the end of self in view” which indicates the *ipse*’s capacity or power to give its own laws, “its force of law, [and] its self- representation” that demonstrates its autonomy and sovereignty” (11). To quote *Rogues*:

The turn, the turn around the self—and the turn is always the possibility of turning on oneself around oneself—the turn (*tour*) turns out to be it (*tout*). The turn makes up the whole and makes a whole with itself; it consists in totalizing, in totalizing itself, and thus in gathering itself by tending toward simultaneity; and it is thus that the turn, as a whole, is one with itself, together with itself. (R 12)

Having discussed the totalizing logic of sovereignty, Derrida proceeds to problematize the concept of unconditionality and its implication of indivisibility and exceptionality that contradicts the self-identity inhered within the circularity of sovereignty (R 141). The unconditional cannot but exceed what it creates because unconditionality is not limited by anything, even by sovereignty itself and its notion of the closed and circular self-identity. Thus, in light of the aporetic relationship between ipseity and unconditionality that structures sovereignty, Derrida, “in the name of reason,” attempts to distinguish one from the other by “questioning, critiquing, deconstructing [...] sovereignty in the name of unconditionality” (142-143).

### **Democracy and Sovereignty**

According to Naas, Derrida “agrees with thinkers of sovereignty from Plato and Bodin to Carl Schmitt who argue that [...] sovereignty in its essence without essence must be unshareable,

untransferrable, undeferrable, and silent, or it “is” not at all” (Naas 127). For Derrida, “unavowable silence” marks the “unapparent essence of sovereignty” in that it imposes itself without recourse to words—it just is (*R* 100). As such, sovereignty, in its silence, is unknowable and unavowable which threatens the stable self-identification that likewise guides the circular movement of the self towards sovereign self-sameness (100). Thus, in view of the autoimmune structure of sovereignty, of the stable sense of self-identity of sovereignty that is nonetheless exceeded by the unconditionality that undergirds it, Derrida argues that sovereignty lacks a real essence or presence; for him, “pure sovereignty does not exist [because] it is always in the process of positing itself by refuting itself, by denying or disavowing itself; it is always in the process of autoimmunizing itself” (101).

Derrida discusses further the logic of autoimmunity in sovereignty through Schmitt’s principle of “decisionist exceptionality” (*R* 107). In *Rogues*, Derrida explicates that the logic of unconditionality that founds sovereignty renders the sovereign exceptional in that its power can “never be parceled out or distributed in space, deferred or spread out over time, or submitted to the temporality and spatiality of language” (127). The moment it shares its power, the moment it tries to defend itself by providing reason for its absolute power, sovereignty “opens itself up to law and to language, to the counter-sovereignty of the other, and so begins to undo itself, to compromise or autoimmunize itself” (127). To quote Derrida:

Sovereignty neither gives nor gives itself the time; it does not take time. Here is where the cruel autoimmunity with which sovereignty is affected begins, the autoimmunity with which sovereignty at once sovereignly affects and cruelly infects itself. Autoimmunity is always, in the same time without duration, cruelty itself, the autoinfection of all autoaffection. It is not some particular thing that is affected in autoimmunity but the self, the ipse, the autos that finds itself infected. As soon as it needs heteronomy, the event, time, and the other. (*R* 109)

If unconditionality renders sovereignty to go beyond itself, it follows that unconditionality in the name of sovereignty also resists any architectonic organization of reason that it in itself engendered. Working within sovereignty’s structure of autoimmunity, Derrida furthers the hyperbole in the name of “the deconstructive exigency of reason” that recognizes the

“possibility of suspending, in an argued, deliberated, rational fashion, all conditions, hypotheses, conventions, and presuppositions, and of criticizing unconditionally all conditionalities [...]” (142).

Central to Derrida’s thinking of the unconditional is the possibility of an im-possible event that is beyond the grasp of the conditional (*R* 143). Contrary to the circularity of self-sameness which presupposes a clearly defined concept of sovereign self, Derrida seeks to rethink unconditionality in a manner that is free of the ipseity of sovereignty and its conditional and calculable logic (148). In this regard, the unconditional *qua* im-possible event is incalculable and exceptional in its singularity because it is unforeseeable; whereas a calculable event, on the other hand, “falls [...] under the generality of a law, norm, determinative judgment, or technoscience, and thus of a power-knowledge and knowledge-power” and is not, in Derrida’s thinking of unconditionality, an “event” (148). However, despite the disjuncture between the unconditionality of the im-possible event and the conditionality of determined knowledge, Derrida situates the former within the framework of reason—albeit one that is not limited by calculable knowledge—and in doing so opens the thinking of the future of reason, “of its “to-come,” and of its becoming, as the experience of what and who comes of what happens or arrives” (148). It is, in other words, the experience of reason as other that is neither known in advance nor “reappropriable by the ipseity of a sovereign power” whose power determines its limits and its identity (148).

It is in light of this im-possible possibility that Derrida discusses “democracy-to-come” and its irreducibility to the concept of sovereignty that runs through the Western philosophical tradition. Prior to *Rogues*, Derrida explores the idea of democracy via the logic of spacing that precludes the stability of presence that accompanies the concept of sovereignty:

The same duty dictates assuming the European, and uniquely European, heritage of an idea of democracy, while also recognizing that this idea, like that of international law, is never simply given, that its status is not even that of a regulative idea in the Kantian sense, but rather something that remains to be thought and *to come*: not something that is certain to happen tomorrow, not the democracy (national or international, state or trans-state) of the future, but a democracy that must have the structure of a promise—and thus the memory of that which carries the future, the to come, here and now. (*TOH* 78-76)

Contrary to the unconditionality of democracy-to-come, the thinking of democracy in the Western tradition is based on the idea of sovereignty whose will to self-sameness remains “incompatible with, even clashes with, another truth of democratic, namely the truth of the other, heterogeneity, the heteronomic and the dissymmetric, the disseminal multiplicity, the anonymous “anyone,” the “no matter who,” the indeterminate “each one.” (R 13-15). Instead, similar to the ipseity of sovereignty, democracy moves in a circular motion so that its turns are turns towards the self—a circularity that is demonstrated either in the form of the “*by turns*, the *in turn*, the *each in turn* or else the form of an identity between the origin and the conclusion, the cause and the end or aim” (13).

Derrida explores this heterogeneous relationship between identity and heterogeneity in democracy through a discussion of the 1992 elections in Algeria in which the “state and the leading party interrupted a democratic electoral process” in the name of democracy (R 30). Utilizing the trope of circularity and the *by turns* of democratic sovereignty, Derrida states that:

In France, with the National Front threatening to pull off an electoral victory, the election was suspended after the first round, that is, between the two rounds. A question always of the turn or the round, of the two turns or two rounds, of the *by turns*, democracy hesitates always in the alternative between two sorts of alternation (where the power of one party, said to be republican, replaces that of another party, said to be equally republican) and the alternation that risks giving power, *modo democratico*, to the force of a party elected by the people (and so is democratic) and yet is assumed to be nondemocratic. (R 30)

The 1992 Algerian elections demonstrate the autoimmune structure of democracy in that democracy attempts to protect its democratic ideals by means of attacking itself—whence the *by turns* and the ipseity of democratic sovereignty which ensures the survival of power (*kratos*) of the people (*demos*) even if it means the suicide of democracy itself (R 33). In the example above, for instance, the democratic Algerians decided forego their right to vote so as to prevent the undemocratic rule of the Nationalist Front from ascending to power via democratic means. This, for Derrida, reflects the indecidability within democracy which ironically points to its “meaninglessness meaning” that goes beyond the essence accorded to it by the Western tradition (35).

Derrida further demonstrates the indeterminacy of democracy through a discussion of freedom and equality which he interprets as two contrasting yet inseparable values that structure democracy (Haddad 52). Although the Greek philosophical tradition associates freedom with democracy, Derrida contends that the tradition nonetheless reconciles one's freedom for self-determination with democracy's requirement for equality through the notion of the *in turn* and the *by turns* which ensures the alternation between the two differing values; for Derrida, the circularity of democracy lies in the provisional transfer of power from one sovereign to the other "before returning in turn to the first, the governed becoming in his turn governing, the represented in his turn representing; and vice versa" (R 24). Through the *in turn* and *by turns*, the sovereign power is kept by the people and for the people—in a circularity that ensures "the return [...] of the final power to its origin or its cause, to its for-itself" (24).

Thus, democracy is best defined through its lack of a proper meaning particularly "the very meaning of the selfsame, the itself, the selfsame, the properly selfsame of the it-self" which motivates democracy's circular movement (R 37). In other words, democracy can only be known—if it can ever be known—through the manner "it defers itself and defers from itself" which precludes the realization of its proper presence or any notion of being that preoccupies Western philosophy (38). However, despite its departure from any traditional teleology, democracy's lack of meaning does not come from beyond democracy; rather Plato's interpretation of democracy in the context of freedom suggests the emptiness of the concept itself. In this context, Derrida interprets Plato's democracy as pointing towards the meaninglessness of democracy because for him, freedom in itself does not only presuppose "the faculty of decision and self-determination" but also—and more radically still—it suggests "a freedom of play, an opening of indetermination and indecidability *in the very concept* of democracy" (25).

Consequently, Derrida's determination of its indeterminacy opens democracy to a rethinking that is in conjunction with the unconditionality of freedom. Contrary to the restrictions set by the interpretation of freedom only in the context of self-determination or license to do what a person wishes, Derrida interprets freedom in terms of the openness it provides democracy that is demonstrated, for instance, in the plasticity of its concept and lexicon that renders it susceptible to constant transformation; as such, democracy's sustained self-criticizability renders the concept indeterminate, hence open to the future that is always "to-come" (R 25).

### “Democracy-to-Come”

Interpreting democracy in the context of its autoimmune structure, Derrida emphasizes not only the indeterminacy of democracy but also its concomitant openness to the future which indicates its perfectibility (Haddad 59-60). Viewing it in terms of its autoimmunity, Derrida demonstrates that the thinking of democracy in the Western tradition is made up of differences and deferrals, as well as spacing and turns that render the concept lacking in a stable, concrete meaning. However, despite this, Derrida demonstrates that democracy thrives on this very instability which adds to the ambivalence of an already ambivalent concept: in threatening itself with its own instability, democracy remains alive as it necessitates both the “good” and the “bad” in democracy which in itself results in the collapse of the distinction between what is good and what is adverse in democracy (*R* 21).

Since the “negatives” as much as the “positives” are necessary in the survival of democracy, Haddad, in his analysis of *Rogues*, inquires if it is worthwhile to pursue a study on the Derridean inheritance of the “to-come” of democracy if all there is to it is an understanding of democracy’s autoimmune non-identity (Haddad 59). In relation to this, Haddad asks if Derrida’s understanding of democracy—despite its general indifference between the good and the bad—can lead to future possibilities that are considered desirable (59-60). To answer these questions, Haddad quotes the following passage from *Rogues*:

The expression “democracy-to-come” takes into account the absolute and intrinsic historicity of the only system that welcomes in itself, in its very concept, that expression of autoimmunity called the right to self-critique and perfectibility. Democracy is the only system, the only constitutional paradigm, in which, in principle one has or assumes the right to criticize everything publicly, including the idea of democracy, its concept, its history, and its name. Including the idea of the constitutional paradigm and the absolute authority of the law. It is thus the only paradigm that is universalizable, whence its chance and its fragility. (*R* 86-87)

According to Haddad, Derrida utilizes the concept of autoimmunity in this passage to demonstrate—not only the instability and non-presence of democracy—but also its perfectibility that stems from its self-critique (Haddad 60). For instance, in recognizing that human dignity is



the unconditional that underlies laws pertaining human rights, one becomes committed in studying, examining, and perfecting these laws and not content oneself with the delimiting implications accorded by the stale and stable identity that the tradition has ascribed to it. In recognizing that the unconditionality of the incalculable cannot be limited by the conditions it itself engendered, one strives toward infinite perfectibility that opens other possibilities within concepts that are supposedly considered closed and self-evident.

In this regard, the freedom that structures democracy makes democracy open to its own perfectibility (Fritsch, “Derrida’s Democracy to Come,” 577). Working within the framework of what Derrida calls “the structure of the promise,” Matthias Fritsch states that democracy-to-come implies openness to “an unownable and unknowable future” which indicates the infinite incompleteness of the concept itself (577). In view of democracy’s autoimmune structure which struggles to find a balance between differing and contending values of freedom and equality, Derrida’s democracy-to-come “call[s] for a militant and interminable political critique [...] aimed at the enemies of democracy, it protests against all naïveté and every political abuse, every rhetoric that would present as a present or existing democracy, as a *de facto* democracy, what remains inadequate to the democratic demand” (R 86). In other words, for Derrida, “democracy-to-come” prevents us from the complacency of dogmatism; rather, it enjoins us to rethink the unconditional excess within democracy that cannot be contained by the conditions of the concept “democracy.”

Since the idea of democracy is structured with freedom and equality—a relationship of aporia that is not and will not be limited by the conditions of *being*—“democracy-to-come” will never exist, in the sense of a present existence” (R 86). Being a structure of promise, “democracy-to-come” will remain beyond being not because it is always deferred to some distant, unreachable future but because it will always be aporetic in its structure (86). In other words, the autoimmunity effected by the symbiosis of conditional and unconditional values in democracy such as freedom and equality, the friend and the enemy, heterogeneity and homogeneity, indivisible sovereignty and shared sovereignty and so on precludes the possibility of a stable, present meaning of democracy making its structure aporetic, hence always “to-come” (86).

Consequently, the aporetic structure of “democracy-to-come” implies a rethinking of democracy that is not limited by the conditions of nation state sovereignty (R 87). Constantly

working towards its perfection, democracy is henceforth self-critical; it remains open to changes in “its concept, its history, and its name [...] including the idea of the constitutional paradigm and the absolute authority of the law” (87). In this regard, “democracy-to-come” involves a rethinking of the concept of sovereignty that poses a challenge to its present conceptualization (87). Reflecting on the post-World War II Declaration of Human Rights, Derrida argues that the rethinking of sovereignty in terms of equality, freedom, and self-determination of human beings is “in virtual contradiction to the principle of nation-state sovereignty, which [...] remains intact” (87). Thus, in affirming the individual as a self-determining sovereign, the “to-come” of democracy directly challenges the idea of the sovereignty of the nation-state, revealing the limits and, most importantly, the autoimmunity of sovereignty in general (88). Illustrating the perfectibility of democracy via the constant questioning of the concept of sovereignty that undergirds it, Derrida demonstrates that “democracy-to-come” does not imply a futurity that has a solid and stable conceptualization of democracy; rather, it points towards a constantly changing concept of democracy that is geared not towards a resolution of the meaning of democracy but towards further self-criticism that upholds as it demonstrates the inherent instability of democracy inscribed in its very structure.

Accordingly, “democracy-to-come” does not only point exclusively towards the unreachable and unknowable future; rather, it is also a structure of the past that reflects the changes and development within the concept itself (Haddad 65). Derrida likewise addresses the temporality of “democracy-to-come” in “Politics and Friendship” stating that the “to-come” of democracy does not mean that

“democracy-to-come” will be simply a future democracy correcting or improving the actual conditions of the so-called democracies, it means first of all that this democracy we dream of is linked in its concept to a promise. The idea of a promise is inscribed in the idea of a democracy: equality, freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press—all these things are inscribed as promised within democracy. Democracy is a promise. That is why it is a more historical concept of the political—it’s the only concept of a regime or a political organization in which history, that is the endless process of improvement and perfectibility, is inscribed within the concept. So it’s a historical concept through and through, and that is why I call it “to-come.” (Derrida qtd in Fritsch 578)

However, according to Haddad, Derrida's response to Michael Sprinker's question on "democracy-to-come's" similarity to Marx's classless society seems to stress the hierarchical importance of its futurity at the expense of its heritage. In *Negotiations* Sprinker asks Derrida: "Would you object to calling what you have been referring to as democracy to come what in the Marxist lexicon would be called the classless society?" To which Derrida answers, "Why not, if the concept of class is totally reconstituted, noting the reservations I formulated a while ago with regard to the concept of class? What's important in "democracy to come" is not "democracy," but "to come." That is, a thinking of the event, of what comes" (N 182). For Haddad, Derrida's emphasis of the "to come" at the expense of "democracy" is akin to discounting "democracy-to-come's" dimension of the past because "it is the past that is evoked in the invocation of this name" (Haddad 65). For Haddad, to affirm that the future matters more than the past is to forget that the heritage of "democracy-to-come" is quite different from the *classless society* that Marx envisions which make the two terms non-interchangeable (65). In other words, according to Haddad, "democracy-to-come's" futurity is linked to the historicity of democracy—to its past that contains "the many connotations of "democracy," the multiple contradictory indeed aporetic meanings that echo from the past into the present when this term is invoked" (65). Working within what Haddad calls Derrida's manner of inheriting from the Western tradition via *surenchere* or the upping of the tension within an inherited concept, this could mean that, for Haddad, Derrida's "democracy-to-come" is a political intervention that does not have a specific temporality; rather, being an inheritance, "democracy-to-come" involves a relation to the past from which one recognizes the limitations of and excess within democracy (65). In this context, focusing on the futurity of "democracy-to-come" contradicts the historicity of democracy—an attribute that propels self-criticism that is geared towards the concept's perfectibility as it demonstrates its autoimmune and aporetic structure.

### **The God-To-Come**

Recalling Louis Capet's decapitation that supposedly ends the King's God-given divine sovereignty, and Derrida's reticence for the complete, remainder-less transfer of political sovereignty from the monarch to the people, we now proceed towards the rethinking of the sovereignty of God and its relation to "democracy-to-come," the aporia of which poses a

problem to the indivisibility and self-sameness of divine power which guarantees all power, including that of democracy.

As Caputo has demonstrated in “Without Sovereignty, Without Being,” the revolution that has replaced the monarch with the constitutional democracy is far from complete regardless of the sense of social equality that it has engendered (Caputo 10). “While we have inverted the old schema,” continues Caputo, “we have not slipped free of its most basic presupposition, that of sovereignty itself which goes unchallenged.” In other words, the revolution is far from complete if all it does is “repopulate the sovereign center with the people, running the lines of power from the bottom up” (10).

Accordingly, in *For What Tomorrow*, Derrida elucidates Schmitt’s concept of the sovereign’s right to suspend laws to divine sovereignty whose power operates even in democracy. To quote Derrida:

Without this category of exception, we cannot understand the concept of sovereignty. Today, the great question is indeed, everywhere, that of sovereignty. Omnipresent in our discourses and in our axioms, under its own name or another, literally or figuratively, this concept has a theological origin: the true sovereign is God. The concept of this authority or of this power was transferred to the monarch, said to have a “divine right.” Sovereignty was then delegated to the people, in the form of democracy, or to the nation, with the same theological attributes as those attributed to the king and to God. (*FWT* 91-92)

As Derrida problematizes the indivisibility of sovereignty via the framework of autoimmunity, it is necessary to remember that Derrida himself states that “to deconstruct the concept of sovereignty [is] to [not] forget its theological filiation and to be ready to call this filiation into question whenever we discern its effects” (Derrida qtd. in Naas 143). In other words, the criticism of sovereignty in politics, particularly in democracy, likewise involves the critique of divine sovereignty which empowers telluric sovereignty.

In this regard, if the thinking of unconditionality has demonstrated that sovereignty, hence democracy, has no being in the form of stable, essential presence, does it follow that the “concept” of the unconditional—in its proclivity to exceed even sovereignty—is “a word of

sovereign force and power, nay, even a word of divine authority” (Caputo 14)? For Naas, the excess of unconditionality explains Derrida’s musing on the “unavowed theologism” that is possibly lodged within his work. To quote Derrida:

In preparing for this lecture, I often asked myself whether everything that seems to link the democracy to come to the specter, or to the coming back or revenance of a messianicity without messianism, might not lead back or be reducible to some unavowed theologism. Not to the One God of the Abrahamic religions, and not to the One God in the political and the monarchic figure spoken of by Plato in the *Statesman* and Aristotle in the *Politics*, and not even to the plural gods who are the citizens of that impossible democracy evoked by Rousseau when he longs for a “people of gods” who if they existed, would govern democratically. (*R* 110)

For Derrida, the thinking of the unconditional is a thinking of the beyond “for which the current conditions of being are no match, something that belongs to another order, that of the call or the promise” (Caputo 14). Since the unconditional exceeds even the sovereign that it engenders, its power is also beyond the force of the sovereign; as such, the unconditionality that creates democratic sovereignty has a structure of a promise “that has not compromised with the conditions of being” (14). Thus, given the relation between the theological idea of the One God and the ipseity of democracy, the thinking of the unconditional needs to be distinguished from the Judeo-Christian idea of salvation whose basis on the sovereignty of the Indivisible One renders it autoimmune; as such, the unconditional which is “neither sovereign nor sacred” is called *khora* (Naas 145).

Thus, the “unavowed theologeme” in Derrida’s thinking of “democracy-to-come” is found in his concept of the *khora*—the being-less specter which he describes in “Faith and Knowledge” as “radically heterogeneous to the safe and sound, to the holy and the sacred” it is, according to Derrida, “neither Being, nor the Good, nor Man, nor History. [...] It is the very place of an infinite resistance, of an infinitely impassible persistence: an utterly faceless other” (FK 58-59). Similarly, the democracy-to-come, which Derrida calls “the *khora* of the political,” is beyond being and is before “any determination and any possible reappropriation by a theologico-political history or revelation” (*R* 82).

As such, “democracy-to-come,” is “the inheritance of a promise” in that it is not an ideal in the Kantian sense in which one has an idea of the ideal; rather, it is a promise because it is open-ended and unknowable (Caputo 19). Moreover, being a figure of the promise, “democracy-to-come” is not a figure of sovereign force wrought by an Almighty. Instead, it is a space beyond any being’s appropriation, making it a fragile and powerless injunction that has no sovereignty or capacity to impose itself (Naas 145). Moreover, being unconditional, “democracy-to-come” resists theological appropriation and in doing so, exceeds sovereignty and its propensity towards autoimmunity (145).

However, according to Naas, despite the fact that Derrida questions the theological heritage of democracy, the concept of the unconditional does not enjoin us to rethink democracy in an atheistic framework (Naas 146). Rather, given his thinking of democracy as a powerless *khora*, Naas contends that Derrida is suggesting that we

negotiate with a god without sovereignty, a god that, like *khora*, would be not only under erasure but compromised in its very sovereignty, not only suffering or withdrawn but vulnerable in its very ipseity, not a god that may come in the future to save us but a god that is essentially autoimmune, that is, a god that one day might not even be called one—and to which we might then, though never without trembling pledge our allegiance. (Naas 146)

## Chapter Four: Animality and Sovereignty

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In *The Beast and the Sovereign Vol. II (BSII)*, Jacques Derrida analyzes Martin Heidegger's 1929-1930 lecture course titled *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (from here on, *The Fundamental Concepts*). Focusing on Heidegger's assertion that the stone is wordless, the animal is poor in the world, and the human *Dasein* is world forming, Derrida points out the symptoms of logocentrism in Heidegger's thesis and the way in which the aporias within this text problematize his attribution of the *logos* exclusively to the human *Dasein*. In doing so, Derrida places Heidegger squarely within Western tradition that rests on the Cartesian valuation of the *logos*—speech and mind—that hierarchizes man over the animal.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis concerns Derrida's analysis of *The Fundamental Concepts* in *The Beast and the Sovereign Vol. II*. Notwithstanding the significance of the entire volume in my research, I draw heavily from the seventh to the tenth sessions of the text that explain Heidegger's three-fold thesis on B/being's relation to the world. Of interest to this thesis chapter is Derrida's uncovering of the aporias within *The Fundamental Concepts* via an exploration of Heidegger's question on world, finitude, and solitude. In this regard, I aim to problematize the Western tradition's view of the animal as a mere instrument that can be used and misused by humans—a view that hinges on man's phantasm of mastery over the animal. In underlining this problem in contemporary ethics, I reiterate Derrida's appeal for a community of differences that acknowledges the multifariousness of beings and is beyond the Cartesian binaries that posit human life as worth more than the mere life of the animal.

Hence, in the succeeding paragraphs, I follow Derrida's critical reading of *The Fundamental Concepts* with respect to the comparison that Heidegger makes between the human *Dasein* and the animal based on the *als-Struktur (as such)* of the *logos* that he attributes exclusively to *Dasein*. Following this, I explore Derrida's analysis of the *as such* in relation to death as proper to the human *Dasein*—an argument that Heidegger makes that further clarifies his stance on the intrinsic poverty of animal vis-à-vis man. Upon discussing Heidegger's interpretation of the *logos* that grounds human sovereignty, I consider Derrida's analysis of the concept of *Walten*—a sovereignty more sovereign than the human sovereign—to problematize

man's claim of absolute mastery of beings demonstrated in his sovereign right to determine whose life matters as seen in contemporary ethical and philosophical discourse.

### **The *Logos* as Proper to Human**

In his last seminar on *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. I, Derrida discusses the Cartesian binaries, particularly the opposition between the sovereign man and the machine-like animal. For Derrida, the distinction between the animal and the human which lies on the latter's supposed capacity to apprehend the *logos*, can be traced on the Western philosophical tradition's interpretation and translation of what we call the animal or animality—a concept which nonetheless does “not have a fixed or univocal meaning” from one language to another (*BSI* 337). In this regard, the problem of translation and interpretation is a vital issue in Derrida's analysis of the man/animal distinction that is maintained in the Western philosophical tradition beginning with Aristotle to Heidegger (Derrida qtd. in Mallet, Foreword, x).

For Derrida, the translation of *logos* as Christ—the Word Incarnate—contributes to the difficulty that the Western canonical tradition continues to face in its effort to justify the absolute distinction of man from the animal (*BSI* 338-339). To illustrate the problem inherent in arguments that hinge on the interpretation of the *logos* as word or speech, Derrida cites Giorgio Agamben whose thesis concerning the opposition between the political life of human (*bios*) and the mere life of the animal (*zoe*) appears fragile in the face of Aristotle's concept of the *zoon politikon* that designates *zoe* as “a life that is qualified and not bare” (327-337). In response to this aporia, according to Derrida, Heidegger argues that the Aristotelian interpretation of the Greek *logos* that underlies the conception of man as a political animal (*zoon logon ekhon*) is already a corruption of its original meaning which denotes the gathering of contraries through force (338). In stating as such, Heidegger appears to deconstruct the Western tradition in its privileging of man over the animal via the *logos* that endows mental capacity to man (338).

However, Heidegger's problematization of the canonical interpretation of the *logos* later reveals his adherence to the Western philosophical tradition. Similar to other Cartesian thinkers, according to Derrida, Heidegger defines animality through the lens of privation—for him, the animal lacks the essential capacities which he grants the human *Dasein* whom he aims to remove from the Aristotelian tradition of designating man as a political animal (*BSI* 346). Furthermore, Derrida suggests that the concept of man as *zoon logon ekhon* is especially problematic for



Heidegger because it implies that the *logos* that is thought to be exclusive to humans is only a belated addition to the undifferentiated *zoon* (life) common to both man and animal (346). Thus, for Derrida, Heidegger indeed offers an interpretation of the *logos* that deviates from the canonical tradition; however, by refusing the *logos* to the *zoon*, Heidegger nonetheless sharpens the man/animal distinction that has been a staple in Western philosophical thought by leaving the animal outside the realm of capacities that are deemed proper to man (346-347).

### **The Absence of the *as such*: The Animal as *Weltarm***

Derrida's discussion of Heidegger's logocentrism continues in the second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*. In Session 7 of the text, Derrida questions the thinking of the animal as *Weltarm*—a terminology that denotes the essence of animal as inherently inferior to the human *Dasein* (BSII 198). Recalling Heidegger's three theses that are articulated in *The Fundamental Concepts*, Derrida questions Heidegger's thesis on the animal as poor in the world in its generalization of all kinds of animals under one unified category (196). For Derrida, such generalization implies a "positive knowledge that is poor, primitive, dated, [and] lacunary"—a thinking that demonstrates the human *Dasein*'s phantasm that he possesses absolute mastery over the essence of the animal (197). In relation to this, Derrida argues that Heidegger is evidently anthropocentric—an orientation that goes against his early criticism of Descartes' failure to question everything except the certainty of the "I" (197-199). It can be recalled that near the beginning of *The Fundamental Concepts*, Heidegger complains that

Descartes' fundamental tendency was to make philosophy into absolute knowledge. Precisely with him we see something remarkable. Here philosophizing begin with doubt, and it seems as though everything is put into question. Yet it only seems so. *Dasein*, the I (the ego), is not put into question at all. This illusion and this ambiguity of a critical stance runs right through the whole modern philosophy up to the most recent present [...] [*D*]asein itself is never put into question. A fundamental Cartesian stance in philosophy cannot in principle put the *Dasein* of man into question at all; for it would thereby destroy itself at the outset in its most proper intention. (Heidegger 20)

Notwithstanding his anti-Cartesian polemic, Heidegger remains properly Cartesian in his certainty that all animals—from the cellular amoeba to the mammalian anthropoids—are similar in their intrinsic lack vis-à-vis the human *Dasein* who is *Weltbildend* or world-forming (BSII 197). Hence, in his method of comparison, Heidegger defines animality in the way that it appears to human beings who imagine the essence of the animal in terms of his interest or need—an orientation that is Cartesian as it is anthropocentric (198-199).

Following what it seems to be a non-critical critique of the Western philosophical tradition, Heidegger iterates his theses concerning human's and animal's relation to the world (Heidegger 177). To quote Heidegger:

Man is not merely part of the world but is also a master and servant in the sense of “having” world. Man has world. But then what about the other beings, which like man are also part of the world: the animal and plants, the material things like the stone, for example? Are they merely parts of the world, as distinct from man who in addition has world? Or does the animal too have the world, and if so in what way? In the same way as man, or in some other way? And how could we grasp this otherness? And what about the stone? However crudely, certain distinctions immediately manifest themselves here. We can formulate these distinctions in the following three theses: [1] the stone is worldless; [2] the animal is poor in the world; [3] man is world forming. (Heidegger 177)

In *The Animal That Therefore I am* (2008), Derrida explains that Heidegger arrived at these theses by taking the path of comparative examination that involves the determination of the essence of the living being (*ATT* 153). Upon stating his theses, according to Derrida, Heidegger chooses to proceed with his explanation of the differentiation of beings via his middle thesis: the animal as *Weltarm* (153-154). Although such orientation is in accordance with Heidegger's goal of clarifying the distinct attributes of the human *Dasein* from other beings, Derrida posits that Heidegger is contradicting himself within the seminar. Recalling what Heidegger said on the necessity of determining “the essence of the life of the living” before one can determine the animality of the animal or the humanity of man, Derrida argues that Heidegger's technique of comparing animality to humanity presupposes that the animal is a living thing (*BSII* 113). The analogy between man and animal as living beings also implies that the animal shares a common

finitude with *Dasein*—a finitude which Heidegger nonetheless denies the animal in his later works (114-115). This aporia is found on Section 61 of *The Fundamental Concepts*:

The question concerning the essence of life in relation to the question concerning the essence of death is just as the question concerning the essence of life in relation to the essence of the organism. [...] And just as it remains questionable whether we can speak of the organism as a historical or even historic being, so too it is questionable whether death and death are the same in case of man and animal, even if we can identify a psycho-chemical and physiological equivalence between the two. From what has been said already it is easy to see that in captivity, as the fundamental structure of life, certain quite determinate possibilities of death, of approaching death are prefigured. Is the death of the animal a dying or a way of coming to an end? Because captivity belongs to the essence of the animal, the animal cannot die in the sense in which dying is ascribed to human beings but can only come to an end. (Heidegger 267)

Referring to Heidegger's statement on death, Derrida opens the discussion of Heidegger's second thesis: his thinking of the animal as *Weltarm*. Fundamental to Heidegger's conceptualization of the animal as poor in the world is the link between death and benumbment: the animal cannot die a proper death—the death *as such* experienced by the human *Dasein*—because its intrinsic captivity (*Benommenheit*) hinders it from relating to death *as such* (*BSII* 116). It is thus the *as such*—the capacity that enables *Dasein* to relate to beings as beings—that is lacking in the animal's captivity. Thus, according to Heidegger's thesis, animality is thus defined by its lack of what is proper to the human *Dasein*. This difference in relating to the world is further enunciated in Section 72 of *The Fundamental Concepts* in which Heidegger demonstrates his interpretation of Aristotle's concept of man as *zoon politikon* through the lens of the *as such*:

There belongs to man a being open for [...] of such a kind that this being open for...has the character of apprehending something as something. This kind of relating to beings we call comportment, as distinct from the behavior of the animal. Thus, man is a *zoon logon ekhon*, whereas the animal is *alogon*. (Heidegger 306)

Continuing his examination of Heidegger's thesis on the animal, Derrida, in Session 8 of *The Beast and the Sovereign* Vol. II summarizes Heidegger's mode of distinction between *Dasein* and the animal based on the being's relation to the world: first, a relation to beings *as such* which is the comportment (*Verhalten*) of man, and second, a relation to beings but not to beings *as beings*; in other words, without the apprehension of beings *as such* (BSII 218). This behavior which is intrinsic to the animal is in opposition to man's comportment (*Verhalten*) by virtue of man's *als-Struktur* or the ability to apprehend beings in their proper essence (218). Paradoxically, despite his criticism of the Cartesian treatment of the *logos*, Heidegger claims that the *als-Struktur* is already present in Aristotle's concept of the *logos*—an interpretation that, for Heidegger, is unique in the history of philosophy (Heidegger 306). He then demonstrates this claim by discussing prayer vis-à-vis Aristotle's concept of the *logos semantikos* and how it is differentiated from *logos apophantikos*.

### **Heidegger's Interpretation of Aristotle's Concept of the *Logos***

Derrida states that, according to Aristotle, every *logos* is *semantikos*, which means that “every *logos* gives something to be heard, to be understood, it has some intelligibility, it signifies” (BSII 219). Being the most general form of the *logos*, Heidegger, according to Derrida, classifies prayer in the *logos semantikos* along with making a wish (219). Derrida clarifies this categorization by stating that for Heidegger, intelligibility and giving to be heard belongs to prayer as it belongs to discursive language, to wish, to questioning, and to remembering—a categorization that demonstrates that Heidegger groups together what Derrida calls the performative mode of the *logos* (219). However, according to Derrida, Heidegger nonetheless denies *logos* to prayer because it is non-apophantic. In Derrida's analysis, Heidegger's denial of the *logos apophantikos* from prayer is in view of the latter's larger project of demonstrating that the animal lacks this *logos*; for in identifying Aristotle's *logos apophantikos* as an enunciative proposition, Heidegger categorizes prayer as non-enunciative because it is not a making-known that informs but rather, a form of a request (216). In other words, for Derrida, Heidegger identifies prayer not as “making-known” but as a performance of a “praying another” (216).

Now Derrida locates a tension in Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle's argument on prayer through which Heidegger expounds on the animal's lack of the *logos semantikos*,

particularly, the *logos apophantikos*. In Section 72 of *The Fundamental Concepts*, according to Derrida, the same section in which he affirms prayer as belonging to *logos semantikos*, Heidegger reverts to his second thesis concerning the world poverty of the animal by arguing that a *logos* is semantic “only by *suntheke*, by conventional arrangement, by positing of a conventional law, and not *phusei*, by nature” (BSII 219). Heidegger, Derrida continues, connects this interpretation to what Aristotle states about *suntheke* or convention as being made possible through the *sumbolon* or symbol (219-220). Since the *sumbolon* is not of nature, Heidegger argues that the animal—which is of nature and therefore has no access to symbols—does not signify anything when it cries (220). To quote *The Fundamental Concepts*:

The unarticulated sounds that animals produce by themselves indeed indicate something: animals can even reach agreement among themselves, as we are accustomed to saying—though inappropriately. Yet none of these utterances that animals themselves produce are words: they are merely noises. They are vocal utterances that lack something, namely meaning. The animal does not mean or understand its call. (Heidegger 306)

Since the language that signifies is enabled by *logos apophantikos*—the source of the *as such*—which in turn is enabled by *sumbolon*, the animal does not only produce sound that has no meaning but is also inhibited from relating to the world *as such* or to beings *as such* or to death *as such* (BSII 221-222). For Derrida, the argument on the animal’s privation of *sumbolon* is important to Heidegger’s second thesis because in asserting that even the most basic form of the *logos*—the non-enunciative *semantikos*—is not available to animals by virtue of the non-natural *sumbolon*, it follows that the *logos apophantikos*—the *logos* that signifies meaning—is thoroughly beyond the apprehension of the animal.

Derrida continues his analysis of *The Fundamental Concepts* by studying Heidegger’s claim of the presence of the *as such* in Aristotle’s *logos apophantikos*. For Derrida, Heidegger further disenfranchises the animal through the elucidation of the *logos* as voice (*phonē*) in opposition to meaningless sound. For Heidegger, according to Derrida, the *logos* is demonstrated in the human voice not because the voice is a supplement or a belated addition to the animal sound but because voice comes first—in other words, the voice is an originary attribute of the human *Dasein* (BSII 220-221). For Derrida, this indicates that convention comes first than the

physical sound, an interpretation that Heidegger applies to Aristotle's *kata suntheken* (conventional) as being dependent on the *sumbolon* (221). Later in Session 8 of *The Beast and the Sovereign* Vol. II, Derrida criticizes Heidegger's reliance on the distinction between *phusei* and *kata suntheken* to denote the animal's lack of artificial or conventional signs. For Derrida, ancient and contemporary zoological science demonstrates that wordlessness is not a proof of senselessness because even non-verbal language can be a product of convention not only among humans but also among animals (222).

### **Translation as Interpretation**

Derrida also observes a tension within Heidegger's thought on the problem of translation, one of which I mentioned at the beginning of this paper. In *The Fundamental Concepts*, according to Derrida, Heidegger also gives an explanation on the problems that result from the traditional practice of interpreting the Greek *physis* as nature which gives rise to the opposition between *physis/nomos*, *physis/sumbolon* when there is no opposition in its original Greek sense (BSII 222). In response to this, Derrida argues that Heidegger's *physis* in the context of our discussion is not the original Greek *physis* that the latter said should not be reduced to nature; for Derrida, it appears that the *physis* that Heidegger wants to distinguish from *natura* is not the Greek originary corruption but the post Cartesian concept of *physis* as *natura* (222). Thus, in light of the aporias within *The Fundamental Concepts*, Derrida states that Heidegger "brings his own inflection to the reading of Aristotle, by appropriating, i.e. translating Aristotle's hidden or occulted meaning into his own discourse, or into his own vocabulary" so that it supports his interpretations (223). Heidegger is able to do this, according to Derrida, through his use of the German terminologies *Ubereinkunft* (agreement) and *Transzendenz* (transcendence) (223).

Significant to this chapter's discussion is Heidegger's use of *Transzendenz*. According to Derrida, Heidegger introduces transcendence—or "projecting oneself in order to relate to beings *as such*"—not as a translation of anything but as a means to emphasize the *as such* as proper to man (BSII 226). For Heidegger, transcendence is "the movement of *Dasein's Verhalten*"—the comportment of man toward the *as such* that is lacking in the bedazzled animal (226). In this regard, only *Dasein* transcends and on this basis, only *Dasein* has the *as such*; however, because *Transzendenz* is not exactly a translation in the sense that *Ubereinkunft* is, Heidegger, according to Derrida, is careful to include this concept in Aristotle's idea of the *sumbolon* by translating the

latter as transcendence “as though he were making explicit the insight of a genius” which even Aristotle is not quite properly aware of (226). Derrida refers to Section 72 of *The Fundamental Concepts*:

What Aristotle sees quite obscurely under the title *symbolon*, sees only approximately, and without any explication, in looking at it quite ingeniously, is nothing other than what we today call transcendence. There is language [*Es gibt Sprache*] only in the case of a being that by its essence transcends. This is the sense of Aristotle’s thesis that *logos* is *kata suntheken*. I have no inclination to recall what people have made of his Aristotelian thesis when interpreting it. (Heidegger 308-309)

Thus, in his interpretation of Aristotle’s *symbolon* as transcendence along with its implication that language is a product of transcendence, Heidegger furthers his thesis on the animal as *Weltarm*—as lacking access to the *as such* because at the bottom, it cannot transcend unlike the human *Dasein* (*BSII* 226). Later on in *The Fundamental Concepts*, Heidegger, according to Derrida, states that the classical interpretation regarding *symbolon* have failed in emphasizing the distinction between animal and human *Dasein* because these interpretations rest on the translation of language as *thesei* and not *phusei*, which implies that sound is more originary than voice—that before there is convention that creates language, *Dasein* shares a common natural sound with animals (227).

Derrida states that the interpretation that language does not develop from animal sounds is important in Heidegger’s claim that human language is as originary as animal sound (*BSII* 227). In *The Fundamental Concepts*, Heidegger explicates that the essential comportment of human beings toward one another (*Mitsein*) enables the emergence of language (Heidegger 309). In other words, explains Derrida, language intrinsically belongs to humans insofar as they are intrinsically comported to others through which they share the transcendence that allows them to access the being of beings (*BSII* 227). Thus, by virtue of the concept of *Transzendenz* intrinsic to humans in their togetherness, according to Derrida, Heidegger is able to explain that the language brought by convention (*Umgekehrt*) is as originary as natural or animal sound (227). In other words, because of the intrinsic human comportment toward one another, *Dasein* is able to

transcend and with that relate to the *as such*, proving that humans and animals do not share a common ground even from the beginning.

### **Truth and Falsity**

Related to the discussion of the capacity of human *Dasein* to access the essence of beings through language, Derrida inquires on the distinction between *logos apophantikos* and *logos semantikos* when these “two *logoi* are equally *semantikoï*” (*BSII* 228). This question locates the aporia in Heidegger’s distinction between the two *logi* in that it reveals Heidegger’s arbitrary standard through which he assigns prayer as *semantikos* but non-enunciative therefore not *apophantikos* (228). To answer this question and to further reveal the aporetic ideas within *The Fundamental Concepts*, Derrida quotes Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle’s definition of the *logos apophantikos*: “apophantic *logos* [enunciative discourse] is the discourse in which we find truth and falsity”(228).

However, according to Derrida, Heidegger does not find this interpretation satisfactory because it does not capture the original Greek meaning (*BSII* 228). Hence, Heidegger—being preoccupied with opening a new path that leads to the original path—departs from tradition by interpreting *logos apophantikos* based on its essence; that it is enunciative discourse because its essence is truth and falsity (Heidegger 310). In other words, truth and falsity is not merely found in *logos apophantikos* but these two elements grounds or contributes to its essence (310). Moreover, according to Derrida, Heidegger interprets the falsity in Aristotle’s truth and falsity as “the middle form, *pseudesthai*” which implies “that the enunciative, apophantic *logos* is a *logos* one of the features of which is that it is able to be deceitful, and thus the fact of deceit belongs to the essence of *logos* (*BSII* 229). In this sense, Heidegger defines the *logos* in terms of deceit, of lying, “the power to have something pass (*vorgeben*), to pass of something as what the thing is not, the power to make believe, to pretend, to have pass for (*vorgeben*)” (229).

Derrida states that related to Heidegger’s association of *Vorgeben/Verbergen/Vorbergen* to *logos* is his concept of deceit or dissimulation as belonging to the possibility of speaking truth (*BSII* 229). The *logos apophantikos*, explains Derrida, can speak of the truth only by withdrawing from deceit, lying and retreat, or even from error as such” (230). Thus, the ability to pass a lie as truth presupposes *Verborgen* (dissimulation) and the *Entbergen* (unconcealing) (229). In defining the *logos* in terms of the capacity to lie and to tell the truth, Heidegger is not



only able to deny the animal the capacity for deceit or dissimulation as it lacks the enunciative *logos* but is also able to attribute power to the possibility of lying and uncovering the truth (229-230).

This denial is important to Heidegger's larger goal of differentiating man from the animal because in asserting that the capacity to lie belongs only to the human *Dasein*, Heidegger, according to Derrida, is able to illustrate the capacities that are missing from the animal by virtue of its lack of the *logos apophantikos* (BSII 230). Recalling what I have discussed about *logos semantikos* being proper to *Dasein* because of its *sumbolon*, it is thus clear that not only is the animal unable to have the capacity to speak words that have meaning; rather it also lacks the transcendence that enables *Dasein* to access the *as such*.

### **Logos as Power**

Derrida further explores the notion of capacity as power in Session 9 of *The Beast and the Sovereign* Vol. II. Here, Derrida analyzes Heidegger's attribution of power to *logos* in Section 73 of *The Fundamental Concepts* (BSII 237). For Derrida, the capacity to lie is a prerequisite in Heidegger's conception of the *logos*, therefore of *Dasein* as *zoon logon ekhon* because in asserting as such, in putting the *pseudesthai* as originary along with the truth, Heidegger is able to translate capacity as power (*Vermogen*); hence *logos* as power (241-243). Following this analysis, Derrida devotes the rest of Session 8 in discussing the centrality of power in Heidegger's treatment of the *logos apophantikos*.

Derrida gives two reasons why the question of power in Heidegger's text must be raised and evaluated: first, the Western tradition determines the distinction between man and animal through the criterion of power; and second, the issue of *Walten* which Derrida translates as power, is pervasive in Heidegger's study of the difference between man and animal (BSII 243). That the canonical tradition uses the criterion of power in determining the man/animal binary is evident in the post-Cartesian philosophers. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Derrida claims that thinkers from Aristotle to Lacan, including Heidegger—as demonstrated in his notion of the *logos apophantikos*—have assessed the differentiation of the animal from human beings through the framework of power (*pouvoir*) and non-power—the capacity or the incapacity of beings to speak, to die, or to lie (243). Despite the dominance of this oppositional criterion in the Western thought, Derrida suggests that it is more important to focus on

passivity—on suffering or on vulnerability—in the analysis of beings (244). Drawing from Jeremy Bentham’s statement, “The question is not ‘can the animal do this or do that, speak, reason, die etc?’ but ‘can the animal suffer?’” Derrida argues that it is more important to inquire about the vulnerability that we share with the animal rather than assess man’s relationship to the animal via the framework of power (243-244). For Derrida, studying the difference between man and animal in the framework of passivity enables the human to recognize the vulnerability and the non-power he shares with the animal in the face of suffering (244). This recognition, I suppose, could possibly lead to a relationship based on compassion toward the other—an affectivity that is not possible in a discourse of war between power and non-power that currently dominates the Western philosophical scene.

The discussion of *Walten* as an originary power occupies a significant place in Derrida’s discussion of Heidegger’s view on animality. Drawing from Heidegger’s view that the essence of the *logos* originates from the possibility of truth and falsity, Derrida discusses the leap that Heidegger makes in linking possibility (*Möglichkeit*) with power (*Vermogen*)—“as though he were merely translating and making explicit *Möglichkeit*” (245). To quote the passage in question in *The Fundamental Concepts*:

By ability we always understand the possibility [*Möglichkeit*] of a comportment toward i.e., the possibility of a relation to beings *as such*. The *logos* is an ability, i.e. it intrinsically entails having a relation toward being *as such* at one’s disposal. In contrast to this, we called capacity [*Fähigkeit*] the possibility of behaving, of being related to something in a captivated and taken manner. (Heidegger 337)

Indeed for Heidegger, according to Derrida, the animal has the possibility to relate to beings in the world but because of their intrinsic captivation (*Benommenheit*) that keeps them within a metaphorical ring, the animal, in effect, does not have the power to relate to beings *as such* (*BSII* 245). Reflecting on the possibility of truth and falsity that grounds the essence of the *logos apophantikos*, Derrida underlines the link that Heidegger makes in relating possibility to power through his assignation of power to *logos* in the revealing of the truth or the concealment of a lie (246). Heidegger’s recourse to power, according to Derrida enables the “emergence of the human beyond the animal of the *zoon logon ekhon* beyond the *zoon alogon*, and therefore of

the human signifier beyond the animal code or signal”—a discussion that is also found in Jacques Lacan’s seminar titled *The Formation of the Unconscious* (246).

For Derrida, Lacan’s seminar is as problematic as *The Fundamental Concepts*; similar to Heidegger’s text, *The Formation* argues for the distinction between a hollow signifier and a fully-developed signifier (*BSII* 247). Drawing from Lacan’s seminar in which he enunciates the possibility of the animal having some signifier, Derrida raises the possibility that the human being’s fully developed signifier has emerged from a less-developed signifier of the animal which further reveals the aporia in *The Formations* that discusses the passage from “signifying chains” that eventually develops into the human voice (247-248). However, instead of recognizing this possibility, Lacan, according to Derrida, reverts back to the original canonical discourse of the animal as lacking the enunciative signifier that echoes Heidegger’s thesis on the language-deprived animal (245-251). Recalling Heidegger’s interpretation of the *logos apophantikos* as a power to accede to the truth by withdrawing from *pseudesthai*, Derrida argues for the congruence between the thinking of Lacan and Heidegger in their assignation of passivity to the animal and ability to man through the *logos* (251). In both cases, according to Derrida, there is a distinction between powers—a non-power and power—between man and the animal (251).

### **Walten**

Related to Derrida’s discussion of the difference between ontological capacities is the question on the power of the *als-Struktur* to differentiate between beings. Referring to Lacan’s argument on the passage of speech from being underdeveloped to being fully-developed, Derrida raises his query on the whys and wherefores of the becoming power of the *als-Struktur* when it is presupposed to be a different ontology such as nature (*BSII* 252). With this, Derrida opens the concept of *Walten* and how it relates to the *as such* as *Vermogen* (252). To quote Derrida:

The point is to think how it is, precisely with beings *as such*, how beings *as such* appear, and the mode of this event, of this arrival as unveiling or non-occultation. Here we must be more attentive than ever to the letter of Heidegger’s German. In the eyes of people in a hurry and impatient to find themselves at home with the language they believe they know and with somnolent self-evidences (and that might be the German of many Germans or

the French of many French)—in the eyes of those people, Heidegger’s writing can sometimes look like an unjustified or annoying game. But here it bears all the weight of what is more seriously at stake at the moment when the most subtle differences are all the most decisive [...] At stake here precisely is the difference of the different, the difference in the same and even as the same, and of the far from obvious difference between Being and beings. Between beings and beings *as such*. (BSII 252-253)

Following this passage Derrida examines Heidegger’s concept of the arrival of the *as such* which eventually leads to a differentiation of beings via power. Since there is a complete and ontological distinction between beings and beings *as such* brought about by “the supervening of an absolute alterity” of the *as such* Derrida searches further for the emergence of that which enables the concept of power that forces itself over the absolute other (254-255).

This is where Derrida’s reading of *Austrag* takes significance. Reading Heidegger’s *Identity and Difference* against the background of *The Fundamental Concepts*, Derrida states that the *Austrag*—which is often translated in French as conciliation that arbitrates the difference—brings the difference to an end (BSII 255-256). However, Derrida sees another meaning behind the objective translation of *Austrag*: “it is in the *Austrag* that it *waltet*” (256). In a quote that he borrows from *Identity and Difference*, Derrida underscores as he comments on the *Austrag* through “a clearing of what veils and closes itself off, which *Walten vergibt* (gives, forgives, misgives, etc.) (256). Through the analysis of the interpretation of the French (mis)translation of the German word *vergibt* and its implication, Derrida uncovers the powerful *Walten* within the *Austrag* that gives the differentiation between beings (256). Thus in interpreting the *Austrag* that *waltet* away from the canonical French, Derrida locates the source of the becoming power of the ontological difference between two possibilities.

In continuation of the discussion on *Walten*, Derrida, in the last session of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. II, examines the ramification of uncovering a different interpretation of the originary force that *waltet*—that forgives, misgives differences as it conciliates. Here, Derrida raises the implication of interpreting this force (*Walten*) as sovereignty when it is clear that Heidegger’s text is haunted by the aporia of absolute alterity of the human and the animal, hence beyond comparison. Recalling that the Western canonical tradition “from Descartes to Kant and to Lacan” depends on the *as such*—to *logos apophantikos*—to prove the sovereign mastery of

the human *Dasein* over the animal, Derrida reflects on the non-sovereignty of *Dasein* vis-à-vis *Walten* which is the origin of his sovereign power. Reflecting on what Derrida states at the beginning of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. II regarding *physis* as *Walten*, we now come to a definition that describes the hyper-sovereignty of *physis* whose power is beyond nature—beyond the objective world (*BSII* 278). Moreover, in Session Ten of this text, Derrida describes *Walten* in *Austrag* as “which that appeals to a sovereign so sovereign that it exceeds the theological and political—and especially onto-theological—figures or determinations of sovereignty” (278). Derrida’s reading of *Walten* in Heidegger’s 1959 text, *Identity and Difference*, reveals the role of hyper-sovereignty that pervades *The Fundamental Concept* (279-280). For Derrida, the concept of *Walten* underlies the terminologies in the 1929-1930 Heideggerian lectures, each of them presupposing an excess of sovereign power (280).

Continuing on with his discussion of *Walten*, Derrida raises Gilbert Kahn’s translation of *Walten* as the power not in the sense of a sovereign lord that reigns; rather, it is, in Heidegger’s German context, a sovereign force in poetry that imposes itself—*Waltet* itself—above the objective world (*BSII* 281). In other words, Heidegger’s *Walten* is not a neutral force or being that translations made it appear to be but a violence that renders all knowledge—science and philosophy—subordinate to it (282). Implying the loss of the idiomatic, properly German meaning of *Walten* in its translation to another language, Derrida states the following:

The fold that must be remarked here is that this poetic and spiritual sovereignty of language, as Heidegger will make clear immediately afterward, itself signs, in a sense, the untranslatable and idiomatic use of the *Walten* itself. It is a word and above all a writing gesture, a singular pragmatic use, signed by Heidegger, who presenting himself as a faithful thinking inheritor of the German language, is going ceaselessly to affirm and refine the vocabulary and syntax of *Walten*, in defiance of all translatability, to designate what is most difficult and necessary to think, to know [...] Being, the Being of beings, the difference (without difference), the *Unter-Schied* between Being and beings, and thus the *as such*, the apophantic, the *als-Struktur*, etc. (*BSII* 282)

In view of what is stated above, the determination that it is “in the *Austrag* that *waltet*” is better understood if we take into consideration the cultural context from which Heidegger

defines it. The sovereign power that dominates, imposes itself, as per Heidegger, is a spiritual power that is nothing—a non-being Being, that is “different from beings, although not other than beings (*BSII* 284). Being a non-Being being, this sovereignty is an unusual (*ungewöhnlich*) sovereignty that is pre-ontological as it incites “panic, anguish, [and] respectful fear” toward those who are subordinate to it (286). In this thinking of *Walten* as pre-dominant, *Ungewöhnlich* force, the sovereignty of the human *Dasein* that is said to be the embodiment of sovereign potency, is put into question; if the pre-ontological *Walten* dominates everything (*Überwältigende*) even nature, it follows that all beings—even the human *Dasein* and the animal—are suffused with this power. In this sense, according to Derrida, *Walten* is the essence of beings—they are *deinon* (strange, violent) of the first order, which does not spare even the *logos* (286-287). As such, for Derrida, since the human *Dasein* is essentially subordinated to the *Überwältigende* of *Walten*, man is doubly frightening: not only is he exposed to this excessive power, he is also capable of doing violence himself—a violence that nonetheless does not originate from him as much as the ability to speak using language, to comprehend, or to create (287).

Derrida further explicates the passivity or non-power of the human *Dasein* in the face of *Walten*. Referring to the pervasiveness of *Walten* over and in B/beings, Derrida discusses how the *Walten* of all non-human beings in the world “circum-dominates” (*umwaltet*) man (*BSII* 288). *Dasein*'s encirclement in power—a seeming reversal of the encirclement of the animal in a ring of benubment—is nonetheless an encirclement in passivity as it implies a sense of bedazzlement in the face of a pervasive power that *waltet* him. Following Kahn's interpretation of the German *Walten*, Derrida states that the *Walten* that pervades all beings “oppresses [...] and inflames [the human *Dasein*] insofar as speech—that which is believed to be proper to man—“grips him with its violent predominance, and grips him with this *Walten as such*, as the very thing that man, [...] as the being that he himself is, [...] must properly assume” (288). In other words, *Dasein*'s power to apprehend the *as such* is actually a potency that is rooted in an impotence that he cannot transcend. The *as such* as power is a power that grips man—it imposes itself to man who in turn “takes it on and takes it directly into his power” (288). The *as such*—and all the capacities that the human *Dasein* assumes for himself and denies the animal—is a power that is obtained by his being gripped by a sovereign whose force exceeds him.

Derrida further explains the implication of the hyper-sovereignty of *Walten* in the last pages of Session 10. In light of Heidegger's determination of *Walten* as *physis* in *The Fundamental Concepts*, Derrida refers to *The Introduction of Metaphysics* in which Heidegger explicates the origin of *Walten* as idea (*eidōs*) (BSII 289). According to Heidegger, *logos* acquires the attribute of *Durchwalten* of the originary *physis* "when Beings to know *physis*, after the dehisson of *logos* and of *physis*, receives the predominant name of idea or of *eidōs*" which Derrida interprets as follows: For *Dasein*, *Dasein* is *physis* and as such "imposes on itself an end, as a name which gives the measure, which is *vorwaltender*, predominant, hegemonic, the word [...] idea" (289). In forgetting that he is, at first gripped by *Walten*, man assumes that "he is the author, the master and possessor, and the inventor of these powers;" it is for this reason, according to Derrida, that man is a stranger to his own humanity—a reversal from the canonical tradition's valuation of *Dasein* as the being whose as such enables him to claim mastery over the being of all beings" (288).

Reflecting on the path that leads from man's absolute power over non-human beings to the powerlessness that he shares with animals, I think it is important to think about how an individual's orientation can affect the interpretation of a word or concept that in itself has no equivalent outside of its native context. The implications of closing a text—of not examining it through a different lens—are as myriad as they are serious: accepting a certain interpretation as canonical without undertaking a critical study of the context from which such concepts emerged results in the privileging of a particular perspective over other possible interpretations. Translation, as Derrida demonstrates in his examination of Heidegger's translation of Aristotle, is already an act of interpretation in that it involves a masterful sleight of hand—or sleight of words—that changes the meaning of the word, giving rise to a whole new set of connotations and implications that are foreign to its original. Thus, I argue that translation and interpretation involve power as it licenses one person to maintain a particular position that orients the Western tradition with their claim for knowledge that is deemed to be absolute and indubitable.

In this regard, it helps to reflect on Derrida's analogy between beings and islands—of the many diverse beings that inhabit Robinson Crusoe's island (BSII 2-4). Allowing ourselves to think about the possibility that we do not know—that we do not have absolute mastery of all life, even of our own life, of the phenomena within and outside our world—leads to a different way of relating to others—both humans and non-humans—that is beyond the framework of power. It

ushers us toward a relationship that is based on the acceptance of our shared vulnerability with other beings—a vulnerability that is rooted in the understanding that human knowledge is different and limited and is not comparable to the capacities and limitations that other beings possess.



## Conclusion

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Looking back on the four chapters in which I study Derrida's research on the concept of sovereignty in relation to topics such as politics, friendship, democracy, and "the animal," I suggest some questions that might be asked in light of Derrida's deconstruction of seemingly "established" and "well-meaning" concepts: Does Derrida, in his thinking of difference and autoimmunity promote the doing away of identities? Does he, in analyzing the theological heritage of secular sovereignty, call for its destruction so that a new system of law, one that is purely secular, can be created? Does he, in tracing the androcentric heritage of friendship and citizenship, demand for the abolition of such masculine constructs? Does he, in revealing the tensions within democracy, suggest that "democracy-to-come" is the pure, ideal form of democracy that we ought to achieve in the future?

Contrary to accusations that he is a poison and a computer virus that is out to destroy philosophy because his work is "pure nihilism" (*P* 405-406), Derrida responds that he is against nihilism and that "his way of thinking [...] is affirmative and not nihilist" (406). Commenting on the public media's claim that deconstruction is the "end of philosophy" and that it promotes "a destructive attitude toward texts and traditions and truth, toward the most honorable names in the philosophical heritage," Derrida states that deconstruction, as it is called, "has never opposed institutions as such, philosophy as such, discipline as such" (*DN* 4-5). Rather, it is affirmative because it does not merely conserve and repeat an inherited tradition but attempts to transform, and open the tradition to what is life-giving in it—all while keeping its heritage alive (5-6).

Examining the four chapters in this thesis in which he encounters Plato, Aristotle, Bodin, Hobbes, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, Lacan, Heidegger, among others in his analysis of law, friendship, democracy, and "the animal," Derrida demonstrates that he "is a lover of institutions" but one who "is suspicious of institutional power" (*DN* 50). Deconstruction, in other words, do not operate outside the tradition; rather, it requires knowledge of and "respect for the great texts, for the texts of the Greeks and of others, too" (9). However, Derrida does not intend to reproduce or to conserve this heritage in ways that mimic the "style of a particular institution, within a more or less well protected—or rather less and less well protected—social and professional environment" (*P* 411); instead, his work involves the analysis of these texts "to find out how their thinking works or does not work, to find the tensions, the contradictions, the heterogeneity

within their own corpus” (*DN* 9). In such a way, Derrida attempts to “open the institution to its own future,” thereby keeping it from stagnation and death.

In contrast to the allegation that it is a destruction of institutions, particularly of philosophy (*DN* 36), deconstruction is, first and foremost, about the tradition, its texts and its heritage; it is about reading Plato, Aristotle, and other thinkers who are inheritors of this Greco-Christian philosophy. As demonstrated in the manner in which Derrida explores the tensions within canonical texts, deconstruction is not a method or tool that occurs externally but “something which happens and which happens inside” the texts (9). For instance, in Chapter Two in which I discuss *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida deconstructs the Western concept of friendship and of citizenship by tracing its phallogocentric heritage. Referring to canonical texts such as that of Plato, Aristotle, Montaigne, Nietzsche, and Schmitt, Derrida points out the tension within their view of friendship as a relationship between males; for him, the aporias within Western the concept of fraternity—a concept that seeps into the contemporary notion of democracy along with equality and liberty—reveals that the figure of the brother also contains within it the figure of the enemy. As such, it demonstrates that clear, oppositional distinctions between the friend and the enemy based on traditional concepts of blood and soil are not so clear after all; deconstruction, in this case, reminds us that the enemy can be found within our midst—even in our own brothers—and that a friend can be found among others whom we categorized as enemies (*PF* 94-95)—interpretations that are all found within the canonical texts however aporetic it seems.

Such rereading is an instance of deconstruction which shows that there are heterogeneities within the canon. Instead of trying to solve the inconsistencies and the tensions within a particular concept, deconstruction nurtures these differences which undo any sense of undifferentiated and pure identity; which brings us back to the question regarding deconstruction as destruction—the alleged destroyer of establishments and identities, according to its critics. If deconstruction, in its penchant for leaving inconsistencies as they are, emphasizes differences, can one say that it encourages the abolition of unity and identity?

Derrida states that “we need unity, some gathering, some configuration”—hence he does not suggest that we destroy all forms of unity (*DN* 13). Instead, he calls for “difference within identity” which implies that an identity has differences within itself that preclude a concept of pure identity (13). In other words, deconstruction involves the realization that unity is not unified

at all; rather an identity contains traces of differences, of tensions which suggest that otherness is a part of singularity, that one is not one with one's self (13-14). As such, for Derrida, a differentiated identity "prevents totalitarianism, nationalism, egocentrism" because it opens itself to the other whose singularity is transcendent and unreachable by any form of knowledge—a relation known to Blanchot and Levinas as a "relation without relation" because it denotes a non-mastery of the other (13-14).

For Derrida, such transcendence is "not an obstacle but the condition of love, of friendship, and of war, too, a condition of the relation to the other" (*DN* 14). In other words, as I understand it, the other is an other insofar as his singularity remains; no relation to the other can be had without singularity because such relation is a self-same relation—a theme in the canonical thinking of friendship demonstrated as a relationship of equality among men. In contrast to a self-identical relation to the other, Derrida's theorization of the differentiated self cannot claim an enclosed, self-sufficient self; rather, a differentiated self is open to the other because it would no longer have the concept of pure identity through which he excludes the ones who differ from him (106).

Derrida relates such openness to differences to democracy "which is an idea that is at once uniquely Greco-European *and* an idea that, detaching itself from its Greco-European moorings and genealogy, is still to come" (*DN* 122). Despite its heritage, democracy-to-come is not a regulative Idea that one can see in the horizon; rather, the "to-come" suggests that democracy does not have a proper essence or presence. Democracy remains "to-come" not because we can apprehend it in the future but "because we do not know what democracy is, what it is to become, what the democracy to come calls for, what is coming under the heading of democracy" (122). It exudes openness not only in its "essence-less" essence but in its affirmation of the other whose identity we cannot truly master (122). Thus, according to Derrida, to say that democracy has arrived or would arrive soon is "the very height of injustice" because it will never come in the form of presence; rather its call for openness keeps us from being complacent in our idea of democracy lest we become oppressive, legalistic, hence closed in to ourselves that we forget democracy's openness to the *tout autre* whatever or whoever the absolute other happens to be (123).

Thus, in light of democracy-to-come's openness to the other, it is unjust to say that deconstruction does not concern itself with politics, ethics, and the law—that it is "preoccupied

more with puns” and that it “propose[s] strange readings of odd poems in graduate literary theory classes” without being actively involved with “the demands and decisions of the real world” (*DN* 124). However, quite ironically, the “apostles of anti-deconstruction” also criticize deconstruction in terms of its destructive influence to the law; they accuse it of anarchy as it ruins the legal system with its “random intellectual violence” that assaults established tradition (128).

According to Caputo, such accusation is rooted in the “thought that the very idea of deconstruction excluded the undeconstructible, that undeconstructibility would simply be another version of the “transcendental signified” or the “ascetic ideal,” a post-structuralist version of the *Ding-an-sich*, or even, [...] God” (*DN* 128). In other words, since it becomes “indistinguishable from a purely negative critique,” critics and some admirers think that deconstruction excludes the affirmation of an undeconstructible—that it only deconstructs everything that has some kind of identity because to have recourse to the concept of undeconstructible is in contrast to the inherent autoimmunity of any concept (128). However, according to Caputo, the term “undeconstructible” is not synonymous to a solid foundation akin to God or to a Platonic ideal because “it is not knowable, foreseeable or forehidable” (128). In other words, as I understand it, the undeconstructible in this sense is beyond presence because what is present or what possesses identity is subject to deconstruction; the undeconstructible is not constructed and is therefore beyond history and foundationalism.

For instance, in “The Force of Law: “The Mystical Foundation of Authority”” Derrida states that deconstruction is made possible by the undeconstructibility of justice and by the deconstructibility of the law (*FL* 243). In this regard, Derrida responds to the criticism that deconstruction is apolitical; in its recourse to an undeconstructible such as justice—the “thing” that “gives us the impulse, the drive, or the movement to improve the law, that is to deconstruct the law”—Derrida demonstrates that justice is the condition for deconstruction (*DN* 16). Being irreducible to the law—a concept that possesses history of the transformation and changes of a legal structure—justice calls us to improve the law (16-17); it reminds us that we should “keep an [...] eye open for the other to which the law as law is blind” (131). Similar to democracy-to-come which is another undeconstructible, justice is more than just a future possibility that we can work on by following and calculating rules; instead, it calls us “to strain against the constraints of the foreseeable and possible, to open the horizon of possibility to what it cannot foresee or

foretell” (133-134). In short, it is an “im-possible” because it is beyond temporal presence that nonetheless urges us to endlessly perfect the law at every single moment so that we can never claim that “justice has arrived” (133-134).

Connected to the im-possibility of justice in deconstruction is Derrida’s affirmation of the singularity of the other that “is always and already overlooked, out of sight, omitted, excluded, structurally, no matter what law [...] is in place” (*DN* 135). In contrast to the law, which according to Derrida, is “a system of regulated and coded prescriptions,” (*FL* 250), justice “is infinite, incalculable, rebellious to rule and foreign to symmetry, heterogeneous and heterotropic” (250) as it considers the singularity of every situation before making a decision (251). If one adheres only to the legality and the universality of the law, according to Derrida, there is no just decision but a legal or a legitimate decision; thus, one must go beyond the calculation so that the law moves closer to being just (251). As such, despite the call for the reinvention of the law, no one must freely disregard the law for justice and law must work together; rather, according to Caputo, Derrida views that “a just decision is found in the distance between a blind and universal law and the singularity of the situation before us” (*DN* 137).

Thus, in light of the accusations that it destroys everything that the tradition has established, deconstruction’s argument on the perfectibility of the law demonstrates, on the one hand, its respect for tradition. Its dependence on undeconstructibles such as justice, on the other hand, shows that deconstruction is concerned with the singularity of the other which is overlooked by the universality of the law. In this regard, deconstruction is not apolitical; by deconstructing the law, deconstruction “makes justice possible” (*DN* 132). By keeping the law on its toes, deconstruction prevents it from folding upon itself that often leads to unjust and oppressive decisions that hides under the cloak of legality and legitimacy.

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