

Sparks Will Fly

Benjamin and Heidegger

the form of review. When that became
impossible in '33 K. B. was forced to
leave Paris, he started writing for students
which published outside Germany. He became
an academic star in Germany with the
publication of *Being & Time* (1927). The following
year he succeeded his former teacher, E.H.,

Edited by **Andrew Benjamin**
and **Dimitris Vardoulakis**

Sparks Will Fly

SUNY series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy
Dennis J. Schmidt, editor

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Benjamin and Heidegger

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Andrew Benjamin
and
Dimitris Vardoulakis

SUNY
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ABBREVIATIONS

Walter Benjamin:

- AP *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999). All references to the Convolutives of *The Arcades Project* are given parenthetically according to Convolute number without further specification.
- BA *Briefwechsel 1938–1940: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin*, ed. Gershom Scholem (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994).
- BS *Briefwechsel 1933–1940: Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem*, ed. Gershom Scholem (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).
- C *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jakobson and Evelyn M. Jakobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- CA Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1920–1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
- CS *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, ed. Gershom Scholem, trans. Gary Smith and André Lefevere (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
- GB *Gesammelte Briefe*, ed. Christoph Göttsche and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995–2000).
- GS *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974 ff.).
- OT *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998).

SW *Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1997–2003).

Martin Heidegger:

BPP *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

BQP *Basic Questions of Philosophy, Selected “Problems” of “Logic,”* trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

BT *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 2008).

BW *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Routledge, 1993).

CP *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

FCM *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

GA *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1974 ff.). All German references to this edition.

HH *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister,”* trans. William McNeil and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

HP *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, trans. Keith Höller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000).

IM *Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

M *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).

ML *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

N *Nietzsche*, vol. 4, *Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

P *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

PLT *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 1971).

QTC *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

- TB *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
- WT *What Is a Thing?*, trans. W.B. Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Regnery, 1968).
- ZS *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols—Conversations—Letters*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. F. Mayr and R. Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

TEN

A MATTER OF IMMEDIACY

The Political Ontology of the Artwork in Benjamin and Heidegger

Dimitris Vardoulakis

Martin Heidegger's and Walter Benjamin's essays on art—"The Origin of the Work of Art" and "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility"—are not only, or even primarily, about art. Heidegger and Benjamin use the work of art to articulate an argument against immediacy. Immediacy is seen as a remnant of the onto-theological tradition that is to be destroyed, according to Heidegger. The insistence on mediacy is a marker of modernity, according to Benjamin. Even though Hegel is in the background—for instance, Heidegger borrows from his lectures on Hegel, as we see later—nevertheless immediacy is not understood simply in Hegelian terms as a description of a form of subjective experience. Rather, immediacy for both Heidegger and Benjamin is presented within a political register.¹ Ultimately, for both thinkers, the argument against immediacy is a way of articulating a political ontology of the artwork.² And yet, divergences in the way that immediacy is construed lead the two thinkers to espouse radically different political projects.

The Autonomy of Art

The most discernible difference of their respective approaches to immediacy is that for Heidegger immediacy is discussed in terms of a forgetting of being since

the translation of Greek thought into Latin, whereas in Benjamin it is articulated as an engagement with Romanticism and its aftermath.³ These two trajectories are overlaid. Heidegger was conversant with the German Romantic tradition, as is indicated by a series of lecture courses such as those on Schelling, not to mention his work on Hölderlin from 1934 to 1935 that prefigured notions such as the “destiny of the people” found in the “Origin” essay. Benjamin, also, was conversant with the Greek tradition, for instance when he determined the allegorical impulse in modern art with reflections on ancient Greek tragedy in his book on the *Trauerspiel*, and in the “Reproducibility” essay itself parallels are drawn between the epic and film.⁴ Yet, it is clear from the “Origin” and the “Reproducibility” essays that Heidegger focuses on the forgetting of the Greeks, while Benjamin uses Romanticism as the foil of his argument. The different referents determine the development of their argument. Heidegger in the “Origin” essay relies heavily on Greek terms such as *aletheia*, *techne*, and *poiesis*. Benjamin concentrates on the aftermath of Romanticism, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onward, as is also evidenced by his choosing photography and especially film as the prime examples of reproducibility. These different referents can be read as symptomatic of the different ways that they dismantle immediacy and conceive of history and politics. Hence, the entry to the inquiry into the function of immediacy in the two essays on the work of art is how they define immediacy with recourse to the Greeks and to Romanticism. In both thinkers, this is articulated as a discourse on the nature of the artwork as a thing or object that is construed in terms of denying the autonomy of art.

The question that organizes “Thing and Work,” the first section of the “Origin” essay, is “What in truth is the thing, so far as it is a thing?” (*BW* 146/ *GA* 5: 5). Heidegger describes three answers given to this question. Either the thing is the connection between “substance and its accidents”; or, the thing is understood as “the unity of a manifold of what is given in the senses”; or, finally, the “thing is formed matter” (*BW* 149/ 7–8; *BW* 151/ *GA* 5: 10; *BW* 152/ *GA* 5: 11).⁵ Heidegger summarizes the problem with all these conceptions of the thing thus: “These three modes of defining thingness . . . give rise to a mode of thought . . . [that] preconceives all immediate experience of being [*greift allem unmittelbaren Erfahren des Seienden vor*]. The preconception shackles [*unterbindet*] reflection on the Being of any given being” (*BW* 156/ *GA* 5: 16). Onto-theology is described as a preconception. The object, preconceived as merely a thing at hand, imprisons the thing in “immediate experience.” Evading immediacy, then, is the starting point of Heidegger’s reflection on the work of art.

Methodologically, this necessitates a thought that would “unshackle” the thing. As Heidegger puts it, “To this end, however, only one element is needful

. . . to leave the thing rest in its own self [*das Ding . . . in seinem Dingsein auf sich beruhen lassen*]” (BW 157/ GA 5: 16). Such a thought needs to go to the source of the thinking of existence in ancient Greek philosophy, prior to the translation of the Greek terms into Latin and their appropriation by the onto-theological tradition. “The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation” (BW 149/ GA 5: 8). This methodological insight, however, does not stand on its own. What is required in addition is a conception of the historical context in order to liberate thought from the preconceptions generated by the Latin translation. “That the thingness of the thing is particularly difficult to express and only seldom expressible is infallibly documented by the history [*Geschichte*] of its interpretation indicated above.” Despite the difficulty, such a liberating history is crucial because it determines the Occident. Heidegger continues: “This history coincides with the destiny [*deckt sich mit den Schicksal*] in accordance with which Western thought has hitherto thought the Being of beings” (BW 157/ GA 5: 17). Heidegger identifies a destiny that covers over the metaphysical tradition. The origin of the work of art can only be recovered by aligning it with the historical thought that perceives such a destiny. In other words, the origin will turn out to be not in the past but in the future defined as the liberating destiny of the people. Consequently, it will be the allowing of such a destiny to unfold that will determine the political task at the end of the “Origin” essay. At the moment, all that can be inferred is that the historical understanding counteracts immediacy in order to deny the autonomy of art. Art does not exist merely in art objects, but rather pertains to the destiny of the people and hence it is political.

The denial of the autonomy of art in Benjamin’s “Reproducibility” essay is also crucial for his argument against immediacy.⁶ This immediacy is designated as “the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in the place that it finds itself” (SW 3: 103/ GS 7.1: 352; trans. modified). Benjamin underlines the way that the “here and now” understood as the authenticity of the work of art gives rise to a certain conception of the historical: “The authenticity of a thing is the embodiment of all that is transmissible in it from its origin, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it” (SW 3: 103/ GS 7.1: 353; trans. modified). One aspect of the term “reproducibility”—one element that is *enabled* through reproduction—is the overcoming of a notion of history that sees the work of art as a discreet object inserted within a historical continuum. Benjamin refers to this as the devaluation of aura: “what withers in the age of technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter’s aura” (SW 3: 103/ GS 7.1: 352). Aura designates the conception of the work of art that relies on a notion of authenticity and leads to a certain historical conception. Reproducibility stunts the effects of authenticity and hence leads to the aura’s withering. And, further, this also means

for Benjamin that “all semblance of art’s autonomy disappeared for ever” (SW 3: 109/ GS 7.1: 362).⁷ So long as the work of art cannot be conceived as a discreet, authentic, auratic object, it is no longer possible to understand art as autonomous.⁸

The conjunction of the work of art and history “in the age of reproducibility” is related to what Benjamin promises to deliver in the first section of the essay, namely, “the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art” (SW 3: 102/ GS 7.1: 350). Again, the target can be initially determined as the correlation between immediacy and politics, or what Benjamin calls in the final section of the essay “the aestheticization of the political.” It is here that the engagement with the Romantic tradition can be discerned. Romanticism turns its sight to immediate experience and its contingency in order to derive the self-reflexivity of the subject. For instance, Novalis puts it as follows in his notes on Fichte: “Reflection finds the need of philosophy . . . because the need is in feeling. . . . Because otherwise it would not be the pure form of *reflection*, which necessarily presupposes a material, because [reflection] is the product of the limited thing, of consciousness in this sense—in short, of the subjectivity of the subject, the accidental character of the accident.”⁹ It is only through “feeling,” “the material,” or “the accidental” that the Romantic infinite reflection of subjectivity is attainable. One possibility of self-reflection is to designate the work of art as its privileged site. Benjamin argued against this possibility in the addendum of his dissertation on Romanticism, by saying, for instance, that “the connection of this ideal with art is not given in a medium but is designated by a refraction” (SW 1: 179/ GS 1.1: 111). In other words, the self-reflection of the subject through the work of art remains unmediated; it can lead to what Hegel would term a “bad infinity.”¹⁰ It was precisely in an attempt to quench the Romantic reliance on contingency and to avoid bad infinity that led Hegel to confine the aesthetic to the first stage of the dialectic—the stage that is characterized by the immediacy of perception.¹¹ The Hegelian drive against immediacy, however, does not repudiate the autonomy of art. On the contrary, it is this autonomy, designated as immediacy, that allows for its sublation in the ethico-political stage of the dialectic. In other words, the autonomy of the aesthetic is subsumed in the autonomy of the political. Adorno and Horkheimer analyzed this move under the rubric of the “dialectic of Enlightenment,” whereas Benjamin identifies it in the “Reproducibility” essay as the “aestheticization of the political.”

The Autonomy of the Political

The rejection of an ontology that relies on the immediacy of subjective experience explains Heidegger and Benjamin’s reluctance to define the work as an object with

distinct, aesthetic properties bestowed by a subject, the artist. Art is not autonomous. It also explains the parallels in the way that they reposition art, specifically in insisting that the work of art is not merely an object, but rather it is characterized by an energetic, productive element—what can be called the *work* of the work of art. In both the “Origin” and the “Reproducibility” essays this work expressly determines the confluences between art and history. Such confluences show that the rejection of the autonomy of the artwork is accompanied by a parallel rejection of the autonomy of the political.

Heidegger shows this confluence by indicating two types of relation—what he calls *world* and *earth*—that are constitutive of his notion of “destiny.” In the second section of the “Origin” essay, Heidegger abandons the attempt to define the work of art through an inquiry into its status as a thing, and pursues instead an inquiry into its work-character.¹² This character is understood as a form of relationality. The organizing question is, “in what relation it [i.e., the work of the work of art] stands?” (*BW* 167/ *GA* 5: 27). The example that Heidegger chooses to illustrate his argument is the ancient Greek temple of Hera at Paestum.¹³ The temple produces two kinds of relations. The first one is referred to as world and it is characterized as a “setting up [*Aufstellen*]” (*BW* 169/ *GA* 5: 29). The world is described as a matrix of relations that reveal being. The starkest expression of such a revealing is that the determination of the people is given through the relations that belong to the world of the temple: “The all-governing [*waltende*] expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people [*die Welt dieses geschichtlichen Volkes*]. Only from and in this world do the people first return to the fulfilment of their determination” (*BW* 167/ *GA* 5: 28; trans. modified). In other words, as Heidegger would express it more directly later, this is “the act that founds a political state” (*BW* 186/ *GA* 5: 49). Heidegger asserts that the work of art has the capacity to produce a network of relations that disclose to individuals that which determines them as a people. Only through such a determination can they constitute a people. The relations of disclosure that are organized under the term *world* also require a different, opposing set of relations that are referred to under the term *earth* and whose main characteristic is concealment. Concealment returns from the expansive work of the world back to the materiality of the work of art. With earth’s relations of concealment, which Heidegger calls a “setting forth [*Herstellen*],” “the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone” (*BW* 171/ *GA* 5: 32). This reversion to materiality guarantees that the work of the work of art is not reducible to an object in its immediacy, but rather “unfolds itself in an inexhaustible variety of simple modes and shapes” (*BW* 173/ 34). Crucially, world and earth cannot subsist each on their own; instead, their respective relations of unconcealment and concealment exist as a productive “counterplay [*Widerspiel*]” (*BW*

181/ GA 5: 43). Even though they can be distinguished, still they are inextricable. Further, it is this inextricable relation between the relations of world and earth—this *relation of relations*—that provides Heidegger’s definition of truth as *aletheia*. And, importantly for the argument pursued here, this relation of relations shows, according to Heidegger, how the dismantling of the immediacy of the art object through the work annuls the autonomy of both the aesthetic and the political.

How precisely does Heidegger’s conception of the political overcome immediacy? The difficulty in answering this question by relying solely on the “Origin” essay consists in that Heidegger himself does not explicitly pose the problem this way. To see how immediacy can be inscribed in his notion of the political, the lecture course “Hegel, über den Staat” is indispensable. This course was delivered in the winter semester of 1934–1935, and the “Origin” essay was first delivered as a lecture in November 1935.¹⁴ In “Hegel, über den Staat,” Heidegger considers Carl Schmitt in order to determine the positioning of the political. Schmitt seeks to sustain the autonomy of the political.¹⁵ He does so by reducing the essence of the political to the sovereign’s determination of the enemy. According to the famous opening sentence of *Political Theology*, “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.”¹⁶ The exception is the set of circumstances that reveal a threat to the state from an enemy. The role of the sovereign is to identify the enemy and to suspend the law to protect the state. This mutual act of identification and suspension is the Schmittian decision. Heidegger’s response to Schmitt in the lecture on January 13, 1935, is that the distinction between friend and enemy, that is, the possibility of the decision, cannot form the ground of the political—which is tantamount to arguing against Schmitt’s conception of the autonomy of the political. Heidegger begins the argument by defining the political with recourse to the ancient Greek polis:

For the determination of the essence of the political it is paramount to return to the essence of the *state*. What’s the polis? . . . We learn what the polis is already in Homer, *Odyssey*, Rhapsody 6, line 9 ff. “He erected (drew) a wall around the polis, and built houses and temples, and divided the land.” Thus, the polis is the authentic middle of the span of existence. . . . The polis is the authentic, determined middle of the historical existence of a people. . . . The most essential is self-assertion. Wall, house, land, gods. It is from here that the essence of the political must be understood.

Polis is the site where all the different relations that found the state—“wall, house, land, gods”—assert themselves, giving a people its historical existence. Polis, then, designates here the opening matrix of relations that in the “Origin” essay are referred to as *world*. At precisely this point, Heidegger turns to Carl Schmitt:

Lately, the relation between friend and enemy has emerged as the essence of the political.¹⁷ Such a relation presupposes the *self-assertion*, and therefore it is merely an effect of the political essence. Friend and enemy exist only where there is self-assertion. Thus understood, self-assertion longs for a determinate grasping of the historical being of the people as well as of the state. It is only because there is a state for this self-assertion of the historical being of a people *and* because the state can designate the polis, that the relation between friend and enemy shows itself as a consequence. The political, however, is not that relation.¹⁸

Schmitt's decisionism misses, according to Heidegger, the essential relation of the polis or the world. Deciding upon the enemy is merely a consequence—that is, an empirical manifestation, an *immediate* representation—of the state. In other words, Heidegger argues that Schmitt completely misses the *relation* of relations. In that sense, he reverts back to a notion of immediacy.¹⁹ As an onto-theological relation, decisionism preconceives all immediate experience. The enemy is in politics what the thing at hand is in epistemology.

Heidegger rearticulates this argument in the “Origin” essay by employing the notion of strife.²⁰ Strife designates the antagonism between world and earth:

The work is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continuously self-secluding. . . . The opposition of world and earth is strife. But we would surely all too easily falsify its essence if we were to confound strife with discord and dispute, and thus see it only as disorder and destruction. In essential strife, rather, the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures. Self-assertion of essence, however, is never a rigid insistence upon some contingent state, but surrender to the concealed originality of the provenance of one's own Being. (*BW* 174/ *GA* 5: 35)

Note that Heidegger is explicit that the “essential decision” is a modality of the world-relations that found a state understood as polis. Whereas a decision is, according to Schmitt, the act that instigates enmity or the war between sovereigns, Heidegger views this idea of enmity as the falsification of the essence of strife.²¹ Strife is not simply the immediate manifestation of war, “disorder and destruction.” Rather, strife constitutes a self-assertion that is irreducible to contingency. Thus, Heidegger determines the notion of immediacy in the political through a critique of Schmitt's decisionism. The distinction between friend and enemy is a

decision immanent within the authority of the sovereign of an established state. Heidegger objects that a state is never simply given, nor is it concentrated within the sovereign authority. Rather, the strife between world and earth—Heidegger’s polis—opens up the historical essence of a people. “The world is the clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies. Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision” (*BW 180/ GA 5: 42*). The relations that pertain to materiality prevent the decision. They belong, instead, to the concealment of the earth. By forgetting the earth, Heidegger suggests, Schmitt turns strife into the immediate relation between friend and enemy, and thereby guarantees the autonomy of the political as the realm of the sovereign’s decision. On the contrary, by insisting on the undecidability of the earth, Heidegger exposes decisionism’s adherence to immediacy and simultaneously also destructs the autonomy of the political.

The similarity and yet profound difference between Heidegger and Benjamin’s political ontologies can be succinctly expressed with reference to Schmitt’s grounding the autonomy of the political in the sovereign “who decides upon the exception.” Both Heidegger and Benjamin are opposed to this autonomy. However, Heidegger concentrates on critiquing the decision because it reverts to immediacy, whereas Benjamin’s discourse can be read as a critique of the exception. Similarly to Heidegger, Benjamin describes the work of art as establishing a network of relations, or in Benjamin’s terminology, the work is a medium. This, again, leads to a reconsideration of the historical: “Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception. The way in which human perception is organized—the medium in which it occurs—is conditioned not only by nature but by history” (*SW 3: 104/ GS 7.1: 354*, emphasis deleted).²² Since the work of art is not conditioned only by nature, the perception of the art object is inadequate for the determination of the work’s functionality. Immediacy is inadequate because perception is not *sui generis* but is rather inextricable from history. Or, more emphatically, existence and history are codetermined through common media—and the work of art is such a medium. For instance, the transition from the aura to reproducibility is effected through new media of production. In the nineteenth century, “photography freed the hand from the most important artistic tasks in the process of pictorial reproduction . . . [which] was enormously accelerated” (*SW 3: 102/ GS 7.1: 351*). Thus it is the medium—the work understood as an energetic field—that determines artistic processes because it forges a conjunction between modes of perception and history.

Benjamin insists, further, that the medium has always had that function. “In principle, the work of art has always been reproducible” (*SW 3: 102/ GS 7.1:*

351). The principle that distinguishes historical periods is not whether or not they contain a historico-political conception of the medium or the work character of the work of art. Such a conception, Benjamin suggests, has always been present in one way or another, because reproducibility points to an inherent potentiality within the work: “It has always been one of the primary tasks of art to create a demand [*eine Nachfrage zu erzeugen*] whose hour of full satisfaction has yet to come. The history of every art form has critical periods in which the particular form strains after effects which can be easily achieved only with a changed technical standard—that is to say, in a new art form” (SW 3: 118/ GS 7.1: 378). The historical is understood here neither as a retrieval of an authentic origin, nor as a development towards the future, nor—most importantly—as a combination of the originary and the futural, that is, the combination that Heidegger calls “destiny.” For Benjamin, there is no opposition between an authenticity and an inauthenticity to produce historical and artistic modalities. Instead, the medium always poses an irresolvable problem—it “asks a question after its presentation” (*Nachfrage*). It is this irresolvability that produces a sense of the future as that which has “yet to come.” Or, to put this another way, the future is the open question that the medium contains within itself. And that’s why the medium is always mediated, it can never be reduced to immediacy. Heidegger translates this argument against immediacy to a political argument against Schmitt’s decisionism. Benjamin’s focus on the exception instead of the decision is due to his conception of temporality. This can be expressed in the question, what is the political import of the “yet to come”?

The question of temporality in Benjamin is linked to a consideration of exclusion. It was argued a moment ago that the opposition between the authentic and the inauthentic is inoperative in Benjamin. The objection can be raised that it is precisely the auratic that is understood as authentic in the “Reproducibility” essay. On closer inspection, however, it emerges that the objection in fact supports the argument. The reason is that only the aura conceives of its temporal dimension in terms of a relation between the authentic and its opposite, whereas reproducibility repudiates that opposition. Further, and most crucially, aura and reproducibility themselves do *not* form a relation that reiterates, rehearses, or re-creates the opposition between an “inauthentic authenticity” of the aura and an “authentic authenticity” of reproducibility. Aura and reproducibility are *not* related in terms of authenticity. Rather, they are related through the temporality of the “yet to come,” the inherent potential whose unpredictable unfolding entails an undecidable future. In section VI of the essay, Benjamin points to a “qualitative transformation” of the work of art that he expresses in terms of a first and a second technology—Foucault later called them technologies of *power*. The first technology corresponds to auratic art, and the second to the reproducibility of the artwork:

What matters is the way the orientation and aims of [the first] technology differ from those of ours. Whereas the former made the maximum possible use of human beings, the latter reduces their use to the minimum. The achievements of the first technology might be said to culminate in human sacrifice; those of the second, in the remote-controlled aircraft which needs no human crew. The results of the first technology are valid once and for all. . . . The results of the second are wholly provisional. (SW 3: 107/ GS 7.1: 359)

There are two opposing features that distinguish the two technologies. Whereas the first one appears through its effects on the human, culminating in demanding its death in sacrifice, the second decreases the effect on the human and recognizes the “play,” as Benjamin calls it, within the objects themselves. Further, the effects of the first technology acquire a finality—the death that it demands is, after all, an ultimate limit. The effects of the second technology are, conversely, an open question, they live on, they have “yet to come.” Benjamin extrapolates the distinction by clarifying that he is not suggesting an exclusory opposition between the two technologies: “Seriousness and play, rigor and license, are mingled *in every work of art*, though in very different proportions. This implies that *art is linked to both the second and the first technologies*” (SW 3: 107/ GS 7.1: 359; emphasis added). If there is something like a “relation of relations” in Benjamin, this has to do with the way that aura and reproducibility, the first and second technologies, are always mingled or linked. There is no outside that relation.²³

Conversely, it will be recalled that Heidegger designates the inauthentic space opened up by the Latin mistranslation of the Greek concepts as that exteriority wherein immediacy persists, and at the same time reserves the “relation of relations” as the exclusive characteristic of strife and the polis. According to Benjamin, if the auratic was concerned with the mastering of nature, reproducibility introduced an additional element: “The first technology really sought to master nature, whereas the second aims rather at an interplay [*Zusammenspiel*] between nature and humanity. The primary social function of art today is to rehearse that interplay” (SW 3: 107/ GS 7.1: 359). There are not two types of relation—one authentic and the other inauthentic. Rather, there is in actuality only one relation, that of the second technology. In other words, the aura is, in actuality, a curtailed reproducibility—a moment that stops short of recognizing that it has “yet to come” and thereby sacrifices itself. Thus, the second technology excludes nothing, but rather proliferates the relations of nature by bringing them into interplay with humanity.

Schmitt’s definition of the sovereign as “he who decides on the exception” requires the exception to be understood in terms of radical novelty as that which

is new and hence uncodifiable. The critique of the decision that Heidegger pursues in “Hegel, über den Staat” and in the “Origin” essay also relies on a radical novelty—which explains why Heidegger does not criticize the exception. Heidegger’s “counterplay [*Widerspiel*]” is an opposition, a strife, or, as he also says, the site where “the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought” (*BW* 181/ *GA* 5: 43 and *BW* 168–9/ *GA* 5: 29). This battle is undecidable because it points to the *relation* of relations, which can never be particularized. Nevertheless, the battle relies on the existence of *new* gods, whose emergence radically alters the relations designated as world and earth. As Heidegger put in his *Spiegel* interview, “Only yet another, a new god [*nur noch ein Gott*] can save us.”²⁴ Heidegger’s notion of the undecidability of strife, and hence his delineation of the destiny of a historical people, requires this radical, divine novelty.²⁵ This retains the notion of the exception, which is radically new and hence uncodifiable.²⁶ Conversely, Benjamin’s future is not a destiny that requires a radical exclusion so that its originary dimension can be reached. Rather, Benjamin’s future is produced through a realizing of the potential contained within the medium itself. The future has “yet to come” because it can never come—the potential can never be fulfilled (this would entail its being sacrificed), it is, rather, only ever provisional. The reason is that its actuality is nascent within the medium. It consists in the unmasterability that is indicated by the interplay (*Zusammenspiel*) between nature and history. From Benjamin’s perspective, the problem with Schmitt’s definition is not so much the notion of the decision, but rather that of the exception. The exception is the unique situation in which the law is inadequate. It is the moment something radically new and unpredictable happens—or, as it can be expressed with reference to Heidegger’s terminology, the moment of the arrival of the new god. Whereas for Heidegger that new coming constitutes strife and it is the act that founds a new state, for Benjamin the god never comes. Every second is “the small gate in time through which the Messiah could enter”—but the Messiah is neither a new god, nor does he ever come (*SW* 4: 397/ *GS* 1.2: 704; trans. modified). Rather, it is the Messiah’s “not coming” that accompanies the play of reproducibility, and hence the *zusammen* of its play. This possibility—the fact that he *could* come—is the condition of a temporality that is radically unexceptional. Or, to put it in the language of Thesis VIII from “On the Concept of History,” the exception has become the norm.²⁷

Novelty or Reproducibility

Radical novelty is inexorably linked to immediacy. The coming of the new gods reinscribes immediacy in Heidegger’s ontology of the political. This new coming is

signaled in the “Origin” essay as the function of the work’s preservers. In the third section of his essay, Heidegger indicates a transition from possibility to an ethico-political imperative. The organizing question is: “What is truth, that it *can* happen as, or even *must* happen as, art?” (*BW* 182/ *GA* 5: 44; emphasis added). There is a move from the “can” to the “must.” This transition necessitates radical novelty: “The establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being [*Seiende*] such as never was seen before and will never come to be again” (*BW* 187/ *GA* 5: 50). This bringing forth of something new is what Heidegger calls *creation* (*das Schaffen*). Creation, significantly, “*must* contain within itself the essential traits of strife,” says Heidegger. This “must” of creation leads to the ethico-political imperative of the work of art. Heidegger continues: “As a world opens itself, it submits to the decision of a historical humanity the question of victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery. The dawning world brings out what is yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness” (*BW* 187–8/ *GA* 5: 50). The “hidden necessity of measure” is the necessity to establish a state, for instance, to recall the Homeric definition, by erecting a wall, by building houses and by dividing the land. This founding act of a state is still not enough: “But the work’s actuality does not exhaust itself in the createdness. On the contrary, this view of the essence of the work’s createdness now enables us to take the step toward which everything thus far said tends” (*BW* 191/ *GA* 5: 53–54). Everything that he has thus far argued, Heidegger says, is leading toward a notion he is about to announce. That notion is the preservers as that which forges the link between the work of art and its historical and political significance, or its ethico-political imperative. “What is created cannot come into being without those who preserve it [*sowenig kann das Geschaffene selbst ohne die Bewahrenden seiend werden*]” (*BW* 191/ *GA* 5: 54). The participle turned into a substantive that is used for the preservers—*Bewahrenden* instead of *Bewahrer*—indicates the active role that the preservers assume. This activity is indicated through the etymological link between preserving (*bewahren*), truth (*Wahrheit*) and perception (*Wahrnehmung*). Immediacy was defined as that which was presupposed in perception according to the onto-theological tradition. It then emerged that what was presupposed was truth, the originary operation of strife. This operation is now shown to be carried out by the preservers. And this is what enacts a return to the perceptible (*seiend werden*)—a transition from the mere ontic to facticity. This way, Heidegger shows how his opposition to the autonomy of art and the autonomy of the political are inseparable. The two form a relation of mutual bestowing of identity. Art determines the political and vice versa.²⁸ And it is the preservers that set in motion this aestetico-political hermeneutic circle.

This circle requires a plurality of preserves. Or, more emphatically, preserving is political. A work does not necessarily need to have a preserver, says Heidegger, so long as “it is waiting” for its preservers (*BW* 192/ *GA* 5: 54). More emphatically: “Preserving the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work. Thus it grounds being for and with one another as the historical standing-out of human existence in relation to unconcealment” (*BW* 193/ *GA* 5: 55). For this *ex-stasis* or standing out, for this destiny, a plurality of preserves is necessary. This destiny *presupposes* the dialectic between the individual and the people in order for the immediacy of perception to be overcome.²⁹ The mutual determination through the hermeneutic circle of art and the historico-political is impossible without that presupposition: “Whenever art happens—that is, whenever there is a beginning—a thrust enters history; history either begins or starts over again. History here means not a sequence in time of events. . . . History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entry into that people’s endowment. . . . Art is history in the sense that it grounds history” (*BW* 201/ *GA* 5: 65). Art is political because art is the essence of history. Art creates a new beginning, or makes beginning *as such* possible. Art as history means that *art is the undecidable exception*. The creation of a people or a state is interchangeable with the creation of the work of art. This is, according to Guy Debord, the structure of the spectacle, in that it “seeks to appear *at once* as society itself.”³⁰ The connection between history and art proposed by Heidegger in the “Origin” essay provides no other criterion for recognizing art than its creating the political in the form of the destiny for a people. There is no art without a “we” and no “we” without art. This entails that a people originates through its *immediate* connection to art.³¹ Even though Heidegger sought to establish the work of the artwork outside immediacy, still immediacy is reinscribed as the “at once” in the relation between a people and the work. This immediacy is not inscribed in the relations of world or earth, but rather in the relation of their relations—in strife, in the polis, in preserving.

Having developed a notion of the historical that does not rely on the exception, Benjamin can criticize the presupposition of Heidegger’s discourse—namely, the dialectic between private and public that gives rise to the preserves as the representatives of the destiny of a people. Benjamin’s critique also leads to a very different notion of the political that does not revert to immediacy. According to Heidegger, it is the formation of a people that overcomes the autonomy of the political because it does not conform to the immediacy of decisionism, thereby creating an authentic politics of preserving, *ex-stasis* and so on. Conversely, according to Benjamin, the auratic in its various modalities of immediacy is neither political

nor historical. “Instead of being founded on ritual, it [exhibition as a function of reproducibility] is based on a different practice: politics” (SW 3: 106/ GS 7.1: 357). Again, this does not mean that the auratic is simply outside politics. Rather the auratic has not realized its potential, for instance, its historical potential: “Neither the concept of semblance nor that of play is foreign to traditional aesthetics; and to the extent that the two concepts of cult value and exhibition value are latent in the other pair of concepts at issue here, they say nothing new. But this abruptly changes as soon as these latter concepts lose their indifference to history” (SW 3: 127/ GS 7.1: 368–369). The recognition of potentiality is equated with a recognition of—an awakening to—the importance of the historical and the political. This potential, as something inscribed in auratic modes, does not signify radical novelty. It rather signifies an only ever curtailed project—and it is curtailed because it regards itself as completed, because it does not recognize the “yet to come.” In addition, the insistence on novelty contained in the auratic implies a certain kind of politics: fascism. Aura and fascism are connected in that they rely on immediacy, which in turn is produced by the dialectic of private and public.

Benjamin takes up the issue of the link between immediacy, the private and the public, and fascism in an important footnote, which in turns relies on a certain reading of Marx. According to Benjamin,

The class-conscious proletariat forms a compact mass only from the outside, in the minds of its oppressors. . . . In the solidarity of the proletarian class struggle, the dead, undialectical opposition between individual and mass is abolished. . . . The mass as an impenetrable, compact entity . . . is that of the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie is not a class; it is in fact only a mass. . . . [T]his compact mass with its unmediated reactions forms the antithesis of the proletarian cadre, whose actions are mediated by a task, however momentary. . . . Fascism . . . realizes that the more compact the masses it mobilizes, the better the chance that the counterrevolutionary instincts of the petty bourgeoisie will determine their reactions. The proletariat, on the other hand, is preparing for a society in which neither the objective nor the subjective conditions for the formation of the masses will exist any longer. (SW 3: 129–130/ GS 7.1: 370–371)

Benjamin suggests that the creation of a mass—the creation of “a people”—is premised on the opposition between “individual and mass.” Further, the reactions of such a mass are always unmediated—they are immediate. Later in the “Reproducibility” essay, Benjamin will elaborate on this point with an unmistakable allusion to Nazi aesthetics, as they were expressed, for instance, at the Nürnberg rallies: “In

great ceremonial processions, giant rallies and mass sporting events, and in war, all of which are fed into the camera, the masses come face to face with themselves” (SW 3: 132/ GS 7.1: 382). This coming “face-to-face” with oneself as a mass is what Debord referred to as the “at once” in the relation between art and society, and what for Heidegger constitutes the interchangeability between a people and the work of art. This face-to-face is the *immediate* bestowal of identity, it is the formation of a mass that lacks mediation. Such a mass is created through the bourgeois, undialectical opposition between the private and the public. And it is precisely this same process of immediacy that fascism utilizes in order to oppress. Finally, it is this immediate identification that is accomplished through the collapse of any difference between—the mutual definition of—the historico-political and art that is characterized as the “aestheticization of the political” at the end of the “Reproducibility” essay. How does the “proletariat,” however, manage to avoid forming itself into a mass? How does “class consciousness” evade the opposition between the individual and the mass?

The questions can be understood to form one of the major themes of the project on the Second French Empire that Benjamin was working on, which remained unfinished and which we know as “The Arcades Project.” Benjamin was interested to explore the way that city planning in Paris after 1852 relied on forms of thinking that presupposed oppositions such as that between the private and the public. Marx’s *18th Brumaire*, which describes the rise to power of Louis Bonaparte in 1851, provides the background to these ideas. Indeed, Marx in the *18th Brumaire*, just like Benjamin in the “Reproducibility” essay, is fiercely critical of the exception, developing at the same time a conception of community or class beyond the opposition between private and public. Even though traditional political theory understands the exception as a response to a threat to the state, Marx shows how Bonaparte *used* the exception to propagate his power. If the use of the exception to protect the state is a tragedy because of its toll on human life, then the use of the exception to grab power is merely a farce. Marx expresses this reversal in the function of the exception with belligerent irony: “Society is saved just as often as the circle of its rulers contracts, as a more exclusive interest is maintained against a wider one.”³² Now, this critique of the politics of the exception leads to a conception of class-consciousness as nonrepresentable, or in Benjamin’s terminology as class-consciousness’ incompatibility with the unmediated mass:

Bonaparte represents a class, and the most numerous class of French society at that, the *small-holding peasantry*. . . . Insofar as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes,

and them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among those small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. . . . They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above.³³

The utilization of the exception creates a politics of representation, a politics that relies on the opposition between private and public in order to create a compact mass. It is the same process that Heidegger had characterized as the opening of a world that allows for “the decision of a historical humanity” about the “victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery” of a people. According to Marx, the endpoint of the exception is the representation of the masses by someone else—a dictator like Bonaparte.³⁴ This representation—or, more precisely, the *immediate* inscription of aesthetic values of representation in the political sphere—is like a comedy. Conversely, a class is nonrepresentable.³⁵ It presents itself “in hostile opposition” to those who seek to oppress it, and it forms a community in the sense that its “actions are mediated by a task,” as Benjamin put it. Or, to use a figure that is prevalent in the *Arcades Project*, the political task is an *awakening*—an awakening to the immediacy with which a politics of representation creates “a people” in order to immediately bestow identity through aesthetic categories, and an awakening to the mediacy of the task in that the task has “yet to come” and yet its noncoming can only ever again be enacted.

.....

Heidegger confines immediacy to the perceptible. This allows him to define the work of the work of art. However, the hermeneutic circle he constructs for the work of art relies on the immediate relation between art and politics. It is precisely this latter sense of immediacy that reproducibility seeks to repudiate. It does so by pointing out that such an immediate relation produces a compact mass that is manipulable—a mass that has lost a sense of the political for itself. To retain a link between art and politics entails for Benjamin inscribing in both of them the messianic temporality of the “yet to come.” And this is only possible if the two are not collapsed into each other. Such a collapse requires the sacrifice of the human—its logic is a being toward death. Conversely, the potentiality that the “yet to come” indicates relies on a proliferation of relations. This is an affirmation of the living—a

being in life. Thus, the artwork's relation to immediacy leads to the construction of two radically different political ontologies in Heidegger and Benjamin. For Heidegger such an ontology delineates the emergence of a new being—the new gods of the newly founded state. For Benjamin it is a repudiation of novelty as a way of opposing all forms of exceptionality that lead to dictatorial regimes and as a way of leaving open the possibilities contained in the political relations.

Notes

The author would like to thank Jeffrey Barash for his invaluable help.

1. For the relevance of immediacy to the political, see chapter 1 of my *Sovereignty and its Other* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).
2. A similar preoccupation with immediacy as the site of interaction between ontology and aesthetics can be found in Theodor Adorno. See, for example, his *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990) and *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2004).
3. It would detract from the main argument to analyze here in detail the importance of Greek philosophy for Heidegger or of the Romantics for Benjamin. The most important references in relation to their respective reflections on art are, for Heidegger, his meditations on *Antigone* in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), which were originally lectures presented at Freiburg University in the summer of 1935—that is, just months before he delivered the “Origin” essay as a series of public lectures, in November of the same year. Cf. Clare Pearson Geiman, “Heidegger’s Antigones,” in Richard Polt and Gregory Fried, *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 161–182. Benjamin’s most important work on Jena Romanticism is his doctoral dissertation, translated in the first volume of the *Selected Writings*. See also the essays collected in Beatrice Hanssen and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Walter Benjamin and Romanticism* (London: Continuum, 2002).
4. The link between distraction and the epic that Benjamin draws in this essay is also influenced by Brecht. For a collection of Benjamin’s most important material on Brecht, see *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 1998).
5. All these conceptions of the thing are defined with reference to Greek terms. Specifically, the first in relation to *symbebekota*, the second in relation to *aesthesis*, and the final one in terms of *morphe* and *hyle*.

6. I am using here the second version of the “Reproducibility” essay, because it is more developed than the first one, and less edited than the third one. For an analysis of the “Reproducibility” essay that compares different versions, see Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998).
7. Cf. George Markus, “Benjamin’s Critique of Aesthetic Autonomy,” in eds. Andrew Benjamin and Charles Rice, *Walter Benjamin and the Architecture of Modernity* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 111–127.
8. For a series of reflections on the relation between appearance and politics in Benjamin that resonate with the argument here on the relation between immediacy and the political, see the first part of Andrew Benjamin, *Style and Time: Essays on the Politics of Appearance* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006).
9. Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, trans. Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 14–15.
10. This is one possibility. In his dissertation, Benjamin argues that the concept of “criticizability” in Jena Romanticism avoids this problem precisely because the Romantic concept of criticism relies on mediation. In the “Reproducibility” essay, Benjamin articulates the transition from Goethe to Hegel in a footnote: “Hegel’s statement that art strips away the ‘semblance and deception of this false, transient world’ from the ‘true content of phenomena’ . . . already diverges from the traditional experiential basis of this doctrine. By contrast, Goethe’s work is still entirely imbued with beautiful semblance as an auratic reality” (SW 3: 127/ GS 7.1: 368).
11. See Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), vol. 1, and the first section of the *Phenomenology*.
12. For the most important book on the work aspect of Heidegger’s theory of the work of art, see Krzysztof Ziarek, *The Force of Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).
13. In fact, Heidegger assumed that this, the second and best preserved temple to Hera, was a temple to Poseidon, as it was commonly held at the time. See Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Works* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 141–142 and Jeff Malpas, “Heidegger’s Topology of Being,” in eds. Steven Galt Crowell and Jeff. Malpas, *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 119. This mistake was because Paestum means Poseidonia, the city dedicated to Poseidon. As Joseph Rykwert notes, Heidegger’s description is not faithful—for example, the temple is not built on a rock, as Heidegger says. See Rykwert, *The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1998), 379–380. The other example

- that Heidegger famously used in the first section of the “Origin” essay is Van Gogh’s depiction of a pair of peasant shoes. The most important discussion of this related example can be found in Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
14. Heidegger co-taught the course with Erik Wolf, who was dean of the faculty of law at Freiburg University. The course has often been cited to discuss Heidegger’s Nazism, usually in polemical terms that reside on personal relations, such as with the Nazi jurist Wolf, or in relation to contextual, historical information. See, for instance, Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933–1935*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). This negative publicity, as well as the fact that the notes of the “Hegel” course are not in Heidegger’s own hand, may be the reasons why the course has not been chosen for publication in Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*. A more measured assessment of the course can be found in Jeffrey Andrew Barash, *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 224–225. For a series of assessment on Heidegger’s involvement with national socialism, see vol. 5 of the Heidegger-Jahrbuch, *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus II*, ed. Alfred Denker und Holger Zaborowski (Freiburg, München: Karl Alber, 2009).
 15. For a discussion of Schmitt’s argument on the autonomy of the political, see William Rasch, *Sovereignty and Its Discontents: On the Primacy of the Conflict and the Structure of the Political* (London: Birkbeck Law Press, 2004).
 16. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George D. Schwab (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1985), 5.
 17. Sigrifried Bröse, who provided corrections and additions to Hallwachs’ transcript, adds here the following sentence: “Vgl. dazu das Freund-Feind Verhältnis als das Politische von Carl Schmitt.”
 18. “Für die Bestimmung des Wesens des Politischen ist der Rückgang auf das Wesen des Staates das Allererste. Was heißt πόλις? . . . Was πόλις ist Erfahrung wir schon aus Homer, Odysse, VI. Buch, Vers 9 ff. ‘Um die πόλις herum zag er (fuhr er) mit einer Mauer, und baute Häuser und Tempel der Götter und teilte aus das Ackerland.’ Πόλις ist so die eigentliche Mitte des Daseinsbereiches. . . . Πόλις ist die eigentlich bestimmende Mitte des geschichtlichen Daseins eines Volkes . . . Das Wesentliche des Daseins ist Selbstbehauptung. Mauer, Haus, Land, Götter. Von hier aus ist das Wesen des Politischen zu begreifen. Neuerdings ist das *Freund-Feindverhältnis* aufgetaucht als Wesen des Politischen. Es setzt die *Selbstbehauptung voraus*, ist also nur *Wesensfolge* des Politischen.

- Freund und Feind gibt es nur, wo Selbstbehauptung ist. Selbstbehauptung in diesem Sinn verlangt eine bestimmte Auffassung des geschichtlichen Seins des Volkes und des Staates selbst. Weil der Staat diese Selbstbehauptung des geschichtlichen Seins eines Volkes ist *und* weil man Staat = πόλις nennen kann, zeigt sich demzufolge das Politische als Freund-Feindverhältnis; aber nicht ist dieses Verhältnis = das Politische.” Martin Heidegger and Erik Wolf, “Hegel, über den Staat,” Freiburg University, Winter Semester 1934–1935, transcription Wilhelm Hallwachs. Heidegger Estate. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach, 50.
19. Cf. Derrida’s critique of Carl Schmitt in *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997).
 20. Stuart Elden draws a similar conclusion on the distinction between Heidegger’s notion of strife and Schmitt’s enmity. After acknowledging that there are some similarities, Elden notes: “But the key contrast with Schmitt . . . is that the enemy is not named. Heidegger is not, seemingly, against anything in particular, but argues for a reading of politics as *polemos*. Unlike Schmitt, his *polemos* is not against a *polemios*, there is not an enemy. It is more a reading of politics as struggle, as *Auseinandersetzung*, as confrontation.” Stuart Elden, *Speaking Against Number: Heidegger, Language, and the Politics of Calculation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 85.
 21. As Gregory Fried explains, Schmitt himself had sent a copy of *The Concept of the Political* to Heidegger in 1933. Heidegger replied in a cordial letter to thank Schmitt and congratulate him on his interpretation of Heraclitus’ Fragment 53 on “*polemos basileus*.” Heidegger adds: “I have had such an interpretation with respect to the concept of truth set down for years” (quoted in Fried, *Heidegger’s Polemos: From Being to Politics* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000], 28). Maybe Heidegger refrained from naming his interlocutor in the “Origin” essay because of this cordial personal exchange as well as due to Schmitt’s powerful position within the university system and the state at the time.
 22. For the importance of the history of the medium in order to highlight the way that the medium determines history, see Sigrid Weigel, “Detail, Photographische under Kinematographische Bilder,” in *Walter Benjamin: Die Kreatur, das Heilige, die Bilder* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2008), 297–332.
 23. Peter Fenves makes a similar argument about the relation between the aestheticizing of politics and the politicizing of art in “Is there an Answer to the Aestheticizing the Political?” in ed. Andrew Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and Art* (London: Continuum, 2005), 60–72.

24. The Heidegger interview can be downloaded from the Spiegel Archiv: <http://wissen.spiegel.de/wissen/dokument/dokument-druck.html?id=9273095&top=SPIEGEL>
25. Cf. Thomas Pepper, *Singularities: Extremes of Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 87.
26. I cannot take up here the ways in which Heidegger's thought developed this idea of novelty, especially in terms of the *Ereignis* that appears in his later writings. See Andrew Benjamin's compelling analysis in *The Plural Event: Descartes, Hegel, Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 1993).
27. For a comparison on Benjamin and Schmitt's use of the exception, see Samuel Weber, "Taking Exception to the Decision: Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt," *Diacritics* 22 (1992), 5–18.
28. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe argues, similarly, that in the 1930s Heidegger makes an argument about "the hegemony of the spiritual and the philosophical over political hegemony"—or to rephrase using the terms of the present essay, the hegemony of art over the autonomy of the political. See *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 13.
29. In the addendum to the "Origin" essay, which was included for the first time in 1956, Heidegger recognizes this problems and seeks to present strife without recourse to the distinction between the private and the public. However, he still relies on the notion of the decision. See "Origin," *BW 211/ GA 5*: 73–74.
30. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 12, emphasis added.
31. For the concept of the "people" in Heidegger, see James Phillips, *Heidegger's Volk: Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
32. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. Clemens Dutt, in *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (New York: International, 1976), 111–112.
33. Marx, *18th Brumaire*, 186–188.
34. For an analysis of national socialism that is influenced by Marx's critique of the rise of Bonaparte's dictatorship in the *18th Brumaire*, see Franz Neuman, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009).
35. Cf. the last chapter of my *Sovereignty and its Other*.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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