



NOTES ON THE ILLEGAL CONDITION IN THE STATE OF EXTRACTION

How Not to Be an Informant

Glenn Greenwald, one of the journalists who helped Edward Snowden in his whistle-blowing tasks, titled his account of that story *No Place to Hide. Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the US Surveillance State*. The notion that we live in a surveillance state, that the state is surveillant today, that it thrives on information, that information is its currency and content, should not obscure the obvious corollary that information is us, and we are the referent of information. Think NSA, yes, but think also of Google and Facebook, of Twitter and Instagram, of your email, of your annual reviews, of your post-tenure reviews, of your citations or lack thereof, of what is going to happen to you if the Trump manages to do away with coverage of pre-existing conditions.

You might find yourself trying to prove again and again that you are suffering from no preexisting condition, an impossible task of course, and then you will have to surrender your iPhone and laptop, together with their passwords, to the competent or incompetent airport authorities, and then to the highway patrol. And this is just the beginning. We become information, we are nothing but information—we are quantified, and our bodies are now, insofar as the state (or the work place) is concerned, the primary site for information extraction and information use: information glorifies or abjects bodies. We are good or bad information, and we will be rewarded, or punished, accordingly. For a surveillance state the extraction of information becomes the primary *modus operandi*, and extraction, the task of extraction, develops, is developing,

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a logic of its own. Think about how weird it is that your mood may be so dependent on a given weekend on how many likes you received on the picture of your ailing cat with happy mother, ailing mother with happy cat. Or on whether you had more or less than, say, 40 visits to your latest blog entry. Or on the fact that nobody has retweeted your last five Twitter posts, even though you were as sincere as you could have been in them. And this, trivial as it may be, in spite of the fact that you are still a citizen in legal condition, that is, a citizen within the democratic law that can still find shelter in the Kantian notion of freedom as autonomy. Imagine if you were illegal: the illegal condition would be a form of radical servitude, a form of contemporary radical servitude, just one among others, but perhaps also something more than just one; to the extent that it could be said that contemporary legal conditions push us all towards the illegal.

We live, increasingly, in a state of extraction. My thesis is that we have not yet figured out the implications of a primary or fundamental logic of state extraction. We have not figured out its implications for our own predicament—for the predicament, that is, not of state functionaries as such, not of extractors and surveyors, which is a predicament of domination, but the predicament of those who would rather not be dominated, and who understand that giving up on domination is the logical price to be paid. These latter figures, those who refuse domination, those who prefer not to be dominated, hence not to dominate, they might in fact constitute the “borders of the border,” that fantastic fringe territory of the human this conference has decided to thematize and, in some sense, to honor.¹ Let me then reserve that theoretical position, the position of border or hyperborder dwellers, to develop what follows. I will claim that the border of the border is today the site where information will not be shared—an opaque site of silence and secrecy, a place of radical reticence concerning unconcealment.

Another recent book on these issues, Bernard Harcourt’s *Exposed. Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age*, goes beyond the notion

1. This paper was originally presented at the 8th World Congress of the International American Studies Association, *Marginalia: The Borders of the Border*, in July 2017. I have opted for leaving the traces of my oral presentation in the text.

of a surveillance state to claim that we live today in what he calls an “expository society,” which is itself a function of the fact that the surveillance state thrives on a social desire for exposition, for so-called transparency, for exhibition and shameless publicity. If the expository society has come to replace earlier figures of late modernity—the disciplinary society, the control society, the securitarian society—, even while it retains most of the features of those earlier models, it is because exposition can encompass them all. For Harcourt, the triumph of the expository society is a dialectical triumph: it marks the moment in which the infinite desires of the population are successfully channeled by the state’s primary interests in information extraction: in fact, they are put at the very service of information extraction. Nobody forces us voluntarily to reveal everything we give away in an earnest Facebook discussion: but it will be used. with a caveat: the “state” in the expository society is not only the state of governance, the governing state, it is also the state of exchange, the economic state: we are all participants, willingly or not, and we are all exposed. Only infrapolitical or protopolitical life remains outside the expository society, to the precise extent that it does; only that in us which is infrapolitical or protopolitical escapes the state of surveillance. Which therefore merits some consideration.

What is it, in us, within us, that exceeds or sub-ceeds the position of participant, that is, the position of informant, which is the direct counterpart to the surveillance state, the surveillance economy, the surveillance or expository society? If there is surveillance, there are informants, willing or unwilling, or both. No surveillance without informants, no informants without surveillance. But what is, specifically, an informant? If we are all informants, how are we so? We might want to start developing this question through a minimal phenomenology of the informant—I say “minimal” because it will be unsatisfying, and there would be much more to bring up about this. I think it will be useful to develop this minimal phenomenology of the informant in connection with the phenomenology of evil developed by Immanuel Kant in his book *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Please bear with me: my interest is not to denounce as evil any and every informant, that is, any and every denizen of our expository society. Yes, that

would enable us perhaps better to reserve the place of goodness for that theoretical position of the hyperborder dweller, always a temptation, always a moralistic temptation. But it would also be simplistic and plain wrong. It is not a matter of good versus evil—it is more a matter of how to isolate a kernel in the human that is resistant to the demands and satisfactions of expository life, and from which, therefore, it could perhaps be possible to preserve the promise of another present, hence of another future.

Let me start by proposing that evil is for Kant in every case “illegal,” to the very extent that it is always outside the law, outside the moral or unconditioned law. The subject of evil is in every case a subject to evil: “We call a man evil [...] not because he performs actions that are evil (contrary to law) but because these actions are of such a nature that we may infer from them the presence in him of evil maxims” (Kant 16). The evil may rise out of or in connection with so-called “propensities,” of which Kant selects three, linked to “predispositions” defined as “elements in the fixed character and destiny of man” (21). The latter are, 1), the predisposition to *animality*; 2), the predisposition to *humanity*; and, 3), the predisposition to *personality*. The first one can be grafted with so-called “beastly vices” (22), which are in every case the vices of a “purely mechanical self-love” (22), namely, “gluttony,” “lasciviousness,” “drunkenness,” and other. A propensity for “frailty” (24), where inclination is stronger than the heart, explains this first form of evil, which we may call *beastly evil*. The second one—the predisposition to rational humanity, which means that we all want “to acquire worth in the opinion of others” (22)—can be corrupted through “wickedness” (24) into “jealousy” and “rivalry,” and it gives rise to “diabolical” evil (22), as in “envy, ingratitude, spitefulness.” And the third one, the predisposition to *personality*, is probably the most interesting one: here there is an almost insurmountable and undecidable impurity that, at the limit, keeps us from deciding whether any of our actions can be properly registered as a free action, solely conditioned by the moral law, which is the law of freedom. The propensity here, which is to act as if we were acting morally, is radical evil, to the extent that it distorts the moral principle by overdetermining it with intentions that

do not themselves conform to duty: pathological “vices concealed under the appearance of virtue” (29).

This is probably enough Kant for our purposes at this point. Three kinds of evil: beastly, diabolical, and radical. How do we map these different forms of evil onto a (minimal) phenomenology of the informant? Let us take, for instance, the example given to us by Salvadoran journalist Oscar Martínez in his *A History of Violence*. He will tell us the story of a fellow called Abeja, an informant. He prefaces it by saying:

Without these murderers, hundreds more murderers would be walking the streets. Without these rapists, hundreds more rapists would be stalking the nights. The plea-bargain witness: criminals the state pardons in exchange for their testimony. Their lives in grave peril, many of these women are battling the most dangerous gangs of the continent. Nobody but the state backs them up, and often the state becomes their enemy. (Martínez 109)

This requires some explanation: a gang member, himself or herself having indulged in criminal activity many times, gets arrested and plea-bargains with the Salvadoran state to become a witness against other gang members. It is his or her way out of permanent jail time, but at the same time he or she risks becoming a target for the gangs themselves. If there is anything like a witness protection program in El Salvador, it is haphazard, thoroughly precarious, incompetent, and certainly never to be taken for granted or relied upon. These gangbangers, Abeja for instance, are taking their lives into their own hands. They have become informants. God knows, they will die for it, sooner or later, and sooner rather than later. How do we understand that? Coercion may be an explanation: they do not have a choice, the police have threatened to kill them unless they cooperate (in truth, given the state of affairs in El Salvador and other Central American countries, if there is successful prosecution of gang crimes, which happens rarely, it is usually through plea-bargain witnesses, not through proper police investigations) or to leak that they are traitors and give them no protection, expose them; so our gangbanger, take Abeja, must comply and hope for the best, which can be some additional days or weeks or months of life. This is mere opportunism—it does not rise to the level of evil behavior but it is

not necessarily moral behavior either. An informant has accepted to become an informant. At the moment, we cannot know what kind of an informant he or she is—just an undifferentiated one, like most of us in the surveillance state.

But Martínez, in his story entitled “The Most Miserable of Traitors,” does not speak of coercion. He says: “In late 2011, Abeja, a twenty-something-year-old kid, sat in front of prosecutors from Chalatenango and, for an undisclosed reason, admitted to being a member of the Fulton Locos Salvatrucha. He said that his clique dedicated itself to extortion, murder, and drug trafficking in the states of San Miguel, Santa Ana, Sonsonate and Chalatenango. He told them many secrets, secrets that spanned sixty-three typed pages” (113–14). This was not a trivial case, since Abeja’s testimony could be decisive for the Salvadoran state’s prosecution of José Misael “Medio Millón” Cisneros, one of the top Mara Salvatrucha leaders deemed to be “the mastermind behind the country’s cocaine exports” (112). The Salvadoran police imprisoned him in the tiny municipal police station of Agua Caliente and had him there for fifteen months of quasi-starvation and neglect, until Abeja decided to escape the prison and forfeit his plea-bargain witness status. No wonder. As Martínez put it, “Plea-bargain witnesses, especially former gang members, have to deal with the fact that their cliques have committed many crimes against the police. In other words, their guardians will often have a profound hate for them. Sometimes they’re even forced to testify about the complicity of the police. Abeja did exactly that in Medio Millón’s trial” (119).

We should not feel too sympathetic for the police or indeed for the witness. They are all bad, most of them anyway, and indifferently so. They simply fulfill their roles: some are police, some are gangbangers. Israel Ticas, “the only forensic investigator in all of El Salvador” (117), appreciates the importance of the gangbangers turned witnesses, since they enable him to find and exhume bodies that would otherwise remain disappeared. But Ticas also tells us that the witnesses are not devils turned angels. When Martínez asks him whether the witnesses feel sorry for their actions, Ticas says: “No. They’re totally calm. I admire that about those fuckers. They’re not even embarrassed” (118). And Ticas continues: “One

time I pulled out a boy about five years old and a girl about eight. The witness said they promised the girl that they wouldn't kill her little brother if she let herself be raped by fifteen men. They raped her and killed them both. It was in Ateos, in 2006. I found the two bodies hugging" (118).

The informants are participants in what they inform about. Their information is testimonial. They speak up, risking their lives, but not because they are embarrassed about what they did, or others did. The reason for their informing, as Martínez puts it, remains "undisclosed" (113). We do not know, we cannot know. Is the informant himself or herself a subject of radical evil, diabolical evil, beastly evil? Or is the informant, to the contrary, after all a subject to the surveillance state, to the state of extraction, fulfilling the moral law, the unconditioned law, the categorical imperative? Under what conditions is it fair to say that the informant is, in fact, in truth, doing the right thing? Does it matter?

For the surveillance state, it does not. Undifferentiated informants are good enough, since only the information as such matters. That is why the state has no compunctions at the level of extracting it from anybody. Some of you may have felt as initially perplexed as I did just a few days ago reading in the *New York Times* an article about how the Mexican state very likely "targeted with sophisticated surveillance technology sold to the Mexican government to spy on criminals and terrorists" a team of international investigators appointed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to investigate the forced disappearance of the 43 students in Ayotzinapa in September 2014.² This happened a few weeks before the investigators published their final report, but certainly after the Mexican authorities had become aware that the commissions' report rejected the government's version of what had happened. According to the *Times*, the investigators, all of them endowed with diplomatic immunity but still targets of the cyberweapon known as Pegasus, which renders all anti-surveillance encryption useless in smartphones at the same time it turns the same smartphones—through their microphones and cameras—into surveillance tools against their owners, had complained that the Mexican

2. Re "forced disappearance" in Mexico, including important consideration on the Ayotzinapa events, see Federico Mastrogiovanni.

“government essentially obstructed their inquiry and then cast them out by refusing to extend their mandate.” At the same time, “an investigation by the *New York Times* and forensic cyberanalysts in recent weeks determined that the software had been used against some of the country’s most influential academics, lawyers, journalists and their family members, including a teenage boy.” Surveillance runs amok, in excess of every law, in excess of every legal justification, just because it can. The surveillance state is itself a state in the “illegal” condition, certainly in the Kantian sense.

So perhaps we should alter the question and ask, not about varieties of evil in the informant himself or herself, but about varieties of evil in the surveillance state. Is it not the state of extraction the one who, through their many agents, indulges in antimoral behavior, in evil behavior, in illegal behavior? Would the surveillance state be a state of beastly evil, diabolical evil, or radical evil? Is the extraction of information a symptom of the frailty of the state, of the wickedness of the state, or of the impurity of the state? Or is the state, *de facto*, following its own merely opportunistic drive to do all it can do in its effort to fulfill its own mandate so as better to protect its citizens? Or, rather than taking advantage of an opportunity, is the surveillance state obliged to fulfill state functions to the most extreme possibility in the deployment of its own logic understood as categorically imperative? Is the surveillance state in fact, for the most part, and in general, a moral state?

Let me invoke one more example, this time Roberto Rangel’s testimonio, edited and published by Ana Luisa Calvillo and entitled *Me decían mexicano frijolero* (2015). *Me decían mexicano frijolero* could in fact be a place where to identify the primary features of a degree-zero informant—that is, within the phenomenology of the informant, an undifferentiated, unwilling informant who could not be subject to any moral judgment either to adjudicate evil or goodness. Roberto Rangel would have or be entitled to the atrocious honor of configuring the most extreme type of informant, the informant who informs against his will, against his life, against his libidinal satisfaction, against anything that could be considered an aspect of his happiness; a slave informant, or informant slave, whose performance follows a deconstituent imperative. Rangel is told “inform, it is your law, you signed a contract, you

have no option, and if you fail to do it we will gut your girlfriends, we will kill your children, and then we will get rid of you; after torturing you.” Rangel does not have a life, although he seeks it. But it has been stolen. He knows he is serving rogues, he knows that the system surrounding him also serves those rogues, he has no resources, and the miracle is always the miracle of a precarious survival, after he fails as informant, in jail for fifty seven years for an imagined murder, fifty seven fake years, because Rangel cannot count, cannot serve, cannot be, or he can be only cannon fodder, that is, someone doomed just because, nothing else would be consistent, truth and justice are not part of the procedure. Only derision, only monumental mockery.

Sadistic mockery comes from the police officer than runs him as an informant and turns him into a sexual slave and humiliates and degrades him in every visit, the police officer that calls him “mexicano frijolero” at the moment of rape and makes him eat meat that has been spitted on the floor because beaner Mexicans who think they can come to the United States and expect to eat meat deserve nothing else. They are themselves meat, usable sexually or economically, usable for extraction, but beyond that they are nothing. They are only transcripts, screens for the deployment of a predatory drive that is ultimately owned by the surveillance state, the corps of police, all the corps of police, all the force of the state. Roberto Rangel falls into a machine for crushing bodies and spirits, after information has been extracted from them, whatever meager information they are able to provide, and he will not get out of it. Paradoxically, only jail brings on a certain measure of peace, and the possibility of learning how to read, learning how to write, how to give a testimonio that nobody will ever be able to believe, not really, it is probably a fiction, one cannot give it proper credit lest one enters the psychotic night: it is not just Officer Rivas or María from Immigration Services, it is also all the other agents who must disbelieve every word from Rangel, and also the lawyer, the state attorney, the judge, no one can stick to the testimonio, to Rangel’s simple word, but what simple word, everything is a lie, it has to be, the truth of Rangel’s story can only show itself through its own impossibility, which means it never will, it does not. It is the psychotic night of the world. From its

depth—but it is the depth of the state of extraction, of the surveillance state—Rangel hears that he is a bitch, nothing but a bitch, I will make you my bitch, you will become a bitch, I will give you proper existence as a bitch, your being must match your worth, your name is the name of a bitch, proper name, mexicano frijolero, suck my cock or I will gut your son. This was Rangel’s testimonio, as told to Ana Luisa Calvillo.

Is that so different from our current US president when he demanded from Mexican President Peña Nieto to pay for the wall, pay for my wall, I know it is absurd but you must, or you will suffer the consequences, you have no option, and if you fail to comply I will gut your children, I will kill your girlfriends, I will make you my bitch, you already are my bitch: this is also the psychotic night in international politics, of which Kant would have spoken many years ago when he mentioned “the international situation, where civilized nations stand towards each other in the relation obtaining in the barbarous state of nature (a state of continuous readiness for war), a state, moreover, from which they have taken fixedly into their heads never to depart. We then become aware of the fundamental principles of the great societies called states—principles which flatly contradict their public pronouncements but can never be laid aside, and which no philosopher has yet been able to bring into agreement with morality” (29).

The surveillance state can and will always function in view of the maximization of its own libidinal cathexes, its own libidinal release, and its agents will take opportunistic advantage of it every time. This is the impurity of the state, of every state, its ongoing and ceaseless radical evil, which matches or mimics that of Officer Rivas, the Fresno, California, detective who has or can purchase the trust of his people, of the Drug Enforcement Administration, of the California Highway Patrol, of the district attorney, of the lawyers, the judges. Frankly, after all, Officer Rivas can access all the cocaine in the world, and the money, which is the reason he uses informants.

There are other kinds of informants. We could appeal to the fictional example of Butcher’s Boy, the protagonist of Thomas Perry’s *The Informant*, who informs a Justice Department agent because that information serves his own interests, his own calculations,

his cold plan for revenge, or perhaps not revenge, just caution, those fellows should be in jail or dead as far as I am concerned. He, Butcher's Boy, is an assassin, a cool one, but he still cannot assassinate everyone, there are too many of them, so he helps himself, as an assassin, by becoming an informant, through calculation: this type is of course the radical informant, or the radical evil informant, since his informing actions do denounce criminals who deserve it but for opportunistic and immoral reasons. In Officer Rivas's case, his informant was the site of diabolical evil, not as agent but as patient. Butcher's Boy is an agent of radical evil.

There is a moment in Don Winslow's recently published novel, *The Force*, when the protagonist, Denny Malone, a very reluctant informer who is forced to betray his friends, becomes a different kind of informer. We can imagine a serious informant, a professional informant, the informant who informs out of duty, the informant who accepts a life of risk and constant betrayal, a life lived in infinite distance, because there is a law that must be fulfilled, a law that must be made fulfilled, so that to become an informant means to affirm freedom, to be totally within the law, hence totally free, no matter the price. This would be the moral informant, the radical opposite of Roberto Rangel's, a full-degree informant, perhaps the type that Robert Mazur's *The Infiltrator* presents or would like to present if we could take it at face value—the perfectly professional, the perfectly non-pathological actions of an undercover police officer who accepts to befriend and then betray any number of people at the service of the law. So we would have three primary types of informants, the zero-degree informant, Roberto Rangel, the undercover officer serving the true interests of the law, Robert Mazur maybe, full-degree informer, moral informer, and the radical-evil informant represented by Butcher's Boy in Thomas Perry's novel. This is to say that a typology or phenomenology of the informant can absorb the Kantian analysis of varieties of evil: there is diabolical evil, there is radical evil, and there is moral freedom, and perhaps all kinds of beastly evil in between. And there is nothing else.

But it is still a very precarious typology that settles nothing. We know little, we can only imagine about those “undisclosed” reasons that marked Abeja's intentions, for instance. Why should

one become an informant? Why should one give his or her life over to the machinations of an extractive state? Why should one do it, really? Or in the best of cases, when one is not bound by duty, like the undercover officer, when one is not bound by diabolical wickedness, like it is the case for Roberto Rangel, and when one is not coerced by opportunistic calculations having to do with self-interest? Why is it the case that most informants in the surveillance state, or Facebook users, you yourself, for instance, give freely of their own bodies through a production of *jouissance* that, as we know, is far from being always pleasant? Perhaps because we want something back: the informant, any informant, is always in the position of Tobias, Tobit's son, the youth whose angel fled and who spent the rest of his life, until he died at 107 years of age, missing him, awaiting his return. It is perhaps not possible to live without an angel, or we can only do so in nostalgia for the angel. For Rangel the angel is perhaps the son he has never met and he will never meet, the second daughter of his other girlfriend he also loses, the children that come and go and from whom he cannot expect any returns, no longer, and then, if no longer, then when? Rangel wants to cross the border, wants to return after his deportation, he has a son, he wants to be received by his son, and he falls into the hands of a diabolical police force. Without proper papers, he becomes a slave, soon addicted to his very slavery, and he loses his very capacity to inform, since it requires a distance that is now lost.

One would think we are lost in the illegal condition, outside the law that is the law of freedom. One would think that the surveillance state has no respect for freedom's law. Informants—the subjects of the surveillance state are all informants, that is what they are, what we are, willing or unwilling, some of us innocent enough, some of us mired in the evil we are or are not embarrassed about—informants cannot make a claim to freedom, unless they find themselves in the improbable predicament of informing on the side of the categorical imperative, informing as a function of a universalizable maxim of behavior. Or, on the contrary, we might ask, is it, could it be, that, since the state is the only constituted authority, it is only being and becoming an informant to the state that will give us our freedom? Informing defines, in fact, our very

legitimacy as citizens, even if we were to be informing an illegal state, whose illegality would not be our responsibility. Could it be that, today, the categorical imperative is best served by informing on ourselves and others as well we might, unconditionally, for the sake of coming into the law, for the sake of abandoning the abjection of the illegal condition? It is not less Facebook that we need, it is more Facebook, more sincerity, more exposure, more confession, and, yes, we should encourage university authorities to read all our emails, until, finally, we would have said it all, there would be nothing left to say.

At the beginning of this talk I mentioned that I could think of a place, the border of the border, where information would not have to be shared, where language and politics would not come together under the form of the imperative to inform, an opaque site of silence and secrecy, a place of radical reticence concerning unconcealment. I also indicated that such a place, if it exists at all, would be protopolitical or infrapolitical, it would be directly outside politics, outside the expository society, in exodus from the state of extraction, the state of surveillance. It is time for me to take that up in a more explicit way, and I will attempt to do it by honoring the late Werner Hamacher, who died only a few weeks ago. My interest is on one particular aspect of Hamacher's very rich 2014 essay "On the Right to Have Rights," to which I have to refer rather expeditiously for reasons of time.

Let us assume that the right to secrecy, which in the North American tradition, following US Supreme Court decisions, is frequently referred to as the right to privacy, is a human right. The surveillance state demonstrates once again what Hamacher, following Hannah Arendt's famous analysis in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, says about the state in general: "it is left to the 'good will,' and that is to say to political opportunism and, more precisely, to property, security, and private interests masquerading as interests of the state, to either adopt human rights as the measure of political decisions or to reject them altogether: human rights themselves could always legitimate any of their arbitrary manipulations" (Hamacher 183).³ The universalization of the surveillance state,

3. Hamacher refers of course to the chapter in *Origins* entitled "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man."

however, immediately means that there is no room for the right to secrecy. To be deprived of the right to privacy is to be deprived of a human right that is also a citizen right. Once this process starts, Arendt says and Hamacher agrees, the human will be produced as “structurally worldless” (184), the human being will have become, from the perspective of the state, a hyperborder dweller, naked life as such.

Arendt’s postulate of a “right to have rights,” as is well known, is the demand of a right to politics, that is, a right to regulate human and public life through language, not violence. But the right to politics, which points to public life, is only the mirror side of the right to secrecy, the right to a private life. If the right to politics, as Arendt says, can be experienced only through its loss, the same is the case for the right to secrecy: the right to secrecy is the secret right to have rights, which the opportunism of the surveillance state will want to take away. Let me then propose that the right to secrecy is the same as the right to politics. Hamacher says that this right that grounds all rights and can only be perceived in its very loss is a “protopolitical right” (191), that is, a condition of politics, the very possibility of political determinability and determination. This, in Hamacher’s words, is what takes place when the right to politics/ secrecy, which is the right to rights, is lost at the hands of a rogue state (or of a rogue institution):

Politics [is] not any more a lingual process of searching for a common form of life but instead the mere form of the self-reproduction of an established procedural schema that must have negated its provenance out of linguistic processes of deliberation, reduced language to acts of judgment, and eliminated its political relevance. If the *polis*—as Arendt assumes with Aristotle—was ever the place, free of definition, of the *being-human* in the sense of the speaking-being, politics became the procedure of grasping precisely this being as an already-spoken-and-decided-being, as a fact and a fate, and the procedure for immobilizing its generative, redefining, and indefinite movement. Human existence is henceforth not anymore graspable as an *a priori* partaking in a political world through language but instead only as an existence at the threshold of politics (193–94).

But an existence at the threshold of politics, even before it becomes understandable as a protopolitical existence, is an infrapolitical existence. Hamacher talks about it as an existence constituted

by “a law without right” (197), “unqualified, mere existence” (197). Hamacher’s extraordinary conclusion follows:

The language of those who have no world can only be the language of the liberation of a world that is other than the world from which they were exiled: it can only be a language for such a world that is not meant, intended, and defined through intentions; not an already known world that is appropriated in its knowledge but rather a world released from aims and securities, a world let free by anyone who relates to it, and only for this reason, it is absolutely a world—free from all concepts of the world. (203)

The protopolitical position is indeed, for Hamacher, the beginning of another politics, a new beginning, but a beginning “that cannot be traced back to any other and that can be surpassed by none, since it is a beginning merely for further beginnings and is offered to them without commanding them. The beginning of language and law in the claim is an *arché an-arché*” (204). An an-archic beginning, a new politics after the destruction of politics that is the general consequence of the consummation of the state into a state of extraction—such is, maybe, the promise of protopolitics. In the temporal gap of the promise, neither believing nor disbelieving it, dwells infrapolitics.

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