

From Hegel to Heidegger... And back

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Will human sexuality survive the passage to Artificial Intelligence? To answer this question properly, we should first analyze the paradoxical inner structure of sexuality itself, which is never simply binary: it always involves a third element that gives body to the deadlock of sexual difference – this is what Lacan meant by “there is no sexual difference.” This is why sexuality is in itself excessive and perverse. For this reason, all attempts to “normalize” sexuality by way of keeping it within the limits of moderation miserably fail: today, we find on the market products deprived of their dangerous element (coffee without caffeine, chocolate without sugar...), and the moderate sexuality is sexuality without sex. The Buddhist attempts to contain the excess sexuality miss the point of sexuality: intense sexuality is in itself the greatest sacrifice (the sacrifice of peaceful moderate life) – in sexuality, we enjoy the pain, the renunciation itself. However, today, in our world pervaded by commodification and technological inventions, real human partners are more and more replaced by what Lacan called lathouses, artificial objects aimed at satisfying our sexual desire without another human being (plastic phalluses, digitalized pornography). The result is that we are thrown into a space of limitless pleasures where, although “everything is permitted,” our intense sexual desire gets anaesthetized.

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1. Absolute Knowing as Hegel's Name for Finitude

Robert Pippin was for decades among the most outspoken American Hegelians, defending Hegel's idealist legacy not only against the post-Hegelian turn towards non-discursive or non-notional reality but also rejecting Heidegger's treatment of Hegel. So it comes as a shock when, in his new book *The Culmination* (Pippin, 2024), he endorses Heidegger's characterization of Hegel's thought as the culmination of Western metaphysics, as the full deployment of its basic premise that being equals *logos*, i.e., that the truth of everything that exists (or that can exist) can be articulated in the form of discursive judgments, so that the full system of logic is at the same time a full ontology, the description of conditions that everything that exists should meet. The post-Hegelian thinkers were right to claim that something escapes this closed circle of logical categories and mediations, but they were wrong in trying to locate this missing dimension into some form of pre-logical positive reality (will, productive process, unconscious drives...). It is only Heidegger who really breaks out of the Hegelian closed circle, pointing out that we (humans) are finite beings thrown into a historically destined disclosure of Being which predetermines what "matters" to us, our horizon of the meaningfulness of Being - Hegel himself doesn't see how his own Logic already relies on a disclosure of Being as immanently structured by logical categories, judgments, and syllogistic mediations. A new beginning is thus needed, and Heidegger gives hints that only a non-discursive poetic thinking can do the job.

Pippin makes the move from Hegel's culmination of metaphysics as logic to the finite existence of a Dasein thrown into a historical world of a disclosed meaning – but is this move the ultimate one? Do we not find in Hegel himself (and Schelling) an *Ansatz* for a move beyond/beneath Heidegger? The dimension of radical madness, the "night of the world," the pain of infinite difference, is prior to the openness to a meaningful disclosure of being. Schelling begins his *Ages of the World* with: logos is at the beginning, but what was BEFORE the beginning?¹ Heidegger indicates that the culmination of Western metaphysics, of its reduction of being to discursive knowability (i.e., Hegel's elaboration of logic as a complete account of the conditions of the knowability of being and, consequently, of being itself), precisely because of its completion makes palpable that something is missing, that something is left out, ignored: it "reveals finally what is missing or left out, or what remains unasked."(11) The so-called post-Hegelian thought was obviously aware of this ignored dimension; but Heidegger repeatedly claims that it tries to fill in this gap with some new positive substantial mode of being (will to power, social-material process, the unconscious...) which just turns around the metaphysics without effectively stepping out of it. My thesis is that while this is true, it was none other than Hegel himself, the point of culmination of metaphysical idealism, who was fully aware of this limitation and included it into his system. Hegel's name for the radical finitude of our

¹ I developed a detailed analysis of Schelling's pre-ontology in my *The Indivisible Remainder*, London: Verso Books 1996.

predicament is none other than ABSOLUTE KNOWING (AK).¹ The first obvious fact that bears witness to this finitude is Hegel's strict prohibition to engage in speculations about future: philosophy (and science) can only paint grey on grey, what will come is radically on, in no way to be derived from the past and present – here is Hegel's well-known formulation:

“Only one word more concerning the desire to teach the world what it ought to be. For such a purpose philosophy at least always comes too late. Philosophy, as the thought of the world, does not appear until reality has completed its formative process, and made itself ready. History thus corroborates the teaching of the conception that only in the maturity of reality does the ideal appear as counterpart to the real, apprehends the real world in its substance, and shapes it into an intellectual kingdom. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. The owl of Minerva, takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering.”

Hegel's point here is not that we can only fully know the past, but a much more radical one: each historical epoch implies its own vision of the past, it reconstructs it retroactively from its standpoint – we cannot rely even on our knowledge of the past. This is what Hegel calls “Absolute Knowing /Wissen, not Erkenntniss/cognition/”: the end-point of dialectical reversals, when the subject stumbles upon the final limitation, the limitation as such, a limitation which can no longer be inverted into a productive self-assertion. Contrary to the misleading appearances, Absolute Knowing “does not mean ‘knowing everything.’ It rather means – recognizing one's limitations” (Solomon, 1983, 639). “Absolute Knowing” is the final recognition of such a limitation which is “absolute” in the sense that it is not a determinate, particular, and as such a “relative” limit/obstacle to our knowledge, something we can clearly see and locate as the limit/obstacle. It is invisible “as such” because it is the limitation of the entire field as such, its closure which, from within it (and we are always by definition within it, because this field in a way “is” ourselves) cannot but appear as its opposite, as the very openness of the field.

It is a commonplace to oppose Hegel as the ridiculous point of Absolute Knowing to modest sceptical approach which recognizes the excess of reality over every conceptualization. What if, however, it is Hegel who is much more modest? What if his AK is the assertion of a radical closure: there is no meta-language, we cannot step on our own shoulder and see our own limitation, we cannot relativize/historicize ourselves, our own position? What is effectively arrogant is, as Chesterton made it clear, precisely such self-relativization, the attitude of «knowing one's limitation», of not agreeing with oneself – as the proverbial «wise» insight according to which we can only approach reality asymptotically. What Hegel's AK deprives us of is precisely this minimal self-distance, the safety-distance from our own location. That is to

¹ I resume here the line of argumentation from the subchapter “Absolute Knowing” of the Chapter 6 of my *Less Than Nothing*, London: Verso Books 2012.

say, Hegel's ultimate point is not that, in spite of our limitation, of our embeddedness in a contingent historical context, we – or Hegel himself, at least - somehow can overcome this limitation and gain access to Absolute Knowledge (to which historicist relativism then responds that we cannot ever gain access to this position, that we can only aim at it as at an impossible Ideal). What he calls absolute Knowing is, on the contrary, the very sign of our total capture – we are CONDEMNED to absolute Knowing, we cannot ESCAPE it, since “absolute Knowing” means that there is no external point of reference with regard to which we could as it were step onto our own shoulder and perceive the relativity of our own “merely subjective” standpoint. All determinate being is relational, things only are what they are in relation to their otherness, or, as Deleuze put it, perspectival distortion is inscribed into the very identity of the thing. The real is not out there, as the inaccessible transcendent X never reached by our representations; the real is here, as the obstacle/impossibility which makes our representations flawed, inconsistent. The real is not the In-itself but the very obstacle which distorts our access to the In-itself, and this paradox provides the key for what Hegel calls “absolute knowing.”

Both Hegel and Heidegger thus advocate the end of philosophy, but to complicate things further, none of the two is original in this claim. The topic of the end of philosophy dominates European philosophy from Kant onwards: Kant designates his critical approach as a prolegomena to a future philosophy (metaphysics); Fichte talks about “doctrine of science (*Wissenschaftslehre*)” instead of philosophy; Hegel saw his system as no longer just philosophy (love of wisdom) but knowledge itself; Marx opposed philosophy to the study of actual life; etc. till Heidegger whose motto was “the end of philosophy and the task of thinking.” There is a deep paradox in this fact. It is only with Kant's revolution, with his notion of the transcendental, that philosophy came to itself. Is it not that, ultimately, philosophy AS SUCH begins with Kant, with his transcendental turn? Is it not that the entire previous philosophy can be understood properly - not as the simple description of the "entire universe," of the totality of beings, but as the description of the horizon within which entities disclose themselves to a finite human being - only if read "anachronistically," from the standpoint opened up by Kant? Is it not that it was Kant who also opened up the field within which Heidegger himself was able to formulate the notion of *Dasein* as the place in which beings appear within a historically determined/destined horizon of meaning? (I am well aware that Heidegger would never accept to use the term “transcendental” for his approach since “transcendental” is for him irreducibly branded by the notion of modern subjectivity. In spite of that, I keep this term since I think it remains the most appropriate one to indicate the idea of a horizon within which entities appear to us.)

So what does it mean that today we don't only live in an era of the proclaimed end of philosophy – we live in an era of the *double* end of philosophy? At the very beginning of his *The Grand Design*, Stephen Hawking triumphantly proclaims that »philosophy is dead.” (Hawking, & Mlodinow, 2010, 5) With the latest advances in quantum physics and cosmology,

the so-called experimental metaphysics reaches its apogee: metaphysical questions about the origins of the universe, etc., which were till now the topic of philosophical speculations, can now be answered through experimental science and thus empirically tested... The prospect of a “wired brain” is a kind of final point of the naturalization of human thought: when our process of thinking can directly interact with a digital machine, it effectively becomes an object in reality, it is no longer “our” inner thought as opposed to external reality. On the other hand, today’s transcendental historicism insists that sciences cannot provide the ultimate cognitive frame of our knowledge. Heidegger gave to the transcendental approach an existential turn: philosophy as transcendental-phenomenological ontology does not inquire into the nature of reality, it analyses how all of reality appears to us in a given epochal constellation. In today’s age of techno-science, we consider as “really existing” only what can be an object of scientific research – all other entities are reduced to illusory subjective experiences, just imagined things, etc. Heidegger’s point is not that such a view is more or less “true” than a premodern view, but that, with the new disclosure of being that characterizes modernity, the very criteria of what is “true” or “false” changed... It is not difficult to grasp the paradox of such an approach: while Heidegger is perceived as a thinker uniquely focused on the question of Being, he leaves out of consideration what we understand by this question in our “naïve” pre-transcendental stance: how do things exist independently of the way we relate to them, independently of how they appear to us? I find here problematic, misleading even, how Pippin formulates the relationship between Being and beings/entities:

Being itself is at issue. Without Dasein, then, there are beings, and there would be a number of facts that would be true of such beings— what exists, what kinds exist, what might exist but does not — but there would be no Being qua Being, manifestness as such /.../ Heidegger’s question is not ‘what is there?’ but ‘what allows’ beings to be manifest? (60)

The disclosure of the meaning of Being of course doesn’t create or cause entities; however, to draw from this the conclusion that, even without the disclosure of Being “there would be a number of facts that would be true of

such beings— what exists, what kinds exist, what might exist but does not” – is deeply misleading. The terms Pippin uses here – the true facts about such beings which exist even outside their ontological disclosure – are obviously not ontologically neutral, they *already appear only within a specific historical disclosure of Being*. As Heidegger himself was fully aware of, what is out there (or here or anywhere) prior to a historical disclosure of Being, i.e., how to *think* nature prior to the emergence of humans as *Da-Sein*, as the “here” of Being, is a much more difficult question totally avoided by Pippin.

So where does Hegel stand, in this passage from the traditional metaphysics to the postmetaphysical nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought? Hegel is the “vanishing mediator”

between his “before” and his “after.” That is to say: something happens in Hegel, a breakthrough into a unique dimension of thought, which is obliterated, rendered invisible in its true dimension, by postmetaphysical thought. This obliteration leaves an empty space which has to be filled in so that the continuity of the development of philosophy can be reestablished—filled in with what? The index of this obliteration is the ridiculous image of Hegel as the absurd “absolute idealist” who “pretended to know everything,” to possess absolute Knowledge, to read the mind of God, to deduce entire reality out of the self-movement of (his) mind—the image which is an exemplary case of what Freud called *Deck-Erinnerung* (screen-memory), a fantasy-formation intended to cover up a traumatic truth. In this sense, the post-Hegelian turn to “concrete reality, irreducible to notional mediation,” should rather be read as a desperate posthumous revenge of metaphysics, as an attempt to reinstall metaphysics, albeit in the inverted form of the primacy of concrete reality.

When, in his *Culmination*, Robert Pippin moves from Hegel to Heidegger, he misses the most radical dimension (beyond the transcendental) in Hegel’s thought: like Heidegger, he reduces Hegel’s absolute idealism to the total coincidence between being and (logical) knowability, thereby reducing ontology to the notion’s self-deployment. However, the gap between logic and reality remains in Hegel, at more than one level – ultimately, the gap is not between logos and reality but in the thing itself, between (in Lacanian terms) reality and the Real. Does already Hegel’s best-known formula (the Absolute should be conceived not only as substance but also as subject) not point in this direction? “Subject” does not stand here just for self-consciousness, its discursive power of reflection, it stands also for a gap in the thing (Absolute) itself – “subject” does not mean only that substance is dynamized, caught in self-movement, it means above all that abstraction, illusion, partiality, etc., are immanent to a totality. Let me quote here again the well-known passage from the “Foreword” to his *Phenomenology of Spirit* where Hegel provides the most elementary formula of what does it mean to conceive Substance also as Subject:

The disparity which exists in consciousness between the I and the substance which is its object is the distinction between them, the *negative* in general. This can be regarded as the *defect* of both, though it is their soul, or that which moves them. That is why some of the ancients conceived the *void* as the principle of motion, for they rightly saw the moving principle as the *negative*, though they did not as yet grasp that the negative is the self. Now, although this negative appears at first as a disparity between the I and its object, it is just a much a disparity of the substance with itself. Thus, what seems to happen outside of it, to be an activity directed against it, is really its own doing, and substance shows itself to be essentially subject. (Hegel, 1977, 21)

Crucial is the final reversal: the disparity between subject and substance is simultaneously the disparity of the substance with itself—or, to put it in Lacan’s terms, disparity means that the lack of the subject is simultaneously the lack in the Other: subjectivity emerges when substance cannot achieve full identity with itself, when substance is in itself “barred,” traversed by an immanent impossibility or antagonism. In short, the subject’s epistemological ignorance, its failure to fully grasp the opposed substantial content, simultaneously indicates a limitation/failure/lack of the substantial content itself. Therein also resides the key dimension of the theological revolution of Christianity: the alienation of man from God has to be projected/transferred back into God itself, as the alienation of God from itself (therein resides the speculative content of the notion of divine kenosis)—this is the Christian version of Hegel’s insight into how the disparity of subject and substance implies the disparity of substance with regard to itself. This is why the unity of man and God is enacted in Christianity in a way which fundamentally differs from the way of pagan religions where man has to strive to overcome his fall from God through the effort to purify his being from material filth and elevate himself to rejoin God. In Christianity, on the contrary, God falls from itself, he becomes a finite mortal human abandoned by God (in the figure of Christ and his lament on the cross “Father, why have you forsaken me?”), and man can only achieve unity with God by identifying with this god, the god abandoned by itself.

Pippin misses this dimension of Hegel because his reading of Hegel not only in *Culmination* but already in his previous books was definitely Kantian: Hegel’s science of logic renders the a priori structure of all possible thinking (of thinking all possible objects/entities), where nature and spirit are just two contingent domains of objects – there could be others since these two cannot be directly deduced from logic. He notes his difference from Robert Brandom:

If it were not fully determinable, then the determinations would be hostage to something empirical or historical, and so not a matter of pure thinking. Brandom has developed a reading of conceptual determination in Hegel that argues for such an “open” form of thought’s self- determination, or for such a subjection. (143)

I am here on Brandom’s side: to take just two exemplary cases, the categories from Hegel’s logic are simply not able to provide the coordinates for grasping the mechanisms of the Freudian unconscious or the weird logic of wave oscillations and superpositions in quantum mechanics. And I even think that, if we properly read the Freudian unconscious, there two cases imply a clear parallel. For Freud, the unconscious is not a substantial pre-discursive psychic entity, a drive that strives to express itself in different ways; it is the repressed part of our symbolic universe, the part which exists in a virtual way, i.e., which is not more real but, in some sense, less real than our conscious and preconscious thoughts. In the terms of quantum physics, unconscious are the superpositions which are lost when a wave oscillation “collapses” in one

determinate conscious thought or statement: they don't exist, they continue to insist as virtual entities.

In this sense Lacan claims that the status of the unconscious is not ontological but ethical – not only in the sense that the psychoanalytic process is guided by the ethical maxim to confront the patient's unconscious but, much more radically, in the sense that the unconscious itself brought out through the analytic process is not a deep truth already present deep in our psyche but an ethical construct that results from the duty to put some order into our psychic life: “If I am formulating here that the status of the unconscious is ethical /.../ it is precisely because Freud himself does not stress it when he gives the unconscious its status.” (Lacan, 2004, 34) Already in his early work, Freud indicates this apropos a hysterical who “weeps at A” and “is quite unaware that he is doing so on account of the association A-B, and B itself plays no part at all in his psychical life” (Freud, 1953, 356):

Now this case is typical of repression in hysteria. We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by deferred action. The cause of this state of things is the retardation of puberty as compared with the rest of the individual's development.¹

So, it is not that the unconscious is simply B: B became traumatic only retroactively (a classic case is here that of Wolfman, Freud's best-known patient: when as a small child he witnessed the *a tergo* sexual act of his parents, there was nothing traumatic or sexual in it – it became traumatic only years later when Wolfman developed his infantile sexual theories). The ethical act is here not simply to remember the primordial scene but to *dissociate* it from its traumatic impact which is conferred on it later, retroactively. To remember the primordial scene involves linear causal determinism: one identifies the ultimate cause of ongoing pathological phenomena. The space of freedom is the space of retroactivity, and I retroactively reconstruct the past (in its meaning) as an ethical project.

This is why, in his *Is It Ever Just Sex?*², Darian Leader problematizes the standard notion that, according to psychoanalysis, everything we do or talk about is really about sex – as it says on the book cover: “The old idea that sexuality is a smouldering, animalistic force within us, desperate for release yet restrained by social forces, has little to support it. Bodies aren't just sticks that make fire when you rub them together, and the pain, heartache, and regret that can accompany the highs of sexual excitement show us that much more is at stake.” Let's take an ordinary example: when I take the Piccadilly tube line in London, I notice that one of the end stations is “Cockfosters,” a name which gives rise to obvious dirty associations (fostering my cock). A Jungian approach would decipher in this name a deeper urge to strengthen my potency

¹ Op.cit, p. 349.

² See Darian Leader, *Is It Ever Just Sex?* London: Hamish Hamilton 2023

(if I am a man), as if sexuality is a substantial psychic passion that seeks to express itself in all possible everyday situation. For a Lacanian, things stand the other way round: I am (or, rather, may be) obsessed with fostering my cock because I associate the name of the station with some traumatic or libidinally invested event which may have nothing to do with sexuality. To put it in another way, at its most basic level, sexuality of the unconscious phenomena does not reside in their ultimate content but in how these phenomena are mediated or submitted to the “dream-work,” to its detours and displacements.

2. The Pre-Transcendental Real

So, let's take a closer look at Pippin's shift from a Hegelian position to a Heideggerian one. In *Culmination* Pippin restates his old Hegelian position that any critique of idealism which asserts its dependence upon some external ground, “insofar as it is a thinking, a judging, a claim to know, is always already a manifestation of a dependence on pure thinking and its conditions, and such “moments” of pure thinking are to delimit (but not limit) the normative domain of intelligibility (what can rightly be distinguished from what, or rightly posited as “ground,” for example) and not any process or series of events that goes on in supposed independence of the empirical world.” (149) In his earlier works, Pippin applies this critique on Heidegger himself: Heidegger's assertion of the dependence of our thinking on a disclosure of Being external to it, is also “already a manifestation of a dependence on pure thinking.” Pippin doesn't elevate here thinking (self-consciousness) into a causal ground of nature and social life: science can explain how certain animals were able to develop thinking, but they are thereby describing a certain natural process, and

no fact about the organic properties of such being's accounts for what it is to be self-conscious or agents, and there is no need for the positing of nonmaterial entities or capacities. Those are categories of achievement—indeed, collective achievement—and the question of what is achieved is an autonomous philosophical question. (158)

Spirit as a self-generative process is, of course, grounded in natural substantial bodies, but this does not explain its immanent logic. It goes without saying that Pippin applies the same critique on Marx and Freud: they both assert the dependence of our thinking on some “objective” substantial process external to it (the social productive process, the unconscious mechanisms). In *The Culmination*, however, Pippin concedes that Heidegger *does* break out of this circle – just Heidegger, not Marx or Freud. Heidegger's critique of Hegel (not Marx's, not Freud's limitation of consciousness) is therefore for Pippin “the first genuine confrontation with Hegel in all the post- Hegelian European tradition” (161). In some sense this is true, but this confrontation is extremely reductive: a key dimension of Hegel's thought disappears in Heidegger's reading of Hegel as the culmination of metaphysical idealism in which discursive

Reason is asserted as the ultimate ground of all reality. We should begin with the key fact that Hegel himself in some sense breaks out of the self-enclosed logical circle when, at the end of his logic, he passes from logic to nature: he evokes the insufficiency of the closed circle of logic, of its realm of shadows:

The idea is still logical; it is shut up in pure thought [in den reinen Gedanken eingeschlossen], the science only of the divine concept. Its systematic exposition is of course itself a realization, but one confined within the same sphere. Because the pure idea of cognition is to this extent shut up within subjectivity, it is the drive [Trieb] to sublate it, and pure truth becomes as final result also the beginning of another sphere and science.” (SL, 12.253) This passage is thus not an objective causal process, it is immanent to thinking subjectivity, an effect of “a felt practical insufficiency (160).

What post-Hegelians from Schelling to Marx reproach Hegel with is here clearly stated by Hegel himself. Pippin is right to point out that what Hegel means by calling the Logic the realm of shadows is “a concession to finitude that Heidegger does not see” (179):

by ‘shadows,’ Hegel means to point to the insufficiency of the Logic—even as a metaphysics—if considered as a stand-alone part, when considered as a speculative science. It is an abstraction, a necessary one, but its isolation from the system it animates, while necessary, can produce only conceptual shadows of the Absolute. We must see it “alive” in the development of the sciences of nature and in the historical development of human *Geist* before it can be fully understood. (180)

Here Pippin comes close to Brandom: “the Hegelian *a priori* for the philosophies of nature and spirit must be a historical *a priori*, what is conceptually indispensable and so not empirically disconfirmable but at a moment of development in the investigation of nature and the developments of civil society.” (181) However, Pippin constrains here historicity to the “philosophies of nature and spirit,” not to logic itself. He is right to assert that the passage from logic to *Realphilosophie* is not an actual deduction or the description of an actual causal process: all that one can deduce from the immanent self-movement of notions is that it ends up in the feeling of practical insufficiency which gives birth of the drive to move from the logical “realm of shadows” to actual life. Plus, any reality that appears in this way has to follow and fit the space of logical categories. But where does this reality come from is not a philosophical problem but a question of empirical sciences.

To answer this question, one should venture into the notion of a Thing which is not a part of our (transcendentally constituted) reality. In *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, his treatise on Kant’s

Critique of Pure Reason,¹ Heidegger restricts himself to “thing” in the sense of an empirical object, part of our transcendentally-constituted reality, without mentioning the Thing in the more radical Freud-Lacanian sense needed: the pre-ontological Real, the “immortal” horror not bound by finitude, a feature of imagination prior to fantasy, like Maupassant’s *horla* or the alien from Ridley Scott’s film of the same name. We should render here the two opposed philosophical senses of imagination. In Kant, imagination is a synthetic activity which is necessary for reality to manifest itself, a medium in which sensory data and pure reason come together – to quote Ulisses Razzante Vaccari: “This conciliatory function of imagination shows, via a synthesizing action, how the manifold may be then connected by knowledge as it pervades the manifold of the sensitive data and makes it available to the synthetic unity of apperception.”² Imagination is thus transcendental, constitutive even of our perception of actual objects, and Heidegger focuses on this, reading imagination as pre-discursive Manifestness. In Lacan’s terms, we could read this imagination as the fantasmatic support of reality. / In Hegel, imagination at its most radical is pre-ontological, the violent activity of tearing things apart, the infinite power of abstraction. One cannot avoid mentioning here two often quoted passages, the first one from *Jenaer Realphilosophie* and the second one from the *Foreword* to *Phenomenology*. There is nothing more foreign to Hegel than the lamentation of the richness of reality that gets lost when we proceed to its conceptual grasping—recall Hegel’s already-quoted unambiguous celebration of the absolute power of Understanding:

what is thus separated, and in a sense is unreal, is itself an essential moment; for just because the concrete fact is self-divided, and turns into unreality, it is something self-moving, self-active. The action of separating the elements is the exercise of the force of Understanding, the most astonishing and greatest of all powers, or rather the absolute power. The circle, which is self-enclosed and at rest, and, *qua* substance, holds its own moments, is an immediate relation, the immediate, continuous relation of elements with their unity, and hence arouses no sense of wonderment. But that an accident as such, when out loose from its containing circumference, — that what is bound and held by something else and actual only by being connected with it, — should obtain an existence all its own, gain freedom and independence on its own account — this is the portentous power of the negative; it is the energy of thought, of pure Self. (Hegel, 1977, 17-18)

This celebration is in no way qualified, i.e., Hegel’s point is not that this power is nonetheless later “sublated” into a subordinate moment of the unifying totality of Reason. The problem with

¹ See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning the Thing: On Kant’s Doctrine Of the Transcendental Principles*, Blue Ridge Summit: Rowman and Littlefield 2018.

² Imagination in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (degruyter.com).

Understanding is rather that it does not unleash this power to the end, that it takes it as external to the thing itself—like, in the above-quoted passage from *Phenomenology*, the standard notion that it is merely *our* Understanding (“mind”) that separates in its imagination what in “reality” belongs together, so that the Understanding’s “absolute power” is merely the power of our imagination which in no way concerns the reality of the thing so analyzed. We pass from Understanding to Reason not when this analyzing, tearing apart, is overcome in a synthesis which brings us back to the wealth of reality, but when this power of “tearing apart” is displaced from “merely our mind” into things themselves, as their inherent power of negativity. In this way, the dimension of the Imaginary returns in its grounding role, not as the site of imaginary identifications and self-recognition but as a (possible) name for the violent act of dismembering (the production of *le corps morcele* with its *membra disjecta*) which tears apart every organic unity. In a move further from Kant, imagination is asserted not just as synthesis but also as “analysis,” the activity of tearing apart what seemed to belong together. Hegel formulated this process in his *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, where he writes about the “Night of the World”:

The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity - an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him - or which are not present. This night, the interior of nature, that exists here - pure self - in phantasmagorical representations, is night all around it, in which here shoots a bloody head - there another white ghastly apparition, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye - into a night that becomes awful. (Hegel, 1974, 7-8)

One should not be blinded by the poetic power of this description, but read it precisely. The first thing to note is how the objects which freely float around in this “night of the world” are *membra disjecta*, partial objects, objects detached from their organic Whole – is there not a strange echo between this description and Hegel’s description of the negative power of Understanding which is able to abstract an entity (a process, a property) from its substantial context and treat it as if it has an existence of its own? It is thus as if, in the ghastly scenery of the “night of the world,” we encounter something like *the power of Understanding in its natural state*, spirit in the guise of a *proto-spirit* – this, perhaps, is the most precise definition of horror: when a higher state of development violently inscribes itself in the lower state, in its ground/presupposition, where it cannot but appear as a monstrous mess, a disintegration of order, a terrifying unnatural combination of natural elements. This is why for Hegel madness is not an accidental lapse, distortion, “illness” of human spirit, but something which is inscribed into individual spirit’s basic ontological constitution: to be a human means to be potentially mad:

This interpretation of insanity as a necessarily occurring form or stage in the development of the soul is naturally not to be understood as if we were asserting that *every* mind, *every* soul, must go through this stage of extreme derangement. Such an assertion would be as absurd as to assume that because in the *Philosophy of Right* crime is considered as a necessary manifestation of the human will, therefore to commit crime is an inevitable necessity for *every* individual. Crime and insanity are *extremes* which the human mind *in general* has to overcome in the course of its development.¹

Although not a factual necessity, madness is a formal possibility constitutive of human mind: it is something whose threat has to be overcome if we are to emerge as “normal” subjects, which means that “normality” can only arise as the overcoming of this threat. This is why, as Hegel put it a couple of pages later, “insanity must be discussed before the healthy, intellectual consciousness, although it has that consciousness for its *presupposition*.² In short, we do not all have to be mad in reality, but madness is the real of our psychic lives, a point to which our psychic lives necessarily refer in order to assert themselves as “normal.”

Although Heidegger is the ultimate transcendental philosopher, there are mysterious passages where he ventures into this pre-transcendental domain. In the elaboration of this notion of an untruth *lethe/* older than the very dimension of truth, Heidegger emphasizes how man's “stepping into the essential unfolding of truth” is a “transformation of the being of man in the sense of a de-rangement /*Ver-rueckung* - going mad/” of his position among beings. (Heidegger, 1975, 65) The “derangement” to which Heidegger refers is, of course, not a psychological or clinical category of madness: it signals a much more radical, properly ontological reversal/aberration, when, in its very foundation, the universe itself is in a way “out of joint,” thrown off its rails. What is crucial here is to remember that Heidegger wrote these lines in the years of his intensive reading of Schelling's *Treatise on Human Freedom*, a text which discerns the origin of Evil precisely in a kind of ontological madness, in the “derangement” of man's position among beings (his self-centeredness), as a necessary intermediate step (“vanishing mediator”) in the passage from “prehuman nature” to our symbolic universe: “man, in his very essence, is a *katastrophe* – a reversal that turns him away from the genuine essence. Man is the only catastrophe in the midst of beings. (Heidegger, 1984, 94) It seems clear what Heidegger aims at by the quoted formulation: man as *Da-Sein* (the “being-there” of Being, the place of the disclosure of Being) is an entity irreducibly rooted in his body (I use here the masculine form since it is at work in Heidegger). With a little bit of rhetorical exaggeration, one can say that Heidegger's “no Being without Being-There as the place of its disclosure” is his version of Hegel's “one should grasp the Absolute not only as

¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, Par. 408, Addition. Quoted from The Subjective Spirit (marxists.org).

² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia*, Par. 408, Addition. Quoted from The Subjective Spirit (marxists.org).

Substance but also as Subject." However, if the disclosure of the entire domain of entities is rooted in a singular entity, then something "deranged" is taking place: a particular entity is the exclusive site at which all entities appear, acquire their Being – so, to put it brutally, you kill a man and you simultaneously "kill Being" ... This short-circuit between the Clearance of Being and a particular entity introduces a catastrophic de-rangement into the order of beings: because man, rooted in his body, cannot look at entities from outside, every disclosure of Being, every Clearance, has to be grounded in untruth (concealment/hiddenness). The ultimate cause of the de-rangement that pertains to *Da-Sein* thus resides in the fact that *Dasein* is by definition embodied, and, towards the end of his life, Heidegger conceded that, for philosophy, "the body phenomenon is the most difficult problem":

The bodily */das Leibliche/* in the human is not something animalistic. The manner of understanding that accompanies it is something that metaphysics up till now has not touched on. (Heidegger, 1979, 146)

One is tempted to risk the hypothesis that it is precisely the psychoanalytic theory which was the first to touch on this key question: is not the Freudian eroticized body, sustained by libido, organized around erogenous zones, precisely the non-animalistic, non-biological body? Is not THIS (and not the animalistic) body the proper object of psychoanalysis? Heidegger totally misses this dimension when in his *Zollikoner Seminare*, he dismisses Freud as a causal determinist:

He postulates for the conscious human phenomena that they can be explained without gaps, i.e. the continuity of causal connections. Since there are no such connections 'in the consciousness,' he has to invent 'the unconscious,' in which there have to be the causal links without gaps. (Heidegger, 2017, 260)

This interpretation may appear correct: is it not that Freud tries to discover a causal order in what appears to our consciousness as a confused and contingent array of mental facts (slips of tongue, dreams, clinical symptoms) and, in this way, to close the chain of causal links that run our psyche? However, Heidegger completely misses the way the Freudian "unconscious" is grounded in the traumatic encounter of an Otherness whose intrusion precisely *breaks*, interrupts, the continuity of the causal link: what we get in the "unconscious" is not a complete, uninterrupted, causal link, but the repercussions, the after-shocks, of traumatic interruptions. What Freud calls "symptoms" are ways to deal with a traumatic cut, while "fantasy" is a formation destined to cover up this cut. That's why for Heidegger a finite human being a priori cannot reach the inner peace and calm of Buddhist Enlightenment (nirvana): a world is disclosed to us against the background of an ontological catastrophe.

3. From Heidegger's Politics of Finitude to Class Struggle

What are the political implications of Heidegger's thought of radical finitude and contingency of our existence? He provides a radical version of how every version of universal Destiny relies on a historical contingency - *Dasein* is a being

with no inherent teleology or universal or even available ground (an answer to the question of why what fundamentally matters in the world does or ought to matter). What originally matters is inextricable from our thrownness into a certain historical world, so what comes to matter is a question of contingency, what we plan out concerning what matters is subject to the massive contingency of our lack of control not only over our own "ground" but over our fate or our ever- possible death. So, the only possible constancy to a life (and so the only way *Dasein* as some sort of whole is available to itself) is a background resolve, an always underlying readiness for anxiety and an unwillingness to accept in such an attunement whenever called on the tranquilizing normalcy of the everyday, inauthentic world of *Das Man*. (121)

But does everyday engagement and care in our life-world not also provide a kind of "tranquilizing normalcy"? Heidegger often evokes Novalis's notion of homelessness (longing for home) - but what if the fact that what appears as "mattering" to us is radically contingent indicates that homelessness is the founding gesture of becoming human, with nothing beneath it? For Heidegger, every disclosure of "mattering" is radically contingent, rooted in a specific historical situation, which means that there is no space in Heidegger for some universal "matterings" like human rights, freedom, dignity, etc. Here Heidegger is a true anti-Habermas: every "home" is the obfuscation of the primordial homelessness, so there is no big Other of transcendental-pragmatic rules of communication and interaction on which we could and should rely independently of our home. Pippin is thus right in characterizing Heidegger's approach as "dramatically isolating or individualizing":

A background standing attunement to the constant impendingness of one's own death is intensely private and unsharable, and with such a notion at the center it makes almost all of ordinary life escapist and even cowardly. There seems to be behind it some dark view that the only possible human dignity is a refusal of self-deceit in the face of the ungraspability of one's death. (122)

"Almost all of ordinary life" – so not just *das Man* but caring relating to ready-at-hand included. The rather obvious problem is here: how does authentic care relate to *das Man*? Is it just simply rootedness in a concrete historical world versus abstract rootless universality of today's "global citizens"? There are four existential stances at work here: authentic care of being-thrown into a historical disclosure of Being; anxiety when we confront our mortality; rootless *das Man*;

traditional metaphysical distanced observation. If care taken radically, with no reliance on the big Other, in its abyss, we get anxiety. (Although Heidegger as a rule perceives the anxiety of being-towards-death as an individual experience, he sometimes hints that a society can also make an authentic collective decision when confronted with the threat of its annihilation.)

How did we pass/regress from authentically engaged care to the modern everyday experience of reality as availability for our manipulation? Pippin proposes that the metaphysical primacy of present-at-hand over ready-at-hand has somehow penetrated our ordinary experience: “some screen of theoretical sedimentation in our ordinary expectations has distorted everything, and what the world is like for us now in its original availability is not what it is actually like for us.” (129) The idea that the alienation of our actual daily lives is due to the “theoretical sedimentation in our ordinary expectations” – in short, that a philosophical stance had fundamentally influenced the daily behavior of people - seems to me very problematic – is it not much more convincing to introduce here the notion of social classes and of the division of labor? Does the theoretical distance towards reality and its scientific exploitation manipulation not presuppose a double division, the division between those who work and those who live from the work of others, as well as the division in the production process itself between those who are constrained to the physical work and those who plan and regulate this work?

In short, we may say that, in describing the technological exploitation of nature, Heidegger ignores the *social* relationship within which this happens. To clarify this point, let's turn to the classical question of political economy: is labor the only source of value? The obvious and “logical” reply is: no, there are three sources, labor, material on which the work is done, and instruments used in the work. But Marx is basically right here because he sees the value of a commodity not as the property of an object but as the expression of a social relationship, and human beings are the only elements in a social relationship. The same goes for the “radical” ecological stance according to which not only human beings but also animals and other sentient beings, and for some even rivers and mountains, have certain basic rights. Rights have only humans since rights come with responsibilities, and only humans can be held responsible – we cannot hold a dog who killed a small baby responsible for its act. So, although we should, of course, be extremely cautious not to cause too much pain to animals, etc., it is deceiving to talk about their rights – if we do it, we come close to the situation in France in the late Middle Ages when, for example, birds which penetrated a church and desecrated it were put to court and condemned to death.

So where does Heidegger stand here? How does he deal with what we perceive as the big Evils of the XXth century? As expected, Heidegger's basic reference is to the ontological difference: the true Evil are not “ontic” crimes like gas chambers but the ontological nihilism of the global scientific-technological civilization. However, two things cannot but strike the eye here. Although Heidegger does here and there risk a dialogue with a Japanese or some other thinker, the space of historicity proper is for him the West from the so-called pre-Socratics

onwards, a sequence which culminates in today's global technological civilization. One cannot avoid here a naïve question: what about other parts of the world, India, China, Africa – what about their spirituality, their world-disclosures? And, especially, how could it happen that they are all also conquered by the global scientific-technological civilization, caught in what we call “progress”? Why and how did their spirituality get caught in the same path towards nihilism?

The second thing to note about Heidegger's insistence on the properly transcendental-ontological level of the Disclosure/Meaningfulness of Being is that secretly (or not even so secretly) it relies on many ontic choices. For example (and this is arguably THE example), for Heidegger the nihilism of modern technological manipulation is not simply a global feature of today's world but is repeatedly identified with Judaism. Even in 1948, after the end of the World War II, Heidegger urged an examination of “Jewry's predisposition to planetary criminality (*planetarischen Verbrechertum*)”:

*With their marked gift for calculation, the Jews 'live' according to the principle of race, and indeed have done so for the longest time, for which reason they themselves most vigorously resist its unrestricted application. The arrangement of racial breeding stems not from 'life' itself, but from the hyperempowerment of life by machination (*Machenschaft*). What this brings about with such planning is a complete deracination of peoples by harnessing them in a uniformly constructed and streamlined arrangement of all entities. Along with deracination goes a self-alienation of peoples -- the loss of history -- i.e. of the regions of decision for beyng (*Seyn*). (Heidegger, 2014, 56)*

The philosophical background of these lines is the opposition between fully living in a concrete world, assuming the way being discloses itself to us in an always unique Event, and the denial of such concrete spiritual-historical roots in the abstract stance of objectivizing the world into “external reality” as something to be manipulated and exploited. Defenders of Heidegger claim that he simply confuses here the metaphysical stance of rootless *Machenschaft* that predominates today with an empirical people (Jews) which embodies this stance at its most radical, so that one can get rid of Heidegger's anti-Semitism by being more faithful to Heidegger than Heidegger himself, i.e., by sticking all the way to the ontologico-ontic difference.

However, in Heidegger's theory, Jews are not the only place of such a short-circuit between the ontological and the ontic: the counter-point to Jews are Germans as the only proper metaphysical people, the only people who can enact a new epochal beginning. If Germans and Jews are the two absolute opposites the tension of which can only be resolved through the annihilation of one pole, does this mean that holocaust was in some sense justified? Here Heidegger takes into account the difference between the metaphysical stance of Jewishness and

the ontic Jews, but in an extremely perverted way: he interprets holocaust (the annihilation of ontic Jews) as the self-annihilation of the Jews themselves:

Only when what is essentially ‘Jewish’ in the metaphysical sense battles against the Jewish is the pinnacle of self-annihilation in history attained; assuming that what is ‘Jewish’ has everywhere seized dominion entirely for itself, such that even the battle ‘of the Jewish,’ and this above all, becomes subjection to it. (Heidegger, 2015, 82)

By accounting for the holocaust in the terms of the havocs of modern technics, Heidegger ignores the pathologies of the German historical development which culminated in the annihilation of the Jews; in this false move from the particular to the universal, Germans, the actual perpetrators of the holocaust, disappear from the picture, they become just an anonymous perpetrator of the self-annihilation of the Jews themselves. And is Israel not doing something similar when it claims that Palestinians themselves are responsible for the thousands of dead civilians in Gaza? IDF is targeting only Hamas members, and since Hamas is using civilians as a human shield, it is responsible for their suffering and death.

The irony goes here even a step deeper: Germans (or, more closely, the Nazis) become the stand-in of “what is essentially ‘Jewish’ in the metaphysical sense” in its battle against the empirical Jews. In short, they stand for the much more radical practice of technological machination than the actual Jews themselves, so that, to go to the end, Germans themselves were the true agents of self-annihilation - the destruction of Germany in 1945 was its self-destruction, something Germany brought upon itself. What Heidegger misses here is that, in our global capitalism, every reference to roots, to “blood and soil,” loses its innocence since it already serves the aim of global machination.¹ Pippin is right to point out the political implications of Heidegger’s view:

Heidegger has to claim that what for the Hegelian, or in the Hegelian tradition, must count as the pathologies of modernity— alienation, reification, domination instead of mutuality of cognitive status, the humiliating conditions of the modern organization of labor, anomie, deracination— are all best understood as implications of the still “unthought” question, the meaning of Being, as descendants of the “metaphysical” tradition. As I have suggested, this claim is worth taking more seriously than it has been, but the way Heidegger formulates the issue seems to exclude all other options as derivative from and so complicit with that tradition. (219)

¹ Not to mention the obvious fact that there is a rich tradition of Jewish spirituality which absolutely cannot be reduced to Heidegger’s rather caricatural notion of *Judentum*.

The key word here is “excluded”: it is not that economic exploitation and alienating organization of labor can be integrated into Heidegger’s thought as secondary effects of modern nihilism; any focus on them is to be excluded, dismissed as not only irrelevant but a dangerous trap. In 1953 Heidegger said that the end result of the Second World War “decided nothing” (Heidegger, nd, 71) nothing in terms of the history of Being. Russia and America who are “metaphysically the same” won over Germany not just militarily but also “metaphysically,” by infecting Germany with the (self)destructive stance of nihilism, depriving Nazism of its “inner greatness.” This is what Heidegger is aiming at in the following passage from his *Black Notebooks*:

If one thought it through from the perspective of destiny, would not, for instance, the failure to grasp this destiny—which would not belong to us, if the world-willing [Weltwollen] was suppressed [Niederhalten im Weltwollen]—would this failure not be much more essentially a ‘guilt’ and ‘collective guilt,’ the magnitude of which essentially could not even be measured against the gruesomeness of the ‘gas chambers’ [Greuelhaften der ‘Gaskammern’]; a guilt—uncannier than all ‘crimes’ that can be ‘inveighed against’ publically—which surely no one would forgive in the future. Already today ‘one’ does not want to see—this not-willing is far more willing than our spinelessness [Willenlosigkeit] in foreboding that Germany and the German people are but one concentration camp - the likes of which ‘the world’ has not ‘seen’ indeed, and which ‘the world’ does not want to see—this not-willing is far more willing than our spinelessness [Willenlosigkeit] in the face of the brutalization [Verwilderung] of National Socialism. (Heidegger, 1997, 51)

If we read this paragraph carefully, the message is clear: the gas chambers are an ontic crime and as such incomparably less terrifying than the German defeat in 1945 which made all of Germany and the German people one big concentration camp, a spineless people deprived of its world-willing, a willingness to engage in a historical disclosure of authentic Being. In short, the guilt of this ontological betrayal is incomparably more important than the guilt for the holocaust – or, as Peter Trawny put it concisely:

“If ‘we’ /Germans/ were ‘suppressed’ in pursuing this ‘world-willing’—now, after the war—this ‘suppression’ would be ‘guilt,’ the magnitude of which could not even be measured against the gruesomeness of the gas chambers. The ‘world-willing’ of the ‘Germans’ is ontohistorically more important than the ‘gruesomeness of the gas chambers.’ (Trawny, 2016, 175)

The expression “brutalization (Verwilderung) of National Socialism” thus indicates that it was the global stance of calculation and technological domination which “brutalized” National Socialism, at its origins a much more positive spiritual project. The universalization of an actual terrifying event into an all-encompassing metaphor is crucial here: the Nazi concentration camps were a (gruesome, true) real event, but after the WWII, the whole of occupied Germany became one big concentration camp... The same universalization often occurred when white liberals expressed their horror at the practice of clitoridectomy in some Third World countries (especially in Africa): the reply was that white liberals have no right to complain about this because plastic operations that are taking place among millions of white women are nothing but a kind of extension of clitoridectomy to the entire body of a woman... Back to Pippin, although he is sensitive to Heidegger’s simplifications and unanswered questions, he doesn’t go to the end here, especially with regard to politics: Heidegger is indifferent towards “ontic” justice, moral responsibility, guilt in holocaust, even empirical threats to environment and acting against them. The question raised by Pippin here is simply irrelevant from Heidegger’s standpoint:

Heidegger has framed all such issues as dependent on, and reflecting some sense, of the historical meaningfulness of Being and that means the context of his question about the reconciling powers of reason is a question about mattering. How could Hegel approach a question like whether a mutual recognitive status in modern ethical life matters, and if so, how much, and if a lot, why? It is to Hegel’s enormous credit that he realized that in the emerging modern world of market capitalism and competitive economies a critical source of meaningfulness would have to be one’s ethical standing among others, the sources of self-respect in a world (or mutuality of recognition), but given that global capitalism has effectively destroyed the possibility of any such standing, how could he possibly think that it just must be the case that such a deficiency and the system responsible for it would determinately negate and transform itself? Why would not the world of Hegelian ethical life resemble nothing so much as the decayed remnants of Malte’s building, redolent of what might have been but without hope for what could be? (220)

It is not difficult to guess Heidegger’s reply: the very ideal of mutual recognition and dignity remains within the frame of modern subjectivity and is as such ultimately the source of what is wrong in modernity, demonstrating that the failure of modernity is its truth. Or, to put it brutally in the terms of “mattering” (a disclosure of Being determines the basic frame of what *matters* to the subjects who find themselves thrown into a specific historical world: for Heidegger, human rights and mutual recognition ultimately *don’t matter* for Heidegger. The only thing that

really matters is the willingness of a people to freely assume its destiny, an act of total commitment which has nothing to do with free dialogue and negotiation.

For all these reasons, one should agree with Michael Millerman who, in his “Alexander Dugin’s Heideggerianism”¹, argues that the infamous Aleksandr Dugin is a legitimate Heidegger’s pupil: Heidegger is not just one of the sources or inspirations of Dugin’s philosophy, a proper understanding of his thought plays a key role in determining Russia’s future: to master Heidegger’s thought is “the main strategic task of the Russian people and Russian society,” and “the key to the Russian tomorrow.”² How, then, does Heidegger become “Khaydegger” (his name written in Russian)? To what subtle changes does Dugin submit Heidegger’s edifice?

For Dugin, the transcendental-ontological analysis of *Dasein* that Heidegger deploys in his *Being and Time* is not universal: every civilization gives birth to its specific form rooted in a specific collective spirituality. There are many figures of *Dasein*, the Russian one is different from the German one, it is focused on “narod,” the people in the sense of German *Volk*, not state, not just nation (nationalism), not race (Fascism), not class (Marxism), and especially not liberal individualism. “Narod” is thus an ontological category, it designates a historically-specific form of the disclosure of Being, of how its members perceive what matters in their lives, what gives their lives meaning, what freedom and dignity mean in their spiritual universe. For an authentic Russian, “freedom” is something different from the liberal notion of human rights and freedoms, it is a mode of free immersion into the spiritual substance of one’s people which only provides dignity to him.

For Dugin, philosophy is thus immanently political, inclusive of advocating war: war in Ukraine is a war between Western global modernism and the Eurasian spirituality. There is war because (as Heidegger saw) the West reached its deepest decline in global liberal hegemony, Western modernity is Evil embodied, while Russia did not yet fully articulate its Eurasian spiritual identity – this task still lies ahead, and only Russian philosophy grounded in Heidegger can do it. Here Dugin replaces Germany (as, for Heidegger, the unique spiritual nation) with Russia: a “new beginning” - the awakening expected by Heidegger, a new *Ereignis* - will take place in Russia, not in Germany, not even in the West. Dugin refers here even to Russian language itself: he notes how the terms that sound artificial in Heidegger’s German (like “in-der-Welt-sein,” being-in-the-world) have much more natural everyday equivalents in Russian. Dugin is not simply a Rightist against the Left, he notices how at a certain point Bolshevism itself took an Eurasian turn.³ One should mention here Aleksandr Blok, the great Russian poet who wrote *The Twelve*, the great ode to the October revolution: he was quickly disappointed by

¹ IJPT Vol. 3. No. 1. 10.22609/3.1.2. AUTHOR PROOFS (philpapers.org).

² Dugin quoted from op.cit.

³ See Aleksandr Dugin, *Templars of the Proletariat*, London: Arktos 2023, a close analysis of the metaphysics of national Bolshevism.

the Bolshevik Revolution and his last work before his early death in 1921 was a patriotic poem “Scythians” which advocates a kind of “pan-Mongolism,” a clear precursor to today’s Eurasianism - Russia should mediate not only between the East and the West but also politically between the Reds and the Whites to end the self-destructive civil war. This is also why Dugin prefers Stalin to Lenin: in 1921 Lenin conceived the task of Bolsheviks to bring Russia as fast as possible to Western modernity, while this reference to the West disappears with Stalin.

Dugin is not simply opposed to the West: his target is modernity which culminates in liberal individualism. One should note here that a similar reading of Heidegger as a tool to keep at a distance global Western modernization is practiced not only in Russia or some other Slavic countries but also in non-Slavic countries from Romania to Iran. (In my own country, Slovenia, some Heideggerians were interpreting Dostoyevski - whom otherwise Dugin rejects - as a case of overcoming Western nihilism.) Dugin solicits every country, every people, to get rid of the liberal-individualist yoke of global modernity and discover its own specific spirituality. The role of Russia is to defeat the global West and thus to give each country, the Western ones included, the freedom to discover its own spirituality – one may say that Dugin provides a philosophical version of the idea of multipolar world embodied in the political notion of BRICS.

This brings us back to Heidegger: insofar as the event of disclosure of Being is always localized, rooted in a historical people, the question remains if what Heidegger describes as the primordial opening/disclosure/attunement is not cut/traversed by class difference: is the attunement that discloses the world as object of technological disponibility really simply shared by all people in a modern epoch? When Pippin recapitulates Heidegger’s notion of modern society as the one of productive exploitation, manipulation and consummation of all reality, he adds in brackets: “(Although he would never put it this way, it would not be unfair to invoke another word to capture this situation: capitalism.)”(214) The question to be raised here is: but he never DOES it, this word is prohibited in his language – why?

In all probability, Heidegger’s answer would have been that capitalism is just one among ontic organizations of the technological disclosure of Being – as he put it, Soviet Union and the US are “metaphysically the same.” To this we should insist that capitalism is not simply an ontic phenomenon, one of the possible versions of technological attunement: capitalism is not just a social phenomenon, it also has a transcendental-ontological status. It is not modern science and technology as such which push us to continuous domination over and exploitation of nature – they function like this only within the frame of capitalism with its permanent propensity towards expanded self-reproduction. So, Pippin is right here: it is not enough to mention technological disponibility as the source of the disappearance of Meaningfulness – one should add the word “capitalism” never used by Heidegger. Here Marx surprisingly meets radical conservatives: Patrick Buisson, the French ultra-conservative, was right in claiming that

“*le grand deconstructeur, c'est le capitalisme.*”¹ Plus we should add that the disclosure of beings as objects of technological manipulation and exploitation is not homogeneous: the objects of such exploitation immanently resist it, which brings us back to class struggle - a notion even more unmentionable for Heidegger than capitalism.

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