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Thank You

Contrary to what is often said, one is never alone when writing a dissertation. People stay present in the reminiscences of discussions, they come in with the memories of the good times we had, and they stay present in the ideas I picked-up in conversations and that were subsequently developed into paragraphs and chapters. These people are colleagues, friends, parents, family and, most of all, my wife. All of them stood behind me, gave me their support, and indicated a myriad of possibilities when I thought I was stuck. Thank you.

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Finally, teaching is a remarkable affair: very often I walked out of a classroom with more ideas than I went in with. To the students I have been lucky enough to teach over the last three years: thank you.

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Introduction
From Machinic to Technics (and back again)

1. The Instance of Emergence

This book deals with *technics*. By the term technics I want to express a precise, albeit somewhat abstract idea that will bear on how one thinks about technology, technique, and machines. The concept of technics not only has implications for how one conceptualizes technology. It opens the possibility of positioning elements of technology within politics and literature. Technics can be seen as the outcome of a renegotiation of ontological difference: it is an attempt at tracing back technological elements to their multiple, differential ontological core. First of all, in order to understand the concept of technics it must be distinguished from technology. As a concept bearing on politics, literature, and ontology (including metaphysics), technics does not simply refer to a technology or to a technological artifact. Unlike an artifact, technics is not and can never become a *thing*. A thing indicates a material unity which, while not necessarily an object that is conceptually present,[1] is embedded within a repetitive pattern of everyday use.

[1] For a philosophical investigation of the thing (in its relation to nature and technics, and in distinction to 'objects'), see Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Harper & Row: New York 1971), 166–167: 'The jug is a thing. What is the jug? We say: a vessel, something of the kind that holds something else within it. […] As a vessel the jug is something self-sustained, something that stands on its own. This standing on its own

In contrast, technics is a relational concept that cannot be pinpointed as an object, thing, or artifact. Instead of indicating a unity, technics is a veritable 'in-between,' it is *at work* in between things, constituting interrelations between things, or artifacts. However, insofar as technics is what establishes interrelations between things, it is also, in the same move and at various moments in their construction, the emergence of an unquenchable multiplication and dispersal in which no-thing can hold together. In this sense, technics becomes multiplicity itself. It is for these reasons that technics cannot be conceptualized by focusing on technical things or artifacts.

In his introduction to a seminar on Heraclitus, which he taught with Martin Heidegger, Eugene Fink gives the following circumscription of a thing in its relation to technics (*Technik*):

> On the one hand we take the concept of thing in a wider sense, and then we mean all that is. On the other hand, we also use it in a narrower sense. If we mean things in the narrower sense, then we can distinguish between such things as are from nature […] and such that are products of human technics […].[2]

Fink does not just distinguish between two different kinds of things here. Instead, he makes a distinction between technically created things and natural things. In the first chapter of this study, I will attempt to bypass the difference between technics and nature by deconstructing the concept of thing. To this end, I introduce a novel concept of technics that cannot be enclosed within the existing conceptual categories of object or artifact,

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characterizes the jug as something that is self-supporting, or independent. As the self-supporting independence of something independent, the jug differs from an object. An independent, self-supporting thing may become an object if we place it before us, whether in immediate perception or by bringing it to mind in a collective re-presentation. However, the thingly character of the thing does not consist in being a represented object, nor can it be defined in any way in terms of the objectness, the over-againstness, of the object.'

[2] Eugene Fink and Martin Heidegger, *Heraclitus Seminar* (Northwestern University Press: Evanston 1993), 4.

technology or technique. This involves theorizing technics not so much as an object (or as a quality belonging to an object), but rather as interrelations between a myriad of heterogeneous elements, as a multiplicity of interweaving forces that slowly consolidate into more structural – or, as will become clear below, machinic - functions. Above all, I am deploying this idea of technics as a means to counter the assumption that technics can be reduced to the way it can be readily *discerned* in literature, politics, or in systems of writing and representative (political) institutions in general.[3] Although technics forms part of a system of writing, and takes part in political institutionalization, what I hope to explain in this study is that in order to effectively account for the 'techno-logics' at work in a system of writing, or in a mode of institutional-political representation, it must be encapsulated in a broader framework – that is, in a theory of *technics*. In order to open up its potential, technics must be conceived as emerging in multiplicity and as always relational.

The emergence of technics should not be seen as the beginning of something, as the beginning of things, issues, or constellations (political, literary, metaphysical or otherwise). Technics decomposes the idea of a single origin by already starting out from a multiplicity: its beginning already lies beyond any form of origin or originality. It has always already begun. Whilst technics figures as the instance of emergence, in the sense that it allows technologies and techniques to emerge and consolidate, it is not a beginning as such. In this introduction, I will explain how technics functions as an instance of emergence by studying the concept of an 'economy of forces,' which figures prominently in the works of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze (among others) and takes on a central role in this book. The concept of an economy of forces will explain the transition from technics to machine (and back again) that I see at work in literature, politics, and metaphysics. I will explain what I understand by 'machine' with reference to the concept of 'abstract machine,' developed Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In the last section of this introduction, I explain how the machine is related to language and literature.

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[3] See Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800 / 1900* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 1991).

2. From Economy to Machine

The term *economy* is often used rather vaguely in the humanities. It is used in a loose fashion to designate a more or less rigid structure or order.[4] In this book, I will rely on a specific use of the word economy, but I will nonetheless endeavor to give it a more precise meaning. At various moments throughout this book I refer to a play of singularities that is essential to technics. Such a play of singularities or forces is shot through with just as many irregularities as regularities. The structures through which these singular forces are played out against each other are still radically open and underdetermined. It is impossible to speak of distinctions or oppositions at this point, with regard to the play of forces that is instigated by technics. Oppositional schemas already belong to the machine, to the function of a metaphysical machine.[5] For this reason, it makes more sense to speak of singularities within an economy of forces: such singularities cannot be recuperated within an oppositional structural schema, which divides them into categories of original or unoriginal, natural or technical, *etcetera*. Thus, the singular play of forces interwoven in technics displays a difference that is not oppositional, but rather, following Deleuze, a difference of intensity. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes: 'Everything which happens and everything which appears is correlated with orders of differences of levels, temperature, pressure, tension, potential, *differences of intensity*.'[6] The orders of differences avoid becoming oppositional differences. At the level of intensities, the forces that interweave in technics construct multiple interrelations that have not yet become oppositional. Yet the moment inevitably comes when these forces start to form more consolidated interrelations, and it is at this point that they can go on to form oppositional schemas. As I already suggested briefly at the beginning of this introduction, the moment in which these forces start to correlate on a structural level is *the instance of emergence*, the moment when the free play of forces begins to take on a more or less regulated structure. It is at this point that the conceptual use of

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[4] See Nicole Bracker and Stefan Herbrechter (eds.), *Metaphors of Economy* (Rodopi: Amsterdam / New York 2005).

[5] On metaphysical machines, see Chapter 1.

[6] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (Continuum: London / New York 2004) 280.

the word economy within the humanities becomes relevant for my project on technics. Steven Connor describes the way that the concept of 'economy' is use in the humanities:

> an economy is a *dynamic* structure, which allows and obliges the critic not only to order and distribute the elements of his field of study in inert relationships of equivalences and distinctions, but also to show the processes of exchange, circulation and interested negotiation which bring these relationships dynamically into being. The metaphor of economy may allow one, therefore, to escape some of the closure or seductiveness of the metaphor of structure.[7]

The use of 'economy,' as Connor indicates, enables one to sketch a dynamic process. It becomes possible to see how the process of circulation can be grounded without conceiving of the relationship of exchange itself as static or inert. In this sense, the concept of economy allows me to create a *middle passage* between the absolutely chaotic, or unordered, on the one hand, and an absolutely rigid, mechanized structure, on the other. It can designate precisely the moment of passage from technics – as an absolutely free interplay of singular forces that escape any oppositional categorization – to a machinic function that operates with oppositional schemas. At the same time, it can account for transitions in which machines are broken down again and opened up by technics. In order to conceptualize these transitions, it is necessary to analyze the relation between the free play of forces and the forceful ordering of these forces in a structural intertwinement. The concept of economy can be used to capture the singular moment of transition from technics to machine. The sense of an economy that traces these emerging differences, which are not yet oppositional, lies in between 'an energetics of pure shapeless force'[8] and a completely rigid machinic regula-

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[7] Steven Connor, *Theory and Cultural Value* (Blackwell Publishers: Oxford 1992), 57–8.

[8] Jacques Derrida, "Force and Signification," in *Writing and Difference* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London / New York 1978), 19. For a solid account of the relation between form, force, and economy in the work of

tion of force and difference. Instead, such an economy mediates and organizes *in between* and *in relation* to force and form.

The economy of forces by which a machine operates already indicates a difference between technics and the machine. Whereas technics is the free play of forces, the machine begins to emerge as soon as these forces become consolidated in oppositional schemas. From this point of view, it is unclear what precisely the difference is between a consolidated economy of forces and the machine itself. I will therefore try to give a more concrete outline of the machine. Without running ahead of issues that will be addressed and explained in the course of this study, a few remarks on how the machine operates will help to introduce the argument to be developed in the following chapters. Rather than attempting to provide an exhaustive definition of the machine, I will first give a general outline. Then, I will discuss a few related ideas about the 'abstract machine' in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The concept of the 'abstract machine' plays an important yet often implicit role in this study, so I will take the opportunity here to sketch the differences and alliances between Deleuze and Guattari's concept and my own.

The concept of the machine that I develop in this book is to a large extent based on a study and critique of Derrida's work on metaphysics, and in particular, his thinking of *différance*. However, to work on the concept of the machine in the context of Poststructuralist philosophy means to pass through the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, and elsewhere, they have developed their concept of 'machinic assemblage' and 'abstract machine.'[9] My own

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Derrida, see the first two chapters of Christopher Johnson, *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1993). See also Joost de Bloois, *L'économie générale: Derrida sur les traces de Bataille* (Doctoral dissertation at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2003).

9 For a systematic account of the concept of machine in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, see Alistair Welchman, "Machinic Thinking," in Garry Genesko (ed.), *Deleuze and Guattari. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers* (Routledge: London / New York 2001), 1233–50; see also Marcel Swiboda, "Engineering Ethical Connections: (Re–

concept of machine is indebted to theirs, but also digresses from it regarding several issues. Before speaking of the machinic assemblage Deleuze and Guattari first draw an important distinction between the assemblage and abstract machine. In order to grasp what Deleuze and Guattari mean by the abstract machine, then, it needs to be distinguished from an assemblage. In *Deleuze and the Political*, Paul Patton explains in what ways these two differ by drawing on the Deleuze's distinction between the virtual and the actual. This indicates that the difference between abstract machine and assemblage is not merely formal, in the sense that it is not a difference between two different forms of machine or construction. In so far as it is a difference between the virtual and the actual it is a difference between two different kinds of realities. The position of the abstract machine is virtual whereas the position of the assemblage is actual. This gives the abstract machine a decisive position in relation to the assemblage. Patton explains this as follows:

> While assemblages are more or less concrete arrangements of things, their mode of functioning cannot be understood independently of the virtual or abstract machine which they embody.[10]

The assemblage is understood as an embodiment, or an actualization of the virtual abstract machine. Whereas an assemblage is an actualized, formed constellation which structures everything that takes place in it, an abstract machine is indeterminate in the sense that it does not have any concrete, consolidated, actual existence. An abstract machine delineates 'functions' that will afterwards be actualized by the assemblage. Form and content come into existence together with the assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the abstract machine has no form or content (as these appear only with the assemblage), only *function*. In *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi explains that Deleuze and Guattari understand a function as something that is undetermined:

)Conceptualizing The Machines of Deleuze and Guattari," *Parallax*, volume 10 / n° 3, 2004, 113–19.

[10] Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (Routledge: London / New York 2000), 44.

> Function with no form or substance to confine it would be a continually changing, turbulent pool of matter-energy. The abstract machine in its virtuality would be indeterminate in position and velocity, outside a space of relatively stable matter and quantifiable energy.[11]

In this study, both 'function' and 'machine' will be understood differently from Deleuze and Guattari's abstract machine. By 'function' – or rather, *machinic function* – I understand a consolidated connection that assures determination and teleology within a given constellation of interlaced elements. Its determination is not dependent upon a relatively stable space. Instead, the machinic, as I understand it, assures the stabilization of space.

The first and second chapters of this book argue that a metaphysical machine organizes space and time, turning them into a relatively stable ground. This organization is performed by machinic functions that, in turn, originate in the economy of forces set up by technics. In the first chapter, my argument is developed in discussion with Derrida's *différance*. As Derrida pointed out on the occasion of Deleuze's death, there was between Deleuze and himself

> a nearly total affinity concerning the "theses," if we can use this word, across very obvious distances, in what I would call – lacking any better term – the "gesture," the "strategy," the "manner" of writing, of speaking, of reading perhaps.[12]

The affinity between Derrida and Deleuze has to do with their mutual commitment to work out a notion of *différance* as a play of forces. For both Deleuze and Derrida, such a play of forces must be thought as non-oppositional. Hence, Deleuze speaks of difference in intensity rather than difference in quality.[13] However, the difference between them is not only

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[11] Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (M..I.T. Press: Cambridge Ma 1992), 170.

[12] Jacques Derrida, "I'm Going to Have to Wander All Alone," in *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago University Press: Chicago 2001), 192.

[13] See Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (Zone Books: New York 2001), 20-21.

located in the gesture or strategy that Derrida mentions. The distance between Deleuze and Derrida is spelled out in their respective articulations of ontological problems: for Derrida, *différance* is neither virtual nor actual; whilst for Deleuze, the virtual is not governed by *différance*.

This distance brings me to a concept of the machine that, whilst inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, differs from their concept of the machine to a considerable degree. In my work the machine is understood as that which brings order within an otherwise chaotic free play of forces. The machine, then, is what follows from an economy of forces. A machine starts to take form at the moment these forces begin to function in a more or less calculable economy. A machinic function is what orders the economy of forces, thus turning it into a machine. It is a consolidated interlacement of elements, made up by machinic functions. The possibility of forming a machine derives from technics, since technics defines the possibility for forces to interlace, to consolidate, and to become machinic. At any moment, therefore, technics can interrupt the machine. This possibility for interruption is examined in the first chapter; and the tendency of the machine to close off possibilities for interruption is examined in the second chapter.

In this study, I argue that the machine ultimately relies on technics. Technics is thus, in a sense, more fundamental than the machine. Deleuze and Guattari, on the contrary, bring their abstract machine into relation with assemblages. In their account, it is the abstract machine that is more profound than the assemblage. According to Deleuze and Guattari, there is something 'more profound' within the assemblage.[14] This is the abstract machine, 'which constitutes and conjugates all of the assemblage's cutting edge of deterritorialization.'[15] The abstract machine is responsible for drawing up the plane of consistency upon which all assemblages will be based.[16] The assemblages territorialize and stratify. The abstract machine, however,

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[14] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Continuum: London 2003), 155.

[15] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 155.

[16] My use of certain of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts, such as 'plane of consistency,' or '(de)territorialization,' which have no immediate relevance to the stakes of this introduction, remain necessarily cursory. For a profound investigation into the meaning and use of these concepts, see Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

articulates the virtual plane that will allow for stratifications. 'The abstract machine in itself is destratified, deterritorialized.'[17] This would not be possible if the abstract machine were not virtual. That it is virtual does *not* mean that the abstract machine is not real, only that it 'constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality.'[18] So whilst the virtual is real, its reality is one that is constantly to come, rather than one that is simply given. In his earlier work, *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze explains the relation between the virtual and the real more fully:

> We opposed the virtual and the real: although it could not have been more precise before now, this terminology must be corrected. The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual*. […] Indeed, the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension. […] The reality of the virtual is structure.[19]

The abstract machine does not *determine* reality, which will only be properly embodied in assemblages, but it does make it possible by giving it structure. In this sense it constructs reality by opening it up to actualization. However, working from within the assemblages and strata that are built on the plane of consistency the abstract machine also unhinges these assemblages, 'constantly setting things loose.'[20] An abstract machine defines the functions that an assemblage can fill in with form and content. For Deleuze and Guattari, a machine and the functions it installs are therefore strictly virtual or abstract, whilst the assemblage operates at the level of the actual. This distinction between the actuality of the assemblage and the virtuality of the abstract machine indicates the difference between the abstract machine and my own understanding of machinic functioning. A machinic functioning operate neither at the level of the virtual, nor at the level of the

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[17] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 156.

[18] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 157.

[19] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 260.

[20] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 159.

actual. Instead, it makes the transition from a free play of forces to a stable economy, thus securing the transitory passage from technics to machine.

Drawing on an analogy drawn by Paul Patton in his lucid explanation of the virtuality of an abstract machine, I now want to examine the relation between machinic function and a more concrete conception of machines such as automobiles or computers. Patton explains that

> abstract machines are virtual machines in the same sense as the software program which turns a given assemblage of computer hardware into a certain kind of technical machine (a calculating machine, a drawing machine, etc.).[21]

In this analogy, the software program takes on the role of the abstract machine, and the concrete, technical machine - or the hardware of a computer - is on the side of the assemblage. Just as the assemblage is determined by the virtual order of the abstract machine, so the software program determines the technical machine by turning it into a calculating machine or a drawing machine. This implies that the virtual abstract machine draws connections from one assemblage to another in much the same way as a word-processing software program transforms the hardware of a computer into a visual typing machine. However, there is a hitch when it comes to conceiving of hardware as the actual that is firmly opposed to the software, or the virtual. The argument can be made that hardware determines software just as much as software determines hardware. Whilst Patton's analogy holds, his definition of a technical machine as the outcome of software is incomplete. Patton's definition omits something that complicates the analogy considerably: although *software* can effectively turn a computer into a typewriter or a calculating machine, a computer still depends on a *hardware* driver that allows for software programs to run their codes. The point is that hardware itself is more open and more general than actual software, since it is the latter that gives the computer its destination as a word processor, or as a visual workstation on which one can edit photos. In that sense software still depends on hardware, however much it may have superseded it in terms of complexity. As Friedrich Kittler points out, even if today a com-

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[21] Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 44–5.

puter's operating program is reduced (or alleviated) to the status of a software program, the fact remains that

> no underlying microprocessor system could ever start without the rather incredible autobooting faculty of some elementary functions that, for safety's sake, are burned into silicon and thus form part of the hardware.[22]

A computer is a layering of software codes over software codes, but starts off from the Basic Input Output System (BIOS), which is hardware driven. The history of the computer is, admittedly, the history of the obfuscation of hardware by the increasing complexity of software design. Consequently, computer design has undergone an 'implosion of hardware by the explosion of software,' by which 'eventual differences between hardware implementations do not count anymore.'[23] The software of Deleuze's virtual machine lays out the structures of the reality that subsequently becomes possible. But if we take the computer analogy seriously, then this reality is not independent from a hardware that is already in place. Patton's analogical argument claims that whilst the virtual abstract machine is itself indeterminate, unable to mould into any grid, it constructs a grid that it ultimately escapes from. But it is questionable whether such an escape could be successful, since in most actual machines it is extremely difficult to trace the distinction between the actual and the virtual. For precisely this reason, the analogy between the virtual and software is useful but limited.

My own concept of the machine is an attempt to avoid such analogies. Here, the machine is understood in relation to a consolidation in the economy of forces that defines technics. In that sense, it is probably closer to Deleuze and Guattari's 'assemblage' than to the 'abstract machine.' However, the machine and its functions are not *determined* by technics. Whilst the machine begins from technics, the organization that it introduces into the free play of forces does not stand in relation to technics as the actual stands to the virtual, or hardware to software. The machine brings in an order and organization that are present neither in technics nor in the play of

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[22] Friedrich Kittler, *Literature / Media / Information Systems*. (G+B Arts International: Amsterdam 1997), 150.

[23] Kittler, *Literature / Media / Information Systems*, 148.

forces that precedes it. This organization is only achieved through the consolidation of an economy, as shown at the beginning of this section.

3. The Language Machine

In his work on the modes of existence of technical objects, Gilbert Simondon is cautious not to think of machines as completely rigid structures. An operational machine needs to incorporate a certain degree of indeterminacy in its functions in order to operate successfully. The degree of indeterminacy can differ, but in general a balance needs to be established between rigidity and indeterminacy. Simondon describes this process as follows:

> True perfection of the machine, such that we can say that it raises the degree of technicity, does not correspond to an increase in automatism. On the contrary, it corresponds to the fact that the functioning of a machine contains a certain amount of indeterminacy. It is this margin, far more than an increase in automatism, that enables the machine to be susceptible to the information that a technical whole [*ensemble technique*] can accomplish. [24]

Simondon distinguishes between the degree of technicity that belongs to the machine and to automatism. The machine is not the complete automation of its functions. Quite the contrary, too much automation will stop the machine from being able to function properly. A higher degree of technicity is achieved by endowing the machine with a certain degree of indeterminacy.

Literature works as a machine. However, unlike a political machine or a metaphysical machine, literature acts as a machine of dispersion, since it is a machine aimed at extending the margins of indeterminacy beyond their limits. It does this not only in relation to language, but also in its connections with metaphysics and politics. The first and fourth chapters of this

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[24] Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Aubier: Paris 1958), 11.

book stage readings of literature in relation to the metaphysical and political machine: in the first chapter, *Zwerm. Een geschiedenis van de wereld* [*Swarm. A History of the World*] by Belgian writer Peter Verhelst; and in the fourth chapter, *La disparition de la langue française* [*The Disappearance of the French Language*] by French-Algerian writer Assia Djebar. Both novels allow for a reflection on language and the ways in which language interrelates with politics, or with what I will call the political machine. The first chapter reflects on how literary language disrupts the political machine (at least from within the literary), while the fourth chapter shows how literature can trace the (at times devastating) effects of the political machine. It is clear, then, that language and literature have a central role in this book; although in each case this role is played out in relation to technics and the machine. My central thesis is that literature operates as a machine that connects to other machines, such as metaphysical machines or political machines.

In conceptualizing the machine, Derrida declares that 'when I think of machine I am thinking just as much of machines of signs as of machines of movement and displacement.'[25] Pondering on the complications of the alleged intimacy of Nietzsche and Heidegger's philosophical work to certain tenets of Nazism, he suggests that the works of these philosophers may well have been driven by an *utterance-producing machine*. If language is guided by such an utterance-producing machine, it gives form and destiny to often conflicting philosophical statements that, at times, bring both Heidegger and Nietzsche into the vicinity of certain facets of Nazism, *while at the same time* making them into the most vigilant critics of this regime in general. Derrida's formulation of an utterance-producing machine provides a starting point for a reflection on language that will help to clarify how language relates to technics and to the machine:

> Must there not be some powerful utterance-producing machine that programs the movements of the two opposing forces at once, and which couples, conjugates, or marries them in a given set, as life (does) death? (Here, all the difficulty comes down to the determination of such a set, which can be neither simply linguistic, nor simply

[25] Jacques Derrida, *Sur Parole. Instantanés philosophiques* (Éditions de l'aube: Paris 1999), 46.

> historico-political, economic, ideological, psycho-phantasmic, and so on. That is, *no regional agency or tribunal has the power to arrest or set the limits on the set, not even that court of "last resort" belonging to philosophy or theory, which remain subsets of this set*).[26]

The question posed by Derrida concerns the production of utterances. The possibility of such a production hypothesizes that an utterance is a composition of heterogeneous elements. Connecting these elements constitutes an utterance. However, the assemblage of elements of which the utterance is the result draws upon an element that is already an intrinsically complex structure. This element, which is never 'one' but which is in itself already a complex entity, Derrida designates by the name of *grammē*. In its most general meaning, *grammē* is 'an element without simplicity.'[27] This element, which is never simple and which 'one must forbid oneself to define within the system of oppositions of metaphysics,'[28] serves as the basic figure from which a language machine will emerge.[29]

At its origin, *grammē* is a multiplicity. Its multiplicity precedes the oppositional conceptual constructs that are formed in metaphysics, or in a metaphysical machine. Because of its central role in language *grammē* also serves as the first preliminary figuration of a literary machine. As such, it

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[26] Derrida, *The Ear of the Other. Otobiography, Transference, Translation* (Schocken Books: New York 1985), 29. My italics.

[27] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 1976), 9.

[28] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 9

[29] 'Figure' is used here in a provisional way, in place of less cautious terms such as 'building block' or 'form', which would be in outright contradiction to the circumscription of technics in this introduction. However, in using the word figure I am not unaware of, or inattentive to, the philosophical usages of figure and/or figuration in Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, figure* (Klinsieck: Paris 1971); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (Verso: London / New York 1994); and Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (Columbia University Press: New York 1994).

introduces an irreducible multiplicity and technicality in language from the very beginning, before structures of meaning, designation, or conceptual opposition are in place. To say that *grammē* serves as a figure from which the machine emerges does not mean that it is a unity or a single form or shape; it is not a series or composition of points that in themselves are discrete units, and it does not provide the first unitary *form* or *point* of a machine as such. What must be rejected, Derrida writes, is 'not the *grammē* as such, but *grammè* as a series of points, as a composition of parts each of which would be an arrested limit.'[30] A language machine starting out from *grammē* is thus never simple: its machinic function consolidates from an earlier multiplicity that it cannot control completely. As Simondon argues, any operational machine must be able to take indeterminacy into consideration in order to be functional: 'A machine that consists of a certain regulation is in fact a machine that contains a certain margin of indeterminacy in its functioning.'[31] In the case of an utterance-producing machine these indeterminacies operate within the machine from the beginning through the complex element of *grammē*. This complexity can only be accounted for in language as incalculable, as an originary element girdling language with a complexity that precedes the calculable. Deleuze describes such a multiplicity as resulting from a difference that is in itself an 'internal multiplicity of succession, of fusion, and of organization, of heterogeneity, […] it is a virtual and continuous difference that cannot be reduced to numbers.'[32] In the chapters that follow, I argue that the potential for such complex elements to reemerge on the surface of a fully developed language machine gains a central role in literature. They reveal the multiplicity upon which any machinic function is based by exceeding the limits of signification.

> The poetic or the ecstatic is that *in every discourse* which can open itself up to the absolute loss of its sense, […] of non-meaning, of un-knowledge or of play, to the swoon from which it is reawakened by the throw of a dice.[33]

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[30] Jacques Derrida, "*Ousia* and *grammē,*" in *Margins of Philosophy* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago), 59.

[31] Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, 139–40.

[32] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 38.

[33] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 261.

Such a spilling over of signification, as an adjournment of sense, not only opens onto the senseless but also reopens the multiplicity from which the machine first emerged. In the same movement, it would compel one

> to give up a concept of language regulated by deep semantic anchoring points that would authorize, for example, questions of the type: what is the guiding sense or *etymon* of the gift on the basis of which all semantic diversities, all idioms, and all usages are diffracted?[34]

Posing that kind of question presupposes that language goes back to one original arch-word that would unify all utterances. This would lead to the construction of a machine that regulates the signifying effect of language down to the tiniest detail. Instead, *grammē* allows for no semantic anchoring point because it is not of the order of signification.

The production of an utterance structures heterogeneous, complex elements with the help of a machine, a 'powerful utterance-producing machine'. Bringing together these complex elements implies ordering them: they need to become machinic functions that are part of a machine – in this particular case, a language machine. Insofar as the ordering of complex elements into operable functions is internal to language itself, it reaches into the multiplicity of *grammē* that serves as the first dispersive figure for meaningful utterances. Language fans out and gathers itself together from *grammē* - that is, from the complex element that, irreducible to language itself, opens up the possibility of language. *Grammē* precedes and exceeds the signification that is at work in language. At the same time, by preceding it, it defies its origin. *Grammē* does not defy the origin directly, but, thanks to its elementary complexity, crosses out and effaces the origin by multiplying it from the beginning. What does elementary complexity mean in the case of *grammē*? It is this question that paves the way for *grammē* and technics, since it is in its elementary complicity and its subsequent defying of the origin that *grammē* overlaps with technics. In fact, *grammē* becomes technics, and its figure coincides with the operation of technics. As a play of

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[34] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time 1. Counterfeit Money* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1992), 48.

forces, technics defies the origin because of its complexity and multiplicity. The *way* in which this multiplicity is constructed is as an elementary complexity. Elementary complexity here means *interrelation*; it means a *play* that is taking place, an engagement of heterogeneous elements with each other. This engagement or interrelation of heterogeneities *is* precisely the first element, though it always remains a complex and interrelating element. This is *grammē:* a mode of interrelating that precedes *things;* and which is called technics throughout this book. At the moment of technics there is as yet no counting of interrelations, there is no 'two or double origin' versus a 'single origin,' since the only origin marked by *grammē* is that of the emergence of interrelations that are not one (they are *inter-*) and that are not unitary (they are *relations* and therefore only exist in relation to one another). It is this mode of interrelation, which cannot be counted as one or as two, that I call technics.

The utterance-producing machine programs a *set* of words in which two opposing forces are intertwined. The difficulty is to determine the nature of this set, since it often consists of mutually exclusive conceptual oppositions. Each of these conceptual oppositions is assembled in an utterance-producing machine that is itself riddled by 'quasi-concepts that are so many aporetic places or dislocations.'[35] *Quasi-concepts* precede conceptual oppositions, and forcefully pair them into one aporetic machine. One such quasi-concept is *grammē*, another is *différance*. The possibility of quasi-concepts, I argue, stems from technics as the possibility of incalculable, multiple interrelations of forces from which, eventually, concepts might emerge. Preceding the domain of the conceptual as such, quasi-concepts constitute the economy that marks the transition from technics to machine. They are 'quasi' because they come about in relations that in themselves already include a multiplicity that is not reducible to the concept; they are characterized by an interplay of forces that will intertwine conceptual oppositions posterior to it.

An important objection can be raised at this point: namely, that quasi-concepts are, in fact, *sham*-concepts. This objection needs to be addressed in order to understand in what way technics as interrelation develops a different attitude toward the concept. It was Gottlob Frege, widely regarded as the founder of analytical philosophy, who rejected the idea of

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[35] Derrida, *Aporias*. (Stanford University Press: Stanford 1993), 15.

quasi-concepts on a logical basis. Not insignificantly for my argument, Frege based his argument on the relation between 'concept' and 'relation':

> We get the same case for a relation as for a concept: logic can recognize a relation only if it is determinate, as regards any one object and any other object, whether or not the one stands to the other in that relation. Here too we have a *tertium non datur*, the case of its being undecided is ruled out. If there were a relation for which this requirement were not fulfilled, then the concepts that we can derive from it by partly filling it up [...] likewise would not have completely sharp boundaries, and would thus, strictly speaking, not be concepts at all, but inadmissible sham-concepts.[36]

Frege's objection against quasi- or sham-concepts implies that there can be no 'set' of words resulting from the relational activities of such quasi-concepts that make up the language machine, or utterance-producing machine. According to Frege, a relation must go from one object to another, or from one concept to another; and a concept must refer to an object and to a certain property of this object (to which this object has a relation, or not). In Frege's philosophy, the idea of a 'concept' and of a 'relation' presupposes the (logical) possibility of reference and predication. The concept is thus a function defined by referentiality. From this presupposition flows analytical philosophy's emphasis on discussing, complicating, and explaining such apparently simple phrases as 'the cat is on the mat.' However, to commence from such a statement one already presupposes that what is at stake in language is reference and referentiality, and what is at stake in thinking (and in the concept) is intentionality.[37] Precisely this idea of the concept is undermined by a deconstruction of the language machine by quasi-concepts. The possibility of reference in the concept and in language - and thus the possi-

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[36] Gottlob Frege, *The Frege Reader* (Blackwell Publishers: Oxford 1997), 264.

[37] For a systematic account of the relation between analytical philsophy and deconstruction, see Samuel C. Wheeler III, *Deconstruction as Analytic Philosophy* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2000).

bility of designating a certain set of objects or words - is what must be explained. This is where the quasi-concept comes in as an irreducibly 'complex element' that forms the first figure of a language machine and/or a metaphysical machine. The consolidated concept is thereby in itself already riddled by multiplicity, held together by a stabilized play of forces that originates in the 'an-original' (because multiple) interrelation of quasi-concepts set up by technics.

A concept, as Deleuze and Guattari note, 'is defined by the inseparability of a finite number of heterogeneous components traversed by a point of absolute survey at infinite speed.'[38] Where do these heterogeneous components come from? How is their coming together as intertwined components possible? And how does the concept consolidate itself in relation to its heterogeneous elements and in relation to other concepts? If the concept is in a certain sense related to a creative conjuring with language, to 'almost crazy etymological exercises,'[39] then what has been said about the language machine will hold for the concept as well: commencing from the multiplicity of *grammē* and *différance*, quasi-concepts structure the economy of forces that make possible a consolidated machine in which concepts can emerge. Such a machine also gives *destiny* to utterances and conceptual oppositions. In quasi-concepts a *teleology* begins to emerge, a destiny that reaches its highest intensity in metaphysics. Derrida describes conceptual oppositions as governed by 'antagonistic forces,' arguing that

> neither of the two antagonistic forces can break with this powerful machine: it is their *destination*; they draw their points of origin and their resources from it; in it, they ex-

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[38] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 21. Paul Patton provides an instructive comparison between Derrida and Deleuze's idea of the concept in his article, "Concept and Politics in Derrida and Deleuze," *Critical Horizons*, 2003, vol. 4 / n° 2, 157-175. For a comparisson between Deleuze, Derrida and Frege on the quasi-concept, see Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 15ff. For an account on the relation between Gilles Deleuze and analytical philosophy, see Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (Continuum: London / New York 2002).

[39] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 8.

> change utterances that are allowed to pass through the machine and into each other, carried along by family resemblances, however incompatible they may sometimes appear. Obviously, this "machine" is no longer a machine in the classical philosophical sense, because there is "life" in it, or "life" takes part in it and because it plays with the opposition life/death. Nor would it be correct to say that this "program" is a program in the teleological or mechanistic sense of the term. [40]

At this point, having begun with the assemblage of an utterance-producing machine, there now is a machine in which life partakes, a machine that juggles with the very distinction between life and death. At this point, it should be kept in mind that the distinction between life and death is presented as a conceptual opposition that is constructed in the language machine on a metaphysical level. The political machine tries to take these oppositions one step further, in order to establish political control along the lines of these distinctions. Conceptual oppositions thus start to work as *ordering-words*: they order the multiplicity of technics into categories of possibilities that can be controlled, regulated, and calculated. Such is the effect of machinic functions. Deleuze and Guattari made the common French word for slogan (*mot d'ordre*) into a concept that captures the way that the utterance-producing machine links up with the political machine. They spoke of *order-words* that regulate what is possible and what is impossible within language and also within society:

> We call *order-words*, not a particular category of explicit statements (for example, in the imperative), but the relation of every word or every statement to implicit presuppositions, in other words, to speech acts that are, and can only be, accomplished in the statement. Order-words do not concern commands only, but every act that is linked to statements by a "social obligation."[41]

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[40] Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 29.

[41] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 87.

The order-word is itself 'a language function' that, although not an explicit statement, regulates the way language takes on signification.[42] Such language functions, I would argue, can come about and consolidate only within an utterance-producing machine, as described above. Throughout this book it will become clear that the utterance-producing machine time and again intertwines with the metaphysical and the political machine. They overlap and arise from one another.

The metaphysical machine, in my analysis, plays a crucial role in bringing together language and politics. In the first chapter, I analyze the conceptual structure of the metaphysical machine in its relation to technics. Here I address the question of the transition from technics to the machine. Metaphysics plays a crucial role in this transition, at least on a conceptual level. In this chapter, metaphysics is shown to be a machinic way of distinguishing and opposing concepts. Such conceptual oppositions do not yet exist in technics. The ability to draw conceptual oppositions is consolidated by the political machine, which tries to bring these oppositions into real life by drawing up borders and ordering patterns of behavior. The literary machine, on the other hand, intensifies and subverts these conceptual oppositions, only to disperse them. The central role of the literary machine, I argue, is that it acts as a machine of dispersion. It unhinges meaning from the materiality of language, a project impossible by any other means. A recent novel that shows this process of dispersion at work across political, literary, and metaphysical levels is Peter Verhelst's *Zwerm*. The first chapter will analyze and interpret the myriad of events that take place in that novel.

The second chapter explores the idea of a metaphysical machine. At this point in the argument the concept of the modern machine is introduced. What characterizes the modern machine, both in its metaphysical and its political tendency, is the desire for closure – that is, the desire to close off the realm over which the machine exerts its power. In order to understand this striving for closure, this chapter undertakes a theoretical investigation of a difference between Derrida and Heidegger's conceptions of the history of metaphysics. Whereas Heidegger argues in favor of the 'end' of metaphysics, Derrida introduces the idea of the 'closure' of metaphysics. To posit the end of metaphysics allows one to step outside the history of metaphysics, thereby also essentially escaping the metaphysical machine.

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[42] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 85.

Derrida's concept of closure emphasizes the impossibility of simply marking an end to the machine. Instead, the concept of 'closure' marks the tendency of metaphysics to absorb everything within its realm. Through this discussion between Heidegger and Derrida, I will argue that the machine, both on a political and a metaphysical level, is marked by the interplay of closure and ending. The machine strives *both* for an absolute end that would supersede its own functioning *and* for a closure that would grant a total immanence to the machine. By exploring this double tendency, I show that what underlies it is a problem of *time* and *acceleration*, which in the last instance turns out to be the problem of technics.

The third chapter traces the conceptual development of the 'modern political machine.' At first glance, the modern political machine is characterized by two operations: first, it creates a *state* through a process of territorialization;[43] and second, it sets up a discourse of *legitimacy* to justify the social stratifications and sovereignty of the modern state. My argument is that to understand the modern political machine a third, underlying element needs to be discerned: the modern political machine shows a turn toward *executive functioning* – that is, executive functions such as the military, the police, and bureaucracy become increasingly important. This turn towards executive functioning makes the modern political machine into a *machine*. The two events of the modern political machine – construction of the state and a discourse on legitimacy – are both the result of this third, underlying event of a turn toward executive functioning, or the becoming-machine of the political. Political modernity equals the becoming-machine of the political. In the first case, territorialization is what enabled the construction of the state; yet such territorialization became possible by the centralization of the armed forces (the construction of an army by the state). The state is the result of a centralization of the armed forces, understood as an executive functioning of the state. In the second case, the discourse on legitimacy (of the state, of sovereignty, of the monopoly of violence by the state) is a distinctively *modern* discourse: the word legitimacy only gained currency in political philosophy during the sixteenth century, when the absolutist state had already been consolidated. Nevertheless, the problem of

[43] Territorialization is understood here as a geographical re-organization of the land that falls under the control of a state. It does not refer to Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2003).

legitimacy is a central problem of the relation between the state, machinic functioning, and philosophical thought: it shows how the state machine retroactively engenders a *state thinking*. State thinking is a form of thinking that obfuscates the executive functioning of the modern political machine – that is to say, it obliterates the machinic within the modern political. Instead, it constructs a theory on the origin of law. This origin of the law justifies the construction of the modern state and serves to demonstrate that the legal framework of the modern state is justified.

The fourth chapter returns to literature and joins together my insights about language and the modern political machine. In Assia Djebar's *La disparition de la langue française* [*The Disappearance of the French Language*].[44] the main protagonist, Berkane, returns to his native country of Algeria after several years in France. Meanwhile, Berkane maintains a diary in which he relates his feelings with regard to Algeria, France, and toward the languages that he speaks. The diary brings us back to Berkane's youth, during which he participated in the Algerian war of independence. As the story unfolds the young Berkane is arrested and imprisoned by French troops after participating in an insurrection against the French occupation of Algeria. The interrogation and torture of the young Berkane form the starting point of a reflection on the relation between language and the exertion of physical violence. In this chapter, I argue that the machine of the state is constructed by interlacing the technics of language with physical elements, such as the use of violence. Indeed, language and the exertion of physical violence continuously bleed into each other, which in fact constitutes the very possibility of language as a social instrument for belonging. To explore this idea further I draw on Derrida's concept of exappropriation. Exappropriation expresses the double move of a subject being both appropriated and expropriated, its 'self' being both given and removed from it. For Derrida, this double move is the result of language. Berkane's experience of exappropriation, I will argue, is the result of an interweaving of language with the techniques of torture.

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[44] Assia Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française* (Paris: Albin Michel 2003).

Chapter One
Machines / Dispersion / Technics

1. Introduction: Machines of Dispersion

At the swarming, rhythmically pulsating machinic heart of Peter Verhelst's novel *Zwerm. Een geschiedenis van de wereld* [*Swarm. A History of the World*][45] something like a virus is at work; not only in the fictive world by which Verhelst emulates an outside world, "the nonverbal 'outside' to which language refers,"[46] but also *in* language itself. Within this language the external 'thing' to which language usually refers is internalized and migrates throughout the story to designate a myriad of different objects and events, time and again indicated in italics as a "*thing*" [*ding*]. These things are not actual objects, but rather they are swarming coagulations that temporarily exist and then explode again to dissolve into "a glittering cloud composed of millions and millions of little splinters [*een glinsterende wolk, samengesteld uit miljoenen en miljoenen scherfjes*]."[47] Likewise on a narrative level the novel is a shattering whirlwind of short, descriptive fragments that depict a decentered world suffering from terrorist and viral

[45] Peter Verhelst, *Zwerm. Een geschiedenis van de Wereld* (Prometheus: Amsterdam 2005). All translations from the Dutch are mine.

[46] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (Yale University Press: New Haven / London), 3.

[47] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, –1.

attacks; the hide-outs and refuges of a mutant fighting machine called Angel, who relives his past as a soldier in battlefields that recall the Vietnam War; young Abel's quest to find out what happened to his girlfriend Pearl, abducted after a piano recital, with the occasional help of Angel; a phone call repeated nightly telling Angel to "start at the beginning"[48] and leading him to a house in which he finds a dead man clasping a phone between his jaw and his shoulder; Abel meeting with an older gentlemen called H, who holds Pearl captive in a room with nothing but a piano and whose connections reach as far as Israel; a DJ called Rimbaud messing around with soundscapes in his hi-tech apartment; an Israeli scientist called Baruch Goldstein[49] and his research project that aims to create an artificial black hole; and a certain mister V[50] who spends years in isolated imprisonment for making public state secrets. In short, the narrative swarms. It takes us all over the place. Yet whilst the narrative literally *is* all over the place, spreading like a swarm without a center, at the same time a number of narrative elements set up a teleological, even eschatological drive that is equally important to the novel. The page numbers in the book, for example,

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[48] The first actual phone call takes place on page 542, but the narrative about Angel – recognizable by its different typography – starts with the sentence: "If I try to reconstruct everything it started with the night I received a phone call that probably wasn't meant for me. [*Als ik alles probeer te reconstrueren, is het begonnen met de nacht waarin ik een telefoonoproep kreeg die vermoedelijk niet voor mij was bedoeld…*]." Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 662.

[49] Not coincidentally the Israeli scientist has the same name as that of the jewish doctor responsible for the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in Hebron, February 25, 1994. For a sociological analysis of the massacre in the wider frame of political conflict in Israel, see Yehouda Shenhav and Nadav Gabay, "Managing Political Conflict: The Sociology of State Commissions of Inquiry in Israel", *Israel Studies*, 2001, Volume 6, number 1, 126-156.

[50] This character is clearly inspired on Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli nuclear technician who revealed details about Israel's nuclear weapons program to the British Press in 1986. Vanunu, who had fled Israel, was abducted in Rome by an Israelian secret agent and sentenced to 18 years in prison, 11 of which were spent in solitary confinement.

count backwards from 666 to -5; in the exact center of the novel 15 black pages proclaim the constitution of a new empire called virutopia and a new, mutant man called *Homo Invictus Viralis* (abbreviated, H.I.V.);[51] and all the while the characters that appear in the novel are feverishly running away from something, or frantically searching for something until they, too, get sucked up in a black hole imploding on page 0 with someone screaming "oh my god!!"[52] The overall effect is that everything in the novel seems to happen "in *imminence and in urgency*."[53] It also means that the novel acts as a *machine of dispersion*.

Like any dispersion, a machinic dispersion is a way of diffusing and spreading, of scattering around elements and forces that were previously tied into each other. Yet instead of building up a machinic function with all its semi-centralized automatic capacities, Peter Verhelst's *Zwerm* disperses the functioning of the machine. The machinic functions of different things are spreading out like a swarm rather than operating in an ever more intertwined, structural way. The swarm that is created in the novel is machinic, but it is a machine that builds up loose ends; a machine that cuts loose the end of every narrative, every machinic function that the narrative might try to build up. In *Zwerm*, there is a machinic dispersion at work which makes that *things* [*dingen*] explode into a swarm of singularities that can no longer be recuperated in a larger, functional constellation. These swarming singularities trace the operation of *différance*, as Jacques Derrida defines it in *Specters of Marx* for example:

> Differ*a*nce, if it remains irreducible, irreducibly required by the spacing of any promise and by the future-to-come that comes to open it, does not mean only (…) deferral, lateness, delay, postponement. In the incoercible differ*a*nce the here-now unfurls. Without lateness, without delay, but without presence, it is the precipitation of an absolute singularity, singular because differing, precisely [*justement*], and always other, binding itself

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[51] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 333-317.

[52] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 0.

[53] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (Routledge: New York / London, 1994), 31.

> necessarily to the form of the instant, in *imminence and urgency* (…).
>
> No differance without alterity, no alterity without singularity, no singularity without here-and-now [*ici-maintenant*].[54]

The singularity-driven differance both disperses and gathers the here-and-now. It places and displaces, allays and relays the here-and-now, that is to say, according to Derrida, the ontological presence that metaphysics desires. Preceding metaphysics and even extending "beyond the thought of Being"[55], differance makes the metaphysical machine possible while escaping it. "Without the possibility of differance, the desire for presence as such would not find its breathing-space."[56] Such a space for breathing is found in the interrelation of forces that is enacted by differance, where the rhythmically breathing desire for presence tries to take over and forces these forces to become present, functional and calculable. Such a coercive force that tries to order the free floating forces of differance can be wielded by metaphysics, building up a *metaphysical machine*; it can be operated in politics, establishing a *political machine*; and it can be the *topos* of literature, creating a *literary machine of dispersion*. At the same time, differance menaces these machines: it jeopardizes metaphysics' "self-presence in the breath"[57]; it opens the political machine to invest it with "the singularity of each as a fundamental organizing principle" and with "a process of self-transformation, hybridization, and miscegenation"[58]; and the literary machine itself is the continuous possibility of dispersal that thus makes way for differance and its multiplicity. Differance is *incoercible* and *irreducible*. It will thus unsettle the machinic again. Detaching and breaking open the consolidated functions of the machinic, differance rains down upon us

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[54] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 31; *Spectres de Marx* (Galilée: Paris 1993), 60.

[55] Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 1976), 143.

[56] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 143.

[57] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 26.

[58] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (The Penguin Press: New York 2004), 356.

absolute singularities, engendering "the reprise of singularities by one another, the condensation of singularities one into another."[59] This operation of differance - the way that its interrelation of forces evolves in a machinic function that it also breaks down again - will be the thematic focus of this chapter. Its outcome will be a concept of *technics* derived from differance but trespassing on some of differance's ontological reservations and reconsiderations.

For Derrida, differance opens up the possibility of the machine and of metaphysics. It therefore necessarily "*precedes* metaphysics"[60] and all its machinations. In the idea of democracy-to-come, differance lays down the sojourning groundwork for any democratic political project, which is therefore *always already* in deconstruction.[61] Likewise, the precedence of differance for any kind of machinic function is not of the order of a historical temporality – which, like time in general, already "belongs to metaphysical conceptuality"[62] - but rather constitutes the very possibility of temporality. In contrast, what *technics* allows us to conceptualize is an operation close to difference, but one that starts *after* and *from within* the machinic (metaphysical, political, or literary) rather than remaining strictly exterior to it. Before I get to this contrast, let us take a breath, a metaphysical breath, the "liberty of a breath that nothing breaks into pieces"[63] and like Angel in *Zwerm*, attempt to start at the beginning. "A voice says: 'start at the beginning.' A voice answers: 'this *is* the beginning'."[64]

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[59] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (Continuum: London / New York 2004), 251.

[60] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 143. My italics.

[61] See Derrida, *Rogues. Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2005).

[62] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago), 65. The next chapter makes a detailed analysis of time as inherently metaphysical. For a thorough, booklength analysis of this subject, see David Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time* (Northwestern University Press: Evanston 1989), and John Protevi, *Time and Exteriority. Aristotle, Heidegger, Derrida* (Bucknell University Press: Cranburry 1994).

[63] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 308.

[64] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, –5.

2. Phonocentric Metaphysics

It is no coincidence that the beginning for which Angel searches is announced over the telephone, a technological synecdoche for the contamination of voice and machine; or, as Avital Ronell put it, "the locus par excellence where voice, language and instrumentality share a common residence."[65] It leads to the love of the spoken word, but it also leads to instrumentality, or as I will call it, the *machinic*. All this starts with a *phonocentrism* which, for Derrida, captivates metaphysics early on in its machinic formation. Let's start there.

With the rhythmic breathing of metaphysics' desire for presence comes its love for the spoken word. The spoken word - breath and the convoluted vocal cords by which it is articulated - is the closest possible connection between sense and presence. The spoken word attracts metaphysics because of a deeper seated "determination of being as presence."[66] It is because of this relation to presence that speech is favored over writing in metaphysics. From the determination of being as presence logocentrism and phonocentrism emerge; metaphysics' "adventure merges with that of logocentrism."[67] Derrida's detailed circumscription of phonocentrism at the heart of the history of metaphysics gives him ample opportunity to explain how desire for presence permeates metaphysical thought and language. Through meticulous analyses of classic texts from the history of metaphysics – Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and others – Derrida demonstrates that the preference for the spoken word, present in all these metaphysical works, is invested by a desire for an immediate presence of thought. Only when thought is present can it truly *be*. Insofar as Being is understood as presence, the thought of Being – the philosophical discourse of ontology – must be present as well if it is to adequately understand Being. Ideally, it should not be mediated by

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[65] Avital Ronell, *Finitude's Score. Essays for the End of the Millennium* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln 1994), 26. See also Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology / Schizophrenia / Electric Speech* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln 1989).

[66] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 97.

[67] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 97.

anything. It should be immediate, constituting a here-and-now (Derrida's *ici-maintenant*) of absolute presence. The spoken word is what comes closest to rendering thought immediate. Thus the spoken word is closest to Being understood as presence. If mediation is unavoidable, then the mediating technologies (words, writing, gestures, or technical media) must be constrained to stay as close as possible to what really counts: Being understood as presence. Technologies are thus understood as *derivative techniques*, as media devised to re-present the presence of Being.

Phonocentrism delineates an *operation* for getting as close as possible to Being as presence. This operation acts against supplementarity and against mediation. Technologies are necessarily mediating technologies that function within a stratagem for attaining presence. They are instrumental; oriented toward controlling the intervals of desire and presence regulated by differance.[68] The drive of metaphysical phonocentrism, then, is a desire for presence stimulated by differance, which can also be understood politically: presence is power. Political power is the capacity to decide over presence and absence, life and death.[69] For this reason politics is conceptually concerned with tracking the movements of differance: "Death is the movement of differance to the extent that that movement is necessarily finite."[70] Differance precedes the distinction between absence and presence, but also engenders it. This is why metaphysics emerges in the breathing-space of differance, in the interval between absence and presence. But to master the differantial economy of absence and presence would be to master an absolute political power over life and death. The *modern political machine* consists in various attempts at

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[68] See Bernard Stiegler, "Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limit of Deconstruction" in Tom Cohen, *Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical* Reader (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2001), 252.

[69] See Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended." Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976* (Picador: New York 2003), Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 1997), and Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics", *Public Culture*, volume 15, n° 1, 2003, 11-40.

[70] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 143.

mastering and redistributing this economy.[71] The machinic is the structural emanation of these attempts. It is via the machinic that political modernity is marked by "a generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations."[72] Controlling the temporal and spatial intervals of absence and presence a generalized instrumentalization of human bodies becomes possible on a political level.[73] Politics as the instrumentalization of human existence follows in the wake a *becoming-machinic* that defines the modern political. It is enacted at the end of the fourteenth century through a territorialization by which the control of space becomes one of the main objectives of modern politics.[74] It is made possible through the development of strong military apparatus and a police force, and by the excessive import of the executive functions of the state machine in general. "Humanitarian intervention" and "rescue operations" would be impossible without the preceding becoming-machinic of politics and the completion of its executive functions to master the differantial economy of absence and presence – and thus to decide over life and death.[75] In *Zwerm* several such rescue operations (or just one,

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[71] Derrida uses the term "modern political machine" in *Of Grammatology*, 138. My understanding of the modern political machine issues from Derrida's, but it will also significantly differ from (and take issue with) it.

[72] Mbembe, "Necropolitics", 14.

[73] Derrida writes: "Spacing insinuates into presence an interval." Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 203.

[74] The third chapter of this present work deals extensively with the becoming-machinic of politics at the beginning of modernity.

[75] Adi Ophir has argued that "the emergence, development and institutionalization of a dispositive articulating rescuing technologies meant to respond to large-scale catastrophies, is one of the distinctive traits of modernity [*L'émergence, le développement et l'institutionnalisation d'un dispositif articulant des technologies de secours et d'assistance, destiné à répondre aux catastrophes de grande envergure, constituent un des traits distinctifs de la modernité*]." Adi Ophir, "Le souverain, l'humanitaire, et le terroriste: conjurer, produire, prendre en charge les catastrophes", *Vacarme*, n° 34, 2006, online: http://www.vacarme.eu.org/article488.html.

perhaps, represented and reconfigured several times throughout the novel) take place, which neatly blend in with police pursuits and civil arrests.

In *Zwerm*, then, a number of narrative events are grouped around the implosion of a building known as the Silver-Colored Building Block [*het Zilverkleurige Complex*]. Or rather, the narrative events swarm out from the attack on the Silver-Colored Building Block. Within minutes of the attack, an extensive rescue operation is set up around the building block. At the beginning of the novel the events are described as follows:

> Presently a vibration travels through the Silver-Colored Complex, followed by a howling that rises from the very foundations, but for now a helicopter searches the buildings for elements with body heat and focuses of heating. There are surveillance screens, faces upon which no panic is yet written, rather gradations of surprise. On one of the screens a body floats over dozens of hands. In the heads of the security experts the blueprint of the Silver-Colored Complex unfolds itself. They know that fire, for now still a sneaking poison, develops a capricious logic. Little flames shoot into cracks and hollow spaces to hiss to those who come closer at unexpected places. Imperturbably they eat their way through the fuse.
>
> Fire brigade ladders slide out, little mosquito legs that try to get hold of the outer walls.
>
> *Weldra trekt een rilling door het Zilverkleurig Complex, gevolgd door gebrul dat uit de fundamenten zelf opstijgt, maar voorlopig zoekt een helikopter de gebouwen af op lichaamswarme elementen en broeihaarden. Er zijn bewakingsschermen, gezichten waarop nog geen paniek te lezen staat, eerder gradaties van verwondering. Op een van de schermen drijft een lichaam over tientallen handen. In het hoofd van de veiligheidsdeskundigen ontvouwt zich het grondplan van het Zilverkleurig Complex. Ze weten dat vuur, voorlopig nog een sluipend gif, een grillige logica ontwikkelt. Vlammetjes schieten in*

spleten en holle ruimten om op onvoorziene plekken te sissen naar wie dichterbij komt. Onverstoorbaar vreten ze zich een weg door de lont.

Brandweerladders schuiven uit, muggenpootjes die vat proberen te krijgen op de buitenmuren.[76]

From the very start there is emergency, calculation and intervention. From the beginning there is an attempt to take control of the differantial economy of presence and absence. *Zwerm* revolves around the impossibility to delimit the events that are about to take place. Within moments the building will collapse, the helicopter hovering over the building will digress from its calculated trajectory and fly out over the city, a car will crash, the reader overhearing a hobo's frantic apocalyptic rambling, a young man will be arrested and led to a prison for interrogation, a carjacking will take place, a street fight among hobos will be followed by yet another violent police intervention. The scene depicts the moment before the Silvery-Colored Building Block collapses. A helicopter is circling around the building, monitoring it. Equipped with advanced technologies, it is scanning for body heat. On the ground, security experts are calculating possibilities for intervention by visualizing the floor plan of the building and estimating the time before collapse. They will give the signal for the fire brigade to enter. As this is done different spatial zones must be delineated: zones in which an intervention takes place; zones to which the victims are brought; and zones through which passers-by must be diverted from the spectacle taking place before their eyes. Moments after the event, the mayor of the city arrives in a limousine, smiles and assures everyone that "nothing's happening. Really there isn't. You have to believe me."[77] As events unroll it becomes clear that section F of the Silvery-Colored Building Block is of specific interest to the police. Holding a photo of Angel in their hands, police troops storm in to search for what remains of Angel, a mutant man and subject to all kinds of state experiments. By that time, Angel is racing out of town in a stolen Ford Mustang. "Two agents unwind red- and

[76] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 664.

[77] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 663.

white-colored ribbons and divide the place in restricted areas, entries and exits, zones that are to be photographed meticulously."[78]

The narrative events that occur in rapid succession at the beginning of the novel emulate the executive apparatus of police troops and military functionaries, which incorporates modern technologies to chart, calculate, and ultimately contain the events that are taking place. The mayor assures us that nothing is happening while two police officers mark off restricted areas: this nicely captures Jacques Rancière's definition of the police. In his "Ten Theses on Politics", Rancière defines police as "a reminder of the obviousness of what there is, or rather, of what there isn't: 'Move along! There is nothing to see here!' The police says that there is nothing to see on a road, that there is nothing to do but move along."[79] Rancière's concern is to distinguish this policing activity, with its own economy of restricted spaces and no-go-zones, from politics. Instead of closing off spaces, instead of placing restrictions politics ought to be "transforming this space of 'moving-along' into the space for the appearance of a subject: i.e. the people, the workers, the citizens."[80] The trouble, to my mind, is that the modern political is indistinguishable from its policing apparatus and from its executive apparatus in general. To separate the policing activity from the political reconfiguration of space is not possible. The constitution of the political takes place with the demarcation of space by what Rancière calls police, the executive function of the state. Derrida calls it *ontopology*: the political attempt to master the territory by controlling space and time, absence and presence.[81] Technologies facilitate the control of space and time at a political level. They are intimately interwoven with the functioning of the political machine, in which they receive their properly technical destination, as a means for registration for example:

> In the hall of section F of the Silver-Colored Building Blick the evacuated men and women are chased through a line of detectives. Data flicker on laptops. Bags slide past X-

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[78] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 641.

[79] Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory & Event*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2001 (online).

[80] Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics."

[81] See *Specters of Marx*, 82.

> ray cameras. Everyone is scanned, searched, filmed and afterwards branded with a stamp that is invisible to the naked eye which will light up for weeks to come under the ultraviolet light.
>
> *In de hal van sectie F van het Zilverkleurige Complex worden de geëvacueerde mannen en vrouwen door een rij rechercheurs heen gejaagd. Data flikkeren op laptops. Tassen schuiven langs röntgencamera's. Iedereen wordt gescand, afgetast, gefilmd en daarna gemerkt met een voor het blote oog onzichtbare stempel dat weken later nog zal oplichten onder het ultraviolet licht.*[82]

An interlacing constellation of scanners, laptops, films tapes, and seals is used to check whoever has been in restricted F Section of the Silvery-Colored Building. This is done in order to get a grip on the *here-and-now*, in order to control the events that have just taken place in the building. But the fragmentary narrative that spreads out in the course of the novel makes clear that these events cannot be pinned down. Instead, by swarming out, the narrative also opens up the political machinery that attempts to isolate the event. It is the political machine - that is, the indistinguishable interlacement of the political and the technological - that assures us that "nothing's going on," "there's nothing to see." To be able to say this, the political machine needs to control absence and presence, life and death. To do so it uses modern technologies.

But as it is for metaphysics attempt to attain presence, so it is for politics attempt to control the rhythm of absence and presence. Ultimately something will escape it.

3. The Supplementary Technique and the Machine

On the level of metaphysics phonocentrism rapidly becomes the foremost manifestation of a desire for presence. This is why, in Derrida's work on metaphysics, the differantial unfurling of the here-and-now is circumscribed

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[82] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 641–640.

by what happens to a failed attempt of phonocentrism. In *Of Grammatology,* Derrida lines up a set of philosophical and metaphysical concepts to show how they all originate from a desire for presence that is most adequately captured in terms of phonocentrism. Phonocentrism not only "merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence,*" it also merges with "all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form."[83] The subdeterminations that Derrida subordinates to the overdetermination of "Being as presence" are the basic concepts of western philosophy in a nutshell: the "self-presence of the cogito"[84] as a form of *hearing* oneself speak; the presence of the *logos* as *breath* of the spirit;[85] the "presence of the thing to the sight as *eidos*"; and "temporal presence as point [*stigmè*] of the now or of the moment [*nun*]".[86] Phonocentrism determines the self as present and determines the other as co-present,[87] defining the cogito as a form of "grasping of self as grasping of

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[83] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 12.

[84] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 12.

[85] Apart from the passages on "breath" in *Of Grammatology* to which I have already alluded, see also Derrida's reading of Martin Heidegger's hesitation to sever the connection between "breath" and "spirit" in *Of Spirit*. Derrida argues that Heidegger still partly upholds the connection, albeit in a derivative form: "Heidegger does not simply reject the determination of spirit as *spiritus* as *pneuma* (…). Rather, he derives it, he affirms the dependence of breath, wind, respiration, inspiration, expiration, and sighing in regard to flame." Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit. Heidegger and the Question* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1989), 97. See also David Farell Krell, "Spiriting Heidegger" in David Wood (ed.), *Of Derrida, Heidegger, and Spirit* (Northwestern University Press: Evanston 1993), 11–40.

[86] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 12.

[87] In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida delineates how phonocentrism invests thought with an auto-affectivity that comes with "hearing oneself speak": "To speak to someone is doubtless to hear oneself speak, to be heard by oneself; but, at the same time, if one is heard by another, to speak is to make him *repeat immediately* in himself the hearing-oneself-speak in the very form in which I effectuated it. This immediate repetition is a reproduction of pure auto-affection without the help of anything

non-self."[88] The moment that these concepts are lined up, showing their affinity with phonocentrism, it begins to transpire why they are always on the rebound.

Due to the importance it places on the spoken word, phonocentrism is menaced by writing (*écriture*). If Being is pure presence, then "voicing" the *logos* of this Being implies distancing one step away from pure presence. And given that the spoken word is one step away from Being, the written word is two steps away from Being as presence. From a phonocentric viewpoint, then, writing is a supplement in the second degree. This gives writing a deeply problematic status: while Being *is* pure presence, writing is a re-presentation of presence *in the second degree*. The adequacy of the representation that writing gives must therefore be checked and double-checked. Writing itself must be kept in check. This means making sure that writing fulfils the function that it was designated from the perspective of metaphysics: writing must be a faithful representation subjugated by the spoken word that is closer to Being. It is from within this metaphysical constellation of concepts, all of which are over-determined by Being understood as presence, that writing is understood as "always technical [*technique*] and representative."[89] It is important to realize that this understanding of writing only arises from within the desire for presence that is proper to metaphysics. What we have here is not an axiomatic definition of writing as such, but the subjugation of writing within the machine of metaphysics. I want to concentrate on how this subjugation is implemented so that writing becomes a *technique*, a technical phenomenon. The work of subjugation done here by metaphysics, it will turn out, is not restricted to the realm of metaphysics. It can be found in literature and it structures the political. The work of subjugation is done by the machine. The *machinic* is what assembles distinct elements to organize them in an operative interlacement. "That which makes a machine, to be precise, are connections, all the connections

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external." Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* (Northwestern University Press: Evanston 1973), 80.

[88] Derrida, *Of Spirit*, 26.

[89] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 11.

that operate the disassembly."[90] The metaphysical machine organizes a conceptual interlacement in which writing becomes *technical*. Technicity, technicality and techniques originate inside the machine. Within the subjugation effectuated by the machinic, free-floating forces are "straightened out" to become functions that have a technical or ancillary function within the larger functional machine. The metaphysical machine has a specific significance here because, with its technical conception of writing¸ it gives a blueprint of how technicality is formed. The operation that makes something into a technical artifact and into a representative supplement is a result of "the metaphysical enslavement to technicity."[91] In metaphysics, *enslavement* and *subjugation* take place on a conceptual level.

The representative and technical function designated to writing is exemplary for how technological artifacts are treated in a metaphysical machine. From the very first moment *technologies (like writing, for example) are reduced to the status of techniques*. A technique is understood as an auxillary function. It is a means toward an end without it determining or having a grip over the end it serves. This comprehension of technique or technicality could also be termed techno-logical, in the sense that something is transformed into a derivative technique that is governed by a *logic* that does not, as such, belong to it. In his work on technology and philosophy, Bernard Stiegler has argued that technology, understood as a logic of the technical, is at once at the origin of philosophy and yet has been forgotten by it.

> From its beginning, philosophy has provided evidence for such a techno-logical condition, but in its foreclosure and denegation; and it is the entire difficulty of my project to show that philosophy begins with the foreclosure of its proper question.[92]

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[90] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature* (University of Minnesota Press: Mineapolis / London 1986), 82.

[91] Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness* (Continuüm: London / New York 2006), 152.

[92] Bernard Stiegler, *Philosopher par accident. Entretiens avec Élie During* (Galilée: Paris 2004), 15.

The technological condition of philosophy consists in the fact that knowledge needs to be exteriorized in order to be transmitted in space and in time. It is this exteriorization that requires technics from the start: from the very first moment there is a prosthesis that is essential to knowledge. This prosthesis is not exterior to knowledge, as metaphysics might contend. The proper task of philosophy, according to Stiegler, is to reflect upon this techno-logical condition. However, from very early in its development, philosophy becomes metaphysical through a denegation of technics. This was done by appropriating technics into the structural conceptual oppositions of a metaphysical machine. Metaphysics, Stiegler argues, revolves around a

> dogmatism based on a play of simple oppositions that reduce the elementary complexity for which *the element is not just the simple*, precisely because it is already 'supplementary', that is to say technical [*technique*], or 'prosthetic'.[93]

The reduction of complexity is in fact the reduction of technics. Such a reduction is achieved by subjugating technics to become instrumental techniques within a connective set of concepts. Such a connective set of concepts constitutes a metaphysical machine because within it an operative order is created. Metaphysical concepts are arranged in oppositions, such as the opposition between nature and culture, original and unoriginal, presence and absence:

> It is precisely these concepts that permitted the exclusion of writing: image or representation, sensible and intelligible, nature and culture, nature and technique [*technique*], etc. They are solidary with all metaphysical conceptuality and particularly with a naturalist, objectivist, and derivative determination of the difference between outside and inside.[94]

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[93] Stiegler, *Philosopher par accident*, 27.

[94] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 71. Translation modified.

The "metaphysical conceptuality" that Derrida mentions in the quote performs an action - namely, the action of "excluding" writing. In the same movement it subjugates writing by turning it into an instrumental function. The exclusion and instrumental subjugation that the metaphysical machine undertakes are not restricted to writing; they are indices for a more general action that is undertaken by the metaphysical machine. This is the action of instrumentalization in which *technique* comes about. It is precisely this action that makes metaphysics machinic. The machinic is what takes place *in between* concepts, what arranges these concepts; the machinic is what happens in the connectivity of these concepts, what arranges the free floating forces of technics into an operative, instrumental function that I call technique.

By arranging the concepts in complex constellations of oppositions a *teleology* emerges. It is a teleology that tries to attain pure presence and uncontested origin. In it everything is subjugated and instrumentalized to become a representation of the origin and of the pure presence of Being. While "any attempt to return toward the untouched, proper intimacy of some presence or some self-presence is played out in illusion,"[95] the illusion itself is highly efficacious.[96] A proper beginning or pure presence will never be found, but in the mean time the metaphysical machine does not stop trying to attain it, arranging technics in ever more functional intrumental relations. *It is via a constellation of concepts, then, that technics can be reduced*

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[95] Derrida, *Dissemination* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), 327.

[96] To be clear: this teleology is not illusory because it is ineffective. Although it would be possible to deconstruct this teleology it is by no means ineffective. The illusory value of this teleology arises from its attempts to retrieve an origin that can never be retrieved. There never has been such an origin, and in so far as there is such an event that could be taken as the origin, then this origin is immediately deconstructed because it would be an "event that is no longer an event since its singularity (…) is doubled, multiplied, divided, and discounted, immediately concealing itself in an unintelligible 'double bottom' of nonpresence, at the very moment it seems to produce itself, that is to say, present itself." (Derrida, *Dissemination*, 321) In the attempt to retrieve the origin, or in the attempt to set out from this origin, a teleology needs to be reconstructed that, precisely because it wants to return to the origin, remains illusory.

to techniques – techniques of writings, techniques of storing information, techniques of representation, techniques of mediation, techniques of acculturation, etcetera. By reducing technics to technique, technics is inscribed as a function in a machine. It becomes a machinic function. Such a machinic function can arise in the context of the teleology that a machine establishes. It is therefore a techno-teleology, or rather a teleo-techno-logic that does not belong to technics as such but only arises within a machine.

It will have become clear by now that my concept of the machine does not coincide with a regular understanding of a machine. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a machine as "a structure regarded as functioning as an independent body," and alternatively as "a material structure designed for a specific purpose, and related matters." In itself, this definition of a machine is similar to what I am calling a metaphysical machine, a political machine, or a literary machine. But such metaphysical, political, or literary machines are not what we think of when we say "machine". They are not steam engines, cars, typewriters, or anything of that sort. At best, and depending upon the machinic constellation they are in, these objects (steam engines, cars, typewriters) can be called techniques. That is to say, they are already instrumentalized – there is no getting around the instrumentalization that the metaphysical machine enacts. The instrumentalization itself has been performed by the machine, which brings these objects in a larger teleo-techno-logical constellation in which they become functional. In my argument, a machine is therefore nothing like a motor in need of fuel, and neither is it the complex mechanism that is dependent on more simple or general human techniques. The concept of the machine is used to explain how, from a play of forces that is neither instrumental nor pre-technical, a structural interlacement of these forces comes about.

Jacques Ellul sketches a relation between technique and machine that is almost the exact opposite of mine. In Ellul's work, the machine is unadapted to human society, while it is technique that makes it suitable for societal application. The suggestion is that the machine is profoundly inhuman whereas technique is still in touch with humanity:

> Let the machine have its head, and it topples everything that cannot support its enormous weight. Thus everything had to be reconsidered in terms of the machine. And that

> is precisely the role technique plays. In all fields it made an inventory of what it could use, of everything that could be brought into line with the machine. The machine could not integrate itself into nineteenth-century society; technique integrated it. (…) Technique had enough of the mechanical in its nature to enable it to cope with the machine, but it surpasses and transcends the machine because it remains in close touch with the human order.[97]

It is clear from Ellul's account that he understands the machine in its narrow sense, as the highly mechanized artifacts that were invented during the industrial revolution and which have led to a radical transformation of society on a technical, economic and political level. This revolution and the mechanical changes it brought about are important, though it is not the object of my inquiry. Ellul's philosophy endeavors to "contextualize machines"[98] by tapping into a wider comprehension of technique as any kind of human "method of operation."[99] In that sense technique is in close contact with the "human order" because it is what defines humans, whereas a machine is understood by Ellul as indifferent to human order. Technique can then function as the intermediary between human nature and the machine. By integrating the machine into human society, technique also estranges man from himself. Eventually, in the nineteenth century, this brings about what Ellul calls the "technical phenomenon", which occurs when human "consciousness and judgement" become involved with technique to reflect upon human techniques with the aim of optimizing and perfecting them. "The technical phenomenon is the main preoccupation of our time; in every field men seek to find the most efficient method."[100] The technical phenomenon has led to the machine and will lead us beyond it, Ellul argues. However, in doing so there remains no

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[97] Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York 1973), 5.

[98] David Lovekin, *Technique, Discourse, and Consciousness. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jacques Ellul* (Associated University Press: Cranbury 1991), 158.

[99] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 19.

[100] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 21.

possibility for reflection upon, nor critical distance from, technique or machine:

> From that moment onwards, when technical operations [*opérations techniques*] travel at the speed of a nanosecond, when the most consummate engines become obsolete within a few years, distance, reflection, and critique are no longer possible.[101]

For Ellul this risk has always been imminent in technique. This leads him to take a skeptical position toward technique and the machine. Ultimately, there is no level of technique, technical knowledge or advancement that can help overcome the deadlock of technological society. On the contrary, Gilbert Hottois argues that, for Ellul, "technoscience can only lead to a total closure and the failure of every utopia."[102] Ellul is unable to conceive of technics without immediately conceptualizing it as a subservient, instrumentalized relation that has gone out of hand. For Ellul, the only way out of instrumentalization is to deny technique altogether. Below I will propose a concept of technics that tries to overcome, or at least bypass the dilemma that Ellul, along with many other philosophers of technology, faces. In this present study, technics is conceived of as "an-originary technicity" without it being instrumental. Technics is *an-originary* in the sense that it defies all origin. At the same time, nothing is more original than technics: time and again, it is the play of forces in technics that allows machinic functions to come about. Instrumentalization emerges with the machine taking the heterogeneous forces of technics to constitute operative interlacements. The literary, the metaphysical, and the political are constituted from within these operative interlacements of the machinic. At the same time, the play of forces in technics can return to break open these interlacements.

A deconstruction of the machine starts off by analyzing the discursive constellation of concepts that *forms* a machine. A machine is a structural *formation* of concepts that are underpinned but also disturbed by

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[101] Ellul, *Le bluff technologique* (Hachette: Paris 1987), 179.

[102] Gilbert Hottois, *Entre symboles et technosciences. Une itineraire philosophique* (Champ Vallon: Seyssel 1996), 157.

forces.[103] Deconstruction is an attempt to trace the emergence of such a constellation of concepts, and to uncover the "rules of formation" by which the conceptual constellation of metaphysics operates.[104] At the same time, it tries to uncover how these rules of formation and their conceptual constellations break down. Disturbed and displaced by the very forces that underlie it, the conceptual constellations of the metaphysical machine are opened up by technics. The tracing of such displacements and disturbances is achieved by tracking the movements of the forces at play, by looking for the moments at which difference and multiplicity are engendered in a play of forces that cannot be contained by the machinic. These forces both motivate and displace the machinic formation of any constellation of concepts, including that of metaphysics and its conception of technique. Deconstruction thus resides in a subtle "displacement of meaning from the point of view of the system of forces that gave rise to it, that motivate it and work through it."[105] Such a displacement of meaning goes further than meaning itself; it arises from the play of forces that underlies meaning and gives it form. From thence these displacements proceed to fracture the

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[103] On the troubled relationship between force and form, see "Force and Signification" in Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago University Press: Chicago 1978); and "Form and Meaning" in Derrida, *Margins: of Philosophy* (Chicago University Press: Chicago 1978).

[104] In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault defines "rules of formation" as the "conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance) in a given discursive division." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Pantheon Books: New York 1972), 38. It is not my intention to confuse archaeology with deconstruction since, as Foucault points out, "it is clear how far one is from an analysis in terms of deconstruction (any confusion between these two methods would be unwise)." Foucault, *The Essential Works of Foucault. Volume 1, Ethics* (New Press: New York 2006), 110. Then again, as Gayatri Spivak has pointed out in response to Foucault's remark, "the terrain is, in another and related way, nearer." Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (Routledge: New York 1993), 42.

[105] Éric Alliez, "Ontology and Logography: The Pharmacy, Plato, and the Simulacrum." In Paul Patton & John Protevi (eds.), *Between Deleuze and Derrida* (Continuum: New York / London 2003), 86.

machinic formations of metaphysics or politics. Deconstructive displacements aim to break open the consolidated functions in which the machinic takes form.

Opening up machinic functions to engender multiplicity and difference is central to *Zwerm* both on a thematic and on a narrative level. On a thematic level, there is the zigzagging story of Angel, who, at the start of the novel, is fleeing the police. In a separate narrative, distinguishable by its different font type, Angel recounts his life in an attempt to find out how he ended up as the creature we encounter at the beginning of the novel. At times, Angel's narrative parallels the main narrative of the novel, but whereas Angel functions as a character-bound narrator, this parallel main narrative is told by an external narrator. Oftentimes the thematic contents of these two narratives start to enmesh. In this way the history of Angel's life takes form, but not in chronological order. The novel zigzags through Angel's life, telling of his life as a clubbing teenager; his recruitment with the army; his training for war; his experiences in war; his escape from the army; his life as pariah. Central to all these fragmentary cuts and takes from Angel's life is his awareness of having seen "things" and of having seen these things splintering into a myriad of little, ungraspable objects. In a certain sense, Angel's story begins at the moment he realizes that he is seeing "things" and sees them fall apart to become a multiplicity of ungraspable little splinters. This is neither an aesthetic affair nor a subjective one. Instead, I would suggest that at this point the novel engages with the ontological, criticizing the conceptual constellations that make up a metaphysical machine. The dispersal of "things" that Angel witnesses is contrasted with the tendency to divide everything into clearly assignable conceptual categories. In the case of the implosion of the Silvery-Colored Building Block the dispersal of "things" counters the political attempt at control. This machinic dispersal is the thematic and textual wager of *Zwerm*. For this reason *Zwerm* operates as a machine of dispersion. Like metaphysics or politics, literature can be seen as a machine that organizes and structures the play of forces to constitute a narrative. In the case of *Zwerm* this narrative is itself an organized form of dispersion, gesturing toward the multiplicity that I call technics.

4. Angel's Multiplicity

Angel's heightened awareness of the multiplicity of things begins as a child. As he sees his dog coming out of the water he comments: "When he shakes himself dry I see thousands, millions of *things*. As if I'm seeing the entire world reflected in those splashing drops."[106] As a grown-up Angel first tries to subdue this multiplicity, convinced that it is all in his mind. Gradually this multiplicity of shattering splinters becomes central to the novel itself, at which point it is clear that it is not merely happening in Angel's head. Instead, his heightened awareness of these "things" is what distinguishes him from the other characters, along with the fact that he is infected by a virus developed by the military. As these two facts seem to be central to the novel, Angel can be read as an allegorical character substituting for the novel itself. In the following passage, Angel evokes "things" in recounting his earliest experience of seeing them shatter. The inevitable shattering of the things seems to be related to his initial desire to divide everything into strict oppositional categories (absence/presence, safety/danger). In this passage we witness the transition from a subjective feeling of multiplicity to a more objective feeling grounded in "things" themselves:

> Impossible to sleep, and if you succeed in it, you wake up in a pool of sweat. In fact you have not even slept, you have brought yourself into a state of a simultaneously reduced and intensified form of consciousness: a reptile rhythm is imposed on the body while it continues to receive and code every sound, however small, to classify them in two categories: danger / no danger. The latter category becomes more and more rare after a while. In the corners of your eyes you continously see *things*, but it is the very light that breaks apart into mobile little parts, as though your retina is affected.
>
> *Onmogelijk om te slapen, en als je daar toch in slaagt, word je wakker in een zweetplas. In feite heb je niet eens geslapen, je hebt jezelf tegelijk in een verlaagde en een*

[106] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 650.

> *verhevigde vorm van bewustzijn gebracht: het lichaam wordt een reptielenritme opgelegd terwijl het elk geluid, hoe miniem ook, blijft opvangen en coderen, rangschikken in twee categorieën: gevaar / geen gevaar. De laatste categorie wordt na verloop van tijd steeds zeldzamer. In je ooghoeken zie je onophoudelijk* dingen, *maar het is het licht zelf dat in beweeglijke deeltjes uiteenbreekt, alsof je netvlies is aangetast.*[107]

Angel is just beginning his story. He still tends to subjectize the experience of multiplicity he is having. Here it is the light that breaks open into flexible particles. As the story unfolds Angel will come to experience the shattering of things more and more as an objective, ontological phenomenon. When, at the end of the novel, the implosion of the building is described as the swarming out of a "millions of birds, millions of wide open beaks,"[108] Angel's story has come to an end. The shattering myriads that disperse the "things" Angel sees guide every description he gives of his experiences as a soldier, hobo, and terrorist. At the end of the novel multiplicity has shifted from Angel's descriptions to the overall narrative of the novel itself. The dispersal of "things" that is staged in the novel arises from within these things themselves.

A deconstructive literature is not just about text or concept. The multiplicity and difference engendered in *Zwerm* are not contained by the merely textual. To the contrary, it engages with a political machine and a metaphysical machine. These machines will be at the center of inquiry in subsequent chapters of the present work. At this point, it will already be clear that a literary machine such as *Zwerm* has a potential for deconstructing these machines. This potential for deconstructing the machinic arises from the same forces that give rise to these machinic functions: the same forces that structure the rules of formation for a metaphysical or political machine can de-structure it. Such a de-structuring or displacement results from a play of forces that is proper to technics. Concepts of technology and technique are the result of the structural formations of these forces – *forces* forced into a *form* – and as such they

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[107] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 530.

[108] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, –1.

assist in keeping the machinic on track. Technics, on the other hand, is the totality of these forces and regulates the play of these forces. For this reason technics is the precondition for the machinic, whereas the machinic is the arranging and reordering of the free play of forces to consolidate them in operative interlacements. As the interplay of heterogeneous forces technics is neither form nor content. Preceding that distinction, it allows for this distinction to be made. The machinic does not hesitate to make these distinctions and to interlace different formations that technics can then displace once again. By focusing on technics, by scrutinizing its implications, potentials and limits, a reconceptualization of metaphysics and politics starts to take shape. This is possible precisely because in Derrida's work technics and politics lie in one and the same trope, as Paul Bowman explains:

> For Derrida, in one trope, the *political* moment or event arises when 'telecommunication' or regular relations and distributions and communications are derailed, jammed, and warped. This is basically (…) why deconstruction places such great emphasis on 'merely' reading – on working interminably and vigilantly at reading (…). Reading is never 'mere', if it is reading: it is the freeing from sedimented practices, presumptions, structures, institutions and establishments.[109]

By carefully analyzing the concepts and tropes by which a metaphysical or political machine is formed, deconstruction attempts to "untangle the hidden forces of attraction linking a present word with an absent word in the text."[110] These *forces* do not simply structure the *formation* of a machinic function; rather, by making possible the form of the machine, they also give

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[109] Paul Bowman, "'Confused, good for everything hate object': of deconstruction, cultural studies, and academic irresponsibility." Unpublished research paper (quoted with the permission of the author), online retrievable at http://freespace.virgin.net/jp.bowman/Bowmanderridalegacy/page_05.htm

[110] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 133.

it its drive. The teleological movement that gives direction to the metaphysical constellation of oppositional concepts originates here. At the same time, a machinic function will not be able to contain the forces from which it is constituted. While forming a machine, giving it its drive, these forces also overflow the machine, distorting its machinic functions and opening up the teleological overdetermination that comes with a machinic interlacement. The teleology in which technology is conceptualized as supplementary aid or technique ultimately relies on the forces that drive and set to work a text in the same way as they drive and set to work metaphysics or politics.[111] In this context, Heidegger has spoken of "the onto-theological nature of metaphysics"[112], recuperated by Derrida as the "onto-theological schemas or the philosophy of technique as such."[113] Expanding on Derrida's statements concerning eschatology and teleology, I would argue that while there is a "teleo-eschatological"[114] overdetermination at the heart of every metaphysical function, technics "in the last analysis refuses to be governed by a teleo-eschatological horizon."[115] I call metaphysics the attempt at forming these forces and to force them into a closed and fully operative system.

Since this metaphysical attempt at formatting emerges from the play of forces of technics, it will never attain presence and it will never be able to abolish technics in favor of an absolute and unmediated presence. The desire for presence is generated *within* the metaphysical machine. My use of Derrida's reading of metaphysics, though not separated from the

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[111] In *Dissemination* Derrida adds that "with respect to the weight of such a force, the so-called 'presence' of a quite relative verbal unit – the word – while not being a contingent accident worthy of attention, nevertheless does not constitute the ultimate criterion and the utmost pertinence." Derrida, *Dissemination*, 133.

[112] Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 2002), 55.

[113] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 70 (translation modified). For Derrida's recuperation of the term "onto-theological," see Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 70, 90, 98, 143.

[114] For the term "teleo-eschatological," see Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 64, 75.

[115] Derrida, *Positions* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1981), 71.

metaphysical machine, is aimed at clarifying the machinic and the way it tries to reduce the multiplicity of technics to machinic functions. Technology and technique are two exemplary machinic functions, since they are formed in the machine. Technics, on the other hand, is clearly distinguished from technique or technology in that technics is not instrumental. Technics does not adapt to the logic of the technical that I explained above, and which is crucial to machinic functioning. Instead, technics is presupposed as what will allow this logic to take form. It follows, then, that technics does not coincide with metaphysics or its machinic functions. Metaphysics is machinic because it takes the forces at play in technics and tries to enact a "neutralization (…) by the form."[116] The machinic functioning of metaphysics takes effect in this neutralization, in this formation. Technics is not an attempt at neutralizing or arresting heterogeneous forces. Instead it sets up an economy of forces that gives those forces free play. When these forces are formed into a machinic function technics re-establishes its economy of force by breaking up the machinic function. An analysis of technics will have to trace this *double move* in which forces are first allowed to be incorporated in a machine and then, when the machine is operational, break up the machine again.

The relation between technics and metaphysics is the relation between two different ways of dealing with the free play of heterogeneous forces that determine ontology. Metaphysics is an attempt to neutralize through the *form*, while technics is what gives space to the forces themselves. At certain points, the disruptive capacity of *force* in relation to form becomes manifest at the level of language. For language to be operational, for the signifying capacity of language to be assured, each signifier has to be neatly switched into a larger circuit of signifiers. The signifier is the instrumentalized ordering of language, where the instrumentalization is achieved by placing the signifier in a chain of signifiers.[117] According to Friedrich Kittler, contemporary literary criticism will have a bright future if it can succeed in analyzing the machinic, military-

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[116] Derrida, "Force and Signification", in *Writing and Difference* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London 1978), 5.

[117] See Louis Hjelmslev, *Language. An Introduction* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison 1970), 32.

strategic construction of language. This would mean taking issue from information sciences and discourse analysis:

> At least for the literary critic, it appears that [the] military-strategic field of information science has a big future before it. Specifically, it could proceed on a strictly technical plane according to methods similar to those with Foucault's discourse analysis proposed for utterances and texts. Rather than investigating the meaning of a sign-chain as interpretation or investigating the rules of a sign-chain as grammar, discourse analysis is quite simply concerned with sign-chains in as far as they exist and do not, on the contrary, not exist.[118]

Connecting the fate of literary criticism to information sciences Kittler proposes to focus on the "strictly technical" side of meaning and language. The technical conditions for meaning are laid down in the formation of a chain of signifiers. However, the fact that this is a technical condition already points to the fact that an instrumentalization of language is taking place. Kittler makes a valuable point in arguing that this technical side of language is more important than meaning, but he leaves unexplained how language lets itself be instrumentalized, or how it becomes technical.

What remains to be asked, therefore, is how a chain of signifiers, or a machinic ordering of language, or an instrumental account of language are possible as such. Meaning and the instrumental are on the same side here: meaning is created by technically ordering language into a chain of signifiers. Technics and the forces that underlie the formation of chains of signifiers are on the other side. Together these two explain the possibility of language to become what it usually is, that is to say meaningful and technical. The instrumentalizing process that constructs chains of signifiers to evoke meaning starts out from a play of forces. At the same time these forces displace signification and upset meaning. Language shows its true face at the moment signification is disrupted and the chain of signifiers becomes defunct. At that very moment "we have entered another regime,

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[118] Friedrich Kittler, *Literature / Media / Information Systems: Essays* (G+B Arts International Books: Amsterdam 1997), 165-166.

other zones infinitely muter and more imperceptible (…) over-spilling the limits of the signifying system."[119] Within the metaphysical machine, signification is the only thing that matters about language. What I would like to bring to attention are those singular moments in which language is torn away from its signification so that the forces underlying it can be seen at work.[120] Force is "the other of language without which language would not be what it is."[121] The importance of technics, as the other of language, for literature becomes clear in the following remark by Derrida in "Force and Signification":

> It is when that which is written is *deceased* [défunt] as a sign-signal that it is born as language; for then it says what is, thereby referring only to itself, a sign without signification, a game or pure functioning, since it ceased to be *utilized* as natural, biological, or technical information, or as the transition from one existent to another, from a signifier to a signified. And, paradoxically, inscription alone – although it is far from always doing so – has the power of poetry, in other words has the power to arouse speech from its slumber as sign.[122]

The task of tracking down the forces of technics that allow a metaphysical, political, or literary machine to take form might begin by looking for the moment of *inscription* in all of these machines. Neither material nor immaterial, neither present nor absent, the inscription Derrida is talking

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[119] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Continuüm: London / New York 2004), 128.

[120] For a beautiful meditation on the other of language, see Alphonso Lingis, "Language and Persecution" in Paul Patton and John Protevi (eds.) *Between Deleuze and Derrida* (Continuum: London / New York 2003), 196-182.

[121] Derrida, "Force and Signification", in *Writing and Difference*, 45. (Quoted in John Protevi, *Political Physics: Deleuze, Derrida and the Body Politics*, Athlone Press: London / New York 2001, 59.)

[122] Derrida, "Force and Signification", 12.

about cannot be recuperated by a machinic function that operates with a rigorous distinction between presence/absence, material/immaterial, etcetera. The inscription itself is the ground that opens up the possibility to differentiate between material and immaterial, present and absent. Because it precedes these distinctions in a certain sense it also jeopardizes them. Henceforth, it becomes possible to disturb and displace machinic functions. Literature is a play with language that is not restricted to the technical capacity for the production of meaning. On the contrary, literature like *Zwerm* is apt at exploring "the other of language," that which gives language its capacity to create chains of signifiers but also disrupts these chains. In literature the play of forces of technics is brought to the fore in a unique way. Krzysztof Ziarek has argued along similar lines that art has the capacity to show how technics is operative in everyday life:

> It is art that may allow us to see technicity for what it is: not simply the omnipresence of technological products or the growing impact of technologies on all aspects of modern being, down to the elemental level of genetic information, but the specific valency of relating, the power vector, so to speak, of relations, which become increasingly constitutive for how contemporary reality unfolds.[123]

Ziarek distinguishes between technicity and technological products. The force of art is that it shows how technicity is at work in everyday life, including, but not limited to, technological artifacts. I prefer to hold onto technics as a term so that a distinction can be made between technique or technicity as an instrumental effect of machinic function, and the free play of forces that technics sets to work. However, I concur with Ziarek's description of technics as essentially *relational*, as always interrelating heterogeneous forces. The force of a novel like *Zwerm* is that it tracks down those interrelations and shows how they generate a multiplicity that cannot be accounted for by technology or technique alone. *Zwerm* itself generates this multiplicity on a narrative level by acting as a machine of dispersion.

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[123] Krzysztof Ziarek, "Is All Technological? Global Power and Aesthetic Forces", *CR: The New Centennial Review*, volume 2, n° 3, 2002, 143.

5. A Double Move in Technics

Instead of analyzing specific technological products such as, for example, the microscope, the radio, or the computer, this study aims to develop a logic of the technical. This requires that we follow the becoming-machinic of the forces of technics to see how instrumental relations emerge. These are instrumental interlacements of forces from which a logic of the technical arises. In so far as this logic is machinic, it also constitutes a metaphysical machine. By arranging and interlacing the forces of technics in a structural way it introduces *technique*. This reduction is a first move that can be seen at work in the metaphysical. The second move, while operating from within the metaphysical machine, is a reemergence of technics that annuls the first move by a teleological overdetermination that characterizes the logic of technique. It reveals that the conceptual constellations of the metaphysical machine were always already dependent on the multiple force that they tried to subdue. This dependency can only be truly revealed by first allowing technologies to turn into techniques. Ultimately, the second move is based upon something that precedes the metaphysical machine - technics. It demonstrates how a certain economy of technics is presupposed in the oppositional and conceptual constellations of the metaphysical machine. This will show how technics is at the heart of metaphysics, both giving it shape and displacing it in one and the same movement. Technics is the inside *and* the outside of the metaphysical machine. In a way, the machine tries to push the forces of technics outside of its formal construction; it tries to neutralize these forces through the form. The form delineates an inside within which the machinic can have its way, while technics is neutralized.

An inside is demarcated and maintained by opposing it to an outside. For that reason the outside is always in an essential relation to the inside, since it is only in this relation that such a distinction is possible. In a sense, then, the inside is affected by the outside. It therefore loses its absoluteness: inside and outside begin to interlace. The paradoxical move in which the inside can only be maintained by contrasting it with an outside demonstrates how the inside presupposes the outside. For the inside to lay

claim to pure interiority it must rely upon an outside.[124] A relation of identity is always established with reference to the non-identical - never to the identical itself. While the relation of the identical to itself may be real, it will never be able to confirm its own identity. At best it will confirm a relation of identification, but it will not be able to establish identity *tout court*. To confirm identity an engagement with the non-identical is needed. The conceptual oppositions between inside and outside, identity and its other are therefore always interlacing. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel describes this interlacement by means of the internal limit that defines the relation between the identical and the non-identical, the self and the other:

> Something, as an immediate determinate being, is (…) the limit relatively to another something, but the limit is present in the something itself, which is a something through the mediation of the limit which is just as much the non-being of the something. Limit is the mediation through which something and other each as well *is*, as *is not*.[125]

As a limit marking the outside of something, the non-identical other takes on a constitutive role in the creation of the identity of the inside. The inside presupposes the outside within its own identity as inside. What takes place here is a mutual interlacement of inside and outside, theorized by Hegel as a *limit* that is both internal and external to something. Such a limit marks off the individuality of something by relating its inside to an outside from which it differs. At this point the interlacement of outside and inside could be recuperated to account for individuation. It would even be possible to construct a machinic individuation from the operative interlacement of outside and inside that Hegel expresses with the concept of the limit. In

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[124] In his essay "Plato's Pharmacy" Derrida writes: "The purity of the inside can (…) only be restored if the *charges are brought home* again against exteriority as a supplement, inessential yet harmful to the essence, a surplus that *ought* never to have come to be added to the untouched plentitude of the inside." Derrida, *Dissemination*, 131.

[125] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic* (Humanities Press: 1976), 127.

Gesture and Speech André Leroi-Gourhan already conceived how such a machinic account of individuation would proceed. It would have to shape itself first of all as "a real biology of technique [*technique*]."[126] Such a bio-technical account of individuation, Leroi-Gourhan argues, would consider

> the social body as (…) an organism [*un être*] independent of the zoological one – an organism animated by humans but so full of unforeseeable effects that its intimate structure is completely beyond the means of inquiry applied to individuals.[127]

Individuation of the social body would be as much a matter of technique as a matter of biology; or rather, social individuation would be technically producible. In this technical model of individuation the distinction between inside and outside, between self and other, and between identity and difference are constructively set to work *within* a machine. Not only are beings individuated within this machine, but so, too, are techniques – one might also say: not only are techniques individuated, but so , too, are beings. I explained above how a becoming-machinic gives rise to a teleo-techno-logic in which *technique* emerges. In this logic of technics, technique attains a concrete function. The emergence of technique is described by Stiegler as "giving concrete form to a technical object [*la concretisation de l'objet technique*]", that is to say "its *becoming-individual*, (…) *its organization as becoming-indivisible*." [128] In machinic individuation the limit would connect one technique with the other, thus at the same time adapting them to each other to create a machinic function.

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[126] André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech* (M.I.T. Press: Cambridge Ma 1993), 146. (Translation modified.) See also Gilbert Simondon, *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (Presses Universitaires de France: Paris 1964).

[127] Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 146.

[128] Bernard Stiegler, "Temps et individuation technique, psychique, et collective dans l'oeuvre de Simondon", *Futur Antérieur*, 5-6, January 1994, online retrievable at *Multitudes* http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Temps-et-individuation-technique.html. See also Stiegler, *Passer à l'acte* (Galilée: Paris 2003).

A question of a totally different matter is whether the machine that consolidates this mode of individuation effectively deals with the distinction between inside and outside *as* the distinction between the machinic and its other that gives rise to it. By reshaping the distinction between outside and inside within itself as a means of technical individuation, the machine performs a doubling of this distinction. By thus doubling the distinction between inside and outside it is possible to confirm the identity of the inside by relating it to an outside still inside the machine. In that case "the division between exterior and interior passes through the interior of the interior or the exterior of the exterior."[129] There is a universal tendency toward immanence in the machine, a desire to shape and determine everything from within the limits of the machinic.[130] This can only succeed to the point where machinic immanence is "essentially exposed to the intervention of forces that are apparently alien to its system."[131] These forces are what allow distinctions between inside and outside to be made. In relation to the machine, technics is "an outside more distant than every external world because it is an inside deeper than any internal world."[132] Technics is what makes it possible for differentiation to emerge, prior to any conceptual opposition. This brings us to another level of individuation and differentiation. Here we have an individuation in which difference and multiplicity are maintained *within* the individuated object. This is because technics functions as "the prior medium in which differentiation in general is produced."[133] At the level of technics, "laws and universals are but the evolutionary results of the stabilizations of relations, and individuals the hardened – but nevertheless provisional – nodes of these relations."[134] While a machinic individuation will try to universalize these provisional nodes, technics will open them up again. This is possible because the play of forces in technics constitutes the possibility of

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[129] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 43.

[130] This tendency is addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

[131] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 43.

[132] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (Verso: London / New York 1994), 59.

[133] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 130.

[134] Alberto Toscano, *Theatre of Production. Philosophy and Individuation between Kant and Deleuze* (Palgrave Macmillan: London 2006), 128.

difference prior to any ontological decision, prior to any philosophical thinking, prior to any teleology, and prior to any possibility for universalization. In this sense it is close to the plane of immanence which Deleuze and Guattari argue is the unthought that underlies every philosophy:

> Perhaps this is the supreme act of philosophy: not so much to think *the* plane as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane, and to think it in this way as the outside and inside of thought, as the non-external outside and the non-internal inside – that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought, which was once, as Christ was incarnated once, in order to show, that one time, the possibility of the impossible.[135]

Technics does not oppose the machinic. On the contrary, it allows for the machinic to emerge – whether political, metaphysical, or literary. At the same time it cannot be reduced to the machine. From time to time it opens up the 'possibility of the impossible'. When that happens technics intertwines heterogeneous elements to set to work an auto-productivity irreducible to the machinic.

While Peter Verhelst's earlier work has been described as "extremely visual and almost objectlike"[136], *Zwerm* is both a reflection and a dispersion of the object as *thing*. Not only does the novel deal with dispersion on a visual, aesthetic level – on megascreens and personal computers, which figure prominently in the story – it also grapples with the ontological implications of such a dispersion of things. More specifically, technics, as the other of language, is staged in *Zwerm* on a narrative and a

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[135] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (Verso: London / New York 1994), 59-60.

[136] Kurt van Bellegem, "Triple appropriation", in Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager (eds.), *Concepts on the Move* (Rodopi: Amsterdam / New York 2001), 45. This shift in writing style has not gone unnoticed. Many critical reviews of *Zwerm* target the change in style of Verhelst's prose. See, for example, Jeroen Theunissen, "Een stem zegt: 'we hebben zin'. Over *Zwerm* van Peter Verhelst," in *Yang*, volume 2, 2006.

linguistic level as a virus that roams language itself. As Verhelst remarks in an interview with the Belgian daily *De Standaard*, "reading *Zwerm* is like seeing the virus at work, but for once with language as its object and not the human body."[137] On a conceptual level *Zwerm* is about how the *thing* itself is a metaphysical assemblage that is continuously placed *and* displaced by a swarmlike virus inside and outside language - technics. The characters that figure in the novel, like Angel, each try to deal with this phenomenon in their own way.

Zwerm is a novel about how language as a signifying chain maintains a commitment to present objects in language as things with a unified, extra-linguistic existence. At the same time, *Zwerm* also testifies to a multiplicity of forces that would seem to be outside of language. Roving inside language these forces de-structure the image of the thing that language as a signifying chain gives us. But there is more. This multiplicity of forces operates like a virus. *Zwerm* shows how language has always already internalized this virus. The forces that structure language belong to a "pre-individual sphere within which is rooted the process of individuation."[138] In Peter Verhelst's novel these forces act like a virus, contaminating the inside of language and all narrative events. As a result the novel itself acts as a swarm with narratives continually dispersing, spreading out without any apparent unity between the narrative fragments. Throughout the novel this swarmlike composition is connected to the *machinic*. The swarmlike structure takes place from the backdrop of a machine, but also defies this machine in a similar way to technics. The following passage describes a machinic yet swarming event that captures this relation between machine and technics:

> On a thousand screens in town similar images appear, snapshots that, when put together, might form a film. But nobody is capable of overviewing the whole. You do not recognize the images themselves, nor the technique that was used. You only see that something is situated *in* the

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[137] "We zijn besmet en we muteren: Peter Verhelst over Zwerm", *De Standaard,* September 22 2005.

[138] Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Semiotext(e): New York 2004), 77.

screen and that it seems to breathe. Only after looking on for a long time you become aware that you are a witness to something that has to be so intimate that you cannot possibly avert your head. As if you were looking at an exposed heart, as if you were located *in* an exposed heart that contracts faster and faster, a mechanism that feeds itself and that drives itself to impossible speeds. One day a moment has to come, you think, when it has wasted itself, maybe even that is its goal. But it does not happen, the images become sheer speed. So fast that, paradoxically enough, the *thing* remains immobile.

The only way to get rid of it: pull the plug out of the socket.

But even then it continues in your eye, at night, when your eyelids are closed, by day, when you look around yourself, you always see that vibrating *thing.*

Op duizenden schermen in de stad verschijnen soortgelijke beelden, momentopnamen die, samengevoegd, misschien een film vormen. Maar niemand is in staat om het geheel te overzien. Je herkent niet de afbeelding zelf, noch de techniek die werd gebruikt. Je ziet alleen dat iets zich in het scherm bevindt en dat het lijkt te ademen. Pas na lang toekijken dringt het tot je door dat je getuige bent van iets wat zo intiem moet zijn dat je onmogelijk het hoofd kunt afwenden. Alsof je kijkt naar een blootgelegd hart, alsof je plaats neemt in *een blootgelegd hart dat steeds sneller samentrekt, een mechanisme dat zichzelf voedt en zichzelf tot onmogelijke snelheden opjaagt. Ooit moet er een moment komen, denk je, waarop het zichzelf verspild heeft, misschien is dat zelfs het doel. Maar het gebeurt niet, het beeld wordt louter snelheid. Zo snel dat het* ding *paradoxaal genoeg onbeweeglijk blijft.*

De enige manier om het weg te krijgen: trek de stekker uit het stopcontact.

> *Maar zelfs dan blijft het nog in je oog doorgaan, 's nachts, als je de oogleden sluit, overdag, als je om je heen kijkt, altijd zie je dat trillende* ding.[139]

In this passage all the key elements that figure in a myriad of different constellations throughout the novel are present: on megascreens throughout the city, on a personal computer, even on the inside of the eye after the plug has been pulled, something indefinable is shown. It is not simply an image that is transmitted; something actually appears to be *in* the screen itself. What it is exactly cannot accurately be described or named. An essential trait of this *thing* [*ding*], as it is called in the novel, is its machinic action, its rhythmic pulse rising and falling, steadily accelerating to an infinite speed. Endlessly accelerating its rhythmic, machinic motion the machine-thing seems to be at a standstill. This is why it looks like a static, unchangeable thing, whereas in fact it is spreading and swarming all over the city (on megascreens), in households throughout the world (on personal computers), and in peoples minds. The rhythmic pulses of the *thing* are described as mechanical; on the other hand, it does not function like any ordinary machine since it continues to operate even when unplugged. More important, it is unlike any classical machine in that it spreads like a swarm. Like the novel itself, it is a *machine of dispersion*.

Whether metaphysical, political, or literary, a machine is about calculation; it is about stabilizing the assemblages it creates by neutralizing and interlacing heterogeneous forces. As the machine arranges them into a teleo-techno-logical order they become operational. In this passage something is operational. But the operation does not go as planned. Something disturbs it from within. The image of a thing as a unified object present both to the mind and to the external world is a deep-seated metaphysical idea. Techno-teleo-logical assemblages such as computers and large screens can help to secure this metaphysical idea. All this is present in *Zwerm*. But as the passage above shows, the unity of the thing, roaming *inside* the machine, is completely dispersed. Dispersion can take place from within the machine. I would suggest that here we have technics reemerging from within the machine. As a result it can create a *retroactive loop*. A retroactive loop occurs when technics destabilizes consolidated

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[139] Verhelst, *Zwerm*, 475.

machinic functions from within a (political, metaphysical, or literary) machine, giving rise to a free play of forces and opening up new possible techno-teleo-logical constellations. Technics here follows the logic of a double move, faithfully tracing machinic functions in a first move to disperse them in a second move. For this reason it is retroactive: technics emerges both before and after the machine. Bernard Stiegler describes how such a retroactive loop can occur from within a given technological constellation of machine, using the example of Western society during the industrial revolution:

> A human society is always based on a technical system (…). A society puts this technical system to work, but at some point it no longer provides the expected results – for example because it has enabled a social transformation in relation to which it "disadjusts" itself. This disadjustment then induces a dynamic exogenous to the system, one that may in turn come up against a dynamic endogenous to the system itself. For example, the steam engine enables the production of better steel which enables the production of more effective machines and this constitutes a positive retroactive loop, which progresses until the machine reaches an optimal performance and then declines. And in the end this changes the technical system. The result of this dynamics is a process of technical evolution that regularly leads to a transformation of the very laws of the system and so produces a boomerang effect, such that the system itself then impacts upon society as excess, disadjustment, inadequation, etc.[140]

What Stiegler calls a system, I would prefer to call a machine. New technologies introduced into a machine are recuperated as part of a

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[140] Bernard Stiegler, "Technics of Decision: An Interview", *Angelaki*, vol. 8 / n° 2, 2004, 163. I will discuss the concept of disadjustment at greater length in Chapter 3, specifically in relation to the consitution of the modern state machine.

machinic function. Thus they become techniques in a larger constellation. The steam engine revolutionized both economy and national politics.[141] In much the same way contemporary political machine tele-technologies such as the telephone, radio, or television have opened new possibilities that may be appropriated for political purposes. The technological assemblage that is thereby created in a political machine thus defines the political. At times, however, by refusing to fit in the political machine, these technologies de-structure the political. At that point a retroactive loop is created. Such a retroactive loop is a creative moment *par excellence*. It is precisely for this reason that it is also a positive political moment, taking multiplicity into consideration and even generating it. Such a thought of multiplicity, situated on a political, technical, and ontological level, is what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call "multitude":

> The multitude (…) is not unified but remains plural and multiple. (…) The multitude is composed of a set of *singularities* – and by singularity here we mean a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different.[142]

Technics might be best described as generating a multiplicity that procures "a difference that remains different" without shunning the technological conditions that define the world. Those technological assemblages, which I call the machinic, are always already taking their course. They do not stop technics from generating multiplicity. On the contrary, they depend upon it. In the remaining part of this chapter I will look for the technical underpinnings of the possibility for difference. Drawing on Derrida's thinking of *différance* and the *pharmakon*, I will ask how technics works as a medium in which difference *as* difference and multiplicity can first emerge.

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[141] Karl Marx has arguably provided the most famous analysis of the political economic effects of the steam engine, in *Capital. Volume 1* (Penguin: London 1990), 288ff. & 499ff.

[142] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude*, 99.

6. *Différance* of Technics / Technics of *Différance*

Technics is more than a supplement contaminating the spoken word. It is at once more original and less static. It is a movement of contrasting and contracting forces by which difference is produced. As such, it is not only more original than the spoken word and its contamination, it also shows that there is no single origin. Instead of one single origin there is an *emergence* of several forces.[143] According to Derrida, "the *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production) of difference." Because it is the site where difference is produced it is "the *différance* of difference."[144] At this point, however, the production of difference is a matter of contrasting forces. Even more, the contrasting that happens in this play of forces is still undetermined, it is not yet a matter of oppositions. It is only later that "the process of discrimination will come to carve out" from this indetermination "the opposites and the differends" of conceptual difference.[145] An economy of *différance as* an economy of forces is at play here. The locus or site where this economy of forces takes place is not *one*. It is doubled, tripled, disseminated. The multiplicity of forces revolves around this dissemination. The economy of forces creates a site, locus, plane, or milieu that is multiple. "It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and overspills."[146] From within this economy difference can emerge. This all happens in the blink of an eye, or even quicker. It happens at such speed that it is not even instantaneous. The instant as a temporal unit becomes possible from the backdrop of the plane or site created by the economy of forces. The locus of this economy is therefore not simply spatial, it affects time as well. As soon as it emerges temporality becomes possible, immediately – without any delay an infinite

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[143] See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in D.F. Bouchard, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca 1977), 149-150: "Emergence is always produced through a particular stage of forces. (…) Emergence is thus the entry of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to center stage, each in its youthful strength."

[144] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 130.

[145] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 130.

[146] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 23.

delay reverberates. It is deferral in difference, in which time and temporality find their multiple origins. Because it is multiple, or rather because it creates multiplicity, this origin of time and temporality is not one. The emergence of a metaphysical machine is an attempt at arranging and ordering this multiplicity. It follows, then, that the machine takes its cue from technics, from the heterogeneous locus that technics creates.

In much the same way as technics, *pharmakon* inhabits Socrates' discourse and arguments from the beginning. It is not just (in) writing. Its effects and affectations are not simply "present" in the written word. In fact, remaining as close as possible to the written word could be a way to counter the dangerous *pharmakon*, Socrates suggests. It is "*pharmakon* against *pharmakon*,"[147] a frenetically literal reading of the law versus the ambiguous forces that place and displace the written word. This is why Socrates pays such heed to the laws when he is condemned to death. Only by obeying the law in the strictest possible way, and by declining Crito's generous proposal to help him escape from prison and set him up outside Athens, can Socrates hope to counter the dangerous *pharmakon* with the good *pharmakon* of the law and philosophy. But the price to be paid is life.

The strategy of opposing *pharmakon* to *pharmakon* immediately ends in defeat. Both are "a force *inscribed within the general alogical economy of the pharmakon*."[148] So even Socrates' rigorous adhering to the law is futile. *Pharmakon*, too, is part of an economy of forces that Derrida has called *différance*. The *eidos*, truth, law, and *epistémé* that, in Platonic philosophy, are fixed against the flux of becoming and excrescence of writing are also equally inscribed in the economy of *différance*. In the best of all possible scenarios they, like everything else, "refer back to a *same* that is not the identical, to the common element or medium of any possible dissociation."[149] This is precisely what Plato's doctrine of ideas cannot tolerate: heterogeneity introduced in the idea itself. In its attempt to undo *différance*, to still its differential forces in the ideas, Platonism begins to disintegrate.

Shimmering through in the *pharmakon* there is a *différance* that resides in the Platonic idea itself and divides the idea within itself. *Différance*

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147 Derrida, *Dissemination*, 127.

148 Derrida, *Dissemination*, 127.

149 Derrida, *Dissemination*, 130.

precedes the Platonic idea, as it precedes every idea. A letter in the word *différence* is displaced, erased and then replaced for another letter. An 'e' is replaced by an 'a', with no audible difference. Starting out from language and what it has to offer us, *différance* presents a "literal permutation" that signals an "inaudible displacement."[150] Exchanging an 'e' for an 'a' is so effective because it reveals, ironically enough, some sort of deficiency in phonetic writing. Already we can see a double move here similar to the one made by technics. First it follows the given system – in this case phonetic writing – and only then starts to deconstruct it. This inaudible difference, precisely because it is inaudible, puts into question the difference between the sensible and the intelligible. *Différance* is thus an attempt to conceive of an order that exceeds these oppositions which rule Western philosophy: "The order which resists this opposition, and resists it because it transports it, is announced in a movement of *différance* (with an *a*) between two differences or two letters."[151] This opens the possibility for the "strange place" (*espace étrange*) in which *différance* is situated. This place is outside of Being *and* outside of not-Being. *Différance* is the medium in which this distinction between Being and not-Being can first be made *at an ontological level*. It therefore precedes ontology; it is anterior to Being and makes Being possible. This paradoxical (a)position of *différance* defines the place of technics, the place from whence an interlacement of different heterogeneous elements can start to take place.

Insofar as it is the precondition for the distinction between Being and non-Being, *différance* is also what allows for things to *be* presented *as* things. *Différance* itself, however, can never be brought to presence and can never be formed into a thing. Derrida writes that "if *différance* ~~is~~ (and I also cross out the '~~is~~') what makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such. It is never offered to the present."[152] *Différance* is that which allows for beings to be present, and even allows Being to become present, without itself falling under the yoke of Being. Without itself being present, and without being at all, differance is what forms things. But here we need to be careful when using the concept of form. The formations of Being and being-present that *différance* enacts are

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[150] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 3.

[151] Derrida, *Margins*, 5.

[152] Derrida, *Margins*, 6.

themselves not formed by a form; they are not the result of simply molding into the grid of *différance*. The process of becoming present is a contingent activity enacted by a play of forces. *Différance*, then, is not a collection of transcendental a priories, nor a collection of categories in which being reveals itself (whether subjectively, according to Kant, or objectively, according to many philosophers before him). It is precisely *not* this well delineated grid of transcendental categories of which Being would be the highest and most general.[153] One way of individuating something, as I have explained above, is by giving it a limit that marks off this thing from another. However, such a limit requires that things are already present; before they can be clearly delineated, something of a material thing must first have come about. By giving it a limit something is reinforced that was already taking place. The limit therefore creates a difference – like a difference between self and other, between one thing and another thing – but it is not *différance* or technics. It is not the multiplicity that underlies everything:

> There is a crucial experience of difference and a corresponding experiment: every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation presupposes. It presupposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences; a properly differential and original space and time; all of which persist alongside the simplifications of limitation and opposition. A more profound real element must be defined in order for oppositions of forces or limitations of force to be drawn, one which is determined as an abstract and potential multiplicity.[154]

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[153] This was already countered by Heidegger in his destruction of western metaphysics. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (SUNY: New York 1996), 2.

[154] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (Continuum: London / New York 2004), 61.

What I am looking for in technics is a difference that is not yet oppositional, not yet limiting, but instead will be able to account for the "swarm" and "pluralism" that Deleuze mentions. Crucial to this difference is that it underlies subsequent oppositional distinctions but is not a part of them. To differentiate this kind of difference – the difference of differance, Deleuze's difference, or technics - from any system of oppositional categories, apriority conceptual schemata, or limits, the notions of *force* and *play* need to be taken into account.

Technics is a play of forces that determines a difference that is not a matter of conceptual opposition or of a difference in objects. Instead, the difference of technics that is present in the play of forces is a multiplicity that, unlike the metaphysical machine, does not yet have any teleological determination. It is technical because it is not original, defies every so-called natural order, and gives rise to technocultural machines of all kinds. But because it is free of any teleological overdetermination technics has a potential of multiplicity more free than any freedom. Hence the *free* play of forces. For Derrida the play of differance signals that it is a "strategy ultimately without finality [*stratégie finalement sans finalité*]."[155] This testifies to the *contingency* of what happens in *différance*. It might well not happen, but at the same time it cannot stop happening (for it cannot be captured in the realm of Being, nor can it disappear into the realm of non-Being). The notion of forces in *play* shows how technics engages with Being: preceding both Being and not-Being, it brings Being to presence without determining it or overpowering it. Forces are not a (dominating) power. This is why, for Derrida, *différance* "governs nothing [*ne commande rien*], reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority."[156]

I suggested earlier how forces drive and distort a metaphysical, political or literary machine without ever appearing as concepts within it. In the play of *différance* forces are never present, they escape any ontology of presence. But they push forth the problematic that underlies machinic functions. They drive a metaphysical machine and push it beyond its "break

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[155] Derrida, *Margins*, 7 ; Derrida, *Marges – de la philosophie*. (Minuit : Paris 1972), 7.

[156] Derrida, *Margins*, 22.

boundary" without ever acting as a classical causal motor in a machine.[157] A first and perhaps strongest impression of such a play of forces was given by Friedrich Nietzsche in his notebooks from summer 1885:

> This world: a monster of force, without beginning, without end, a fixed, iron quantity of force, which grows neither larger nor smaller, which doesn't exhaust but only transforms itself, as a whole unchanging in size, an economy without expenditure and losses, but equally without increase, without income, (…) a determinate force set into a determinate space, and not into a space that is anywhere 'empty' but as force everywhere, as a play of forces and force-waves simultaneously one and 'many', accumulating here while diminishing there, an ocean of forces storming and flooding within themselves, eternally changing, eternally rushing back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and flood of its forms, shooting out from the simplest into the most multifarious, from the stillest, coldest, most rigid into the most fiery, wild, self-contradictory, and then coming home from abundance to simplicity, from the play of contradictions back to the pleasure of harmony, (…).[158]

Nietzsche describes the forces that make up the world as an *economy*. One could say this is a truly differential economy: an economy that creates a multiplicity of differences without expenditure or loss, as opposed to the difference of a limit that inevitably creates a loss (a loss of the other when demarcating the self, a loss of the non-object at the moment that an object

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[157] On the concept of a break boundary in technological or machinic constellations, see Marshall McLuhan who argues that "in any medium or structure there is what Kenneth Boulding calls a 'break boundary at which the system suddenly changes into another or passes some point of no return in its dynamic processes'." McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Routledge: London / New York), 41-42.

[158] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2003), 38.

is demarcated). A distinction between self and other is not yet made within the multiplicity of difference/technics. For that reason Nietzsche defines the play of forces as simultaneously one and 'many'. This is not a contrast or ordinary distinction, it is an indication of how the play of forces precedes oppositions. "Force says difference. To think force is to think it by way of difference."[159] The rivalry between forces is not about oppositions but about different scales of intensity.[160] The same goes for the apparently "self-contradictory" fashion of the play of forces. It is self-contradictory because it has no unity within itself; the forces of technics are differentiated within themselves, they are never one, always many.

Drawing on Nietzsche, Derrida's *différance* can be read as a "field of forces", where it is precisely the "interweaving of the field [that] is named *différance*."[161] I want to hold on to this interweaving because it comes close to the heterogeneous interlacement set to work by technics. Technics cannot be entirely equated with Derridean *différance*, Deleuzian difference, or Nietzschean forces because of its technical underpinning. This technical underpinning suggests that technics is not just concerned with formulating the differential (pre)ontological basis for Being, but also with the possibility for a re-emerging multiplicity and difference inside an always already technical and machinic Being – whether it be metaphysical, political, or literary. All three thinkers share a similar endeavour to account for a multiple difference that cannot be reduced to determinate distinctions. John Protevi provides a productive interpretation of force when he argues that "it is always a marshalling of force against force, a differential shift of meaning by a shift of forces, the non-hylomorphic production of a forceful

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[159] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 1993), 160.

[160] It was Gilles Deleuze who, in his book on Nietzsche, first paid attention to degrees in intensity of forces. See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Columbia University Press: New York 1983). Deleuze's concept of intensity in relation to difference and multiplicity goes back as far as his book on the philosophy of Henri Bergson, in which he distinguishes between a "difference in kind" and a "difference in intensity". See Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (Zone Books: New York 1991), 21–2.

[161] John Protevi, *Political Physics. Deleuze, Derrida, and the Body Politic* (Athlone: London / New York 2001), 63.

body politic."[162] The fact that there is a body politic at play here also implies, I believe, that these forces are ordered and rearranged so that they can act as a political machine processing the body. To understand how such a thing is possible technicity must be placed at the heart of *différance*. Technics is the milieu from which both the free play of forces and the machinic body politic arises.

Taking up Leonard Lawlor's words technics could be described as "the place between form and formless as a chiasmic fold, the mi-lieu (the displaced field)."[163] What would such a milieu, as a sort of middle ground between form and formless be? As indicated in the beginning of this section, the locus, site, plane, or place in question must first of all be thought of as plural or multiple. Lawlor's chiasm implies an interlacement of heterogeneous elements. The form and the formless are plaited into each other because the distinction between them does not as yet exists in technics. Instead, there is a play of forces that is in itself multiple. The machine tries to neutralize this through the form. Technics exists as a milieu in the sense that it is not a beginning but a middle. It is a milieu in the sense that it does not only start *before* the machine, but starts *in* the machine as well.

One last aspect that deserves attention is the way multiplicity of difference avoids causal overdetermination. Derrida is quick to point out that *différance* is not subject to causality. The classical conception of causality involves a first, crucial step toward teleology. Technics will allow such teleological overdetermination to take place through the machinic, but it is not teleological itself. It is able to avoid teleology because it escapes causality. Derrida points out how, in the French language, the shift from *-ence* to *-ance* also displaces the opposition between active and passive in the words *différence*/*différance*. The ending *-ance* neutralizes the active connotation that is still present in the infinitive ending *-ence*.[164] In other words, what we end up with is an activity that is neither active nor passive, but rather passes through the opposition between active and passive. Thus, the way in which *différance* enacts being is by crossing out the opposition

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[162] Protevi, *Political Physics*, 65.

[163] Leonard Lawlor, *Thinking Through French Philosophy: The Being of the Question* (Indiana University Press: Indiana 2003), 140.

[164] Derrida, *Margins*, 9.

between active and passive. This is reinforced by the description of *différance* as a play of forces : the play and interweavement of forces stress the contingency of *différance*. They are not an original cause, they are an-original. *Différance* therefore becomes "an operation that is not an operation."[165] In a similar way *technics is a modus operandi that is neither direct cause nor direct event; it is not a beginning, but begins somewhere in the middle as it were, interlacing and de-interlacing machinic functions that were already there*. Technics is "a taking place" of the entire process of intertwining heterogeneous elements. At the moment that it takes place it develops a retroactive auto-productivity that opens up new possibilities.

7. The Turning of Technics / Heidegger's *Technè*

Technics pushes the classical conception of causality to breaking point. It thus opens up a rethinking of the debate on technological determinism.[166] On a conceptual level, technological determinism formulates a deadlock: it introduces an either/or relationship in which only one of the components can determine the other. The two components at stake in this discussion are, most commonly, human nature and artificial technology. Only one of these two can determine the other; or, in a more subtle version of this argument, one of the two will have greater impact on the other. Unsurprisingly, the argument regularly exhibits a certain disdain. On one side, arguments against technological determinism are often disparaging towards technology, which is depicted as never being able to match the complexity of the human mind. At the same time, these arguments display a fear of technology as something that will overpower and rule human nature.[167] On the other side, arguments for technology exhibit a disdain for human nature. In this argument technology determines human nature and culture.

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[165] Derrida, *Margins*, 9.

[166] For an overview of the debate on technological determinism, see Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith (eds.), *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism* (M.I.T. Press: Cambridge Ma 1994).

[167] As I argued above, Jacques Ellul is one of the best examples.

Both sides of the argument are problematic because they share two common presuppositions that I believe to be untenable. A first presupposition for technological determinism is that "human nature" or "human mind" exists in in an original state – that is to say, uncontaminated by technology. A second presupposition is that one entertains a notion of technology that is already on the level of the conceptual. I have argued that oppositional concepts only arise in a machine, whereas technics itself is a play of forces that is neither conceptual nor oppositional. As a concept, technology only exists within a machine. Likewise, the distinction between the human and the non-human technical artifact, or between nature and technique, can only be made from within a metaphysical machine that structures these oppositional concepts. Failing to realize this will inevitably lead to some kind of technological determinism. Read closely, even an eminent philosopher of technology like Lewis Mumford builds up a critique of the machine on the basis of this rudimentary – but ultimately untenable and unproductive – distinction between (human) nature and machine:

> All the arts and institutions of man derive their authority from the nature of human life as such. This applies as fully to technics as to painting. A particular economic or technical regime may deny this nature (…). At all events, the mere bulk of technology, its mere power and ubiquitousness, give no proof whatever of its relative human value or its place in the economy of an intelligent human society. The very fact that one encounters resistances, reversions, archaicisms at the moment of greatest technological achievement (…) makes one doubt both the effectiveness and the sufficiency of the whole scheme of life the machine has so far brought into existence.[168]

For Mumford, technological possibilities and achievements arise from "the nature of human life as such". Although life can be brought into existence by the machine, a human resistance to these same machines gives evidence

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[168] Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London 1934), 317.

of the ultimate anteriority of the human over the machinic. For the same reason, Mumford makes a distinction between art and technology. Art, he argues, "springs spontaneously (…) from the desire for individuation and self-expression."[169] For Mumford, the distinction between art and technics lies precisely in this spontaneous human desire: modern machines stand opposed to human nature and the desire for individual self-expression.

In certain respects, Martin Heidegger's philosophy of technology comes closest to refiguring the relation between technology and causality. His distinction between *poièsis* and *technè* is closely related to his critique of the reduction of causal complexity at work in Western philosophy. Heidegger's critique represents a powerful way of re-conceptualizing Being as an event that cannot be reduced to causality. As such, his work is an instructive attempt for freeing technics from its conceptual and causal strictures.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger argues that "from time immemorial, philosophy has associated truth with Being."[170] It is because of this "association" that a philosophical investigation into the nature of truth becomes pertinent to Heidegger's project of a fundamental ontology. While adhering to the principle that Being and truth somehow entertain a fundamental relation, Heidegger de-structures the metaphysical tenet that underlies this claim:

> If *truth* rightfully has a primordial connection with *Being*, the phenomenon of truth moves into the scope of the problematic of fundamental ontology. (…) Because Being actually 'goes together' with truth, the phenomenon of truth has already been one of the themes of our earlier analysis (…). Now we must explicitly delimit the phenomenon of truth giving precision to the problem of being and fixing the problems contained therein.[171]

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[169] Mumford, *Art and Technics* (Columbia University Press: New York 2000), 33.

[170] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 196.

[171] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 197.

I would like to take this quote as a starting point for unraveling Heidegger's lifelong engagement with rethinking of truth as Being. His meditations of truth and Being will bring him to conceive of truth as disclosure (*Entbergung*). For Heidegger, disclosure indicates that truth is something that both reveals (or discloses) and veils (or closes). In other words, along with that which is being shown by truth, there is something that is not shown but remains hidden. Truth has now become something that *takes place*; it is an *appropriation* (*Ereignet*). These are the parameters that define Being for Heidegger. By facilitating appropriation (*Ereignis*), the activity of disclosing is both close to and far removed from the play of forces in technics. Heidegger will conceive of *technè* as a way of bringing Being to presence.

How does the disclosure of Being take place? What guarantees that *Entbergung* and *Ereignis* take place? This is, ultimately, a question of causality, or at least of a causality that cannot be called by this name. Heidegger situates the birth of technique in a shift in the concept of causality. At the same time it also becomes a shift in the way Being discloses. Walter Brogan summarises it well when he says that "Heidegger attributes the birth of technology to a reductive transformation of the Aristotelian sense of nature, causality, and motion."[172] To understand technique, Heidegger writes in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology," we need to know what is the essence (*Wesen*) of technique.[173] If we focus merely on technical machinery, without taking into account its essence, we will not have begun to ask the question concerning technology. The essence of technique is not found in technical apparatuses or machines. Instead, this essence lies somehow "deeper", intimately related to the way in which Being is disclosed. For Heidegger, moving toward the essence of technique implies understanding it as a particular way of disclosing Being. In its essence, then, technique is an activity, one that is closely connected to Being as truth (*Entbergung*). Furthermore, technique or *technè* will come to represent a transformation in the way that

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[172] Walter A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (SUNY: New York 2005), 25.

[173] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*. Revised and expanded edition. Ed. D. F. Krell (Routledge: London 1993), 313.

Being is disclosed. Henceforth, technique will take on a critical role in the history of Being.
It is with this transformation in mind that Heidegger analyzes the four relations of causality established in classical philosophy. These four causal relations are explained through the example of the difference elements required to craft a sacrificial implement. Heidegger writes:

> For centuries philsophy has taught that there are four causes: (1) the *causa materialis*, the material, the matter out of which, for example, a silver chalice is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters; (3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the required chalice is determined as to its form and matter; (4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is finished, actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith. What technology is, when represented as a means, discloses itself when we trace instrumentality back to fourfould causality.[174]

There is a *material* cause, a *formal* cause, a causal *finality*, and finally a causal *efficiency*. Heidegger's claim is that, in more recent times, philosophy has tended to reduce these four causes to only one: that of the maker or the craftsman. As a result, it has become impossible for philosophy to understand Being as disclosure. After all, these four causes *together* bring something into presence. Consequently, they partake in the disclosure of Being. They even have an essential function in disclosing, since they make Being come to presence as a *thing* and as Being: they "let what is not yet present arive into presencing [*ins Anwesen ankommen*]."[175] Heidegger calls the activity of bringing into presence *Her-vor-bringen*, bringing-forth. Bringing-forth guarantees that something that until this moment was not present, is now brought to presence. Heidegger's endeavor to reflect on technique as something that is concerned with bringing-to-presence is certainly compelling, and he makes two important contributions. First, he

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[174] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", 313–14.
[175] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", 317.

thinks of technique as an *activity* and not as something static. Second, by intertwining the activity of technique (as bringing-to-presence) and the activity of Being, he takes into account the possibility that Being might be brought-to-presence by technique. In other words, Heidegger seems willing to consider the possibility that Being as disclosure might be dependent on technique's bringing-to-presence. The question that must be asked, then, is: where does Heidegger locates the transformation in bringing-to-presence that accounts for the role of technique in the history of Being?

The Greek word used from which Heidegger derives bringing-to-presence is *poièsis*. *Poièsis* is a specific manner of bringing-to-presence that is particularly associated with craftsmanship. As Heidegger's explanation on the four sources of causality makes clear however, a poetic bringing-into-presence requires more than just the craftsman. The craftsman is only one causal element in a more complex process. *Phusis* (Greek for nature) is another way of bringing-to-presence. While *phusis* as a natural process does not need any help to bring-to-presence, *poièsis* is precisely that which brings those things to presence which cannot bring themselves to presence. This is where the artisan, or craftsman, comes on the scene. The craftsman is only one of the causalities, but it is the one that triggers the bringing-to-presence of the sacrificial implements. In essence, technique is almost exactly the same way of bringing-to-presence that which does not bring itself to presence: like *poièsis* and *phusis*, it is a mode of disclosing Being:

> Technique [*Technik*] is therefore no mere means. Technique is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence [*Wesen*] of technique will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e. of truth. *Technè* belongs to bringing–forth, to *poièsis*; it is something poetic.[176]

The difference between bringing-to-presence as *technè*, or technique, and as *poièsis* lies in the fact that *technè* will quickly evolve into an extremely aggressive way of bringing-to-presence. *Technè* forms what Heidegger calls

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[176] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", 318. Translation modified.

the framework (*Gestell*) that forces everything into presence as much as possible. The name given by Heidegger to this way of bringing-to-presence is "challenging" (*Herausforderen*). The framework that brings-to-presence in such a violent way is no longer restricted to inanimate things that cannot bring themselves to presence. Because technique reigns in Being as the mode in which Being is disclosed, living things are equally ordered in the framework. Human beings are held in reserve and become part of the standing-reserve (*Bestandstucke*) that belong to the framework. It is from here that they can be disclosed, since Being discloses itself in technique. At the end of *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger argues that there are two possible ways to relate to technique. The first is to negate it and to act as if it did not exist, and posed no threat to the world. Those who argue that the value of technique lies in its utility take this position. The second is to turn oneself over to technique, hoping that a day will come when Being as *phusis* will once again pierce through the bringing-forth of technique:

> This other possibility: that the frenziedness of technique may entrench itself everywhere to such an extent that someday, throughout everything technical, the essence of technique may unfold essentially in the propriative event [*Ereignis*] of truth.[177]

Until that time comes, Being will be technical.

In a similar way as technics Heidegger's *technè* is driven by a desire to relate technological phenomena back to an activity that concerns Being itself. But Heidegger's bringing-to-presence still has a teleological underpinning that technics seeks to avoid. Above all, Heidegger's *technè* seems dependent upon a certain unity (of Being, of disclosure, and of truth) that would be diametrically opposed to the multiplicity technics is concerned with. Because it is so closely related to ontology, Heidegger's philosophy of technology is engaged in theorizing a space for Being to disclose itself. Heidegger's philosophy does not presuppose particular a priori coordinates of space and time. On the contrary, it is the appropriation of Being that gives place and time. The appropriation (*Ereignis*) of Being

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[177] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 340. (Translation modified.)

gives space and time, while *technè*, *phusis*, and *poièsis* assure that the disclosure is possible. Appropriation as such is a contraction, a gathering of time and space which makes possible a birth ground (*Heimat*). In one of his last letters to Bernard Welte, Heidegger seems to doubt whether *technè* still allows for such contraction of time and space: "It requires contemplation to say whether and how there can still be a birth ground (*Heimat*) in an era of technicalized uniform world civilization."[178] Heidegger fears that modern disclosure by *technè* destroys appropriation. Being therefore withdraws itself. However, within the lines of his philosophical project, Heidegger remains true to the conviction that Being is a disclosure that contracts time and space. As a form of disclosure, *technè* cannot essentially disturb this process: it can only aid or provoke disclosure of Being. Heidegger's *technè* thus remains tied to an ontology which it essentially cannot grasp. Throughout this chapter, I have tried to develop a different idea of technics, one that escapes an ontology that holds on to the unity of Being as a first premise.

Derrida's *différance* is an answer to some of Heidegger's ontological presuppositions, such as the unity of Being. For Heidegger, Being requires a presence or presencing that is achieved through disclosure. *Différence*, on the other hand, is not present. It precedes presence, whereas presence only becomes possible through this play of forces. On a spatial and temporal level *différance* must be understood as an original displacement of space and time. This is implied in the word *différance* itself: it refers to differing, which means both stalling and displacing. *Différance* is an "interval that might be called *spacing*, the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space (*temporization*)."[179] For Derrida, *différance* names the spatialization and temporalization that are required in order that Being can take place. As soon as *différance* has spatialized and temporalized Being, as a contraction of space and time, can eventuate. Derrida argues that *différance* is at the same time displacing and deferral. When *différance* spatializes it also immediately displaces the space it opens; when it temporalizes it also immediately differs time. As a result, full presence is impossible. From this perspective Heidegger's postulate that Being is an event presencing itself as

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[178] Martin Heidegger and Bernard Welte, *Briefe und Begegnungen* (Klett–Cotta Verlag: Stuttgart 2003), 49.

[179] Derrida, *Margins*, 13.

a contraction of time and space becomes problematic. Derrida's *différance* deconstructs Heidegger's concept of Being for two reasons. First, it shows that Being is not the most originary event. The spatialization and temporalization that take place in *différance* are presupposed by *any* event. *Différance* itself is an activity that cannot be pinned down. It undermines the very idea of an origin and of Being as an originary grounding. Second, Heidegger's claim that Being is a *contraction* of time and space is countered by the infinite deferral and displacement of *différance*. Being is displaced and differed; it does not take place as an event contracting time and place, but is always already disseminated and dispersed.

Yet disseminated, scattering time and space before they are even "born", *différance* remains untouchable. At no point in time or in space does *différance* give way to the technological constellations created in a metaphysical, political, or literary machine. Whereas *différance* touches, disturbs, and contaminates everything, taking things out of place and disjointing time, it is never touched or contaminated itself. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida sets *différance* to work on a political level. He argues that politics desires to take control over a delineated territory because of a deeper-seated desire for presence. The attempt to control territory is a political reformulation of a metaphysical desire for ontological presence. Consequently political control over territory is called *ontopology* by Derrida:

> By *ontopology* we mean an axiomatics linking indissociably the ontological value of present-being [*on*] to its *situation*, to the stable and presentable determination of a locality, the *topos* of territory, native soil, city, body in general.[180]

Political action here refers back to an ontological problematic, to a "process of differentiation [that] is no less arch-originary,"[181] and hence it has no real independency. Within Derrida's ontopological framework there is no political machine that is not already reliant upon the ontological deconstruction carried through by *différance*. It implies that political machines will try to build up, will try to use tele-technical instruments to

[180] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 82.

[181] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 82.

fulfil their politico-ontological desire for presence. But they will never succeed in this aim. Consequently, there are no *real* metaphysical, political, or literary machines in Derrida's differential philosophy. They are deconstructed before they have a chance to build up. I believe this is because Derrida developed *différance* in the context of a metaphysical and ontological discussion (with Heidegger and Nietzsche among others) and only later considered the political and technological stakes. *Technics, on the other hand, is an attempt to situate the technological and political possibilities in the heart of differential multiplicity*. In that way machines are constructed from multiplicity, and multiplicity can reemerge from within these machines. Technics is truly a *milieu*, a middle ground that does not determine politics or literature from a quasi-ontological level, but is capable of opening up political or literary machines from within – from the middle.

8. Conclusion

In his book on technesis, Mark Hansen has criticized the relation between *différance* and technology in Derrida's work for a tendency to reduce all technologies to techniques. A good example of such a reduction is the way that Derrida deals with cybernetics and its concept of program.[182] Hansen argues:

> Derrida seizes on the notion of the cybernetic program precisely because it allows him to restrict technology to [a] doubly derivative status and consequently to support the totalizing grasp of his ontology of *différance*. For Derrida, in the context of the history of the trace, technology functions as a mere machine – 'a technics in the service of language' – while *différance* is the genetic or quasi–vitalist principle that animates the technical machine.[183]

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[182] See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 84.

[183] Mark B. Hansen, *Embodying Technesis. Technology beyond Writing* (The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2000), 85.

Hansen reproaches poststructuralist theory, and Derrida in particular, for restricting technology to textual conventions. He argues that Derrida has succeeded in conceptualizing technology according to the model of textuality, but has not succeeded in conceptualizing technology in terms of its own qualities. As a result, poststructuralist philosophy in general has unwittingly tried to transpose the uniqueness of technology onto the generic model of a theoretical discourse based on textuality. It is this desire to discursivize technology and to push "concrete technologies in the service of a generative, deconstructive textual model" that Hansen calls *technesis*.[184] At the heart of technesis lies a deep-rooted resistance to technology and an unwillingness actually to embody technology.

Hansen makes a valuable point in warning against a confusion of text with technology. I agree with Hansen when he charges *différance* for operating as a quasi-vitalist principle that animates the machine. However, as I have argued above, differential philosophies like Derrida's are not primarily about textuality. Instead, they are concerned with a play of forces that both places and displaces the text and its linguistic conventions. What both Derrida and Deleuze attempt to think in the multiplicity of differences is the moment when the signifying chain is broken. It is at such moments that the play of forces remerges from within a textual, semiotic framework. I have tried to emphasize this aspect of *différance* - and de-emphasize others – by focussing on the concept of *technics*.

Technologies are not mere machines. Yet, as I have argued, technologies do not exist *outside* them. This claim draws upon a broad conception of machine, one that cannot be reduced to mechanical artifacts. On the most basic level, then, a machine is the idea that "technologies" and "techniques" always imply a schema of means and ends. In other words, technologies do not exist out in the open, outside of any functional framework. On the contrary, they are the result of a functionality that is forced upon them by a machine. In this respect, they are distinct from technics, which does not have any functionality or determinations but instead represents a genuinely creative multiplicity of possibilities. A machine starts out from this multiplicity. It reduces multiplicity and tries to interlace the heterogeneous elements into a functional constellation, or a

[184] Hansen, *Embodying Technesis*, 86.

machinic function. A metaphysical machine does so by arranging conceptual oppositions. A literary machine undertakes a similar action, but in a very special way. Peter Verhelst's *Zwerm* can be read as an attempt to disperse the machinic functioning of metaphysics. But this dispersion is not an attempt to escape the machinic as such. Instead, the novel itself becomes a machine. Except that this time, what we have is a machine of dispersion.

Insofar as it functions as a machine of dispersion, creating a swarm of narrative fragments, the novel is different from other machines, such as a metaphysical machine. A metaphysical machine does not *open up* interrelations, nor does it establish correlative possibilities for creation between heterogeneous elements according to the structure of a swarm; instead, it orders and mechanizes these heterogeneous forces in a structural and functional way. I analyzed the build-up of such a metaphysical machine. At the same time, I analyzed Peter Verhelst's novel *Zwerm*, contrasting it to different ways of machinic functioning: one tries to order heterogeneous forces into a subdued pattern of order and functional presence; the other tries to disrupt such ordered, machinic functions by acting as a destructive machine of dispersion that untangles the machinic functions of a metaphysical or political machine. *Zwerm* tracks down such machines as they operate in language, then goes on to show that something different is at work in language, including within the linguistic conceptualization of a metaphysical machine and within political machines. This something, this indefinable *thing*, always already shattering, spreads like a virus.

Most attempts to "start up the process of disabling the metaphysical machine"[185] remain attached to this machine. It might seem almost impossible, at times, to escape the metaphysical or political machine. The notion of technics demonstrates that there are forces from which metaphysics derives its machinic functioning, and which reappear within the metaphysical machine to disturb it and open it up all over again – even to counter it. Technics breaks open with an incredible, nondestructive, creative counterforce.

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[185] Avital Ronell, *The Test Drive* (University of Illinois Press: Urbana 2005), 211.

Chapter Two
Machinic Functions: Deconstruction and/of the Metaphysical Machine

1. Introduction

There is a real risk that, starting out from Derrida's work on metaphysics, the metaphysical *machine* will be understood as a metaphysical *text*. At times Derrida's work hazardously reduces the machine to text.[186] At different moments in his argument he refers to the metaphysical machine as the metaphysical text as if those words and their subsequent clusters of meaning could be used interchangeably. In the light of Derrida's intensive critique of semiotics and his attempt to establish a grammatology that overcomes the classical concept of text in order to open it up to the *grammē* and trace, this lapse is comprehensible. Nevertheless, it remains problematic for a conceptualization of technics and the machine. This ambiguity has led Mark B. Hansen to reproach Derrida for reducing the machine to text

186 This is also the theme of a fascinating study on deconstruction by François Laruelle, *Machines textuelles: Déconstruction et libido d'écriture* (Seuil: Paris 1976). Laruelle's interpretation of Derrida's 'metaphysical text' brings him to understand the text as a machine of reproduction. What becomes increasingly clear toward the end of his study is that Laruelle not only understands the text as a reproductive machine, he also understands machines from the vantage point of the text.

and thus understanding everything to function as a text, technology included:

> Derrida is compelled to localize the operation of technology exclusively within the domain of the text. Technology is thus restricted to the "machine", to the "programmatic", and, ultimately, the "grammatical" aspect of thinking (the *mechanisms* of language).[187]

Hansen mistakenly believes that the text is what defines and determines the potential of Derrida's work for developing a concept of technics. In the previous chapter, I argued that a more viable point of departure that opens up wider possibilities is *différance*. The interweaving of forces that is done by *différance* cannot be captured by any sort of immanent textualism. Instead, the interweaving play of forces constructs multiple poles of attraction to which the text itself is bound.[188] Derrida's work is not in line with a textualism understood as the 'mechanics of language' that determines technics.[189]

While an urgent task is to develop a concept of technics starting out from *différance* as I have done in the previous chapter, technics also needs to be distinguished from the machine. Although the two concepts rely upon each other and operate by grafting themselves onto each other, they are not the same. In Derrida's work the machine is most often used in relation to metaphysics. It does not designate something that Derrida deems positive.[190] Quite the contrary, it is the machine that Derrida wants

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[187] Mark B. Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*, 129.

[188] This is why Derrida can refute both attempts at literal, strictly textual readings and readings that try to abstract the meaning of a word from its form. See Derrida, *Dissemination*, 112.

[189] Another difficulty in Hansen's critique is that it does not clearly distinguish between technology, the machine, and the program. Derrida himself, however, does make a distinction between these concepts.

[190] Sometimes Derrida also speaks of machines when referring to teletechnologies. This is perhaps another signal that the concept of the machine, albeit important, remains underdeveloped in Derrida's work.

to deconstruct – the metaphysical machine. This chapter deploys an analysis that rigorously scrutinizes Derrida's reading of metaphysics with reference to the machine. This enables me to uncover what could be called the *machinic functioning* of metaphysics. The properties of this machinic functioning can be derived from Derrida's analysis of metaphysics. In particular, Derrida's reading of metaphysics as the construction of a teleo-eschatological history, and his distinction between the end of metaphysics and the closure of metaphysics, play an important role in this chapter. By abstracting these issues from their strictly metaphysical context, I show that they can serve as a starting point for conceptualizing the machine. At that moment it also becomes possible to digress from Derrida's analysis in order to investigate the concept of the machine as a conceptualization of the political.

At various moments this chapter zooms in on a discussion between Derrida and Heidegger while developing a thinking of the machine in the interstices of every paragraph and every turn of the tongue. I only deal with elements of this longstanding discussion; they are brought in as far as they are relevant for a conceptualization of the machine. But the elements that I select are presented in full to give a clear view of the matter at stake before derailing it. This is a painstaking activity that takes time, but that is necessary to explore the full potential of the deconstruction of metaphysics for conceptualizing the machine. In the first section, I explore how and how far the analysis of metaphysics has implication for Derrida's formulation of a deconstructive practice. Metaphysics captures thought in a *closure* from which it cannot free itself. At the same time, it strives toward its own *end*. This argument only becomes comprehensible when it is clear that metaphysics has a hold on our notions of time, history, and epoch. These metaphysical concepts, which hold us in their closure, are appropriated in a deconstructive reading (in a first move) only to subvert them later on again (in a second move). Tracing the moves that are made in a deconstructive reading of the 'tradition,' 'history,' or 'epoch' of metaphysics puts us right at the heart of the discussion on time that unfolds in Derrida's essay, "*Ousia et grammē*." At this point in the chapter, I look into the problem of time, not only as a metaphysical and a machinic problem, but also as a problem for deconstruction itself. *Différance* is what makes time possible, I argue, but it is the machine that actualizes time. So time only comes into existence at the moment that the machine is grafted onto *différance*. The concluding argu-

mentative step in this chapter contends that the grafting of the machine onto *différance* introduces time at the heart of the political functions of the machine. This brings into focus the implications of the teleo-eschatology that can be detected in the machine. It also refers back to the ontopological functioning and disrupting of the political by *différance* and technics that was analyzed in the first chapter. In returning to the problem of time (as a metaphysical one), I return to the metaphysical concepts of history and epoch with which I begin the argument, and so consequently the beginning returns in the end.

2. The Metaphysical Machine, Reading History

Derrida's reading of metaphysics – or, as I prefer to call it, the metaphysical machine - unfolds itself as a reading of a specific history. In so far as this history is presented as an organic unity, with the 'conceptual crisis of language' as its guiding thread, Derrida's project does indeed seem to hinge on the classical ways of writing history as a unity. This has vast implications for Derrida's reading of metaphysics: it would signal that Derrida himself remains captured in metaphysics in that he adopts the metaphysical presupposition that history can be read as a unity with a guiding principle. Studying metaphysics and the concepts employed therein, Derrida is caught up in the use of metaphysical concepts such as 'history,' 'unity,' 'epoch,' 'presence.' The fact that he adopts these terms in a first move does not mean that he remains caught up in metaphysics. His use of these concepts is strategic: he adopts them in a first move only to overturn their use and meaning in a second move. The same double move that I traced in the first chapter with regard to the concepts of technique, technology, and technics is at work in Derrida's reading of metaphysics as a history. It is the way in which Derrida uses these terms that allows him to (de)construct the metaphysical era and reveal its crucial traits.

In many respects Derrida's analysis of the metaphysical machine is preoccupied with history, with situating deconstruction in (metaphysical) history. In the preface to *Of Grammatology*, Derrida underlines his ambition to create a theoretical matrix that should subsequently provide some marks and points of contact for further historical inquiry into the history of writing *as* the history of metaphysics. Derrida's reading of the history of metaphys-

ics cannot be accounted for by any of the existing classical modes of reading. In order to bring out the essential traits of the history of metaphysics it is necessary to transgress the boundaries and restrictions laid out by these classical modes of reading and writing history. For this reason, Derrida claims that it was absolutely necessary that his reading

> should free itself, at least in its axis, from classical categories of history – not only from the categories of the history of ideas and the history of literature but also, and perhaps above all, from the categories of the history of philosophy.[191]

Immediately following this, Derrida argues that in writing the history of metaphysics he also had to respect the norms that are inherent to that tradition and which cannot simply be undone. The concept of the axis plays a critical role in explaining this paradox. Whilst Derrida claims that in its axis his reading of metaphysics has to move away from the classical concepts of writing history, it is now suggested that around this axis his reading needs to conform to some of the most impeding concepts and rules of metaphysics. Around this axis he has to 'respect them [*i.e.,* the classical categories of writing history].'[192] Derrida consciously moves back and forth between a new approach to writing history, on the one hand, and a classical approach to writing history, on the other. The question is how these two approaches are related. They are intricately interwoven, and whilst the new approach to writing history defines the axis of Derrida's reading, the classical approach lies around this axis. In other words: the new approach should form the matrix even if the classical form is still present.

This rather abstract issue becomes clearer by looking at some concepts that function as prerequisites to Derrida's writing of the history of metaphysics, concepts such as 'history,' 'epoch,' or 'era.' All these concepts are impregnated by metaphysics. This implies that even the idea of writing a history of metaphysics will remain captured within metaphysics. The metaphysical machine overdetermines the relation to the past in such a way that a unifying grid can be laid over it so as to conjure up a 'history.'

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[191] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, lxxxiv.

[192] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, lxxxxix.

This unifying grid is not at a stand-still, like a snapshot; it has its own teleology embedded in it. Therefore, in order to write a history of metaphysics, Derrida already needs to revert to a metaphysical concept, *i.e.*, 'history'. A similar problem poses itself with concepts such as epoch, age or era. Derrida's project in *Of Grammatology* is itself overdetermined by the metaphysical machine by the concepts it uses and displaces.

The solution Derrida provides once again highlights the double move that was introduced and analyzed in the first chapter. By reading metaphysics as a history two performative modes are installed in Derrida's reading that together add up to the double move of deconstruction. First, in reading and writing the history of metaphysics this reading and writing in turn start to belong to metaphysics. There is no way one can write a history of metaphysics without being part of it precisely because one is writing it *as* a history. Second, by writing the history of metaphysics from within (the margins) of metaphysics Derrida is actively displacing the metaphysical machine, using it against itself even as he himself remains caught inside it. According to Derrida, it is necessary to use these metaphysical terms as *structural figures* and as *historical totalities*:

> Although the word "age" or "epoch" can be given more than these determinations, I should mention that I have concerned myself with a *structural figure* as much as a *historical totality*. I have attempted to relate these two seemingly necessary approaches [...].[193]

Derrida uses a concept such as 'history' or 'epoch' in a figurative sense to discover a structure. He uses the concept of 'history' or 'epoch' to reveal the axiology of metaphysics as it has appeared in the tradition of Western philosophy. Taken as a figure, a concept such as 'history' enables Derrida to trace certain structural connections between metaphysical concepts. By thus tracing the connections from one concept to another a first idea of the metaphysical machine becomes apparent. The machine is what allows for these concepts to be connected, what sets these concepts to work and what gives them their teleology. This machine, as I argue throughout the chapter, is first and foremost characterized by its functioning. The machinic

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[193] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, lxxxix.

functioning drives the teleology that lies behind it. Derrida characterizes metaphysics as teleo-eschatological while at the same time stressing there is no concept that is metaphysical by itself. The teleology of metaphysics must therefore come from something other than these concepts. I propose that it is inaugurated through the machinic functioning of metaphysics. Moreover, machinic functioning is just as much at work in politics as it is in metaphysics. In fact, what Derrida reads as a history of metaphysics lets itself be read just as easily as a cryptic history of modernity's conceptualization of the political. This conceptualization is carried out through the machine and within the machine.

Using such concepts as 'history' and 'epoch' Derrida is aware of their metaphysical effect. These effects are the result of the machinic functioning that links them. Using them implies succumbing to the functions of the metaphysical machine. For example, the concept of history is also characterized as a historical *totality*, and this is also the (metaphysical) definition of the concept 'epoch.' The lever of Derrida's deconstruction will be to displace the relations between these concepts so that the machine that links them will fall apart. If such a deconstruction is successful, then the metaphysical machine in its totality would be nothing but 'an erratic graft, parody perhaps'; and thus 'it is not a totality [after all] […], perhaps in certain of its most slippery movements,' it only deceives us in appearing like a totality.[194]

Although Derrida aims for a deconstruction of the metaphysical machine, he also realizes that he cannot simply do away with metaphysics and everything it implies. At the philosophical level, from which Derrida is very much still speaking in *Of Grammatology*, the history of metaphysics is all there is. It provides the concepts and it provides the linkages between those concepts. Inventing new concepts without first deconstructing the older metaphysical ones would cause the old concepts to become caught up in the metaphysical machine again. In Derrida's work, the political efficacy of philosophy often depends on the successful deconstruction of concepts that political discourses depend upon. In *Rogues*, for example, Derrida deconstructs the concept of sovereignty in relation to the machine. Only when these concepts are deconstructed is a possibility for new concepts

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[194] Jacques Derrida. *Épérons. Les styles de Nietzsche* (Flammarion: Paris 1978), 115 (my translation).

opened. The relation of Derrida's political deconstruction to his deconstruction of the metaphysical machine will be investigated in more detail below. However, for Derrida, to deconstruct metaphysics means to do so from within its closure; if possible, by bordering on the outside as much as on the inside of metaphysics. The relation between inside and outside, and more generally speaking, of the hierarchies that are operational in the metaphysical machine, might however be effectively disturbed by deconstruction. In his political work Derrida has often made the case that politics too falls prey to the same desires as metaphysics. The argument Derrida offers concerning *ontopology* in *Specters of Marx* is motivated by his conviction that politics tries to establish an ontological presence, a present ground or territory that would be controlled by politics. The question remains whether Derrida is not just transposing the features of the metaphysical machine onto politics. This would not be wrong in itself; in fact, it may prove to be one of Derrida's more fascinating and creative political figure of thought. I suggest however that we take the concept of the machine with us in this transposition.

3. Destruction / Deconstruction, Wither the Metaphysical Machine (1)

In *Of Grammatology* deconstruction is played out as first and foremost a deconstruction of the history of metaphysics. Derrida's attention to concepts such as history or epoch already gave ample evidence of this. It might appear, then, as if Derrida uncritically inherits a task that Heidegger sets himself at the beginning of *Being and Time*: to destruct the metaphysical tradition by a reprise of its most basic concepts. Derrida's approach towards the history of metaphysics is indeed indebted to Heidegger's work on the same theme. Yet it would be wrong to think that Heidegger and Derrida aim for the same destruction, or that their respective positions towards metaphysics are the same. Derrida's deconstruction of the history of metaphysics harbors at least one crucial alteration of the Heideggerian theme, thus marking the difference between Derrida's deconstruction and Heidegger's destruction. Not coincidentally, this difference highlights an issue that is crucial to technics in relation to the machine (of metaphysics).

Heidegger believed it possible to leave the metaphysical era behind by properly destructing it. His philosophy can be interpreted as an un-

dertaking to free itself from the metaphysical tradition. This view is maintained by Richard Rorty among others. According to Rorty, 'Heidegger is still doing the same sort of thing which Plato tried to do when he created a supersensible world from which to look down on Athens.'[195] What Plato does to the world and the world of ideas, Heidegger does with regard to epochs and history, Rorty claims. Thus:

> the Heideggerian counterpart of Plato's world of appearance seen from above is the West seen from beyond metaphysics. Whereas Plato looks down, Heidegger looks back. But both are hoping to distance themselves from, cleanse themselves of, what they are looking at.[196]

Though Rorty's view is rather undifferentiated and would do well to take into account Heidegger's admonition in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* that one can never simply leave the epoch of metaphysics behind, the overall point Rorty is making allows for a valuable distinction between Derrida and Heidegger on the issue.[197] Derrida argues that Heidegger's philosophy can still be interpreted as belonging to the history of metaphysics precisely because Heidegger too easily thought he would be able to leave that metaphysical era by destructing it. The beginning of *Of Grammatology* reads as a reprise of Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics. The lever for deconstruction here is to deconstruct Heidegger's reading of metaphysics along with the history of metaphysics itself. In the course of this enterprise Derrida introduces the idea of the *closure* of metaphysics. He distinguishes this closure from Heidegger's *end* of metaphysics. As Eugenio Donato remarks:

> Derrida's *closure* of metaphysics is a reading and a displacement of the Heideggerian notion of *end*. The rewrit-

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[195] Richard Rorty. *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1991), 67.

[196] Richard Rorty. *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, 67.

[197] Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Neske Verlag: Pfullingen 1954), 72.

> ing of the *end* of metaphysics into its closure necessarily problematizes its concomitant notion of origin.[198]

This indicates that Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysics differs in some essential ways from Heidegger's destruction of the metaphysical tradition. Instead of stepping out the metaphysical machine Derrida remains within its closure. However, Derrida's deconstruction from within the closure reveals 'the yet unnamable glimmer beyond the closure [*la lueur de l'outre-clôture*].'[199] This is one of the points in which Derrida distinguishes himself from Heidegger. It is also a basic trait of deconstruction.

In the context of my argument on the machine the relation between closure and end plays an important role. Both closure and end are present in the machine. They ought to exclude each other but in reality they work alongside each other. Working alongside each other they are effectively working against each other, time and again displacing each other. The dynamics that result from this relation best describe what Derrida refers to as teleo-eschatology. Deconstruction begins with the knowledge that there is no escape from the metaphysical machine. The way in which the metaphysical machine *captures* will be explained in detail when analyzing the difference between a closure (which functions as a fence) and an end (toward which there is a teleological drive). Derrida's analysis of metaphysics is a major breakthrough in discovering the function of the machine, precisely because metaphysics has its own specific machinic functioning. In order to define the machine and clarify its relation to technics, Derrida's analysis will have to be taken elsewhere, and it will even have to be modified in certain respects.

Distancing himself from Heidegger, Derrida allowed himself to be caught up in the closure of metaphysics. This is one of the strengths of his analysis. He takes into account his own position as a both the subject and object of the metaphysical machine. But he also succeeds in glimpsing what remains outside the closure of metaphysics. This metaphysical ambiguity manifests itself even on the level of the concepts deconstruction deploys, displaces, and deconstructs. Derrida reflected upon 'the *theory* of [his] *task*

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[198] Eugenio Donato, "Ending/Closure: Derrida's Edging of Heidegger," *Yale French Studies*, n° 67, 1984, 12.

[199] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 14.

[*devoir*].' As a consequence, Jean-Luc Nancy remarks, 'Derrida was forced to exhibit the *reverse* of this self-legitimization [*auto-légitimation*] and self-obligation (this time due to a logical necessity, which would be the necessity of what he himself calls "deconstruction").'[200] I would suggest that the essential ambiguity that haunts Derrida's discursive and philosophical position needs to be transposed on to the concept of the machine. In Derrida's work the metaphysical machine is presented as a solid chain between concepts – some of which I have introduced already, history, era, epoch, presence, logocentrism. But this does not yet account for metaphysics' machinic functioning. *Machinic functioning is precisely what I want to retain from Derrida's analysis*. Far from being restricted to such an elusive thing as the history of metaphysics, the machine is operative in politics and literature as well. Perhaps even more so there than in metaphysics, even if Derrida articulated his own ideas through metaphysics. I will now go on to formulate my argument that the machine is what installs the teleology Derrida detects in metaphysics. It is only in this teleology that the chain of concepts that Derrida calls metaphysical becomes operative. Once this argument is established it becomes clear that a similar machinic functioning is at work in politics. In his work of the 1990s Derrida has increasingly focused on the political implications of his philosophy. In doing so, he relies on key concepts developed in his earlier work. This does not necessarily mean that Derrida analyzes politics as (directly or indirectly) inscribed in the metaphysical machine. That would risk leading back to Heidegger's infamous 1933 mistake: to believe that philosophy could lead politics. Derrida's deconstruction of Heidegger's attempt to destruct metaphysics could bear equally well on their respective relations to politics.[201]

Deconstruction in Derrida's early works is thoroughly characterized by its tentative struggle with the history of metaphysics. It is clear to Derrida that this struggle with metaphysics cannot be won by simply declaring the

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[200] Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Free Voice of Man" in Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, ed. S. Sparks (Routledge: London 1997), 36.

[201] It is because of this link back to the false pretence of the possibility to step outside metaphysics that the pretence that philsophy could lead politics is 'neither a mistake nor an error,' as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has argued in *La fiction du politique* (Christian Bourgois: Paris 1987), 34.

end of metaphysics, or by proposing to *destruct* the history of metaphysics. Metaphysics is an era that we cannot simply choose to leave behind. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida reproaches Heidegger for his attempt to destruct the metaphysical tradition and to construct a *fundamental ontology* that would subsequently ground all other regional ontologies. To grasp this connection, I want to take a look at a figure of Heidegger's thought to which Derrida is greatly indebted, but which he has criticized thoroughly: Heidegger's destruction (*Destruktion*) of the history of metaphysics. The difference between destruction and deconstruction preludes and underpins the difference between end and closure. In addition to being grounded in the interrelation of technics and *différance*, addressed in the previous chapter, Derrida's critique on Heideggerian destruction also forms the basis for the distinction between closure and end. Since this is central to my conceptualization of the machine it is important to take a closer look at this sequence in the discussion between Heidegger and Derrida.

According to Heidegger, the question of the meaning of being has fallen into oblivion. The entire history of metaphysics hitherto has failed to ask the question after the meaning of being, since it has failed to come up with a plausible concept of being as such. The notion of being employed throughout the history of metaphysics and which originates from the works of Plato and Aristotle, though 'correct', led to the forgetting of the question of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). Throughout the history of western metaphysics this primal forgetfulness of the question of being has remained unchanged. To pose the question of the meaning of being anew, the metaphysical tradition from Plato to Hegel needs to be destructed. By means of a self-assigned obligation Heidegger provides the following description of the task (*Aufgabe*) of a 'destruction of metaphysics':

> If the question of being is to achieve clarity regarding its own history, a loosening of the sclerotic tradition and a dissolving of the concealments produced by it is necessary. We understand this task as the destructuring of the traditional content of ancient ontology which is to be carried out along the *guidelines of the question of being.* This destructuring is based upon the original experiences

> in which the first and subsequently guiding determinations [*Bestimmungen*] of being were gained.[202]

Jean-Luc Nancy's admonition that Derrida is hostile towards the self-proclaimed task that philosophy sets itself is important here. The disposition of deconstruction is to distance itself from such Heideggerian auto-justification of philosophy. Derrida is indeed critical to Heidegger's self-imposed task of destructing metaphysics to regain an insight into the question of being. He attacks the presupposition that lies behind Heidegger's destruction of the metaphysical tradition. Heidegger argues that metaphysics has not sufficiently answered the question of being and has forgotten the concept of being as such. It has covered up the original conception of being. The task for a destruction of the metaphysical tradition, Heidegger argues, is to bring back to the surface again *Dasein*'s original understanding of being, to make it explicit again. In contrast, Derrida questions the possibility of uncovering such a primordial understanding of being. He rejects the primordial unity of being Heidegger presupposes to carry out his destruction of metaphysics.

Commenting on Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, Derrida argues that

> we must above all not attempt to restore or make explicit a less naïve "ontology," composed of profound ontological intuitions acceding to some originary truth, an entire fundamentality hidden under the appearance of an empiricist or metaphysical text."[203]

Such a hidden ground – a primordial understanding of being that for centuries has been covered up – is precisely what Heidegger presupposes. Undermining Heidegger's articulation of the hidden ground of metaphysics, Derrida demonstrates that Heidegger's clinging to a hidden ground is itself a metaphysical gesture. This gesture in its turn is motivated by the metaphysical

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[202] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (State University of New York Press: Albany 1996), 20.

[203] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 19.

> ”naiveté” of a breakthrough which cannot attempt a step outside of metaphysics, which cannot *criticize* metaphysics radically without still utilizing in a certain way, in a certain type or certain style of *text*, propositions that, read within the philosophical corpus [...], have always been and will always be “naivetés,” incoherent signs of an absolute appurtenance.[204]

In contrast to Heidegger, Derrida maintains that we cannot simply step away from metaphysics. Metaphysics is not a cape that covers our understanding of being, while all we need to do is throw off the cape. A deconstruction of metaphysics acknowledges that it is itself captured within metaphysics. Instead of aiming for a radical break it utilizes metaphysical concepts to formulate a critique of metaphysics.

Derrida goes on to show that Heidegger still falls prey to basic presuppositions of metaphysics. Proposing a different reading of metaphysics as a history essentially characterized by the absolute priority it ascribes to logos and truth, Derrida expands the domain of metaphysics to include Heidegger in its scope. This is important for it draws attention again to a tendency of the metaphysical machine that results from its machinic functioning, namely its tendency to incorporate everything. The metaphysical machine is present in every philosophy, even within Derrida's. Likewise its political equivalent cannot easily be escaped. If the desire to escape the political machine exists in the same way as it does for the metaphysical machine, then it will need to be articulated in the same way as Derrida articulates the latter: by finding a position of the margins of the machine.

Central to the metaphysical machine, as Derrida understands it, is not a forgetting of the question of the meaning of being, as Heidegger held, but logocentrism. In logocentrism the word - one of the meanings of 'logos' - 'is lived as the elementary and indecomposable unity of the signified and the voice, of the concept and a transparent substance of expression.'[205] Within this experience of the word as a transparent substance of expression, the word 'being' (which is yet another meaning of 'logos') occupies a

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[204] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 19.

[205] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 20.

special place. It is, Derrida remarks, recasting one of Heidegger's thoughts, 'an "originary word" ("*Urwort*"), a transcendental word assuring the possibility of being-word to all other words."[206] If this is one of the presuppositions of metaphysics, as Derrida contends, it is easy to demonstrate that the metaphysical heritage is still lingering in Heidegger's thought.

In the opening chapter of *Being and Time*, Heidegger avers that we always have some conception of what being means. This can be easily demonstrated by looking at the use of the word being in everyday conversation: 'Everyone understands, "The sky *is* blue," "I *am* happy," and similar statements.'[207] According to Heidegger, this is partly what has led the metaphysical tradition astray. Taking their cue from this implicit and vague understanding of being, philosophers from Plato to Hegel have concluded that being is the most self-evident and self-explanatory of concepts. But for Heidegger *Dasein* alone has an implicit and vague understanding of being. For this reason it is necessary to interrogate *Dasein*'s understanding to achieve a true knowledge of being. So although this vague understanding has led the metaphysical tradition astray, it at the same time warrants the possibility to pose the question of being as such. It indicates that *Dasein* already has a certain comprehension of being from which 'the explicit question of the meaning of being grows.'[208] Both the forgetfulness of metaphysics with regard to the question of being and Heidegger's exploration of this question hinge on a certain conception of being. It is 'indeed the *question* of being that Heidegger asks metaphysics,' Derrida assures, and 'with it the question of truth, of sense, of the logos.'[209] With this new criterion in hand Derrida can reproach Heidegger that '*the history* of (the only) *metaphysics*' does not simply reach 'from Plato to Hegel (even including Leibniz) but also, beyond these apparent limits, from the pre-Socratic to Heidegger.'[210] Whereas Heidegger claims that this vague pre-comprehension of being is fundamental to the possibility of any ontology, Derrida's reading undermines this claim. This brings him to develop an analysis and displacement of the metaphysical system from within metaphysics itself. This displace-

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[206] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 20.

[207] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 3.

[208] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 4.

[209] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 22.

[210] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 3.

ment, which is carried out from within metaphysics itself, only becomes comprehensible when we conceive of it as operating from within machinic functioning.

In a second move, perfectly intertwined with the previous one, Derrida develops a second critique of Heidegger's distinction between fundamental ontology and regional ontologies. Heidegger holds that the word 'being' must be present in every language in order for language to be able to function properly. He considers the word 'being' an *Urwort*, a word that is the 'logos *of* being, "Thought obeying the Voice of Being," [that] is the first and the last resource of the sign, of the difference between *signans* and *signatum*.'[211] Derrida deconstructs the originary word by confronting Heidegger with two possibilities, both fatal for the idea of being as *Urwort*. A first possibility is that linguistics as the science of language (including the sign and the word) remains enclosed in a classical modus of conceptualization in which the word is the non-decomposable basic unit of linguistics. In that case, linguistics remains a regional ontology subservient to a more fundamental ontology that would provide the ground for all regional ontologies. But the implication is that 'all that is profoundly meditated as the thought or the question of being [is] enclosed within an old linguistics of the word which one practices here unknowingly.'[212] Heidegger's project of a fundamental ontology can thus only be achieved through classical linguistics, which is a regional ontology. Both linguistics and ontology will have 'always had to share the presuppositions of metaphysics' for they would 'operate on the same ground [*sol*].'[213] Consequently, Heidegger's attempt at destructing metaphysics fails. The second possibility is that linguistics succeeds in escaping this metaphysical conceptuality with the word as its most basic unit. Linguistics will then have managed to deconstruct the word, which now no longer serves as an non-decomposable unit and ultimate basis for all possible linguistics. This possibility, too, has implications for Heidegger's fundamental ontology. If the word as a basic unit is deconstructed in contemporary linguistics, then

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[211] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 20.

[212] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 21.

[213] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 21.

> that which, within this linguistics, deconstructs the unity of the word in general can no longer, according to the model of the Heideggerian question, as it functions powerfully from the very opening of *Being and Time*, be circumscribed as ontic science or regional ontology.[214]

Again Heidegger's hierarchic divide between regional and fundamental ontology, introduced with the question of being as an original question inherent to *Dasein*, is undermined. Both possibilities suggested by Derrida deal with linguistics. To Derrida, it is the crisis in language (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) that justifies this move. Derrida's critique of Heidegger is similar to his critique of Sigmund Freud. Derrida's argument holds that both Freud and Heidegger want to figure out a way to destruct the history of metaphysics in their own way. However, such a destruction is impossible because

> all these destructive discourses [...] are trapped in a kind of circle. This circle is unique and it describes the form of the relation between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics: *there is no sense* in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics; we have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history [...].[215]

In *Of Grammatology* archi-writing undermines a Heideggerian destruction of metaphysics by inaugurating a deconstruction of destruction.[216] Now we

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[214] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 21.

[215] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago University Press: Chicago 1977), 280/412 (translation modified).

[216] Writing is of fundamental importance to the deconstruction of metaphysics since it takes a new stance towards the concepts of metaphysics. It uses these concepts, while at the same time, by using them, deconstructing metaphysics. As Spivak notes in the preface to her translation of *Of Grammatology*, the term 'writing' in Derrida's lexicon stands for "the gesture that both frees us from and guards us within, the

are back at the initial theme with which *Of Grammatology* opens - the crisis in language. Just as contemporary linguistics, by letting go of the word as smallest unit, overflows the borders of regional ontology and contaminates Heidegger's fundamental ontology, so language expands its domain to pervade contemporary discourse.

At this point in the argument I wish to return to the machine. The machine needs to be understood in the same way. The machine grafts itself on difference in order to still it. In doing so it elaborates a chain of concepts that bear witness of an inherent solidarity that is only guaranteed by the machine. But the machine also operates like deconstruction in that it has a double point of origin. It posits the metaphysical desire for presence but it also lays the foundations of deconstructive reading: the machine operates as closure. This closure is opposed to the Heideggerian end in the same way as Derrida's deconstruction is opposed to Heideggerian destruction. My main argument here, however, is that the machine *itself* installs the double point of insertion of both end and closure. It is the machine that creates the closure, even if at the same time it drives the metaphysical desire for presence that strives to go beyond the closure and therefore strives to go beyond itself – to end itself.

The implications of this concept of the machine are also political. What Derrida reads as a thoroughly metaphysical process can also and just as easily be read as a machinic process or machinic functioning. The effects of this machinic functioning and its creation of a chain of concepts operated by closure *and* end can be witnessed in the political. By taking into regard the relation between closure and end that is operational in the machine, machinic functioning can account for the double process of increasingly regressive nationalism and ever-emergent capitalist globalization that goes beyond the nation-state. It is not a matter of opposing nationality to trans-nationality, state to globalization.[217] Operating as a machine, the state

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metaphysical enclosure." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, xli.

[217] See Ulrich Beck, "The Truth of Others: A Cosmopolitan Approach," *Common Knowledge*, 10/3, Fall 2004, 430–449. In his conclusion, Beck argues that the term transnationality should indicate that there is no longer an opposition between the national and the global. On the contrary, he says, the term indicates the relative interdependency of the

produces the possibility of its own ending, its possibility to submerge into a global, transnational constellation. The ending of the state machine is produced within the closure of the state machine and the end itself remains captured in this closure. As Saskia Sassen argues, the 'increasingly complex grid of macro- and micro-internationalisms involved the major state and corporate actors of the time as well as less formalized actors.' This implies that

> the consolidation and extension of the national state and nationalism in the twentieth century took place in a far more dynamic international context than later state-centered narratives of the past make visible.[218]

Sassen's analysis distinguishes several phases in the process of globalization, based on economic and monetary differences as well on their involvement of the state. But in each case she stresses that globalization is an interaction between state and transnational factors. The more general point I am making is that rather than seeing the state and the global as opposites, the global as a mode of capitalism only became possible through the state machine.

Deleuze and Guattari formulated the dynamics of the state along the same lines when they introduced the concept of *threshold of consistency* to account for the interaction between various political assemblages. A threshold of consistency functions in a very similar way as the interlacement of end and closure in the machine. Every regime of power, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is a 'function of a threshold or degree beyond which what is anticipated takes on consistency or fails to, and what is conjured away

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national and the global: 'Transnationality replaces the national *either/or* with a nonnational *both/and*.' (442) The overall argument of Beck's article is contestible, as Bruno Latour argues in his reply, "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck," *Common Knowledge*, 10/3, Fall 2004, 450–462. But it at least gives an indication of the intenably stark contrast between globalization and nationalism.

[218] Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press: Princeton / Oxford 2006), 152.

ceases to be so and arrives.'[219] The point is that the threshold functions *within* a constitutive regime: the regime is measured by the way it progresses toward the threshold while warding it off at the last instance. Political assemblages stop at the 'penultimate, the next to the last.'[220] Once the threshold is crossed, the regime falls apart and new assemblages are formed. The threshold thus functions as a pole of attraction that defines the nature of exerted power in a regime, but at the same time it pulls this regime beyond itself. However, the implications of Derrida's analysis of the metaphysical machine are that, in the realm of metaphysics, the threshold can never be crossed. This implies that with regard to modern democratic nation-states the distinction between that 'which keeps within the limits of what is permitted by the police' and that what is 'permitted by logic' is no longer a clear distinction.[221] Instead, these two antagonistic alternatives, one of which is never without the other, are intricately related to each other in the same way as the end and the closure, or the inside and the outside, in Derrida's work on metaphysics. The implications are that machinic functioning makes for both the inside and the outside, and that it is precisely through this contradictory installment that the machine creates a dynamic. Machinic functioning is dependent upon this dynamic. In a later section of this chapter, it will become clear that this dynamics is understood by Derrida as a teleo-eschatology that is not only proper to the metaphysical machine, but also to the political machine.

This double process of two agonistic operations within the machine is also active in the aporia of democracy that Derrida has articulated and analyzed with increasing vigor from the mid 1980s. Derrida argues that democracy is driven by the desire to unite several contradictory aims within its own rule. Democracy is defined by its desire to treat every citizen as a unique and singular being, while at the same time it tries to give everyone an absolutely equal treatment in which no discrimination is possible. These two desires, both of which are essential to democracy, are irreconcilable.

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[219] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Continuum: London 2004), 477.

[220] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 483.

[221] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program", in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (ed. Lewis S. Feuer) (Doubleday Anchor: New York 1959), 128–129.

Therefore, democracy must forever be adjourned, postponed, it always remains to come. This is the aporetic structure of democracy. The importance of this structure for my argument here is that it explains the dynamic that lies behind democracy. With reference to the machine, the dynamic of democracy-to-come can be understood in line with the desire to control territory (such as in ontopology). But whereas Derrida argues that democracy always remains to come because the desire to reach its own fulfillment is caught up in an aporetic structure that is driven by *différance*, I opt for the introduction of the (state) machine onto the economy of *différance*. The machine, by grafting itself on to *différance*, aims at stilling it. Only when the machine is grafted upon the placing and displacing process of *différance* does the aporetic structure of democracy start to actualize. Confronted with an incalculable play of forces that is interwoven and interlaced by *différance*, the machine tries to overcome it. It is *différance* that has assured the aporetic structure of democracy, but the machine actualizes democracy in a way that *différance* never could. For *différance* itself makes nothing happen: it does not do anything in the strict sense of the word. For something to happen we need the machine, which sets to work a paradoxical teleology.

4. End / Closure, Wither the Metaphysical Machine (2)

Derrida argues that 'since these concepts [of metaphysics] are indispensable for unsettling the [metaphysical] heritage to which they belong, we should be even less prone to renounce them.'[222] Instead, these concepts should be utilized in such a way that they themselves start to deconstruct the metaphysical machine. With regard to the metaphysical machine Derrida speaks of a *clôture*, which literally translated means 'closure,' but also has the meaning of an 'enclosure' or 'fencing'. In her preface to the English translation of *De la grammatologie*, Gayatri Spivak gives a poignant description of the Derridean concept of closure:

> As he develops the notion of the joyful yet laborious strategy of rewriting the old language – a language, incidentally, we must know well – Derrida mentions the "clô-

[222] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 14.

> ture" of metaphysics. We must know that we are within the "clôture" of metaphysics, even as we attempt to undo it. It would be a historicist mistake to represent this "closure" of metaphysics as simply the temporal finishing-point of metaphysics. It is also the metaphysical desire to make the end coincide with the means, create an *en*closure, make the definition coincide with the defined, the "father" with the "son"; within the logic of identity to balance the equation, close to the circle. Our language reflects this desire. And so it is from within this language that we must attempt an "opening."[223]

The multiplicity of meanings in the original French word gives rise to a multiplicity of viable interpretations. Whereas Spivak interprets the closure as an enclosure, as an attempt at enclosure, John Protevi cautions that this would be a misreading. Protevi argues that the closure is 'not to be conceived on the model of a fence, an enclosure of a homogeneous interior by a heterogeneous exterior.'[224] Instead, he argues, the closure should be understood as a margin, or even as a trace or supplement. Protevi's suggestion conception of the closure as a margin is lucid since it immediately accounts for the quasi-outside-of-closure, the *outré-clotûre*, that Derrida says is connected to the closure without relying upon an uncontaminated outside. In this way, the closure accounts for the analytical point of view that Derrida adopts in reading metaphysics. This is why the closure functions as a margin - a margin of metaphysics.

Another possibility would be to assume that closure and end (of metaphysics) can exist alongside each other as two opposing yet intertwined tendencies. At the same time as imposing a fenced domain - an enclosure that allows no trespassing - or an immanence that has no outside, the concept of end accounts for the destructive tendencies that Derrida detects in metaphysics. The end wants the closure to turn into a total closure so that it can get beyond metaphysics. The task of a deconstruction of the metaphysical machine is to work with metaphysical concepts from

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[223] Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, xx.

[224] John Protevi, *Time and Exteriority. Aristotle, Heidegger, Derrida* (Bucknell University Press: Cranburry / London), 14.

within its closure. In so far as Derrida circumvents the possible closure of metaphysics from within, and with reference to metaphysical concepts, this closure itself remains metaphysical. This is precisely what Derrida is playing at. As Richard Beardsworth argues, 'the closure of metaphysics remains a metaphysical concept.'[225] At the same time, however, this poses a problem to Derrida's work if we want to transpose it to the domain of technics and politics. If the closure is metaphysical then the question is whether it is possible to conceptualize politics and technics outside of the metaphysical machine. In other words: is it possible that technics or politics have an impact on the metaphysical machine in a similar way as the metaphysical machine – through its concepts and its teleo-eschatology – will have on them? If the closure of metaphysics is absolute, then to think politics in its own terms as a machine that is not determined by metaphysics is difficult. This leads Beardsworth to conclude that, 'aware of the necessary failure of all thought and action, Derrida must end up incapable of *taking* political risks.'[226] As the previous chapter demonstrated, that which supersedes and deconstructs the closure of the metaphysical machine is *différance*. Once the alteration from *différance* to technics is accomplished, we can begin to consider the transposition from the metaphysical machine to the political machine. This machine will operate with its own closure and its own end. But how should we conceive of its closure and end?

In *The Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy works out his own particular logic of the closure. What is fascinating is that Nancy establishes a logic of closure to reflect on the possibility of community both from a metaphysical point of view and from a political point of view. The logic of closure that Nancy works out thus has implications for the way the relation between closure and end is constituted in the political machine:

> Its logic will always be the same inasmuch as it is without relation. A simple and redoubtable logic will always imply that within its very separation the absolutely separate encloses, if we can say this, more than what is simply separated. Which is to say that the separation itself must be

[225] Richard Beardsworth, *Derrida and the Political* (Routledge: London 1996), 59.

[226] Beardsworth, *Derrida and the Political*, 59.

> enclosed, that the closure must not only close around a territory (while still remaining exposed, at its outer edges, to another territory, with which it thereby communicates), but also, in order to complete the absoluteness of its separation, around the enclosure itself.[227]

In order to accomplish itself as enclosure, Nancy argues, the closure must also incorporate what lies around it and thus outside of it. In the case of the political machine, the territory that it needs to enclose will always need to be expanded; there is an ever-growing need for the machine to incorporate everything possible. In Nancy's work the closure is presented as an attempt to enclose in such a way that the closure will be complete. This could be understood as an attempt to establish a radical immanence through closure. At the same time, Nancy avers, by incorporating the outside to establish a successful enclosure the closure communicates with the territories that edge it. Thus it is impossible to say that the enclosure establishes immanence, since it always communicates with a neighboring outside. What I want to retain from this discussion, and what to my mind is the most valuable aspect of Nancy's remark, is the idea that the closure can strive to become an enclosure and still remain a margin that has neighboring territories. In the political machine the drive towards an enclosure that encompasses everything in its scope is compatible with an attempt to reach an end that would fulfill the political machine's ambition, and thus dissolve it. This dual ambition of immanent closure and transcendent end will be addressed later in this chapter as one of the essential features of the political machine in its modern guise.

'Within the closure,' Derrida writes,

> by an oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back within what is being deconstructed, it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse – to mark the conditions, the medium, and the limits of their effectiveness and to des-

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[227] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (The University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 1990), 4.

> ignate rigorously their intimate relationship to the machine whose deconstruction they permit [...].[228]

It seems, then, that Derrida distinguishes some critical concepts from the machine to which they belong. This would make sense, for it is Derrida's conviction that there is no such thing as a metaphysical concept. Concepts only become metaphysical by their arrangement and by the connections that are established from between the different concepts. The machine that Derrida is referring to orders the concepts in such a way that something like metaphysics comes about. This would imply, as I believe to be the case, that the machine is crucial to metaphysics. In fact, the machine is more important to metaphysics than its concepts as such. After all, it is the machine that organizes concepts in such a way that they begin to take on their metaphysical qualities. Given that concepts in themselves are never metaphysical, the metaphysical properties of the concepts Derrida has been studying must be located somewhere other than in these concepts themselves. *It is my contention that what Derrida calls the metaphysical is in fact better described as the machinic.*

What becomes clear now, is that it is precisely because the concepts of the metaphysical tradition are not metaphysical in themselves that they can be used to deconstruct this tradition. In other words, by reordering and displacing these concepts at the same time as rearticulating the metaphysical tradition, it becomes possible to deconstruct the metaphysical tradition. It seems that this is precisely what Derrida's deconstruction aims at doing. A passage that programmatically declares this ambition of deconstruction, with regard to the metaphysical machine, is found in *Margins of Philosophy*. Near the end of "Signature, Event, Context," Derrida writes that deconstruction is concerned with a general displacement of concepts. In doing so, its ultimate aim is to displace the very idea of philosophy itself:

> Despite the general displacement of the classical, "philosophical," Western, etc., concept of writing, it appears necessary, provisionally and strategically, to conserve the *old name*. This implies an entire logic of *paleonymy* which I do not wish to elaborate here. Very schematically: an

[228] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 14.

> opposition of metaphysical concepts (for example, speech/writing, presence/absence, etc.) is never the face-to-face of two terms, but a hierarchy and an order of subordination. Deconstruction cannot limit itself or precede immediately to a neutralization: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a field of nondiscursive forces. […] There is no metaphysical concept in and of itself. There is a work – metaphysical or not – on conceptual systems. Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated.[229]

A paleonymy, a genealogical investigation into the use and meaning of concepts, is what Derrida proposes. The detection of opposites plays an important role in this investigation. To disturb the balance attained in metaphysics through the construction of conceptual oppositions and hierarchies, deconstruction needs to start by investigating the arrangement of the concepts. Only from this point will a general displacement be possible. 'There is no such thing as a "metaphysical concept."'[230] Instead, the metaphysical is a 'certain determination or direction taken by a sequence or "chain."'[231] This chain needs to be investigated by researching the concepts it aligns and connects. It is precisely the machinic functioning of metaphysics that gives these concepts their direction. When Derrida claims that deconstruction aims at revealing *the non-discursive force field* that in some way underpins metaphysics, this needs to be understood from the vantage point of the machine. The non-discursive force field, the system, and the *machine*: all these notions are essential to metaphysics, and are perhaps the

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[229] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 329.

[230] Derrida, *Dissemination* (Continuum: London 2004), 6.

[231] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 6.

only essential things. It is this force field that not only structures all concepts in such a way that metaphysics comes about; the force field is also what cranks up the history of metaphysics. The machine sets the teleo-eschatology of metaphysics to work.

5. Speeding Time in the Machine

Hierarchical distinctions are drawn between

> nature and institution; play of difference between symbol, sign, image, etc., a naïve concept of representation; an uncritical opposition between […] an objectivist concept of the body proper [*corps propre*] and of the diversity of sensory functions […]; opposition between analysis and synthesis, abstract and concrete […].[232]

These discursive oppositions ultimately rely on the non-discursive force field from which the machine takes its cue. In the previous chapter, Derrida's conception of force field was defined as *différance*, and it was argued that *différance* has to be rethought as technics. The machine grafts itself onto this force field and establishes a continuity between the different hierarchical oppositions that Derrida determines as metaphysical, but which are also at work in politics. The justification for speaking of a machine in this case is given by the fact that a system of circulation is constructed that allows one to go from one concept to the other in a continuous movement. In the machine concepts 'form a system: we circulate from one to the other within the same structure.'[233] This system is best described as a machine because by grafting itself onto a force field in which concepts are played out against and alongside each other, this system functions by itself without any aid from the outside. This is the most important feature of a machine as it is commonly understood.

A significant aspect of my reading of Derrida is that machinic functioning installs teleology into this force field. The force field upon which the

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[232] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 82.

[233] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 83.

machine grafts itself is that of *différance* as an intertwining of different forces. When there is talk about stilling *différance*, it is not the case that the machine actually halts *différance* or dissolves it. But the machine differs essentially from *différance* in that the machine aims at dismantling what is incalculable in the play of *différance* in order to implant a calculable teleology. For Derrida, this attempt to install a successful teleology that stills the play of *différance* is impossible. This is where Derrida's theory of the aporia becomes relevant. Derrida argues that the teleology that the machine wants to establish and the ontological (self-)presence for which it strives are both structural impossibilities: the desire for presence is both inscribed and made impossible by *différance*.

In what follows I work through the proposition that the combination of the non-linguistic force field of *différance* /technics and the machine engenders a linear time concept. This is where concrete technologies return to my argument. With regard to time the machine sets to work acceleration: it speeds up a conceptual linear time - by speeding toward an 'end'. Recent tele-technologies have made possible such an acceleration in the transmission of sound and vision that we may now speak of real-time transmission. Such real-time transmission is precisely what is desirable in the machine. The functioning of the metaphysical machine is such that it inaugurates 'a movement which attempts through an infinite acceleration to win time, to win over time, to deny it.'[234] The machine is aided by technologies, but only in so far as these technologies can be reduced to techniques in the service of the machine. When these technologies impose their own laws, as they often do, machinic functioning is transformed from within.

A starting point for an inquiry on time in *différance*/technics and the machine can be Derrida's notion temporalization, which he introduced in his essay, "*Différance*." *Différance* is a process of spacing and temporalization. In defining *différance*, Derrida writes:

> *Différer* in this sense is to temporize, to take recourse, consciously or unconsciously, in the temporal and temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of "desire" or "will," and equally

[234] Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man* (Columbia University Press: New York 1986), 62.

> effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect.[235]

Différance is constitutive for the possibility of time, without affecting or setting to work time as such. Temporization opens up the possibility of time. Yet, in this temporization in which it first emerges, time is always already left jolted, disturbed.

Derrida argues that metaphysics constantly tries to deny this concept of time as a displacement; and yet, at the same time, metaphysics has the greatest interest in time. The concept of temporization implies stalling, putting of, and thus absence or non-presence. The metaphysical machine, however, strives for full presence: only then will it have accomplished its goal, or its end. Thus, in one and the same movement, metaphysics tries to deny the concept of time as always differed/deferred, which follows from the notion of *différance*, by stopping its deferral; and it will try to overcome it by accelerating to such an extent that several points of deferral flow into one another and transform into presence. In order to overcome the stalling inherent in time, metaphysics creates a linear concept of time in which infinite acceleration (as a reaction against stalling) becomes possible. Derrida uses basic concepts of Heidegger's work on time to explain these processes of linearization and acceleration in metaphysics.

Derrida argues that metaphysical time is linear time. Hand in hand with the development of metaphysics, a process of linearization, a linearization of thought and time, takes place. Derrida contends that '[a] war was declared, and a suppression of all that resisted linearization was installed.'[236] In the epoch of metaphysics, 'the traditional concept of time, an entire organization of the world and of language, was bound up with it [linearity].'[237] The construction of linear time and the construction of metaphysical history are intricately related. Both are affected by the machine that drives metaphysics. This linearization of time has its implications also for history: 'one may just as well consider […] linear thought as a reduction of history.'[238] Far from being a reduction of history, metaphysics produces history; but it pro-

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[235] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 8.

[236] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 85.

[237] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 85.

[238] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 85.

duces history in a linear time frame. History belongs to metaphysics and can be seen as the direct effect of a linear concept of time. Explaining his view on history Derrida returns to the metaphysical desire for presence. For the era preceding metaphysics and linear time, 'another word ought perhaps to be used.' After all, Derrida continues:

> the word history has no doubt always been associated with a linear scheme of the unfolding of presence, where the line relates the final presence to the originary presence according to the straight line of the circle.[239]

This fragment from *Of Grammatology* strikes at the core of the production of a teleo-eschatological drive in the machinic functioning of metaphysics. The desire for presence, powered by the metaphysical machine, goes hand in hand with the inauguration of linear thinking and linear time. Derrida is working toward the notion of 'vulgar time' developed by Heidegger to characterize metaphysics. According to Heidegger, great metaphysicians like Aristotle and Hegel maintained a notion of time that can be called 'vulgar.' They reach a concept of time that can only be captured within an aporia: pressed to the extreme, Aristotle defines time, on the one hand, as that which has already been and what is yet to come (and thus as something that is never actually present), and on the other hand as the 'now'. In his attempt at refuting this aporetic definition of time, Heidegger remarks:

> And thus time shows itself for the vulgar understanding as a succession of constantly "objective present" nows that pass away and arrive at the same time. Time is understood as a sequence, as the "flux" of nows, as the "course of time."[240]

According to Heidegger, it is the task of a fundamental ontology - as developed in *Sein und Zeit* - to destruct such a concept of time. This concept of time depends upon an immediate and unquestioned presence, or what Heidegger prefers to call 'being-at-hand.' In this way, it acts as a cover-up of

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[239] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 85.

[240] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 386.

a more fundamental concept of time as 'taking care.' This would be a concept of time that, for Heidegger, steps out of the metaphysical tradition.

In his essay, "*Ousia* and *grammē*," Derrida casts doubt on the possibility of ever going beyond the vulgar, or metaphysical concept of time.[241] His critique should be framed in the context of the discussion of destruction and deconstruction, end and closure, analyzed earlier in this chapter. Here, too, Derrida disbelieves in the possibility to make a clean break with metaphysics. Such a clean break would be all the more difficult when it comes to the question of time, Derrida argues, since time is the metaphysical concept par excellence. In contrast to Heidegger, Derrida maintains that there can be no non-metaphysical concept of time.

What Derrida does agree with is that metaphysical time can be characterized as vulgar time. But to him the origin of vulgar time lies in a metaphysical longing for presence. Since metaphysics measures beings according to the standard of presence, it is forced to qualify time as a non-being. When measured to the standard of presence, and following Aristotle's definition, time is something that *has been* and *is yet to come* – that is, a succession – but not something that *is* here, present before us. Returning to Heidegger's proposed alternative, Derrida concludes that

> if it appears that one demonstrate that time is no-thing (nonbeing), it is because one already has determined the origin and essence of no-thing as time, as nonpresent under the heading of the "not yet" or the "already no longer."[242]

From this point of view, Heidegger's destruction of metaphysical time is still in line with metaphysical time itself. Heidegger's fundamental ontology does not succeed in getting away from the desire for presence that determines both the vulgar concept of time and time as 'taking care.' Derrida concludes that perhaps there is no such thing as 'a vulgar concept of time':

> Perhaps there is no "vulgar concept of time." The concept of time, in all its aspects, belongs to metaphysics, and it

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[241] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 29–68.

[242] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 50.

> names the domination of presence. Therefore we can only conclude that the entire system of metaphysical concepts, throughout its history, develops the so-called "vulgarity" of the concept of time (which Heidegger, doubtless, would not contest), but also that an *other* concept of time cannot be opposed to it, since time in general belongs to metaphysical conceptuality. In attempting to produce this *other* concept, one rapidly would come to see that it is constructed out of other metaphysical or ontotheological predicates.[243]

In the metaphysical machine, the concept of time has as its sole objective the definition, capture, and arrest of the differential displacement of temporization, in order to turn it into presence. Derrida's argument is that it would be impossible to find a concept of time in the history of the West that is not devised to capture presence. Derrida inscribes time within a 'metaphysical conceptuality.' He also argued, as I have shown above, that concepts are never metaphysical in essence. Metaphysics is nothing but a machine or a machinic process that grafts itself onto *différance* to install a *telos*. The end, or *telos*, which orients this teleology, is presence. In order to achieve this presence, Derrida argues, the machine puts concepts in a specific order, one after another, one upon another, connecting them in such a way that together these connections form the solid unity of metaphysics. The idea of linear time has been inherent to metaphysics since its very beginning and originates in the aporia of time that was first formulated by Aristotle and remained crucial to philosophy – including the philosophies of Hegel and Heidegger. How does the concept of time as linearity come about then, according to Derrida?

Aristotle tried to solve the problem of time as something that is as a 'now' on the one hand, and as something that already-has-been and only will-be on the other. It is here, Derrida contends, that Aristotle relies on the concept of *grammē*, the trace or line. He tries to solve the problem dialectically in a manner that, according to Derrida, prefigures a veritable Hegelianism. The 'now' or 'moment' could be seen as a point that does not reach beyond its own 'place.' But, Aristotle argues, this would imply that there can

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[243] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 63.

only be one point and that therefore there is no progress. Another view on time needs to be introduced to be able to think its progress. Derrida articulates this idea by saying that 'the now, presence in the act of the present, is constituted as the impossibility of coexisting with an other now, that is, with an other-the-same-as-itself.'[244] However, the argument that time is never really there, that it is always in between points of presence, is certainly not an option. This would forfeit definitively the presence of time. Thus, Aristotle needs to find another manner in which he can say that time *is*. The solution that Aristotle comes up with is highly interesting. Time, he argues, is only partly like a point: it goes from one point to another and thereby forms a *line*. In one respect, then, time is a 'now' comparable to a point; but in another way, time is the passing from moment to moment, a linear development in which it has already been and is yet to be. Both conceptions of time – as a point and as a line – need to be thought together, as two patterns laid out over each other.

It is the work of the metaphysical machine to create a linear pattern of time in which time is nonetheless fully present as if it were a point of presence. Metaphysics envisions time as a line because it wants to conceive of time as something that *is*. But in order for time to be truly present in the paradoxical play between the line of flow and the point of presence, the flow must be sped up, rushing from one point of presence to the next with infinite speed. Hence, Derrida speaks of the linearization of time in the course of metaphysics. This is where the teleo-eschatology that Derrida sees at work in metaphysics originates.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida claims that

> [i]f one allows that the linearity of language entails this vulgar and mundane concept of temporality (homogeneous, dominated by the form of the now and the ideal of continuous movement, straight or circular) which Heidegger shows to be the intrinsic determining concept of all ontology from Aristotle to Hegel, the meditation upon writing and the deconstruction of the history of philosophy become inseparable.[245]

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[244] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 55.

[245] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 86.

Linearity and the line are related in Derrida's view. Whilst linearity is one of the main processes that went hand in hand with the development of metaphysical thinking, Derrida argues that the concept of the line had to remain invisible to metaphysics itself. Heidegger again plays a crucial transitory role in the era of metaphysics, even though he too remains enclosed within the realm of metaphysics.

Heidegger reflects on the concepts of the line in his essay, "On the Question of Being."[246] In this essay - a response to an essay by Ernst Jünger, written two years earlier on the occasion of Heidegger's fiftieth birthday - Heidegger unravels the problem of modern nihilism and the role played in it by metaphysics. Addressing metaphysics and the language used throughout the history of metaphysics, Heidegger asks the following question:

> What if even the language of metaphysics and metaphysics itself, whether it is that of the living or of the dead God, *as* metaphysics, formed that barrier which forbids a crossing over [*Übergehen*] the line?[247]

Derrida's own attempt at crossing the lines that fence off metaphysics is different from that of Heidegger. According to Derrida, it is only when we see that line that it becomes clear that it forms a closure for the metaphysical machine. Derrida uses the concept of the line in order to illustrate how metaphysics works. As long as metaphysics was in its full reign, it was impossible to see the line: to see the line expresses the stretching of a philosophical boundary. Or, as Derrida puts it: 'the enigmatic model of the *line* is thus the very thing that philosophy could not see when it had its eyes open on the interior of its own history.'[248] Derrida's deconstruction aims at unraveling precisely how the concepts within metaphysics are 'controlled

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[246] Martin Heidegger, "On the Question of Being," in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1998).

[247] Heidegger, "On the Question of Being," quoted and translated by Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, xiv-xv.

[248] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 86.

reciprocally, minutely, laboriously.'[249] The line thus gets its place in a set of reciprocally controlled concepts.

But the line is not just any concept in the metaphysical machine. As Derrida avers in the above quote, the line is the very thing that metaphysics itself cannot see. In contrast to history and epoch, for example, the line remains the blind spot of the metaphysical machine. The crux of his argument, then, is that this blind spot, the line, is directly related to a metaphysical concept of time. Derrida argues that the line and a privilege for linearity are connected to the concept of time that Heidegger calls 'vulgar' in *Being and Time*. This concept of linear time as vulgar is recuperated by Derrida to characterize metaphysics. By characterizing vulgar time as linear time - even though this is not the primary trait that Heidegger attributed to this concept of time – Derrida succeeds in creating an interpretation of metaphysics as a temporal and teleological process. Relating the problem of vulgar time to metaphysics' longing for presence, Derrida then tries to show how Heidegger himself still remains within metaphysics. And, he concludes, if this is the case, then it follows that – as I already quoted above but will quote again here – 'the meditation upon writing and the deconstruction of the history of philosophy become inseparable.'[250] Derrida continues:

> every history of writing that has been written up until now has received its guiding concepts from other human sciences or, what nearly amounts to the same thing, from traditional metaphysics.[251]

The humanities, in their relation to traditional metaphysics, have long favored a technical and scientific economy, he argues.[252] Derrida claims that the motor of the metaphysical machine, and all that came with it, 'has been structurally bound up with that of economy, that of *technics*, and that of ideology.'[253] It is this structural connection that I want to examine in the final part of this chapter. By elaborating upon Derrida's analysis of the

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[249] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 83.
[250] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 86.
[251] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 83.
[252] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 86.
[253] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 86.

metaphysical machine, it can be argued that the machine is not solely metaphysical. Technics can be understood as an interlacement or contamination between aspects of literature and aspects of politics, but the teleological determinations are proper to the machine. Diverse elements are interlaced by technics, but they only start to form a teleological unity in the machine. Incorporated into a machine, concepts can be understood only by looking at how the machine that powers them functions. In order to analyze this set-up, it becomes necessary to scrutinize certain fundamental political concepts in much the same way as Derrida scrutinizes metaphysical notions such as epoch and history in his analysis of metaphysics. Thus, in the remaining chapters, I analyze concepts such as legitimacy, justice, torture, civic disobedience, and the right to information. But these concepts, however seminal, only operate as 'reciprocally controlled concepts' that form operative constellations, much in the same way as concepts within the metaphysical machine. In the mutual grafting of technics and machine these concepts take on their function and start to operate together.

6. Linear Machinic Technologies / Circumventing Technopolitics

Derrida argues that desire for presence brings about linearity in the metaphysical concept of time. This is a function of the machine, which by providing metaphysics with its telos also constructs ways to achieve this telos. The line and linearity are exemplary in this regard. They are crystallizations of a machinic function that is looking for a way to create presence as directly and as quickly as possible. Another way in which the machine tries to establish presence is by instrumentalizing technologies. I have made my argument on the instrumentalization of technology at length in the previous chapter, but I want to return to it here, now that a definition of the machine can help us understand the factual implications of this instrumentalization. The instrumentalization of technics runs through the machine. Like linearization, instrumentalization is processed by the machine. The machine closes down the possibilities of technological artifacts to incorporate them in a larger structure, that of the machine. Here, once again, we can see the incorporative immanence at work in the machine. Technologies become techniques as soon as they are incorporated by the machinic functioning.

The point here is that technology loses its potential goals and receives just one goal, or telos – the one impressed upon it by the machine.

In Derrida's work, there are two major additions to be made to this argument. The first is that he overdetermines the telos of the machine as always being that of a desire for presence. Thus, every technology, once drawn in the machine, is reconfigured as an instrument or technique that can further the metaphysical desire for presence. Technologies become techniques for presence, for making present. A second addition is that this strategy can never work. Technologies cannot be used as techniques for attaining (ontological or metaphysical) presence. They are unable to do so because these technologies, even when they are reduced to techniques, remain media. That is to say, every technology (however convincing) is only a mediation of presence; it is never a factual presence but a crafted presence. This is not what metaphysics desires. *Of Grammatology* provides a good example of Derrida's view on these matters. Here, he explains how new technologies can help realize the metaphysical subject as immediately present to itself *and* subvert the very possibility of such a self-present subject:

> the constitution of electronic card-indexes and reading machines, [which] enlarges difference and the possibility of putting in reserve: it at once and in the same movement constitutes and effaces so-called conscious subjectivity, its logos, and its theological attributes.[254]

Derrida has described these kinds of operations as a *pact* made between metaphysics and technology in their desire for presence. What remains unclear in his work is how this pact is actually brought about. Drawing and reflecting on my own analysis of the machine, I would now say that it is not so much a pact as it is a synthesis or process. And this process is brought into effect by the machine incorporating both metaphysics (as it determines metaphysics in its desire for presence and its eschatology) and technology (placing them into a relationship of servitude under metaphysics, but also politics). The claim that metaphysics and technology strive for presence could even be turned upside down, arguing that it really is the

[254] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 84.

machinic functioning that gives them their desires: the desire for presence and immediacy that can be witnessed in all sorts of technologies (tele-technologies such as televisions or telephones, but others as well) is instigated by the metaphysical machine; it is the drive of the metaphysical machine *as* a drive for immediacy and presence that propels these technologies in their quest for presence and immediacy. What is less clear, however, is whether presence really is the only drive that the machine sets to work. In other terms, pertaining more directly to Derrida's political work, we might ask: does the political desire to control its subjects and its territory indeed constitute itself through the desire for presence? Derrida makes this argument in *Specters of Marx* and *Rogues*, but having established a concept of the machine it is not clear whether this is the only teleo-eschatological option for the machine.[255] As Donna Haraway notes:

> technological determination is only one ideological space opened up by the reconceptions of machine and organ–ism as coded texts through which we engage in the play of writing and reading the world.[256]

Derrida's question is whether these technologies that have made a pact with metaphysics succeed in attaining immediacy and presence. As the quote from *Of Grammatology* suggests, such a metaphysical-technological project can only be partially successful. After all, technology is something that makes present, but at the same time it stands for absence. This is what Derrida is hinting at when he writes that technological devices like a writing machine in one and the same movement construct classical metaphysical concepts like the logos and the subject, as well as destruct these concepts. The subject wants to be present to itself, the logos longs to become and to remain an absolutely unmediated knowledge. Technology is used to overcome the non-present, but technology itself is also always mediation and thus something that inevitably destroys presence.

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[255] See Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 82ff.; and *Rogues. Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2005).

[256] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge: London 1991), 152.

In his later work, Derrida gives a striking example of how such technologies are functioning according to the laws of the machine. The example he gives deals with the use of visual tele-technologies. As technologies always have, visually oriented tele-technologies create what Derrida calls *artefactualities*.[257] Within the realm of the artefactual, '"reality" (to which "actuality" refers) – however singular, irreducible, stubborn, painful, or tragic it may be – reaches us through fictional constructions [*factures*].'[258] Thus, Derrida avers, the presence with which the artefactual claims to provide us remains a fiction: 'The "live" communication and "real time" are never pure: they permit neither intuition nor transparency, nor any perception unmarked by interpretation or technical intervention.'[259] In this case, too, the subject along with its demand for presence is simulataneously created and forfeited, constructed and deconstructed. This is the inevitable process of an *exappropriation*: the interlacement of an appropriation that makes the subject belong to itself; and the expropriation that pulls the subject out of its proper place. The machine proposes speed to overcome the faltering of presence, to constitute true presence. As Derrida explains in *Memoires for Paul de Man*: 'Through an infinite acceleration' the machine tries 'to win time, to win over time, to deny it.'[260] By gaining speed, the machine hopes to overcome the absence of presence that is inherent to it. The machine strives for an end in which it would accomplish its purposes and annihilate itself in the same movement. A paradoxical feature of this speeding towards an end is that it wants to put the machine outside of itself. This is exactly why speeding up time will never work: it would annihilate that which speeds it up. *My argument is that the impossibility of accelerating time to the point of absolute presence is taken into account by the machine itself.* This is the closure that the machine imposes. The machine imposes a closure that

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[257] See Jacques Derrida. *Negotiations. Interventions and Interviews 1971–2001* (Stanford university Press: Stanford 2002). See also Jacques Derrida & Bernard Stiegler. *Echographies of Television. Filmed Interviews* (Polity Press: Oxford 2002).

[258] Derrida, *Negotiations*, 86. Note the important role played by fiction in this technological process. In the next chapter, I examine the role of fiction in technics more fully.

[259] Derrida, *Negitiations*, 88.

[260] Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, 62.

functions as a fence so that there can be no escape from the machine, even for the machine itself. The outside of closure that Derrida alludes to in his study of metaphysics is generated by the ambiguity of the co-existence of end and closure. Two seemingly contradictory operations are at work in the machine: on the one hand, it strives for an end that would put it outside of itself; and on the other, it counters such an end by installing a closure that encloses everything within its boundaries. The end works as a transcendent outside towards which the machine aims. The closure maintains the immanence that the machine equally strives for. The combined effect could be termed transdescendance.[261]

Deleuze and Guattari have argued that the modern capitalist state machine displays both a tendency towards absolute immanence (effected by an absolute deterritorialization connected to capitalism) and a re-introduction of a despotic transcendence (effected by re-inscribing relative deterritorializations onto the capitalist deterritorialization to transform the territory into an earth that can be ruled by the state).[262] Both must be brought together to understand the logic by which the state machine operates. Power over social formations such as the state, they argue, does not function through modes of production, but precisely through such 'machinic processes.'[263] Elaborating on this idea, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have tracked down the formation of modern sovereignty and its transformation in and beyond the nation state. Their argument implicitly relies on the teleo-eschatology of end and closure, transcendence and immanence, that is proper to the machine:

> In politics, as in metaphysics, the dominant theme [in modernity] was thus to eliminate the medieval form of transcendence, which only inhibits production and consumption, while maintaining transcendence's effects of domination in a form adequate to the modes of associa-

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[261] The term was coined by Jean Wahl in his book *Existence Humaine et transcendence* (La Baconière: Neuchâtel 1944) and subsequently appropriated by Émmanuel Lévinas.

[262] See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Continuum: London 2004), 478–83.

[263] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 480.

> tion and production of the new humanity. The center of the problem of modernity was thus demonstrated in political philosophy, and here was where the new form of mediation found its most adequate response to the revolutionary forms of immanence: a transcendent political apparatus.[264]

The insertion of such a transcendent political apparatus into the immanent political field of modernity, Hardt and Negri argue, will determine the modern concept of sovereignty. Modern sovereignty is defined by them as a 'sovereignty machine' that will have fulfilled its task only 'when the synthesis of sovereignty and capital is fully accomplished, and the transcendence of power is completely transformed into a transcendental exercise of authority.'[265] From that moment, the sovereignty machine dissolves into a 'political machine that rules across the entire society.'[266] But such an accomplishment, which would propel power outside modernity, can never take place.

One of the points of dispute between Derrida and Hardt and Negri might concern the reality of transcendent domination. While Hardt and Negri argue that this is a mere effect that is upheld, thus giving the impression that it might just as well be an illusion, the desire for end (versus closure) is real in the machine – and most certainly in Derrida's metaphysical machine. Translated back to the discussion on the acceleration of time, it takes on a veritable eschatological dynamic. Nevertheless, it is an eschatology that, although inaugurated by the machine's end, is held back by the machine's closure. In *Rogues*, Derrida investigates the functions of sovereignty in contemporary society. He argues that the characteristics of sovereignty are bound up with the claims of reason and rationality in the West. The principle of reason has long functioned as that which would legitimate the forceful application of sovereignty. At the same time, there is a teleo-

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[264] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge 2001), 83.

[265] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 87

[266] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 87.

eschatology at work in reason as ground for sovereignty.[267] Derrida distinguishes between two forms in which such a teleo-eschatology might manifest itself. These two forms are played out in the difference between the verbal modes 'to let oneself strand' (*échouement*) and 'to strand oneself' (*échouage*). While the first implies passivity, the second implies activity. The two possibilities of stranding or running aground are equally real to Derrida. Together, precisely in their inextricable intertwinement, they establish the oscillation between two kinds of eschatology: an active one of self-stranding; and a passive one of being stranded. [268] The difference is that the first mode (*l'échouement*) is passive, and therefore allows for something totally unexpected to take place that would not be affected by reason running aground. Here the possibility of the event is kept open. The second mode (*l'échouage*) is active and implies that sovereign reason is actively (though not necessarily deliberately) running itself aground. This process is further described by Derrida as auto-immunity.

7. Conclusion: Artefactualities in the Deconstructive Machine

Continuing his reflection on artefactuality, Derrida avows that he has been drifting off, stalling time by not answering the questions directly: 'Some might say: he's wasting time, his time and ours. Or he's playing for time, he's putting of answers. And that would not be entirely false.'[269] Derrida avers that there is more to his deliberative stalling of time than becomes apparent at first blush.

> The one thing that one cannot accept these day – on television, on the radio, or in the papers – is an intellectual

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[267] Rodolpe Gasché, in his review essay on *Rogues*, pays particular attention to this feature of the book. See Gasché, "'In the Name of Reason': The Deconstruction of Sovereignty," *Research in Phenomenology*, 34, 2006, 289–303.

[268] Derrida, Rogues, 150ff. For the subtle word play in French, see Jacques Derrida, *Voyous* (Galilée: Paris 2003), pp.171–2.

[269] Derrida, *Negotations*, 89.

> taking his time. And perhaps this is what needs to be changed about actuality: its *rhythm*.[270]

Derrida's critique of tele-technology consists of an analysis of the rhythm it installs, the economy by which it accelerates the rhythm and tries to make present a time and space that can never be fully present. To the rhythm of technologies as such he opposes the (a)rhythmic spacing and temporizing of *différance*. *Différance* acts as a medium in which difference first becomes possible. Rhythm is understood by Derrida as a process of differing made possible through the act of temporalization in difference. As such, Derrida is making a performative move by saying that he has been stalling time. For not only does he stall time in the interview, he has devised a theory in which time as deferral plays a crucial role in understanding and conceptualizing all things technical – technics, the machine, technology, and technique.

An interview with philosopher Bernard Stiegler brings to light an important consequence of Derrida's priority of *différance* over technology. Stiegler suggests that the discrete image, though an artefactuality in the strict sense of the word, has the potential to expand our notion of intelligibility because it is exact. The exactness of discrete images, coded by the digital, gestures towards

> a certain mode of accumulation, in an "exact" form, producing a sense of exactitude and of authenticity, that is to say, of presence, [that] would be the condition of a certain form of intelligibility.[271]

The answer that Derrida gives to Stiegler introduces a large part of the problematic that has been at stake in this chapter. Derrida concedes to Stiegler's suggestion that a new intelligibility arises from the exactitude of technical media, such as the film composed of 24 frames per second or digital code; nevertheless, he maintains a certain reserve toward what it is that makes this intelligibility. At stake here is the status of *différance*:

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[270] Derrida, *Negotiations*, 89.

[271] Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, 108.

> This extends the field of what you call intelligibility, the field of knowledge, the field of meaning itself, but in order to accommodate the opposite effect within it: meaning and intelligibility can be extended – on the scale of what you have called the "discrete," the spacing of the discrete – only by multiplying the conditions of this very discreteness, in other words, spacing, non-sense, the blank, the interval, everything that bounds [*borde*] sense and non-sense as it were, exceeds [*déborde*] or splits it. The origin of sense makes no sense.[272]

That which constitutes intelligibility is itself not intelligible. It is the rhythmic play of spacing and temporization; the interweaving play of forces that is enacted by *différance*. The possibility of separation that is precisely necessary in discrete images, and even more so in the digital code, is guaranteed by the blank, or the interval. This interval, which is put to work by *différance*, articulates what cannot be captured in terms of sense or meaning. This is why Derrida, from his earliest essays onwards, makes the distinction between force and meaning (signification, or sense). Focusing on *différance* enables Derrida to map the economy that underlies technologies, even those that are characterized by the discreteness of images or by a digital code. For discrete images to function as they do it is still necessary for an interval to separate them, so that discreteness becomes possible. As Derrida puts it in "*Différance*":

> an interval must separate the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject.[273]

Derrida will hold on to this interval, even if this means that he risks missing something essential in the interplay between technics, the machine, and teletechnologies.

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[272] Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, 108.

[273] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 13.

The analysis of rhythm also refers back to the relation between the metaphysical machine and time already discussed in this chapter. The metaphysical machine is what constructs the linear time in which its attitude towards concrete technologies will be formed. Teletechnologies are inserted in the machine to effectuate the acceleration of time that the machine sets to work to overcome absence. However, for Derrida, there remains a certain silence immanent to every medium, to every technology or transmission – "a silence coming from the other side."[274] This silence is there for those who read as well as for those who "see the news." But the rhythm of the former differs from that of the latter. This rhythm, along with its silences, is what Derrida calls "the law of time" - and he adds: "It is terrible for the present; it always leaves one to hope or to count on the untimely."[275] This is why Derrida believes that even in the performative act of stalling time during an interview, there is the possibility of a critical stance toward the recuperation of teletechnologies in a machinic functioning. It is a first step towards asking for a reflection on the effect of teletechnologies. Derrida declares his point of view more fully in his interview with Stiegler:

> It is necessary to fight, today, *not against* teletechnologies, television, radio, e-mail or the Internet but, on the contrary, so that the development of these media will make more room for the norms that a number of citizens would be well within their rights to propose, affirm, and lay claim to – particularly those "intellectuals," artists, writers, philosophers, analysts, scientists, certain journalists and media professionals, too, who would like to say something about the media or analyze them at the same rhythm at which we are trying to do this together, here and now.[276]

Derrida is calling for a change of rhythm. However, what he seems to forget in this passage is the relation between teletechnologies and the machine.

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[274] Derrida, *Negotiations*, 90.

[275] Derrida, *Negotiations*, 90.

[276] Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, 33.

This chapter argued that only the machine can account for the instrumentalization of technology. It is precisely this instrumentalization that forecloses much of its possibilities.

If we look back at Derrida's analysis of the concept of history as pertaining to metaphysics, it is now clear that the concept of history is modeled by the constructions of linearity and linear time carried out in the metaphysical machine. This history is linear and monolithic. Within the linear template that the metaphysical machine constructs, a question imposes itself: where is this history leading to? This is where the paradoxical intertwinement of a radical end (that would place us outside the history of metaphysics) and an immanent closure (that captures all in its machine, including the political) emerges. This paradoxical interrelation can be accounted for in an adequate conceptualization of the machine. It is also in the interplay of end and closure, as we have seen, that a teleo-eschatology is established: an '*eskhaton,* the end, or rather the extreme, the limit, the boundary, the last, that which closes a history - a genealogy, or very simply a quantifiable series - in extremis.'[277] What is at stake in the machine's teleo-eschatological functioning is a mobilization in which the political finds its particular modern feature. The machine is certainly not only 'the *Kampfplatz* of metaphysics,'[278] it is that of politics as well. Derrida himself is at least prepared to admit that it is also to be found 'in poetics (between poetry and philosophy), concerning the death or the future of philosophy.'[279] The next chapter inquires into the relation between fiction and the legitimacy of violence.

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[277] Jacques Derrida, "D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie," in Jean-Luc Nancy & Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe (eds.), *Fins de l'homme* (Seuil: Paris 1984), 450.

[278] Derrida, "D'un ton apocalyptique," 459-60.

[279] Derrida, "D'un ton apocalyptique," 460.

Chapter Three
The Modern Political Machine

1. Introduction

The concept of legitimacy has a fairly short history in the philosophy of law and politics.[280] In a treatise entitled *De Regimine Principum*, attributed to Thomas Aquinas, a distinction is made between 'legitimate force' (*legitima potestas*) and tyranny.[281] His distinction calls upon a previously untheorized, or undertheorized, concept of legitimacy. While the force (*potestas*) used in a kingdom is a justified, *legitimate* force, the force used in a tyranny is an unjustified, *illegitimate* force. Aquinas makes no use of the concept 'illegitimate.' That concept will only begin to circulate several centuries later. But Aquinas' use of 'tyrannical' already points to what is at stake in the distinction between legitimacy and illegitimacy, or tyranny: it differentiates between two kinds of *force*. There is a legitimate force and a tyrannical force. An *economy of forces* is discerned in which there is a difference

[280] See Simone Goyard-Fabre, "Légitimité", in Philippe Raynaud and Stéphane Rials (eds.), *Dictionnaire philosophique de la politique* (P.U.F.: Paris 2003), 388-393.

[281] The major part of the treatise was most probably written by Ptolemy of Lucca, whilst only the first part of the treatise, *De Regno ad Regem Cypri*, is likely to have been written by Aquinas himself. See Ptolemy of Lucca, *On the Government of Rulers. With Portions Attributed to Aquinas* (University of Pensylvania Press: Pensylvania 1997).

between legitimate force and illegitimate, tyrannical force. Since it concerns the distinction between a legitimate political regime and a tyranny, this economy of forces is a political one: the differentiation that this economy makes – between legitimate and illegitimate force – is a political differentiation. How such an economy works can be clarified by close-reading a passage from Derrida's *Glas*. This passage can be read as a preliminary sketch for an economy of forces, which would be one that does not rely on the distinction between mediate and immediate, natural or unnatural. Its notion of force would have to escape those oppositions as well as displace them.[282] Through this economy, Derrida argues, we would have to experience

> a recognition that is not natural and yet that passes through no conflict, no injury, no rape: absolute uniqueness, yet universal and without natural singularity, without immediacy; symmetrical relation that needs no reconciliation to appease itself, that does not know the horizon of war, the infinite wound, contradiction, negativity.[283]

In a similar vein, the forces that Aquinas distinguishes and that will play an increasingly constitutive role in the build-up of the modern political machine are not 'natural'. But they are not the result of direct 'conflict' either. Neither are they the result of a *rupture* with the natural order. If anything, they make possible such a conflict (the conflict between legitimate and tyrannical force) and they make it possible to establish any rupture. An example of such a rupture would be the transition from the state of nature to the law of state guarded by a legitimate force, to which I will return below. The distinction between legitimate force and illegitimate force is required so that a distinction can be made between the state of nature and the state of law. Therefore these forces do not constitute a 'violation' of any kind of natural law. Instead, the distinction between

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[282] See Arkady Plotnidsky, *Reconfigurations. Critical Theory and General Economy* (University Press of Florida: Gainesville 1993), 19.

[283] Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln / London 1986), 150.

legitimate and illegitimate force will lie at the origin of any construction of law, society, or any political regime. They have no 'natural singularity,' but they are 'absolutely unique.' The forces and the distinction made among them are not immediate, but neither are they mediated. They are not immediate because their political nature implies an economy in which the political is first introduced; something extra is needed that will set up such an economy. They are not mediated because these forces only appear as forces once they are differentiated by this economy, and hence they immediately appear as political forces – as legitimate force and illegitimate force. In other words, there is no pre-political point of origin from which one could trace the becoming-political of these forces. Instead, something deeper is at work that makes these forces political by operating already from within the economy of forces, setting it to work: the *political machine*. In the course of this chapter it will become clear what the nature of this machine is.

The distinction between legitimate force and illegitimate force is fully employed during the sixteenth century. At that time the opposition between these two is explored and becomes part of the everyday functioning of political regimes. Michel de Montaigne takes up the discourse on legitimacy in his essay, "An Apology for Raymond Sebond," where he relays the legitimacy of government back to the legitimacy derived from the origin of law.[284] The origin of law functions as the decisive moment at which the distinction between legitimate force and illegitimate force is made. In the same movement the modern state is established as a viable, justified form of government. But Montaigne's position is a skeptical one. In his essay he distrusts this discourse on the origin of law as the origin of legitimacy and the justification of the state. He cautions his readers and suggests that we look for the social conditions that allow for such a discourse on the origin of law to emerge. What sort of transition took place between Aquinas' treatise on government and the legitimization of political regimes in the sixteenth century? What allowed the opposition between legitimate force and illegitimate force to move toward the center of the political? What social conditions brought the discourse on legitimacy to the center of the state? Answering these questions means asking about *the*

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[284] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays* (Penguin Press: Harmondsworth 1987), 489–684.

conditions under which the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate force becomes central; it implies looking into the economy of forces and showing that the central position of legitimacy was made possible by a politico-technical change in government that resulted in the modern state; answering these question implies realizing that the centralization of a discourse on legitimate force and illegitimate force veils a more profound event: the constitution of the *modern political machine*. The advent of political modernity equals the becoming-machinic of the political.

Within the modern political machine the economy of forces is set up to correspond to the distinction between legitimate force and illegitimate force. Instead of pointing towards the economy of forces of which they are a part, these forces draw attention to the juridical constitution of the state. The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate force occupies a central place in modern political theory, accompanied by the emergence of a conceptualization of the origin of the state. What this discourse of legitimacy is unable to observe is the economy of forces that is set to work in the modern political machine. The focus on the fictional origin of the state and its possible legitimacy leads away from the machinic in modern politics. Following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I will call this act of diversion *state thinking*.[285] Some of Montaigne's writings from the sixteenth century clearly indicate and tacitly criticize the construction of such a state thinking. He criticizes the regime of his time and contrasts it with primitive society, praising that society for its 'egalitarian and libertarian position.'[286] I will return to state thinking and legitimacy below. First, I will elaborate a concept of the modern machine in relation to an economy of forces by looking at philosophies of technology from Bertrand Gille, Bernard Stiegler, and Gilles Deleuze. Having done so, I will assess the transformation from feudal order to modern state from the point of view of a modern political machine.

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[285] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 414.

[286] David Lewis Schaeffer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca / London 1990), 178.

2. Constitution: Disadjustment, Machinic Point, and Executive Function

In the centuries between Aquinas's legitimate and tyrannical forces and de Montaigne's skeptical account of legitimacy a politico-technical *disadjustment* took place that disassembled,[287] deconstructed,[288] or deterritorialized[289] the feudal order and led to the formation of the modern state. Bringing into balance this disadjustment, a machinic functioning was constituted that did not exist previously: it erected the bureaucracy of kingdoms, enabled the centralization of military force and organized the territorialization of land by means of a centralized military apparatus.[290] The result of this disadjustment was that the forces of technics had the opportunity to enmesh themselves in a new way. In the process of doing so a machinic functioning was constituted. In order to understand how the modern political machine took form and determined the concept of the political in modernity, a more profound understanding of machine and machinic functioning is required. Two concepts from the philosophy of technology are useful in this respect: *disadjusment* and *machinic point*. In many ways the modern political machine is the machine par excellence since it makes the political depend on executive functions (bureaucracy, police, military apparatus); that is to say, on the *machinic* function. This is why the modern state machine equals the becoming-machinic of politics: in the very process of effectuating a centralization of power, the modern state machine depends entirely on its executive functions. These executive functions cannot be overseen by one sole sovereign who holds power and surveys his kingdom; neither can it be localized in one origin of the law and the state. Instead, the modern political takes the form of a machine because it operates through several heterogeneous elements that are brought together, connected to each other, and related.

As a concept for studies of technology, disadjustment was introduced by historian Bertrand Gille and taken up by Bernard Stiegler to

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[287] See Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press: Princeton / Oxford 2006).

[288] See Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (Routledge: London / New York 1994).

[289] See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

[290] See Christopher Pierson, *The Modern State* (Routledge: London / New York 1996).

account for the way a crisis in a given system causes this system to transform, and thus become able to adapt to a new situation.[291] Disadjustment occurs when one system within a broader network of interconnected (social, economic, military) systems is evolving faster than the systems that are related to it. The faster evolving system will then no longer be on a par with the other systems connected to it. As a result, it causes a disorder in the interconnected network of systems: 'In these periods of crisis the system evolves at great speed, which causes "disadjustments" with the other social systems – law, economy, education, religion, political representation, etc.'[292] The system will have to find a new stability that restores the balance between the systems to which it is related. Bertrand Gille argues that technology always exists in the form of a technological system, understood as a set of interrelated techniques and technical capacities. 'It is one of the characteristics of advanced technical civilizations [*des civilizations techniques avancées*] to have constituted their own technology.'[293] A technological system is related to other systems, for example a social system, an economic system, an educational system, a political system. According to Gille, the position of a technological system in the set of systems is almost always that of the faster evolving system. Therefore it is the technological system that will cause a disadjustment, which forces the other systems to transform themselves to find a new equilibrium. The possibilities for technological progress depend on the ability of the interrelated systems (social, economic, political) to keep up to speed with the technological system. Progress is only possible within such

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[291] See Bertrand Gille, *Histoire des techniques* (Gallimard: Paris 1978); Bernard Stiegler, *La technique et le temps 1. La faute d'Épiméthée* (Galilée: Paris 1994); Stiegler, "Our Ailing Educational Institutions", *Culture Machine 5*, (2003), online at: http://rime.tees.ac.uk/VLE/DATA/CSEARCH/MODULES/CSTUD/2003/S/20030015.htm; Stiegler, "Technics of Decision: An Interview", *Angelaki*, vol. 8 / n° 2, 163; and Stiegler, "Constitution and Individuation," *A working paper for a seminar at Northwestern* (2006), May 2, online at: www.arsindustrialis.org/Members/bstiegler/bsesp/ci.

[292] Stiegler, "Our Ailing Educational Institutions", *Culture Machine 5*.

[293] Gille, *Histoire des techniques*, 443.

an interrelation of systems, Gille argues.[294] He distinguishes between 'technical progress' and 'adjustments' called forth by a 'new technological system':

> Whilst technical progress takes uncertain or apparently uncertain tracks [*voies aléatoires*], the adjustments of new technological systems with other systems are carried out as well as possible by the play of a certain number of freely operating forces, with all the mistakes, all the after-effects that this can entail before establishing a satisfactory equilibrium.[295]

According to Gille, the tracks by which *technical* progress proceeds are 'uncertain' because they are not properly related to a system of *technology*. Only when there is a technological system is innovation possible. But in that case the possibility of innovation is tied up with a political system, a social system, an economical system. In short, in Gille's analysis, technology is always interdependent with economy, politics, and related domains. For progress to be possible an equilibrium must be established between the systems. It is in finding such an equilibrium that a technological innovation can be made. Since finding an equilibrium between a rapidly evolving technological system and slower evolving interdependent systems (social, political, economical) requires an adjustment of the other systems, it is only in searching for such an equilibrium that a societal, systematic transformation occurs.

The decisive moment – the moment of disadjustment, called 'tipping point' by Saskia Sassen[296] – occurs as 'the play of a certain number of forces.' I would argue that while these forces were previously interwoven and enmeshed in a machinic functioning, they are set free again through a disadjustment. The play of forces described by Gille is reminiscent of my interpretation of *différance* as technics in the first chapter of this study. The 'play' mentioned by Gille could refer to what is at stake. It represents the

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[294] See Stiegler, *La technique et le temps 1. La faute d'Épiméthée*, 50–1.

[295] Gille, *Histoire des techniques*, 77–8.

[296] Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, 9.

wager set by the imminent transformation evoked by a technological innovation. But it also refers to a free play of forces, to 'a certain number of forces operating freely.' These freely operating forces, which will almost immediately start to interweave and give rise to a new machinic functioning, are what I call technics. Whilst the operation of these forces is free, it is not wholly uncoordinated. The free pay of forces operates from the interstices of the network of systems that has been disadjusted.

The merit of Gille's account of systems is that it shows how technological transformations, occurring at those decisive moments in which forces operate freely, are always dependent upon other factors (and other systems) rather than merely technological ones. Continuing this line of thought I would say that *what is technological and what is political within the freely operating play of forces is yet to be determined*. In this decisive moment the two categories enmesh on a sub-technological and sub-political level. Technics interweaves heterogeneous forces and these include political, technical, and other elements. At this moment, there is an interweaving of several heterogeneous elements but there is not yet a strict economy. Technics is on the verge of establishing an economy, but a fixed (generalized and stabilized) economy only occurs when the interplay of forces is ordered in machinic functions. The machine moulds technics into a fixed pattern, transforming it into a political technology. The political machine constitutes a rigid economy in which a distinction first can be made between legitimate forces and illegitimate forces. In other words, the differentiation between forces only becomes possible after they are ordered and made operational in a political machine. The constitution of the modern political machine, then, consists in a specific way of ordering and distinguishing forces according to the legitimate and the illegitimate, and according to the executive function and the law-giving function of state. The *modern state* is based on these distinctions and hence is the result of the modern political machine. In technics there is a first 'mobile, immanent principle of auto-unification through a *nomadic distribution*, radically distinct from fixed and sedentary distributions.'[297] The interplay of these forces then establishes an economy, what Gille and Stiegler - borrowing from the natural sciences - refer to as an equilibrium. Machinic functioning makes this economy operational, distinguishing it from a mere

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[297] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* (Continuum: London 2003), 102.

free play of forces. It is also this machinic functioning, interrelated with the constitution of the political regime of modernity, that will make this economy into a modern machine.

The disadjustment in the centuries between Aquinas and Montaigne sets to work a free play of forces. It took place as a historical turning point in which the restructuring of the military apparatus, the territory over which power is wielded, and the bureaucratic machinery used to maintain that power all played a decisive role. In the process of reestablishing equilibrium, a political machine was constituted. This machine defines and determines modern politics. The breakdown of the feudal order enabled the build up of the modern state. As Sassen points out, 'a given factor in the decomposition of an order, in this case the feudal order, can become a capability once it gets lodged in a novel organizing logic.'[298] Breakdown and build up join forces in disadjustment: the point at which the feudal order[299] breaks down or deterritorializes is also the point at which the modern state is constructed and territorialized.[300] What

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[298] Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, 28.

[299] In passing it should be noted that the term 'feudal' was unknown in the Middle Ages. Even today its use and precise meaning are contested. For a general overview on the matter, see Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe", in Lester K Little and Barbara H. Rosenwein (eds.), *Debating the Middle Ages. History and Readings*. (Blackwell: Oxford 1998). Its efficacy for denoting a political system is often attenuated or even denied. Strayer, for example, argues that feudalism is not so much a political concept describing a 'method of government,' but rather 'a way of securing the forces necessary to preserve that method of government.' See Joseph R. Strayer, *Feudalism* (R.E. Krieger: Huntington, NY 1965), 13. George Duby argues that feudalism was first and foremost a "psychological complex formed in the small world of warriors who little by little became nobles." Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise* (Armand Colin: Paris 1971), 481 – quoted and translated by Brown.

[300] Deleuze, "Dualism, Monism, and Multiplicities (Desire – Pleasure – *Jouissance*)." In *Contretemps*, n° 2 (May 2001), 92–108, online at: http://www.usyd.edu.au/contretemps/2may2001/deleuze.pdf.

distinguishes the modern political machine from the feudal political order is still its machinic function. During the disadjustment that took place between Aquinas and Montaigne a *machinic point* is reached at which the political becomes machinic. The machinic point is the moment at which the changing (military, economic, and bureaucratic) apparatuses shaped the conditions for the passage from feudal order to modern state. At that point the state is created and can begin to assemble these changing apparatuses into the *state machine*. In a seminar from March 1973, Gilles Deleuze introduces the concept of a machinic point (*point machinique*) to designate a historical turning point that is evoked by a change of machines:

> At a given moment, for reasons that, of course, must still be determined, it is as if a social space were covered by what we would have to call an abstract machine. We would have to give a name to this non-qualified abstract machine, a name that would mark its absence of qualification, so that everything will be clear. We would call it – at the same time, this abstract machine, at a given moment, will break with the abstract machine of the preceding epochs – in other words, it will always be at the cutting edge (*à la pointe*), thus it would receive the name "machinic point" (*pointe machinique*). It would be the machinic point of a group or a given collectivity; it would indicate, within a group, and at a given moment, the maximum of deterritorialization as well as, and at the same time, its power of innovation. […] [I]t's this machinic point of deterritorialization that is reterritorialized in this or that machine, or in this or that military machine, amorous machine, productive of new statements.[301]

The modern machinic is indeed at the cutting edge - *à la pointe* - it constitutes a veritable turning point. It has assembled a relatively stable territory larger than the territories mastered by lords in the feudal order.

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[301] Deleuze, "Dualism, Monism, and Multiplicities (Desire – Pleasure – *Jouissance*)," 93.

The assemblage of larger territories deterritorialized the smaller territories of the feudal order. This process was necessitated by an advance in military machines and economic markets. So while the smaller regions of the feudal order broke down – in Deleuze's terminology, deterritorialized – a power of innovation was unleashed that would lead to the territorialized, larger region that constitutes the modern state. Kingdoms were established that reigned over this larger region. But what brought about the modern state was the growing power of bureaucratic and military systems. These were developed to control the larger region of the state – which was considerably larger than the regions controlled by the lords during the feudal period. In other words, one of the central features of the modern state is the need to organize the territory. In order to do this, kingdoms needed to erect the bureaucratic and military machinery capable of keeping the social, economical, and political transactions of the state under control.[302] Power in the modern political machine is located in the executive machines like the military, the police, the bureaucracy.[303] Two operations merge into one another here. In short, the modern state is characterized by a process of centralization (the unification of the large territory that would become the state), but this centralization required erecting executive machines (military and bureaucratic) that decentralize power, making the maintenance of power dependent on the executive functioning. The total of this operation is what constitutes the *modern political machine*. It created the state, but it is only when incorporated in the state that the different apparatuses (military, bureaucratic) become a machine with a designated machinic functioning.

For these reasons the *modern political* is determined by a *becoming-machinic*. On the one hand, the modern political form of government – the state – resulted from a change in machinic functioning: from regionalized feudal warlords to unifying military apparatuses that were finally incorporated by the state. As Nisbet points out, 'the state is indeed hardly more than the institutionalization of the war-making

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[302] See Samuel Finer, "Military Forces and State Making," in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton University Press: Princeton), 84–163.

[303] This claim is also put forward by Michel Foucault, *Abnormal. Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975* (Picador: New York 2003).

apparatus.'[304] *The state is the assemblage of machinic functions that were developed at the end of the feudal period, at the beginning of the modern period*. On the other hand, as the assemblage of all these machinic functions, the state is also what orders and controls them. In other words, as soon as the state established itself as a political form of government, it began to enhance the machinic functions through which it exerts its power: the military machine, the bureaucratic machine. In doing so, the modern state becomes a state that depends on its decentralized mechanisms of control; that is, it depends on its machinic functions. *The becoming-machinic of the modern political takes place here: at the point where the state is assembled by the machinic functions and that the machinic functions are incorporated in the state*. The *machinic point* of the state is the moment at which the military and bureaucratic apparatus, having erected the state as a political institution, are in turn institutionalized by the state. As Stuart Hall points out in his analysis of the modern state:

> Though the state may be an abstract and general force, its power has to be *materialized* – i.e., it must acquire real, concrete, social organizational forms, with real tasks, using and disposing of real resources through a set of practices in the apparatuses of the modern state machine.[305]

Hall's argument implies that there is, first of all, a state that operates as an 'abstract and general force,' and that with this force comes the need to materialize the state in its institutions. My argument runs that the abstract and general force that was operative during the period of disadjustment, which occurred between the breakdown of the feudal order and the build

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[304] Robert Nisbet, *Sociology as an Art Form* (Oxford University Press: Oxford 1976), 101. See also Deleuze and Guattari on the war machine and the apparatus of capture, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 388ff; and the first chapter of Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge / New York 1986).

[305] Stuart Hall, "The State in Question," in Stuart Hall, David Held, and Gregor McLennan (eds.), *The Idea of the Modern State* (Open University Press: London 1984), 19–20.

up of the modern state, was put in a machinic function that would only afterwards lead to the state – not the other way around. Once constituted, the state would give a proper teleology to these machinic functions.[306] *As an idea and as a starting point for theoretization, the state is not the place to begin*. The proper place to begin is the disadjustment in which machinic functions were taking shape (like the military apparatus) that enabled the possibility to construct a state. The modern state resulted from the change in institutions; that is, from the change in its machinic functions – military, economic, and political. Thus, the *executive functions* of the state, which are often called the state machine, preceded the actual abstract idea of the state. The abstract idea of the state, and hence the idea of such a political order as the state and its conceptualization, is an after-effect of a change in machinic functioning.

3. Territorialization and Centralization in the Modern State Machine

Comparing medieval and modern states Samuel Finer makes a useful distinction between the two. His distinction highlights the double operation of centralization and moving away from centralization that determines the modern state and what I call its machinic functioning. Finer argues that '*territorially*, the medieval state was *differentiated*,' while its 'public and private *functions* were *consolidated* in one and the same office and individual.'[307] In the case of the modern state, he continues, it was the other way around: its territory was consolidated, but its functions were differentiated. The rise of the early state depends on a process of centralization and territorialization.[308] *Centralization* implies the interlacement of various heterogeneous elements of social and economic life, which were still distinct in feudal society, existing alongside one another. Their *modi operandi* become interdependent and interconnected.

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[306] On the modern political machine and its teleology, see the previous chapter.

[307] See Finer, "Military Forces and State Making," 87.

[308] See Pierson, *The Modern State*; see also Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State. A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 1978).

In this centralization the modern political machine comes into being.[309] Historically this centralization is the result of transformations of structures in power. More specifically, *executive power* becomes organized in an efficient and more functional way in this period. The centralization of power in politics was in close connection to a process of *territorialization*. 'A clearly defined territoriality is one of the things that mark off the state from earlier political forms, such as premodern empires.'[310] In the establishment of the state, politics comes to be understood as the control over a certain, well-delineated territory. This territory can then be articulated in the idea of 'the national'. The ontopological politics that Derrida discerns in *Specters of Marx* is an essentially modern phenomenon. It makes no sense to speak of politics as *essentially* ontopological if it is not first placed in the context of the centralization and territorialization that constructed the modern state machine. Through this construction the modern state machine becomes exactly that: a *machine* that operates on a certain *topos*, the nationally defined and delineated territory. The modern political machine is formed in a process of deterritorialization that affects its concept of being, truth, and politics: it is by becoming a modern political machine which organizes territory that politics becomes *rational* and ontopological. As Michel Serres puts it, 'instead of letting the possible roam free' - that is to say, instead of opening up the forces of technics - modern politics tries to be 'right and rational,' modern politicians become 'functionaries of the truth.'[311] Such a specific type of politics becomes possible in the modern political machine and its territorialization.

At first sight, centralization by the state would seem to go against everything that has been said about machinic functioning so far. Machinic functioning implies that there is no single controlling instance, no supreme power that rules over the others. Instead, the machine takes on its functioning because it is an assemblage of heterogeneous elements and

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[309] On the relation between the conception of the state and early modern mechanisms, see Otto Mayr, *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Europe* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 1989), 112ff.

[310] Pierson, *The Modern State*, 9.

[311] Michel Serres, *Genesis* (The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor 1995), 23.

forces. *Functioning* means that these forces are directed in a routine that can be repeated and modulated. This is what we have called machinic functioning. This is why it is important to distinguish between the centralization that is operative in the state machine and the idea that there is a single instance that controls the machinic functioning, which would appear to contradict the definition of machinic functioning given in the previous chapter. First of all, the centralization that took place in the state was the unification of several distinct territories, which in turn was the result of the unification in military powers. This centralization does not imply a central point from which all machinic functions can be controlled; rather it implies that such a unified point is no longer maintainable. The specific feature of the machinic is that it connects heterogeneous elements without there being one element from which we could get an overview of the entire machine. The several executive powers or functions of the modern state are such elements of the machine - they are what could properly be called machinic functions. The centralization that these machinic functions constitute therefore does not imply centralization in the sense of one absolute locus of power. On the contrary, the centralization of the state implies that the several distinct elements that are brought into machinic function in the state begin to function as a machine. Hence, centralization implies the disappearance of one locus of power. It also implies the increase in power of the executive functions of the state.

Continuing this line of argument, it would be necessary to consider the absolutist states that were established in early modernity as transitory forms of political government. The centralization enacted in the political form of the state is machinic because it is a process that orders and stratifies social, economic, political, and military forces and elements that, until then, had been unconnected. It is because these forces are connected and ordered into a routine that the state begins to take form. Centralization therefore does not imply absolutism, and neither does the state form. In political theory it is commonly agreed upon that '[a]bsolutism is perhaps best seen as a transitional form, albeit one that spanned several centuries.'[312] But it is not necessary to conceive the absolutist state as a transitory form of government, as Pierson and others argue, in order to understand why the modern political is defined by a becoming-machinic of

[312] Pierson, *The Modern State*, 45.

politics. The absolutist state is just as dependent upon its huge coercive apparatus, and its tightened bureaucratic web. Without these *executive functions* the absolute monarch would not be able to stay in power. 'The centralized state power characteristic of bourgeois society arose in the epoch of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions are most typical of this state machine: the bureaucracy and the standing army.'[313] Through its centralization absolutism enacted a break-down of the older, fragmented regimes of power. But this centralization, in turn, became possible thanks to the establishment of a permanent police force and military apparatus. The monarch was an important element in the modern political machinery, but no more important than the military and bureaucratic apparatuses.

Once the state was established as the dominant political regime it would continue to functionalize the military and bureaucratic machinery by which it controlled its territory. 'Life is the object of the police': Foucault's phrase only holds in the modern political machine with its executive functions – one of which is the police, a modern invention indeed.[314] Starting out from the newly established state it became possible to use the executive functions to enforce the authority of the state. One of the clearest examples of how the executive functions of the state machine are perfected and used to further enhance the machinic function of modern politics is the increase in military power during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Perry Anderson explains that the territorializations operated by the French state

> were backed by a massively augmented coercive machinery. A permanent police force was created to keep order and repress riots in Paris (1667), which was ultimately extended throughout France (1698–9). The Army was enormously increased in size during the reign, rising from 30–50,000 to 300,000 by its end. Regular

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313 Vladimir Ilich Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Penguin: London 1992), 27; see also Lenin, *Revolution at the Gates* (Verso: London / New York 2002), 42.

314 Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews* (Routledge: New York / London 1990), 81; see also Antonio Negri, "Polizeiwissenschaft," *Future Antérieure*, 1990, n° 1, 77–86.

> pay, drill, and uniforms were introduced by Le Tellier and Louvois; military weaponry and fortifications were modernized by Vauban. The growth of this military apparatus meant the final disarming of the provincial nobility, and the capacity to strike down popular rebellions with dispatch and efficacy.[315]

Anderson argues that the territorialization needed to institutionalize the state as a form of political government was done by directing the military apparatus to disarm the remaining 'provincial nobility'. It is precisely because executive functions like the military apparatus and police force made the territorialization of the state possible that they have their import in the analysis of the state as a state machine; they are *constitutive* for what I call the *modern political machine*. This political machine develops the state machine and its executive functions, and peaks at the beginning of the nineteenth century. At that time Karl Marx also introduces the notion of the state machinery in his treatise on the *18th Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte*. A distinctive feature of the state machine, Marx argues, is its executive function. He affirms that the machinic feature of the state lies in the executive role of the military and the bureaucracy. Marx dates the emergence of the state machine back to the formation of absolute monarchies:

> This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military apparatus, with its widespread and ingenious machinery of state [*Staatsmaschinerie*], a compliment of a half million officials alongside an army of another half million, this fearsome parasitic body, which traps French society like a net and chokes it at every pore, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, accelerating the decline of feudalism.[316]

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[315] Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (Verso: London / New York 1974), 102.

[316] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in *Marx. Later Political Writings* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1996), 115. For an excellent analysis of the concept of the state machine in Marxism, see

Under the category of *executive power* Marx allocates the bureaucracy of the state and the military apparatus of the state. These two are not the only elements of the executive power, but they do form its core. Together they make up the 'widespread and ingenious machinery of state,' or *state machine*. Thus, Marx's analysis of the modern state as a state machine is motivated by the 'widespread' executive powers of the modern state. It is not the result of an analysis of the sovereignty of kings or statesmen. Neither does it emerge from a philosophical inquiry in the origin of law. In his analysis of the state as a machine Marx avoids any reference to political theory. Instead, his determination of the modern state as a machine is based on numbers: 'half a million officials' and 'an army of another half a million.' These figures indicate the existence of a 'parasitic body' that has encroached itself upon French society. This parasitic body is not centered; instead it functions like a *net*.

To conclude this section, I have argued that the central feature of the modern political machine is the increase in executive functions. The power of the modern state machine depends on these executive functions, and up to a certain point these executive functions are responsible for erecting the state machine. Once constituted, the state machine will continue to depend on these executive functions, which now operate from within the larger political machine of the state. On a more abstract level, but still starting out from the executive machinic functions that arose in the fourteenth century, the modern political machine can be defined by its capacity to create a machine that arrests social, economic, and geographic forces. Such a political program cannot be seen distinct from the machine that is created in politics. Politics itself is a machine, meaning that it brings together the heterogeneous elements to link them together so that they can start to operate in a machinic function that will determine politics. The state implies a move toward hierarchical structures and territorialization. Another outcome of the machinic functioning of the state is its emphasis on the judicial apparatus that grounds the legitimacy of the state. It is through

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Etienne Balibar, "Appareil", in Gérard Bensussan and Georges Labica (eds.), *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme* (Presses Universitaires de France: Paris 1982), 47–54.

the law that the state legitimates its monopoly of violence and thereby its centralization and territorialization.

4. State Thinking and Skepticism

The machinic functioning that consolidated in the modern political machine had its impact on the economy of forces with which I began this chapter. At this point I would like to return to the economy of forces and look at how this retroactively reconstituted the concept of the state. The economy of forces operative in the modern political machine is no longer that of natural sovereignty. In any case, the sovereignty of the state operates by a different economy of forces. This economy will now be regulated by the machine analyzed in the preceding section. In a similar way, Michel Foucault differentiates the economy of sovereignty from the economy of the modern disciplining societies. The theory of sovereignty, he writes, is a theory which 'can found absolute power on the absolute expenditure of power, but which cannot calculate power with minimum expenditure and maximum efficiency.'[317] The capacity for absolute expenditure belongs to the economy of forces sketched by Aquinas in his distinction between legitimate force and tyranny. In that economy it is possible to continue to draw from the legitimate force to establish a (justified) sovereignty because it relies on a *telos* of nature. Political laws will derive from the 'divine natural laws,' which in turn are derived from the 'divine will' that establishes the *telos* of nature.[318] In the modern political machine, on the other hand, the economy of forces is not set up by a *telos* of nature but by the machinic functioning, that is to say by the executive function of the state. The calculation of the use of force, and its capacity for expenditure, operate according to a different economy. The economy of force in the modern political machine will 'calculate power with minimum expenditure and maximum efficiency.' Foucault argues that this 'nonsovereign power, which is foreign to the form of sovereignty, is

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[317] Foucault, "*Society Must be Defended" Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*. (Picador: New York, 2003), 36.

[318] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Volume 28: Law and Political Theory* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2006), 151.

'disciplinary power.'[319] My argument has been that the economy of force itself, in the modern political machine, is installed and maintained by the machinic functions that make up this modern political machine. In more concrete terms, the economy of forces that is operative in the modern political machine is situated in the military apparatus, the police force, and the bureaucratic machinery that make up the modern state. Because the economy of forces now operates via these machinic functions, this economy itself becomes machinic. What is witnessed here is the passage from technics to machine.[320]

This does not mean that the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate force disappears; but it does mean that this distinction works from within the new economy that functions by disciplining institutions (in Foucault's terms), or via the machinic functions of the modern political machine. Any discourse on legitimate force and illegitimate force will have to situate itself within a *modern* economy of forces set up by the machinic functions of the state. It turns out, then, that such a discourse on legitimate and illegitimate force is of increasing importance for a number of reasons directly or indirectly related to the becoming-machinic of the political in modernity and its redistributed economy of forces. It is because the becoming-machinic of the modern political depends upon the executive functions that *the legitimacy of the force exerted by these executive must be warranted* – even if retroactively. The discourse on legitimate and illegitimate force therefore starts to play a role in modern state machine precisely because the legitimacy of the executive function of the state needs to be established: such a discourse will need to account for the economy of forces by drawing a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate force. In modern political theory this is done with rigorous precision, but not by scrutinizing the proper functioning of the executive functions of the state machine. The discourse that is developed in modern state thinking moves away from these executive functions. Instead, it tries to legitimate the use of force in the executive functions of the state by accounting for a legitimate origin of the state machine. The argument is that if the force originally used to establish the state is legitimate, then the use of this force (by its executive functions) to maintain the state form will

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[319] Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended*", 36.

[320] On the passage from technics to machine, see the first chapter.

also be legitimate. In other words, the question concerning the legitimacy of the force used by police, military apparatus, or bureaucracy is relayed to the legitimacy of the force that founds the state. This original force - also called original violence - that founds the state does not base itself on the historical emergence of the state. For as I have argued above, the historical emergence of the state is largely dependent upon a centralization and territorialization that only became possible thanks to the executive, machinic functions that would only be afterwards be incorporated by the state machine. Instead, a fictional or hypothetical ideal origin of the state must be constructed. In doing so, attention is led away from the modern state machine, away from the machinic functioning of modern politics, and directed toward the law and the social contract as that what founds the state. Such a theory that leads away from the machinic functioning of the political, and the role such a theory takes on in this state machine itself, is what I call *state thinking*: a theory that not only disguises the machinic functioning of the state and the political in modernity, but also redistributes the economy of forces operative within the state and reintroduces the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate force. On this subject Pierre Bourdieu has remarked that

> to think the state is to take the risk of taking (or being taken over) a thought of the state, that is, of applying to the state categories of thought produced and guaranteed by the state and hence to misrecognize its most profound truth.[321]

The crucial feature of state thinking is inscribed in the machinic functioning of the state but also disguises it. According to Deleuze and Guattari, such a state thinking signals the recuperation of reason by the modern state. The state gives reason a form of universality, which can then be used to legitimate the state as the universally just form of government:

> The state gives thought a form of interiority, and thought gives that interiority a form of universality. […] The exchange that takes place between the State and reason

[321] Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason* (Polity Press: Oxford 1998), 35.

> is a curious one; but that exchange is also an analytic proposition, because realized reason is identified with the de jure State, just as the state is the becoming of reason. In so-called modern philosophy, and in so-called modern or rational State, everything resolves around the legislator and the subject.[322]

The effect of state thinking, as Deleuze and Guattari remark, is that the state now revolves around the *legislator* and the *subject*. The machinic functioning of state is obfuscated while its juridical status is brought to the fore. Compliance with the modern tendency toward immanence, while maintaining a transcendent source of authority, is characteristic of such state thinking. Modern political philosophy has a particular aptitude to balance on the verge of state thinking. This implies that 'political philosophy (…) structures implicitly all philosophy.'[323]

The modern state machine creates its own reason: 'If it is advantageous for thought to prop itself up with the state, it is no less advantageous for the state to extend itself to thought, and to be sanctioned by it as the unique, universal form.'[324] This is why the construction of a theory of social contract and the origin of law are typical for the modern state machine. These strategies are executed in thought; they operate as experimental cogitative constructions. Historically they are possible because of the centralization and territorialization that mark the state as a modern political machine. The construction of one single origin that justifies the construction of the state machine as the ordering principle for the social strata is the extension of the characteristics of the state into thought. In the same movement, the construction of such an origin that would justify the state obfuscates the increasing importance of its executive functions. It therefore misses an essential characteristic of the machinic functioning of the state. But this is precisely why the construction of a historical origin of the law fits into the machinic functioning of the state itself: by focusing on such an origin the executive functions of the state disappear from sight; the state becomes a cogitative idea and the violence

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[322] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 414.

[323] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 92.

[324] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 414.

performed in the state through its executive functions are obfuscated. Hence the state does not appear as a machine. The distinction between legitimacy and illegitimacy plays a particularly important role here.

5. Law and Legitimacy in the Modern Political Machine

In his book *State, Power, Socialism*, Nicos Poulantzas argued that the constitution of modern law, including its economy of legitimate and illegitimate forces, was a direct result of the political machine of the modern state. 'It is precisely through a system of general, abstract, and formal rules that law regulates the exercise of power by the state apparatus.'[325] The roots of such a law do not go back to an ancient origin that would justify the modern state as the best form of government; but rather, as I argued above, 'its roots go back to the Absolutist State and the seventeenth century European monarchies.'[326] The legitimacy of the law is of a conceptual nature. But it is here that the efficacy of concepts and their very real imprint becomes apparent. Legitimacy is a concept that is intertwined with the physical reality of political violence: it is intertwined with the concrete functioning of the political machine (the military and the police). For this reason, the conceptual genealogy of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate force is bound up with the formation of the modern political machine. Illegitimate force gets defined as violence, while legitimate force effaces violence. For example, actions visited upon a subject in so far as they are legitimate actions of the law cannot be called violent. Thus, the concept of legitimacy has a crucial function in the political machine: while some actions are presented as violent, others are presented as legitimate and therefore non-violent (albeit coercive). Legitimacy functions within an economy of forces that structures and organizes the forces of technics in a given society. A distinction is made between *violence* and the *just coercion* of the law. The physical act that underlies the 'just coercion of the law' is, strictly speaking, a form of violence no different from any other form of violence. But because these physical acts are enmeshed in the political machine of the modern nation state, with its acquired

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[325] Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (Verso: London 2000), 91.

[326] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 91.

monopoly on violence, its violent nature is effaced. This effacement is enacted by legitimacy, as a part of the economy of forces. The conceptual framework of legitimacy thus immediately brings forth concrete effects that structure the modern political machine.

Michel de Montaigne is one of the first to explicitly refer to the legitimacy of the law in his essay, "An Apology for Raymond Sebond." As Montaigne puts it, the legitimate is but a fiction that serves to found the *truth of justice*.[327] He writes: 'And it has been said that even our law has legitimate fictions upon which the truth of its justice is based [*Et nostre droict mesme, a dict-on, des fictions legitimes sur lesquelles il fonde la verité de sa justice*].'[328] In his essay, "Force of Law," Derrida quotes this extremely complex remark by Montaigne to elaborate upon the difference between justice and law. Derrida asks: 'What is a legitimate fiction? What does it mean to found the truth of justice?'[329] These questions, along with the quote by Montaigne, prepare the reader for Derrida's interpretation of the force of law, the foundation of the law, and the meaning of justice. Derrida's essay puts into question the possibility of finding a foundation of the law; yet, at the same time, it argues that it is impossible to do without such a foundation.[330] Therefore, the origin of the law needs to be fictional *and* historical at the same time. Its legitimacy depends on these mutually excluding conditions. In my reading of legitimacy and the law I will use Montaigne's quote to develop a reading that is close to Derrida, but also differs from it in some distinct ways.

Montaigne's dealing with the law has to be read as an intervention that deals with the emergent modern political machine of his time, the economy of forces that is established by it and the discourse on legitimacy

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[327] For a systematic analysis of Montaigne's theory of law and justice, see André Tournon, "Justice and the law: On the reverse side of the *Essays*," in Ullrich Langer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2005), 96–117.

[328] Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, 603. (Translation modified.)

[329] Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'," in *Acts of Religion* (Routledge: New York / London 2002), 240.

[330] See Hent de Vries, *Religion and Violence. Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 2002), 209.

and illegitimacy that accompanies it. In articulating what can be understood as the first traits of positive law, Montaigne places the workings of legitimacy in a broader, political framework: that of the becoming-machinic of the political. On a political level, the foundation of the law is necessary to legitimate the state and its monopoly of violence. Dwelling on Derrida's analysis I want to approach the problem of legitimacy as a twofold problem that forms part of the state machine and has a machinic functioning in its own right. Both aspects of the problem of legitimacy take part in setting up the economy of forces operative within the modern state machine; and both aspects of the problem are constitutive for state thinking. Legitimacy is a twofold problem in the sense that it deals with two interrelated kinds of violence: the violence necessary to found the law, and the violence necessary to maintain the law. The legitimization of the law, when taken to its extreme, is the problem of legitimizing the violence that is needed to found the law. This will subsequently legitimate the violence that is needed to enforce the law. So legitimacy concerns violence that precedes the law but also founds the law, standing at the origin of the law. The violence used to maintain the law is made credible by relaying it to a more originary violence that founds the law.

Derrida's essay inquires into the status of an originary violence that precedes and founds the law. First, he deconstructs the originarity of this violence. As a result, originary violence is carried over to the law itself, where it starts to intermingle with the violence that maintains the law. While the latter depends on originary violence, it must also remain clearly distinct from it. The originary violence is of a different order than that used to maintain the law. Since it precedes the law it also precedes legitimacy and therefore it cannot be legitimate itself. But if the legitimate force or violence to maintain the law is itself based on a violence that is not legitimate, how then can one distinguish between legitimate violence and illegitimate violence? This is the question that Derrida asks throughout his essay on the force of law, and that will guide him through the wilderness of violence and legitimacy to a notion of justice that marks a *différance* from the law:

> How to distinguish between the force of law [*loi*] of a legitimate power and the allegedly originary violence that must have established this authority and that could not

> itself have authorized itself by any anterior legitimacy, so that, in this initial moment, it is neither legal nor illegal – as others would quickly say, neither just nor unjust?[331]

Because this violence that imposes itself upon 'the mystical foundation of the law' (as the subtitle of Derrida's essay has it) is central to Derrida's analysis, legitimacy is implicitly at the heart of Derrida's inquiry. The profoundly modern economy of legitimatization is best described as a strategy of distinction, restricting violence to a period where the law did not yet exist – and not beyond it. Once the law is founded, however violent the foundation may have been, the law itself becomes a criterion that legitimates the violence used to maintain the law. This specific violence exercised by the law is no longer violence, it is the force of (the) law and therefore legitimated. Legitimization is what allows for this distinction between violence, as an unjustified use of force, and the force of law, as a justified use of force.

One modern aspect of legitimizing the violence of the law in the modern political machine lies in its finely tuned responsiveness to the historicity of the state machine and to the foundation of the law that supposedly legitimates the state machine as the only justified political order. An intricate relation between law, fiction, and history necessitates the extraordinary move, the 'economy of legitimization' that the law in the modern political machine employs to justify the violence that founds the state. The state is in fact a historical construct but it does not tolerate its own historicity. Its historicity reveals contingency, its machinic functioning as well as the priority of the machinic. It thus threatens to undo the justification of the violent foundation of the state; it demystifies the idea that at the origin of the state lies the foundation of a just law to resolve a state of total war of everyone against everyone. Once we investigate the history of the state machine we can trace it back to its executive functions, its process of territorialization and the contingent political factors that allowed for the emergence of the state. Likewise, if we trace back the historical origin of the modern law that legitimates the violence of the state machine and of its executive functions, we would find that this law is the result of habitual and historical circumstances. Neither state nor law is the

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[331] Derrida, "Force of Law," 234.

result of a *universal subject* that acts as the *legislator* of the state machine, as state thinking has it. This is to say that as soon as we trace back the law to its origin, we find that it is without origin, without proper foundation. To relate the state machine back to its origin in a historical and political way means destructing it as a foundational juridical order: the law of the state can no longer maintain itself as something that is justified *in* and *for* itself on a trans-historical basis. Instead, what comes to the fore are the executive functions that the law tries to legitimate retroactively. For the state machine and the law of the state to be justified it needs to be a-historical; its installment may, therefore, never take place within history, but must be placed outside of history, the installment itself being an *event that never (at no historical moment) takes place*. This moment is presented as a fictional origin of the law that, in one single stroke, founds the state machine. The installation of the law brings with it legitimacy and the power that wields this legitimacy – the state.

The single stroke by which the judicial state machine is founded obfuscates the machinic function of the state because it draws attention away from the executive function of the state. The *single stroke*, the *absolute emergent order* to which the fictional foundation of the state machine adheres is typically modern, and closely engaged with a modern conception of the law. I would now like to take a closer look at the way such an emergent order or foundational act is structured, and what this implies for the modern state machine and its juridical order. In an essay on Kafka, entitled "Before the Law," Derrida gives an example of the relation of the law to history, the history of its own origin. Derrida describes how the law always tries to efface its own history:

> The law, intolerant of its own history, intervenes as an absolute emergent order, absolute and detached from any origin. It appears as something that does not appear as such in the course of history. At all events, it cannot be constituted by some history that might give rise to any story. If there were any history, it would not be

> presentable nor relatable: the history of that which never took place.[332]

The conceptualization of a *radical rupture* between the period before and the period after the foundation of the law of the state bears witness to the necessity of effacing the history of law and state. Legitimizing the foundation of the law must be done through *the a posteriori (re)construction of a hypothetical original situation*, not by reconstructing a concrete historical situation, whose circumstances can be fully accounted for. This hypothetical original situation depicts the transition from a violent unregulated order to the order of the modern state. The law, embodied as a social contract, thus stands at the origin of the modern state machine. The event by which the law is founded is an event to which there can be no direct relation. As Derrida has it, the 'reality of its historical referent is, if not annulled, at least irremediably fissured.'[333] In this attempt to efface its own historicity, the law risks transforming its own origin into a fiction. In becoming a fiction the justification of the law is threatened a second time. Now there is a lack of reality that is equally intolerable to the law. The 'quasi-event' with tangible consequences that never took place, necessitated by the need to legitimate the violence of the law, is both 'demanding and denying the story.'[334] It is demanding it in the sense that it needs to be a-historical, and to achieve this the law turns itself and its own history into a fictitious event, a quasi-event.

The fiction at the origin of state and law cannot be reduced to an ideological need to cover-up a supposed real violence at the origin. The relation between the historical event and the fictitious quasi-event is not one of simple contrast, as if between truth and fiction. Slavoj Žižek, in *For They Know Not What They Do*, gives an ideological account of the fictitious moment at the origin of the law. In his reading the law is a cover-up for the Real of violence:

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[332] Jacques Derrida, "Before the Law," in *Acts of Literature* (Routledge: London / New York, 1992), 194.

[333] Derrida, "Before the Law", 199.

[334] Derrida, "Before the Law", 199.

> "At the beginning" of the law, there is a certain "outlaw", a certain Real of violence which coincides with the act itself of the establishment of the reign of law: the ultimate truth about the reign of law is that it is an usurpation, and all classical politico-philosophical thought rests on the disavowal of this violent act of foundation. The illegitimate violence by which the law sustains itself must be concealed at any price, because this concealment is the positive condition of the functioning of law: it functions in so far as its subjects are deceived, in so far as they experience the authority of law as "authentic and eternal" and overlook "the truth about usurpation."[335]

Žižek describes the violence of the law as the Real not because it happened at a certain point in time, but because it must be presupposed for setting in place the law.[336] Fiction, then, is what substitutes this Real to make us believe that it did not happen. It is because one must not uncover the infamous origin of the law – which is in itself nothing but an illegitimate violent act – that fiction is introduced, Žižek argues. This fiction is a 'fantasy constructed by bourgeois ideology to account for the origins of civil society – that is, of the reign of law.'[337] In dealing with what he designates as one of the more obsessive interests in politico-philosophical thought, Žižek relies heavily on a concept of ideology. Such an ideological reading of the law makes a distinction between the real violence and the ideological fiction that is supposed to veil this violence. Derrida's analysis, however, has the advantage of demonstrating that the distinction between the fictitious event and the historical event cannot be maintained. The two are interrelated, deconstructing each other.

The foundation of the law is depicted as a fable, a myth or a fiction because it needs to efface the concrete historical circumstances of its foundation. Yet, at the same time, 'the law as such should never give rise to any story. To be invested with its categorical authority, the law must be

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[335] Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do. Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (Verso: New York / London 1991), 204.

[336] See Jodi Dean, "Žižek on Law," *Law and Critique*, 15 / 2004, 7.

[337] Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*, 205.

without history, without genesis, or any possible derivation. That would be *the law of the law*.'[338] The quasi-event of the foundation of the law denies its fictitious status because the law itself must be real and not fictitious. (A fictitious law would not be a law, since it cannot be enforced.) This 'law of the law' reveals a tension, even an aporia that can be brought to bear upon the legitimization of the law itself. At the same time, the legitimate existence of the law depends upon this tension.

The difficulty in narrating the origins of law as a strategy of legitimization is a characteristic feature in modern theory of law and state which originates within the modern state machine. This is one of the intricate complexities of state thinking. The penultimate example of a state thinking, which tries to justify the state by a fictional origin of the state machine as the institution of law, is exemplary for the social contract. The law acts as a central function in a broader conception of society. Its importance in the context of an analysis of *political machinic functioning* is that it not only serves to legitimate the law but also the state machine itself, in which the law takes part. The fiction Derrida ascribes to the origin of the law takes on its political significance when placed within the context of the machinic functioning that brings together the first formative figurations of the state in early modernity. My emphasis on Montaigne's use of the phrase 'legitimate fiction' is motivated by the conviction that it gives an idea of the modern concept of legitimacy in the formation of the state machine – and not merely as a principle of law. Derrida quotes Montaigne for another reason, namely for his articulation of an idea of justice that is no longer founded on a mystical origin. With this in mind, I now return to Montaigne's statement about legitimacy and fiction.

In Montaigne's reading, an origin of the law is lacking. Montaigne denies the story that founds the law and subsequently the state. This does not mean that the law or the state loses its legitimacy. For Montaigne, this opens up an analysis in which the law is studied as a part within a larger machinery that is brought into being: the modern political machine with its tendency toward immanence and its need for a transcendence that will secure its sovereign power. This tendency between immanence and transcendence, between closure and end, is what is articulated in the fictitious quasi-event that lies at the origin of the law. As such, it is part of

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[338] Derrida, "Before the Law," 191.

the larger constitution of the social and political realm of the modern political machine. Its functioning is in compliance with this machine. By merely focusing on the relation between justice and the law as a problem belonging exclusively to the theoretical question about the origin of the law, Derrida's analysis risks losing sight of the larger political and machinic context in which Montaigne's statement should be placed. The origin of the law should be seen as a part of state thinking, which functions in an economy of forces of the political machine. It is not only the case that the origin of the law legitimates the maintenance of the law; it is also the other way around, the maintenance of the law justifies its origin even if that origin is lacking. This is the seeming 'juridical paradox that constitutive power can be defined only by constituted power.'[339] It leads to the emergence of positive law in modernity, of which Montaigne may be a first forebear.

6. Demystification and Machination: The Modern State Machine

Let me return to the quote by Montaigne: 'And it is said that even our laws are legitimate fictions upon which the truth of their justice is based.'[340] As the quote indicates, the distinction between the law and justice is itself marked by a distinction between truth and fiction. Montaigne argues that there is a 'legitimate fiction', namely the law, which is necessary to found justice. Justice is then depicted as *truth* founded by fiction. Pairing fiction with legitimacy and truth with justice, Montaigne's quote reveals the precariousness of the law: for its very existence *just* law seems to depend on a *legitimate* fiction. This implies that the ultimate foundation of the just is itself something that is not just but legitimate. Montaigne thereby reverses the usual order that goes from the just to the legitimate and that bases the legitimate on the just. Along with this reversal Montaigne also plays a trick on the relation between truth and fiction. Truth is based on a fiction. In Montaigne's rendering of the law, its justice only becomes a truth by being

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339 Antonio Negri in an interview with Gilles Deleuze, *Negotations 1972–1990* (Columbia University Press: New York 1995), 173. On constitutive power, see also Negri, *Insurgencies. Constitutive Power and the Modern State* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 1997).

340 Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, 603. (Translation modified.)

founded upon a fiction that is itself merely legitimate. From a contemporary perspective on concepts such as justice and legitimacy, truth and fiction, this strikes one as an odd statement.

In his essay on the force of law Derrida takes Montaigne's indictment as a starting point to argue that the possibility of the law is alike in structure to the possibility of literature. He secures his claim via two rhetorical questions in which he notes a structural analogy between law and literature. The *first question* focuses on the structural relation of the law to the subject of law and asks: 'What if the law, without being transfixed by literature, shared the conditions of its possibility with the literary object?'[341] Derrida is arguing that we never have access to the ontological core of the law itself. In this sense the law is *structurally like* the literary object: it cannot really represent itself since its existence remains indeterminable. For its justification the law needs to narrate its own origin. Yet it does not tolerate any story. The law cannot relate its own origin and hence it cannot relate its own foundation. In its structure, Derrida argues, the law is dependent upon the impossibility of recounting its own story. Such a story is nevertheless necessary for the justification of the law. This is why in order to be effective, the law must be alike in structure to the literary object, even if this means to risk haphazardly contaminating the law with fiction. Both depend upon the productive insertion of fiction into their build-up to become operational. In the case of literature, this is obvious. In the case of the law, it is necessary for the whole machinery of legitimacy to take its course.

Even if the law is *in principle* different from fiction, the possibility of fiction cannot *structurally* be ruled out. This is a consequence of the construction of state thinking that both constructs and destructs the idea of the *origin* of law and state. The double move we see at work between the law as fiction and the law as intolerant to any fiction regarding itself, returns in Derrida's second question. The *second question* focuses on the structural relation of the subject of law to the law and asks:

> Is not what holds us in check before the law […] also what paralyzes and detains us when confronted with a story: is it not its possibility and its impossibility, its readability

[341] Derrida, "Before the Law," 191.

> and unreadability, its necessity and prohibition, and the questions of relation, of repetition and of history?[342]

Derrida again stresses the inaccessibility of the law. We cannot get hold of the supposed ontological core of the law. Although the law clearly exists, its precise nature and determination remain intangible. For the law to have an effect on its subjects, it has to depend upon the inaccessibility or suspension of the story of the law. So again, according to Derrida, the law needs this structural affinity with fiction in order to be effective. This reveals the precariousness of the law, but also its force. Once Derrida relates this possibility of fiction to the essential readability and unreadability of the law, as is suggested in the second question, he has cleared the road for a deconstruction of the law as carried out in his essay "Force of Law".

The distinction between truth and fiction, and between justice and legitimacy, also implicates a more profound distinction: that between nature and artifice or technique, mediated through the concept of the supplement. The fictional legitimacy installed to found the truth of justice is characterized by Montaigne as a supplement analogous to the supplement of nature. He compares the need for a fiction in law with the need for a lady to mask her missing teeth with artificial ivory ones.[343] Montaigne suggests that there is only a supplement, a legitimate fiction, and no original natural justice that precedes this fiction. Justice only comes afterwards. The legitimate fiction then becomes a strategy of the supplement. Through this reading, Montaigne is rendered as a precursor of the doctrine of positive law that was conceptualized in the nineteenth-century and has since taken on an important position in the theory of law. For Derrida, what is at work in Montaigne's use of the supplement is an alignment of technique with the unnatural, the supplementary. This would make it possible to reduce law to a technique, a move which Derrida criticizes. However, the complex relation between law and technique in Montaigne's statement entails more complex alignments than merely that of technique and supplement. Montaigne is not so much reinstating such an alignment - which supposedly can be traced in philosophy from Plato to Heidegger. Rather he is *articulating the singular political condition of his age in which the modern*

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[342] Derrida, "Before the Law," 196.

[343] Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, 602.

political machine begins to take shape. His turn away from the origin of the law enacts a demystification of the law and legitimacy. It opens up the possibility to see them at work as two elements in the machinic functioning of the state. This makes the reference to Montaigne of critical importance as a marker of a constitutive moment in the modern political machine.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida conceives of the supplement as a cumulating abundance and substituting for a shortage or a lack. This double meaning of the supplement is described as follows:

> The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *technè*, image, representation, convention, etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function. […] But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory [*suppléant*] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes-(the)-place* [*tient-lieu*]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness.[344]

Derrida designates two aspects of the supplement which, while not exactly contradictory, create a tension, or even infighting: the supplement adds and enriches, but it also replaces and fills. This implies that the supplement is at the same time the accomplishment of an overabundance of presence, an 'extra,' as it were, and a necessity that is needed to fill a lack of presence.

Such structural tension installed by the supplement is found in Montaigne's plea for a legitimate fiction. Montaigne asserts that we need a legitimate fiction to secure justice. Hence he implies that whilst justice certainly exists in the world and does have some kind of foundation, the law that is needed to attain justice cannot be founded in nature. Parting with

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[344] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 144–5.

the doctrine of natural law that was still maintained by Aquinas, Montaigne moves toward a doctrine of positive law and depicts the law as founded on a historical and social contingency.[345] The theory of positive law was coined by legal theorist John Austin, arguing that 'the existence of law is one thing; its merit or demerit is another.'[346] Austin argues that instead of focusing on the justification and hence the origin of the law, it is better to study the law as it is actually functioning in society. This implies that the legitimacy of the law will not depend on the justice that underlies it but on its efficacy in modern society. 'A law, which actually exists, is a law, though we happen to dislike it, or though it vary from the text, by which we regulate our approbation and disapprobation.'[347] In positive law the legitimacy of the law depends on the correct regulation it has in society. Here the legitimacy of the law is truly on the side of technique: forced into an instrumental relation the law is legitimate if this instrumental relation is adapted correctly, serves the right goal. Positive law is installed under the pretext of a supplement, that is to say it is because the origin is left out of the analysis that the function of the law becomes the focus of the legitimacy of the law. As I explained in the first chapter, the conceptualization of the supplement - like the *pharmakon* - is part of a teleological determination that installs the schema of means and ends. By aligning technology with the supplement it is reduced to technique, that is to say a means oriented toward an end. Both natural law and positive law can be read as using the supplement to reduce the complexities of the law to a mere technique. In the case of natural law, the supplement - as a means - is firmly oriented toward the origin that functions as its goal and justification. The law here refers back to the natural institution that is mediated by it and that justifies its force. In the case of

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[345] The doctrine of positive law is based on the thesis that 'the existence and content of law depends on social facts and not on its merits.' See Leslie Green, "Legal Positivism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/legal-positivism/. See also Mario Jori, "Legal Positivism," in E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Routledge: London 1998), online: http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/T008.

[346] John Austin, *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995), 157.

[347] Austin, *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, 157.

positive law, the supplement is used to study the law as a means without relating this back to its end or origin.

In Montaigne the move toward a theory of positive law is still attenuated by the 'legitimization' of this fiction by *a just end*, which is more typical for natural law theory. Montaigne's fiction finds its justification not in the correctness of its application - typical for positive law theories - but in the just end that it serves, namely the foundation of justice (typical for natural law theory). In his important study on Montaigne, Jean Starobinski has appropriately positioned Montaigne in between positive and natural law. He points out that the legitimate fiction Montaigne proposes leads us toward a human duty that is founded neither on nature nor on strict convention:

> What Montaigne has brought to light is a "duty of humankind," a "mutual obligation" that applies to all who share the same experience of the senses, even though it is impossible to state any positive law that is not open to debate and controversy: the sense of felt *similarity* justifies the repudiation of violence. The apparent paradox is that *acquiescence* in the inherited order is based, for the enlightened mind, on the infinite *variety* of usages and customs, among which no criterion of superiority enables one to choose: no criterion, that is, except for that of public tranquility and the survival of the community. Yet the convention to which the war-weary skeptical mind rallies is unlike the convention earlier denounced: it is the same in appearance but henceforth deprived of the foundation it once claimed, and which guaranteed it a timeless, not to say transcendent, authority. What had been the object of attack and criticism, and what continues to be held suspect, is the "mystical" authority that the civil and religious order had claimed.[348]

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[348] Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion* (Chicago University Press: Chicago 1985), 253.

Montaigne accepts the rule of law in the new political figuration. But it is precisely because of this new political figuration that he will argue that the law is a supplement that lacks an origin. Hence, he is able to demystify the foundation of the law. This opens the way for an analysis that will focus on the positive function of the law. Montaigne's conceptualization of legitimacy does more than foreshadow the future development of the concept of legitimacy. His view serves as a point of orientation in the development of the modern political machine that is in the process of constituting itself. In this machine the law starts to take on a function that is embedded in a new political context. This is the modern political machine with its end and closure, its tension between immanence and transcendence.

The conceptualization of the origin of the law as a fictitious event and the conceptualization of this origin as a supplement without an origin both need to be placed in the context of the modern political machinery. The obsessive interest in the social contract as a fictitious starting point that legitimates law and state is one outcome of the process of the formation of the state machine. The state machine itself is thereby pushed back to its singular, *foundational* principle: the origin of the law as the origin of the social stratum that is ordered and structured in the political machine, that is to say the modern state machine. The grounds for such a foundation or origin of the law are political, that is to say the construction of such an origin functions as a political strategy: it is *state thinking*. The paradoxical relation between the necessity for the onto-historical reality of this origin *and* the need for fiction in the relation of the origin can be understood once we realize that the origin is a construction of the political machine. The modern political machine constructs both the fictitious and the onto-historical status of the origin. It does so to *legitimate* its own political order. Derrida focuses on the original foundation of the law and shows that it is ultimately untenable. In his work on politics, Derrida takes the same strategy. He leads the essence of the political back to its desire for a pure and stable presence (a metaphysical tendency). He then argues that politics seeks such a solid presence in the construction of a stable territory (which will most often be the territory of the nation state). Both the desire to find an ontologically stable origin of the law and the desire to find an ontologically stable territory are impossible to fulfill. As a result, Derrida argues, politics is caught up in a double bind that deconstructs the political.

But even more important, this conceptualization of politics depends upon a profoundly modern formation of the political – determined as it is by the historical and structural formation of the state machine.

Quite a different outcome follows from the implicit turn toward positive law as witnessed in Montaigne. This initial turn to positivism is still far removed from the legal positivism of the nineteenth century motivated by utilitarianism. Montaigne's underlying drive is still justice. Moreover, Montaigne is not the only political theorist who reconfigured the relation between nature and law through the broader formation of the political machine. According to Pierre Macherey, in Spinoza we find a negotiation between natural principles to which all political forms tend and a sort of political realism that forbids leading all forms of society back to one universal principle or origin. Macherey writes that:

> Philosophy leads all kinds of societies back to common principles, which are those of nature, but it abandons privileging in any absolute way a certain structure of power and constituting this structure into a universal paradigm.[349]

In a double movement Montaigne at the same time denies the relation between nature and the law, by arguing that we need a fiction and cannot fall back upon any natural law to assure justice, *and* yet draws an analogy between justice and nature: both are in need of a supplement. In the case of justice, fiction is the supplement that is required. This fiction serves as a supplement as it is described by Derrida in *Of Grammatology*: the supplement is an overabundance of fiction, but one that has the primary task to make up for the lack of a definite foundation of justice.

As Derrida reads him, 'Montaigne proposed an analogy between this supplement of a legitimate fiction, the fiction necessary to found the truth of justice, and the supplement of artifice called for by a deficiency of nature.'[350] The connection between the deficiency of nature and the fiction of the law is established through the absence of natural law that lies at the

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[349] Pierre Macherey, *In a Materialist Way. Selected Essays* (Verso: London / New York), 149.

[350] Derrida, "Force of Law," 240.

core of Montaigne's argument. Derrida argues that Montaigne derives the necessity of fiction from the absence of natural law, 'as if the absence of natural law called for the supplement of historical or positive (that is to say, an addition of fictional) law.'[351] Again we find the intricate relation between the historical contingency of the law and the supplement of fiction that remains essential to that law even if it is argued that the law cannot endure fiction. However, the preceding analysis of the modern state machine shows the problem posed by Derrida to be a typically modern problem. A growing emphasis both on the executive function of the state and on the conceptualization of the origin of the law as the origin of a just ordering of the social strata that make up the state, is what results from the formation of the state machine. This is why I believe that the origin of the law is neither ontologically or historically real, nor fictitious. Both the ontologically real and the fictitious status of the law are constructed from within the modern machine of the state. It is but one of the many ways of the machinic functioning of the state, albeit an important one, that of legitimacy.

Montaigne's argument exemplifies the way that both a historical and a fictional account of the law gain ground because of the absence of a natural origin. This historical approach to the law, which can lead to all kinds of theories of positive law, opens up the possibility for a focus and critique of the state and the law that is situated in the violence that they enact. Derrida believes that, at best, this can lead to a kind of judirical ideology critique that 'will always be possible and [will] sometimes be useful.'[352] But he argues that this type of historically oriented ideology critique is not enough in itself, since it threatens to make abstraction of the most pertinent problem in modern theory of law: the legitimization of the violence that founds the law, and hence the justice of the law itself. I have argued, on the other hand, that the analysis of the origin of the law and the supposedly performative violence that is enacted there, are themselves constructions of the modern political machine extending itself into thought. An all too narrow focus on the origin of the law cannot place this theory of the origin of the law in the context of the machinic functioning of

[351] Derrida, "Force of Law," 240.

[352] Derrida, "Force of Law," 32.

the state. Therefore it runs the risk of unwittingly turning into 'state thinking'[353] - a theory that ratifies the state even if it seems to criticize it.

7. Constitutive Violence and Performative Fiction

If we exclusively focus on the foundation of the law and the violence enacted by it, a moderate move toward positive law, such as the one made by Montaigne, does not reach up to the mark. Such a historical critique of the law is unable to deal with the intricacies posed by the foundation of the law. In "Force of Law," Derrida criticizes positive law precisely because of its neglect for the problem of the origin of the law. This is because the violence that is used to found the law is of a special, performative kind that cannot be accounted for by historical or economical analysis. It is here that Derrida introduces fiction as something that is crucial to the law but cannot be reduced to something purely historic. Derrida's reserve for a positive theory of law is expressed in the following passage from "Force of Law":

> The very emergence of justice and law, the instituting, founding, and justifying movement of law implies a performative force, that is to say always an interpretative force and a call to faith [*un appel à la croyance*]: not in the sense, this time, that law would be *in the service* of force, its docile instrument, servile and thus exterior to the dominant power, but rather in the sense of law that would maintain a more internal, more complex relation to what one calls force, power or violence. Justice – in the sense of *droit* (right or law) – would not simply be put in the service of a social force or power, for example an economic, political, ideological power that would exist outside or before it and that it would have to accommodate or bend to when useful.[354]

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[353] On this subject, see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 415ff.

[354] Derrida, "Force of Law," 241.

Derrida distinguishes between applications of the law, which would certainly benefit from standards set by positive law, and the foundation of the law that demands a different reflection on the law and cannot be limited to simply setting the standards for applying the law correctly. For Derrida, the application of a rule may bring the correct and legitimate solution to a certain judicial dispute, but it will not bring justice. Focusing on the problem of the origin of the law, Derrida rules out the correct application of the law as a minimal definition for justice. His definition of justice emerges from a reflection on the origin of law. At the same time, Derrida presents a concept of fiction that is characterized by the modern conditions for its emergence. If the concept of fiction that he employs in his analysis can be shown to be the outcome of the formation of the modern state machine, then the concept of justice he develops also needs to be replaced in the context of the modern machine of the state. The question that arises for Derrida is: what is the role of fiction in the legitimacy of the law? He will argue that the role of fiction is related to the performative force of constitutive violence. Digressing from Derrida's interpretation, I want to emphasize the role of fiction in the formation of the modern machine of the state. I do so by relating Derrida's focus on the origin of the law back to the executive functions of the state, for this is where the machinic functioning of the state can be witnessed.

Emphasizing the performative violence that marks the foundation of the law, Derrida runs the risk of reintroducing a quasi-mystical foundation of the law. At the core of Derrida's reading lies the belief that the origin of the law can be neither demystified by a historical reading, nor completely mystified – again by posing it as somehow historically real. The risk of a renewed mystification of the origin of the law lies in the structural likeness that Derrida sees at work between the law and fiction. By overemphasizing Montaigne's rejection of the foundation of the law as its legitimation, Derrida can criticize Montaigne in order to propose a reevaluation of the foundation of the law. He then shows how the origin is ultimately problematic. The question is whether this strategy does justice to the law in relation to the modern political machine. Starobinski's comment demonstrated that Montaigne's turn to a positive conception of the law is moderate. Above all, it is motivated by the new political context in which Montaigne is situated. In the political machine one encounters a narrow focus on the performative force of the foundation of the law. In itself this

can be a strategy of diversion that leads attention away from the machine itself. At the same time, the conceptual utensils that are needed to bring the origin of the law into scope are provided by the modern political machine itself: a turn to historicity and a modern conception of fiction as that which has the right to say everything.

What needs to be studied is how the performative force of law is brought into relation with other political elements, how it forms a part of the centralization and territorialization of the state. All these elements form an operative interlacement that is not so much concerned with denying or covering up the origin of the law as with structuring the forces at work in society. The political turns into a machine with complex but interlaced machinic functionings not because it is a superstructure – that would be to misinterpret the centralization of the state completely – but because it forms a network of distributing forces, producing legitimacy in its economic and military operations. The essence of this power, and the economy of forces to which it pertains, is described well by Foucault:

> It seems to me that the eighteenth century also succeeded in creating – and the disappearance at the end of the eighteenth century of the monarchy, of what we call the Ancien Régime, is precisely the confirmation of this – a power that is not part of the superstructure but that is integrated in the play, distribution, dynamic strategy, and effectiveness of forces; a power, therefore, that is invested directly in the distribution and play of forces.[355]

It is in the context of this political regime of the eighteenth century that the modern concept of literature emerges, along with the increasing interest in the origin of the law and the social contract. The idea that the law cannot tolerate its own history, as Derrida argues, only becomes a pertinent problem in modernity with its increasing awareness of the importance of history and historicity. If the historicity of the law is what Derrida is basing

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[355] Michel Foucault, *Abnormal. Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975* (Picador: New York 2003), 52.

his argument upon, then his conceptualization of the law only holds for the modern political machine.

Derrida argues however that what holds us in check before the law is something different from the history of the law, something that is intricately related to fiction. What Derrida – digressing from Montaigne – calls the mystical foundation of the law expresses the idea that what stands at the origin of the law is not merely something historical but something that transgresses a historical approach to the law. Neither can the concept of legitimacy be useful in determining the violence that is needed to found the law. An inquiry into the origin of the law will get stuck on this point: the common juridical standards for the legitimacy of the law, which entail the legitimacy of the force that is needed to apply or enforce the law, are no longer sufficient to determine the nature of the violence (or force) that founds the law. The origin of the law is marked by a performative force that is not just a force in the usual sense of the word. This force cannot be called just or unjust, nor legitimate or illegitimate, since there is no law prior to it according to which it could said to be just or unjust. This force is indistinguishable from the law itself, and it cannot be contradicted or made undone by any kind of justice. Derrida concludes:

> [T]he operation that amounts to founding, inaugurating, justifying law, to *making law*, would consist of a *coup de force*, of a performative and therefore interpretative violence that is in itself neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no earlier and previously founding law, no preexisting foundation, could, by definition, guarantee or contradict or invalidate.[356]

Literature, as Derrida understands it, is intricately tied up with this modern theme of legitimacy, if only because 'the set of laws or conventions which fixed what we call literature in modernity was not indispensable for poetic works to circulate.'[357] It already becomes apparent that the legitimacy of the

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[356] Derrida, "Force of Law," 241.

[357] Derrida, "'This strange institution called literature': an interview with Derek Attridge," in Derrida, *Acts of Literature* (Routledge: London / New York), 40.

law in modernity is installed in the machinic functioning of the political machine of the state. This is why fiction should be understood from within this machine, as a part of this machine.

When dealing with the status of fiction in relation to the law, Derrida makes no clear distinction between fiction and literature. For that reason his arguments are sometimes accidentally confused. Moreover, Derrida easily switches from the essence of fiction, which he argues is that of the lack of essence, and the position of fiction in a social or political machine. This goes to show how easily the historical or social function and position of fiction is mixed up with a philosophical reflection on the lack of essence. For my own inquiry in the machinic functioning of the modern political machine it is important to keep these two as strictly separated as possible. In the next chapter I undertake a more profound inquiry in the narrative function of literature and the privileged site it can have in a machinic function. For now I track Derrida's conceptualization of literature and fiction while trying to position his argument in the context of the modern machinic functioning of politics.

Derrida makes a distinction between literature in the broad sense and literature in the strict sense. In the broad sense, literature stretches from Homer to the present day. In the strict sense, however, literature is distinctly modern and emerges in the highly singular political context of modern Europe. Continuing this line of thought Derrida even argues that 'Greek or Latin poetry, non-European discursive works, do not, […] *strictly speaking* belong to literature.'[358] Derrida makes this categorization on the basis of a political condition: if we take literature as a narrative *and* social practice to be the result of the possibility of 'being able to say everything,' then literature only emerges in European modernity. The law or principle so tied up with literature and modernity as Derrida understands is that of 'being able to say everything.' Strictly speaking, literature begins in modernity, marked as it is by the desire to be able to say anything. This does not imply that in reality it has always been able to say anything it wants. In practice literature has always faced censorship. In my argument I want to hold on to Derrida's conceptualization of literature in the strict sense to give a more precise definition of what literature is, as opposed to fiction.

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[358] Derrida, "'This strange institution called literature'," 40 (emphasis mine).

Nonetheless, the tradition of literature cannot be detached from its Latin origin and future. Literature stems from, and strives toward a world literature that remains dominated by the Latin-Christian tradition. When speaking about this tradition in a broader sense Derrida often refers to mondialatinisation.[359] With regard to literature this Latin-Christian tradition can also be found in the laws of literature – the desire to be able to say everything and the project of a global literature. Thus, although Derrida has confirmed that only modern literature can *strictly speaking* be called literature because of its place in the modern political context, he has also stated that in a broader sense literature is tied up with its Latin roots:

> There is no thought, no experience, no history of literature as such and under this name, no world literature, if such a thing is or remains to come (…), there is no passion of literature that must not first inherit what this latinity assumes and thereby show itself capable of receiving it and, as I would say in French, of suffering it, which is to accept, to receive, to capacitate, to invite, to translate into itself, to assimilate, but also to contain, to keep thus within its boundaries.[360]

The combination of the broad and the strict view on literature together form Derrida's specific insight into the structure of literature. In both cases the law is intricately involved with literature. Time and again, Derrida's conception of literature and the law hovers between this broad view and the strict view. Shuttling back and forth between the strict and the broad view allows him to establish connections between literature, society and the law.

The emphasis that Derrida puts on the juridical-historical principle of being able to say everything is itself the result of the specific conditions in which literature developed in Europe since the sixteenth century. The

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[359] Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: the two sources of religion at the limits of reason alone" in *Acts of Religion* (Routledge: New York / London 2002), 50.

[360] Derrida, *Demeure. Fiction and Testimony* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2000), 20.

fact that Derrida takes this specific evolution of literature as its principle would seem ample evidence of the claim that he is conscious of the historical and specifically modern circumstances in which literature arose. J. Hillis Miller points to Derrida's concept of literature in order to argue against the claim that deconstruction's relation to literature is ahistorical:

> here is an exigent historicizing if there ever was one. It is a historicizing of literature that would make big problems with current (and much older) attempts to universalize the Western concept of literature.[361]

This may be true, but what remains clear beyond this justifiable claim is that the historical exigency demonstrated by Derrida in his reading of literature remains scarce. Although Derrida historicizes, he does not directly place his historicized idea of literature in a political context. He does so indirectly by pointing out that literature depends on democracy; but he never traces the formation of literature in relation to the state machine. In Derrida's work, literature in its operative function is not related to the modern political machine. For Derrida the historical emergence of literature in the political and historical formation of Europe is related 'in a unique fashion to what is called truth, fiction, simulacrum, science, philosophy, law, right, democracy.'[362] The operative function of literature is related to the concepts that are used to deconstruct ontology (such as simulacrum and fiction). As a result, the operative function of literature finds its place within this deconstruction of ontology. However, whereas literature takes part in the deconstruction of ontopology, it does not take part in explaining the formation of the machinic functioning of the state. Derrida's thinking of politics grapples with the ontopological formation of the state, but at the same time it cannot get past state thinking.

With this in mind I want to turn to the distinction between the violence used to maintain the law and the violence used to constitute the

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[361] J. Hillis Miller, "Derrida and literature," in Tom Cohen (ed.), *Derrida and the Humanities. A Critical Reader* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2001), 64.

[362] Derrida, *Points…Interviews 1974–1994* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 1995), 346.

law. It is through this distinction that the relation between fiction and legitimacy becomes visible in the clearest possible way. To reach the predominantly modern kernel that underlies the problem of legitimacy and the violence of the law we need to draw upon an intricate understanding of its emergence. This emergence is structurally related to the emergence of the state as a political and social order. I have designated this ordering principle as the modern political machine. One of the state's machinic functions is to draw the distinction between positive law (with an increasing awareness of the executive functions of the state) and natural law (with the risk of falling into a state thinking). The distinction made in modern philosophy of law between the violence that maintains the law and the violence that founds the law is in line with the distinction between the executive functions of the state and the founding principle of the state.

Most modern theories of law will argue that the problem of legitimacy is more difficult to resolve in the case of the violence that *founds* the law. This can be either because there is no origin of law (as Montaigne would have it), or because the origin of the law itself is subject to a deconstruction (because of its need for fiction *and* history, as explained above). The problem of the justification of violence, and along with it the need to legitimate the violence enacted by the law, is considered more problematic in the case of violence used to found the law than in the case of violence used to maintain the law, because in the first case there are not yet any rules to hand that enable one to draw the specific distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence.

In a pre-modern economy of legitimate and tyrannical forces there is no rupture between the origin of these forces and the natural order – and neither is there a distinction between the tyrannical and the legitimate. Thomas Aquinas still grounds the legitimacy of royal power in the *telos* of nature, arguing that 'there needs to be something that directs all things ordained to an end [...] so that they might achieve the due end by a direct path.'[363] Hence, Aquinas does not draw any distinction between pre-juridical or pre-statist human life and juridical human life within the state. For Aquinas, the ordered, legitimate society follows naturally from God's

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[363] Ptolemy of Lucca, *On the Government of Rulers. With Portions Attributed to Aquinas*, 60. Book 1 is attributed to Thomas Aquinas; see n.2, above.

well-disposed natural plan. Modern theories of law, on the contrary, do not accept this fluent and natural transition. Even proponents of natural law stress the rupture between what is given prior to the foundation of the law and what is posterior to the foundation of the law. In modern political theory the transition from the (imaginary) state of nature in which every man does as he thinks best and obeys no law, to a society with a legislation upon which all members can agree, is conceived of as a *rupture*. This rupture is installed in the modern political machine. In order to proceed from the natural conditions to those of civilized society a rupture must be made: the necessary enforcement of a set of laws that found the state as a form of political government. To enforce the law for the first time requires a performative violence that is not legitimated by the existing laws. Therefore, the question that state thinking will ultimately have to address in order to legitimate the modern state as the most just form of political government is a legal question, a question asked in modern theory of law: how can laws be set in place without enacting a violence that *in itself* is not legitimate (and it cannot be legitimate since there are not yet any laws that could legitimate it), so that a state can emerge? The rupture between the natural condition and the state of law is typical for the modern political machine. It fences off the origin from the current political situation. Whereas in the previous chapter I dealt with the teleo-eschatological closure of the modern political machine towards its end, here we can see the closure of the origin. The modern political machine desires to become a closed system of complete immanence. Yet the authority of its laws and functions depends on a transcendent force that compels one to obey from beyond the formation of the social contract. The authority of the law is tied up with its origin and at the same time this origin must remain intangible in the strictest sense.

Immanuel Kant was the first philosopher to really pay attention to the rupture that distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate forces in modernity, and thus to use this rupture explicitly to legitimate the originary violence that founds the law and the state. Kant explains that violence can never be legitimate, but he then immediately asks how it would be possible to arise from the state of nature to the civil state with its well-ordered laws. If the laws are founded they must be preceded by a violence that was not legitimated by the laws. Kant argues, however, that this violence *was* founded; not by the laws as such, but by the morality that is intrinsic to our

common human nature. Kant argues that it is our natural tendency toward freedom that allows for the violence that installs the law. He concludes:

> Hence we must *assume* that nature allows for the reconciliation [...] of man's free will with the general law of freedom; and thus we have found a natural law that allows for the violence used.[364]

Thus, in the last resort, Kant founds the laws in human morality and legitimates violence by reverting to a quasi-metaphysical explanation. The absolute rupture that is characteristic for the modern political machine is thereby bridged by human morality. Since Kant, the relation between law and human morality has become a central object of concern in political philosophy. This is witnessed in John Rawls' theory of justice. Rawls acknowledges that his theory of justice is strongly influenced by Kant's theory of right and morality. In the introduction to *A Theory of Justice* he divulges that his work can be read as an attempt to overcome some of the weaknesses that are inherent to Kant's theory. Rawls argues that whilst Kant held that 'a person is acting autonomously when the principles of his action are chosen by him as the most adequate possible expressions of his nature as a free and equal rational being,' Kant did not have any way of assuring the autonomy of a person's actions.[365] In contrast to Kant, Rawls argues, 'the veil of ignorance deprives persons in the original position of the knowledge that would enable them to choose heteronomous principles.'[366] The 'veil of ignorance' compels all persons in the 'original position' to act on behalf of autonomous, rational principles. Moreover, it allows Rawls to dispose of the quasi-metaphysical nature of Kant's argument (in which people are only free - that is to say, autonomous - when they act in accordance to the moral law that lies within them, and in which the moral law is the foundation of the legal laws) by not reverting to man's 'nature,' but remaining within the limits of what might be called a thought experiment.

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[364] Immanuel Kant, "Auswahl aus der Reflexionen. Vorarbeiten und Briefen Kants,", in Zwi Batscha (ed.), *Materialien zu Kants Rechtsphilosophie*, (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main 1976), 69.

[365] Rawls, *A Theory of Justic*e, 222.

[366] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 222.

Kant's foundation of law in morality ultimately leads back to a modern version of natural law that tries to look beyond the rupture installed by the economy of forces of the modern political machine. As such he is deeply involved in state thinking. This is where fiction proves to be useful: to go beyond the rupture and closure of the modern political machine, natural theory of law constructs fictions that sketch the situation that preceded the foundation of the law. Rawls avoids reference to any speculation on the situation before the rupture. Instead, he constructs a completely ahistorical situation through his 'veil of ignorance.' Nevertheless, his ideal situation is strongly indebted to theories of natural law such as Kant's. In Rawls' theory, the *principles of justice* can be deducted from an *original position* that is *fictitious* but still serves as a viable starting point for the justification of the law. This makes his thought experiment radically modern. From the 'original position,' behind the 'veil of ignorance,' the principles of justice and a just society are agreed upon. These principles then serve as the guidelines for concrete, everyday rule-making. Rawls' theory allows for a foundation of the law, since the principles for the foundation of the law can be derived from the principles of justice upon which all persons in the original position will agree. However, at the same time, his theory does not directly confront the problem of legitimating the originary violence used to found the law. This is because Rawls positions his thought experiment within the already existing modern political machine. His theory does not try to recuperate the moment before this political machine took effect. Instead, he uses a strictly fictional situation to legitimate the already existing political machine. Starting out from Rawls' theoretical framework, the problem of legitimating the violence that founds the law does not seem to pose itself, since the principles of justice are deduced from a fictional thought experiment (the 'original position') that holds no direct implications for the concrete actions one has to undertake in reality.

In *A Theory of Justice* John Rawls takes an approach similar to that of Kant, but he tries to sidestep the metaphysical traces still inherent to Kant's approach through the construction of a strictly imaginary *original situation* behind a *veil of ignorance*. It could therefore be argued that Rawls' theory is in compliance with the tendency toward immanence characteristic of the modern political machine. His fictional thought experiment tries to establish a transcendent authority for the principles of justice. But this

project is launched within the immanent political machine: the transcendent source that judges the just principles for a society is created in a fictional environment. Nevertheless, Rawls' work starts out from a belief in human reason that exceeds the political order. The fictional 'veil of ignorance' professes a faith in human reason that founds the political and judicial order. This is why Rawls argues, in *Political Liberalism*, that violence is legitimate when it is in compliance with the constitutional idea of the modern political machine. This constitutional idea is something that 'all citizens can reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of their common human reason.'[367] Ultimately, then, Rawls' theory is grounded on the same principles as most political theories of legitimacy and justice crafted within the modern political machine: it bases itself on a state thinking.

Derrida's query regarding the foundation of the law unfolds in two steps. In a first step, he undermines the foundation of the law so that, in a second step, he is able to point to the performative violence that lies at the origin of the law. First, he does not exactly argue that the law is without ground, but rather writes that 'the founding or grounding [*la foundation ou le fondement*], the positing of law cannot by definition rest on anything but themselves.'[368] Thus, given that these laws are their own grounds, they 'are themselves a violence without ground [*fondement*].'[369] Derrida maintains that it is precisely because the law is without ground that it can be deconstructed, that it is even *essentially* deconstructable. His argument is based on two possibilities, two routes that are both marked by the absence of ground. On the one hand, the law is essentially deconstructable precisely because 'it is founded, that is to say constructed, upon interpretable and transformable text.'[370] On the other hand, it is essentially deconstructable because this textual foundation can still be deconstructed, so that 'its ultimate foundation is by definition unfounded.'[371] In Derrida's argument, the ultimate absence of an ultimate foundation results from the textuality

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[367] Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press: New York 1995), 140.

[368] Derrida, "Force of Law," 142.

[369] Derrida, "Force of law," 142.

[370] Derrida, "Force of law," 142.

[371] Derrida, "Force of law," 142.

of law. Laws are necessarily written and therefore they can be deconstructed, for what the law is ultimately concerned with can never be written down and can never be said clear enough. The law cannot but be written and therefore it cannot but be imperfect, contestable, perfectible, and deconstructable. This is why both the state and the law depend on a foundation that cannot be grounded. Here performative violence enters the economy of forces. Derrida drives state thinking to its extreme and renders it ultimately groundless. This then shows the economy of forces that is operative in state thinking, without discarding it for being an effect of ideology.

8. Conclusion: The Executive Functioning of the Modern Political Machine

The argument that Derrida develops concerns the violence used to found and ground the law; it has no direct relation to the legitimacy of violence used to *exercise and maintain* the law. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the concept of legitimacy is often called upon in order to justify the violence of the law within the state machine. As I showed at the beginning of the chapter, the concept of legitimacy belongs to a specific economy of forces that only starts to take shape with the emergence of the modern political machine. The modern political machine is marked by a turn toward executive functions, which allow the state to take shape in the first place. It is within the executive functioning of the modern political machine that the concept of legitimacy is introduced. With it, a state thinking is introduced. By focusing on the emergence of the concept of legitimacy one can see the two strategies in which legitimacy plays a prominent role, both of which are part of a state thinking. On the one hand, there is a political philosophy that returns to the origin of the law to establish the legitimacy of existing executive laws in the foundation of the law. This move, I have argued, is typical for state thinking: the origin of the social stratification that is operated by the state machine is brought back to a fictional origin that makes possible a philosophical reflection on the emergence of the state. The complex set-up for this fiction is analyzed by Derrida in his essay, "Force of Law." At the same time, by focusing on this problem, Derrida downplays the significance of Montaigne and others, who tried to conceptualize a

different element of the modern state machine. What Montaigne's ideas show, on the other hand, is the first sign of a turn away from the origin of the law toward the actual functioning of the law. *It is here that the modern political machine begins to emerge on a conceptual level*. As I have argued in this chapter, what makes this turn to positive law important is that it opens up the possibility to look at the operative machine of the state. Thus, it becomes possible to recognize the distinctive features of the modern political machine.

Montaigne argues that whilst it may indeed be true that the law enacts violence, these laws themselves are justified (and their violence legitimated) because they serve the cause of *justice*. Thereby he takes up an intermediate position, in between natural law and positive law. The laws, he argued, are a direct and above all *concrete* result of our concept of justice. In this sense, we can interpret Montaigne's remark as saying that even if the legitimacy of the violence used by the law is indeed a fiction - and the violence problematic - it nevertheless remains the sort of fiction that is necessary to maintain - and also, *found* - the justice that it serves. This points us toward the modern solution for legitimating violence: violence is used for a just cause or a just end; and in this way, it is legitimated. The concept of legitimacy expresses the belief that, as Goyard-Fabre puts it, 'in the exertion of force there must be something that lies beyond force itself and that founds and justifies this force.'[372] What has become clear in this chapter is that this *belief* is not located on a natural, pre-conceptual level, but is itself already the outcome of the political stratagems of the modern political machine. This modern political machine invests thought with the conceptual fiction of the natural contract and the foundation of the law. State thinking is the result of the machinic, executive functioning of the state, itself a historically contingent phenomenon. 'The state gives thought a form of interiority, and thought gives that interiority a form of universality.'[373] In reality, however, this illusion of universality is the effect of machinic functioning of the state.

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[372] Goyard–Fabre, "Legitimité," 388.

[373] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 414.

Chapter Four
Subject / Exappropriation / Technics
On the Terminal Exappropriation of Language and Technics

1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined the construction of the modern state machine. The machinic functioning of the state in modernity, I have argued, is related to the construction of a societal form that divides itself into several segments that can function autonomously. This implies a turn toward executive functioning, which is characteristic for the modern state. It also implies the construction of a stable territory over which the state machine can exert its power. The executive functioning of the state machine is dependent on the construction of such a territory. Central is the control of a territory by means of the deployment of a state machine. Today, this deployment is effectuated through the use of media-technical assemblages comprised of communication media, scanners, digital registration, and others elements. In the first two chapters, I explained how machinic functioning is what first organizes (or orders) technics into a set of techniques, a set of technologies. The recent increase in tele-technologies pose specific problems for the machinic functioning of the state, but it also opens up specific possibilities.

I want to take my analysis one step further by drawing in a more concrete case in which the operative interlacement of technics in politics can be seen at work. I aim to do more than merely show how information

systems such as radio, television, or computers are appropriated by a political regime, or even show that they partake in the construction of a modern political machine. Instead, I want to demonstrate how these information systems on a political level and on a subjective level are always tied in with *language*. I started this study with language and technics, and now, after the exposition on the modern political machine, I would like to return to it. In so far as there is such a thing as political technique it is often related to language as much as to technics. Indeed, language and technics would seem to be constitutive for the (political) subject. For this reason I now want to pay particular attention to political techniques and their effect on the subject. To be clear, as I explained in the first chapter, techniques, technologies, and technics all designate different things. I speak of techniques when a technical constellation is set in place that has a specific goal or end that it wants to attain. Such techniques need the machinic to introduce a *telos*, teleology, or better yet tele-techno-logic according to which a technique becomes operable. Technologies, by contrast, are artifacts such as televisions, automobiles, videogames, and so on. It follows that technologies can be techniques (a car can be a means to get to work), whereas techniques are not necessarily technologies in the strict sense. An assemblage of interlaced techniques can set up a political regime that, when structured rigidly enough, starts to function as a political machine. The political machine is what sets to work an interlacement of several techniques. In this chapter I will study one concrete instance in which an interlacement of several techniques can be observed. More specifically, I will look at how *language* in a political regime is interlaced with more direct political machinic functions (such as the military apparatus and the police) to achieve an *expropriation of the political subject*.

Although technics and language are far from identical, the interweaving of heterogeneous forces that I have called technics in the preceding chapters does maintain a privileged relation with language. In the first chapter I demonstrated how literary language constructs its own machine. Language also plays a crucial role in the constitution and maintenance of a political machine, since it is decisive in the creation (and if necessary, the subjugation) of political subjects. The interlacement between language and political techniques, wherein language itself is recuperated as an element in a political technique, works to ensure that the subjects forming a community are within the control of that community. In the course of this chapter I

will analyze Assia Djebar's novel, *La disparition de la langue française*, as a tangible example of how such an exappropriation of the political subject operates.[374] This example will provide a clearer analysis of how the interrelation between technics and language enable the modern political machine to exercise control over the 'self,' in so far as this self is politically invested as 'subject.'

The intricate involvement of language in political techniques makes it possible for the political machine to expropriate the self of an insurgent subject. Such an expropriation of the self is possible due to the way the language interweaves the ipseity (or selfhood) with the larger political constellation of which language is a part. The convoluted and mutually constitutive relation between language and self is assured by technics. The machinic functioning of the state taps into the potential of language and uses it to decode and recode the insurgent subject. This is only possible due to an inherent characteristic of language. Derrida has analyzed at length how language, as that which is most proper to oneself, appropriates (brings that what is proper to man) and expropriates (pulls one out of oneself) at the same time. As such, language has a capacity to destruct the self. At least, such is the risk that belongs to it and from which all speaking and communicating commence.

Derrida has called this exappropriation, a neologism that contracts expropriation and appropriation. This chapter will test this neologism and its conceptual articulation to see whether it enables a more complex analysis of the interrelation between politics and technics. This interrelation is able to graft itself onto the insurgent subject via language and its capacity to exappropriate. Technics comes in here as that which, convoluted in language itself, relates language to other, extralinguistic techniques that together construct and consolidate a political machine. It is because language is so closely related both to the subject and the machine that it takes on a privileged role; it is located somewhere in between technics and technique. The political functioning of the 'ontological machine of production and reproduction'[375] becomes possible because of the direct interlacing of lan-

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[374] Assia Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française* (Paris: Albin Michel 2003).

[375] Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Ma 2001), 41.

guage with politics and the tele-technological impetus of contemporary society. This interlacing is the result of technics, which makes language a seminal element in the current 'network of control.'[376] This could be called a technological network in the sense that information technologies play a crucial role in it. However, these information technologies are themselves enmeshed with language in an immediate way: first, because communication is still takes place with and through language; and second, because it is via language that these technologies can tap into the self. As a result, an exappropriation is set to work that is seminal to contemporary society.

2. Exappropriation: Interlacing of Technics and Language

Forging a neologism is a risky business. It is particularly risky when two existing words are contracted, for there is a danger of effacing the singular effect and meaning that each word separately conveys. Such an outcome would lack the force that ought to have given this concept its drive; that is, its particular aptitude for analyzing a certain problem. Jacques Derrida's neologism, *exappropriation*, is a contraction of two existing words: expropriation and appropriation. Both words in their original meaning express an action or an act that takes place upon something or someone. This act concerns the 'proper,' and by extension, 'property'. The English word, 'expropriation,' is first and foremost related to the act of depriving someone of her or his personal property. It is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as

> The action of expropriating. **a.** The action of giving up one's whole property. Also the action of giving up control *of*. **b.** Removal *from* the ownership or dominion of. **c.** The action of depriving (a person) of property; deprivation; an instance of this. **d.** The action of taking (property) out of the owner's hands (*esp.* by public authority); an instance of this.

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[376] Michael Hardt, "The withering of civil society", in Eleanor Kaufmann and Kevin John Heller, *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture* (University of Minnesota Press: Mineapolis 1998), 23.

Conversely, appropriation is the act of acquiring property. It expresses that move by which something becomes proper to someone or something. The two axes around which expropriation and appropriation evolve are the proper, or property, and the self. Derrida uses the concept to undermine an idea of the self as that which is proper to oneself. For Derrida it is the possession of language that belongs most intimately to the self. Language is staged by Derrida as that which defines and gives what is proper to the self, while at the same time it is language that will inaugurate the double move that exappropriation expresses. But what is essential in the working of this double move, which allows it to expropriate the proper that it has just given us, is that it is related to politics and technics. In the final analysis, I will argue, it is exappropriation that is a technics, an operative constellation in which both the power of language and politics are consolidated.

The most elaborate conceptualization of exappropriation by Derrida is found in *Monolingualism of the Other* and *Of Hospitality*. In both these works Derrida introduces the word when accounting for the double move in politics, language, and technology. His argument is that these three are closely intertwined. Derrida characterizes this intertwinement first and foremost as an *operation*, that is to say as a double move (both appropriation and expropriation) that can seen at work and theorized through deconstruction. This double move is articulated in a different way each time - depending on the perspective taken and the particular case studied. Central to Derrida's use of exappropriation is the role language plays in it.

I would argue that the efficacious and displacing effects of this double move comes in to view once we realize that the capacity of language to exappropriate intricately depends upon the build-up of the contemporary political machine. Technics is a process of interlacing; it brings heterogeneous elements into a specific constellation. From thereon it becomes possible to consolidate the specific elements that are interlaced by technics. In the previous chapters I have argued that the consolidation of the heterogeneous interlacements of technics creates a machinic functioning. The second chapter showed how, starting from technics, machinic functioning establishes a teleology and even a teleo-eschatology that is at play in media and technology. This is the *temporal* effect of machinic functioning: it is the linearization of technics. The third chapter showed how the state machine constructed a territory and executed a centralization of

power that allows for supple, machinic segmentarity. This is a *spatial* effect of machinic functioning. The exappropriation that is at work in language introduces another element: a spatial *and* temporal deployment of technics. Language cannot be reduced to a mere machinic functioning. It has a degree of *indetermination* to it that prevent it from being completely recuperated in a machinic functioning. At the same time, language has an *originary technicity* that makes it possible to tie language in with other elements that together start to form a machinic functioning. The role that language plays in this machinic functioning is not always machinic, but it is a vital role nevertheless. Consequently, I argue that language is placed between technics and machine, yet it belongs to neither. Technics interlaces it with other elements, out of which a machinic functioning can be created. Exappropriation expresses the fact that this both gives a proper placement of the self (a machinic functioning) and also inaugurates a displacement.

In *Monolingualism of the Other* Derrida deals with the exappropriation of language in relation to politics; whilst in *Of Hospitality* he emphasises its relation to tele-technologies. This is not to say that he does not deal with politics in the latter work, but rather that it is through tele-technologies that politics both takes place and is being displaced in his interpretation of hospitality. This interpretation that Derrida laboriously works out through a series of seminar lectures will return as the closure of this chapter, but it is also a good place to begin my interpretation of the concept. I then move on to explicate the function of exappropriation in relation to my own concept of technics. Finally, I give a close reading of Assia Djebar's *La disparition de la langue française*.

Exappropriation allows Derrida to situate the advent of recent tele-technologies in a political context. He argues that two different effects result from them, both of which are operative at the same time. First, recent information technologies function as mechanisms of control that help to secure and stabilize the territories that over the centuries have consolidated as nations and as states. A state can use new technologies to control, secure, and safeguard the political public space in which it manifests itself. The emergence of television is a case in point. It has reshaped the public sphere in which politics and culture operate. From a political perspective, this opened up an endless array of possibilities. It becomes possible to exert a greater amount of control over citizens because it widens the public sphere in which politics manifest itself. With the introduction of television,

political debates blurt into every household. The emergence of national television, especially in European countries, was motivated by the political potential of television. National television served to consolidate the nation and thus secure its real and imaginary territory.[377] In this sense, as Jérôme Bourdon points out in his article on French national memory and television, the word television 'refers both to a technological and an institutional apparatus.'[378] The argument I have developed in this study is that the institutionalization of a technological apparatus forces it to become a machine in the larger machine of the state. Tele-technologies do not stand on their own; they are enmeshed in a larger political and technological machine that is assembled from the technics of interlacing.

Specific to *tele*-technologies is their ability to transmit information from one place to another (often many places at the same time, as in the case of television). The result is a new sense of place that emerges, one that might be characterized as tele-topological. In the case of television, this new concept of place opens up a new realm for political public space. The machinic restructuring of public space into a tele-topology opens up important possibilities for the political machine. Television and other tele-technologies created a spatio-temporal environment in which the political machine takes shape. Focusing on the temporal effects of tele-technologies Bernard Stiegler has argued that 'television constitutes an enormous machine of synchronization.'[379]

However, the problem with the spatio-temporal environment created by hyper-industrial machines, or tele-technologies, is that is not easily controlled. The ambition of the political machine is to stabilize this spatio-temporal environment. This is possible up to a point. But these machines not only create a spatio-temporal environment; they also displace it. This conclusion is drawn by Samuel Weber in his analyses of television. Weber argues that

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[377] This claim only holds for the early years of television. Today, the distinctions between national and private, or commercial, television are disappearing.

[378] Jérôme Bourdon, "Some Sense of Time: Remembering Television", *History and Memory*, vol. 15 / n° 2, Fall/winter 2003, 32.

[379] Bernard Stiegler, *La misère symbolique. 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle* (Galilée: Paris 2004), 51.

> the more technology seeks to put things in their proper places, the less proper those places turn out to be, the more displaceable everything becomes and the more frenetic becomes the effort to reassert the propriety of the place as such.[380]

The proper is exappropriated by the political and technological machine. There is both a placing and a displacing at work in the machinic functioning of tele-technologies such as television. This implies that the proper is also expropriated from the political.

This brings me to the second characteristic of tele-technologies and their effect on politics. Tele-technologies not only construct a spatio-temporal environment, a new public space upon which the political machine can act, they also disturb the public space of the political machine. They displace the place over which the political machine of the state exerts power. When today the political takes shape through televisualized debates and representations, as I have argued, the political itself is also shaped through the technologies it uses. As Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx*, the fact that tele-technologies have nestled themselves deeply in the realm of politics goes far beyond a mere restructuring of place. They even risk taking politics to the brink. Derrida argues that this disturbance of politics through technology can be traced back as far as the end of the First World War:

> Let us recall the technical, scientific, and economic transformations that, in Europe, after the First World War, already upset the topological structure of the *res publica*, of public space, and of public opinion. They affected not only this topological *structure*, they also began to make problematic the very presumption of the topographical, the presumption that there was a place, and thus an identifiable and stabilizable body for public speech, the public thing, or the public cause, throwing liberal, parliamentary, and capitalist democracy into a crisis, as is often

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[380] Samuel Weber, *Mass Mediauras. Form / Technics / Media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1996), 124.

> said, and opening thereby the way for three forms of totalitarianism which then allied, fought, or combined with each other in countless ways.[381]

The more recent development of tele-technologies such as scanners and the internet open up endless possibilities for surveillance, but at the same time they cannot be controlled by a single power, such as that of the nation state. Here, too, an exappropriation of both politics and technology is at work. This functioning of technology in the contemporary political realm is constantly in a double register: at the same time that these tele-technologies open up the possibility for an *appropriation* of the place of the political, they also *expropriate* this very same space. This is what Derrida has called exappropriation. It is also here that the need to deconstruct technology is felt the most. Indeed, recent technologies are deconstructing the state, the political, and the self.

Derrida believes that the exappropriation that is activated by recent tele-technologies can also be found in language itself. In "Force of Law," Derrida explains that he is 'forced' to speak in English. He himself does not control this force and obligation, and more generally, it is never controlled by the speaker. It is always forced and implemented upon the speaker. An appropriation of language inevitably takes its course, as Derrida intimates:

> A sort of *polémos* already concerns the appropriation of language: if, at least, I want to make myself heard and understood, it is necessary [*il faut*] that I speak your language; *je le dois*, I have to do it.[382]

This testifies to Derrida's conviction that exappropriation is laboring within language itself. While language hands down one's most intimate identity, language itself also works as a tool of expropriation. And it is this double move that makes language a tool of exappropriation. At the same time that it provides a medium through which one first finds ones self in the world,

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[381] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 79.

[382] Jacques Derrida, *Force of Law*, in *Acts of Religion* (New York and London, Routledge 2003), 232.

through an act of appropriation, language also displaces the subject, pulling it out of its proper place, excentering it and marginalizing it.

This experience has been the subject of a recent novel by French-Algerian writer Assia Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française* (*The Disappearance of the French Language*). In this novel the main character, Berkane, who grew up in Algeria but migrated to France in his adolescence, returns to his native country Algeria after approximately thirty years of absence. Whilst traveling he keeps a literary diary – or what might possibly be the beginning of a novel - in which he reflects on his past life in Algeria, while frequently digressing on his recent life in France. The novel recounts his childhood in Algeria, his relation to his father, and the trouble he got himself and his father into when one day at school he had to draw his country's flag, and 'accidentally' drew the Algerian instead of the French national flag. In the novel, this childhood narrative is enmeshed with another narrative, namely that of his recent life in France, where he lives in Paris and fell in love with Nadjia. The encounter with Nadjia increases Berkane's awareness of the split between the two languages he speaks and lives: French and Arabic. Whereas Nadjia is schooled in Arabic and masters the language fluently, Berkane had to speak French in school and had to restrict his use of Arabic to the private sphere. In Paris, too, French is the language he uses for his everyday affairs. The different languages he speaks shape his persona, and even more they shape the *different* personae that inhabit Berkane and through which his ambitions are articulated. Throughout the novel Berkane tries to come to terms with the multilingual situation that defines him as a person, yet ambushes him in his ambition to be a writer. The reverence he has for French - a language that he respects and that he wants to write in - is accompanied by a sense of fear, loss, and displacement. Berkane intimates that French is not really his language, even if it is the only one he really has (certainly on a literary level). Berkane, speaking and writing in French, but also in Arabic, is never entirely at home in one of the two languages. In other words, Berkane is inevitably exappropriated by the languages that define him.

In the novel, the feeling of displacement that defines Berkane will come to a climax in his own narration of his past, at a decisive moment in the Algerian narrative. But earlier in the novel, in his account of his life in Paris, there is a telling passage on the relation that Berkane maintains with language. Berkane is reminiscing how not so long ago, in his Paris apart-

ment, he had been awaiting his beloved, and meanwhile trying to conceive the project for his novel and writing. The exappropriation of language here falls upon him with full force:

> I write in French in a state of fever and insomnia, in the wake of evaporated voluptuous instants. My Latin alphabet is, all the same, that which on this earth, has traversed the ages; it has been hollowed out on scorched stones, then forgotten in ruins.
>
> *J'écris en français dans la fièvre et l'insomnie, sur le sillage des instants de la volupté évaporée. Mon alphabet latin est, tout de même, celui qui, sur cette terre, a traversé les siècles; il fut creusé sur des pierres rousses, puis oublié dans des ruines.*

Yet Berkane avers that, when thinking of his beloved, he writes and reminisces and lives in Arabic, and the singular accent of his beloved comes to live while his French is minimizing itself:

> That voice of such nearby languishing: displacing those Arab words, making them glide to keep them as a second language? I hear her words, uttered in our mother tongue, in their particular music: and French becomes a narrow door for me, so as to maintain the avowal of voluptuousness that sparkles within the space of my room.
>
> *Cette voix de si proche langueur: déplacer ces mots arabes, les faire glisser pour les garder en langue seconde? Ses mots, proférés dans notre langue maternelle, je les entends dans leur musique particulière: et le français me devient une porte étroite pour maintenir l'aveu de volupté, qui scintille dans l'espace de mon logis.*[383]

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[383] Assia Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française* (Albin Michel: Paris 2003), 169–70. (My translation.)

The experience Berkane relates is close to what Derrida sees unfolding in language as exappropriation. Berkane is not losing one language for the other; he is inevitably lost between two languages.[384] In this lingering between two languages he is not exchanging one self for the other, but he does feel the pressure of different personae that take shape within him. These personae are only able to figurate *in* language - they belong to language. But they are also displaced by language. The experience of Berkane is both a gain and a loss, a keeping in between. It is in this vein that Derrida defines language as an exappropriation in *Of Hospitality*: 'If it seems to be both, and by that very fact, the first and the last condition of belonging, language is also the experience of expropriation, of an irreducible *exappropriation*.'[385] It is of crucial importance here that Berkane's experience of language stems both from his factual displacement as a French-Algerian citizen, the singular circumstances of his life, and from the structure of language itself. There is no ontological priority one way or the other: the factual displacement of Berkane and the inherent displacement of language perfectly collide here. This is operative exappropriation.

Later in the novel, however, Berkane will experience a second, brutal moment of exappropriation. This moment, which is far more political in nature, also works through language. But here language and the exappropriation of the self are interrelated with an extreme political situation. This situation, I will argue, is able to do more then merely exappropriate Berkane in language. It goes much father than that: it expropriates Berkane entirely. This becomes possible through a constellation of language, different techniques of incarceration, and the infliction of pain upon the body. Interlacing these things for political purpose, a *machinic functioning* is set to work that expropriates Berkane, and finally, makes him *disappear*. Language – the French language - disappears with him.

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[384] In describing the situation of Berkane as 'in between,' I am aware of the intricacies that this expression entails in postcolonial discourse. For a brief exploration of this issue, see Paul Carter, "Naming Place." In Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths (eds.). *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (Routledge: London / New York 1995), 402–6.

[385] Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, transl. R. Bowlby (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2000), 89.

In order to understand how such a thing is possible, it is useful to draw upon Derrida's account of language as exappropriation. It allows me to undo the idea that language is solely concerned with the meaning of things, or that there is no technics operative within it. To carve out this discussion, I now turn to Derrida's recent work on language, specifically *Les yeux de la langue* and *The Monolingualism of the Other*. An analysis of Berkane's experiences will allow me to connect this concept of language more closely to technics and politics. The efficacy of language to function in combination with other techniques, such as that of incarceration for example, is made possible through the operative interlacements of technics. The institutionalizations of this interlacement in the use of torture are part of the machinic functioning of the state in the 1950s in France and Algeria. The very real nature of *technics* - as that which makes the interlacement possible, and constitutes the techniques used - becomes clear in this analysis.

3. The Eyes of Language as Technics

In *Les yeux de la langue* [*The Eyes of Language*], a commentary on an unsent letter by Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenzweig, Derrida criticizes Scholem's idea of language. Instead, he gestures toward the technicity present in language, which determines language in its uses and effects. While Scholem maintains that there must be a moment in language that precedes its instrumentalization, wherein body and spirit of the letter are in unity without yet being intrumentalized, Derrida rebukes that it would be wrong to believe in a moment in which 'an instrumentalizing technicization (iterability) or desacralization has not always already happened to language.'[386] Although Scholem divulges that it would be wrong to conceive of the spirit of the letter as separate from its body, since this professes a Christian attitude that disavows the body and praises the superiority of the spirit as a pure presence, he nevertheless maintains that the economical use of language in contemporary life might possibly have disastrous effects. Thus, in the final instance, the problem that Scholem detects in the every-

[386] Jacques Derrida, *Les yeux de la langue* (L'Herne: Paris 2005), 63. (My translation.)

day use of language is that its originary sacral nature has been sacrilegiously defamed in the modern economical use of language. This means that language will sooner or later turn itself against its users.[387]

In an essay concerning the name of God and the language theory in the Jewish Kabbalah, written by Scholem much later, he concludes his analysis with a more subtle phrasing of this basic intuition. Scholem here argues that, according to the Kabbalah, meaning is infused in language by the name of God. Thus, God is present in the words we use and that are brought to us by tradition. The divinity of God forms an undercurrent for the use of language. However, it may happen that the tradition fades away. As a result, the divinity of God that is professed to us through language would also fade:

> That which speaks to us from the Creation and the Revelation, the Word of God, is infinitely explainable and is reflected in our language. Its rays or sounds which we receive are invocations rather than communications. That which has meaning, sense and form, is not this very word but the *tradition* of this word, its transference and reflection in time. This tradition, which has its own dialectic, transforms and possibly turns into a soft and slowly extinguishing whisper, and there may be times such as ours, where transmission [*überlieferen*] is no longer possible and tradition falls silent. That, then, is the great crisis of language in which we stand, and we can no longer grasp even the smallest corner of the secret that used to live in it.[388]

For Scholem, the crisis of language is related to something more original, something sacred that used to be present in language, but has now disappeared. Derrida argues that, on the contrary, there has never been such a sacred originary fund in language. At least, this fund is never devoid from a certain economic use of language. The instrumentalization of language has been there since its inception.

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[387] Cf. Derrida, *Les yeux de la langue*, 9.

[388] Gershom Scholem, *Judaica 3*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1973), 69.

Derrida's reading of Scholem opposes two different views on the efficacy of language within economic and political everyday life. For Scholem, the sacred origin of language professes its incompatibility with its economic use, and thus language is divorced from such an economic use – with possibly disastrous results. For Derrida, the economy of language is determined by its inherent technicity. Economical use of language is made possible by the iterability of language and utterances made in language. On the other hand, a pure economical use of language, where it is conceived as a means for communication of pure meaning, is made equally impossible by the technical nature of language. There is an indetermination operative in language that forbids its purely economic use. This indeterminateness cannot be erased. What Derrida, following Scholem, designates as the economic use of language might therefore perhaps better be called language's capacity to function in a wider machinic functioning. In the following section, I will show how language in Assia Djebar's novel is bound up with a political machine that uses language in an economic-political way.

Derrida is articulating a view on language in which the materiality of the letter cannot be separated from meaning. Instead, the two are intertwined. In order to extend this argument, I will argue that the intertwinement of the material inscription of the word and its meaning, which marks the utterance as an *unbridgeable passage* from noise to voice and from sound to meaningfulness, is where the 'proper' in both 'appropriation' and 'expropriation' becomes the subject of *exappropriation*. On the one hand, this is the operation of a technics that intertwines the materiality and the meaning of the letter. Yet, on the other, there is a technics operative here that interlaces the material inscription of language with the exertion of power and violence. This technics makes an economic use of language both difficult and possible.

4. The Expropriation of language: Assia Djebar's Algerian War

In his *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics*, Giorgio Agamben argues that contemporary political regimes operate on language. The spectacular state, as he calls it, enacts an expropriation of language, which defines contemporary politics:

> The plane of immanence on which the new political experience is constituted is the *terminal expropriation of language* carried out by the spectacular state. Whereas in the old regime, in fact, the estrangement of the communicative essence of human beings was substantiated as a presupposition that had the function of common ground (nation, language, religion, etc.), in the contemporary state it is precisely this same communicativity, this same generic essence (language), that is constituted as an autonomous sphere to the extent to which it becomes the essential factor of the production cycle.[389]

In what way has language, as Agamben suggests, become part of the production cycle? And in what way does this production cycle expropriate language? One way to understand his claim is by looking at how language is essential to the construction of the self, not only as a existential phenomenon but as a political phenomenon. Starting out from a construction of the self through language, the political machine works through language to code, or decode, the subject according to the functioning of the political machine. In this section, I will analyze how such an expropriation of language is installed in the state machine, to become one of its most vital functions.

By expropriating language the state can exercise a power and violence over the subjects of the state. By interlacing language with other elements (such as army, prison, or school), a political machine emerges that can expropriate political subjects to decode and recode them. The pertinent point for analysis is the way that mechanisms of control and violent actions make use of language in relation to other political elements, in order to establish the machinic functioning of the modern state. The political machine gets inscribed in the very operation and use of language. The use of language is modeled on the exercise of power by the modern state. This modern state is not just a victim or a cunning user of the tricks played by language, as if language had a stable essence that could be summed up by the term, exappropriation. The exappropriation operative in language and

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[389] Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics* (University of Minnesota Press: Mineapolis 200), 115.

the ways in which the state uses it to set in place its judicial and political apparatuses, which exert power over the citizens and foreigners within its territory, are engaged in a complex interplay. The exappropriative capacity of language models the political machine, in which it becomes a vital element. But the political machine, in turn, is able to use language for its executive functioning; hence, the exappropriative capacity of language enhances, modulates, and ultimately benefits this functioning. This means that if the state uses the tricks of language, it is because these tricks are equally installed throughout and as a result of the political, territorial, and national developments of the modern nation-state. These developments need to be analyzed as a part of the machinic functioning of the state, insofar as an interlacing of language with different techniques of subjugation makes possible the exercise of state power.

This argument implies that there is violence woven into language (a violence of expropriation), which is recuperated by the state in order to place, localize, and interrogate its subjects. In short, in language itself there is already a possibility to connect it to other, extralinguistic techniques that are used by the state in the subjection of its subjects. The base from which this interweaving becomes possible does not lie at the level of meaning; but neither is it related to the sheer materiality of language. Instead, it is the *originary technicity* of language that motivates and enables interweaving language with other elements. It becomes possible to think an economy of language from this idea of technicity, from its proximity to both technics and machine. An economy of language is set up which is not that of the efficacious use of meaning stored by language, but one which consists of interlacing language with school systems, prison, and interrogation rooms.

Assia Djebar skillfully reflects on this use of state violence and language in a passage in *La disparition de la langue française*. It depicts events immediately following an insurgency and uproar in Algeria toward the end of the Algerian War.[390] In December 1961, Berkane, who is still the main

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[390] Assia Djebar's is not the only novel on the Algerian war that contains a depiction of torture Without doubt, the book that came to set the tone for narrative accounts of the war was Henri Alleg's *La Question* (Paris: Minuit 1958)..*La Question* is Alleg's acount of the his imprisonment, interrogation, and torture in 1957, whilst a French journalist in Algeria. Djebar's book is different in three ways, and this is why I analyze it here.

character of the novel and functions as a character-bound narrator, is involved in this uproar. In the wake of a violently subdued protest march for the liberation of Algeria, he is chased by the police and finally captured. The protest march, close to the end of the war, commemorated a spontaneous protest action that took place exactly one year earlier, in which Berkane also had been involved but had managed to escape harm. Now, however, at the age of sixteen, he is arrested by the police and taken to prison where he is locked up in a dark and vast prison with fellow protesters. After a period of waiting a group of Special Forces soldiers enter the prison, pointing to Berkane, and saying: 'we're taking that one, there!' ['*On l'emmène, celui-là!*'][391] The soldiers take Berkane to a base near Orleans where they put him in a cell – or rather a cellar, according to his description - with a bunch of other men. This is where the violence of the state starts to enmesh with the disappearance of the French language as Berkane experiences it. The way Berkane as character-bound narrator depicts this moment from his past shows that it was not only a gruesome and painful experience, but that it played and is still playing tricks on his capacity to feel at home in language. It seems as if, from that moment onward, language begins to disappear. This is what intimately relates the passages about prison to other passages where a different experience of language is depicted. But here, in the scene following the insurgencies, violence is meshed into language itself. This

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First, it is a fictional account that does not claims to be based on a direct testimony. Second, Djebar's novel is a work of fiction that is telling something about the experience of language and being in-between languages. (The experiences of Berkane during the Algerian war form a vital part of the novel, but not the only part.) Third, the actual torture scene is not depicted in Djebar's novel; a fact that will be pivotal to my argument.

391 Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française*, 214. Note that at the time the story is set the police forces had already been taken over by the French paratroopers, which explains the rapid shift from police custody to military custody in the story. (The shift of command from the police to the paratroopers took place early in 1957 by governor Jean Lacoste. The 'notorious' General Jacques Massu thereby became the commander of the Algerian police.)

occurs through the deployment of a series of techniques: persecution, incarceration, interrogation, torture, and finally long-term imprisonment.

At first sight these techniques might appear to have no direct relation to language, but in Djebar's story language enters at several levels. First, language is woven into the process of interrogation, which in turn is woven into the larger ordeal of incarceration and subordination. Interrogation is not a means for extracting information from the interrogated; it is a means of extracting all meaning or sense from language. Second, language is destroyed during the process of torture. Not only does the horrific experience of undergoing incarceration, interrogation, and torture have such an effect on Berkane that he has trouble casting it into language; but also the entire ordeal, I will argue, seems to be conducted to expropriate Berkane's most intimate possession - namely, his emergent adolescent self. This self, as Derrida argues in *Of Hospitality* and *Monolingualism of the Other*, is most intimately constructed and deconstructed in language as a site for both appropriation and expropriation, as a site of exappropriation. Thus, in my view, these techniques of incarceration and torture carry out a process of *undoing*, or expropriating, the insurgent subject or self. In this process, the undoing of language plays a key role and it will remain to haunt Berkane years later. The paradox of this narrative is that whilst it is a testimony of the moment at which Berkane situates the origin of the loss or disappearance that he has experienced ever since, it is also at the same time narrated in French, in the language and by the persona that are destroyed in that very experience. Since the disappearance concerns his own language, and in the last instance also his own life, the story reaches a paradoxical climax at the point when the origin of the disappearance is recounted. Step by step, the adolescent Berkane is bereaved of his freedom, his language, his voice, and finally his face. That which is most *proper* to him, his own self, is expropriated, taken away from him. When this process of undoing is recounted by the older Berkane, the story abruptly ends and Berkane disappears altogether.

Yet the novel continues as Berkane is reported missing in Algeria years later by his brother Driss and Berkane's current love, Marise. Commemorated by the woman he loved, Marise, and in an earlier time Nadjia who sends him a letter from Padua, not knowing that he has gone missing,

the novel ends with a final reflection by Driss.[392] In the last paragraph of the novel, the persona of Driss has become a ghostly and polyphonic cluster of the voices of Berkane, Nadjia, and Erasmus of Rotterdam (whom Nadjia was studying in Padua):

> In his clandestine studio, Driss goes back to the bed. He slowly reads Erasmus' *Letter on Dreams*. Very drowsy, he repeats a sentence underlined by Nadjia: "I do not speak of the sky of angels…"
>
> It is Erasmus who speaks, or Nadjia perhaps, or Berkane, from where he lies. Murmuring the same words "of the sky, the sky of angels!" Driss finally sinks into the night.
>
> *Dans son studio pour clandestin, Driss se remet au lit. Il lit lentement la* Lettre sur les songes *d'Érasme. Tout somnolent, il se répète une phrase, soulignée par Nadjia: « je ne parle pas du ciel des anges… »*
>
> *C'est Érasme qui parle, ou peut-être Nadjia, ou Berkane, de là où il se trouve. Marmonnant les mêmes mots « du ciel, du ciel des anges ! » Driss sombre enfin dans la nuit.*

This passage is from the very end of the book, some thirty pages after Berkane has disappeared. The focus of the narrative, following his disappearance, is provided respectively by Marise, Driss, Nadjia, and finally Driss again. Except in the case of Nadjia, all of the passages are narrated by an

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[392] This is an important theme in Djebar's work. Even if in my analysis I have opted to concentrate on another aspect of the novel, the importance of the commemoration by these women should not be overlooked. Moreover, this would be where an entry point for a subtle critique of Derrida's political work could be found, as Gayatri Spivak has convincingly argued by juxtaposing Derrida's spectral deconstruction of ontopology in *Specters of Marx* to the women-narratives that Djebar constructs in *Far from Madina*. See Spivak, "Ghostwriting", *Diacritics*, 25 / 2, Summer 1995, 65-84.

external narrator. After Berkane disappears at the end of the paradoxical recounting of the crucial passage in his life, the text itself comes to be structured by another narrator. This allows for a story to emerge that again ends in a narrative paradox, as all major personae that figure in it speak through one voice but are narrated by an external narrator. Here, then, lies the force of fiction in its capacity to delve into the exappropriation of language. The voices that emerge – or, in the case of Berkane, re-emerge - in the persona of Driss are decidedly fictional. To test this paradoxical fragment of narrative against everyday life, to hold it up to the conditions and restrictions that reality imposes upon real people would turn it into a completely absurd passage. But personae in a novel are not real people; they are narrative constructs. The political potential that is inherent to fiction, and to Djebar's *La disparition de la langue française* in particular, only gains in efficacy once this fact is acknowledged.

In *Narratology* Mieke Bal makes a plea for the 'paper' qualities of personae or characters. She warns against the 'character-effect,' suggesting that we take into account that a character 'has no real psyche, personality, ideology, or competence to act, but [that] it does possess characteristics which make psychological and ideological descriptions possible.'[393] While she admits that there are no strict rules for how to assess the paper qualities of a character, she suggests that narrative analyses should be restricted to 'the actual words of the text.' As a case in point she refers to Albertine in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. According to Bal, Albertine

> is a "paper person" in the true sense. She is an object of the protagonist's obsession, does what he thinks she does, and when he no longer needs her to make his point about the relation between jealousy, love, and knowledge, she dies in an unlikely accident.[394]

To overlook this aspect of Albertine would be to misunderstand Proust entirely. Yet as soon as we start to

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[393] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto University Press: Toronto 2002), 115.

[394] Bal, *Narratology*, 116.

> accept that she has no psychological depth of her own, we not only grasp the specifically Proustian construction of character – which is crucial for an appreciation of the work – but also the aesthetic thrust of the narrative.[395]

I would like to add that it is only in this way that we can also grasp the political thrust of the narrative. This, I contend, is the case for Assia Djebar's novel. By following the fractures and destructuring passages in the novel, by recording the paradoxical aspect of the narrative, and then tracing the merging of the different personae that play a part in it, it becomes possible to trace, in each case, a political articulation of the interrelation between language, torture techniques, and the destruction of the self in Djebar's novel.

To perform such a reading, then, it is not enough to stick to the 'actual words of the texts.' I will read Djebar's novel in relation to the Algerian war, which receives extensive attention in the novel. The historical facts of this war as well as the structure of the narratives that sprang from it are carefully staged in *La disparition de la langue française*. To open up the potential that this novel harbors for such a reading it is not enough to merely refer to these events, it is necessary to explicate them from a comparative perspective. To give just one example, which I will elaborate below: the fact that in Djebar's novel the torture scene itself is not actually narrated, although it constitutes a climax in the fictional Berkane, is by no means insignificant. The element of torture had been woven into the established narratives of the war; consequently, it had taken on a structuring role in the construction of such narratives.[396] The first, best, and probably also constitutive example of such narratives is in Henri Alleg's *La Question*.[397] This book relates how Alleg, a French communist and former head of the newspaper

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[395] Bal, *Narratology*, 116. For a more detailed analysis of Proust by Mieke Bal, see *The Mottled Screen. Reading Proust Visually* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1997).

[396] Maurice Mateos-Ruiz has conducted a study on fictional accounts of the Algerian war and found that they all had scenes of torture structurally embedded in the narrative. See Mateos-Ruiz, *L'Algéria des appelés* (Paris: Atlantica 1998).

[397] On this book, see n.17, above.

Alger Républicain, is captured by French troops and is tortured, almost to the point of death, for weeks in a row. The torture scenes are described in great detail and in fact form the bulk of the novel. In the light of such narratives it is of paramount importance to study how Djebar has managed to leave this part of the fabula out of the story. As it turns out, the destruction of Berkane as a persona is only accomplished by this 'absence' that is introduced in torture. That is to say, the final undoing of Berkane's self only comes to us through techniques that only fiction can account for. Yet it consists of more than fiction, and it tells something on the interrelation between literature, politics, and technics.

As I have argued, the undoing of the adolescent Berkane takes several steps, but each step is nevertheless interwoven with the others by means of anticipation and their inevitable contiguity both in time and in space. In a first step, Berkane is in a dark cell with a lot of other men. Although it is too dark to see anything the men can easily talk to each other. Even so, they do so in a whispering tone. Meanwhile, classical music resounds from further down the hallway. Picking up on a conversation between two prisoners, Berkane learns that the purpose of the music is to subdue the cries of those being tortured:

> At the Orleans barracks I was brought to cellars that were even more crowded. A crowd of detainees, impossible to distinguish who precisely. And again the odor of excrement, but there were jerry cans in front of the doors. Incarceration, here, was a sort of immobility of bodies; with almost no sigh. Hardly a murmur or groan. The night appeared an indeterminable color. Above all, music began; but so too did the cries, very high, very far away…
>
> – Classical music, someone muttered close to me, whom I could not distinguish.
>
> – Not to hear the cries of the tortured, a voice explained to me, very close, spent.
>
> – We hear them all the same! whispered a third.
>
> *À la caserne d'Orléans, je suis conduit dans des caves, plus peuplées encore. Une foule de détenus : impossible de distinguer quiconque. Et, de nouveau, l'odeur des ex-*

créments ; mais il y a des bidons devants les portes. L'emprisonnement, ici, une sorte de passivité immobile des corps ; et presque pas de soupirs. À peine de murmures ou quelques râles. La nuit semble un couloir interminable. Surtout, commence la musique ; mais aussi des cris, très haute, très loin…

– Musique classique, soupire quelqu'un, près de moi, que je ne distingue pas.

– Pour ne pas entendre les cris des torturés, m'explique une voix, tout près, épuisée.

– On les entendra quand même ! souffle une troisième.[398]

This fragment tells of a constellation of techniques, including new media, which are set in place by the French government during the Algerian war to imprison the insurgent Algerians, to torture them, and at the same time to prevent the prisoners from hearing their fellow comrades being tortured. The apparent dialectic that emerges from the three voices, whom Berkane hears but cannot see, is striking in this regard. The first one posits that there is classical music playing, which in ordinary situations would bring to mind nothing negative or frightening, but in this situation already carries with it a suggestion of fear and pain. Classical music is simply out of place in a prison, one might think. As it turns out, this is not at all the case; classical music assumes its role as an element of torture, it is used to subdue and blot out the screams of the one being tortured. This is a second step in the dialectic of voices, in which the second voice tells us that the music is indeed only meant to disguise the screams of pain. As such the music appears to be paradoxical, since even if it did successfully blanket the screams, it would still serves as an index to the presence of torture. The apparent function of the music, to prevent prisoners from hearing the screams of pain, is thus immediately undone. Berkane, who is still awaiting 'his turn' – '*enfin, c'est mon tour!*' – realizes this all too well. The function of music in this political and technical constellation of imprisonment arguably lies elsewhere. This is where the third voice comes in. By saying that the screams can be heard nevertheless, a gruesome synthesis is achieved, or rather undone,

[398] Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française*, 215.

between the screams and the music: both sounds now begin to take on a role in the technics that is installed. Working alongside each other and complementing each other, music and the screams start to reinforce each other. But most of all they reinforce the presence of torture. This presence however is of the strangest kind, since it is both denied (by the music) and affirmed (both by the music and the screams). The music, after all, functions both to subdue the cries and to bring them to attention. In one and the same move, the loud resounding of 'French music', as one prisoner calls it, performs a subtle revealing and concealing of what is going on inside the prison.[399] Stilled by music the screams are brought to attention all the more; in a fine, albeit horrific, tactics of veiling and unveiling, muting and sounding, Berkane knows *and* does not know what awaits him. He is a witness to his fellow prisoners being tortured and at the same time he is not. [400] Meanwhile, the sounds (both music and screams) force him to anticipate the moment that he will be tortured. The result is a deregulatory effect on the imprisoned Berkane. This deregulatory effect can be read as a first step in the undoing or expropriation of the self.

It is crucial that the expropriation staged here is set to work through a series of techniques. These techniques are applied by one country (in this case, France, but numerous other examples could be given) in an attempt to dominate the people of a second country (in this singular case, the people of Algeria and those supporting them). From 1955 onwards, these techniques of torture were applied in Algeria on a wide scale. The

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[399] Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française*, 216.

[400] That this technique was actively used in a variety of ways was attested by an expedition of French intellectuals, who went to investigate the practices in the prisons. One of the intellectuals who had participated in these expeditions wrote a report on these matters for *Les Temps Modernes*. In this report he relates as follows: 'I remember that from time to time, when the traveling cinema of the battalion came and showed us a film, and it didn't go over, soldiers and officers would get up and tranquilly spend the rest of the evening in the company of the prisoners (…) *the screams were partly drowned by the music of the film*.' G. M. Matei, "…", *Les Temps Modernes*, July–August, 1957; quoted by Frantz Fanon in *Toward the African Revolution* (Penguin: Harmondsworth 1970), 80.

rather unsubtle way of denying the use of torture while information about its use keeps leaking is not a side-effect when looked at from the perspective of expropriation. Quite the contrary, it exemplarily demonstrates a certain relation between politics and technics. Whilst the stream of information that overflowed state control undermined the legitimacy of the war, it also at the same time installed a regime of terror that widely exceeded the torture chamber and was diffused through France and Algiers. If the facts of torture pushed contemporary intellectuals in their opinion that the war was illegitimate, for a broader audience the news of the tortures was either ignored, or else it forcefully emphasized the unquestionable necessity of the war. The contaminating work of leaking information and censuring wherever possible became a part of everyday life in political France. The ambiguous effect of this technics of leaking and censuring is accurately described by Simone de Beauvoir in her autobiographical book, *La force des choses* (*The Force of Things*):

> My compatriots didn't want to know about it. From the spring of '57 onwards, the truth came out and if they had welcomed it with as much zeal as they did with the revelation of the Soviet working camps, it would have been the topic of the day. The conspiracy of silence could only succeed because everyone was complicit in it. They didn't listen to those who spoke, they screamed to cover up their voices and if, despite oneself, one could hear certain rumors, one made hast to forget them.
>
> *Mes compatriotes ne voulaient rien savoir. A partir du printemps 57, la vérité transpira et s'ils l'avaient accueillie avec autant de zèle que la révélation des camps de travail soviétique, elle aurait éclaté au grand jour. La conspiration du silence ne réussit que parce que tout le monde s'en fit complice. Ceux qui parlaient on ne les écoutait pas, on criait pour couvrir leurs voix et si on en-*

tendait malgré soi quelques rumeurs, on se hâtait de les oublier.[401]

If de Beauvoir is here mainly concerned with the general public repressed the rumors by devalorizing and finally forgetting them, the active censure that was operative in France at the time would become a tangible part of her everyday life when, half a year later, Henri Alleg's *La Question* was published and almost immediately taken out of circulation, along with Jean-Paul Sartre's article, "Une victoire" (published in *L'express*), in which he praised the book.[402]

For those living under colonial rule in Algeria, the technics of leaking and censuring went far beyond the manipulation of information. In Algeria, people had to live with the insecurity that they might disappear. The fact that Berkane himself is arrested during a march that commemorates the dead and the disappeared of a protest that took place a year before is a fictional testimony to this truth. 'Disappearances' were frequent and the malicious fact that everybody knew what had happened to those who had disappeared, yet no one could say so in public, did not miss its effect. It formed the heart of the colonial regime of the times and torture took on an important place in it. It is this point that Frantz Fanon makes in his early analysis of the use of torture in Algeria. Fanon argues that what the paratroopers are doing in Algeria 'fits into a pattern of police domination, of systematic racism, of dehumanization rationally pursued.'[403] This pattern, he argues, can only be maintained if it has actual results. In other words, 'torture is inherent in the whole colonialist configuration.'[404] This configuration

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[401] Simone de Beauvoir, *La force des choses* (Paris: Gallimard 1963), 389. De Beauvoir's interest in the Algerian war from 1957 onwards coincides with Sartre's own involvement. See Anne Mathieu, "Un engagement déterminé contre le colonialisme: Jean Paul Sartre et la guerre d'Algérie," *Monde Dimplomatique*, novembre 2004, 30–31.

[402] See De Beauvoir, *La force des choses*, 405. During the first few weeks that Alleg's book was in the store it managed to sell up to 67.000 copies. It was taken out of circulation in March 1958.

[403] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 74.

[404] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 74.

is exerted upon Berkane directly in the scene that follows the dialogue in the prison.

In this next scene, which can be read as a second step in the expropriation of Berkane's self, he is about to be questioned by the interrogators and torturers. The scene is introduced by a pensive older Berkane who, as character-bound narrator, is wondering why he feels the need to reflect on this moment in his life. The situation he was in at the time is described by the older Berkane as a 'tunnel of hours,' and a 'kingdom of fear' that enwraps him in darkness. Here the darkness is both literal and literary. On the one hand, it functions literally as a real condition that Berkane was subjected to when in prison. On the other hand, the metaphorical function of total darkness and the tunnel of hours express the very physical effect that both had on Berkane. The result of it was a disorientation of time and place. Consequently, this condition is also operative in the larger technics of expropriation that is set to work in the novel:

> Realm of shadows: two days, three days; finally, it's my turn! They have spelled out my name, always in the dark. I am relieved: the waiting was becoming convulsive.
>
> Three or four interrogators, but I wouldn't be able to tell how many hours have passed each time. Denying, denying everything.
>
> *Royaume d'ombres : deux jours, trois jours ; enfin, c'est mon tour ! On a épelé, toujours dans le noir, mon nom. Je suis soulagé : l'attente devenait paroxysme.*
>
> *Trois ou quatre interrogatoires, mais je ne saurais dire combien d'heures se sont écoulées à chaque fois. Nier, tout nier.*[405]

A moment later in the novel the retroversion properly begins as the reader receives a full account of the entire procedure of interrogation and the increasing levels of torturing that accompany it. The omission of several days in a dark prison, to which Berkane only alludes in passing, inserts into the story the tunnel of hours and disorienting effect that Berkane himself ex-

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[405] Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française*, 216.

periences. It is through narrative techniques of ellipsis and summary - and so not by postulating a psyche or psychological motives for the 'paper character' Berkane – that a veritable element of the submission and process of undoing is captured in the story. Berkane goes on to narrate that he underwent three or four interrogations, but as his notion of time has already been disturbed he is unable to tell how much time past with each of them. The sole purpose of the interrogations he undergoes seems to be to provide the soldiers with a reason to keep him as a detainee. The interrogators are looking for a crime, a clear act of sedition or insurgency that they can impute to Berkane. In this case, any involvement in the insurgencies and protest marches would be enough to convict him. In reality, however, young men were taken from the streets at random during the Algerian war. This was also known and acknowledged by the French public early on in the war, with major newspapers such as *Le Monde* uncovering the tales of horror and torture from 1957 onward.[406] But Berkane does not cooperate and recounts to his interrogators the same, rather simple story over and over again: he was not carrying the Algerian flag, he was merely picking it up from the street were someone had dropped it; he was not running from the police officers that were chasing him, but instead was fleeing from a dog that was behind him and so on. Berkane invents a persona for himself: he is playing dumb or, as he says in his fable, he is merely a typographer's apprentice:

> To play the idiot, against all logic, in spite of the blows and awaiting torture, since I behaved that day as an idiot! To persist. Not to budge! I know nothing. I am but a small typographer's apprentice. Seriously; I am serious: my mother and my sisters need my work! That must have lasted two or three hours. Beneath the blows I can no longer feel my face, swollen; my ribs, my skull, painful,

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[406] As early as the mid 1950s, the use of torture was openly discussed and condemned in major newspapers such as *Le Monde* and *France Obversateur*. See William B. Cohen, "The Algerian War and the Revision of France's Overseas Mission," *French Colonial History*, vol. 4 / 2003, 227–239.

but I can still take it: I was brought up the hard way, thank you, beloved brother Alaoua!

Malgré les coups, et en attendant la torture, contre toute logique, jouer l'idiot, puisque je me suis comporté, ce jour-là, en idiot ! S'entêter. Ne pas en démordre ! Je ne sais rien. Je ne suis qu'un petit apprenti typographe. Sérieux ; je suis sérieux : ma mère et mes sœurs ont besoin de mon travail ! Cela a dû durer deux ou trois heures. Sous les coups, je ne sens plus mon visage, tuméfié ; mes côtes, mon crâne, douloureux, mais je peux encaisser encore : j'ai été élevé à la dure, merci, chère frère Alaoua![407]

The persona that Berkane assumes to get through the already very violent interrogation, the mask he puts on, is constitutive for the simple, even naïve answers he gives to his interrogators; and, vice versa, the simplistic discourse he assumes constitutes his persona. Berkane is playing 'the idiot.' This is but one of the languages that Berkane will interiorize in the course of his story. It is in this context that I wish to place his description of the blows and beatings he receives to his face. This beating, which takes place during the interrogation and forms a sort of antechamber for the real moment of torture that still awaits him, concentrates on Berkane's face, as if it wanted to get to the origin of the simple discourse that he is assuming. Here, breaking his face might also mean to pierce through the mask or persona that Berkane holds up against his interrogators.

The interrogators are performing an explicit form of interrogation. However, what is most striking is that the questions these men pose to Berkane are never actually narrated in the story. Only the simple answers Berkane gives are narrated, as well as the hits and blows he receives to his face. The language used by the interrogators remains absent in the story - even though it can be easily inferred from the answers that Berkane gives. The clichés that make up an interrogation (or the narrative representation of such an interrogation) are not only well known, they are also present in the clichéd answers that Berkane provides. Language here becomes a routine. And routine questions provoke nothing but routine answers. Nothing takes

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[407] Djebar, *La disparition de la langue française*, 216–217.

place here, save for an institutionalized reactionary practice of the state machine to any kind of insurgency. Moreover, the language the interrogators presumably used are not only inferable from Berkane's answers, but also from the routine of the whole process. This is, in turn, a sign that the questions were not really posed to extract information from Berkane who, being a young boy with no real ties to any political party and only allied to the Front de Libération Nationale (F.L.N.) by sympathizing with their goal, does not carry any valuable information.

This absence of the questions that were presumably posed during the interrogation tells us yet another thing about the disappearance of language that takes place in the novel. Consequently, it is also in these moments that the undoing of Berkane as a person take place. What is happening here cannot be grasped by saying that language is simply instrumentalized. That would not distinguish the experiences by Berkane from any other daily conversation in which routine questions and answers figure extensively. The discussion that I have dealt with above between Derrida and Scholem on the technics of language has resulted in the conclusion that language is always already instrumentalized in part. There is no point in time or place where it would be possible to speak a language that is free from any instrumentalized or technical practice. The signifying act only occurs in an always already instrumentalized way. In *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida has called this situation that of an 'abiding "alienation" [*aliénation à demeure*].'[408] But lest this give the impression that Derrida believes that language suffers from some kind of lack, he warns that the alienation here is of a constitutive nature – it is something that gives rather than takes away. In a paratactic phrase, Derrida adds that, in reality, this alienation is 'neither a lack nor alienation.' By this he means that 'it lacks nothing that precedes or follows it, it alienates no *ipseity*, no property, and no self that has ever been able to present its watchful eye.'[409] Language gives us a place

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[408] Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, *or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 1998), 25. It should be noted that *à demeure* means more than 'abiding'. Rather, it says that one 'lives' in this alienation as one lives in a house. For the particular meaning that Derrida attaches to *à demeure*, see Derrida, *Demeure – Fiction and Testimony* (Stanford University Press: Stanford 2000).

[409] Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 25.

in which to live and to reside (in French, *demeure*), but this place turns out to be displaced or out of place. The displacement is not merely an after-effect, it is not a blow dealt to language only after it has become a space for living. Quite the contrary, it is constitutive. Hence, language is that which belongs most intimately to oneself, while at the same time carrying with it the potential to radically expropriate the self. In Derrida's analysis, as I have mentioned above, language exappropriates: it both appropriates and expropriates, at the same time, what is most proper to us, our *ipseity*.

What is at stake, then, in Berkane's interrogation is not the routine as such, but rather the way in which the technics of interrogation grafts itself onto the original exappropriation that is inherent to language. It is able to do so only because language is that which exappropriates. In other words, it is through language that a deconstruction of the self can be performed. This is why I think that language and physical violence are interwoven in the interrogation scene of Djebar's *La disparition de la langue française*. Read in this light, the routine with which the questions and answers are posed and given installs a communication situation in which both could be posed to anyone, or no one, in particular. Conversely, the answers are perfectly predictable and they, too, could have been given by anyone in the same interrogation. By the absence of real conversation, language reveals one of its most fearsome capacities; namely, to transport the speaking subject to a realm in which it performs something totally unfamiliar to its own self, while at the same time intimately belonging to the self. In *La disparition de la langue française*, this effect is attained by eclipsing the questions that are posed, and rendering just the answers. This rigid routine, whose sole function is to install such an impersonal situation, serves in turn as a threshold for administering state violence to an insurgent subject who does not respond appropriately to the questions posed. It is from this threshold that the interrogators will then switch to physical torture, with the justification of not having received the information that the state seeks. Hence, the technique that is installed in interrogation here is made possible within a political machine that bases itself on what Giorgio Agamben calls 'the terminal expropriation of language.'[410]

Such a terminal expropriation of language not only works as a specialized technique during interrogation; it is also used in the media. I have

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[410] Agamben, *Means Without Ends*, 115.

argued that tele-technologies alter the spatio-temporal environment that constitutes the political space. On a more concrete level of politics, the alteration of the political space through tele-technologies signals the growing import of news briefings and of controlling the news. This became an acute problem throughout the Algerian war. An important manifesto and petition was published in 1960, entitled *Declaration on the Right to Insubordination in the War in Algeria (The Manifesto of the 121)*. The manifesto was censured by the government so that, instead of publishing it in *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre published two blank pages as an index to the government's censorship. The manifesto contested the legitimacy of the war in Algeria on the basis that it was neither a war waged by the French to protect the French nation or territory, nor was it a war of conquest. Instead, it argued that the war in Algeria had become an autonomous war waged by the French military on their own account:

> Today, it is principally through the will of the army that this criminal and absurd combat is maintained; and this army, by the important political role that many of its higher representatives have it play — at times acting openly and violently outside any form of legality, betraying the ends confided in it by the nation — compromises and risks perverting the nation itself by forcing the citizens under its orders to become the accomplices of a seditious and degrading action.[411]

In the light of such a situation the notion of civic responsibility is put to the test. The authors of the manifesto conclude that under the conditions of this war civic disobediences, such as refusing to serve as a recruit in the Algerian War, is not longer disobedience, but 'a sacred obligation.' Instead, they demand that this refusal be justified to help the Algerian people in their fight for independence: to refuse to take up arms against them; and to support the Algerian people in its attempt to destroy the colonial regime

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[411] Maurice Blanchot, *Declaration on the Right to Insubordination in the War in Algeria (The Manifesto of the 121)*, (transl. M. Abidor), 1960, available online at: http://www.marxists.org/history/france/algerian-war/1960/manifesto-121.htm

that is imposed upon them. The manifesto was signed by 121 of the foremost intellectuals of the times, including Robert Antelme, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Blanchot, André Breton, Hubert Damisch, Marguerite Duras, Louis-René des Fôrets, Claude Lanzmann, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Leiris, Maud Mannoni, André Masson, J.-B. Pontalis, Nathalie Sarraute, Jean-Paul Sartre, Claude Simon, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, and many more.

If the interrogators did not succeed in piercing through the mask of Berkane's persona, then the moment of torture does. Something odd happens when the story takes the expropriation of Berkane one further, final step. In *La disparition de la langue française*, the distinction between torture and interrogation is complicated: it is both discrete and continuous. In the novel, the interrogators and torturers succeed in getting 'the best' out of this complex interrelation of torture and interrogation. On the one hand, the way Berkane tells the story, it seems as if there is a discrete distinction between torture and interrogation. Berkane says that he had no idea how long the interrogation lasted *before* they stopped interrogating and started to torture him. On the other hand, the interrogation itself is accompanied with a violent ransacking of Berkane's person, which cannot be described by any other word than torture. It seems, then, that Berkane himself makes this distinction from his position as a character-bound narrator. However, it is clear from what we are told in the novel that the interrogation itself was already a form of torture, since the interrogation was clearly not meant to extract real information from Berkane. Insofar as it is an excuse for torture, the interrogation already belongs to the process of torture.

It is possible to read the effectiveness of this distinction between the moment of interrogation (which already achieves a significant level of torture) and the moment of torture as such (which might perhaps be termed 'pure' or 'absolute' torture) as a narratological device for underlining two seemingly distinct, yet wholly compatible aspects of torture in a political regime. In the first place, this clear distinction between the interrogation and the (pure) moment of torture underlines the fact that torture does not have as its objective the extraction of information from an interrogated subject. Torture has a very different function: it is meant to inscribe the power of the political regime upon the body of an insurgent subject. Torture, in other words, is used by the political regime that governs Algeria to reaffirm its hegemonic position. This aspect of torture is analyzed at

length by Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*.[412] Scarry argues that pain destroys language, and hence the subject or self. It is for this reason that the use of torture can be such an effective political strategy. According to Scarry, torture undoes the world and undoes the language of the one subjected to it. This process of undoing opens the possibility of reconstituting the tortured subject in the state machine. In other words, once the subject has been rid of language, once it has been destroyed as a subject, it then becomes possible for the political power to be inscribed onto the tortured subject. These two effects of torture intersect neatly here. The destruction of the self, understood as the effect of the destruction of language in pain, could be called an *expropriation* of the self. In the case of torture, such a destruction of the self is immediately political. It also shows how pain is a politically effective mechanism *exactly because* it is related to the operations of language (albeit in a negative way). Subsequently, an appropriation can take place, a moment in which the subject is reconstituted by the political machine. In other words, the political machine inaugurates an ongoing process of exappropriation to which all political subjects are subjected through language. This is what happens with Berkane. It also highlights the fact that torture is a political strategy that intimately belongs to the political machine and its military apparatus. As Frantz Fanon wrote during the war, 'Torture in Algeria is not an accident, or an error, or a fault. Colonialism cannot be understood without the possibility of torturing, of violating, or of massacring.'[413] The concept of exappropriation makes it possible to analyze the difficult interlacement between the destruction of self and world in torture, analyzed by Scarry, and the constitution of the material inscription of the power of the political regime through the infliction of pain. They cut into one another, and thereby gain in force and become effective.

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[412] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford University Press: New York / Oxford 1985), 29–59.

[413] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 76.

5. Conclusion: Exappropriation by the State Machine versus Hospitality

Throughout this chapter I have analyzed how exappropriation is an act of displacement: it both constitutes (placing) and deconstructs (displaces) the self or subject. Such an exappropriation works through language, but because language is plugged into the political state machine, the effects of exappropriation are political. The political efficacy of language, I have argued, is related to the position of language in between technics and machine. Language sets up an economy in which it is used in relation to elements such as interrogation, torture, subjugation. This is possible because the economy of language is not solely related to the meaning that language harbors. As the discussion between Scholem and Derrida makes clear, there is always already an originary technicity in language.

An insurgent subject, like Berkane in *La disparition de la langue française*, is placed and displaced by means of an ongoing process of exappropriation, turning it into a subjugated subject that no longer forms a threat to the state. In an entirely successful version of this subjugation, the subject that was Berkane would be completely expropriated. The fact that Berkane disappears altogether points in this direction. However, exappropriation denotes a certain ambiguity: the double move of appropriation and expropriation that takes place is not that easily controlled by any agency, including the state. Thus, it might occur that exappropriation can be used as a device against the state's attempt to subjugate the subject. In other words, the originary displacement of exappropriation – which, in his response to Scholem, Derrida refers to as the originary technicity of language – might be used as a counter-strategy. In that case, exappropriation would not be seen exclusively as a way for the state machine to subjugate an insurgent subject through the use of language and torture (the case of Berkane). Instead, exappropriation would also form a positive strategy for the foreigner or the insurgent subject to destabilize the state machine.

The extent to which such a displacement the state machine would have political effects remains to be seen. A first problem with this kind of exappropriation would be to delineate where it begins and where it ends. To put it differently, such an exappropriation could destabilize the borders of the state, by its displacement of margin and center, but only if the ambiguity between margin and center gets resolved. Giving expression to the ambiguity of the distinction between center and margin, Vietnamese writer

and filmmaker Trinh Minh-Ha argues that 'without a certain work of displacement […] the margins can easily recomfort the center in its goodwill and liberalism.'[414] The work of displacement that Minh-Ha advocates is one that not only marginalizes the center and centers the margin; it is also a work that starts from the acknowledgement that the political place (the place of the political) is being restructured. It is this work of displacement, together with the inevitable ambiguity that it involves and the continual risk of expropriation, that I want to make speak in Derrida's neologism *exappropriation*, where at the same time something is placed and displaced. The political stakes of this displacement are brought to the fore in Minh-Ha's reflection on the risk of taking the margins for granted. She asks:

> How possible is it to undertake a process of decentralization without being made aware of the margins within the center and the center within the margin? Without encountering marginalization from both the ruling center and the established margin? Wherever she goes she is asked to show her identity papers. What side does she speak for? Where does she belong (politically, economically)? Where does she place her loyalty (sexually, ethnically, professionally)? Should she be met at the center, where they invite her in with much display, it is often only to be reminded that she holds the permanent status of a "foreign worker," a "migrant," or a "temporary sojourner" – a status whose definable location is necessary to the maintenance of a central power.[415]

The persona staged by Minh-Ha reports on an operation of power that consist in placing and localizing the stranger who comes in. Even though this persona is invited in with much display, it is an invitation that does not come without reciprocity and obligation. The stranger is invited in and thus begins to take part in a *pact* that requires the stranger to be identifiable, localizable and accountable at any time. In order to obtain information from

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[414] Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge 1991), 17.
[415] Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, 18.

and about the stranger who is coming in, tele-technology such as scanners, monitoring equipment, and the internet is used by the state. This is a techno-political attempt to master a territory over which power is exercised and into which strangers are invited. But the same tele-technologies are also increasingly destabilizing the territory that the state tries to master. There is placement and displacement at the same time, in the same movement. This is the process of exappropriation.

In his essay on hospitality Derrida tries to counter the exappropriation of the state machine by introducing a different kind of hospitality, absolute hospitality. The situation depicted by Minh-Ha is analyzed by Derrida as *restricted hospitality*, a hospitality that commences not by letting the stranger come in, but by asking her name, her profession, and her loyalties. This is to place the stranger, to give her a *definable location* necessitated by the maintenance and exertion of power. Such a restricted hospitality is installed by the state and intimately belongs to the state and its modes of power. It is not necessary to be a foreigner to the state, since the same thing happens with Berkane during the Algerian war. It is a contract that gives the state the ability to force strangers 'to be subjects in law, to be questioned and liable, to have crimes imputed to them, to be held responsible, to be equipped with nameable identities, and proper names."[416] The risk of posing at the margins lies in the fact that it allows the restricted hospitality to clearly define and stabilize the stranger (as someone at the margins who is temporarily sojourning in the center); that is to say, it expropriates the stranger. Better a displacement of power itself, a displacement that is operative in an analysis and critique of the endeavor to control and define both margin and center. This would be the *work of displacement* in the political. I would argue that such a work would focus on delineating the machinic functioning of the state and the role exappropriation plays in it. In an earlier chapter, I showed how the consolidation of the territory is a constituent element of the modern political machine. Thus, if recent tele-technologies are now destabilizing the territory, then this opens an opportunity to re-examine and possibly destabilize this modern political machine.

Such a destabilization would work along the lines of hospitality; that is to say, it would look how and where the territorial state is being de-

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[416] Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, transl. R. Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2000), 23.

structured. This implies an examination of restricted hospitality. Starting out from hospitality it would criticize the restrictions that are imposed on it. Thus, it becomes possible to grasp the paradox at work in the law of hospitality that forces it to pervert itself in its exertion. Although restricted hospitality is set in place by the state as a power mechanism, to draw the stranger into the politico-judicial apparatus, the notion of hospitality itself constantly appeals to us to transgress the restrictions that are imposed upon it by the state.[417] This is why Derrida puts restricted hospitality, as a state-imposed contract, in contact with another form of hospitality that breaks with the pact that the state tries to impose on the stranger. This he calls *unconditional hospitality*. It is a hospitality that breaks with restricted hospitality in that it does not attempt to use hospitality as a way of stabilizing the desta-

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417 In her article, "Making Sense of Derrida's Aporetic Hospitality," O. Custer analyzes the imminent aporia of hospitality primarily on the basis of her attendance at Derrida's seminar in Paris (of which parts were later reprinted in *Of Hospitality*). Custer stresses the fact that Derrida time and again appealed to 'intuitive terms' to explain the inherent aporia that is weaved into the laws of hospitality. Although in my account I principally focus on the fact that real hospitality requires that one transgresses the *laws* of hospitality, Derrida also stresses that a total and unconditional hospitality would not be a real hospitality either. If I can rely on Custer's account of Derrida's seminar, the main focus for this problem was that of the guest entering a household, again used as an intuitive example or figuration to explain the 'other side' of the aporia of hospitality. Custer explains: 'To put it again into intuitive terms (in his seminar Derrida appealed a lot to them time and again), if there are no limits, if I really say to a guest "make this your home," do I not cease to be a host? If there are no limits then the roles of host and guest can no longer be assigned in a way which we consider necessary to speak of a scene of hospitality.' O. Custer, "Making Sense of Derrida's Aporetic Hospitality," in Z. Direk & L. Lawlor (eds.) *Jacques Derrida: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Vol. III* (London & New York: Routledge 2002), 203. I do not address this particular question of hospitality because it is not likely to occur; it remains confined to a purely hypothetical situation which has no relevance for me, being interested in a more concrete literary and political use of the concept.

bilized territory of the state, or to gain control over it. Consequently, unconditional hospitality does not ask the questions that are posed by restricted hospitality: it requires more than just allowing the stranger to enter under certain conditions and after having answered a series of questions. For Derrida, unconditional hospitality demands

> that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names.[418]

In this passage, Derrida distinguishes between the foreigner, or stranger, and the absolute other, and accordingly he distinguishes between restricted hospitality and unconditional hospitality. The foreigner, or stranger, is given a restricted hospitality as soon as his name and origin are known to the state. The absolute other receives another kind of hospitality, without questions being asked. The unconditional hospitality that the absolute other receives subverts the state's restricted hospitality. It is this paradoxical relation between restricted hospitality and unconditional hospitality that clarifies what is at stake in exappropriation. Somewhat counter-intuitively, perhaps, at least from a Derridean perspective, I propose that exappropriation be interpreted as a *de(con)struction of the other as a political category*, both as stranger and as absolute other. Only the paradoxical contamination of these two forms of hospitality, restricted and unconditional, avails this deconstruction. While the deconstruction of the stranger alone would be a negative activity, because always at risk of being an expropriation of the stranger by state power, the deconstruction of the absolute other that is introduced with unconditional hospitality could serve as an appropriation of the stranger, salvaging it from the subjecting power of the state. However, since appropriation by the stranger and expropriation by the state cannot be distinguished and held apart, and since restricted and absolute hospitality are interlaced in the paradoxical law of hospitality, what occurs

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[418] Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 25.

here is neither an expropriation of the stranger by the state's restricted hospitality, nor an appropriation and rescue of the absolute other through unconditional hospitality. Instead, there is an *exappropriation* of the other as a risky political category. This exappropriation functions as a deconstruction of the other as a political category, and in the very same movement it opens up the realm of the political (at least on a conceptual level). The political realm, or our conceptualization of it (but in that case, I would argue, our conceptualization has effects on politics itself), is no longer guided by the distinction between self and other, nor is it a reduction of everything to the same.

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Machinic Deconstruction: Literature / Politics / Technics Samenvatting in het Nederlands

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Dit proefschrift stelt zich ten doel om, uitgaande van de theorie van de deconstructie die de afgelopen 40 jaar door de Franse filosoof Jacques Derrida werd ontwikkeld, een breder begrip van techniek (*technics*) te ontwikkelen dat in staat is om zinvolle analyses te maken van de interrelatie tussen literatuur en politiek. Bij het ontwikkelen van een begrip van techniek tracht ik dit begrip op een abstracter niveau te denken dan doorgaans het geval is. Techniek wordt niet begrepen als een technologisch object of een technologische functie. Veeleer wordt het begrip techniek in deze studie op een abstracte wijze gedefinieerd als de mogelijkheid van verschillende, vaak erg heterogene elementen om met elkaar een relatie aan te gaan, met elkaar in verbintenis te treden. Aan de hand van het begrip techniek tracht deze studie te onderzoeken op welke wijze heterogene elementen kunnen samenkomen en op welke wijze ze op die manier een nieuwe operatieve constellatie vormen. Techniek is de interrelatie die ontstaat tussen verschillende dingen en op die manier het vormen van nieuwe constellaties mogelijk maakt. Vanuit deze abstracte definitie heeft het begrip techniek niet enkel implicaties voor de wijze waarop er (in de filosofie, in de literaire en culturele theorie, en in de politiek) over technologie wordt gedacht; het begrip heeft ook implicaties op de wijze waarop er over taal gedacht kan worden. In deze studie wordt geargumenteerd dat taal, en in het bijzonder de taal

die in de literatuur wordt gebruikt, een exemplarische rol speelt wanneer we een inzicht willen krijgen in wat techniek is.

De belangrijkste begrippen die aan deze studie ten grondslag liggen en de literaire analyses ervan bepalen worden geïntroduceerd in de inleiding en het eerste hoofdstuk. In de inleiding van de studie worden de voornaamste kenmerken van techniek onderzocht, zoals de oorsprong ervan, de ontologische positie ervan, en de werking van techniek. Aan het begrip techniek moet een emergente oorsprong toegekend worden. Dat wil zeggen dat er niet één centraal beginpunt kan aangeduid worden waar we kunnen spreken van techniek. Integendeel, omdat techniek begrepen wordt als de mogelijkheid van verschillende heterogene elementen om met elkaar in interactie te treden om zo nieuwe constellaties te creëren kan er pas werkelijk van techniek gesproken worden wanneer *verschillende* dingen samenkomen. Om die reden is er niet één oorsprong van techniek, maar vele, en deze oorsprong is niet gericht op eenheid maar op multipliciteit. Het verschil (de differentie of *différance*) is daarbij een essentieel onderdeel van techniek; techniek is datgene wat, als de mogelijkheid tot het aangaan van een interrelatie, het mogelijk maakt dat er een verschil behouden kan blijven in het samenwerken van verschillende elementen. Teruggaand op het werk van Jacques Derrida en Gilles Deleuze spreek ik in dit verband van een economie van krachten (*forces*) die aan het werk is in techniek, die de werking van techniek beheerst en als zodanig ook kenmerkt. In de inleiding en in het eerste hoofdstuk van mijn proefschrift wordt het begrip kracht aan een theoretische analyse onderworpen. Kracht wordt daarbij gedefinieerd als datgene wat één bepaald element ertoe in staat stelt om een invloed uit te oefen op een ander element. In techniek is er altijd een spel van krachten aan het werk tussen verschillende (politieke, literaire elementen). Hoe dit idee meer praktisch begrepen kan worden wordt onderzocht in het derde hoofdstuk, waar de relatie tussen kracht, geweld, en fictie een belangrijke rol speelt.

Naast het begrip techniek speelt het begrip machine een centrale rol bij dit onderzoek naar de interrelatie van literatuur, politiek, en techniek. Een machine wordt eveneens begrepen op een abstracte manier. Er ontstaat een machine wanneer de economie van krachten die door de techniek in gang wordt gezet begint te consolideren, wanneer de circulatie van krachten in een calculeerbare, stabiele functie gegoten kan worden. Een machine is precies deze vastgelegde circulatie.

In deze studie worden de begrippen van techniek en machine uitgediept aan de hand van een lezing van literatuur en aan de hand van een studie die tracht na te gaan hoe literatuur en politiek steeds in een wederzijdse relatie met elkaar staan. Het ontstaan van deze relatie tussen literatuur en politiek wordt toegedragen aan techniek. Nadat in de inleiding een eerste conceptuele uiteenzetting is gegeven van de belangrijkste begrippen die een rol spelen in dit boek (techniek, economie, kracht, taal, politiek, en machine) en de theoretische ankerpunten zijn aangegeven, tracht dit werk in vier hoofdstukken steeds één bepaald facet van het begrip techniek in relatie tot literatuur en politiek uit te diepen. In het eerste hoofdstuk wordt de relatie tussen politiek, literatuur en techniek uitgediept aan de hand van een analyse van de roman *Zwerm. Geschiedenis van de Wereld* van Peter Verhelst. In dit hoofdstuk wordt ook het begrip van machine voor het eerst uitgewerkt. De vraag die hier als uitgangspunt dient is: wat markeert de overgang van techniek naar machine? Het antwoord dat hierop gegeven wordt is: terwijl techniek begrepen kan worden als een vrije circulatie van de krachten die in een losse economie op elkaar inwerken, is de machine datgene wat ervoor zorgt dat deze circulatie van krachten een georganiseerde, veel minder flexibele structuur krijgt die beheersbaar, calculeerbaar en manipuleerbaar is. Een machine is dan ook niet zozeer een concrete technologie; veeleer is het een organiserend principe dat uitgaat van de circulatie van krachten in techniek. In *Zwerm* van Peter Verhelst zien we hoe er op literair, politiek, en metafysisch niveau steeds gestreefd wordt naar het calculeerbaar maken van een reeks evenementen, hoe er getracht wordt om controle te krijgen op de samenkomst van heterogene elementen. We zien echter ook hoe dit proces steeds faalt. In mijn analyse van Verhelsts roman tracht ik aan te tonen hoe, aan de hand van literaire technieken, het mogelijk wordt om een zekere systematiek te geven aan een evenement, waardoor de heterogene samenloop van elementen calculeerbaar wordt. Tegelijkertijd, en bij nader inzien, moet duidelijk worden dat de systematiek die de literaire representatie verleent aan een evenement, zichzelf meteen weer teniet doet. De samenloop van heterogene elementen blijft daardoor heterogeen en onunificeerbaar. Aan de hand van deze dubbele lezing wordt duidelijk dat literatuur zelf een machine is dat het functioneren van een (metafysische of politieke) machine en haar streven naar eenheid en berekenbaarheid inzichtelijk maakt maar tegelijkertijd voortdurend

verstoord en onderuit haalt. Literatuur functioneert met andere woorden als een politiek en metafysische relevante dispersiemachine.

In het tweede hoofdstuk wordt het begrip moderne machine geïntroduceerd. Terwijl het eerste hoofdstuk inhoud gaf aan de begrippen politieke machine en metafysische machine wordt nu geargumenteerd dat de moderne machine zich kenmerkt door een neiging om het politieke en metafysische project op elkaar af te stemmen. De moderne politieke machine heeft zowel op politiek als op metafysisch vlak de neiging om ernaar te streven een afgesloten geheel te worden. Tegelijkertijd vertoont de moderne machine zowel in haar politieke als in haar metafysische variant een eschatologische neiging, een streven naar een einde waarin de moderne machine zichzelf zou opheffen. De neiging om een afgesloten geheel te vormen en de neiging om tot een eind te komen zijn de twee bepalende tendensen van de moderne machine. Aan het slot van dit hoofdstuk worden de politieke tendensen van de moderne machine samengenomen met de specifiek moderne karakteristieken ervan. Het begrip moderne politieke machine wordt zodoende geïntroduceerd.

Het derde hoofdstuk gaat de conceptuele ontwikkeling van de moderne politieke machine na. De moderne politieke machine lijkt twee kenmerken te hebben: ten eerste creëert het een staat aan de hand van wat in dit boek als een proces van territorialisering beschreven wordt, en ten tweede ontwikkelt de moderne politieke machine een discours van legitimiteit dat ertoe dient de sociale en politieke territorialisering van de staat te rechtvaardigen. Echter, het argument in het derde hoofdstuk is dat om deze twee kenmerken te kunnen begrijpen een derde kenmerk van de moderne politieke machine aandacht verdient. Dit derde element is de nadruk die de moderne politieke machine legt op de uitvoerende functies van het politieke apparaat. De moderne politiek kenmerkt zich door de ontwikkeling van een politioneel apparaat, een militair apparaat, en een juridisch apparaat. Dit zijn allen uitvoerende functies; maar tegelijkertijd liggen ze allen binnen het domein van de politieke staat. De wending naar uitvoerende functies die desalniettemin politiek zijn is wat een machine bij uitstek definieert als machine. De politieke moderniteit staat in die zin gelijk aan het machineworden van de politiek.

In het vierde hoofdstuk staat literatuur weer centraal via een lezing van de roman *La disparition de la langue française* van de Frans-Algerijnse schrijfster Assia Djebar. Aan de hand van een analyse van deze roman wordt

de relatie tussen taal en techniek, die bij de inleiding ook al aan bod kwam, verder uitgediept. De protagonist van *La disparition de la langue française* is Berkane, die na een jarenlange afwezigheid terugkeert naar zijn geboorteland Algerije. Dit is voor hem aanleiding om een soort van dagboek bij te houden waarin hij zijn gevoelens en herinnering uit zijn jeugd in Algerije tijdens de jaren vijftig van de vorige eeuw beschrijft. Tijdens zijn tienertijd, aan het eind van de Algerijnse oorlog, participeerde Berkane in de betogingen voor een onafhankelijk Algerije. In mijn lezing van Djebar's roman argumenteer ik dat dit verzet tegen het heersende politieke regime een centrale rol speelt in Berkanes zelfbeleving. Om dit aan te tonen moet er gekeken worden naar de centrale passage in de roman: het moment waarop Berkane tijdens een betoging opgepakt wordt, gevangengezet, ondervraagd en gemarteld wordt. In deze passage is te zien hoe militaire technieken in elkaar weven met politionele technieken. De wijze waarop dat gebeurt is via taal, via het gebruik van taal. Deze interrelatie van taal en materiële marteling heeft een essentiële impact op Berkane, die tijdens de roman langzaam maar zeker zijn taal verliest en uiteindelijk ook zichzelf.