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Carl Schmitt's 'Hamlet oder Hekuba' and the question of a philosophy of history

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Introduction

The following study conceptually reconstructs Carl Schmitt's 1956 *Hamlet oder Hekuba*. In this succinct yet fertile monograph on *Hamlet*, Schmitt develops a particular notion of a philosophy of history. The canonical definition of this expression can be found in Hegel's introduction to his *Lessons on the Philosophy of History*: "The point of view of *philosophical world history* is not that of a particular, abstract universal but of a *concrete* universal, which is the 'guiding soul of events', (...) it is *spirit* that guides the world." Hegel's spirit is a supreme standpoint, a *Weltgeist*. "Thinking is the self-production of spirit. Spirit's highest goal is to know itself (...). World history is the matrix in which this transition comes about."¹¹ Thus, the expression "philosophy of history" champions a superior comprehension of human events according to a universal viewpoint, which is reflective—namely, philosophical. Put differently, historical events are to be grasped by "spirit's" thinking.

However, both "philosophy" and "history" meant something different for Schmitt, who was—despite his heterodox approach to different disciplines—a jurist. In his provoking *Die Lage der europäischen Rechtswissenschaft*, Schmitt states "[f]ür mich waren Sokrates, Platon und Aristoteles primär Rechtslehrer und nicht das, was man heutzutage Philosophen nennt (...)."¹² Nonetheless, this does not mean that Schmitt matched philosophy with jurisprudence. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were *like* jurists, that is: as philosophers, they performed like jurists. They thought and reflected within a determined order, in a specific time, and according to a concrete situation. In this perspective, Schmitt can be considered a philosopher, namely, as a jurist who thought essential problems that belonged to a concrete order of human life. Some authors¹³ have seen in Schmitt's theoretical procedure a theory of understanding, as for Schmitt any problem can be comprehended from a legal structure. Such a perspective always provides to the observer a "transcendental" element. All in all, Schmitt's statement on philosophy as the intellectual expression of jurisprudence is very akin to the definition of philosophy stated by Kant in his *Lectures on*

11. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Volume 1. Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822-3*, edited and translated by Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson, with the assistance of William G. Geuss (Oxford University Press: New York, 2011), 20-21.

12. Schmitt 2012h, 427.

13 Hugo Herrera, *Carl Schmitt Between Technological Rationality and Theology. The Position and Meaning of His Legal Thought* (SUNY Press: New York, 2020), 32.

logic. “In the former respect [that is, in the scholastic sense] it is thus a *doctrine of skill*; in the latter [in the *worldly concept*], a *doctrine of wisdom*[,] the *legislator* of reason[,] and the philosopher to this extent not an *artist of reason* but rather a *legislator*.”¹⁴

On the other hand, “history” meant to Schmitt the supreme structure where human actions are contained. His idea of history is theological, not teleological. In his early essay on Roman Catholicism, he asserts: “This is the only revolution in world history that deserves to be called great—Christianity provided a new foundation for mundane authority (...).” Human reality is nothing without a theological framework. A few lines later, Schmitt adds: “Individuality coexists only in that God keeps the person in the world. His relation *ad se ipsum* is not possible without a relation *ad alterum*.”¹⁵ And in 1969, in his last published essay, he returns to this viewpoint after his discussion with Hans Blumenberg on secularization: “All detheologised concepts carry the weight of their scientifically impure origins. (...) All de-theologisations, de-politisations, de-juridifications, de-ideologisations, de-historicisations, or any other series of de-prefixed entities tending towards a *tabula rasa* are nullified.”¹⁶ According to Schmitt, the exponential growth of technology will never supersede the theological framework where all human actions are developed. “The new, purely human and secular science is a continuing and process-progress of a widening renewal of knowledge in purely secular human terms, driven by an ongoing human curiosity.”¹⁷ History, then, meant for Schmitt that reality is grounded in theological foundations. Man imposes and creates different kind or orders. The legitimacy of such orders depends on their relationship with their theological origins.

“Philosophy of history”, therefore, can be broadly defined in Schmitt’s late thought as it follows: a type of reflection on human events comprehended according a concrete order; an enclosure where reality unfolds from a greater theological source. Throughout the 1950s, Schmitt grasped his historical context—namely, World War II and its aftermath—in historico-philosophical terms. However, he somehow distanced himself from the strict jurisprudential standpoint, and delved into the hermeneutical possibilities of art. Schmitt

14. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on logic*, translated and edited by J. Michael Young (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2004), 537.

15. Schmitt 2008b, 50-51.

16 Schmitt 2014c, 128.

17. Schmitt 2014c, 128.

chose *Hamlet* for its mythical significance. On his account, the archetypical aspect of *Hamlet* is essentially modern, as Prince Hamlet acts and behaves indecisively. He procrastinates, and prefers a maze-like reality of ponderings and impressions. His delayed actions occur amidst secrecy, treason, and the political decay of Elsinore. Schmitt acknowledged the actuality of all of these elements, and specially the character of Prince Hamlet, the prototypical “European intellectual”. In *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, Schmitt accounts each one of these problems from a non-psychological, non-aesthetical, non-sociological, and non-historiographical perspective. His resistance to such approaches was not a mere reaction, but a political statement. *Hamlet* is the perfect example of philosophy understood from its jurisprudential nature. Its historical aspect fuels Shakespeare’s artistry. The intellectual crisis of Prince Hamlet is the perfect mirror where reality can be reflected upon.

How, then, *Hamlet oder Hekuba* contributes to and enhances Schmitt’s conception of a philosophy of history? I argue that Schmitt’s monograph on *Hamlet* displays a twofold historico-philosophical argument. First, that the mythical aspect of this play of Shakespeare demands a profound hermeneutical analysis. In the case of Schmitt, this kind of approach—as it underlines the constant attrition of psychology, historiography, sociology, and art history at the moment of interpreting *Hamlet*—relies on a marked and particular conception of philosophy of history. Second, this type of hermeneutics aims to prove the normative force of history and how it elevates a notion of art purely based on its autonomy (and the genius of Shakespeare’s playwright) to an everlasting actuality of both its content and main themes. I consider that *Hamlet oder Hekuba* performs as an essential work in order to comprehend Schmitt’s considerations of philosophy, history, and tragedy.

Schmitt’s theoretical methodology is not conventional in academic and philosophical terms. Schmitt’s erudition—like his unique conceptual dexterity—was often expressed through a complex, and sometimes even cryptic train of thought. He never acknowledged a scientific subject determined by a friendly consideration of his readers. On the contrary, he demands a good amount of interpretation and analysis. Every time that Schmitt put into words his thoughts—whether he reflected on a jurisprudential theme or meant to communicate bigotry-drenched ideas—they were invariably communicated through obscure bibliographical references, with a brilliant series of sentences, and through compelling yet questionable thesis. The reader would be right, then, if she or he consider Schmitt’s overall

analysis as dubious. If *Hamlet oder Hekuba* is a central piece of Schmitt's unsystematic concept of philosophy of history, why he never accounted such a problem explicitly? Why the reader cannot find in any of his writings of the 1950s a crystal-clear examination of Hegel's canonical concept of philosophy of history or even his own?

As valid as these claims can be, they presuppose exactly the kind of approach that Schmitt preferred to avoid. His constant meanderings and subtleties at the moment of phrasing an idea needed an heterodoxic and non-academically conventional model of reflection. Schmitt was well aware of his impact on old and new readers, and he knew that his theses were constantly being reviewed and scrutinized. Put differently, Schmitt lured his readers to a work of further exegesis—his style is aphoristic and often hyperbolic. As Schmitt's does not seem to care in providing a traditional breakdown of his theses—for instance, how his idea on the “Hamletization of the avenger” differ to that of the classical conception of the hero as a tragic agent? —, to provide a systematic interpretation of such ideas could end in a quite interesting trade-off situation.

I would like to argue that the two-folded philosophical dimension of *Hamlet oder Hekuba* perform as a note-worthy theoretical piece. Schmitt's heterodoxic interpretation has a philosophical value, as its conceptual foundations develop a hermeneutical analysis that questions the core aspect of philosophy of history. Schmitt's homologates “time” with “history”, and the “irruption of time”, thus, offer a fertile contribution when it comes down to the significance of philosophy of history in the post-war German academic debate. History, according to Schmitt, is not the mere background where the work of art is produced, but the guiding force that ultimately pushes art—*Hamlet*—toward a mythical plane. Moreover, “time” does not stand out for Schmitt for its ontological nature, but for its concrete status. Although this argumentation is not carefully elaborated by Schmitt through an in-depth scientific approach, it prompts important philosophical questions.

Therefore, the notions of “time”, “history”, “tragedy”, “myth”, and “irruption”, are the key concepts to analyze and eventually decipher Schmitt's own conception of a philosophy of history within the theoretical margins established in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*. As chapter III will demonstrate, Karl Löwith's epoch-making book *Meaning in History* elicited in Schmitt a new set of philosophical arguments regarding his theological comprehension of history—an echo of Donoso Cortés' ideas on the subject. Although Schmitt did not recoil to

his previous statements or re-evaluate his theological premises—widely spread in the German intellectual milieu after his 1921 *Politische Theologie*—, Löwith’s ambitious thesis was certainly a new chance for Schmitt to delve into philosophy of history from a non-exclusive jurisprudential viewpoint. Likewise, his private notes in *Glossarium* slowly gave rise to a new mode of philosophical argumentation. If the reader keeps these biographical and intellectual elements in mind, *Hamlet oder Hekuba* will reveal its true philosophical physiognomy.

That Schmitt had chosen a literary theme for close examination was something quite characteristic in his work ever since his first publications¹⁸. However, by interpreting *Hamlet*—through a conceptual expansion of the thesis stated by his old acquaintance, the Anglicist Lilian Winstanley—, Schmitt aimed at something more than a purely scholarly exercise. Being aware of the trend-smasher interpretation executed by Max Kommerell on Schiller’s playwright—which brilliantly connected Schiller’s theory of agency with the political events unleashed in Germany in 1933—, Schmitt opted to recreate a similar analysis with his study on *Hamlet*. If Kommerell signaled the figure of Hitler with his expression “creator [*gestalter*: literally, “designer”] of men of action”, Schmitt intended to depict this very same gruesome character through a warped image of both his ruin and demise—a fate that, according to Schmitt, he also unjustly shared.

Hamlet oder Hekuba was for a long time eclipsed by Schmitt’s *The Concept of the Political*—and its famous “friend and foe” criterion—, along with some other of his most distinct works. That the contemporary philosophical debate of the late 1990s and early 2000s was prone to study the political dimension of Schmitt’s thought seems to be in hindsight somewhat a comprehensible phenomenon, if one considers the main world events occurred at that time. Schmitt’s intellectual connection with Walter Benjamin monopolized any attempt of pondering on *Hamlet oder Hekuba*’s own importance. It was not until the English translation of Schmitt’s monograph on *Hamlet*, that the fundamentals of this essay could be unconcealed. Nonetheless, most of the English literature on *Hamlet oder Hekuba* conventionally followed a methodological and philosophical approach to Schmitt strictly based on his works available in English. *Hamlet or Hecuba*’s genesis, main concepts, and its connection to Schmitt’s personal meditations, were still faded in oblivion.

18 Schmitt 2022b, 12-28.

However, the need for a complete examination of *Hamlet oder Hekuba* is not enough in order to justify a conceptual and philosophical reconstruction of its main arguments. If this was the case, one should attend to some other themes within Schmitt's oeuvre. For example, the theoretical value of his ideas that were revealed strictly in the correspondence with key acquaintances, friends, and interlocutors often ignored—like Ernst Rudolf Hubert, Gottfried Salomon, Franz Blei, and Konrad Weiß. Likewise, most of the well-known bibliography on Schmitt—like the interpretations provided by “post-structuralist” philosophers, Italian thinkers, and English critiques—has consistently skipped both his early and legal writings, which represent a significant portion of Schmitt's work. As the scholarly production devoted to Schmitt's thought continuously increases in Germany, his stereotypical figure grows within the conventional, narrow margins cemented by the editorial successes of the aforementioned scholars. Therefore, the expression “the crown jurist of the Third Reich” philosophically avows a controversial thinking with little to say about any other thing but friends and enemies, states of exceptions, political theology, and several anti-liberal banter.

Schmitt reflected his own persona in Prince Hamlet, and his own context through *Hamlet's* political debacle. Thus, the betrayed King Hamlet could be a nation—Germany—, Claudius his usurper—Hitler—, Prince Hamlet a deceived German intellectual unwilling to fulfill his revenge—Schmitt—, and Elsinore a maimed continent—Europe—. One would rapidly note that Schmitt's identification with this character obeys to a psychological reason. While this similitude is more or less undeniable, Schmitt's interest in Prince Hamlet responded to some other motives. Every action, every decision of Prince Hamlet is *existentially* disturbed. He knows no direct passage from A to B. His deed is eventually fulfilled, but with several—and often unnecessary—detours. Such a spirit represented for Schmitt the intellectual axis of modernity. Roughly speaking, both Prince Hamlet and modern thinkers—including Schmitt, one could add—were a “full of himself” type of person. According to Schmitt in his Aachen conference¹⁹, such a feature is present in most of intellectuals, that is, the proneness to philosophize at the moment of resolution. This attribute cannot be fully understood from a psychological perspective. Rather, it is a trademark of existentialism. Otherwise put, the world is a surface onto which reflections must be made before taking any kind of actions.

¹⁹ See chapter 4.5.

Likewise—and with the exceptions already pointed out—, the biographical and conceptual genesis of the 1956 monograph has received little consideration in the philosophical margins of the contemporary debate on Schmitt. In this respect, it is important to underscore that what is at stake at *Hamlet oder Hekuba* is Schmitt's self-awareness regarding his troubled past and the havoc wrecked after 1945 in German society. With this monograph, he industriously attempted a multileveled intellectual exercise, namely, a cultural, philosophical, historical, and conceptual critique that circumscribed the history of Europe within its veiled inner dynamics.

Simply put, the current debate on Schmitt's²⁰ takes on aesthetics and history—two themes seriously modified in Schmitt's idea of philosophy of history—is quite inane regarding both Schmitt's biographical context and his conceptual modifications. There is no a single study, nor an exhaustive account, on the evolution of Schmitt's thought during the 1950s²¹. The elusive yet cohesive body of work elaborated by the jurist during this decade, once it is unraveled and then systematized, exhibits an impressive and consistent intellectual dimension. The question, scope, and limits of the possibility of a philosophy of history then emerge. What to make when facing the desolated political landscape of a now ruined and re-educated-in-democracy Europe in the course of a fully-technicized world? Through a fragmentary reasoning, and esoteric dressing-down critiques, Schmitt aimed at asking such a question. Nowadays, in the very brink of environmental collapse, when economical éminence-grise are lurking and casting their geopolitical shadows over international politics, where outstretched nuclear catastrophes are looming every day, Schmitt's ponderings on a philosophy of history are worth reconsidering. *Hamlet oder Hekuba* performs as an airtight effort that gloomily encapsulate this.

Nonetheless, the reader could ask: were no other far more interesting, crystal-clear, scientifically consistent, and not morally stained intellectual efforts regarding the historical present in the 1950s? Why even bothering with the conceptual entanglements delivered by the troubled mind of this “prominent constitutional lawyer and historico-litterateur

20 See chapter 2.11.

21 This thesis was already completed when Andreas Höfele book on Schmitt's relationship with literature was published. In it, Höfele carefully examines Schmitt's writings of the 1950s.

outsider”²². If the essential subject was *Hamlet*, were not some other studies by Anglicists and Shakespeare’s specialists more appropriate? The crucial aspect of Schmitt’s *Hamlet oder Hekuba* is the expansion of the standpoint through which the play is analyzed. This means, first and foremost, a conscious disregarding of the aesthetic, psychological, and sociological perspectives through which *Hamlet* was often comprehended. *Hamlet* is grasped by Schmitt not according to its modern value—nor by its solely historical dimension—but through a formal model of historical mirroring. In this sense, Schmitt contemplated *Hamlet*—as his conception of the artwork—through an ius-philosophical examination of the historical forces liberated from the play itself. Schmitt, therefore, proposes a hermeneutical approach to fully understand *Hamlet*, as its main aspects can be efficiently disentangled through a philosophical examination. But history meant for Schmitt something quite different than the Hegelian-Marxist or Spenglerian perspectives. It meant, roughly speaking, an oriented power that always—through different events and different personas—outlines a concrete order where political existence can be sustained. If such a position can be superseded—arguing that, in fact, Schmitt muffled a psychological feature in his non-psychological approach—, it is something quite auxiliary to the problem itself. The very core of *Hamlet* as a play is its public nature. Public, according to Schmitt, presupposes the attunement between a people and its common space, namely, its order. Likewise, the public sphere—according to Schmitt—belongs to the State as the primal political force. As it reads thus in his *Verfassungslehre*: “Volk ist ein Begriff, der nur in der Sphäre der *Öffentlichkeit* existent wird. Das Volk erscheint nur in der *Öffentlichkeit*, es bewirkt überhaupt erst die *Öffentlichkeit*. Volk und *Öffentlichkeit* bestehen zusammen; kein Volk ohne *Öffentlichkeit* und keine *Öffentlichkeit* ohne Volk.”²³

Another considerable problem with which the reader could make bones about it, it is the so-called “irruption of time” into the play. The dark uncertainty of the Elizabethan years can be recognized in *Hamlet* as “allusions”—just like the jurisprudential structure of succession performs as a historical “parallel”—, but the true “irruption” is the coalesce of Prince Hamlet’s indecision and Queen Gertrude’s part in the conspiracy against King Hamlet. Put differently, the “irruption” is the energy of a concrete time performing within

22. *Der Spiegel*, 28.8.1956 (<https://www.spiegel.de/politik/die-mutter-ist-tabu-a-cbd48c8f-0002-0001-0000-000043063974>), last accessed: 02.06.2022

23. Schmitt 2017, 243.

Shakespeare's play. However, Schmitt does not acknowledge how this *Einbruch* manages to fulfill its outbreak into *Hamlet*. It is a process? It is something that can be recognized by anyone at the moment of its realization? It happened the very first time that *Hamlet* was performed at *The Globe*, or, on the contrary, it is an everlasting phenomenon that manifest its constant activity in each interpretation? Its publicity—namely, its mythic nature—does simply crush any subjectivity or, in fact, can coexist within a modern, capitalist, technology-driven world? Its power, is strictly limited to the life in the theater or—like Aristotle's comprehension of tragedy—can also be found in the text itself? Does the myth eventually wane over from generation to generation, or its ever-fueled by the energy liberated from a historical singularity? Can its unadulterated force be conserved through over-technicized means, like a live performance streamed online through different digital platforms?

Hamlet portrayed the main political themes of the Elizabethan years. However, this would have not been sufficient enough to consider Shakespeare's play as a "myth"—despite its undisputed classic status—, as such themes perform at its best as topical elements. On the contrary, the procrastination of Prince Hamlet is what really stands out in the play. He is the archetypal figure of modern individuality, and the tragic fate that surrounds him. His existential dead-ends foreshadow what will become the main feature of the modern individual, namely, an overgrown feeling of impending doom. Such a distinctive trait developed in the onset of political catastrophe. According to this, *Hamlet's* energy is raw action, a sudden shock of emotions that were able to signal the immediate biographical context of the Elizabethan audience. Its mythical status, therefore, cannot be ignored, as it compels the shared historical experience of the public sphere. Conversely, it cannot be simply created with artistry and zest by the genius of a single individual, even if the individual in question is Shakespeare himself. It transforms the hearsays, rumors, and secrecy into a lively yet modified image of the very content that could not be explicitly mentioned. The smothered political discourse of Elizabethan citizens was taken into full extent through an extraordinary conversion of materials. Human voices were now deposited in linguistic somersaults interpreted by dream-like characters, whose aching and discomfort coalesced into an eerily, familiar sensation. The play was transformative, it transforms, and certainly transformed the mindset of an old Carl Schmitt. The "mirror of nature" is a massive surface, resistant enough to become impervious to coming centuries, and larger than life. It is both a social and

psychological index, as peoples and individuals can see themselves living in Elsinore and in the metaphysical whereabouts of Prince Hamlet's soliloquies. Therefore, every character and every situation in *Hamlet* function as a mirror where Schmitt was able to recognize and acknowledge current events and situations. And yet some other obscenities needed to be uncovered, a nameless act that unnerved and pervaded the common ground of a people, namely, its reality. If the killing of King Hamlet exposed the treason that wretched for good the political harmony of Elsinore—early sixteenth century England—and its future, perhaps the atrocities of WWI and WWII were a topic too obscure to refer directly to. Therefore, the greatest of all plays was the precise artifact where a complex set of puzzling calling-outs could be shouted at safe distance. By baptizing its universal, artistic features in mythical waters, Schmitt used *Hamlet* as his personal spiritual totem. Also, this mythic attribute performed as an ideological firewall for Schmitt, as its higher power could back down any accusation of a merely psychological *Selbstidentifikation*—as Walter Warnach's indulgent and mildly censored by the FAZ review²⁴ of *Hamlet oder Hekuba* reminds—of his author. In this perspective, Schmitt would have failed to his own anti-romantic credo, for his essay on *Hamlet* could have been understood as yet another kindred-oriented exercise towards *Hamlet*—a modern tradition of its own within the German spirit. In this perspective, I do not share the views of Andreas Höfele²⁵—whom revivifies Hugo Ball's considerations on how fond of romanticism Schmitt was—concerning the unassumed romantic orientation of the author of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*. This would mean that there is a strict, single use of literary sources, namely, self-identification through speculative fiction. On the very contrary, self-identification comes as the first, mandatory level of usage of literature—and outside literature, too, as one can only seriously relate with subjects which more or less touch one's own biography. This is rather a condition more than a choice; a condition that, in fact, later on, could lead to a higher level of comprehension—which is indeed the very aim of Schmitt at the moment of underlining the hermeneutical advantages of art regarding history. Schmitt beamed through the play a reversed image of Germany and Europe, where the latter was devastation and historical debris, now placed within the foreign limits imposed by the social architecture of the Allies. The former, a docile set of instructions of intellectuals and political

24. See Höfele 2021, 7.

25. Höfele 2021, 8-9.

clerks whose national relinquishment was safely hidden in plain academic sight. A reviled jurist dared to defy both faces of a single taboo, that is, that good does not prevail over evil. Good, in fact, was evil. *Hamlet* always comes in clutch.

A final word must be said regarding the meaning of the concept of “myth” in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, namely, what does the myth—or the “mythical”—stands for according to Schmitt? It is somehow difficult to provide a positive account of what “mythical” meant for Schmitt, as he uses this word as a superlative; that is, as a higher quality that only *Hamlet* could achieve. One might think that “myth” meant for Schmitt secularized myth; namely, the afterlife of allegoresis depicted in mirrorings of decisive vignettes of history. Put differently, Schmitt’s theory of the myth meant the historical irruption of primitive forms of reality within a non-sacred, secularized epoch. There is not true politics without an authentic myth. In this perspective, the figure of Hamlet provided a well-rendering service.

The following investigation is divided into **two parts**, and displayed through five chapters. In the **first part**, I present a full examination of Carl Schmitt’s *Hamlet oder Hekuba*. **Chapter 1** offers a methodological analysis of the monograph on *Hamlet*. It surveys its theoretical structure, and highlights the importance of Schmitt’s main interlocutors by testing their intellectual contents regarding Schmitt’s essay on *Hamlet*. Also, **Chapter 1** studies Schmitt’s prologue to Lilian Winstanley’s German version of her book on *Hamlet*. In it, the reader can have a glance of Schmitt’s early takes on the “topicality” developed by Winstanley. This prologue—quite apologetic—performs as a blueprint of the monograph of 1956. In conjunction **Chapter 1** presents to the reader a full account of the philosophical dimension of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*.

Chapter 2 unfolds a point-by-point explanation of each one of the sections of Schmitt’s essay on *Hamlet*. By conceptually connecting Schmitt’s early notions of reality and seriousness—fully unfolded in his *Political Romanticism*—, **Chapter 2** emphasizes on the intellectual continuity of Schmitt’s negative, reluctant considerations on modern art, and explains why this counter-modern perspective finds in the coarse nature of *Hamlet* its antidot—in this perspective, Schmitt’s concurs on Hegel’s dismissal of romanticism. The main goal of this second chapter is to display a structured reading of the *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, and to restore Schmitt’s reluctance to modern art to its first theoretical sketches. His position regarding art never abandoned the philosophical range of Hegel’s conception of the artwork.

The **second part** of this investigation expands both the theoretical and historical context of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, that is, it proposes a detailed account of Schmitt's meditations on an alternative philosophy of history. **Chapter 3** outlines a chronological and schematic survey of Schmitt's thought of the first half of the 1950s. In this third chapter the reader will be shown how the Spanish thinker Donoso Cortés spearheaded Schmitt's outlook of a philosophy of history. Donoso Cortés apocalyptic vision of historical events—a comprehension that curtailed any traits of social activity, and intensified the theological ground upon which human history unravels—fitted in the drop of the dime Schmitt's speculations on the inner dynamics of modern events.

Chapter 4 continues the exploration of Schmitt's work during the last half of the 1950s. Along *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, a series of essays and even Voltaire-esque dialogues on order and power encompassed—and strengthen—Schmitt's much scattered intellectual efforts on accounting for the conceptual grounds for a philosophy of history. Also, the two talks which accompanied the publication of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*—and its philosophical counterparts—are here thoroughly discussed and studied.

Once this amplification of the conceptual core of the essay on *Hamlet* has been paved both in its genesis and intellectual context, **Chapter 5** explores the almost unknown meeting of the minds that somehow enabled the style and interpretation developed in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, namely, the importance of Max Kommerell's 1934 dissertation on Schiller for Schmitt's own theoretical interests. **Chapter 5** flags how crucial Schiller's *Wallenstein* became for Schmitt's ideas on historical parallels, allusions, and intrusions. Kommerell—the best friend of Hans-Georg Gadamer—posited a particular thesis regarding Schiller, that is, that the German playwright drama offers a hermeneutical background at the moment of evaluating political actions. In this perspective, in Schiller's *Wallenstein*—based on Albrecht von Wallenstein, the Bohemian mercenary of sixteenth century—an intrusion has been performed, too. While *Wallenstein* it is not mythical as *Hamlet*, its historical nature elicited in Schmitt several reflections on parallels and mirrorings. Along with the figure of Demetrius—the main character of Schiller's fragmentary play—, both *Wallenstein* and *Hamlet* are summoned in Schmitt's private reflections on history, art, and politics as a tragic activity. These meditations were put down in the very same years of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*.

Therefore, their place amidst Schmitt's conceptual hierarchy of his late work, becomes utmost important.

Finally, I conclude by assessing the importance of Schmitt's work in the 1950s and his actuality regarding the current political and aesthetical debates is formulated. His non-systematic idea of a philosophy of history championed inner historical dynamics that conducted significant political events. Schmitt even saw in *Hamlet* a historical index—a curve—, where the Revolutions of 1848 unleashed a series of political episodes that were circumscribed to the historical horizon of the social upheaval that occurred that very same year. As Martin Tielke has recently stated, “Wichtiger aber ist, Hamlet ihm zur Chiffre bestimmter Situationen wurde”²⁶. Governed by the dramatic rise and fall of Modern state, contemporary history cannot be properly grasped—according to Schmitt—through the Hegelian, Marxist, and Spenglerian perspectives. These models of historical interpretation simply denied or ignored the theological axis that was present in every political event. Moreover, such visions of history were unable to capture its tragic nature. Prince Hamlet's demise, Wallenstein's-stained moral duties, and Demetrius's political delusions, rightly proved the uncontrollable forces of history. A drab postcard of both Germany and himself was signed by Schmitt's reckless, perplexing ideas of the future in an already condemned technological world. Through *Hamlet*, Schmitt hit a bid away from his contemporaries. He exiled himself to historical connections and parallels. Schmitt's dying breed approach ultimately pointed at a complex yet fascinating concept of reality.

26 Tielke 2020, 23.