# CHAPTER 4
# THE QUESTION OF A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

## Introduction

While chapter 3 provided a chronologically reconstruction of Schmitt's key texts of early 1950s, chapter 4 broadens the conceptual dimension of such material through a bibliographical survey of Schmitt's work. In this perspective, this chapter aims to systematize the texts where Schmitt's envisioned of a "philosophy of history". The reader should be reminded that Schmitt was no philosopher—at least not in the traditional sense, say, like Heidegger or Adorno—, and that his longing for establishing the fundamentals for a philosophy of history was cemented from a legal scope, now spiritually enhanced after grasping the immense historical horizon that came after 1848. Although his professional career was irretrievable, the intellectual isolation and new, young acquaintances—like Reinhart Koselleck or Ernst Wolfgang Böckenforde—gave Schmitt momentum, and a chance to be drawn some other subjects. A set of philosophical problems—which concerned strictly to newborn disciplines, such as hermeneutics, comparative literature, and Marxist historiography—were now plucked by Schmitt from unusual conceptual sources. An unrequired opportunity knocked to his door, and he took it right away. The "chameleon"[426] was suddenly granted with historical vistas on which he inventively reflected on, although retaining his central thesis of his early works. Chapter 4, then, reviews the conceptual shift of Schmitt's thought in the late 1950s, by addressing his radiobroadcasts, correspondence, reviews and some other brief publications.

## 4.1 *Nehmen, Teilen, Weiden. Ein Versuch, die Grundfragen jeder Social-und Wirtschaftsordnung von Nomos her richtig zu stellen* (1953)

In this first appendix of *Nomos*, Schmitt develops an analysis of the Greek word *nomos* that aims to provide a global comprehension of the term—namely, beyond the "scholarly" approach adopted by etymologists. Schmitt offers a "simpler" method; that is, to determine

426. Kaiser 2020, 3-4.

"the structure of various social orders and doctrines in all the specialized disciplines, and in finding the proper formulation of the questions with respect to the core of their ethic and their view of history" (325). Such an approach, then, aims to identify a structure—and thus, historical dynamics. Schmitt's appendix is divided into five brief sections.

In the first one, Schmitt reflects on the semantic vicinity between the Greek *nemein* and the German *nehmen*—a link also shared by *legein* (derived from *logos*) and *sprechen* (derived from the German word for language, *Sprache*). A second level of meaning is found in *nemein*, which appears as the German *teilen*. Possession and division emerge as a single original phenomenon that logically leads to distribution. Schmitt acknowledges Hobbes as the first modern thinker to recover this second semantic layer; that is, "division and distribution." Otherwise put, Schmitt stresses the interwoven condition of social life and its property—persons and things. A third meaning of *nemein* is *pasturage* [*weiden*],[427] the action of producing within property—through it, *nemein* acquires a deep technological dimension.

In the second paragraph of this appendix, Schmitt asserts that "these three processes" are the coordinates present "[i]n every stage of social life, in every economic order," and "in every period of legal history until now" (327). The place which each stage occupies within the hierarchy—depending on the "concrete" moment in which they take place—is, according to Schmitt, the "major problem." The order and sequence of the stages that these processes unfold "even changes in the image people have of themselves, of their world, and of their historical situation."[428] Schmitt argues that until the Industrial Revolution, the land was "the foundation of all productivity"—which explains the historical phenomenon of "land appropriation." The land was the matrix for any further "distribution" and "any subsequent cultivation" (328). The reader here is offered a primal image of world history—or a non-Marxist conception of history as a "class-struggle" process. "Land appropriation is always the ultimate legal title for all further division and distribution, thus for all further production," Schmitt concludes (328). But is not this *nomos* and its threefold process a primary example of juridical fiction? Viewed from a perspective beyond the mythical bustle, *nomos* and its

427. See Nietzsche 2006, 216–217: "When Zarathustra had left the ugliest human being, he was freezing and he felt lonely; after all, so much that was cold and lonely went through his mind, to the point where even his limbs grew colder because of it. But as he climbed further and further, up, down, now past green meadows [*an grünen Weiden vorbei*], but then also across wild stony deposits where previously an impatient brook might have laid itself to bed, then all at once his mood became warmer and more cordial."
428. Schmitt 2003, 328.

threefold processes simply imply power, brute force. His mention of the "man-earth" relationship ends in a grand show of forces. Schmitt links biblical narrative—via Plato and then Hobbes—with factual history. It is quite the story.

In the third paragraph, Schmitt mentions an occasion when Lenin attended a speech by Chamberlain in order to illustrate the "land appropriation" thesis. Chamberlain's imperialism was, according to Lenin, "inhuman." "[I]mperialism was nothing more than theft and plunder" (331). By eschewing Chamberlain's vision of "land appropriation," Lenin sought an alternative and a more human justification of expansion. With it, Schmitt considers that "socialism falls in with classical political economy and its liberalism" (331). But why? Liberalism endorses production through its ideology of "progress and economic freedom" (331). These elements are greatly expanded by technology to the point that "land appropriation" and "production" become "irrational" (331). The social dimension is deeply affected by an antisocial guidance of economic powers. However, this dimension is precisely what socialism supports and protects. The social aspect of life is championed by "all political parties in contemporary European democracies" (331).

Schmitt briefly comments on this phenomenon's place in mid-twentieth-century Germany—a theme to which he seldom referred after 1945—and stresses the current promotion of the democratization of "individual property ownership" to a "surplus (plural-, joint-) ownership" (333). Schmitt is convinced, and persuades the reader too, that in the early fifties, Germany was a "socialist democracy." In defending a democratic conception of property, socialism is confronted with the problem of "division and distribution," leading to a mishmash of interpretations and conceptions that "collectively are called 'socialist' and are said to fly the socialist flag." Schmitt recognizes in the utopianism of Charles Fourier—specifically, his idea of massive production as the solution to the problems derived from "division and distribution"—"a clear position with respect to the basic questions, and, thereby, to affirm the contemporary tie of socialism to the historical vision of technological progress and its unlimited increase in production."[429] Proudhon, one of the thinkers whose position Schmitt used to contrast his own, went as far as to call for land redistribution—taking the whole "land appropriation" phenomenon to a new moral sphere. Marx, on the other hand, sustains his position "in terms of a philosophical and historical dialectic." According

429. Schmitt 2003, 333.

to this view, "the bourgeois social order would suspend and destroy itself!" and the social dimension would eventually collapse as a result of the conflict between the growth and social order and the "inhuman" distribution. From this perspective, Schmitt is simpler, as he—continuing this extremely fictional perspective—entrusts the future to the party that already holds power—the landowners and their concrete "sequence." Early on, Schmitt stated that the shores of "socialism" and "liberalism" overlap. Socialism, by unleashing unknown stages of appropriation through the "expropriation of the expropriation," ends as "the strongest imperialism, because it is the most modern"—i.e., historically placed in a world wholly changed by technology. Time and again, Schmitt detaches himself from all the revised standpoints and merely concentrates on the "production" problem, where all social systems coalesce in a graded utopianism, for an unstoppable production would lead to the utter disappearance of the "economic systems," "because they always presuppose a certain scarcity" (335).

This first appendix of *Nomos* brings to mind the lucid diagnosis of Carl Brinkmann in 1925, who drew attention to the inner conflict between imperialism and the laws of "classical political economy concerning population and profit" (335). Schmitt supports this argument, although his concerns are located in other areas; namely, in the future stages that these three processes—"appropriation, distribution, and production"—will determine, and their impact on re-evaluated "social systems" through their legal and economic ramifications. Apocalyptic questions close the appendix, questions that, somehow, are eerily relevant for our present days.

> Has humanity today actually "appropriated" the earth as a unity, so that there is nothing more to be appropriated? Has appropriation really ceased? Is there now only division and distribution? Or does only production remain? If so, we must ask further. Who is the great appropriator, the great divider and distributor of our planet, the manager and planner of unified world production?[430]

Schmitt guarantees the reader that only by unearthing "original concepts" can a true answer be given to those enticing and ideologically charged questions. Both the concepts and their

430. Schmitt 2003, 335.

essential category have been put forward; that is, the *nomos*. Nonetheless, is this concept endurable enough to circumscribe an exotic, cryptic, and, at the same time, "concrete" approach toward the general draft of the "philosophy of history" that postwar Europe urgently needed and depended on?

### 4.2 *Gespräch über die Macht und den Zugang zum Machthaber*

The notion of "dialogue" does not do justice to this interaction originally written by Schmitt as a script to be interpreted and then broadcasted by Raymond Aron and himself[431]—Schmitt had practiced it previously with his daughter.[432] While the introduction provided by the English translators of this piece correctly addresses its origin and main biographical elements,[433] important remarks about the style and significance of this piece have yet to be fully noted. For example: although the English editors link this "dialogue" with Schmitt's "dialogues on Nazi power with the interrogators from Nuremberg"—along with other writings of his—and even comment on the text's resemblance to "Catholic education manuals that were typical of the 1920s and the 1930s"[434]—the reader will find no mention of the most important formal aspect of these *Dialogues*. That is, that the *Gespräch* is no dialogue, but rather an interrogation. As such, its formal structure is based on questions and answers—exactly the same model highlighted by Schmitt in his commentary of Jünger as the core structure employed to address a philosophy of history. Second, this scripted interrogation was meant to be performed live: which means, according to the formal statements regarding *Hamlet* in Schmitt's 1956 book, that this interrogation is a *play*—maybe even a "dumb show," just like "The Mousetrap" in *Hamlet*. From this perspective, it is not a "continuation of his dialogues on Nazi power" but rather a *play* that recalls Schmitt's subjection to interrogation in Nuremberg—ergo, it is a *play* on the Nuremberg interrogations but also on the ceremonial aspect of Nazi rallies. Third: while one can note the resemblance between this piece and dusty "Catholic education manuals," this interrogation was already outlined in one of Schmitt's early literary works; namely, his 1912 *Silhouettes* [*Schattenrise*].

---

431. Schmitt 2015d, 86n22.
432. Schmitt 2015d, 91n4.
433. See Kalyvas and Finchelstein in Schmitt 2015d, 1–14, here 1, 12–14, 88–89.
434. Schmitt 2015d, 10, 12–13. No examples from these manuals are given.

This early work is a parody that unfolds in twelve portraits of well-known German and non-German characters who belonged to the cultural atmosphere of the early twentieth century. Schmitt wrote it under the pen name of Johannes Negelinus, who states in the prologue: "Relativism is not dead, naturalism lives, and that belongs to the children of the century, too!"[435] While *Silhouettes* is neither a dialogue nor an interrogatory, it does offer a fictional portrayal of real people—just like the interrogation does and, later, the other "dialogue" published four years later—in an ironic and even mocking style. Schmitt's marked interest in literature, already seen in this parody but also in *Die Buribunken* and the short story "The Faithful Gypsy"—reaches its final form in the interrogatory published in 1954. Only by assembling these essential elements that implicitly surround the *Gespräche* can the reader fully appreciate its significance and importance.

The interrogation starts with "Y"—the "youth" or "the student" ["un joven estudiante, que pregunta], as it is depicted in the Spanish version[436]—and "C. S." (as in Carl Schmitt, a complex subject to play). The topic is quite clear: power. The viewpoint of "Y." is incisively moral. "C. S.," on the other hand, follows a merely "objective" criterion regarding the question of power. The latter states that "[h]e who speaks about power ought first to say in which power-situation he finds himself," only to then admit that he "belongs to the powerless" (27). "Y." immediately asks if, given such a condition, perhaps "C. S.'s" views on power might not be biased—conversely, the same would be true if "C. S." had or participated in power. Against this and any "intellectual" standpoint, "C. S." simply attempts "to see rightly a historical manifestation that we all experience and from which we all suffer" (26). This is how the presentation ends and gives way to the development of the interrogatory, which is divided into five paragraphs and one *intermezzo*—"that may be spoken by a third person" (27).

In the first paragraph, "Y." and "C. S." discuss the divine condition of power and its unholy modern version. Then the latter posits a general thesis on this transformation:

435. See Villinger 1996, 16. See also Huhnholz 2018, 74–88, here 80–88.
436. Schmitt 1963, 12.

> The human—by nature a weak form of life[437]—has raised itself above its environment with the help of technology. It has made itself into the Lord of Nature and of all earthly forms of life.[438]

Technology as the backdrop of the modern phenomenon of power will be a constant theme throughout the whole interrogation. Scholarly remarks by "C. S." answer the questions raised by "Y" regarding the genuine sources of power. Its origin, just like "the Latin adage: *Homo homini lupus*," must be traced to its pure execution; and thus, to its executant, who then becomes a God. Nonetheless, the core question within this "as above, so below" paradigm is that power "stems" from humans. "The human is a human to the human," asserts "Y.," confirming—or secularizing—the Latin adage (30).

The relationship between the immanency of power and obedience is tackled in the second paragraph: "He who does not have the power to protect someone also does not have the right to require obedience. And conversely: He who seeks protection and receives it has no right to withhold obedience."[439] Such a statement refers to the undeniable bond between security and obedience. In fact, "C. S." makes it crystal clear that he is thinking of "a political unity." "Y.'s" moralist "what-ifs" are rapidly extinguished by "C.S." and his dispassionate explanations regarding the coercive dimension of power. "Y." grasps the haunting potential of "contemporary power," to the point of picturing the contemporary holder of power as an almighty force. However, in the third paragraph, "C. S." warns "Y." about the autonomy of power, which encompasses even those who hold it. He is a human, after all, a mere biological episode that is born and dies. This "weakness" was the pillar of Hobbes's "state-construction," suggests "C. S." A spiritually-inspired technological sphere is created in order to raise a total apparatus of protection.

> But despite all of these protective measures, Hobbes says, in the right moment anyone can kill anyone. A weak man can come into the situation where he disposes of the

437. The expression "form of life" could ironically be taken from Eduard Spranger's considerations on the "man of power" as a type of "life form." See Spranger 1950, 212–235. In *Ex Captivitate Salus*, Schmitt critically addressed his old friend following the "questionnaire" he received from him in 1945. See Schmitt 2017, 15: "All that was right, all that rightness could provide, *iusta causa* and *res iudicata*, was on his side." At the end of this first paragraph, Schmitt considers himself "defenseless."
438. Schmitt 2015d, 28.
439. Schmitt 2015d, 31.

> strongest and most powerful man. On the points the humans are really equal, insofar as they are all threatened and endangered.[440]

This is the "objective" situation. Much to "Y.'s" dismay, "C. S." states that "consolation" or "angst" are considerable variables in the exercise of power. "C. S." talks at length of the "dialectics" of power; that is, "power and impotence" (34). The daily hardships of the holder of power, perpetually flooded with an "infinite sea of truth and lies," force him to delegate. Several unpredictable accesses to the source of power are demanded. The indirect path to the holder of power leads to an often-secret architecture of power. History proves it, and "C. S." provides the reader with several convincing examples. Another conclusive statement is established:

> In other words: in front of every chamber of direct power an antechamber of indirect influences and powers constructs itself, a path of access to the ear, a corridor to the soul of the holder of power. There is no human power without this antechamber and without this corridor.

How then can this untamed landscape of factual power be reconciled with its public display? Necessary as it is, the legal balance "cannot circumvent the antechamber itself" (36). Several portrayals of this "antechamber" are mentioned by "C. S."; "often, however, it is only a private cabinet" (36). One should not forget that this interrogation is a play. The mention of this "private cabinet" refers back to what happened before Schmitt's detention in Nuremberg; namely, his experience with power. Schmitt did not know Hitler, but he did know these golden-brown corridors of power.[441] "The process of constructing the corridor, which we're talking about here, plays itself out daily in minimal, infinitesimal maneuvers, on the grand scale and on the small scale, everywhere where humans exercise power over other humans."[442] Power consumes power to produce power. The dialectics of power are spatially

---

440. Schmitt 2015d, 33–34.
441. See Ullrich 2016, 248: "Bursting with pride, Hess wrote to his parents: 'The showcase rooms, including the Führer's office, are so wonderfully beautiful that they could be used to receive any representatives of foreign states… My office is directly next to the Führer's, and next to his are the people who work for me, my office manager and two typists.'"
442. Schmitt 2015d, 37.

restrained.[443] Corridors and antechambers create distance. The holder of power becomes isolated. "No human power escapes this dialectic of self-assertion and self-alienation," concludes "C.S."

"Intermezzo: Bismarck and the Marquis Posa" is arguably one of the most enticing passages of the interrogation. The "dialectic" is exemplified by the use of "Bismarck's petition for release [*Entlassungsgesuch*] from 1890" (38). "C. S." demonstrates with this document how Bismarck, by championing "full liberty" regarding the self-information of "the Chancellor, the King and Kaiser," touched the core aspect of the problem of power (38). His position on the future "audience" with the king stresses "the problem of access to the peak" (39). The greatest tension through which the communicative means of power are revealed marks "the begin of the tragedy of the Second Reich" (39). The very same paradox is to be found, according to "C. S.," in Schiller's *Don Carlos*. In it, Phillip II is only accompanied by—and therefore, only accessible to—the Duke of Alba. A third character appears, Marquis Posa. As soon as he discovers a shortcut to the king, he is killed. The antechamber has endangered the cabinet. Power has defended itself.

In the fourth paragraph of the interrogation, "C. S." anticipates one of the main themes of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*; namely, the question of "succession." "Y.," on the other hand, yearns for "the splendor and misery of humans" (40). This leads her to the question of whether the exercise of human power by a human holder of power is "good or bad." The "friend and enemy" criterion helps to elucidate this: it depends on who is holding it. "Y." responds to "C. S.'s" erudite references with Jacob Burckhardt's maxim: "Power, in itself, is evil." "C. S." quickly corrects both "Y." and the origin of this phrase. At this point, "C. S.'s" overly-Socratic perspective becomes blind to other views. His mention of Gregory the Great regarding the divinity of power suffers an "essential" change. A "pious man of the seventeenth century held power to be good, while pious men of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries held power for evil?" questions an alarmed "Y" (43). What has changed? Nietzsche's "God is dead" "and the other maxim *Power in itself is evil* both stem from the

443. See Kittler 2014, 213: "Carl Schmitt once wrote a short text, *Dialogue on Power and Approaching the Ruler* […], that culminates in the thesis that power amounts to its conditions of access: the antechamber, the office, or more recently, the front office consisting of a typewriter, a telephone, and a (female) secretary. With and by means of such instances of power, dialogue could in fact still occur. Technologically implemented levels of privilege, however, derive their power from the efficacy of silence […]."

same period and the same situation," acknowledges "C. S." The fifth and longest paragraph of this asymmetrical play develops Hobbes's theory on power before bringing the interrogation to an end.

Hobbes emphasized that technology helps mankind overcome its "biological weakness." This goes far beyond the predatory nature of humans posited by Spengler and mentioned by "Y." By 1650, the dangers posed by wild animals had been resolved by "the weapons of the human." The change came later.

> But today the dangerousness of the technological means has escalated boundlessly. Consequently the dangerousness of humans to other humans has correspondingly escalated as well. As a result the distinction between power and powerlessness is growing in such a boundless way, that it is drawing the concept of the human itself into fully new modes of questioning.[444]

"Y." is perplexed. Just as Schmitt asserted early in "Die Einheit der Welt," the advances in technology do not bring about advances in morality. Otherwise put, humans and their world are outstripped by technology. "Good or bad" no longer serves as a criterion. "Incalculability" surrounds normality by defeating the sporadic yet predictable exception. "The human brain," according to "Y.," has been bested. "Power has slipped out of human hands even more than has technology," according to "C. S." (45). Inventors unconsciously contribute to the work which transforms God: the "new Leviathan." Hobbes's state, "the machine of the machines," already exceeded "all human consensus" (46). Modern power dissociates from humans. It is now "an independent reality," suggests "C. S." Power is play and its display overcomes the players. "Power is stronger than any will to power, stronger than any human good and happily stronger than happy human evil as well," reads the statement that is designed to educate "Y." However, she fears that "C. S." is a Machiavellian. Time and again, "C. S." renews this prejudice: if that was the case, Machiavelli "would have written pious and devotional books, most likely an *Anti-Machiavelli*" (48). The interrogation comes full circle. The tables have been turned. "C. S." now asks "Y." if she has or does not have power. An answer is possible only with an example, which is what "Y." asks for. "C.

444. Schmitt 2015d, 44.

S." offers a quick description of the holder of power because, although one can give many examples, the crucial aspect of this "objective magnitude" is the possibility that "the real political power could appear publicly and visibly upon the political stage [*auf der politischen Bühne erscheint*].[445] Are these "practical applications" an ex-post message to those ministers and secretaries to which Schmitt became so close twenty years earlier? The dominant thesis, "the human is a human to the human," is now revealed as "the beginning of our problematic" to "Y." "C. S." ends with a quotation by Theodor Däubler: "To be human, nonetheless, remains a decision. / That shall be my last word" (49). Who were those, then, who resigned to be humans and decided which of their kin were to be above and which below?

### 4.3 *Die geschichtliche Struktur des heutigen Welt-Gegensatzes von Ost und West: Bemerkungen zu Ernst Jüngers Schrift: 'Der Gordische Knoten'* (1955)

Schmitt's erudite commentary of Jünger's *The Gordian Knot* (1953), included in the laudatory writings published for Jünger's sixtieth birthday, is a piece of its own. Although, as Mehring has stated, this article is "the most comprehensive account of his position" regarding the question of the *nomos* and the international affairs of global political players like Russia and the United States, compared to his little book on *Hamlet* or even to his review of Löwith's book, this essay has often been overlooked by Schmitt's interpreters. I would like to argue that this is perhaps the theoretical key to fully understanding Schmitt's reflections on history—and a philosophy of history—and one of the most ambitious and enticing reflections Schmitt ever wrote. I will prove this by studying the six sections of this essay, its main thesis, and its central theoretical elements.

Both Schmitt and Jünger think that the "geographic division" between "East" and "West" is secondary. Secondary here means a merely empirical description. By contrast, Jünger considers that the opposition as such is "a question of fate." How should the reader interpret said notion of "fate"? Schmitt scholarly reminds us of the origin of the expression "the Gordian knot." However, this specific analysis is not crucial for the moment. More important is Schmitt's interpretation of this legend; namely, that such a "knot"—or a "gnarl," as Schmitt likes to remind the reader of the text's authentic Arian heritage—can be cut off

445. Schmitt 2017b, 49.

by a single "sword stroke." This would be a "dictatorial-decisionistic" gesture. In any case, Schmitt makes no bones about the philological aspect of this image. He advances Jünger's conception of it; namely, the question of "polarity and transition" (103). This represents a model of analysis, and Schmitt will employ it throughout his general yet multitiered study. First, as a historical criterion, then as an epistemic device, and, finally, as a political argument. The reader must not forget that the early stages of the Cold War loom over both Jünger's and Schmitt's reflections.[446] Between the publication of *The Gordian Knot* and Schmitt's notes on it, the Korean War and the Warsaw Pact had already taken place.

Schmitt's first paragraph offers the vocabulary that will serve as a means of evaluation for this "contemporary world-opposition [*Welt-Gegensatz*]" (100). Schmitt refers to a "global tension" and to its "innermost opposition" (103). Much like he will do a year later in his book on *Hamlet*, here too, the reader is informed about the abundance of "historical interpretations" and bog-standard "diagnoses or prognoses"—just as in Schmitt's "Die Lage" article. It becomes crystal-clear that, once and again, Schmitt aims to reach a higher comprehension of the subject:

> But since the earth has become a surveyable globe even for our practical relation to space, the manifold rivalries and collisions of the great powers are elevated for a moment into a simple, global dualism. All the more does the question concerning the core and structure of this dualistic tension govern any further treatment.[447]

The earth as a "surveyable globe" [*einem übersehbaren Globus*][448] is a direct link to Schmitt's *Nomos,*[449] which means, therefore, that these comments on Jünger's *The Gordian*

446. See Immerman & Goedde 2013, 9: "Most scholars now agree that once the political polarity is stripped away from the term "globalization," what is revealed is a long-term process that preceded the cold war; transformed and was transformed by the cold war; and continued at accelerated speed after the cold war. For cold war scholars the challenge thus becomes to determine precisely how the cold war altered the course of political, economic, and cultural globalization, whether it halted or simply redirected the trajectory of increasing international connectivity and exchange, and how these long-term processes of globalization might have altered or possibly even contributed to the demise of the cold war."
447. Schmitt 2018d, 103.
448. Schmitt 1995, 555.
449. Schmitt 2003, 86: "No sooner had the contours of the earth emerged as a real globe – not just sensed as myth, but apprehensible as fact and measurable as space – than there arose a wholly new and hitherto unimaginable problem: the spatial ordering of the earth in terms of international law. The new global image, resulting from the circumnavigation of the earth and the great discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries, required a new spatial order. Thus began the epoch of modern international law and lasted until the 20th

*Knot* unfold Schmitt's previous reflections on international politics and raise them toward a superior actualization of their theoretical elements. This intellectual gesture can be read inversely; that is, because these considerations also act as a self-laudatory exercise. The question of the "globe" was the starting point, and the "historical structure of the contemporary World-Opposition" is the major proof offered by the conceptual framework of the "*nomos*" that such a polarity can be rightly understood. On the contrary, the "historical, moral, cultural, and economic inventory" of the parties involved does not provide, through a simple comparative analysis, a convincing rationale with which such an opposition can be grasped. Schmitt eschews antitheses. Different criteria can provide a number of specificities at best, but do not lead to a global distinction. While Schmitt values Jünger's subtle differentiations—one should bear in mind how experienced the German writer was in establishing global descriptions, whether it was classifying insects or seeking comparisons between cultures[450]—these are left behind inasmuch as an ultimate criterion is needed in order to fully engage the spiritual core of the "contemporary World-opposition." Even Jünger's depiction of a final "world state" confirms, according to Schmitt, the fact that this global tension only "resituates" the current polarities, because "every solution […] signifies only a dissolution: circulation and dissolution of the problems, circulation and dissolution of the elites" (105).

The second paragraph of the essay expands on this last reflection. Schmitt unearths an expression found in Jean Gottmann's *La politique des États et leur géographie*, a long-forgotten French geographer. He posited the notion of *iconagraphie régionale*, a formula that condenses the manifoldness of every cultural "particular space." Likewise, the concept of "iconography" outperforms that of "ideology"—the latter circumscribes the political and, therefore, temporal dimension of a community, while the former is fixed in a "historically concrete" moment. Through such an expression, Schmitt stresses the concept's epistemic

---

century." For an entirely different account of the question of the "globe" beyond the rather biased juridical-geopolitical scope of Schmitt, see Sloterdijk 2013, 21: "The world-navigators, cartographers, conquistadors, world traders, even the Christian missionaries and their following of aid workers who exported goodwill and tourists who spent money on experiences at remote locations – they all behaved as if they had understood that, after the destruction of heaven, it was the earth itself that had to take over its function as the last vault. This physically real earth, as an irregularly layered, chaotically folded, storm-eroded body, now had to be circumnavigated and quantified. Thus the new image of the earth, the terrestrial globe, rose to become the central icon of the modern world picture."

450. See Blumenberg 2007, 100: "Ernst Jünger ist ein erleuchteter Aufspürer von Analogien in Ober- und Unterwelten, in entfernten Kulturen und distanten Epoche. Was ihm auffält und zufällt sind die Ähnlichkeiten."

benefits regarding his current times and the need for a thorough yet global analysis. Focusing once and again on the backdrop of modern technology, Schmitt highlights how "iconography" can be seen in the contemporary development of "psychoanalysis" and "modern painting," for the former commences where old "iconographies" waned, and the latter develops its creations by destroying its own tradition. Three examples are given which belong to the Gordian knot paradigm.

> And finally both of these, among themselves in no way identical intrusions, stand manifestly in a relation with the depredations that the irresistible technologization wreaks in the East and in the West. The three intrusions—industrial technologization, psychoanalysis, and modern painting—can here be conceived by one differently: technologization as the sword, which cuts through the gnarl of old images and taboos, psychoanalysis as the loosing of the strap, and modern painting as a dissolution via overhaul.[451]

At this point, one can note how the roughly and briefly sketched "philosophy of history" present in Schmitt's review of Löwith's *Meaning in History* has now evolved into a conceptual meditation on the relationship between history and technology. Likewise, the notions with which *Hamlet oder Hekuba* treated the analysis of the bridged dimensions of theater and a "concrete historical situation" were already present in Schmitt's reflections on Jünger's *The Gordian Knot.* These "three intrusions" [*Einbrüche*] take the image of the "gnarl" toward a more concrete field; namely, the non-linear cooperation between history and art. History as a mere chronicle is outweighed by Schmitt's description of intrusions. The adopted expression of *iconographie régionale* is theoretically refurnished, giving birth to the concept of "intrusion." Put otherwise: by the latter notion, Schmitt means the cultural—and, therefore, political—dimension of a specific historical image of a people—be it the East or the West.[452] The "intrusions" operate within an ultimate framework, an "original opposition"

451. Schmitt 2018d, 106–107.

452. This is the conceptual core of Hans Belting's monumental investigation of the history, function, and importance of the image regarding its pre-aesthetical stage—ergo, its origin as a Christian icon. See Belting 1994, 17: "Unlike medieval cult images in the West, the Eastern icon has always enjoyed a special place in modern thinking. The origin of its unique status is to be sought in the curious history of its rediscovery. Romantic utopias played a part in the mystique of icons but soon were dominated by issues of identity in Eastern

that Jünger could not see. “Every concrete localization is already a kind of visibility,” asserts Schmitt in aphoristic fashion (106). If this is true, then every localization is already a kind of *nomos*—and every possibility projects itself against another visual unit. Gottmann’s expression fueled Schmitt to elaborate a new “philosophy of history.” Using Gottmann’s notion of “iconography,” Schmitt arrived at a theoretical threshold from which he promoted his own position regarding the Cold War as a renewed take on a long-standing opposition. The *iconographie régionale* gave Schmitt the opportunity to locate the dynamics of historical episode, but also prompt him to question his rigid theological comprehension of history.

The tormented Elizabethan years “were in reality battles for or against the image of Mary,” and “[t]he war of images [*Bilderstreit*] in Byzantium touched in its theological foreground upon the Christian dogma of trinity” (107). However, any opposition inevitably occurs amidst a traffic of inputs and outputs on behalf of the parts involved. Here Schmitt departs from Gottmann’s view, for the latter’s scope proved to narrow the historical elements to particularities that do not establish a final opposition. From this perspective, East and West, considered through the criterion of *iconographie régionale*, establish a chaotic history of adaptations, interpretations, and complex cooperations.

In the third paragraph, Schmitt finally puts forward that long-desired opposition; that is, “land and sea.” Nonetheless, are these concepts not unmistakably geographic? Schmitt considers “land and sea” to be an original opposition; namely, a clash between two spiritual forces: one deeply stationary and the other highly kinetic. “East and West” are, as far as differences go, “a composite continental land mass” on the one hand and “a hemisphere bedecked by world seas” on the other (109). Schmitt recognizes this opposition in Jünger’s essay. However, in *The Gordian Knot,* the sea is valued according to incorrect parameters; that is, it is considered a matter of freedom—thus, of expansion—and property—therefore, of sovereignty. Schmitt recognizes this distinction already in Mackinder’s 1919 *Democratic Ideals and Reality*—a book that reduces said opposition to a conventional “them and us” dichotomy—“barbarism and civilization.” And although other authors pointed out similar arguments in the vein of those held by pioneer McKinder, Jünger’s stand out due to his acceptance of a “polarity.” However, Schmitt seeks a global criterion that assures an

---

Europe, for the East used the icon as a means of self-assertion against the established culture of the rest of Europe by placing the icon outside the realm of historical thought.”

epistemic endurance, a historical yield, and a political nature. All in all, Schmitt aims for structure, and the "land and sea" opposition provides it through its unique description of phenomenological features wide enough to cover massive historical segments and considerable periods of time.

> When the world-historical battle approaches its high point and both sides of the material, psychological, and spiritual forces are engaged to the extremes, then the enmity is spread across the entire environment of the battling peoples [*Völker*] and the opposition of the elements land and sea are drawn into the confrontation. The war then appears as a war of the land against the sea, or the sea against the land, as a war of the elements themselves.[453]

"Enmity" existentially—and historically—determines the agents—the "people"—driven by and with the "elements." The factual dimension of the ominous tension between the United States and the U.S.S.R.—anti-communist propaganda, brinkmanship, espionage between Moscow and Washington[454]—is nothing but the surface of a layered phenomenon that Schmitt aims to unravel to its Pindar-like core[455]. Schmitt agrees with the fact that a good number of similarities can be drawn regarding this "contemporary opposition"; "but despite the heuristic value of such historical parallels from out of the thalassic horizon," there is no "historical parallel" for "contemporary world dualism" (112). Just as he already had outlined in *Land and Sea*, Schmitt shifts from seventieth-century England to Napoleon in order to demonstrate the stability of the *nomos*. This equilibrium was disrupted for good in 1949, as the "oppositions between land and sea between East and West" took over international

453. Schmitt 2018, 111.
454. See Garthoff 1992, 287–293, here 288: "So the Cold War had both an ideological and geopolitical dimension. A Manichean Communist worldview spawned a Manichean anti-Communist worldview. Each side imputed unlimited objectives, ultimately world domination, to the other. In addition, each side's operational code looked to the realization of its ambition (or its historical destiny) over the long term and thus posited an indefinite period of conflict. But even though both sides envisioned a conflict of indefinite duration, and even though policy decisions were pragmatic and based on calculation of risk, cost, and gain, there was always the hazard of a miscalculation that could be especially dangerous, given the historical coincidence of the Cold War and the first half-century of the nuclear age."
455. Pindar 2007, 35, vv. 1–9: "Saviour Fortune, daughter of Zeus the Deliverer, I pray to you: / watch over Himera and keep its strength secure. / For it is you who guide swift ships on the open sea, / and on land order tumultuous battles and counsel-giving / assemblies. / But men's hopes are tossed up and down / as they voyage through waves of empty lies. / No man on earth has yet found out from the gods / a sure token of things to come; / man's perception is blinded as to the future."

politics following "the North Atlantic Treaty" (113). Schmitt warns how Goethe foresaw this in an 1812 poem "while Napoleon marched on Moscow." Time and again, the jurist indirectly emphasizes the anticipatory power of historical consciousness provided by aesthetics—in *Hamlet or Hecuba*, it is found in theater, while in this essay, it is found in poetry and literature. But inasmuch as Goethe—who lived a few generations before Jünger and was contemporary to Schelling—portrayed that "[o]nly land and sea here have weight," such an oppositional outline distances itself from "concrete historical thinking" (114). This polarity allows an inner-constructivism; namely, a creation of oppositions that repeat themselves through an iterative—therefore, logical—process that finally detaches itself from the "concrete" aspect that Schmitt so eagerly sought.

> The concrete-historical image, by contrast, contains a dialectic tension, namely, the sequential succession of a concrete question and an equally concrete answer. This dialectic of the historical-concrete defines the structure of unique historical situations and epochs. Indeed, we shall later show that this historical dialectic, as it meant here, may be understood neither as a general conceptual logic nor as a general law governing temporal events.[456]

Schmitt's opposition is dialectical—namely, self-productive. This means that between history qua history and temporal events—sequences that emerge and decline through factual contingency—there is an active connection, a bond that it is not ruled by a normative dimension—"a general law"—nor by some logic—nor, as one may infer, by a positivistic reconstruction of events. The exponential aspect of Schmitt's model is a crystal-clear rehabilitation of Hegel's metaphysical comprehension of history.[457] While Schmitt, just like

456. Schmitt 2018d, 114.

457. See Siep 2014, 237: "Finally, history likewise constitutes an otherness to spirit. We've already indicated that the structure of history's determining element –time – is 'analogous to [that of] the concept.' But in addition, the whole "sense" or "meaning" of history is only intelligible as the self-knowledge of spirit. Now history, too, contains "contingent events." Moreover, the historical education and enculturation of spirit is shaped by the alternation of recollection and forgetting—the precise opposite of the organic analysis of determinate concepts in the *Science of Logic*. History arrives at new 'levels' of spirit, where many developments of previous cultural states are 'forgotten,' or 'fade away' in the one-sided emphasis on the new—e.g., the emphasis on individual autonomy in modern ethical life." "Otherness" here means: temporally unknown, to be known gradually. This asymmetry between a consciousness that does not keep up with its own events and an ongoing history that never stops was resolved by Hegel through the dynamics provided by dialectics and its self-enhancement. See Hegel 1989, 86: "Die Weltgeschichte stellt […] die Entwicklung des Bewußtseins des Geistes von seiner Freiheit und der von solchem Bewußtsein hervorgebrachten Verwirklichung dar. Die

Hegel, share the self-consciousness of a historical subject"—that ultimately creates its own social institutions of self-development"—, Schmitt thinks of the exceptional aspect of such a model. Hence, history is regulated by concrete events, and not according to a teleological self-come-to-terms. Moreover, the "original opposition" aims to unfold the spiritual core in which "the elements" are entangled. Time and again, Schmitt's intention is to seek a "structure" and not a "theory of history." This caveat is highly important because (1) with it, Schmitt establishes a conceptual hierarchy for his approach to a philosophy of history: polarities, parallels, intrusions, oppositions; (2) by attempting to create a "structural" comprehension of history through a "concrete and unique" situation, Schmitt's analysis outperforms any preconceived formula and can thus make phenomenological distinctions amid the chaotic maze of sequential events; (3) Schmitt's idea of a "philosophy of history" encompasses an implicit, existential assumption; namely, the seeking of a "historical" truth:

> The truth of polar oppositions is eternally true, eternal in the sense of an eternal return. A historical truth, by contrast, is only true once. How often then ought they to be true, as they cannot be eternally true as that would contradict their historicity? The uniqueness of historical truth is the immemorial Arcanum of ontology, as Walter Warnach has called it.[458]

The Nietzschean expression "eternal return" [*ewige Wiederkunft* or *ewige Wierderkehr*],[459] refers, according to Schmitt, to the original, authentic nature of the elements that circumscribe a given event. A "historical situation" never repeats itself—nonetheless, it belongs to a major historical development housed in the dimension of being—"the

---

Entwicklung führt es mit sich, daß sie ein Stufengang, eine Reihe weiterer Bestimmungen der Freiheit ist, welche durch den Begriff der Sache hervorgehen. Die logische und noch mehr die dialektische Natur des Begriffes überhaupt, daß er sich selbst bestimmt, Bestimmungen in sich setzt und dieselben wieder aufhebt und durch dieses Aufheben selbst eine affirmative, und zwar reichere, konkretere Bestimmung gewwint, – diese Notwendigkeit und die notwendige Reihe der reinen abstrakten Begriffsbestimmungen wird in der Logik erkannt." According to Gadamer—in his inaugural speech at Leipzig University in 1939—Hegel is the creator [*Schöpfer*] of the one and only "philosophy of history" of the present. See Gadamer 1940, 25–37, here 27.

458. Schmitt 2018d, 115.

459. See Friedrich Nietzsche 2006, 126: "And if everything has already been here before, what do you think of this moment, dwarf? Must this gateway too not already – have been here? / And are not all things firmly knotted together in such a way that this moment draws after it *all* things to come? Therefore – itself as well? / For, whatever *can* run, even in this long lane *outward* – *must* run it once more!"; see also Nietzsche 2019, 464 (16[49]): "The teaching of return is the *turning point of history*."

immemorial Arcanum of ontology" (115). This paradoxical, almost amphibological account of history can be explained as a two-folded agency: first, the unrepeatable "concreteness" of any situation, and second, its bond with a greater opposition which, despite not being normative, rules over the events, as said bond provides the ontological structure through which all events emerge, develop, and finally wither away. At this point, one can also easily grasp that the individual has no place in this outline of history, and every human action ultimately meets its own limits, whether they are plans to assure world peace—Germany joined the NATO in 1955—or a call to arms against Soviet Communism.

Schmitt argues that within the dynamics of the authentic opposition, there is an "endless cycle of metamorphoses" (115). Therefore, events and situations are thrust into action. Likewise, "at particular times peoples emerge [*Völker*] amid groups that are capable of action and are historically powerful"—here it becomes clear how Schmitt approaches his "friend and enemy" criterion. The "contemporary world-opposition" is to be seen as a dangerous landmark of the history of the *nomos*. Regarding this productive enmity, Schmitt—who once again rallies against any form of psychology involving a perspective based on "individuality"—reminds us how such an attitude is to be understood as an original tension and not as a "natural" enmity; namely, a malevolent element rooted in human nature. Such a model is exemplified through the behavior of animals, as they are simply driven by instinct—one fish "devouring" another—and not by a "natural enmity" (116). Schmitt had already pointed out the importance of fables for politics—or "the political." His positing that "[t]he dog with its being does not put the cat spiritually or morally in question, and the cat does not do so to the dog"[460] quite boldly reaffirms the supposed non-morality that characterizes the oppositional arc enabled by enmity. At this point, one can naturally ask if perhaps the fable is a metaphor. However, "enmity" within the human dimension acquires a further connotation, a meaningful sense that does not apply, following the previous example,

460. This argument must be taken *cum grano salis*. While in the 1950s, the question of animal ethics—or morality as a dimension in which animals participate—was, of course, inexistent, recent studies have thoroughly tackled this issue. Schmitt—or anyone, for that matter—could only support such views on morality and animals by taking into consideration the empirical investigation they implied, whether this belonged to ethnological or interdisciplinary studies. See Benz-Schwarburg 2019, 175: "In animal ethics we ask whether and to what extent non-human animals can be potential victims of the effects of our behavior and whether and to what extent we should consider them morally. This question can be reformulated as "Do animals belong to our *moral community*? The members of this community are to be considered not only because of their monetary value or their instrumental usefulness, but also because they have *intrinsic value* to which a moral status and moral rights can be attached."

to cats and dogs. Schmitt uses the terms "surplus," "spirituality," "transcendence"—a vocabulary that obviously rises above the mere naturalness of animals. This intensification—the reader may have inferred by now that no peace is possible in the Arcanum of ontology"—achieves the "dialectical" feature of Schmitt's "oppositions." Otherwise put, "dialectics" is an exponential process where a situation is addressed as an answer to a problem—a question. It is not a mechanical reaction, but an organic development.

> Every historical action and deed of a human is the answer to a question raised by history. A historical situation is incomprehensible as long as it is not understood as a call heard by a human and simultaneously as an answer of the human to this call. Every human word is an answer. Every answer receives its sense from the question that it answers and remains senseless for those who do not know the question.[461]

These four programmatic assertions must be examined closely. The first one; namely, that *Jede geschichtliche Handlung und Tat eines Menschen ist die Antwort auf eine Frage*,[462] merges the historical dimension with human action. The latter is held accountable for a challenge—"the historical call"—that is interpreted as its own. It is important to note that the "answer" can be positive or negative and can include all the oppositions specific to the criterion—immanent/transcendent; regular/irregular; slow/fast; passive/active, or even normal/exceptional. The reader familiar with contemporary anthropology might be able to recognize in Schmitt's "original opposition" a proto-version of the "fight-or-flight" response, a criterion that belongs to the contemporary paradigm of stress."[463] All in all, history encircles human agency, and human actions drive historical events.

---

461. Schmitt 2018d, 118.
462. Schmitt 1995a, 565.
463. See Viner 1999, 391–410, here 393–394: "In accordance with the usage of the period, Selye initially used the term 'stress' to name the noxious agents that caused his non-specific reaction. However, further laboratory work in the late 1930s convinced Selye that his triad of non-specific findings were the universal signs of damage to a mammalian organism, leading him to conceive disease and health in terms of successful or unsuccessful adaptation by an organic system in response to environmental agents. […] In this reconceptualization of Stress, Selye believed himself to have discovered a universal truth regarding the relationships of organisms with their environment, a truth he would sell to whoever would listen"; see Mühlmann 2005, 23: "The stress and cooperation unit results in populations reacting collectively to stressors, conflict cooperative units directing their conflict outwards and finally only cooperation being left within the conflict cooperative unit and the emotional harmony of relaxation spreading out within cooperating stress populations." The common ground between Schmitt, Seyle, and Mühlmann is evident; namely, they attempt to establish a universal criterion regarding human agency. In Schmitt, the paradigm follows an ontological scope that seeks to achieve

The "question-answer" constitutes a model of checking. Indeed, here Schmitt is positing the hermeneutical aspect of any agency. The fact that a historical situation is "incomprehensible" [*unverständlich*]—insofar as it is not addressed as a call that must be answered "by a human" [*als ein von Menschen vernommener Anruf*]—widens the communicative dimension of human agency. However, this hermeneutical scope presupposes that both the call and the answer operate as imperative practices. From this perspective, a call is a mission, and its answer fulfills it—something quite similar to the inner-dynamics of Heidegger's *Dasein* and its ungodly return to its master Being.[464] Comprehension goes before action. Furthermore, hermeneutics becomes constructive. Schmitt provides a model for historical agency. From this perspective, any scholar, interpreter, or even the amateur of Schmitt's infamous "friend or enemy" criterion, must submit this distinction—and, therefore, any analysis of the jurist—to the historical model outlined in this essay. Schmitt here quickly shifts from a juridical to a historical scope of human agency.

What does the statement "[e]very human word [*Jedes menschliche Wort*] is an answer" [*Antwort*] mean? First, quite obviously, that no "human word" can be neutral at all. Every "word" expresses someone's position—be it an individual or, more importantly for Schmitt, a collective understanding—regarding something other than herself. Thus, secondly, this means that every "word" is directed to an otherness. To acknowledge is to recognize all that is not an "I." Moreover, "every human word is an answer" also acts as a statement on the use of language as the supreme medium of politics—or "the political," if

---

consistency by studying "concrete situations"; Seyle's early theory of stress aims to provide a distinction wide enough to cover all "environmental agents"; finally, Mülhmann's "MSC" equation strives to embrace all cultural phenomena—from "terrorist" attacks to videogames.

464. See Heidegger 2010, §54 (312): "With Dasein's lostness in the 'they,' that factical potentiality-for-Being which is closest to it (the tasks, rules, and standards, the urgency and extent, of concernful and solicitous Being-in-the-world) has already been decided upon. The 'they' has always kept Dasein from taking hold of these possibilities of Being. The 'they' even hides the manner in which it has tacitly relieved Dasein of the burden of explicitly choosing these possibilities. It remains indefinite who was 'really' done the choosing. So Dasein makes no choices, gets carried along by the nobody, and thus ensnares itself in inauthenticity. This process can be reversed only if Dasein specifically brings itself back to itself from its lostness in the 'they.'" Of course, considered inversely, "Dasein" would be an inauthentic human agency isolated from the concrete life. In any case, Heidegger's "Dasein" is particularly sensitive to long-distance calls: although one can argue that the quality of the communication might mislead the "Dasein," to the point of spiritual calls being mistaken for historical pranks. See Trawny 2015, 42: "The range of understanding encompasses the finitude of Dasein and that of being, in other words, the finitude of the 'turn'—of this revolution—in being. The finitude of Dasein and of being is not a lack, because it is characteristic for both the one and the other. Dasein, affected by death, is a 'being toward the end.' Because history belongs to being, 'finitude and uniqueness' characterize it."

one is willing to follow Schmitt's expression. Nonetheless, this would mean that every word—and thus every notion, concept, and vocabulary—is a reaction; and, likewise, that every action must develop as an answer. This meta-cognitivism is a point on which Schmitt does not elaborate any further.

Schmitt's last assertion regarding his historical "call and answer" model aims to establish a social distinction between those who have correctly addressed the "question" and those who have failed to answer it due to their numbness, ignorance, or unawareness. How then can one be aware of the question and its call? Schmitt finds in the "concrete situation in which it is raised" the environment in which human actions can and must answer what they have been called to do. An "action," then, presupposes the participation of humans acting within their own medium—their cities, their countries, their "*nomos*." Those who fly past their own "situation"—i.e., the "Romantics," "liberals," and an array of "positivists"—do not hear the "call" nor answer the "question." This model stands for publicity and, at the same time, dismisses any innerness. Human actions, their words, their questions, and their eventual answers are played and displayed as a single public unit. A thousand voices always answer in unison. Schmitt links his model to that of Robin George Collingwood; namely, his "Question-Answer-Logic" model. The English philosopher, who was just as indebted to Hobbes as Schmitt was, still failed to approach the core question of the twentieth century because he was "stuck in the concept of science of the English nineteenth century," which was strongly based on a "psychological-individualistic interpretation of the question-answer-problem" (119). All in all, Collingwood developed an impeccable model of analysis.[465] Schmitt repeats his considerations on the "question/answer" framework, only to conclude that humans "from out of the state of nature, they step into the state of historicity." R. G. Collingwood's model was provided, continues Schmitt, by Arnold Toynbee and his "*Challenge-Response-Structure* of cultural history" (119). It is quite clear that Schmitt acknowledges in these intellectual efforts the conscious rejection of "psychological" and "individual" scopes. Their vision of history is fueled by dialectics, which thus enables an

465. Robin George Collingwood's framework was developed in a book first published in 1942. Its four chapters take the form of numerals, and each section addresses a question in order to answer it. See Collingwood 1942, 129 [18.92]: "It is in the world of history, not in the world of Nature, that man finds the central problems he has to solve. For twentieth-century thought the problems of history are the central problems; those of Nature, however interesting they may be, are only peripheral."

analysis of history by "concrete situations." By this point, Jünger's motivations for his *The Gordian Knot* are past and gone. Schmitt aims for an epistemic level of historical examination; namely, a dimension that is able to touch "the dialectical structure of every historical situation" (120). Otherwise put, Schmitt seeks to establish a non-linear, non-progressive, non-psychological, and non-normative account of history.

> For us, it is not a matter of general laws of world history. That would again be subjection under the law-governedness or statistical process. For us, it is a matter of the unique historical situation, namely, our own contemporary epoch, in which a global world-historical dualism of East and West has come to light. If we here pose the question concerning a dialectical tension, then we are not seeking a general law or statistical probability and even less the general logic of a conceptual dialectic in the systematic sense.[466]

Schmitt here is stating three different points. First, that in the Cold War scenario, an original "dualism" has been highlighted. To be aware of such an opposition does not depend on the correct functioning of eternal historical laws; on the contrary, it only becomes apparent through a "concrete situation" in which the historical core—dialectics, whose nature is not additive, nor progressive—reveals itself. Second, the non-normative aspect of this opposition impedes loose comparisons between one historical situation and another. Dialectics expresses itself through impermanent situations, which are nevertheless determined by a historical core—a *nomos*. Third, the "answer/question" model tackles the essentials of a "concrete situation." It does not aim to put forward a "systematic" account of history—as Collingwood and Toynbee did—but point out the "uniqueness" of a "situation"—and thus, its identity or even its morphology. Schmitt reminds the reader of Hegel's notion of "co-progression" [*Mitfortschreiten*] in order to prove the unfathomable nature of history—although the contemporary reader might think that such dramatism had been already mastered by Luhmann's theory of society—which is, in its formal aspect, similar to

466. Schmitt 2018d, 120.

Schmitt's[467]: the former's "inputs" and "outputs" can be seen as political and legal events co-participating through an ongoing communicative feedback in constant develop.

Every great perspective regarding a general theory of history has failed to grasp it correctly. Schmitt now dismisses the scope of the "law-ordaining-madness [*Vergesetzlichungs-Wahn*] of the nineteenth century" due to its ultra-normative approach to history. In the midst of all of these systematic efforts to capture the ultimate historical framework, Schmitt finds in Alexis de Tocqueville the only unadulterated comprehension of the arrow of time. The rest simply merged into "a thick fog of generalizations"—another metaphor for "positivistic" viewpoints. Here, Schmitt develops certain views already pointed out in his essays on Donoso about the different approaches to history, whether these came from Comte, Marx, or even Spengler, whose lucid conceptual apparatus—stages, centralization-technologization–revolution, and cycles—were nonetheless incapable of providing a comprehension of history's "concrete situation."

The fourth paragraph of Schmitt's homage to Jünger's considerations on the "East and West" opposition identifies the central elements of the dualism that Schmitt seeks to criticize. "Technologization and industrialization are today the fate of our earth," Schmitt asserts, echoing concepts that he had posited in his conference on neutralizations in 1929.[468] At this point, Schmitt attempts to discover the true concepts of the problem. Polarities are set aside, and the "dialectical" approach confirms its superiority. Schmitt briefly discusses Arnold Toynbee's *The World and the West* (1953) in order to rescue the British historian's

---

467. See Luhmann 2012, 345–346: "In other words, evolution theory stresses the rather improbable, opportunistic tendency for structural changes, which, all in all, transform improbable opportunities through integration in systems into probabilities of maintaining and developing their possibilities. At any rate, no historiography can manage without the notion of structural change. It will also have to consult evolution theory; and the question can only be whether the revolution capacity of evolution theory takes the need for sources in historical research and its propensity for putting unanswerable questions so far that any account of a meaningful coherent history in which what comes later is explained by what comes earlier cannot be achieved in this roundabout way. Historians have anyway dissociated themselves from any notion of 'universal history.'" Luhmann made great use of Koselleck's vision of history, which was, as stressed at the beginning, triggered by Schmitt's *Hamlet oder Hekuba*. While this is no causal explanation of the influence one author had on the other, there is, however, a crucial coalescing of perspectives regarding a non-linear account of history. See la Cour and Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2013, 203–226, here 215–222.

468. It is not far-fetched to state that *The Historical Structure of the Contemporary World-Opposition* and *The Age of Neutralizations and Depolitizations* should be read in the same manner as *Theory of the Partisan* regarding *The Concept of the Political*; namely, as a meditated encore on the question of history and technology amid the spiritual decreasing of "the political." See Schmitt 2015a, 87: "Große Massen industrialisierter Völker hängen heute noch einer dumpfen Religion der Technizität an, weil sie, wie alle Massen, die radikale Konsequenz suchen und unbewußt glauben, daß hier die absolute Entpolitisierung gefunden ist, die man seit Jahrhunderten sucht und mit welcher der Krieg aufhört und der universale Friede beginnt."

idea of "opposition." Said conception is, however, quite conventional, as it identifies the West with mean-spirited features—"industrial technology"—and characterizes the East as a passive counterpart in the universal expansion of the West values.[469] As a spiritual backlash, now "[t]he contemporary communistic revolution of the East […] consists in the East empowering itself with European technology that has broken away from Christian religiosity," Schmitt paraphrases Toynbee (122). However, against Jünger's esoteric depiction of the intermingling of East and West and Toynbee's description of the frail accountability of Western values, Schmitt proposes "another historical image" (123). Schmitt carries out a relentless critique of all of those outdated diagnoses that are "partially optimistic, partially pessimistic impressionism," and which collide into "a chaos of theological, moral, and ideological approaches or damnations." These points of view are unaware of their role as value-givers or "re-valuers [*Verwerter*]" as Schmitt calls them—thereby anticipating his thesis on values published in 1960.[470] Some of them—"the technologists"—might even think that their viewpoints are neutral, as they only focus on successfully developing their plans. All in all, these intellectual parties cannot provide a "historical image" of the present, for they do not participate in the dynamics of the "question/answer" dialectical scheme housed in "the opposition between land and sea." Schmitt next posits a "departure" from Toynbee's views on technology in order to sketch the much-longed-for primal "historical image."

In the fifth paragraph of this essay, Schmitt turns back to *Land und Meer*;[471] namely, to the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath. The importance of England is once again emphasized.[472] Schmitt considers Lorenz von Stein to be one of the few intellectuals who recognized England's place in world history, specifically their contribution to modern

469 See Toynbee 1954, 4: "In the world's experience of the West during all that time [the last "four and a half centuries ending in 1945"], the West has been the aggressor on the whole […]."
470. Schmitt 2018d, 31: "No one can escape the immanent logic of value-thinking. Whether subjective or objective, formal or material, as soon as value appears as a specific thought circuit becomes unavoidable. […] Whoever asserts their validity must make them valid. Whoever says that they are valid without anybody making them valid, desires to deceive."
471. Schmitt 2018c, 20: "Alles, was die Englandschwärmer vom 18. Bis zum 20. Jahrhundert an England bewundert haben, ist vorher bereits an Venedig bewundert worden: der große Reichtum; die diplomatische Überlegenheit, mit der die Seemacht die Gegensätze zwischen den Landmächten auszunützen und ihre Kriege durch andere zu führen wußte; die aristokratische Verfassung, die das Problem einer innerpolitischen Ordnung gelöst zu haben schien; die Toleranz gegenüber religiösen und philosophischen Meinungen; das Asyl freiheitlicher Ideen und politischer Emigration."
472. Schmitt 2015e, 221: "Die moderne Industrie is die Fortsetzung des Überberganges vom Land zur See. Daher zuerst in England entstanden."

industrialization. However, it was not only England as a country but England's unique location that mattered:

> England was the island, which since the end of the sixteenth century was broken off from the European continent and had taken the step toward a purely maritime existence. This is that which is historically essential. Everything else is superstructure. […] It outflanked all its European rivals, not by force or higher moral or physical quality but rather singularly and alone via the fact that it had taken the step from the firm land to the free sea in all its consequentiality.[473]

According to the model previously drafted by Schmitt,[474] the English people heard a historical call and then proceeded to answer it; namely, by entering into world history and, subsequently, heading out to sea to conquer an unstable yet free space. That is why Schmitt can argue that "[f]or the first time the challenge was global," as England dominated the century due to its awareness of the world as a navigable globe. England was an isle, and its people responded to the call as such; that is, by extending this particular feature toward the horizon of the unknown. The word chosen by Schmitt, "existence," may be reminiscent of Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism.*[475] Indeed, England "existed" as it took off from the land and headed out to sea—namely, outside. Neither the Spanish nor the Portuguese nor the Dutch, as Schmitt insists, managed to truly abandon their soil. Thus, the "answer" was grasped and accepted as a challenge; it was thoroughly responded. Moreover, it was only through the "meeting" of the Industrial Revolution—enabled by the now thalassic nature of England—and the French Revolution that the "image" sought by Schmitt could be configured. "From the sea, for a purely maritime world image, the firm land becomes a mere

473. Schmitt 2018d, 126.
474. And already praised in the early 1950s, as can be gleaned from a passage from *Glossarium* dated on August 20, 1951. Schmitt 2015e, 247: "Question and Answer-Logik. Erfahrung lehrt mich sehr bald, daß man überhaupt nichts anderes herausfand als die Antwort auf eine Frage: alles (Philosophie ist Geschichte), alles historical inquiry; the conception of eternal problems disappeared entirely. Widerspruch zwischen zwei Aussagen nur dann, wenn sie eine Antwort auf dieselbe Frage sind!" (The terms "question," "answer," "historical inquiry," and "the conception of eternal problems disappeared entirely" are given in English.)
475. See Heidegger 1998, 249: "Ek-sistence, thought in terms of ecstasis, does not coincide with *existentia* in either form or content. In terms of content ek-sistence means standing out into the truth of being. […] Ek-sistence identifies the determination of what the human being is in the destinity of truth." The philosophical core of this forced neologism has been lucidly tackled by Johann B. Lotz. See Lotz 1965, 351: "Wegen der im Vorstehenden angedeuteten Sicht des Seins bestimmt sich auch das Verhältnis der Ek-sistenz zum *Untermenschlichen* und zum *Übermenschlichen* anders als bei Sartre."

coast with hinterland, *backland*," adds Schmitt (127). England undergoes a transformation. The "port" becomes "a gateway to the sea," and the island "metamorphoses into a ship" (127). Therefore, a new world emerges, and an initial estrangement brings about a sudden contact with otherness—otherwise put, according to Schmitt, "a new *nomos*." This means that a new order is set, and in order to accomplish such an order, "a new balance" guides the new and non-symmetrical relationships between "land and sea" (127–128 To phrase it in the language of systems theory, this implies a new level of "inputs" and "outputs." These streamlined considerations allow Schmitt to reject Toynbee's thesis regarding the "technological splinter" that reshaped modern history. At its best, such a phenomenon caused something much more original and crucial; namely, a "new maritime existence" that gave rise to the "first machines."

Schmitt returns to Jünger's reflections in the sixth paragraph of this essay. The German entomologist—in his *The Forest Passage*—"compared the ship and the forest with one another" (128). The reader should remember Jünger's talent for making vivid comparisons; already in the 1920s and then in the next decade, he compared the "worker" to the "soldier."[476] Nonetheless, Schmitt avoids Jünger's analogy and sustains the "elementary distinction between maritime and terrestrial experience," as now the "land" is the "house," and the "ship is the core of the maritime existence of the human" (129). A whole topology of historical existence can now be unfolded according to these central elements; furthermore, both of them—"ship" and "house"—ought to be seen as "different answers to a different call of history" (129). Technology sustains these counterparts, and their nature is now phenomenologically revamped by Schmitt. The jurist points to the "foreign" and "evil" character of the sea as set out in the Bible. An unprecedented series of exchanges and adaptations, fueled by technology, were made after England came up with its massive response. Schmitt uses the word "exertion" [*Antrieb*],[477] a notion employed in mechanics and

476. Jünger 2017, 27: "It would thus be worthwhile to pursue how the 'individual,' in his heroic aspects, appears, on the one hand, as the unknown soldier obliterated on the battlefields of work, and, on the other, as master and steward of the world, as the commanding type possessing an absolute power hitherto only dimly suspected. Both appearances belong to the form of the worker, and this is what unites them most profoundly even when they size each other up in mortal fight."
477. Schmitt 1995, 572.

machine technology,[478] to illustrate the unique driving force of technologization—and its role as an "autonomous force."

> While within a terrestrial order any technological invention of itself falls into fixed orders of life and is encompassed and ordered by these, within a maritime existence every technological invention appears as the progress of a value absolute in itself. The unconditional belief in progress is a sign that the step toward maritime existence has been made. [479]

It is more than obvious that through his insistence on the correct grasping of the historical core of a "concrete situation," Schmitt has managed to articulate an alternative approach for delving into the unreachable maze of past events and present contingencies. Time and again, Schmitt sought to establish a "structure" and find not only its origin but its dynamics. The impact of the "invention of gunpowder," which was first used on land, triggered unpredictable inventions as it was used overseas—otherworldly possibilities.[480] Schmitt thinks of the sea as "another kind of force field [*wesentlich anders geartetes Kraftfeld*]," something that would impede any type of conceptual traffic between terrestrial notions—"nomadism"—and the maritime dimension. However, the sea is also a "surface," and that leads to inevitable comparisons—like Homer Lea's likening of the sea to the desert. Comparisons that, nevertheless, are possible only from the point of view of a static existence. By contrast, Schmitt hauls in conclusions from the opposite shore. A new principle is unearthed by Schmitt: "Therewith it always remains decisive that the germ cell [*Keimzelle*] and origin of all orders of concrete human common life—house or ship—leads to opposite

478 For instance, the electrical connectors [*radarantriebe*] that enable electrical circuits to function.
479 Schmitt 2018d, 130.
480. See Herman Melville 2018, 354: "Death seems the only desirable sequel for a career like this; but Death is only a launching into the region of the strange Untried; it is but the first salutation to the possibilities of the immense Remote; the Wild, the Watery, the Unshored; therefore, to the death-longing eyes of such men, who still have left in them some interior compunctions against suicide, does the all-contributed and all-receptive ocean alluringly spread forth his whole pain of unimaginable, taking terrors, and wonderful, new-life adventures; and from the hearts of infinite Pacifics, the thousand mermaids sing to them"; "Come hither, broken-hearted; here is another life without the guilt of intermediate death; here are wonders supernatural, without dying for them." Schmitt was always much more drawn to Melville's *Benito Cereno* (he commented on a copy of a Spanish translation published in Chile in 1944; see Schmitt 2015, 326) than to *Moby Dick*, something quite baffling if one meditates on the quoted passage above.

consequences for the relationship with technology and new technological inventions."[481] England's answer unleashed an ultraviolent technological gigantomachy, which even the main intellectual sources of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—that is, "the so-called national economy," and "sociology"—failed to grasp as a whole. It was only via the Marxist analysis of the situation that a new stage of collective awareness was attained and rapidly exported to the theoretical milieu of Russian intellectuals and politicians, "who achieved their empowerment in the October Revolution of the year 1917." Sea-fueled creations led to the unprecedented modernization of a largely "agrarian empire."[482] "Marxism" became "material" in the most literal sense. Therefore, another answer was also delivered.

Schmitt once again stresses a crucial aspect overlooked by Marx; namely, "§243ff." of Hegel's *Fundaments of the Philosophy of Right*, which tackles "the dialectic of a bourgeois society." In order to overcome its own impossibilities regarding the creation of a surplus that could balance poverty and wealth, bourgeois society outstrips itself. However, Hegel's insight regarding this social phenomenon is anchored—and this is what Marx failed to notice—in his "association of industrial development with maritime existence" (132–133). Neither *Land and Sea* nor *Nomos* nor any of Schmitt's analyses of world history, its politics and its juridical structure—all condensed in the birth of the *nomos*—would have been possible without paragraph 247 of Hegel's aforementioned book. If Marx developed his theory of society as class struggle from the standpoint of the technological overlapping unleashed by the Industrial Revolution, Schmitt somehow suggests an alternative analysis that is indebted to Hegel's comprehension of the sea as the spiritual gateway for future industry and technology.

*The Historical Structure of the Contemporary World-Opposition* concludes with the caveat presented in the long third paragraph; namely, the dialectical nature of the "land and sea" opposition and the departure from Jünger's "polar" depiction in *The Gordian Knot*. Schmitt finds that a "new question" looms over the horizon that is encompassed by a

481. Schmitt 2018d, 131.
482. See Lukács 1977, 416–424, here 423: "Bolshevism offers a fascinating way out in that it does not call for compromise. But all those who fall under the sway of its fascination might not be fully aware of the consequences of their decision. Their problem can be posed in these terms: Is it possible to achieve good by condemnable means? Can freedom be attained by means of oppression? Can a new world order emerge out of a struggle in which the tactics vary only technically from those of the old and despised world order?"

subsequent "danger." From the previous answer given by England, no useful knowledge can decipher the unknown question of the present.

> This is the danger: when the humans believe themselves to be historical and hold themselves to that which earlier was once true, they forget that a historical truth is only true once. They no longer want to know that the answer to a new call of history, seen from the human perspective, can only be a harbinger, and mostly is only a blind harbinger. […] And how should the victor understand that even his victory is only true once? And who may instruct him about this?[483]

The assertion already stated in "Die Lage"—"a historical truth is only true once"—is repeated once again. However, there is an enigmatic reference that should be addressed; namely, Schmitt's mention of "the victor" [*der Sieger*].[484] Who is "the victor" that Schmitt is referring to? In an entry in *Glossarium* dated May 12, 1957, Schmitt writes a substantial reflection in hindsight about the Night of the Long Knives, the question of the German guilt, the role of Hitler in 1934, and the Potempa murder and the ensuing trial. Whilst the whole entry is begrudgingly written—like most of *Glossarium*—a curious parallel is established between Germany in 1934 and the Roman civil war between Caesar and the beheaded Pompey. Schmitt finds that in 1934 there was no clear way of knowing the future of Germany; therefore, all the nasty [*grotesk*] shouting against Hitler's violation of the rule of law must be brushed off. From this perspective, the historical wisdom sung by Lucan in his *Pharsalia* remains unmatched. Schmitt then quotes the passage of the *Civil War* where Caesar receives the head of Pompey, with which the kingdom of Pharos had bought [*pignore*] a future and bloodless allegiance with Caesar. "If crime it be, then you admit a greater debt to us, because your own hand is not guilty of the crime."[485] This tainted trade-off resurfaces, Schmitt thinks, in the Babington Plot—a scheme to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I in order to enthrone Mary Stuart. Conversely, the Röhm Putsch could also be seen as a similar situation. If this is the case, then one could easily see here the unfortunate reemergence of a modern-day Lucan and his unheeded appeal for help, now sung not in verse but in the form of legal monographs.

---

483. Schmitt 2018d, 134.
484. Schmitt 1995, 575.
485. Lucan 2008, 204 [v. 1030].

Likewise, the head of Pompey now takes the disproportionate size of a whole country that has been bought by liberals and democratic nations in order to seal a bloodless allegiance—the "economic miracle," perhaps. This hypothetical/counterfactual train of thought reaches unknown moral consequences at this point. Schmitt, in self-righteous and self-celebratory lines, even flirts with a fantastical scenario in which Hitler seemingly read *Der Führer schützt das Recht* and became suddenly aware of his own faux-republican legal somersaults. The facts, however, were that the "Nazi jurists"—Du Prel and Frank—considered *Legalität und Legitimität* nothing more than a "liberal" piece of work. *The Führer Protects the Law* provided a legal analysis where political actions would collide with political and legal responsibility. In these astonishing mirroring exercises, in which Schmitt acts as Lucan, Hitler as the victor Caesar [*dem sieger Caesar*], Germany as Pompey, and *Legalität und Legitimität* as the *Pharsalia*, a dramatic conclusion is drawn:

> There is only one possibility for the philosopher or the jurist to deal with the power–holder: to take [*nehmen*] him at his word. This is also a form of acquisition [*eine form der Nahme*]. See the story by Funck Brentano, Le Roi (1907): Your Majesty, the trial will be decided by yourself.[486]

The concepts of "taking" and "acquiring" are a direct reference to the appendixes of *Nomos*. Schmitt somehow manages to enclose all his oeuvre—and its concepts—in this retrospective and esoteric report. Here the reader can undeniably confirm that Schmitt's thought possesses an intellectual unity—which means, in his own words, both a spiritual and historical nature. And although the previous quotation from *Glossarium* was written two years after this lengthy commentary on Jünger, an important number of entries and notices from the early 1950s show that Schmitt had convinced himself several years earlier that contemporary world events were the unresolved consequence of the dialectics of history. At this point, one has to accept Schmitt's cautionary remark about himself; namely, that "there are just two Carl Schmitts: the exoteric (who therefore calls himself Carlo) and the esoteric";[487] this,

486. Schmitt 2015e, 362.
487. Schmitt 2015e, 372.

analytically expressed, means that the interpreter must have a command of both Schmitt's published and unpublished work if she wishes to venture a reflection on *il giurista Carlo*.

Schmitt's analysis of the "world-opposition" praise Jünger's contributions to the ongoing East-West problem. The non-normative nature of Schmitt's opposition—"eternal recurrence on the one hand, uniqueness and unrepeatability of the historical events and epochs on the other hand"—elevates itself as the programmatic principle of his intellectual production during the 1950s. Put differently, Jünger's historical analyses sought to establish architectural connections and comparisons; Schmitt, by contrast, simply aimed to recognize the *chiave di volta*. Schmitt masterfully manipulates the shutter speed when producing historical images. He distances himself from Jünger by choosing the correct angle, but maintains a sense of spiritual kinship with him. "Today, as Jünger himself said best, we are all like 'sea people upon an uninterrupted voyage, and every book can be no more than a log book.'" The jurist becomes a mapmaker, and a new metaphor[488] encircles the esoteric dwelling where the dialectic dynamics of history await to be sung. However, it is necessary to remind the reader that before Jünger and Schmitt, another desperate image of the human situation on the high seas had been depicted:

> We are like sailors who must rebuild their ship on the open sea, never able to dismantle it in dry-dock…[489]

## 4.4 "Was habe ich getan?" (1956)

Schmitt wrote an article—"in the Flemish nationalist monthly *Dietsland-Europa*, vol. 2, no. 1"—just under a year after *Hamlet or Hecuba* was published. The aggravated tone of these paragraphs is strikingly similar to the opening statements of the defense that Schmitt

---

488. See Blumenberg 1977, 9: "The sea has always been suspect for cultural criticism. What could have motivated the move from land to sea but a refusal of nature's meager offerings, the monotony of agricultural labor, plus the addictive vision of quickly won rewards, of more than reasons finds necessary (the latter being something the philosophically inclined are always ready to provide a formula for)—the vision, that is, of opulence and luxury? The idea that here, on the boundary between land and sea, what may not have been the *fall* but was certainly a *misstep* into the inappropriate and the immoderate was first taken, has the vividness that sustains lasting topoi."

489. Quoted in Babich & Cohen 1999, xviii. However, this well-known quotation by Otto Neurath was originally made against Carnap's "fiction of an ideal language constructed out of tidy atomic sentences"—as Blumenberg also reminds us.

presented before both judge and jury. In this case, Schmitt acts both as a defendant and an attorney, and his pleas are directed at the public—the jury—and the judge—that is, those in power to accuse and sentence—. Moreover, the article is divided into five numbered sections, each tackling generalities and specificities surrounding the "*Hamlet oder Hekuba* case." After the interviews with Robert Kempner, Schmitt was subpoenaed once again—however, on this occasion, the crime transcended the finite standards of human jurisprudence. Thus, the doomed question, "what have I done?"[490]

This one-man scandal was triggered after Walter Warnach's apologetic review of *Hamlet oder Hekuba* and a more down to eath article by Rüdiger Altmann—both pieces published in June 1956. Warnach was a close acquaintance of Schmitt—a "Catholic philosopher of art"[491]—and Altmann, a former student who remained loyal to his master even after Schmitt's theatrical self-defense. Andreas Höfele has recently reconstructed this bloated affair to show how both reviewers were both far away from writing "hostile" articles. Schmitt exaggerated Altmann's and Warnach's comments so as to elaborate an ultimate appendix to his monograph on *Hamlet*—which tackles, following the indulging Schmittian critique of both disciples' reviews, both "Romanticism" and "Marxism"[492] as canonical, "unobjectionable" interpretations. The ceremonial show of self-defense carried out by Schmitt reminds one of the prosecutor Fetyukovich from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, whose impressive arguments were finally defeated by the humbler Ippolit Kirillovich. In a new mirroring act, Schmitt adopts the naiveté of Dmitri "Mitya" Karamazov, dissociating from himself so as to scrutinize his splintered being, simultaneously acting as both prosecutor and defendant:

---

490. See Schmitt 2000, 62. Robert Kempner asked Schmitt how he could explain "psychologically" that someone like Lammers "signed hundreds of dreadful [*furchtbaren*] things"? Schmitt answered: "I do not understand that. I have not done that [*Das habe ich nicht getan*]," an uncanny foreshadowing of the question raised in the article of 1957.

491. See Mehring 2014, 429.

492. See Höfele 2016, 270–271: "Given that they were both written by card-carrying Schmittians, this is hardly surprising. Warnach leaves the reader in no doubt that he is on Schmitt's side in a very contemporary cultural war. Applauding Schmitt for taking the same stand against the 'bad subjectivity' of Romantic occasionalism as in his *Political Romanticism* of 1919, he calls *Hamlet or Hecuba* a 'most impressive example of intellectual continuity.' […] Altmann, too, is duly respectful of the master's 'magnificent' interpretation, and he castigates the usual Schmittian suspects, liberals, and leftists, with George Lúkacs being held responsible for a 'Marxist descent into the hell of rationalism.' At the same time Altmann insists that the consideration of what Hamlet meant to an Elizabethan audience should lead on to the more important question of what Hamlet means to us now."

> Thus, what have I done? At first glance something good or rather unobjectionable. I have written a book about Hamlet. Hamlet is a very beloved theme. I thus find myself in an unobjectionable society.
>
> […] What at first glance appeared good and unobjectionable, at once becomes suspect. Manifestly I have done something incautious. I betook myself to the shoreless sea of Hamlet interpretation.[493]

Schmitt repeats the innocent question twice and then proceeds to provide his answer, the question now having been transformed into an assertion. For the reader who is not familiar with Schmitt, his speech seems to resemble that of a clueless tourist who unwittingly committed a felony on foreign soil. However, one knows better. The initial argument carefully describes the actions and where and when they occurred. Schmitt refers to *Hamlet oder Hekuba* as a "book," although it is little more than a booklet. His initial argument is deductive. "x" wrote about "y," and "y" is valued as "$y^1$" by "z." Therefore, only a "$z^1$" set could positively value "y." However, if "x" surpasses the value of "$y^1$," then "x" is valued by "z" as "$x_1$" or even as "–x." The whole situation triggered by the publishing of his piece on *Hamlet* was the mistaken inclusion of a non-true element within a true set. Departing from this logical viewpoint, Schmitt is very vocal on how unjust his situation was: Why has he alone, among "ten thousand unobjectionable humans," been intellectually pummeled for his "book?" (137). Schmitt considers his endeavor "incautious." He has trespassed a forbidden zone on the "shoreless sea of Hamlet interpretation" (137). It would have been cautious to stay within his intellectual domain. But Schmitt crossed this line. That is the crux of the issue. Furthermore, he portrays himself as Don Quixote against "a whole army of hobbyhorse knights, whose newest crew is already Americanized, that is: motorized" (138). The "crew" are the ones who draw the line between right and wrong. Disenfranchisement is "motorized." Schmitt did not weigh the consequences of publishing his interpretation on *Hamlet*.

The second numbered section of "Was habe ich getan?" continues this dramatic proclamation. Schmitt admits he did "sense" the subsequent murmurings of discontent that *Hamlet oder Hekuba* would cause. Therefore, he opted to remain "objective." Now the reader

493. Schmitt 2018d, 137.

knows that his insistent dismissal of "psychological" approaches was no mere coincidence. Schmitt reminds us that he tried to remain as close as possible to Erich Franzen—a long-forgotten "jurist, theater critic, and translator of Beckett and Faulkner"—and his remark on the Bard: "Of all the scholars of Hamlet, Shakespeare came closest to the truth" (138). Schmitt paraphrases most of the introduction to *Hamlet or Hecuba*, only to then warn that "even the objective action that is brought before the spectator and auditor is full of riddle and rupture" (139). Otherwise put, the "objective" structure is unbalanced by something as subjective as "revenge." The question of the "guilt" of the mother is once again stressed, as is Schmitt's "treatment of the objective action"; namely, that in order to propose an analysis of Hamlet, the "concrete situation" within which it was created must be taken into serious consideration. Both situations are expressed as "the taboo and the queen" and "the deflection of the figure of the revenger" (140). The play qua play does not "come undone"; on the contrary, a masked "contemporary historical reality becomes visible" (140). Thus, "the intrusion of time into play" (140).

Schmitt's depiction of his own book aims to elucidate the method he has chosen. This approach, however, was knowingly developed in times in which a "division of labor of the academic factory" was marching ahead full steam. Therefore, Schmitt's view became the intruder, "the aggressor." While one may rightly feel bemused at this point, Schmitt's whimsical defense still yields new discoveries. In the third section, a hypothesis is put forward regarding the so-called "autonomy" of the artwork. Strongly blinded by "its historical and sociological composition," "deeply rooted in the tradition of the German educational culture," a contemporary taboo manifests itself (141). Schmitt mentions a letter by Gustav Hillard—"pseudonym for Gustav Steinbömer, a German writer"—in which the latter explains the particular aesthetic economy that rules over the artwork; namely, the deflating of "originary images [*Urbilder*] via the poet," and their subsequent reception on the part of the "reader and auditor." Then, Schmitt once again quotes Stefan George and his idea of how the artistic experience is meaningless to the artist and "more bewildering than redemptive" for everyone else. These two evaluations of the play are sufficient for Schmitt to unravel the core of the problem.

> *Hamlet* is a work of art; a work of art exists in a world of beautiful appearance and pure play [*ein Kunstwerk gilt in einer Welt des schönen Scheins und des reinen Spiels*].[494] Whoever speaks of James and Mary Stuart in an explication of *Hamlet* engenders bewilderment and questions the purity of a work of art. In speaking of the taboo of the queen Mary Stuart, I myself transgressed [*verletzt*] a taboo.[495]

While this explanation might ring hollow to the reader, a crucial point has been made; that is, the hermeneutical monopoly over the artwork. While this "transgressed taboo" may be nothing other than the usual intellectual bickering between an author and her critics, Schmitt's considerations on this "transgression" become crystal clear if compared with Gadamer's reflections on the same subject.[496] In any case, Schmitt has defied a whole school of thought—and with it, its inner-politics.

A third level of "danger" is yet to be acknowledged. In the fourth numbered section, Schmitt expands on the mention of Lúkacs made by both Warnach and Altmann. The Hungarian philosopher is certainly a leading Marxist intellectual and, therefore, the wielder of an undisputed interpretative method.

> Dialectical materialism identifies its analyses of the class situation of the artist and the period of composition of the artwork with historical treatment simply. In this way it created for itself a monopoly on the historical treatment of art. Whoever endangers

494. Schmitt 1995b, 223.
495. Schmitt 2018d, 141.
496. Gadamer 2004, 499: "Thus, in my opinion, Schmitt falls victim to a false historicism when, for example, he interprets politically the fact that Shakespeare leaves the question of the Queen's guilt open, and sees this as a taboo. In fact it is part of the reality of a play that it leaves an indefinite space around its real theme. A play in which everything is completely motivated creaks like a machine. It would be a false reality if the action could all be calculated out like an equation. Rather, it becomes a play of reality when it does not tell the spectator everything, but only a little more than he customarily understands in his daily round. The more that remains open, the more freely does the process of understanding succeed–i.e., the process of transposing what is shown in the play to one's own world and, of course, also the world of one's own political experience." Gadamer is on point when he acknowledges the inconclusive nature of the work of art as one of its central features. However, to state that Schmitt "falls victim to a false historicism," is quite a distortion of the method he chose to study *Hamlet*. In this case, the play is not calculated but created amidst historical conditions that ultimately intrude into it. These conditions perform as an array of intensities that cannot be commanded. There is quite a difference between an artist being "motivated" by something—in this case, the political context of Queen Mary Stuart—and re-creating historical motivations that ultimately will fuel—"elevate"—that which will be created.

> the monopoly is reactionary and a class-enemy. Between the *diamond*[497] and the beautiful appearance, the German is left merely with the anxious choice.[498]

Schmitt is probably referring to the fourth chapter of Lukác's *Theory of the Novel* (1920),[499] which dominated for a good amount of time the intellectual scope regarding literary studies—as well as Lukác's serious critique, found in *The Destruction of Reason,* of the "existential irrationalism" that ruled over Schmitt's comprehension of politics.[500] It was not until Hans Robert Jauss and Peter Szondi provided an alternative model of comparative analysis that new, post-Marxist philosophical and historical interpretations began to appear. Now, it should not be necessary to repeat that much of Schmitt's defense is a conjunction of loathing, patheticisim, and tongue-in-cheek intentions. The so-called "monopoly" of "dialectical Marxism" was at its best just a strong tendency in the German academy. No guarded garrison of Marxist academics had barred the brave non-specialist from contributing a novel approach to *Hamlet*. Moreover, the sentence, "[b]etween the diamond and the beautiful appearance, the German is left merely with the anxious choice" has been restored to its original meaning by Andreas Höfele,[501] who discovered, when comparing the original manuscript of *Hamlet or Hekuba* with this conference, that *Diamat*—which the English translator of "Was habe ich getan?" had mistaken for a typo of *Diamant*[502]—is actually an abbreviation of "dialectical materialism." Regarding this confusion, a baffled Schmitt wrote: "Note for the Schiller year 1959: Most educated Germans of 1959 are no longer able to read this last sentence; they will not know where the 'dilemma' comes from and be inclined to read 'Diamant' rather than 'Diamat'" (262). The logical question is: Why did Schmitt abbreviate an expression so

497. The italics are mine.
498. Schmitt 2018d, 142.
499. Luçáks 1971, 144: "The artist's epic intention, his desire to arrive at a world beyond the problematic, is aimed only at an immanently utopian ideal of social forms and structures; therefore it does not transcend these forms and structures generally but only their historically given concrete possibilities–and this is enough to destroy the immanence of the form." During the 1950s, Lukács published three monographs on the theme of realism.
500. Lukács 1981, 658: "In these central concepts of law philosophy as formulated by Schmitt, we can see plainly where the existentialist conception was leading: to the union of an extremely scanty and insubstantial abstractness on the one hand and an irrationalist arbitrariness on the other. It was precisely by claiming to solve all the problems of social life that Schmitt's antithetical pairing of 'friend and enemy' revealed its hollow and arbitrary character."
501. Restored for most contemporary English readers. Carlo Galli, in his introductory comment to the Italian translation of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, pointed out this fact. See Schmitt 2012, 28.
502. Schmitt 2018d, 142 f23.

commonly used inside and outside the academy? The only possible answer is that he felt genuinely persecuted by those who presented themselves as "dialectical materialists." Therefore, Schmitt took his provocation very seriously. Conversely, the expression "beautiful appearance" [*Schöner Schein*] belongs to letter 26 of Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man.*[503] Otherwise put, the historical-spiritual situation of Germany—depicted in the interpretative quarrel where Schmitt detected a taboo—must now opt between an authentic comprehension of its people through art, and a specialized—and thus, technified, "motorized"—group of experts, whose knowledge hides a dangerous ideology. Schmitt concludes: "I have experienced on my own body what this practically means" (142). Isolation, rejection, or even mockery, perhaps?

The fifth and last paragraph of this article places the injustice theme within the context of the wave of ex post "criminalizations" in postwar Germany. This is directly linked to the previously quoted passage of *Glossarium*; that is, the question of Schmitt's guilt. Likewise, his indirect mention of Schiller proves how important both Schiller and—as the reader will later see—Kommerell's interpretation of the German dramatist was for *Hamlet or Hecuba* and for Schmitt in general during the 1950s. Those who control the legitimacy of interpretative concepts also control the concepts of guilt and criminality. Just like "The Mousetrap" in *Hamlet*, *Hamlet oder Hekuba* was a performative test designed to unveil the underground operations of agents of secrecy and deceit. Schmitt states that he is merely offering a "candid" argument. At this point, this "old man" can only confess. The essay on *Hamlet* was not a mere insubstantial bottle tossed to the "shoreless sea of Shakespeare interpretation"; it was, rather, "in its thought as in its writing, inadvertent and merely faithful" (143). The defense rests its case and Schmitt quotes his beloved friend, the late Konrad Weiss: "I do what I want and hold what strikes me, / Until what I don't want, a meaning like writing does to me" [*Ich tue, was ich will, und halte, was mich trifft, / bis was ich nicht will tut mit mir ein Sinn wie Schrift*].[504] The verses belong to "Largiris"—Latin for "he who bestows"—a poem that explores the pure soul of the child and the innocence of infancy. This is something very interesting to think about, mainly because Schmitt decides to conclude his self-defense with a poem that is based on the division between man as a dark being [*der*

503. Schiller 2009, 116.
504. Weiß 1961, 595.

*dunkle Mann*], and the divine light shed on the child; that is, the child as a creature of light [*die Sonne scheint*]. Schmitt's words—that is, *Hamlet oder Hekuba*—were innocent, detached from any murkiness or dark intention. Schiller's "aesthetic semblance" [*schöner Schein*] meets Weiß's "the gleaming sun" [*die Sonne scheint*]—the graphic and phonetic similarities between each expression are striking. Thus, when Schmitt—in a letter to Armin Mohler—calls *Hamlet oder Hekuba* "merely faithful [*nur getreu*],"[505] he is stressing the non-academic nature of his work. Moreover, he is antagonizing with the politics that secured for itself the "monopoly of interpretation" (142). As a sentenced "class-enemy" [*Klassenfeind*], Schmitt posits through "Was habe ich getan" both the genesis of *Hamlet or Hecuba*—Schiller's comprehension of history through art—and the forbidden zone he trespassed with his interpretation of *Hamlet*; namely, the political monopoly of postwar Germany and its new ruling, unflinching morality.

## 4.5 The Aachen Conference

In January 21, 1957, Schmitt was invited by the head of the foreign office of the RWTH Aachen University, the philosopher Peter Mennicken, to pronounce a public conference. Andreas Höfele has recently unearthed the two-page typescript of Schmitt's allocution, along with his manuscript annotations and notes[506]—most of them written in the Gabelsberger shorthand, the very same style fashioned in several of the *Glossarium* entries. The title of the conference—which was also sent to Ernst Jünger in 26 January—was "Hamlet as a mythic figure of the present" [*Hamlet als mythische Figur der Gegenwart*]. Unlike the theatrical victimization performed in his private talk at Düsseldorf on 1956, the Aachen conference engages in a more straight-forward language.

> Wenn sie den Namen "Hamlet" hören, erinnern Sie sich wahrscheilich an ein Theaterstück von Shakespeare, dessen Held ein Zweifler und Zauderer ist,
> eigentlich ein sonderbarer Held, den er hat es mit großen Eifer übernommen, die Ermordung seines Vaters zu rächen, findet aber nicht den Entschluß zur Tat[,]

505. Schmitt 1995b, 224.
506. Höfele 2021, 12-3. For Schmitt's manuscript annotations and drafts, 14-37.

> sondern ergeht sich in Reflexionen und endet schließlich in einem wilden Durcheinander von Mord und Totschlag.

Schmitt propaedeutically breakdowns *Hamlet*'s structure. It is a play about a "peculiar hero" [*ein sonderbarer Held*] that although eventually will slash the murderer of his father, builds a metaphysical maze of reflections that neglect his concrete frame of references. The coalesce of such elements makes of *Hamlet* a "Tragic History", Schmitt continues, as it is swarmed with "violent actions and crime, murder and revenge, venom and betrayal, adultery and insanity, sophisticated exposure of astute villains". This ravenous meeting of hubris and confusion somehow endorses, according to Schmitt, the negative appreciation of both Voltaire and Tolstoy.

Schmitt seeks for the image that unravels amidst this violent search for bloodlust. "[W]elches Bild sich uns vor Augen stellt, wenn wir den Namen 'Hamlet' hören?" A tormented prince, dressed in black, whose philosophizing—a variety of word salads expressed through magnificent verses—only aggravates his inner suffering, amplified on the outside, too. "Until the events", that is, reality as such, "finally overwhelms him" [*bis ihn schließlich die Ereignisse überrollen*]. How, then, this somber figure could achieve the status of an archetype?

> Mit anderen Worten: wir sehen das, was man einen typischen Intellektuellen nennen kann. Das Typische daran ist das Mißverhältnis von Denken und Tun, die Lähmung durch Reflexion und Selbstbetrachtung, überlegene Intelligenz und Ironie aber kraftloses Versagen vor der Wirklichkeit. So ist dieser Hamlet Shakespeares zur mythischen Figur des europäischen Intellektuellen geworden.

The reader could rightly ask if by "typical" Schmitt meant "stereotypical", as—especially regarding the consolidated intellectuals still active by the late 1950s, like Sartre, Camus, Bohr, and Karen Blixen, all of them who were nothing but atypical—his depiction of Prince Hamlet as a conflicted bookworm might be slightly biased. The "disproportion between thinking and doing" is undoubtedly a trademark of Prince Hamlet. Likewise, the fact that these mental choreographies cannot stand a chance when facing reality is something human, all too human. Nonetheless, what really stands out in this "paralysis through reflection and

self-examination" [*die Lähmung durch Reflexion und Selbstbetrachtung*], is that occurs in a collapsed political environment, among murder, treason, secrecy, and the ruin of a State. Put differently, Prince Hamlet's mercurial persona disengages from reality. To ignore, to escape, to dissociate—whether it is through phantasy, procrastination, or the endless levels of self-diagnosing—from concrete, serious events, is the key aspect of Prince Hamlet, for only an intellectual can oppose an alternative to reality itself, namely, some other, inner, and greater worlds. And this is, for Schmitt, what enables Hamlet to become the "mythical figure of the European intellectual".

From now on, the Aachen conference takes an unexpected turn. Schmitt reveals the true meaning of the word "intellectual"—a notion that is barely mentioned in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*—. That the very epoch that demythologized the theological image of the world could provide to coming centuries a myth-fueled figure is something simply paradoxical. Schmitt argues that Voltaire is, so to speak, "the greatest Church Father of the European intelligentsia". Or, put differently, the reactionary opinion of Voltaire regarding *Hamlet*—a "barbarian", as the French "intellectual" thinks—demonstrates how innovative was Shakespeare's play, as Prince Hamlet avantgarde persona combines deadly theological elements through a modern intellectual momentum. Schmitt thinks that this rare phenomenon—that is, the myth *Hamlet*—demands a "closer examination", for such an enigma could offer a "crystal-clear" recognition "of the true fate of the European intelligentsia" [*das wahre Schicksal der europäischen Intelligenz in aller Deutlichkeit zu erkennen*].

Schmitt now applies his "*Hamlet* curve" to the immediate political context. If Prince Hamlet performs as a "mythical figure of the present", several—if not the great majority—of politicians and important State authorities exhibit traits of Hamletism. Schmitt mentions "German Chancellor Brüning (1930-1931), the Italian Socialist Saragat (1951), or Prime Minister Segni (1956)", who have been described as "Hamletic figures". Does this mean that the presence of such a display of figures guarantees an Elsinore-like landscape by default? According to Schmitt, this acknowledgment has to be something more than "a journalistic catchphrase".

> Es gibt aber auch tiefer drigende Verwendungen des Namens, die sich daraus erklären, daß im Zeitalter der Massendemokratie vereinfachte und verkürzte Symbolfiguren unvermeidlich sind, eine Art von Ersatz-Mythen für die Millionen Zuschauer, Hörer und Leser von Kino, Radio und Presse. Die Tages-Publizistik bedarf ihrer und verwandelt echte Mythen in Slogans, wie sie ganze Urwälder in bedrucktes Zeitungspapier verwandelt. Aus diesem Bereich der Publizistik eines demokratischen Massen-Zeitalters möchte ich noch zwei Beispiele nennen, damit nicht der Eindruck entsteht, als spräche ich hier von schöngeistiger Literatur.

The summoning of these central figures of the "European intelligentsia" —Giussepe Saragat, the fifth President of the Italian Republic, Heinrich Brünning, chancellor of Germany during the Weimar Republic, and Antonio Segni, both Prime Minister and President of Italy in 1961-1962—demands a thorough examination of the profoundness of the "Hamletic" phenomenon. The shared *Hamlet*-esque feature of these men is guided by a greater context, namely, the "age of mass democracy". Even such a technology-fueled epoch must broadcast mythical content through "cinema, radio, and media". Up to this point, Schmitt's conference perceives as extremely akin with Barthes' *Mythologies*—which was published in the very same year of Schmitt's Aachen dissertation. "So that this myth of 'literary holidays' is seen to spread very far", Barthes reflects apropos a photograph published in *Le Figaro* of André Gide's reading Bossuet, "much farther than summer: the techniques of contemporary journalism are devoted more and more to presenting the writer as a prosaic figure. But one would be very wrong to take this as an attempt to demystify. Quite the contrary"[507]. Both Schmitt and Barthes note the subtle cultural control of public opinion through the use of specific techniques, amplified in media platforms. It is a conversion of energy, which nevertheless preserves a fierce guidance on the masses. "Daily journalism needs them, and transforms authentic myths into slogans, just like they convert entire jungles into printed newspaper", Schmitt states. Therefore, contemporary journalism commands the rise and fall of political myths.

Schmitt warns the audience on the fact that his dissertation is not lingering to an "aesthetical literature" [*schongeistiger Literatur*] standpoint. His unusual name dropping of

507 Barthes 1991, 29.

political figures aims at some other plane, namely, a broader comprehension of political phenomena through the recognition of mythical energies at play. That is why he now reflect on the 1956 USA presidential candidates Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson, "the Hamlet of Illinois".

> Erfahrene Sachkenner der amerikanischer Mentalität haben lange vor der Wahl Wetten gemacht, daß er den Wahlkampf gegen Eisenhower unmöglich gewinnen könne, weil bei der allgemeinen Abneigung gegen der Intellektuellen in Amerika der Name Hamlet genügt, um einen Kandidaten zu erledigen. Die Wetten sind allerdings nicht zum Zuge gekommen, weil – wie Sie sich erinnern – gegen Ende Oktober 1956 die Suez-Krise, der Premier-Minister Eden, in seiner halb-tragischen Rolle ebenfalls als ein Hamlet. Sein Anfall von Aktivismus hat ihm diese Bezeichnung eingebracht, denn solche Anfälle plötzlicher Gewalt gehören sowohl zur Psychologie der Reflexions-Gehemmten im allgemeinen wie auch zur Charakteristik von Shakespeares Hamlet im besonderen.

As it is well-known, Eisenhower defeated—just like he did in 1952—the democrat Stevenson, a result that ended the previous democratic party prevail (Roosevelt was a three-time reelected president, followed by the democrat Harry S. Truman). Schmitt is on point regarding the "general dislike in America for intellectuals" —after all, Stevenson's party pins message read as *All the way with Adlai*—, although Stevenson's defeat is correctly grasped if the reader reminds that the 1950s were one of the most uncertain years of the Cold War. Anthony Eden, the Conservative successor of Churchill in early 1955, is also mentioned by Schmitt. Eden's vouching for the Suez operation—a failed plan for conquering the Suez Canal amidst the invasion of Egypt in 1956, commanded by Israel and the Anglo-French allegiance—can also be seen as a "semi-tragic role as a Hamlet". The erratic political choices of Eden, his "bouts of activism have earned him this label, for such bouts of sudden violence are as much a part of the psychology of the reflection in general—as they are also a characteristic of Shakespeare's Hamlet in general". Schmitt reminds his audience how a verse of *Hamlet*'s Act III[508]—*O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!* [O, welche rasche blutge Tat

508 3, 4, 27.

ist dies!]—was "independently quoted by "many contemporaries in all European countries in light of the proceedings against Egypt".

The Aachen typescript ends here. Several manuscript annotations and drafts abound in the following pages, which also contains "parallel versions" three times sketched. The reader does not know if any participant asked the obvious question, that is, if the "mythical figure" of Prince Hamlet have or have not any true impact in the age of mass democracy. Andreas Höfele posits this question, as he reconstructs Schmitt's drafts on both the "history of the literary reception of the Hamlet-figure" and the "social history of the intellectuals". Schmitt does not further elaborate any kind of conclusion. His reflections on the importance of *Hamlet* in the late 1950s remain open. Moreover, the reader of *Glossarium* can easily note how several of this manuscript annotations—as the conference in Aachen itself—are taken from Schmitt's private entries during the mid 1950s. However, what really stands out of Schmitt's dissertation at the RWTH, is the formal yet oblique application of the main thesis of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*—namely, that the mythical aspect of *Hamlet* is still contemporary as highlights the asymmetry of a tortured intellectual mind within the ongoing ruin of a belittled State. Höfele reminds, nonetheless, a minor but significant correction of one of Schmitt's sub-theses in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, that is, that "the eighteenth century poets of the German *Sturm und Drang*—Lessing, Herder, Goethe—began this process by making their own myth out of" *Shakespeare* —and not "Hamlet", as it reads at the beginning of the *Einleitung* of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*[509]. What does it mean such a correction? While Schmitt's notes compare *Hamlet* with Goethe's Werther, the read cannot discern what is Schmitt arguing here. Perhaps the fact that the production of a German myth on *Hamlet* once again proves the intellectual obsession of reproducing all sort of geniuses? In any case, what becomes clear in Schmitt's conference in Aachen—along with his manuscript notes—is how the importance of *Hamlet* performs within a great historical framework, that is, the year 1848 and all the subsequent political events. "Hamlet is an intellectual man, too sophisticated and noble for the world" [*Hamlet ist ein geistiger Mensch, der für die Welt zu fein und edel ist*][510], adds Schmitt in the first section of his conference. An "intellectual", unlike Goethe's Werther.

509. Schmitt 2009, 7.
510. Höfele 2021, 15.

What does "intellectual" means, then? First and foremost, a man—it is worth noting that, according to Schmitt, "Hamlet as a mythical figure of the present" does not contemplate women, as the self-centered, intellectual persona of Prince Hamlet is a strictly masculine feature—who is able to master everything but his relation with reality. The reader might remember Walter Bradford Cannon's fight-or-flight response, a biological model that explains the physiological reaction of vertebrates and other organism regarding the stress triggered in potential harmful situations. The intellectual does not fight nor he flights, but proceeds toward a series of makeshift U-turns back to himself. In this perspective, the intellectual suspends his fight-or-flight response in favor of a psychological gate, which includes a safeness only to be perceived by no one except him. His dissociation, however, is not terminal, as he eventually will return to reality—the deeds can certainly fail, but cannot be unfulfilled—, even if his delayed actions are to be performed out of time. Höfele underlines how ironic that subject of Schmitt's Aachen dissertation was the "mythical figure", a Hamlet-interpretation initiated by no other than Schlegel. Höfele also reminds he extensive use of *Hamlet* by Schmitt, in order to examine his own situation after 1945. While the aforementioned manuscript notes certainly provide interesting details to the hardcore interpreter of Schmitt—for instance, the use of unknown, unmentioned authors in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, like Hermann Türck, Hoffmansthal, and Julius Bab—they don't really add new or substantial elements to his ideas sketched in *Glossarium*, *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, and the two conferences already explicated.

### 4.6 *Gespräch über den Neuen Raum* (1958)

By 1958, all of Schmitt's crucial reflections regarding an authentic philosophy of history, art, world history, international politics and the momentous conflict between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R, power, and the key concepts necessary to tackle all these phenomena, had already been formulated. A good example of this is Schmitt's 1957 *Die Andere Hegel-Linie*, a brief homage to Hans Freyer on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Schmitt places Freyer on the same level as Dilthey and Hegel. This line "is a characteristic feature in the European physiognomy, an essential component of our European present, and a spiritual reality." This

is quite a compliment. Freyer's 1955 *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*[511] was one of the main"—yet not explicit acknowledged"—references in Schmitt's vision of a philosophy of history. What Spengler's *The Decline of the West* was to World War I, Freyer's *Theory of the Present Age* was to World War II. If the classic Hegelian line reached Lenin and Stalin through Marx, by contrast, this "other" present-day line begins with Hegel's philosophy of history and then is materialized in the relationship of "knowledge and power in the age of the atom and thermonuclear bombs."[512] Jena meets Hiroshima. Can the philosopher voice an opinion that will be heard by the holder of power? Schmitt mentions the contributions of Chicago-based Leo Strauss and Paris-based Alexandre Kojève to this topic, as they represent a parallel between the legendary encounter between Simonides of Ceos and Hieron of Syracuse"—they both end working as diplomats"—. Hans Freyer's meditations on this same topic apropos of the death of Archimedes are simply "wonderful."

*Die Andere Hegel-Linie* ends with a reflection on Hans Freyer's intellectual contribution as the current example of the "unity of knowledge, life and personal destiny"[513] that characterizes the philosopher. In a single page, Schmitt somehow managed to reflect on the philosophy of history, the "spiritual" aspect of every concrete struggle—via the same quotation from Rimbaud he included in his commentary on Jünger: "[t]he spiritual combat is as brutal as the battle of men"—and the dark age of world-history and its politics amid the unfathomable advance of technology. All of these themes will be expanded in the three-way conversation included in his *Dialogue on New Space*.

This piece is quite different from the interrogation published in 1954. Although one can think of an updated version of Voltaire's swansong *Euhemerus's Dialogues*[514] or Berkeley's *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonus,*[515] each of the parties involved in this text represent a historical force. These three are Altmann—a German pun for "old man"—the Europe of the late *nomos*, Neumeyer (a chemical physicist), a liberal man of science and of secular viewpoints, and MacFuture, a cartoonish North American who barges into the dialogue at a certain point. The "question-answer" model is here enhanced with

511. The affinity was quite strong. The last chapter of Freyer's analysis of the present is entitled "The pluralism of the spiritual world and the present of the Earth." See Freyer 1955, 248–258.
512. Wirsing 1957, 2.
513. Wirsing 1957, 2.
514. See Voltaire 2009, 77–274.
515. See Berkeley 2007.

erudite references and lengthy explanations on the main topic; namely, the "opposition between land and sea and then to talk about the distinction between terrestrial and maritime existence."[516] The contrast between "A." and "N." is more nuanced than that between "C. S." and "Y." However, they are separated by a much more profound difference; that is, the "spirituality" of "A." against the parceled "secularism" of "N." This five-paragraph dialogue can be seen as a performative collage of Schmitt's thoughts from *Land und Meer* onward.

> A. When a world-historical opposition approaches its climax, then on both sides all material forces, all forces of soul, and all intellectual forces are brought to bear in the conflict to the greatest extreme. Then the battle extends across the whole environment of the participating powers. At this point, the elementary opposition between land and sea is itself brought into the confrontation. […]; in other words: as a war of the elements against one another.[517]
>
> N. To me it seems that everything that you draw into world-historical phenomena or constructions, including the highly interesting theory of the English geographer Mackinder, is only the form of appearance of an historically bounded picture of the world.
>
> A. Do you perchance believe that physicists, chemists, and technicians dreamed no dreams, produced no myths and were immune to anachronisms?
>
> N. Ah, so. I see you wish to go with this, honorable Mr. Altmann. You now wish to come at me historically [*Sie wollen mir jetzt historisch kommen*].[518] You are now working with the so-called historical sense and with historical dialectics.[519]

This provides a picture of the dynamic between the savvy Neumeyer and wise Altmann, who insists on establishing a structural opposition. But suddenly, a new player joins the play in the second paragraph. "MacFuture" does not participate in the dialogue; on the contrary, he

516. Schmitt 2015d, 53.
517. Schmitt 2015d, 60.
518. Schmitt 1995a, 588.
519. Schmitt 2015d, 62.

intervenes and proceeds to lay down new rules. One should keep in mind that each figure represents world players: the spirit of old Europe, the new depoliticized scientific ethos, and the United States' sudden emergence as a new form of twentieth-century global empire. From this perspective, MacFuture unfolds a statement that must be grasped as an explicit metaphor: "Up until now I have remained silent" (63). MacFuture marks his entrance with a bold and forthright statement: "[…] I find you both, excuse me, outdated [*ich finde Sie, entschuldigen Sie, beide veraltet*].

Both "A." and "N." are connected with a long-gone world. "Even the distinction between nature and history has long been superseded," adds MacFuture. "The atomic age" mentioned in *Die Andere Hegel-Linie* is the starting point from which the third player will demonstrate the obsolete standing of every word spoken by "A." and "N." "You intervene in the right moment," states Altmann. And then he warns: "We must ask what the new question is; we stand—if I may formulate it so pointedly for once—before the question concerning a question [*wir ständen – wenn ich es einmal zugespitzt formulieren darf – vor der Frage nach einer Frage*]" (64). However, MacFuture leaves no doubt about his presence: "I am for simplification and disentanglement [*Ich bin für Vereinfachung und Entflechtung*]" (64). The landscape that MacFuture announces is marvelous, but lacks an essential element—the human being. At this point, the "neutrality" sought by Neumeyer now is transformed into pure restraining power. MacFuture goes too far, anticipating the Californian nihilism expressed by the phrase "everything goes."[520] His message speaks of change brought about by "machines" and "apparatuses." Nonetheless, Altmann remains confident, even if MacFuture's demeanor suggests that "his brain relents" when facing Altman's mind-numbing "question concerning the great question." "A." answers with no irony and with a deadpan expression: "Then allow yourself to build a cybernetic apparatus that grasps and answers this question for you."[521] The second paragraph ends with Neumeyer's attempt to provide a "practical answer," while the third paragraph quotes almost line by line Schmitt's statements delivered in his commentary of Jünger's *The Gordian Knot*.

520. See Welsch 2008, 135.
521. This could easily be read as one of Günther's considerations on polyvalent logic and his "ontology of cybernetics." See Günther 1976, 268: "For cybernetics, on the other hand, the fact of self-awareness is fundamental. It follows that Man is about to enter a new epoch in his scientific history."

The two last paragraphs of *Dialogue on New Space* connect the philosophical dots scattered from *Land and Sea* onward with the crucial remark found in "Die Lage," "[a] historical truth is true only once" (79). However, is Schmitt not confusing "a truth"—which, far from being objective, depends always on the agonistic dynamics that champions it as the ultimate value or criterion of truth—with "a historical fact"; namely, an empty event that is later filled and connected with other events with intellectual content?[522] In any case, the philosophy of history sketched in the 1950s here receives a dramatic presentation. MacFuture is rapidly educated in Altmann's simple phenomenology. "A." presents a new typology: the house vs. the ship. "N." admonishes him: "You are ripping an abyss, honorable Mr. Altmann" (74). But MacFuture does not abandon his simple analysis. "The historical call" that "A." so zealously wishes others to heed might go unheard or be ignored altogether. And what's more:

> F. Pardon me, gentlemen, but I find you both, both our honorable Mr. Altmann with his new order, but you, too, dear Mr. Neumeyer, with your call from out of the depths of the sea—I find you both not grand enough and much too modest. Fundamentally, for me, this no longer concerns the *call* at all. We have enough *drive*, that's more important, we even have an excess of drive. Thus, I would rather journey to the moon and to Mars than remain on this puny planet.[523]

The reader now sees how MacFuture was immune to the disquisitions of both "A." and "N." due to the protection afforded him by his ideological spacesuit. The dialogue ends with the three characters parting ways. "MacFuture" will probably launch himself into the unknown wonders of outer—inhuman—space, while the scientism of "Neumeyer" will lead him back to the sea. As for Altmann, he will honor the privilege of being born and raised as a devoted earthling, even if this means to "awake one morning after a hard night threatened by atom bombs and similar terrors and shall gratefully recognize himself again as the son of the firmly grounded earth" (82).

### 4.7 *Nomos – Nahme – Name* (1959)

522. This might be debatable, as there is no such thing as an "empty event." However, the meaning of any event must be re-codified into a higher meaning, which leads to new situations—and thus, new decisions.
523. Schmitt 2015d, 81.

The main lines of the conceptual biography devoted to the notion of *nomos* in Schmitt's article of 1953 are now afforded a more profound conceptual dimension. *Nomos – Nahme – Name* was written as a comment on the theo-philosophical remarks of Erich Przywara—who acted "as a priest to spiritual assistance" during Schmitt's detention in 1946.[524] In 1952, Przywara published *Humanitas: der Mensch gestern und morgen*. The book, a gargantuan intellectual effort spanning almost 1000 pages, is tackled by Schmitt, who specifically studies the chapter dedicated to the question of "power." Schmitt comments on Pryzwara's "three statements" on power; namely, power as a "secret sinister end," as "implicit centrality," and, finally, as "visibility and publicity"—which is a counter-reaction to the feature presented in the first sentence. Pryzwara's threefold manifestation of power is reflected by Schmitt in its relationship with the *nomos*. From this point onward, several semantic distinctions will be made.

> Power thus appears in many forms as *archy and cracy*. *Archy* means from the source, while *cracy* means power through superior force and occupation.
> […] Together with *archy* and *cracy*, there is still a third category, *nomos* […][525]

This is the first of the seven paragraphs that comprise Schmitt's commentary. The second paragraph demonstrates that *nomos* is the conceptual condition for both "archy" and "cracy," because "[a] word bound to *nomos* is measured by *nomos* and subject to it" (338). Schmitt points out the "impersonality" that rules over the word, which reminds one of the pedestrian expression "in the name of the law"—it is "impersonal" due to its efficacy within the social dimension. The conceptual strength of *nomos* is to be seen in the rise of modern science; namely, "economy," of which Schmitt will celebrate the "extraordinary expansion from house to *polis*" (339). Schmitt draws on the *pater familias* and the modern *statesman* in order to stress that "[t]he transformation of the community into an administrative state for total social welfare leads to a paternal totality without a house father" (340). This apparent vanishing of direct power allowed Engels—Schmitt thinks—to promise "that one day all

524. Mehring 2014, 669n207.
525. Schmitt 2003, 338.

power of men over men will cease." This, in turn, leads to utopia, as "those who swarm around a *nomos basileus* fail to notice that, in reality, they propagate just a formula" (341). Schmitt takes the reader to theological and post-Hellenic intellectual quarrels in order to prove how the organic, pulsating momentum of the original sound of *nomos* decayed into the abstract notion of "law." The dogmatic assumption of Homer's inexistent use of *nomos* is scholarly refuted by Schmitt, who points out that *nomos* is the same word as *nómos*—several words used by Homer include *nomos* as a suffix—for the accent was only added *ex post facto* by "Alexandrian scholars." Schmitt presents the opinions of three of his acquaintances to back up this alleged homonymy.

Schmitt traces the overall semantic traffic of the word *nomos* to the "fixed household: the *oikos*" (341). The article's third paragraph returns to Schmitt's reflections on "land appropriation" and establishes the current decay of *nomos* through "normativism and positivism"—a consequence of the completion of "land appropriation and land division" and the subsequent increase in the importance of "distribution." Then, when the "age of migrations and land appropriation was established on the new foundation," *nomos* was substituted for the notion of *thesmos*. From that point on, *nomos* became an "antithesis of *physis*" and an antithetical term in general. *Nomos* thus connected with *logos*, leading to the contemporary expression "in the name of the law," which presupposes an underlying comprehension of *nomos* as something almost technical, disconnected from Aristotelian "passion."

In the fourth paragraph, Schmitt establishes what he considers one of the most prevalent intellectual prejudices in Western thought; namely, the semantic fusion of *nomos* with *lex*. "The content and course of the claim that Homer never used the word *nomos* is one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the intellectual history of mankind," Schmitt highlights. By stating the contrary—he briefly touches upon Przywara's assertion that "Philo's claim was decisive in what would become the Occident"—reminds us how the infamous migration of "Plato's *logos* to the Heraclitan *logos*" ended up equating the "intelligible" with the "perceivable"—as occurs with "Hegel and Schelling" via "St. Thomas Aquinas." Schmitt repeats again the subterranean link between *nomos* and economy—*oikonomia*—to then assert that "the unity of *nomos* is only the unity of *oikos*" (345).

*Nomos – Nahme – Name*'s fifth paragraph mirrors nearly point by point Schmitt's 1953 essay on the same subject. The "three processes" unleashed from *nomos* are now seen in their consummated modern landscape; that is, by wondering how "this works in the atomic age and in technologically and industrially developed areas" (345). The "linguistic root" from which "*nemein – teilen* and *weiden*" originate is the semantic threshold, according to Schmitt, from which the historical biography of *nomos* can be grasped and revisited. After "land appropriation" has ended, further non-terrestrial appropriations must subsequently be carried out. In a world where production is the only iterative process, there are no longer "war and crises, because unchained production no longer is partial and unilateral, but has become total and global"[526]—thereby, "man can *give* without *taking*."

In the sixth paragraph, Schmitt provides two examples "to illustrate" the past ages of appropriation. For the contemporary reader, such examples can only be the product of a mind anchored in the mental activity of some character depicted in a canvas painted by Fra Angelico. The first example refers to the "family-based marriage" and the woman "taking" the name of the husband, just as the husband previously "took" the wife. Schmitt approaches the current stage of this historical institution in unholy times, bitterly stating that people will eventually forget "how we got our names" (348). The second paragraph mentions "Simone Weil's book, *Attente de Dieu*"—one has to stress that Schmitt rarely quotes a female thinker;[527] in this case, his interest in Weil is referred to her post-Catholic-non-Marxist-I-am-

526. Schmitt 2003, 347.

527. As was demonstrated in chapter 1, Lilian Winstanley was crucial for *Hamlet oder Hekuba*—although one can say that Schmitt carried out a stylized instrumentalization of her book on *Hamlet*, as in it, the reader can hardly surmise that Winstanley was even close to Schmitt's idea of "intrusion" and thus to an alternative historical scope regarding a philosophy of history. Likewise, the recently published posthumous diaries of Schmitt written in the early 1920s are full of entries and annotations regarding the intellectually erotic bond between Schmitt and the Australian Anglicism expert—and his former student—Kathleen Murray. See Mehring 2014, 113–20, here 118–9. Schmitt dedicated a cryptic novella to her, entitled *The Faithful Gypsy*, which has a good number of references to their affair through an impersonation of Shakespeare's Othello. See Höfele 2016, 174–8, here 174–6. In his answer to a survey made by the evangelical weekly newspaper *Christ und Welt* on December 6, 1956, entitled "Bücher von Morgen," Schmitt once again praises Theodor Däubler—whose work received a new edition by Friedhelm Kemp—calling him "a monad in the endless German sense of the word: he mirrors the universe." Moreover, two books written by female authors—one by Margret Boveri, a German journalist specialized in post-war Germany, and another by Ruth Fischer, one of the co-founders of the Austrian communist party—are positively reviewed by Schmitt, as in their contributions he recognizes themes which he was very fond of; namely, the question of "criminalization" and the "political fate" of Germany. See Schmitt 1995, 227–8. In one of his last interviews, Schmitt recalls the doctoral thesis of Johanna Kendziora on liberalism—*Der Begriff des politischen Partei im System des politischen Liberalismus*. See Agamben 2012, 171. In *Glossarium*, seven are the female thinkers quoted or mentioned by Schmitt: Annette von Droste-Hulshoff, Elisabeth Langgäser, Annie Kraus, Toni Sussmann, Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, and Edith Stein (as a mere example of Jewish thought). Finally, the only published text where Schmitt quotes the intellectual

not-longer-I mysticism.[528] Weil's testimony is that God "took" her [*il m'a prise*]. Schmitt quotes Karl Epting's German translation of it; namely, *er hat mich genommen.*[529] Thus, in both examples, a taking is possible as someone or something has given by giving up something or part of herself:

> We are concerned with the legal-historical meaning of the relation between *Nahme* and name, power and name-giving, and, in particular, with the formative, even festive processes of many land-appropriations that are able to make *Nahme* a sacred act. A land-appropriation is constituted only if the appropriator is able to give the land a name.[530]

The seventh and last paragraph of this erudite article explores the "public dimension" of power previously stressed by Przywara. Power needs a means of expression, because true power tends to secrecy, to hide itself from the public. This paradox leads to the need for a responsible and shared view of power, and thus, to the silent share-holders of power. However, just when "abstractions cease," "the situation becomes concrete" (349). The contemporary stage of power, however, needs no names. The reader might be wondering whether Schmitt was carrying out a groundbreaking critique of corporations and all-powerful economic groups or whether he was just begrudgingly meditating on the wicked times that had toppled the classic historical institutions based on *nomos*. Schmitt puts forward a very off-the-cuff critique of colonialism, as he salutes the importance played by "the heroes of the *conquista* as a mission of the *jus commercii*" (349). Colonialism depends strictly on morality. Its examination is performed in hindsight—rendering useless any ex-post explanation. The doom and gloom surrounding the act of naming and taking is ironically portrayed by Schmitt in the current name of the "former German Supreme in Leipzig," now called "Dimitrov

---

work of women is *Hamlet oder Hekuba*. Along with Lilian Winstanley, Schmitt refers the reader to Laura Bonnahan's 1954 Shakespeare article on witchcraft, a piece made for the BBC's "Third Programme," and then to Eva Scott's German translation of her 1935 opus *Six Stuart Sovereigns, 1512–1701* (2009b 10n2, 27n16). An investigation devoted to the female impact on Schmitt's oeuvre is yet to be written, a piece of work that would shed light on crucial and unattended matters of his thought.

528. See Schmitt 2015e, 239.

529. Schmitt was very interested in Simone Weil but not enough to carry out further investigation on her work. Weil's testimony on God taking her is directly linked in her fixation with an expression used by Paul in his letter to the Philippians (Phil. 2:6). See Weil 2004, 212: "To empty oneself of the world. To take upon oneself the character of a slave. To reduce oneself to the point one occupies in space and time. To become nothing."

530. Schmitt 2003, 348.

House" (350). The jurist positively acknowledges Przywara's book, as "it contains one of the most magnificent answers that the German spirit has to offer to the enormous challenge of an epoch characterized by two world wars." *Nomos – Nahme – Name* acts then as a disguised political critique of post-war politics and policies, for, in their modern and neutral operations, politics and policies erode once again the sacred link between taking and naming.

## 4.8 Conclusion

Schmitt was almost 70 years old when *Hamlet oder Hekuba* was published. Although his brilliant academic career was covered in shame and subjected to public repudiation, he still managed to take one step further and reach a new intellectual level. He envisioned a "philosophy of history," a phenomenological approach to history and politics that, by reinterpreting Hegel's work, repelled both Marxism and historical positivism. In this great scheme of human activity, Schmitt sought to discover not a general law that could be applied to history but its inner-dynamics. In the dialectic of the "land and sea opposition," he discovered hidden threats that lead to crucial events of the past. He convinced himself that 1848 was the historical singularity that all contemporary events link back to. Art became for him the privileged form to analyze history. And thus, history revealed itself as an ongoing tragedy. However, the Industrial Revolution and the birth of modern technology marked, according to Schmitt, an unbridgeable gap between the classical and the new world. Technology detached itself from human history, leaving human beings under a colossal rule of law no longer anchored in morality, ethics, law, or state politics. This desolated present could only be the beginning of a dystopian future. Schmitt limited himself to examining the situation, searching for the causes, acknowledging the elements at play and simply aching for an uncertain future. He did not attempt to console himself or others through philosophy. The 1950s mark the last intellectual efforts of Schmitt. During those years, a long-forgotten project found the right time to be developed. Thus, *Hamlet oder Hekuba* came to life. However, what was the original aspect of this project and why did Schmitt want to address the topics of art and history in the past?

In the fifth and last chapter of this investigation, these two answers will be schematically answered by exploring the importance of Schiller's work for Schmitt and

explaining exactly how Schmitt tackled the aforementioned topics. Likewise, the reader will see how many of today's interpreters of Schmitt simply overlooked this point, or simply—as stated in the conclusion of the first chapter—associated *Hamlet or Hecuba* with the wrong references. As far as I know, no general account of Schmitt's thought in the 1950s has been completed. The fourth and fifth chapters of this dissertation provide a schematic outline of the subject. Its intention was to prove the philosophical context in which Schmitt's articles, reviews, and essays appeared. The results are as follows:

1. *Hamlet oder Hekuba* condensed Schmitt's esoteric and exoteric views regarding his 1945 experience. From this perspective, it is a performative piece of work; that is, it acts as a political statement expressed through metaphors and inner references.

2. Schmitt could only outline a potential "philosophy of history." The short length of most of his work during the 1950s can be explained both by his age and the conflicts he had with the democratic policies that shaped the public opinion in postwar Germany.

3. During the 1950s, Carl Schmitt's conceptual framework was subjected to a dramatic transformation. In this sense, any approach to his work, even if only to describe his main concepts and thesis, must account for the spiritual and historical shift that his oeuvre suffered in the 1950s.