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Facundo Vega

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On the Tragedy of the Modern Condition: The 'Theologico-Political Problem' in Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss, and Hannah Arendt

Facundo Vega

College of Arts & Sciences, Cornell University, Ithaca, USA

ABSTRACT

This article addresses Eric L. Santner's claim that "there is more political theology in everyday life than we might have ever thought" by analyzing the "theologico-political problem" in the work of three prominent twentieth-century political thinkers—Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss, and Hannah Arendt. Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt share a preoccupation with the crisis of modern political liberalism and confront the theologico-political problem in a similar spirit: although their responses differ dramatically, their individual accounts dwell on the absence of incontestable principles in modern society that can justify life-in-common and the persistence of the political order. Their writings thus engage with the question of the place of "the absolute" in the political realm. In particular, Arendt's indirect approach to the theologico-political problem is crucial to understanding the radicality of a political world in which traditional certainties can no longer be re-established. The theoretical trajectory I present suggests that the dispersion of political theology in everyday life has a specific corollary: modern politics operates within the tragic and paradoxical nature of its unstable and common origins that cannot be incorporated in exceptionalist versions of the body politic.

KEYWORDS

Carl Schmitt; Leo Strauss; Hannah Arendt; Claude Lefort; the theologico-political problem; disenchantment of the world; secularization; political beginnings

"There is more political theology in everyday life than we might have ever thought," writes Eric L. Santner in *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty*.[1] This perception of the surreptitious presence of the theologico-political has a long tradition: the term *theologia politike* appears in Marcus Terentius Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* and in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*. Although the inexhaustibility of political theology is clearly evident in contemporary theory,[2] the milieu in which it emerged as a "predicament" points to the work of three prominent twentieth-century representatives: Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss, and Hannah Arendt.

These three thinkers share a preoccupation with the crisis of modern political liberalism and confront the theologico-political problem in a similar spirit: although their responses to the theologico-political differ dramatically, their individual accounts center on what has been termed the abyssal character of modernity, that is, the absence of incontestable

CONTACT Facundo Vega fhv3@cornell.edu

principles that justify life-in-common and the persistence of political orders.[3] Admittedly, several theorists have examined the contestable core of modern political legitimacy as well as the role of political theology in contemporary politics. A primary reason, however, for grouping Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt together is that their reflections on modern political legitimacy and the repercussions of the theologico-political are closely intertwined. Put differently, their analyses of the problem of grounding modern politics are part and parcel of their confrontation with the theologico-political predicament. The interdependence of these two issues can hardly be grasped if one does not take into account the historical context in which Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt lived and worked. The intellectual debates during the interwar years and mid-twentieth century enlivened their thematizations of the crisis of modern liberalism and the vision of ineluctable progress. *Kronjurist* Schmitt and émigrés Strauss and Arendt, respectively, supporter and victims of German totalitarianism, offered a distinctive reply to it: their assessments of the modern debacle centered on the political sphere. Unlike other critics of modernity, for Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt, politics—rather than technology, ethics, culture, or religion—constituted the main vantage point from which to illuminate contemporary quandaries. According to them, liberalism prevented the world from confronting the depth of the cataclysm brought about by the advent of modernity. Vis-à-vis the celebration of liberal progressivism, controversies surrounding the persistence of past heritages, the concept of tradition, and the fate of the divine at work in the theologico-political problem inflected their approaches to modern political failures. Thus their "hidden dialogue"[4] was not only an important episode in the European intellectual history of the twentieth century but also offers a theoretical prism through which to understand the promises and risks inherent in the unstable grounding of modern political life, caught between what Arendt called the breaking of the "thread of tradition" and the impression that, even under democratic veils, the "royal remains."[5]

This essay proceeds in four parts to elucidate Schmitt's, Strauss's, and Arendt's engagement with the contestable nature of modern politics and in particular with one of the main responses to this contentious character of life-in-common: political theology. In the first section, I thematize the origin of the theologico-political problem in each of their oeuvres, focusing on the way in which each deals with the Weberian "disenchantment of the world" and with the notion of "secularization." Secularized political modernity represents a situation in which transcendental values have been withdrawn from the arena of life-in-common. However, Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt approach secularization with different aims, which are, respectively, to denounce the collapse of the sacred in contemporary politics, to spurn modern political imprudence, and to advocate the opportunity to constitute political freedom. To fully apprehend their diagnoses of the modern disenchantment of the world, in the second section I argue that their competing responses to the theologico-political problem constitute a singular treatment of tradition and the place of "the absolute" in the political realm. Arendt's indirect approach to the theologico-political predicament, specially, proves crucial to understanding the radicality of a political world in which traditional certainties can no longer be re-established. In the third section, I further examine their responses to the "tragic character of the modern condition." The recognition of the tragic strain of modernity—as analyzed by Claude Lefort—is intrinsic to the hidden dialogue between Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt. The modern challenge to the theologico-political prominently manifests itself through a persistent *form* of intertwining the politically ordinary and extraordinary, the old and the new, continuity and interruption, founding and preservation.

In the fourth section, finally, I discuss the pervasive impact of the hidden dialogue between Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt on current theoretical efforts to deal with the abyssal character of politics. My account suggests that, beyond the specter of the theologico-political, political beginnings cannot be merely described as foundational moments enacted by exceptional founders, which, as such, are fueled by the dignity of "the extraordinary." It suggests, rather, that the dispersion of political theology in everyday life has a specific corollary: modern politics operates within the tragic and paradoxical nature of its unstable and common origins that cannot be incorporated in exceptionalist versions of the body politic.

The Problem of the Origin: Omens of Political Theology

Among other important works in social and political thought, Max Weber's famous speeches "Science as a Vocation" and "Politics as a Vocation" may be said to foreshadow the current debate on political theology. By taking into account political organizations and scientific specialization, Weber makes clear that "the growing process of intellectualization and rationalization… means that… there are no mysterious, unpredictable forces... but that we rather can… *control everything by means of* calculation. That in turn means the disenchantment of the world."[6] In this disenchanted world, science appears to challenge the status of religious beliefs. This, however, is not Weber's blind defense of an omnipotent modern science and faith in progress. Controversial as it may sound, Weber implies that the tension between the two spheres, between the values of science and the values of religion, cannot be overcome.

The most prominent feature of Weber's description of a disenchanted world, with its scientific rationalization and intellectualization, is the withdrawal of ultimate, transcendental values as grounds of public discourse. Paradoxically, the "disenchantment of the world" entails that political life is exposed to a conflict between gods and the absence of ultimate possible attitudes. "The genius or the demon of politics," Weber claims, "lives in an inner tension with the God of love as well as with the Christian God as institutionalized in the Christian churches, and it is a tension that can erupt at any time into an insoluble conflict."[7] The political inflections of this problem include the aforementioned absence of incontestable principles to justify life-in-common.

The world Weber described, marked by secularization and the "polytheism of values," formed the crucial intellectual background of Schmitt's, Strauss's, and Arendt's individual approaches to the theologico-political problem. For Schmitt, the origin of the predicament lies precisely in the pervasiveness of secularization.[8] In contrast to the secularized reality, Schmitt detects the analogous relationship between transcendence and immanence and the ontological co-substantiality of theology and politics, and he re-inscribes it in his theory of the twofold development of political theology. Whereas in *Political Theology* Schmitt traces the shift from theological to political conceptions, from the sacred to the secular, his work on Hobbes describes modernity no longer in terms of the transformation of the sacred into the profane but as the elimination of the former.[9] Schmitt's sociology of juridical concepts attempts to define the fundamental structures of a particular age by claiming that politics is neither the cause nor the effect of theology, and yet the modern theory of the state, as he famously put it, consists of "secularized theological concepts." The particular relationship set out by Schmitt between the modern theory of the state and the theological is exemplified in the structural analogy he draws between "the exception" in jurisprudence and "the miracle" in theology.[10]

Schmitt's statements on what he calls contemporary "neutralizations" and "depoliticizations" also address the process of secularization and the rise and eclipse of the theologico-political realm. He sees the various stages of neutralization and depoliticization—the shifts from the theological to the metaphysical domain, from the metaphysical to the humanitarian-moral, and then to the economic domain—as producing a profound transformation in spiritual life and, consequently, its secularization.[11] The corollary of this transformation was the emergence of a "religion" of technical progress, of the triumph of technology and liberalism. In contrast to the idiom of political liberalism and its *stato neutrale ed agnostico*, Schmitt's theoretical and historical analyses of the advent of political theology rely on essential and non-normative concepts. His praise of political theology is, in fact, an attempt to call into question the tendencies toward neutralization and technologization that characterize secularized politics. In contesting these tendencies, he deplores the situation in which "God himself… is removed from the world and becomes a neutral instance vis-à-vis the struggles and antagonisms of real life."[12] For Schmitt, Christian political philosophy acutely grasped how modern revolutions imply the eruption of atheistic thought that subjectifies God. In contrast to liberal and bourgeois security, Schmitt's political theology postulates the evil nature of human beings. Beyond the banal talk of the bourgeoisie, the "'discussing class,"[13] as he calls it, Schmitt's political theology seeks to defend the persistence of "the political" now threatened by the economic-technical spirit. His fierce anti-liberalism is a rejection of the notion of "cultural decline" so ubiquitous in Weber's work.[14]

The key to Schmitt's dispute with Weber and to his vehement defense of political theology is offered by one of his prime adversaries: Leo Strauss. As John McCormick explains,

> the young Leo Strauss recognizes Schmitt's project… and its relationship to that of Hobbes; he confirms the necessity of such a project based on "the present situation" of Weimar; he criticizes the project on the basis of Schmitt's own assumptions and aims; and finally, he refashions, redirects, and radicalizes the project itself.[15]

To understand how the radicalization of the theologico-political issue occurred, we should note that Strauss's interest in political theology and in the origin of its predicament goes beyond Christian political philosophy and the Schmittian horizon,[16] though as the author of *Political Theology* he was also motivated by the crisis of political liberalism in pre- and post-Weimar politics. Their *mésentente* comes to light in Strauss's review of Schmitt's *Concept of the Political* and persists throughout his later work.[17] By way of illustration, Strauss's reflections on Hobbes's philosophy also problematize the notion of secularization, which, he argues, cannot retain any theological content.[18] His critique of modernity does not consist of an exposition of the metaphysical chain leading from Hobbes to nihilism; neither does it constitute a political theology, an ontology, or a "sociology of juridical concepts." Rather, Strauss's critique emerges in tandem with a theologico-political predicament that traverses the history of political philosophy and its confrontation with ancient thought to meditate on the notions of political beginnings, the good, and order. That is to say, Strauss's theologico-political problem—defined by him as "*the* theme of [his] investigations"[19]—sheds light on political irresponsibility, which he sees as inherent in modernity. Thus for him the passage from classical prudence and caution to the modern rupture with tradition is a radical change of the conditions of life-in-common. In challenging modern imprudence, Weber's positions on secularization, the disenchantment of the world, the insolubility of the conflict between ethics and politics, and the "polytheism of values," no longer entail, according to Strauss, the need to reflect on the persistence of theological structures.[20] For Strauss, instead, Weber's

assumptions simply overlook the legacy of classical philosophy.[21] Strauss's renewed attention to and interest in the ancients—as his philosophy shows—must be based on a meditation on the contrast between Athens and Jerusalem, or reason and revelation.[22] This alternative exemplifies a different approach to the question of the good life and provides a basis for Strauss's subsequent elaborations on the origins of the theologico-political predicament. By referring to the quarrel between Athens and Jerusalem, he also calls into question the modern ideal of progress, which assumes the superiority of the present over the past. For Strauss, "modern man is a blind giant" who can only distinguish between the progressive and the reactionary, but cannot distinguish between good and evil.[23]

Hence, according to Strauss, to understand modern political failures we need to return to the past, and more specifically, as he states: "Obviously… to the principles of Western civilization." But, Strauss adds, "there is a difficulty here, because Western civilization consists of two elements, it has two roots, which are in radical dis-agreement with each other. We may call these elements… Jerusalem and Athens or, to speak in non-metaphorical language, the Bible and Greek philosophy." It is from this theoretical maneuver that Strauss's attempt to define the theologico-political predicament arises. For him, both the Bible and Greek philosophy coincide in their praise of justice and of obedience to the law. And yet, he emphasizes, what they disagree about is how one is to obey: Greek philosophy relies on understanding or contemplation; biblical revelation relies on humility, a sense of guilt, repentance, and faith in divine mercy. Whereas in all Greek thought, "we find in one form or the other an impersonal necessity higher than any personal being," Strauss remarks, "in the Bible the first cause is, as people say now, a person." Athens and Jerusalem, then, stage different answers to the fundamental question of how one should live one's life. Philosophy, as a quest for knowledge of the whole, necessarily entails a particular way of life. Its antagonist, biblical faith, based on revelation, miracles, and a supra-rational law, also entails a particular way of life. For Strauss, these two ways of life are clearly irreconcilable, but it is the tension and conflict between them that accounts for the secret vitality of Western civilization: "No one can be both a philosopher and a theologian nor, for that matter, some possibility which transcends the conflict between philosophy and theology, or pretends to be a synthesis of both."[24] For Strauss the theologico-political predicament thus lies in the insoluble tension between reason and revelation, which he subsequently adds cannot be refuted: "The genuine refutation of orthodoxy would require the proof that the world and human life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of a mysterious God."[25]

In view of this insoluble tension between Athens and Jerusalem, Arendt's approach to political tradition proves helpful in clarifying both Schmitt's and Strauss's positions on political theology. Although she never refers to the theologico-political problem as such,[26] it is implicit in her discussions of secularization and the broken thread of tradition. Both her analysis of secularization and her view of the abyssal character of modern politics, in fact, define the scope and limits of the theologico-political problem. In Arendt's terms, secularization simply means the ascent of the secular and the concomitant decline of a transcendent world. By implicitly referring to Schmitt, she specifies that secularization cannot be equated with the conversion of religious and transcendent categories into immanent standards. Rather, "secularization means first of all simply the separation of religion and politics, and this affected both sides so fundamentally that nothing is less likely to have taken place than the gradual transformation of religious categories into secular concepts which the defenders of unbroken continuity try to establish."[27] That is to say, secularization

should not be understood via the persistence of theological concepts, as Schmitt maintained. More specifically, Arendt does not read modernity through the prism of neutralization and depoliticization, but simply as the separation between political thinking and theology, and the discovery of the secular realm—the space where human beings become mortals.[28] From her understanding of the consequences of secularization, nevertheless, we detect a resonance of the theologico-political problem in Arendt's thought. *Between Past and Future* is clear in this respect. By discussing the modern loss of ultimates or absolutes, Arendt asserts that "the most significant consequence of the secularization of the modern age may well be the elimination from public life, along with religion, of the only political element in traditional religion, the fear of hell."[29] Political troubles arise, however, because the disregard of the fear of hell configures one of the key conditions for the advent of totalitarianism. This particular understanding of the consequences of secularization is constitutive of Arendt's comprehension of modernity and its pathos of novelty. Her singular stance towards the theologico-political problem suggests that "even if we admitted that the modern age began with a sudden, inexplicable eclipse of transcendence, of belief in a hereafter, it would by no means follow that this loss threw [men] back upon the world… but upon themselves." Arendt then refers to Weber, in particular to his "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," to scrutinize the lack of enjoyment of the world and its replacement by the care of the self within modernity.[30]

Although Arendt considers Weber the only author who "raised the question of the modern age with… depth and relevance" and was aware of the extent of the loss of faith, modernity, she argues, implies more profound losses.[31] In *On Revolution* Arendt thematizes one of those losses, namely, the breaking of the thread of tradition. This *Destruktion*, to be sure, can entail both the promise of freedom and depoliticization. The breaking of the thread of tradition, nonetheless, is not merely a repercussion of secularization: "the *enormous significance for the political realm of the lost sanction of religion* is commonly neglected in the discussion of modern secularization." Arendt's reluctant approach to the theologico-political problem—one that, paradoxically, rejects the rubric of political theology—lies in her perception of the abyssal nature of modern politics. The key issue for her is that, after secularization, "politics and the state needed the sanction of religion even more urgently than religion and the churches had ever needed the support of princes."[32] These claims emphasize neither how the sacred persists in profane conditions *à la* Schmitt, nor how the recognition of the theologico-political predicament is constitutive of a philosophical challenge *à la* Strauss. What Arendt's work stages, rather, is a reflection on the conditions that are necessary to maintain political freedom.

The Theologico-Political as a Problem: A Return of Tradition?

The current interest in political theology calls, as noted earlier, for a closer look at the hidden dialogue between Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt. And yet, while critics have analyzed the quarrel between Schmitt and Strauss on the political and political theology,[33] Arendt does not seem to be engaged, at least at first glance, with their dispute. There are only incidental mentions of Schmitt in her work and, though controversial, they remain both isolated and secondary.[34] Regarding Strauss, Arendt's reluctance is perhaps more radical. They knew each other personally, both experienced the strong impact of Heidegger's thought, and both were engaged in the study of ancient political philosophy and its significance for

contemporary politics. As German Jews, both of them fled Nazi Germany and settled in the United States. Arendt and Strauss were affiliated with the same institutions, and in the 1960s they both taught at the University of Chicago.[35] Strikingly, however, Arendt never explicitly refers to Strauss in her work,[36] her only mention of him being a response to Karl Jaspers's question: "[D]o you know anything about Leo Strauss…?" To which she replies: "Leo Strauss is [a] professor of political philosophy in Chicago, highly respected. Wrote a good book about Hobbes (as well as the one about Spinoza). Now another about natural law. *He is a convinced orthodox atheist*. Very odd. A truly gifted intellect. *I don't like him*. He must be in his middle or late fifties."[37]

Beyond narratives based on personal intrigue, the *mésentente* between Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt on the theologico-political problem comes to the fore by looking at their positions on the contestable grounds of modern politics. But first we must consider what is at stake in the theologico-political problem and, more broadly, in political theology. The problem, as originally formulated by Strauss, names a specific theoretical conjuncture. To be sure, Strauss enigmatically alludes to the theologico-political predicament or problem in his prefaces to his books on Spinoza and on Hobbes, respectively, which were republished in the 1960s.[38] Understanding the theologico-political as a *problem*, Strauss sets out to diagnose the modern attempt to overcome traditional revelation. At this first level, as Steven B. Smith notes, Strauss seems to be referring to the "unavoidable theological matrix in which political life takes place,"[39] which might reinforce the idea that modern political philosophy is indebted to tradition.[40] Yet by noting the limits of the modern "refutation" of tradition, Strauss clearly does not propose a return to political theology as Schmitt does. Instead, his reconstruction of the theologico-political problem shows that he primarily seeks to recover classical political philosophy in which the tensions and even contradictions that define society are not resolved but recognized.[41] As Heinrich Meier, Daniel Tanguay, Thomas L. Pangle, and Smith himself, among many others, argue, this second level brings to the fore the conflict between political theology—according to which the political order is founded on revelation—and political philosophy—according to which it is founded on reason.[42] "No alternative," Strauss affirms, "is more fundamental than the alternative: human guidance or divine guidance. *Tertium non datur*."[43]

In the juxtaposition of politics and theology, political theology, accordingly, is understood in at least three different ways: as a politics of theology that pursues a hierocracy; as a reflection on the theological core of politics and the philosophico-political meaning of theology; and as a "theology of politics" or "civil theology."[44] These meanings, however, are unlikely to capture the theologico-political problem as presented by Schmitt,[45] whose view of the predicament needs to be understood in the context of his critique of liberal politics and the disenchantment of the world.[46] In one of his earliest works, *Political Romanticism*, Schmitt lays the basis for his later conception of political theology as the primordial way of dealing with a concrete historical reality.[47] In a polemical gesture, he emphasizes that political liberalism, the epitome of the bourgeois world outlook, implies that the individual subject "takes the place of God as the ultimate authority and the decisive factor." What Schmitt strongly criticizes is the imposition of secularization as a new "metaphysical" reality: "what human beings regard as the ultimate, absolute authority… certainly can change, and God can be replaced by mundane and worldly factors."[48]

Although Schmitt criticizes the modern obliteration of theism, his theory expresses the need to analyze the secularized political world that is no longer imbued with traditional

values. Thus, while he condemns modern politics for its lack of substance, Schmitt also makes clear that the "metaphysical development from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century led to entirely new ideas of God and the absolute." Once traditional metaphysics and its notion of a transcendent God were eliminated, humanity and history became fertile grounds for the appearance of a new demiurge. Once the idea of God as an absolute and objective entity was displaced, the individual subject began treating the world as a mere *occasio* for his productivity. "By means of a simple reversal," Schmitt states, "the subject has become the creator of the world."[49] The political consequence of this metaphysical turn was that the emancipated individual had become a new kind of absolute.

Vis-à-vis this new *imperium* of the subject, Schmitt's *Political Theology* offers not only a diagnosis of the crisis of modern liberalism but also a detailed deployment of the theologico-political problem. In this book Schmitt develops a new conception of sovereignty that is attentive to the existential nature of both decision and exception, in contradistinction to liberalism's notion of the normalcy of everyday life and of politics as a set of norms.[50] Against normativism, Schmitt argues that the legal order rests on the sovereign decision regarding the *exceptional* case. It is from this premise that political theology draws its strength as a measure of political legitimacy that is open to the creative and unstable nature of decision-making. Schmitt's conceptualization also applies to political normalcy: "for a legal order to make sense, a *normal* situation must exist, and he is sovereign who definitely decides whether this *normal* situation actually exists."[51] It is thus only the sovereign who decides what is politically acceptable and what is unacceptable, what is ordinary and what is extraordinary.

Schmitt's theologico-political problem hence stands at the conjuncture between "the normal" and "the exceptional." His *Political Theology* is a philosophy of concrete existence based on the emergence of the exception, where "the power of real life breaks through the crust of a mechanism that has become torpid by *repetition*,"[52] thus emphasizing the fight against superficiality and monotony. Schmitt's notion of the exceptional appears to be a political substitute for the belief in God as the absolute, proposing a politics informed by a metaphysics that acknowledges the "miraculous" nature of exception and decision. But is Schmitt's depiction of politics an apt expression of political prudence? This is one of the questions Strauss seems to have had in mind in addressing the theologico-political problem.

Strauss, a former admirer of Schmitt's theologically inflected political theory, subsequently developed one of the most forceful critiques of the primacy of political theology in understanding political life.[53] And yet his view of modernity and of the failure of political liberalism does not differ radically from Schmitt's.[54] Strauss too sees the rupture with traditional certainties as the imposition of a world in which political responsibility has become impossible. However, he considers Schmitt's political theology, based on sovereign decision, as part and parcel of this problem. In the conference on "German Nihilism," Strauss identifies Schmitt as one of the teachers of the young nihilists who called for the totalitarian destruction of the world order. In arguing against modern civilization and the establishment of an open society, the German nihilists, Strauss writes, pondered the ideal of a closed society "oriented toward the Ernstfall, the serious moment, M-day, war."[55] Inspired by Schmitt, the young nihilists claimed that "the sublime is unknown to the open society,"[56] the recovery of which would thus require the destruction of the liberal status quo. What German nihilism in general and Schmitt in particular rejected was a world centered on hedonistic pleasure and therefore lacking in seriousness and a sense of sacrifice. This rejection of modernity

also entailed, according to Strauss, a disregard for political prudence. His subtle response to "Schmittian nihilism" and the need to regain political responsibility is implicit in his definition of philosophy as the quest for truth which compels us "to distinguish political philosophy from political theology." According to Strauss, "Political theology consists of the political teachings based on divine revelation. Political philosophy is limited to what is accessible to the unassisted human mind."[57] Strauss's distinction between reason and revelation is hence a first step toward a proper understanding of political prudence.[58]

In tandem with Strauss's distinction between reason and revelation there emerges a debate on the crisis of modernity, which in turn constitutes in itself a crisis of modern political philosophy. Strauss criticizes the view that modernity is a secularized form of biblical faith, marked by a shift from other-worldly to this-worldly concerns. To him "secularization means, then, the preservation of thoughts, feelings, or habits of biblical origin after the loss or atrophy of biblical faith. … Yet modern man was originally guided by a positive project. Perhaps this positive project could not have been conceived without the help of surviving ingredients of biblical faith."[59] One could read this as a rejection of contemporary egotism and immanentism, which Schmitt also repudiated. And yet it does not mean that Strauss is hereby declaring the victory of revelation, but rather that revelation motivates his return to classical philosophy.[60] As "a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grip of the *theologico-political predicament*,"[61] Strauss was aware, first, that "infinite, absolute problems cannot be solved," and, second, that "human beings will never create a society [that] is free of contradictions."[62] These judgments enliven Strauss's virulent critique of both positivism and radical historicism. In particular, he condemns the unexamined impositions of relativism by considering its political repercussions: the rejection of the absolute and of fundamental questions lower the aspirations and purposes of human action. Relativism thus renders it impossible to distinguish what is just from what is unjust in political terms and, as Arendt also argues, exposes the failure of modern politics. What is remarkable is that, while Strauss holds that political philosophy has to address this failure, the particular inflection of his theologico-political predicament—conceived as a precondition of political philosophy—places his project at odds with Arendt's. For Strauss, "philosophy teaches the eternity of the world" and exhibits clear principles on the right way of living life.[63] Informed by politics, political philosophy cultivates prudence and responsibility in the social domain of life-in-common. Arendt, in contrast, is suspicious of a philosophy that sets out to determine what is politically beneficial. A personal statement is eloquent in this respect: "I do not belong to the circle of philosophers. My profession, if one can even speak of it at all, is political theory."[64] Arendt then grudgingly approaches the theologico-political problem through the prism of political theory to prove that a mere return to tradition is unworkable.[65] And although—unlike Schmitt and Strauss—she does not advance her ideas under the rubric of political theology,[66] her work indirectly addresses the stakes involved in the theologico-political problem inherent to modern politics.

Arendt's first indirect response to the theologico-political problem comes through in her view of the contestable grounding of modern political thought. For her, the modern rupture with tradition instantiates both the danger of totalitarianism and the opportunity for freedom.[67] Thus her confrontation with the theologico-political problem also addresses the abyssal kernel of modern politics. As she stated at a conference held in her honor in 1972: "I am perfectly sure that [the] whole totalitarian catastrophe would not have happened if people still had believed in God, or in hell rather—that is, if there still were ultimates." But,

she added, "there were no ultimates."[68] In other words, the absence of fundamental principles that govern life-in-common can give rise to radical uncertainty and may have dangerous political consequences.

Arendt's second indirect response to the theologico-political problem is conveyed by her statements on the contemporary lack of religious absolutes within public life. Her insistence on the damaging political consequences of this absence should not, however, be confused with Schmitt's position. Whereas Schmitt associates political theology with the question of sovereignty, Arendt deplores this latter term as mere "quicksand" rather than a solid foundation for politics. It is in this context that Arendt explicitly refers to Schmitt as the defender of *sovereignty*, a concept which, according to her, erodes human freedom.[69] But does her rejection of the concept of sovereignty entail an anti-theologico-political claim? To answer this question, it is necessary to look at Arendt's view of tradition, from which the theologico-political problem emerges. Modern revolutionary politics, she says, tells the tale of the sudden appearance and disappearance of the treasures of tradition. The price of this lack of continuity is the absence of a yardstick to determine political legitimacy. These statements on the rupture of tradition and absence of religious absolutes reveal Arendt's attitude to the theologico-political problem. More specifically, her response to this predicament becomes clear through her analysis of three essential aspects of life-in-common: political foundations, political action as a form of miracle, and revolutions as new beginnings.

The third indirect response to the theologico-political problem is found in Arendt's analysis of political foundations, starting with the Greek and Roman notions of greatness and immortality.[70] Political foundations, she argues, are guarantees against human futility and finitude. However, this classical ideal of greatness ended in the Christian era: "in Christianity neither the world nor the ever-recurring cycle of life is immortal, only the single living individual. It is the world that will pass away; men will live forever."[71] Against this view, Arendt calls for a secularized inflection of immortality—that is distinct from the eternal—via political foundations, the authority of which confers permanence and durability to human life.[72] Without this form of earthly immortality, or particular *transcendence*, "no politics, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm, is possible."[73] Arendt thus sees the classical Roman experience of political foundation as a unique, unrepeatable beginning imbued with the extraordinary capability of immortalizing life-in-common that, though lost to the modern world, is nevertheless crucial for understanding modern revolutions.

Furthermore, Arendt recognizes the theological permanence within politics by defining political action as miracle, which may be seen as her fourth implicit response to the theologico-political problem. While elaborating on human action and political beginnings, Arendt affirms that humans have the capacity to perform miracles. In what is clearly a non-Schmittian maneuver, she states: "the experience which tells us that events are miracles is neither arbitrary nor sophisticated; it is, on the contrary, *most natural and, indeed, in ordinary life almost commonplace*."[74] The human actor as *initium*, as a beginning and as a beginner, is the source of the unforeseeable and unpredictable. But this leads to a paradox—the need to defend the world against the mortality of its creators.[75]

Arendt approaches this paradox inherent to political action in order to overcome repetition and monotony. By doing so, she appears to express a search for the politically extraordinary. Thus "the new" comes in the guise of a miracle, and action implies that human beings expect the unexpected as a manifestation of their uniqueness: "Action can be judged only by

the criterion of greatness because it is in its nature to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the *extraordinary*, where whatever is true in *common* and *everyday life* no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and *sui generis*."[76] Nevertheless, this is not Arendt's last word on action, since it seeks to make the extraordinary an ordinary occurrence of everyday life. Her understanding of miraculous action, again, neither echoes traditional views nor is it equivalent to Schmitt's position in connection to sovereign decision.[77] For Arendt, miracles are not necessarily supernatural events but rather interruptions by human beings who "prove themselves to be of a 'divine' nature."[78]

Finally, Arendt indirectly approaches the theologico-political problem in her study of revolutions as new beginnings, which also sheds light on the implications of the absence of fundamental principles to justify modern politics. In a key passage in *On Revolution*, she asserts that the "'recourse to God'… was necessary only in the case of '*extraordinary* laws,' namely of laws by which a new community is founded." "[W]e shall see," she continues, that "the task of revolution, to find a new absolute to replace the absolute of divine power, is insoluble because power under the condition of human plurality can never amount to omnipotence, and laws residing on human power can never be absolute."[79]

Arendt's view of the political world is full of perplexities, for even modern revolutions cannot avoid the problem of the absolute, which is why the issue of authority has to remain inextricably tied to some sort of religious sanction. Hence, the absolute appears as both impossible and ineluctable in modern politics. Could it be that the nature of this problem entails a theoretical deadlock? If so, Arendt seeks to navigate these complications by arguing that the revolutionary foundational moment is based on political principles and mutual promises: "The very fact that the men of the American Revolution thought of themselves as 'founders,'" she writes, "indicates the extent to which they must have known that it would be the act of foundation itself, rather than an Immortal Legislator or self-evident truth or any other *transcendent*, *transmundane* source, which eventually would became the fountain of authority in the new body politic."[80]

Obstacles and impasses emerge once again. Whereas the American revolutionary experience seemed to be truly virtuous at first, it necessarily succumbed to the problem of the political absolute. Arendt's initial praise of American exemplarity soon turns into a bitter dictum: the revolutionary spirit was lost. The capacity of the Americans to initiate a new beginning did not result in the stability and durability of political institutions. Arendt concludes her incursion into the theologico-political predicament by dwelling on the problems of political foundation that are intrinsic to modern politics—a politics configured as both lacking and in need of a grounding of life-in-common. And yet she never explores the locus of political theology, perhaps because for Arendt this locus remains an illusion.

Beyond the Abyss? Political Promises in Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt

The elusive status of political theology as perceived by Arendt has contemporary repercussions. In his work, Claude Lefort, in fact, offers a compelling analysis of the theologico-political problem by decoding what is at stake in the hidden dialogue between Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt. In the conclusion of his essay on political theology, Lefort poses the question of whether we should see modern democracy as an episode in the displacement of the religious to the political. He asks:

> [S]hould we not conclude that the old transfers from one register to the other were intended to ensure the preservation of a *form* which has since been abolished, that the theological and the political became divorced, that a new experience of the institution of the social began to take shape, that the reactivation of the religious occurs at the social's points of failure [?].[81]

Lefort identifies a unique problem of democracy: the "unavoidable—and no doubt ontological—difficulty democracy faces to render itself self-legible, as well as… the difficulty of political or philosophical thought to assume, without making it a travesty, the *tragic of the modern condition*."[82] His observations condense several points in the debate on the theologico-political problem. First, Lefort makes clear that there is an essential gap within modern politics: democracy cannot be understood as a mere reverberation of the theological in the political. Second, his position manifests a theoretical quandary: although the theological and the political are distinguishable from each other, as the social domain gradually assumes a new shape, the religious element persists in it by preserving a *form* that is devoid of its earlier transcendent meaning. It is this remaining *form* that intertwines the domains of the ordinary and the extraordinary in modern politics. It does so by enacting the encounter of the old and the new, persistence and interruption, preservation and founding, and thus conveys the absence of an indisputable self-legibility in democracy. The inherent paradox of democratic life—the "difficulty democracy faces to render itself self-legible"—seems to be unresolvable. This difficulty, as I have shown, was detected earlier by Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt in their diverse ways of dealing with the theologico-political problem and with what Lefort calls the "tragic of the modern condition," its abyssal, or *essentially contestable*, principles.

This brings me back to Schmitt's rejection of what he defines as anti-political normativism. From his writings on political theology to his reflections on political space, Schmitt focuses on the persistence of the political once transcendence has been superseded.[83] Challenging the ubiquity of the immanent closure and the presumption that, at least potentially, everything is under the control of human reason, Schmitt's discloses his virulent antagonism to liberalism.[84] A politics informed by the theologico-political problem then calls into question the identification of democracy with liberal parliamentarism. As we have seen, Schmitt criticizes liberal discourse and advocates a non-liberal democracy that recognizes sovereignty as that entity that has the authority to decide on the exceptional.[85] Since, for him, liberalism imposes a reverence for negotiation and rational discussion in politics, Schmitt develops his rejection of the liberal world view by establishing a criterion on the political that has a concrete and existential aspect, one that cannot be normativized or moralized through a set of norms.

Schmitt's theologico-political refusal of normativity presupposes an entrenchment of the extraordinary. Against ordinariness and repetition, he famously proclaims that "the *exception* is more interesting than the *normal case*. The *normal* proves nothing; the *exception* proves everything: It not only confirms the rule; the rule actually exists only due to the *exception*."[86] This praise of the extraordinary impacts the constitution of life-in-common: "Political antagonism is the *most intense* and *extreme* antagonism, and every concrete dichotomy becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the *most extreme* point of the friend-enemy grouping."[87] Even terms such as *combat* or *war* do not "have to be *ordinary*, *normal*, something ideal, or desirable. But [they] must nevertheless remain a real possibility for as long as the concept of the enemy remains valid."[88] Schmitt's hyperbolic rhetoric suggests that freed from the exceptional the world would become depoliticized.

His appraisal of the excessive and the extreme situation, furthermore, could be seen as an attempt to "re-enchant" politics. In contempt of a de-transcendentalized world, the Schmittian concept of exception thus re-inscribes the unexpected in politics.

Schmitt's fervent attack on normativism and a de-transcendentalized world animates his defense of political constitutions. Constitutions originate from a decision, which precedes any norm. Whereas political liberalism conceives constitutions in tandem with the "sovereignty of law," individual rights, and the division of powers, Schmitt sees constitutions as the expression of a concrete sovereignty based on the political unity of the people. This conception involves a particular elaboration of the theologico-political problem. Here again, when it comes to a decision in times of an existential conflict, Schmitt argues that "under democratic logic, only the will of the people must come into consideration, because God cannot appear in the political realm other than as the god of a particular people."[89] What worries Schmitt in this, however, is that the people come to occupy the place of God. For him the theologico-political problem is clearly more than the transposition of theological concepts to the theory of the state. What Schmitt thus sets out to explore is the nature and the limits of a people defined as the demiurge of the world. It is striking that what Strauss, his young admirer, identified in Schmitt's work was precisely the egotistic and immanent closure that the jurist deplored.

Strauss in fact positions himself beyond the contours of political theology by showing the limits of Schmitt's theory. His review of *The Concept of the Political*, as suggested earlier, shows his attitude to a political thought that celebrates the exceptional. First, Strauss sees Schmitt's thesis as part of his polemic against liberalism, a world view that is characterized by the negation of the political. Schmitt, Strauss argues, seeks to position the political by emphasizing the role of enmity, which amounts to affirming the political: "if the political is ultimately threatened, the position of the political must ultimately be *more* than the recognition of the reality of the political, namely, an advocacy of the threatened political, an *affirmation* of the political. It is therefore necessary to ask: why does Schmitt affirm the political?"[90] Strauss's answer to this is emphatic: Schmitt "affirms the political because he sees in the threatened status of the political a threat to the seriousness of human life. The affirmation of the political is ultimately nothing other than the affirmation of the moral." Since this affirmation reinvigorates liberalism and moralism, Strauss calls for a more radical critique: "The critique introduced by Schmitt against liberalism can therefore be completed only if one succeeds in gaining a horizon beyond liberalism."[91]

What then is Strauss's alternative vision beyond both Schmitt's critique of liberalism and the influence of the theologico-political in contemporary thought? According to Strauss, modernity stages a radical transformation that is related to its lack of prudence. As noted earlier, by disregarding the importance of political prudence, modern philosophy undermines one of the most important requirements for the stability of the political order: the belief in the indisputable superiority of the principles and values upon which the city is built. Modern philosophy, additionally, lowers the standards of social action to the level of mere self-preservation.[92] This failure exposes the absence of a criterion to distinguish good from evil. Strauss concludes that the impossibility of defining the transcendental grounds of politics places life-in-common at risk, and, in turn, he condemns a relativist historicism that lacks a "clear view of the highest political possibility with regard to which all actual political orders can be judged in a responsible manner."[93] Strauss's aim is to provide these missing criteria for a philosophico-political understanding of regimes and ways of life. This

endeavor requires the rebirth of political philosophy as "that part of philosophy in which the whole of philosophy is in question."[94]

The point at issue is which political regime can bring about the rebirth of philosophy from the ruins of relativism. Although there is no definitive answer to this interrogation, Strauss insists that "the critique of modern rationalism or of the modern belief in reason… cannot be dismissed or forgotten. This is the deepest reason for the crisis of liberal democracy."[95] While Strauss is mainly concerned with philosophy, other thinkers reject "the view that the contemplative life is categorically superior to the life of political involvement, and that the latter has to be judged ultimately by the standards of the former." Among them, as Ronald Beiner notes, is Arendt, who firmly believes that "what shapes our world is not intangible ideas, but tangible 'events'."[96] Arendt, to be sure, is deeply concerned with the crisis of contemporary democracy. Like Strauss, she draws attention to the problems inherent to political liberalism, but she strongly disagrees with Strauss's epistemological approach. Arendt's theoretical position—which is intertwined with her indirect response to the theologico-political problem—centers on the loss of absolutes in the very age that sees the rise of totalitarianism and thus demands the recovery of political founding moments through free action.[97]

Arendt tends to identify both political foundation and free action with the miraculous human capacity to perform "new beginnings." "Since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought."[98] Imbued with the vitality of natality, at times Arendt associates politics with the uniqueness of the extraordinary.[99] In fact, she develops her theory of human experience as the phenomenology of labor, work, and action not only to explain how monotonous repetition is overcome in everyday life, but, inspired by Heidegger, to scrutinize the notion of process.[100] Hence, rather than being instantiations of mere repetition, speech and action express the unusual energy of political beginnings: "With the creation of man," Arendt claims, "the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created, but not before."[101] According to Arendt, though, political action also implies plurality and the search for the "good life."[102] For that reason, Arendtian action is defined, paradoxically, as both powerful and fragile. It is in the way Arendt deals with this ambivalent character of action—evident, particularly, in ancient Greece—that she reveals her attempt to question the pervasiveness of the theologico-political problem and its exceptionalism: "The original, prephilosophic Greek remedy for [the frailty of action's meaning] ha[s] been the foundation of the *polis*."[103] Arendt's rendition of political experience within the Greek *polis*—a "site" where humans could attain "immortal fame"—illustrates her position on how the ordinary and the extraordinary might converge in life-in-common: "One, if not the chief, reason for the incredible development of gift and genius in Athens, as well as for the hardly less surprising swift decline of the city-state, was precisely that from beginning to end its foremost aim was *to make the extraordinary an ordinary occurrence of everyday life*."[104]

Importantly, in elaborating on the ambivalence of political action and "new beginnings," Arendt in fact resituates and reformulates the contours of the theologico-political problem: how might we remember the miraculous character of the political foundation without exhausting its potentiality by imposing a mere quotidian repetition? By approaching this question, Arendt seeks to avoid instrumental solutions: ordinary means cannot result in extraordinary ends, nor can extraordinary ends be the means to overcome ordinariness.[105]

Political action, in fact, cannot be conceived as an instrument, and yet its miraculous potential enables us to combat the inexorable ordinariness of daily life: "The *miracle* that saves the world… from its *normal*, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning."[106] The significance of Arendt's notion of miracle is that it surpasses its religious meanings and thus elusively evokes the theologico-political predicament, while showing, at the same time, her attentiveness to the extraordinary as the *raison d'être* of political beginnings. In other words, even if the theologico-political problem has to be superseded, the act of founding seems to be invested with a "sacred" dignity, which is apparent in Arendt's approach to revolutionary politics.

In effect, Arendt sees revolutions as the only events that confront us with the question of beginnings and the legitimacy of political founding. For Arendt, modern revolutions might be based on a notion of power related to action-in-concert and plurality. Nonetheless, she also analyzes the causes of revolutionary failures: where the liberation from necessity and bodily needs, where the search for prosperity and comfort, displaces the foundation of freedom, the plural understanding of power is, concomitantly, eclipsed. In sum, the failure of modern revolutions manifests the oblivion of the foundational act of political institution. In scrutinizing this oblivion, the risk is that Arendt's phenomenology of political action and freedom may re-actualize a means-ends relationship related to the entrenchment of the extraordinary beginning and entrapped in the theologico-political problem. What would the role of revolutions be if not a means to remember extraordinary acts of political foundation? One of the main tasks of contemporary political thought, I argue, is to examine these revolutionary events not as the expressions of extraordinary moments that we need to remember, but as common occurrences and democratized afterlives of the foundation, beyond its theologico-political embodiment.

What Remains after the Theologico-Political Problem? Politics beyond the Fascination with the Extraordinary

The works of Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt testify to the widespread preoccupation with the theologico-political problem throughout the twentieth century.[107] Their elaborations on the subject offered them an opportunity to discuss the political implications of the contestable, or abyssal, status of contemporary politics. This brings me to the question of the influence of their work on current reflections on political beginnings that seek to supersede the reverberations of the theologico-political problem and therefore attempt to unravel the assumption according to which political institution is necessarily invested with an extraordinary dignity. Two motifs characterize the fascination with the exceptionality of political beginnings.[108] The first is the belief that beginnings are exclusively foundational moments, and the second is the conviction that they are only enacted by extraordinary founders. But grounding political beginnings merely in their extraordinariness may conceal the paradoxical status of politics.[109] On the contrary, a post-exceptionalist characterization of political beginnings is not unrelated to what Lefort defines as the "tragic of the modern condition"—the tragic, I would add, inherent in a politics *based* precisely on the absence of a foundational moment or an exceptional founder. My account of the tragic aspect of modernity, as emphasized by Lefort, requires a clarification: the tragic, in this respect, does not solely amount to the conflict of ultimates in founding life-in-common. Rather, it

mainly refers to "a way of asking about ends, destiny, and history," or more precisely, to "a long meditation on the aporias of a world convulsed by history."[110] Lefort's approach to this question includes a careful consideration of the kind of discussions developed by Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt.[111] On the one hand, in order to account for the abyssal core of modern politics, Lefort notes that our era has displaced the phenomenon of death from the realm of theologico-political "immortality" to the banality of the quotidian and, hence, theologico-political "immortality" appears to die too.[112] On the other hand, he directly engages with the theologico-political problem in discussing the religious influences on politics, such as when Lefort analyzes the relationship between transcendental sovereignty and worldly life, or the conception of the human being as fallen or as an incarnation of the divine. In "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?" Lefort claims that modern political philosophy "discovers in religion… a mode of portraying or dramatizing the relations that human beings establish with something that goes beyond empirical time and… space." And yet, he adds, "the change in religion does not simply present the signs of a human invention of the divine to be read, but instead those of a deciphering of the divine, or, beneath the appearance of the divine, of the excess of *being* over *appearance*." This excess underlies Lefort's warning against the dangers intrinsic to the pure self-immanence of totalitarianism. More importantly, perhaps, the influence of Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt on Lefort comes to the fore in his conceptualization of democracy as a regime where the place of power is empty. In this conception society has neither a positive determination nor can it be represented by an instantiation of community, since it is constituted by its own internal divisions. This leads to a disjunction between the spheres of power, law, and knowledge, whereas in traditional political theology the unity of such spheres is the ground of political certainties.[113]

The decomposition of these certainties is primarily illustrated in Lefort's reading of *The King's Two Bodies*, Ernst Kantorowicz's *magnum opus*, which is also echoed in current reflections on political beginnings. The royal body as juridical fiction configured the king as two persons in one: the natural, vulnerable, mortal being, subject to time and common laws, and the supernatural, immortal, infallible, omnipotent being, freed from temporal and legal constraints. Our incursion into the theologico-political labyrinth through the notion of the king's two bodies indicates that the political mechanisms of incarnation broke down after the nineteenth century, and the fragmentation of power was accompanied by the disincorporation of thought and of the social.[114] Lefort's examination of the doctrine of the king's two bodies can also be seen as an implicit argument against Schmitt's political theology. The mystic fiction of the king emphasizes that the political body is superior to the natural body, thus reducing the imperfections of human nature. The royal body as juridical fiction, in turn, is based on a notion of time that exceeds the natural span of life. In sum, the liturgical significance of the king as *gemina persona*, human by nature and divine by grace, was that he constituted both a representation and an imitation of Christ. Put differently, the king was the hypostasis of the idea of the immortal. Then, the paradoxical status of the king—both under and above the law, subject to but unaffected by time, mortal and immortal—should be understood, according to Kantorowicz, in terms of political theology: "the KING'S TWO BODIES is an offshoot of Christian theological thought and consequently stands as a landmark of Christian political theology."[115] Now the importance of Lefort and Kantorowicz in the present context is that they have inspired a novel approach to analyzing political beginnings that centers on the notion of the "people's two bodies,"[116] so as to overcome the horizon of political theology and traditional legitimacy. Beyond

classic representations of the body politic, the presence of the people's two bodies implies "the migration of the *royal flesh*… that supplants the merely mortal body of the king into the bodies and lives of the citizens of modern nation-states."[117] Addressing the constitutive role that those "subjected" to authority play in political life necessitates an examination of how the ordinary and the extraordinary are intertwined in the dispersion and democratization of the exceptional event of foundation. Viewed as such, political beginnings are not simply the outcome of a political founder's ontological act, but also involve an imaginative configuration of the potentialities of the common and the ordinary that cannot be captured and incorporated by a single and exceptional figure.

Lefort is concerned with the precise blind spots in accounts of political beginnings based on the fascination with the extraordinary, which is why he insists that the amalgam of the theological and the political implies an excess. Religion provided society with a "figurative mode" of dramatizing the relationship between humans and that which transcends empirical time. This theologico-political matrix persisted until the nineteenth century and became the basis of the imperial impulse of the nation-states and their univocal conception of "the good." Contrary to this account, Lefort sees the good as the object of an interminable quest in modern democracy. While democracy in the modern world is a political structure that grants ordinary human beings the prerogative to exercise power, it does not thereby deny the mystery surrounding the good but sees the good as the subject of a perpetual contestation. The recognition of this ineradicable dispute on the meaning of the good as intrinsic to democratic life-in-common leads to questioning the exceptionalist premises of political theology. What remains to be clarified is thus whether we should accept the theologico-political predicament as inevitable.

In attempting to answer this question I have focused on Schmitt, Strauss, and Arendt's hidden dialogue and in particular on Arendt's approach to the impasse posed by the theologico-political problem. Her reflections on the paradoxical nature of politics and her account of political action as contingent and plural are, I suggest, a way to address the problematic implications of the theologico-political predicament.[118] Several critics have emphasized that, for Arendt, "the problem of politics in modernity is, how do we establish lasting foundations without appealing to gods, a foundationalist ground, or an absolute?"[119] In more positive terms, Arendt's non-foundational politics remains open to the abyssal character of political freedom and makes manifest the current stalemates of political theology. Scrutinizing these theoretical deadlocks, Bonnie Honig finds that Arendt "sees less of an opposition between ordinary life and extraordinary politics."[120] Even Arendt's view of the conditions "under which people are open to the miraculous, to receive, perceive, and perform it"[121]—which she associates with the disruptive political action of ordinary people—goes beyond the specter of the theologico-political problem. A miracle for Arendt is thus a this-worldly metaphorization of action in concert and a form of promising. As Honig explains, when Arendt conceptualizes promising "as an *extraordinary* act, she… shows an awareness of how *ordinary* practices might take on a heroic cast when performed in the context of *exceptional* circumstances."[122] This merging of the ordinary and the extraordinary in political action implies that exceptionalist political theology can be superseded.[123] And this, perhaps, is the lesson the theologico-political problem can offer us. By shifting the focus from the theologico-political king's two bodies to the democratic people's two bodies, we must accept that the "contemporary insistence on the theme of the 'theologico-political' dissolves the question of politics into that of… an originary sacrifice. But the dividing of the *arkhe* that founds

politics, and thus democracy, is not a founding sacrifice. It is the neutralization of every sacrificial body."[124] Put differently, only if we admit that the exceptionalist repercussions of the theologico-political problem can be displaced, can we finally do justice to the "tragic character of the modern condition" and to the paradoxical status of democratic politics. The tragic *form* of democracy, then, remains an enigma that requires to be addressed:

> Democracy is the institution of politics as such, of politics as a paradox. Why a paradox? Because the institution of politics seems to provide an answer to the key question as to what it is that grounds the power of rule in a community. And democracy provides an answer, but it is an astonishing one: namely, that the very ground for the power of ruling is that there is no ground at all.[125]

By superseding the specters of the theologico-political problem and its inherent exceptionalism, modern politics, I argue, cannot depend on, or re-establish, the certainties embedded in the transcendental grounding of life-in-common. In other words, modern politics must endure in the paradoxes of its origins, and, more precisely, in their common occurrences and afterlives.

Notes

1. Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 46. See also Kahn, "Political Theology and Liberal Culture," 23.
2. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 91–103; and *Kingdom and the Glory*; De Vries and Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies*; Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard, *The Neighbor*; Meier, *Was ist politische Theologie?*; Scattola, *Teologia politica*; Scott and Cavanaugh, eds., *Companion to Political Theology*; Manemann and Wacker, eds., *Politische Theologie*; Cheng, *Radical Love*; Crockett, *Radical Political Theology*; Kahn, *Political Theology*; Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*; Santner, *The Royal Remains*; and *Weight of All Flesh*; Hammill, *Mosaic Constitution*, 2012; Hammill and Lupton, eds., *Theology and Early Modernity*; Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political*; Kessler, ed., *Political Theology for a Plural Age*; Kahn, *Future of Illusion*; Rust, *The Body in Mystery*; Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology*; Raschke, *Force of God*; Gourgouris, "Political Theology as Monarchical Thought," 145–59; and Kajewski and Manemann, eds., *Politische Theologie*.
3. Strong asks: "What then is the problem of political theology? Put simply it is that in the contemporary world the transcendental criteria for justifying the social order are rejected by more and more people." Strong, "Exile and the Demos," 718. On the abyssal character of modernity, see Arendt, "The Abyss of Freedom," 195–217. See also Panis, "La Question," 59–78 ; Keenan, "Promises, Promises," 76–101; and Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss*, 125–64.
4. On this concept, see Meier, *Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss*.
5. Santner, *The Royal Remains*.
6. Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, 12–13, original emphasis; translation modified.
7. Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, 90.
8. On Schmitt and political theology, see Schmitt, *Political Theology*; and *Politische Theologie II*. See also Hirt, "Monotheismus als politisches Problem?" 319–24; Maier, "Politische Theologie?" 73–91; Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt*, 3–20; Koslowski, "Politischer Monotheismus oder Trinitätslehre?" 26–44, Nicoletti, *Trascendenza e Potere*; Meier, *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*; Galli, *Genealogia della politica*, 331–459; McCormick, "Political Theory and Political Theology," 830–54; Balakrishnan, *The Enemy*, 53–65; Hollerisch, "Carl Schmitt," 107–22; Duso,"Teologia politica," 189–218; and Arato, "Political Theology and Populism," 143–72. For a critique of Schmitt's juxtaposition of theologico-political analogies and secularization, see Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*. See also Monod, *La querelle de la sécularisation*.
9. Schmitt, *Der Leviathan*.
10. For a contemporary critique of this formulation, see Gourgouris, "Political Theology as Monarchical Thought," 146.

11. Schmitt, "Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," 80–96.
12. Ibid., 90, translation modified.
13. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 59. See also Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 69–70.
14. Schmitt, "Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," 93. Weber also plays the role of interlocutor in Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 27–28, 42, 65. See Engelbrekt, "What Carl Schmitt Picked Up," 667–84.
15. McCormick, "Fear, Technology, and the State," 627.
16. Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*; and *Political Theology*. See Smith, "Leo Strauss's Discovery," 388–408. See also Dotti, "Jahvé, Sion, Schmitt," 147–238. Interestingly, Keedus states in *Crisis of German Historicism* that Strauss wrote his dissertation on a Christian religious thinker, Friedrich Jacobi, yet his "interest in Christianity was above all driven by its relation to the contemporary predicament of the Jewish community" (13). See Strauss, "Das Erkentnisproblem," 237–98. According to Batnitzky, in "Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament'" "Strauss strongly criticizes what he regards as a particularly Christian view of revelation not to banish revelation from intellectual conversation once and for all but to suggest that modernity's intellectual ills stem in large part from the legacy of Christian theology" (54–55).
17. Meier, *Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss*. See also Shell, "Taking Evil Seriously," 175–94.
18. Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*.
19. Strauss, "Preface to *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*," 453; original emphasis.
20. Rather, what is a stake in Weber's positions requires political scrutiny. In his letter to Jacob Klein, of June 23, 1934, Strauss wrote: "National Socialism is just the last word of 'secularization'." *Gesammelte Schriften, Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*, 516.
21. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 35–80.
22. Tanguay notes that Strauss introduces the conflict between revealed religion and philosophy under the rubric of "Jerusalem and Athens" in his letter to Löwith of August 15, 1946 (*Gesammelte Schriften, Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft,* 660–64). Between 1946 and 1948, he planned to publish an essay under this title, as "an elementary discussion of the most important points of agreement and divergence between Judaism and classical Greek philosophy." Strauss, "Plan of a Book," 468. In *Leo Strauss*, Tanguay claims that "Strauss did not consider the opposition between Jerusalem and Athens in order to propose a solution to overcome it. On the contrary, he stressed the opposition and rejected all attempts at conciliation or harmonization of the two spiritual powers" (145).
23. Strauss, "Progress or Return?" 239.
24. Ibid., 245, 252, 270.
25. Strauss, "Preface," 28–29. In "Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament'," Batnitzky claims that "revelation for Strauss does have a particular content and form. Its content is not blind belief in the grace of God but the prophetic call to care not just for one's neighbor but also for the stranger, and its form is law." She adds: "Strauss's conception of revelation must be understood in Jewish as opposed to Protestant terms, which means that religion should be understood as public practice rather than private faith" (59, 61).
26. Still, the presumption that "what Leo Strauss termed 'the theological-political predicament'… left virtually no imprint upon Arendt's thinking" seems to be inexact. See Gordon, "Concept of the Apolitical," 857. See also Gordon, "Hannah Arendt's Political Theology," 325–39; Chacón, "Hannah Arendt in Weimar," 73–107; Chacón, "Arendt's *Denktagebuch*," 581. In "Natality and Biopolitics in Arendt," Vatter argues that Arendt's thought can be understood as a negative political theology (137–59). See also Moyn, "Hannah Arendt on the Secular," 71–96; and Camp, "Hannah Arendt and Political Theology," 19–35.
27. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 69. Arendt develops a similar theorization in *The Human Condition*, 253.
28. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 70, 74–75.
29. Ibid., 133.
30. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 253–54, 251–55.
31. Ibid., 277–78. See also Heins, "Reasons of the Heart," 715–28.

32. Arendt, *On Revolution*, 160, emphasis added, 161.
33. See, in particular, Meier, *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*; *Die Denkbewegung von Leo Strauss*; *Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss*; and *Das theologisch-politische Problem*. For a critique of Meier's accounts of Schmitt and Strauss, see McCormick, "Fear, Technology, and the State," 619–52; "Post-Enlightenment Sources," 175–80; "Educable or Sinful Evil?" 179–98; and "Authority beyond the Bounds," 171–83. See also Howse, "From Legitimacy to Dictatorship," 56–90; and Vatter, "Strauss and Schmitt," 161–214.
34. On the relationship between Arendt and Schmitt, see Jay, "Political Existentialism of Hannah Arendt," 237–56; Kateb, "Death and Politics," 612–13; D'Entrèves, *Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 86–87; Arato, "Forms of Constitution Making," 191–231; Villa, *Arendt and* Heidegger, 115–17; Scheuerman, "Revolutions and Constitutions," 252–80; Kalyvas, "From the Act to the Decision," 320–46; *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary*, 194–253; Emden, "Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt," 110–34; Sluga, "The Pluralism of the Political," 91–109; Honig, *Emergency Politics*, 89–93; and Jurkevics, "Hannah Arendt," 1–22.
35. See Beiner, "Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss," 238. See also Kielmansegg, Mewes, and Glaser-Schmidt, eds., *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss*, 911–33; Villa, "Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss," 246–98; Havers, "Between Athens and Jerusalem," 19–29; Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 98; Gordon, "The Concept of the Apolitical," 856–57; Owens, "Beyond Strauss," 265–83; Chacón, "Reading Strauss from the Start," 288, 298; Zuckert and Zuckert, "Strauss and His Contemporaries," 254–88; and Keedus, *Crisis of German Historicism*.
36. In a footnote to "Truth and Politics," however, Arendt invokes Strauss's "noble lies" in a derogatory way: "I hope no one will tell me any more that Plato was the inventor of the 'noble lie.' This belief rested on a misreading of a crucial passage (414C) in *The Republic*, where Plato speaks of one his myths—a 'Phoenician tale'—as a ψεῦδος. Since the same Greek word signifies 'fiction,' 'error,' and 'lie' according to context—when Plato wants to distinguish between error and lie, the Greek language forces him to speak of 'involuntary' and 'voluntary' ψεῦδος—the text can be rendered with Cornford as 'bold flight of invention' or be read with Eric Voegelin… as satirical in intention; under no circumstances can it be understood as a recommendation of lying as we understand it. Plato, of course, was permissive about occasional lies to deceive the enemy or insane people. … But, contrary to the cave allegory, no principle is involved in these passages." See Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 291.
37. Arendt and Jaspers, *Correspondence 1926–1969*, 244, emphasis added. Interestingly enough, Strauss evaded responding to Karl Löwith's question whether Arendt was "worth reading": "I have not seen H. Arendt's articles of Political Philosophy." Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*, 689.
38. Strauss, "Preface," 1; and "Preface to *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*," 453.
39. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*, 51; and "Leo Strauss's Discovery," 389. See also Jaffa, "Crisis of the Strauss Divided," 593–97; Green, "'In the Grip of the Theological-Political Predicament,'" 41–74; and "In the Grip of the Theological-Political Predicament," in *Jew and Philosopher*, 5–27; Batnitzky, "Revelation and Commandment," 181–203; and "Leo Strauss," 43; and Janssens, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 7–30.
40. Strauss's letter to Karl Löwith of August 15, 1946, is revelatory. In *Das theologisch-politische Problem*, Meier reads this letter, particularly its reference to a "shipwreck," as Strauss's confrontation with faith in revelation (49). Strauss refers to the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* and suggests: "I do not deny, but claim, that modern philosophy has many essential things in common with Christian medieval philosophy; but that means that the *attack* of the moderns is directed resolutely against *ancient* philosophy." The letter emphasizes what Strauss will later analyze under the rubric of the theologico-political predicament. The continuities between modern and Christian medieval philosophy show that "modern philosophy emerged by way of transformation of… Latin or Christian scholasticism" and is an invitation to recover ancient philosophy. Strauss, "Preface to Isaac Husik," 252. Although Strauss sees Christianity as the counterpart of the ancients, he defines ancient philosophy as the proper and genuine philosophy. In sum, he writes that we should "attempt to *learn* from the ancients." Strauss,

Gesammelte Schriften, *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*, 662, original emphasis. See also Pangle and Tarcov, "Epilogue," 911.

41. On the "diagnostic" and "reconstructive" senses of the theologico-political predicament, see Batnitzky, "Leo Strauss," 41–62. On the predicament as either a naïve or a critical attitude to a set of fixed assumptions, see Zank, "Beyond the 'Theologico-Political Predicament.'" See also Jaffa, "Leo Strauss Remembered," 41.
42. Meier, *Das theologisch-politische Problem*; Pangle, *Leo Strauss*, 27; Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*, 75–76; "Leo Strauss's Discovery," 389; and Tanguay, *Leo Strauss*. See also Gordon, "The Concept of the Apolitical," 856–59.
43. Strauss, "Reason and Revelation," fol. 4 recto/4 verso, in Leo Strauss Papers, Box 11, Folder 13. See also Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 74–75; and Meier, *Das theologisch-politische Problem*, 17.
44. See Scattola, *Teologia politica*. In "On Political Theology," Espejo detects five different meanings of the term (477–78). See also Lezra, "The Instance of the Sovereign," 183–211; and Thiem, "Political Theology." DOI: 10.1002/9781118474396.wbept0794.
45. In Taubes, *To Carl Schmitt*, Schmitt states: "The term 'political theology' really is one that I coined" (25). Spinoza, to be sure, refers to this notion, albeit as an adjective, in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670). The term is also introduced in other treatises such as Morhof, *Theologiae gentium politicae* (1662), and Van Heenvliedt, *Theologico-Politica Dissertatio* (1662).
46. See Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise*; and Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde*.
47. See Mehring, *Carl Schmitt*, 101–11.
48. Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, 17.
49. Ibid., 58, 97.
50. For a critical exploration of the relationship between political theology and decisionism, see Espejo, "Does Political Theology Entail Decisionism?" 725–43.
51. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 13, emphasis added.
52. Ibid., 15, emphasis added.
53. See Meier, *Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss*; and *Das theologisch-politische Problem.*
54. In a letter of May 19, 1933, Strauss responded to the Nazis' triumph by saying he would rather live in a ghetto than bow to "the cross of liberalism" [*Kreuz des Liberalismus*]. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft*, 625.
55. Strauss, "German Nihilism, Leo Strauss," 358. See also Altman, "Leo Strauss on 'German Nihilism,'" 587–612.
56. Strauss "German Nihilism, Leo Strauss," 358.
57. Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?" 13.
58. Batnitzky asserts: "The theologico-political problem that Strauss wishes to reinstate is not a return to medievalism of any kind but a return to the wisdom of doubt, or put another way, a return to a philosophy, theology, and especially a politics of moderation." Batnitzky, "Leo Strauss," 60.
59. Strauss, "Three Waves of Modernity," 83.
60. See Gourevitch, "Philosophy and Politics I," 58–84; and "Philosophy and Politics II," 281–328; Lampert, "The Argument of Leo Strauss," 39–46; Tarcov, "Philosophy & History," 5–29; "On a Certain Critique of 'Straussianism,'" 3–18; and "Leo Strauss's 'On Classical Political Philosophy,'" 72–76.
61. Strauss, "Preface," 1, emphasis added. On the equivalent status of reason and revelation, see ibid., 28–29. See also Sorenson, "Strauss and the Defense of Western Civilization," 193–221.
62. Strauss, "Preface," 6.
63. Strauss, "Progress or Return?" 252.
64. Arendt, "'What Remains?" 1. See also Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 28–29.
65. In "Karl Marx," Arendt argues that totalitarianism in fact prevents a return to tradition:

> the thread of our tradition, in the sense of a continuous history, broke only with the emergence of totalitarian institutions and policies that no longer could be comprehended through the categories of traditional thought. … I propose to accept the rise of totalitarianism as a demonstrably new form of government, as an event that,

> at least politically, palpably concerns the lives of all of us, not only the thoughts of a relatively few individuals or the destinies of certain specific national or social groups. Only this event, with its concomitant change of all political conditions and relationships that previously existed on the earth, rendered irreparable and unhealable the various "breaks" that have been seen retrospectively in its wake. Totalitarianism as an event has made the break in our tradition an accomplished fact, and as an event it could never have been foreseen or forethought, much less predicted or "caused," by any single man. So far are we from being able to deduce what actually happened from past spiritual or material 'causes' that all such factors appear to be causes only in the light cast by the event, illuminating both itself and its past. (280–81).

See also Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 10.

66. Arendt, nonetheless, is not intellectually indifferent to theology. She enrolled at the Philipps-Universität Marburg as a theology student and wrote her dissertation on the Christian political thinker Augustine of Hippo. Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin*. In her interview with Günter Gaus, Arendt regards philosophy and theology as "belong[ing] together." "'What Remains?" 9.
67. See Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 94, 140, 201; and Arendt, "Karl Marx," 273–319.
68. Arendt, in Hill, ed., *Hannah Arendt*, 313–14.
69. Arendt, *Between Past and* Future, 163–64.
70. Ibid., 48, 71.
71. Ibid., 52. See also Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 314.
72. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 71–72; and *The Human Condition*, 20.
73. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55.
74. Ibid., 170, emphasis added.
75. See Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, 35–69. See also Kattago, "Why the World Matters," 170–184.
76. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 205, emphasis added.
77. See Canovan, *Hannah* Arendt, 146–47; Honig, *Emergency Politics*, 89–93; and Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary*, 202–10.
78. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 19. See also Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 168.
79. Arendt, *On Revolution*, 29, emphasis added.
80. Ibid., 196, emphasis added.
81. Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?" 255, original emphasis; translation modified.
82. Ibid., 255, emphasis added; translation modified.
83. See, e.g, Marramao, *Passaggio a Occidente*.
84. See Dyzenhaus, ed., *Law as Politics*; Mouffe, ed., *Challenge of Carl Schmitt*; and Kalyvas and Jan-Werner Müller, eds., "Carl Schmitt Legacy and Prospects," 1469–895.
85. Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 43; and *Constitutional Theory*, 342.
86. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 15, emphasis added; translation modified.
87. Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 29, emphasis added; translation modified.
88. Ibid., 48–49, translation modified.
89. Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, 267.
90. Strauss, "Notes on Carl Schmitt," 112, original emphasis; translation modified.
91. Ibid., 117, 122.
92. Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?" 41.
93. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 191.
94. Meier, *Die Denkbewegung von Leo Strauss*, 30.
95. Strauss, "Three Waves of Modernity," 98.
96. Beiner, "Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss," 239, 243.
97. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 155.
98. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9. See also Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, 4–34; and Kottman, "Novus Ordo Saeclorum," 145.

99. For an attempt to emphasize the role of the ordinary within Arendt's rendition of politics, see Honig, *Emergency Politics*, xviii. In Honig's earlier account in *Political Theory*, however, Arendt is defined as "a theorist devoted above all to the extraordinary" (89).
100. See Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 69; and Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 43, 98, 141–42.
101. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176–77. See also Arendt, *On Revolution*, 203.
102. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 4, 37.
103. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 196.
104. Ibid., 197, emphasis added.
105. Ibid., 229. See also Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 139.
106. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 247, emphasis added.
107. Of course, this list is not exhaustive. For the authors who would have to be taken into account, see Scattola, *Teologia politica*; esp. Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem*; Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*; Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*; Löwith, *Meaning in History*; Schmitt, *Politische Theologie II*; Kelsen, "God and State," 61–82; Barion, *Kirche und Kirchenrecht*; Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*; Baptist Metz, *Zum Begriff der neuen politischen Theologie*; Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*; Barth, *The Word of God and Theology*; and Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment," 312–13; and "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 253–64.
108. These motifs are based on a kind of "exceptionalism" that conceives of unusual political moments as the primary lens through which to comprehend everyday—but not only everyday—political life. Political exceptionalism actualizes a specific binary defined by the opposition between the normal and the exceptional, and the ontological primacy of the latter. See Schmitt, *Political Theology* and *Concept of the Political*. On the radical difference between "the exceptional" and "the extraordinary," and between "emergencies" and "foundings," see Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary*, 3, 15, 92–97, 116, 119, 129, 135, 161–62. See also Dyzenhaus, *Legality and Legitimacy*, 46; and Frank and McNulty, "Taking Exception to the Exception," 3–10.
109. On the "political paradox," see Ricoeur, "Le Paradoxe Politique," 260–84; Honig, "Declarations of Independence," 97–113; *Political Theory*, 76–125; "Between Decision and Deliberation," 1–17; and *Emergency Politics*, xv–xviii, 87–111; Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*; Keenan, "Promises, Promises," 76–101; Näsström, "The Legitimacy of the People," 624–58; and Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 41–66.
110. See Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks*, 6; and Loraux, *The Mourning Voice*, 13. See also Honig, *Antigone, Interrupted*.
111. For the influence on him of Strauss, Arendt, and less explicitly, Schmitt, see Lefort, *Travail de l'œuvre Machiavel*; "Une interprétation politique de l'antisémitisme. Hannah Arendt. I," 654–60; "Une interprétation politique de l'antisémitisme. Hannah Arendt. II," 21–28; *Democracy and Political Theory*; *The Political Forms of Modern Society*; *Écrits. À l'épreuve du politique*; "Loi de mouvement et idéologie," 193–210; and "Thinking with and Against Hannah Arendt," 447–59. See also Labelle, "Can the Problem?" 63–81; Schaap, "The Proto-politics of Reconciliation," 615–30; Goldman, "Beyond the Markers of Certainty," 27–34; Weymans, "Defending Democracy's Symbolic Dimension," 6380; and Hilb, "Claude Lefort as Reader of Leo Strauss," 71–86.
112. Lefort, "The Death of Immortality?" 261–63.
113. Lefort, "Permanence of the Theologico-Political?" 223, translation modified, 225, 227–28.
114. Ibid., 255.
115. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 506.
116. See Wolin, "The People's Two Bodies," 9–16; and Santner, *The Royal Remains*.
117. Santner, *The Royal Remains*, 10, original emphasis.
118. Honig, *Political* Theory, 76–125; and "Between Decision and Deliberation," 9, 14. See also Lefort, "Hannah Arendt," 45; and "Loi de mouvement et idéologie," 208; Keenan, *Democracy in Question*, 99; Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics*, 230; Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 51; and Arendt, "Lying in Politics," 5.

119. Honig, "Declarations of Independence," 98.
120. Honig, *Emergency Politics*, 136. See also Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary*, 194–253.
121. Honig, *Emergency Politics*, 92.
122. Ibid., 93, emphasis added.
123. See Espejo, "On Political Theology," 475–94.
124. Rancière, *Dissensus*, 34, translation modified.
125. Ibid., 50.

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Notes on contributor

Facundo Vega is a doctoral candidate at Cornell University, USA, and a visiting scholar at the Institut für Philosophie at the Freie Universität Berlin, and at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. He is currently completing his dissertation, entitled "Extraordinary Matters: The Political after Martin Heidegger." Two of his essays are due to be published in *Diacritics* and *Philosophy Today* (forthcoming).

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