

# Heidegger's Claim

## “*Carl Schmitt denkt Liberal*”

### Introduction

to the conference

### Political Theology and Modernity

### The Legacy of Carl Schmitt

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Who is the goddess, or whose the god, of modernity's political theology? To pose this question in this way, to pose the question of the *goddess*, at the outset opens up the *question* of the God as the unity of any political theology. Since the goddess is not the god, and yet she does not stand as his opposite. She shows up that he is, or at least was once, plural, and if she is not, or is not now, his claim to be one, or the claim staked on his demise and the absence that would succeed him, is a historical claim. She was, and he was many, before he, and his death, were at one. And even Hegel, that triumphant thinker of a rational monotheism, acknowledges the place of a state goddess at Athens, the *Volksgeist* which he says is at the same “the self *knowing* and *willing* divine”.<sup>1</sup>

To intrude the goddess and let her constitute the first of our introductory questions sets her in opposition to the God-or-godlessness of modernity: this unifying singular purpose, the pressing of a metaphysical unity, of the political in the present age. For the historical setting of modernity's politics has unfolded in the site that opens up between modernity's God and its avowed godlessness, and more than one commentator has grounded modernity's

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<sup>1</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §257, p. 398. “Der *Volksgeist* (Athene) das sich *wissende* und *wollende* Göttliche” (Hegel's emphases).

secular ambitions in the secularisation of a divine history, and made of, and so interpreted, this godlessness the God this godlessness was meant to supplant. Whether you are committed to God, or to his extermination from the public realm (even as you might hold to him in private), what has unified the political realm has been the place occupied either by the divine God of reason or by his forcible evacuation in the name of an infinitely rational humanity. Not for nothing did Heidegger first interpret Hegel not as an ontotheology, but as onto-ego-theology, and so showed how the *theos* as *ontōs on* was to be understood, in Hegel and in all that followed in the end and completion of metaphysics, through the *ego*, the ‘*Ich denke als Ich stelle her*’ of Hegel’s account of subjectivity’s infinite movement, the putting into position, of absolute subjectivity. At bottom, what unites these two seemingly opposed positions – the counterpositions of an Hegelian or a Marxist politics – is the question of the *ground* of the political itself. It is this, here, that is the preoccupation with this God and his self-evacuated site, that presents itself as the ground, the unifying essence, of the political.

Nothing exemplifies the definition of this ground and its connection with a political theology with more startling effect than Eduard Gans’s attribution to Hegel of the extraordinary claim that “the state is *Geist* itself, which exists in the world and realises itself as such through *consciousness* . . . it is the path of God through the world . . . the force of reason actualising itself as will”.<sup>2</sup>

This unifying essence, the ground of the political, is at the same time the way in which the ground of the political has made its presence felt as an historical presence, and this in two senses: both in the sense that this ground is itself a history, and in the sense that the drive to occupy this ground is the history of the politics through which we have lived. It is here that writers and historians have identified, in the words one of them, the “sacred causes” in the analysis of “religion and politics from the European dictators to Al Qaeda”.<sup>3</sup> It is for the sake of this ground that Carl Schmitt wrote, beginning with his 1932 *Der Begriff des Politischen*.<sup>4</sup> It is for the sake of understanding this ground that Schmitt was to declare that “through the liberalism of the last hundred years all political concepts have been altered and denatured in a peculiar and systematic way”.<sup>5</sup> In 1933 Schmitt had noted, against the

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<sup>2</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 403. “Der Staat ist der Geist, der in der Welt steht und sich in derselben mit *Bewußtsein* realisiert . . . es ist der Gang Gottes in der Welt . . . sein Grund ist die Gewalt der sich als Wille verwirklichenden Vernunft.” (Gans’ reported emphasis)

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to Al Qaeda* (London: Harper Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1932).

<sup>5</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, p. 55. “Durch den Liberalismus des letzten Jahrhunderts sind alle

‘liberalism’ of Hegel and Marx: “Only when the *Reichspräsident*, on the 30th January 1933, named the leader of the National-Socialist movement, Adolf Hitler, as the German Chancellor, did the German Reich recover a political leadership, and the German state find the strength to annihilate Marxism, as the enemy of the state. . . . On this day, one might thus say, ‘Hegel died’.”<sup>6</sup> This is because “the political unity of the present [Nazi] state is a tripartite summation of state, movement and people. It differs from the ground up from the liberal-democratic state schema that has come to us from the nineteenth century”.<sup>7</sup>

Our second, introductory question then asks: ‘how does Schmitt’s tripartite unity differ?’ And yet our first question still presses in, since the goddess sits in opposition to the god or his absence, fulfilled in the subjectivity of the subject. Does Schmitt’s tripartite unity stand in opposition to liberalism’s absolute subjectivity, or is ‘state, movement and people’ simply another way of naming how *through* movement the person of the people comes to be the state? That state and person, aggregated and so swept up in movement as ‘people’, names the one and the same as liberalism names, the origin of the political in the state?

Does asking after the goddess, even were she merely to appear as a second divinity to the first, succeed in letting us ask, is the god, was the god always, nothing other than the summation, the summary unity, of the divine underpinning of the state?

Does Schmitt succeed in overcoming the nineteenth-century liberalisation of the state? After his own disastrous adventure with the Nazi State, and following his resignation from the Rectorate of Freiburg University, Martin Heidegger is reported as beginning a seminar on Hegel’s *Rechtsphilosophie* in saying “It was said Hegel died in 1933: on the contrary, he has only just begun to live”.<sup>8</sup> In his preparatory notes for this seminar, Heidegger says with direct reference to Schmitt, “Carl Schmitt thinks as a liberal”.<sup>9</sup> He provides two reasons for why he thinks of Schmitt in this way: (1) because Schmitt thinks of the political merely as only ‘also’ a sphere – we infer, of being (and so just one among others), and so (2) in other words Schmitt thinks liberally because he is unable to think the

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politischen Vorstellungen in einer eigenartigen und systematischen Weise verändert und denaturiert worden.”

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Carl Schmitt, *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*, p. 31 f. “Erst als der Reichspräsident am 30. Januar 1933, den Führer der Nationalsozialistischen Bewegung, Adolf Hitler, zum Reichskanzler ernannte, erhielt das Deutsche Reich wieder eine politische Führung und fand der deutsche Staat die Kraft, den staatsfeindlichen Marxismus zu vernichten. [. . .] An diesem Tage ist demnach, so kann man sagen, ‘Hegel gestorben’.”

<sup>7</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*, p. 11 f. “Die politische Einheit des gegenwärtigen Staates ist eine dreigliedrige Zusammenhang von Staat, Bewegung, Volk. Sie unterscheidet sich von dem aus dem 19. Jahrhundert übernommenen liberal-demokratischen Staatsschema von Grund auf.”

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling* (GA86), p. 606. “Man hat gesagt, 1933 ist Hegel gestorben; im Gegenteil: er hat erst angefangen zu leben.”

<sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling* (GA86), p. 174. “Carl Schmitt denkt liberal.”

political as the very ground of being (i.e. through the being of beings), Schmitt is unable to think, as even Aristotle (for Heidegger) was able, of the human animal as the political animal (ζῷον πολιτικόν).<sup>10</sup> Schmitt can only ground the being of the human being in the state, and not in being itself. This, as Heidegger makes explicit in his notes, is to follow Hegel. With reference to the friend/enemy distinction, Heidegger argues that to ground the political in the state is to fail to ground the political in the manner in which the state unfolds, namely in its unfolding – “die Weise in der er west! (*Sein!*)”, thus Schmitt is only able to ground the political metaphysically, just as Hegel does, in a self-unfolding self-assertion, out of which the friend/enemy distinction appears.<sup>11</sup>

Heidegger’s argument is that the self-unfolding self-assertion of the self that comes to the fore both in Hegel and in the friend/enemy distinction is neither interpreted from out of the *originary* being and unfolding of the self, nor able to provide a passage into this originary unfolding, and so, he concludes, is “just typically – liberal!”<sup>12</sup>

How does Schmitt think the friend/enemy distinction fundamentally or originally? Schmitt says “enemy is not the concurrent or the counterpart in general”, adding that the enemy is what we discover when entire bodies of humanity face each other in enmity, and concluding, “enemy is *hostis*, not *inimicus* in the wider sense; πόλεμος, not ἐχθρός” (“enemy is the hostile army, not the individual foe in the wider sense; battle, not hatred”).<sup>13</sup> Heidegger’s conclusion from this is that because bodies of humanity constitute – in the wider sense – ‘the political’ and battle is ordinarily enjoined between states or between bodies that oppose each other in the name of a communality (thus, perhaps, from the Crusaders to *Boko Haram*, in the name of a religion or of an already shared interpretation of one), then Schmitt’s concept of the political is, strictly speaking (from the point of view of *Innenpolitik* or ‘domestic politics’, “already [the] determining of the other as friend”. To put this most clearly: the determination of the other as friend is more basic than the determination of the other as foe because the other as foe only appears at the point where there is an already determined entirety (Schmitt’s word is *Gesamtheit*) who are in friendship.

Heidegger’s claim against Schmitt is that he thinks as a liberal. This means he is unable to think beyond and outside the province of the political laid out in the metaphysics

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<sup>10</sup> Aristotle: *Eudemian Ethics*, 1242 a 23; *Politics* 1253 a 3–8, 1278 b 19.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling* (GA86), p. 173.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling* (GA86), p. 173. “– vielmehr typisch – liberal!”

<sup>13</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, p. 16. “Feind ist also nicht der Konkurrent oder der Gegner im Allgemeinen. [. . .] Feind ist *hostis* nicht *inimicus* im weiteren Sinne; πόλεμος, nicht ἐχθρός.”

that Hegel describes, a metaphysics that sets in place all that follows – in Marx, in Nietzsche, through the historical experiences of socialism, Marxism, fascism, Nazism, Americanism and even what Heidegger later calls World Democracy. How is this so? A little later in his preparatory notes for the seminar on Hegel, Heidegger makes a citation of Hegel but gives no provenance for it (and nor do the editors): “thus is the will power in its self and the essence of universal power, of nature and of *Geist*”.<sup>14</sup> The citation is from Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*,<sup>15</sup> and in the question of Schmitt, the citation Heidegger himself makes does not help us in to the critique. The importance of this citation, to which Heidegger alludes and refers but which he does not quote in full, and which concerns the friend/enemy distinction, comes under the consideration of the essence of the state, and says:

This essence can come to be thought as ‘the Lord’, the Lord of nature and of *Geist*. This subject, however, the Lord, is itself only something which is one among others. The absolute power is not Lord over others, but Lord over itself, reflexion within itself, personality.<sup>16</sup>

What this says is that the essential coming to be of the individual as a taking power or lordship of the self over the self is the constitution of the self both as, and within, the state. This is not other than Schmitt’s basic determination of the self as being ‘in friendship’ for the sake of the state: the coming to be of the self, as not over against others but as lordship over the self, comes most fully to be in the state, as the already-present, as most basic principle of the state. Lordship, as an essential name of the God. The Lord. God.

How does the Lord, the god, stand in relation to the question of who the goddess might be? Into this analysis of friend and foe, and of the state as the basic constitution of friendship and lordship over the self, Heidegger introduces a single word: *Mitsein*. *Mitsein*, – co-being (as the basic determination of *Dasein*, here-being), is for Heidegger nothing other than a well-known Greek word σύνεμμι, which says the same as *Mitsein*, co-being. How is co-being, σύνεμμι, and what is its essential connection with the state?

Liberalism (for Heidegger) says that co-being, σύνεμμι, is constituted by the terminus,

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling* (GA86), p. 173. “So ist der Wille Macht an ihm selbst und das Wesen allgemeiner Macht, der Natur und des Geistes.”

<sup>15</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994 [1931]), p. 113. “So ist der Wille Macht an ihm selbst und das Wesen allgemeiner Macht, der Natur und des Geistes.”

<sup>16</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994 [1931]), p. 113. “Dieses Wesen kann etwa gedacht werden als ‘der Herr’, der Herr der Natur und des Geistes. Dieses Subjekt aber, der Herr, ist selbst nur etwas, das noch gegen anderes ist. Die Macht als absolute ist dagegen nicht Herr über ein anderes, sondern Herr über sich selbst, Reflexion in sich selbst, Persönlichkeit.”

the principle, of the state. The state is the political possibility of that lordship over the self which is simultaneously lord over all and lord over that which has fully become itself, *within* the state: thus absolute subjectivity, *either* as God as such *or* in place of God. The state, as the material effect of *Selbständigkeit* and absolute subjectivity, having fully become what it is, stands over against others in at least potential πολέμος.

If Heidegger thinks that liberalism as such, either as what we have come today to call a ‘political theology’ is a name of the impasse of our present inability to proceed beyond the subjectivity of the subject, a subjectivity which functions as a ground for the material self presence of the self in its coming to be as the state, why is ‘being’, *das Seyn* or *das Sein* not *itself* a ground, a *metaphysical* principle that is itself not other than a name or placeholder either for god or *his* displacement? Can, and how can, the goddess come to our aid?

Heidegger poses a contrary to this understanding of liberalism that he finds at work after Hegel and as much at work in Schmitt – within the field, derived from the analysis of *Sein und Zeit* from where the notion of *Mitsein* also made its first published appearance, of care – *die Sorge*. Here Heidegger introduces his most basis determination of being, *das Seyn*. Heidegger asks “from where does this ‘contrary’ have its essential origin? From this, *that being is historically being-in-the-world – as self-willing – a with- and against-willing*”.<sup>17</sup> This *with-* and *against-willing* functions in these notes as a name for what Heidegger believes liberalism – Hegel’s metaphysics as a ‘politics’, as ‘the political’ is unable sufficiently to ground, namely becoming itself. Twice in the notes Heidegger draws attention to how, both for Schmitt and for Hegel willing, the will as such, is to be understood as “itself–self–becoming-willing”.<sup>18</sup> Why becoming is to be understood metaphysically as willing, not much more is said in these essentially private notes.

In a text whose importance is yet fully to be realised, however, known in English as *The Anaximander Fragment*, first written in 1946 and published in 1950, whose central lines were worked out in a much larger set of undelivered lectures prepared in 1942, something more fundamental is said, which allows us – within the time allotted – to glimpse why Heidegger could not possibly have understood any form of ‘being’ to function either as a covert name for, or a name for the evacuation of, the god. Central to Heidegger’s

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling* (GA86), p. 173. “Wodurch hat der ‘Gegensatz’ seinem Wesensursprung? Dadurch, daß *Seyn geschichtliches In-der-Welt-sein* – als *Sichwollen* – ein *Mit-* und *Widerwollen* ist” (Heidegger’s emphases).

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Hegel – Schelling* (GA86), p. 174, 180. “Das *Sich-selbst-werden-wollen*”; “*Der Wille . . . das Sich selbst-(Wesen)-werden*” (Heidegger’s emphases).

interpretation of the Anaximander fragment is his presentation of how becoming, *das Werden* is thought as an opposition to being in all metaphysical thinking, from Plato to Hegel and Nietzsche, and this means in Schmitt as well, insofar as Schmitt is unable to break out of the liberal metaphysics of ‘the political’.

In order to draw our conclusion today, and because this is a conference about Schmitt and not about Heidegger, we can do no more than present in the briefest outline why Heidegger thinks that Schmitt is unable to break out beyond Hegel’s concept of ‘the political’. In the course of this interpretation of Anaximander Heidegger seeks to think being in terms of the pair, presence/presencing: in other words, to think being and becoming together. This is at the same time to think being historically: which means *as the pair presence/presencing is itself historically brought to speech by Anaximander and by our interpreting of him*. We think historically not only because through the unfolding of the pair presence/presencing, history occurs, but also because historically this is how we have experienced the unfolding of the pair presence/presencing.

How, in just a few words, does Heidegger explain this presencing? He says that what presences belongs in the oneness of all that belongs together in presencing. This he calls *die Fuge*, ‘the jointure’. Whatever is joined in jointure is what needs no other underpinning than its belonging together in being joined, like a perfect dovetail joint of a wooden cabinet. But jointure, *die Fuge*, is a lingering in between what Heidegger calls a twofold absence: thus it both lingers and it presses and obtrudes into the here of its coming and the away of its going, and it may insist on seeking to be more present, to persevere in its presencing. Heidegger says “it strikes the wilful pose of persistence”.<sup>19</sup> We see immediately the parallel with the text of 1934. Heidegger is not speaking of luminous objects, but of beings, people, in the πόλις. He stresses that what comes to presence – and this means also who – lingers awhile not in jointure, but in un-jointure. Un-jointure, *die Un-fuge* is, he says more basic than jointure. Or rather he names *die Un-fuge* with its Greek name, in the context of the Greek name of being as a whole and in itself, ἐόντα. The Greek name of *die Un-fuge* is ἀδικία. Thus, the Anaximander fragment “speaks out of the essential experience, that ἀδικία itself is the basic trait of this ἐόντα”.<sup>20</sup>

Disjointure and jointure are the most basic traits of *Mitsein*, of σύνεμμι, of our co-

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Der Spruch des Anaximander* (GA5), p. 355. “Es spreizt sich in den Eigensinn des Beharrens auf.”

<sup>20</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Der Spruch des Anaximander* (GA5), p. 355. “Er spricht aus der Wesenserfahrung, daß die ἀδικία der Grundzug der ἐόντα ist.”

presencing as our being together. This is not a principle, but an experience. Of these basic traits, disjointure, disorder, is the more basic, which means only that it appears *first, in order that jointure, order, friendship, being-set-in-peace-and-freedom* can arise. Jointure arises within the πόλις inasmuch as it is ordered within and to and for and in itself. What is the Greek name of jointure? Δίκη is the Greek name of *die Fuge*, jointure, order, the fitting. And Δίκη, like Athene, is the name of a goddess.

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