



The Two Kings of Modernity: Science and Religion in Simmel's Metaphysics of Value

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Abstract

Georg Simmel's tantalising suggestion that that in each age there exists a 'regal notion', a secret 'conceptual king', opens up an important issue in contemporary social epistemology: the question of how we should conceive of 'the metaphysics of the social'. It suggests that within every *weltanschauung* there exists an adhesive field, a force of conceptual gravitation, capable of binding the fragments of historical being together into the wider significance of a world. In this scheme, it is this force, this 'idea-influence', that is 'the secret king'. However, it is important to speculate as to this king's name, constitution and powers. What seems clear in this regard is that in its regal status, *contra* Foucault, this centripetal notion cannot be reduced to the dimension of governmental discipline and control, as it exists in a quite different relationship to power, at least as power has been conceived in the social sciences. In this paper, I will suggest that the key to understanding the dynamics of the contemporary era in particular resides in understanding the tension between the king - understood as what intellectually reigns - and that which merely governs.

Keywords

Vitalism | Metaphysics | Governmentality | Worldhood | Positivism | Science | Kingship

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The Turn to Life: Value as a Metaphysical Issue

As is well known, after the technological transformations of the 19th century - when conceptual schemes were rendered increasingly complex and traditional value-orientations began to lose their immediacy, self-evidence, purity and coherence - positivist philosophers sought new ways of thinking in order to found modernist ways of life. In the positivist philosophical tradition (that continues to dominate the western intellectual scene) it was the methods of experimental science that were widely understood to provide the philosopher and the social scientist with general criteria for the creation of a new *epistemic* world: a world of 'facts' that was conceived as 'superior' in comparison to the more 'superficial and immaterial' worlds founded upon traditional conceptions of 'value'. Indeed, in 20th century positivism, the distinction between facts and values was seen as the very basis of a second wave of 'scientific enlightenment', without which new and intensified forms of progress, necessitated by demands for economic and cultural modernisation, were deemed to be impossible. In this regard, in ethical terms, to be a positivist was to make commitment to a counter-ethic of factual clarity and precision; for only through a logical and empirical 'making clear' of our conceptual landscape, of untangling the knots in our thinking brought about by the modern maelstrom, was any kind modernist progressive re-founding of the social deemed possible.¹ Clarity, that was seen as coextensive with meaning itself, for the positivist was the true self-reflexivity of philosophy and the authentic route to the self-knowledge of the modern. It is what differentiated true philosophical understanding from the opacity-induced *akrasia* of those wedded to a metaphysics of traditional value and from the ancient ideal of a life oriented both in and towards a transcendent that can never be clearly or precisely articulated. Clarity is what allowed the positivist philosopher, we might say, to 'see through' traditional value-conceptions; to expose their incoherence in revealing the falsity of their complexity - and to perceive that, in the end, all traditional values supervene upon another realm; of facticity defined 'purely naturalistically' as 'mere stuff' and thus 'without value' in the traditional sense. As a consequence of the positivist revolution, ethical and political reflection and judgement have been relegated to the recesses subjective realm, to the extent that any talk of 'ethical and political thinking', and its more significant corollary 'ethical and political knowing', are now widely seen by positivistically-minded philosophers as 'category mistakes' of the first order. Within the positivist's mechanical universe, where techno-science reigns and 'the ethical cannot know', modernist philosophy has asserted its own counter-ethics: that we should refrain from using ethical terms in traditional ways (to refer to things, objects, events 'in the world') as they cannot be assimilated into a 'unified science' defined as the totality of our currently best scientific theories. Ethics here is simply the effervescence of emotion - it

¹ It is in this way that philosophical clarity is itself a mode of critique.



can be nothing else in the positivist's frame of reference.

Within the modern hermeneutic tradition, however, where knowledge has typically been viewed as a sub-specified mode of 'interpretation', ethics, politics and knowledge were seen as more intimately related; but this time at the expense of a rejection of *all* notions of objective truth and value, scientific truth and moral value included. For the modern hermeneut, all knowledge was seen as viewed as infused with and guided by underlying values and life-concerns and consequently for most hermeneutic thinkers the ideal of scientific knowledge celebrated by the positivist is perceived, at best, to be 'only *one* type of knowledge' that 'cannot be taken as the canonical standard for all forms of knowledge' (Bernstein 1985, 9). In its attitude to epistemology, therefore, hermeneutics allows for a non-foundational epistemological diversity - opening up the possibility for both a critique of positivism and a reframing of scientific knowledge within a more authentic form of thinking circumscribed by 'the prejudgements of the world' - what Gadamer termed the horizon of understanding.² Here scientific knowledge is seen as an inferior formation founded upon a radical dis-embedding of our worldly relations to language and history - a disconnection from the horizon of authentic understanding in ways that allow knowledge to become an instrument of prediction and control (but not of *truth*, in the strict philosophical sense). Positivism, in this scheme, is thus merely a philosophy of instrumentalism; a philosophical reflection on the 'technics' by and through which the world is manipulated but in the process rendered fundamentally unworldly, *unheimlich*. Seen thus, as Heidegger famously claimed, science is only knowledge in a very limited sense as it is founded upon the forgetting of being - to the extent that 'science does not think'; and if it did it would be forced to ask itself the Nietzschean question, 'can scientists be said "to know" when their ways of knowing remove us from what is "truly ours", our being-in-the-world?' Thus with hermeneutics we might say, the cultural-historical trumps the factual and both science and the ethical dissolve into a common relativistic/constructed/perspectivist world; into what Paul Ricoeur was to term 'the endless conflict of interpretations' (see Ricoeur 2004) - but with the consequence of a radical loss of clarity and an entanglement in the morass of language games and the darkness of the postmodern.

Clearly, when viewed by positivist and hermeneutic lights, since the 19th century there has been a significant loss of faith in the objectivity of value - in any claim that we can reclaim a conception of value that views values as deeply woven into the fabric of being itself. For the hermeneut, as for the positivist, any return to metaphysics can

² The purpose of hermeneutic reflection - in Gadamer's view at least - is to contest the increasing semantic and epistemological authority of science in the context of a modernity that has banished all classical ideals to the purely historical. As an antidote aim of hermeneutics is to relate the language games of science and technology to a meta-language presented in the mother tongue. In this sense the aim of heremeneutics - *pace* Habermas - is critical in that it aims to overcome the alienation of science from our natural experience of the world. If any valid critical social science ought to be 'motivated by the present and interests - this involves the situating of the partially known and understood within current concerns.



be little more than 'an irresponsible flight into a world of fading dreams' (Gadamer 1981, 139). However, we still use value terms in objective ways and the language of value, whether ethical or political, still carries with it a force that stands as an echo of a metaphysical past. In everyday life, everyone is an ethical objectivist and we immediately feel the stubborn reality of the ethical in both mind and body when conducting our normal daily existence. By these lights, both positivism and hermeneutics are purely 'academic philosophies' estranged from mundane experience and the dynamics of the lifeworld. Thus even within an increasingly nihilistic modernity the ethical as both fact and object of knowledge lives on – value is lived, it emerges first and foremost as a lived reality. Here, somewhat paradoxically, the positivist/hermeneutic rejection of metaphysics does not necessarily imply a sceptical rejection of objective value. It merely shows us that our conception of 'value objectivity' is in need of revision and that our understanding of ethics needs another beginning, a second enlightenment, where the idea of Kantian limits to thought is re-scrutinised in the light cast by an understanding of the nature of the everyday, *of the ethicality of life itself*. More specifically, when we begin with the affective dimensions of the everyday, we might say that between fact and interpretation – between the technics of knowledge and the meanings of culture – stands a third term 'life', the life that is lived by humans in banal ways, a process that happens without reflection yet at the same time mysteriously allows reflection to happen. Without life, in this sense, without life's capacity to support, maintain and create, neither technics nor culture would be possible. Life is the substratum out of which both technics and culture emerge, only to for them to conflict in the forgetting that they are in reality powers that share in the same vital process.

To view life as the foundation of value is to begin *metaphysical* reflection anew. For recognition of the primacy and priority of life, even in its everyday form, not only implies a new object for philosophical thinking – the (vital) process through which meaning emerges – but also a new 'subject of philosophy'; a new ground of meaning, truth and understanding that re-institutes ancient ideals associated with the transcendent – albeit in new ways. For life is what shows itself in thought, language and judgement, but it is precisely that which can never be fully present in them. Here, the true philosophical subject lies beyond the hermeneutic realm, beyond the idea of the philosopher as the 'meta-hermeneut' – beyond the Habermasian idea of the philosopher as 'stand in and interpreter' (Habermas 1990), the mediator between positivistic science and wider cultural arenas. Against the hermeneut, the philosopher of life strives to reclaim a strong conception of metaphysical value dismissed in the Kantian critical project – from within the unfolding processes of life (rather than in the Platonic 'beyond'). In this respect 'life philosophy' requires an 'imaginative', or in the parlance of critical philosophy 'speculative', philosophical response to the problem of value. Indeed, in this way, the focus on life requires a radically new discourse of value, a new lexicon of the ethical and the political – and a conception of philosophy that is close to a Deleuzian conception of philosophy a 'continuous creation of concepts' (see



Deleuze and Guattari 1994) - where the philosopher looks to stretch the existing philosophical lexicon into the new registers that contemporary reflection on the patterns of processes of life demands. In this case, the aim of philosophy is to offer a new language through which another sense of the world's value can be articulated; where, as the early Wittgenstein reminds us, 'the world and life are one' (see Wittgenstein 1922, 5.621). This repositioning of philosophy 'in the open expanse' of life's unfolding requires the philosopher to act as the quasi-transcendental 'mirror of life'. Philosophy here becomes a *synoptic* form of inquiry, an attempt to see value in relation to every aspect of life's appearances, 'cabbages and kings...numbers and duties, finger snaps and possibilities, aesthetic experience and death' (see Sellars 1963, 1). In this account, the role of the philosopher is to reflect on the manifold of life's productions; to grasp 'how things in the broadest sense of the term, hang together in the broadest sense of the term' (Sellars 1963, 1). It is to view the products of life as a whole and to see value not a part of the whole but integral the whole, to what makes the whole *whole* - even if this whole is no longer a unity.

But what maintains the whole, what 'glue', what binding, ensures that life's productions 'hang together' - what is the force that ensures that the life-world remains a world and not a collection of postmodern fragments? In this regard, the entanglement of values within the whole of the life process suggests not only a new location for values but also a new conception of logic and a new practice of evaluation. It demands that we recognise values as forces - as powers through which specific types of human orientation and injunction emerge. Metaphysics becomes here the study of value as what unifies life into a world (an investigation into how life engenders form, especially the form of the good). How then do we understand the ethical *a priori* of life's flow, the dialectic of vitalistic space in a such a way that this force becomes apparent, cognisable, articulable? How can we view life and value, nature and the good as one? This ancient question remains our question.

Reinstating the Vertical

Interestingly and importantly, these are the questions posed by Georg Simmel in his late work, *A View of Life* (Simmel 2011). Indeed, this work is perhaps the clearest and most significant statement of what might be termed 'ethical vitalism'. From this perspective, the 'perspective of life', Simmel claims that no distinction can be made between facts and values, 'is' and 'ought', the 'imperative to do' and the seemingly 'value-free necessities of living'. When viewed in such vitalist terms, values are not subjective states as such but exert an influence in the manner of a vector - directed up for expanding and forming; down for contracting and dissolving ('good' as elevation, evil as 'descent'). There are of course resistances to the upwards expansion of value - but there also exist forces that facilitate the upwards movement of life into form, into



meaning and ultimately in the space of the ethical as such.³ Here, life produces value as a matter of creative necessity; to the extent that we must separate ideas of value from notions of reason, volition and ultimately truth.

However, there is an obvious difficulty with such an account; for human life is distinct from all other life forms in that it is cultural-historical and not 'simply natural'. Its values are not products in the same way as natural products. History is more than nature – indeed it is nature rendered transcendent, it is nature become more than itself – it is we might say *supernatural*. More specifically, human life is (as Heidegger reminds us) life lived in a way that is radically 'open' to the otherness of events and to this extent both expectant and oriented towards an unknown futurity. What this means is that as humans we are not simply creatures of natural rhythms and cycles. In life's opening to itself, life transcends itself – it ceases to be a space of necessity but emerges as a space of possibility, a freedom and decision, in ways that are not fully explicable from the vantage point of positivism. However, if value emerges out of the process of living, if life evaluates itself in the process of its own upwards emergence, then what is it, precisely, that holds value 'in place' in the open realm of history; realms where all values are seemingly transitory moments of a wider temporal process? What is it that guides values on their way towards another historical destination, the destination of ethics, politics and culture and the maintains and reproduces values over time? What kind of force is at play here? Value is emergent out of life, but unless it can be 'solidified' out of the realm of becoming into the social utility of being then it will be nothing more than the detritus of an *elan-vital* that in itself has no interest in preserving what it has produced. Unless the vitalist can answer this question, vitalism threatens to collapse into nihilism, or worse, into a fascistic reinstatement of the worst elements of pre-modern forms of rule, based upon older absolute metaphysical notions.

However, in a *View of Life*, thankfully it is clear that this is not Simmel's position. In fact, in response to the problem of life's capacity to 'in-form' and 'world the world', the problem famously outlined but unsatisfactorily solved by Plato, Simmel makes a tantalising suggestion – one that presents us with a complex wrinkle in his sociological vitalism and that opens up the horizontal dimension of life to the vertical dimension of ethics and politics, but in ways that preserve the vitalist intuition the life is the site for the emergence its own moral and political evaluation. For Simmel claims in each age there exists tacit, indeed covert, a 'regal notion', a secret conceptual king, that holds value in place; that maintains the effervescence of the lifeworld in a state of order; that (to use another Heideggerean term) 'holds sway' over the open realms within which a creative life produces its values.⁴

³ Another possibility is to do away with 'the concept' altogether and start from a 'bottom up' perspective that recognises always in becoming of intellectual sense. The is the path of deconstruction – and the end result is nihilism.

⁴ One way of interpreting the relation between life and (social) form is to view both a being mediated by images – image as an affective force. Life here is seen as productive of affects that cohere into images (this is essentially a Durkheimian insight, but also a psychoanalytic one; for as Freud claims, images are in psychological terms crystallisations of affect complexes). Here, the relation between life and the social is 'imaginary' – to the extent that



From the King's Two Bodies to the Duality of Kingship

In this way Simmel recognises that there is no value without a 'transcendent' ordering of life (even if this transcendent is in one sense immanent to the life process as such) – and in so doing he opens up an important issue for those wanting to understand what is at work in the metaphysics of the social: the question of how we should conceive of the *adhesion* that holds the social world in place once the divine is no longer the dominant centripetal force, the most significant *authority* beneath the social imaginary that holds it in place. As is well-known, in pre-modernity this glue was divine command and sanction but also divine gifting – divine love, in Christianity, administered by the Church as the mystical *Corpus Christi*. Here the metaphysics of the social was profoundly personal and whose model was Christ's 'two natures' – both human and divine, finitude and eternity meeting in Christ's nature. The apparent separation of value from the world was resolved *in persona Christi*. The metaphysics of the social was thus a paradoxical unity; that of 'Christ's two bodies' ruling over a life process that was simultaneously sacred and secular (see Kantorowitz 1997) – Christ *pantocrater* being the most striking pre-modern image of a unifying force that unifies precisely in its sacrificial power to bind the world together.

In modern contexts, Christ is no longer king. Simmel's king however is thoroughly modern – it is a king that, unlike Christ, cannot be sacrificed, for it is already 'without a head'. Simmel's king is thus both radically impersonal and profane – more abstract and disembodied; an adhesive field, a conceptual gravitas, capable of binding the fragments of historical being together into the significance of a value-world as an open historical space with ethical and political significance. It is a force that works upon life's products, forces that are more akin to notions, idea-influences, rather than image-affects – without which human life would lose all sense of form, of common value-conceptuality, in relation to 'vitalistic becoming'. Here, Simmel lays the foundation for a number of later ideas that attempted to make articulate a new conception of an organising value-framework for thought as the basis for any human project concerned with the attainment of knowledge and understanding (perhaps the most famous of which is Thomas Kuhn's notion of the paradigm (see Kuhn 1996).⁵

ethics is simply a kind of common feeling, a capacity for sympathy and empathy, that are quintessentially imaginative acts. The binding power of the image produces here a 'faith without dogmas', an image-totem that has the power to sacralise the life products into a social world of value (see Maffesoli 1993, 4). Here Durkheim the positivist reveals his debt to Hume, for whom ethics can only be viewed as sympathy and closer to custom and habit than truth. Simmel's account of social adhesion, however, is rather different.

⁵ As is well known, according to Thomas Kuhn knowledge is always organised around a single set of key exemplars. It is these concepts that organise thought, perception and judgement in such a way that knowing is form of disclosing. In this way Kuhn points the way towards a new affective/intuitive where an aesthetic-political basis to



Today, it is important to speculate on what the name(s) of this hidden king might be as well as to explore its/their constitution and delineate its powers. Initially, in a preliminary way, this will require engaging with an intellectual tradition that some may believe has provided a simple answer to the name of this hidden king and what its powers may be – Marxism. For it may appear to a vulgar Marxist the name of the hidden king is ‘capital’, whose demonic power is money, whose powers in turn are those of commodification that have reduced the social world to a mere system of exchange. Here, the hidden king is a secret metaphysical tyrant who determines the everyday according to the dull compulsion of the economic and who needs to be overthrown in the name of a kingless humanity. However, Marxism, at least in this regard, cannot make sense of the stability of the value world – capital is not king in Simmel’s vitalistic sense and neither can it be. For in Marxism, capital is not a force that maintains a (quasi) transcendent hold on the social; it is precisely a destroyer of value and the primary cause of the horizontalisation of the world through which the transcendent is dissolved into a universal system of equivalences. Capital, we might say, can never be king but only the slayer of kings (and here we can see the deep affinity that exists between capital and nihilism). Capital, we might say, by its very nature, works against the production of value – it colonizes the lifeworld in ways that make life’s value productions impossible to cohere together (and whose primary consequence is alienation, as Marx correctly observed, that in reality is a condition of value-fragmentation). This is why capital is and can only be a limited phenomenon; a world where capital was king would not even be a world. No one could inhabit it. Capital stands against all forms of kingship – even metaphysical ones – and this is why in the end it is a fierce opponent of any attempt secure value. But it requires a king in order to function.

Marxism in this regard, the belief that ‘king capital’ will eventually be ‘usurped’ at the hands of the proletariat, the true king of history, thus misses its mark a social philosophy and theory. In fact, even for the proletariat to overthrow capital will require that it imbibe a new sense of value; something that in turn will inevitably require an allegiance to the hidden of king(s) of its epoch. For, contrary to vulgar Marxism, the secret king is not that which *governs* through either state or market mechanisms but is rather the *reigning* idea-influence that reigns as it transfigures; transforming life’s momentary acts of meaning, touching them with the glory and solidity of value and the valuable. The hidden king in this sense reveals that the most significant aspects of human life reside outside the sphere of government – that again cannot exist as a space of value and will always presuppose a vitality of value that precisely cannot be governed by a state. The hidden king binds together the discrete moments of life’s value productions into a new conceptual unity – the fact that our birth, the families and nations that we belong to, the languages that we speak – and so

cognition plays an increasingly prominent role in epistemology. Here we need to move beyond neo-Kantian framework for knowledge, one that recognises the socially binding power of the scientific idea-influence.



the hidden king stands as a pre-political reality beyond the remit of rights and governmental decision. To view matters in vulgar Marxist way, we might say, is to misunderstand the nature of kingly rule in the era of modernity. It is to mistake power as such for the regality of a social being that expresses a distinct and often more subtle kind of power; the pulling towards and cycling upwards of life's idea-influences. The hidden king is not simply a ruler in the modern sense, a kind of controlling agent – but rather symbolises a way of thinking about power that echoes back to us through a conception of the world where in the highest domains there resides a principle of unity and order that the modern world has in the main denied. Thus importantly, contrary to Bismarck and those who believe in the power of the state, and as Joseph Louis Adolphe reminded us, it is important to recognise that in modern contexts *'the king rules but he does not govern'*. In the tension between 'king' and 'government' we can see that the old tension between the ancient and modern, between metaphysics and positivism and hermeneutics. But it is the king who remains at the deepest social level 'in charge'.

In this vein, I want to suggest that the key to understanding the social metaphysics of the contemporary era resides in understanding the tension between the king - what 'reigns' in ways that draw life value productions together into a coherent and significant world – and those forces which merely govern. In this respect social metaphysicians need to distinguish between two different kinds of idea-influence. Firstly, those that function regally as a Lacanian 'quilting point' for the social; as quasi-transcendent powers that draw all other forms of 'lower' conceptuality to themselves, thereby raising life up into a world-form. This is the hidden king. And secondly, ideas that function in the service of a wider governmental logic in relation to ideas that organise human life with respect to specific programmatic goals – ideologies, discourses, grand narratives and the like – the visible ruler, the philosophical prince of the world. Recognition of this distinction, I will suggest, requires a rejection of all political ideas associated with the claim that modern intellectual life can proceed via an ideal rational consensus (liberalism), as in every age there has to be a core idea-influence that is the historico-metaphysical basis, the precondition, for any type of social being- an idea that we must, both intellectually and politically, genuflect to before we can begin to understand the world and deploy our understanding in socially useful ways.⁶ In this regard, the ruler of the world must in the end bow to the hidden king, for without the king, the ruler would have no world to govern and no rule to govern with.

Thus we can Simmel's problem in another way – for our task as philosophers is not to understand what rules/governs the social (this is a question for social science) but

⁶ As such, we must immediately recognise that liberalism (and *ipso facto*, ideas of property, rights and progress), as governmental concepts, cannot be seen as regal in relation to modernity, at least as it has been traditionally conceived. Thus overall, while we might with some justification argue that (neo)liberalism is governing idea of the current world order it becomes clear that it does not reign, it having only limited success in providing a new dominant political imaginary for the times in which we live.



what rather reigns (metaphysically) within it. But what does it mean for something to reign? Etymologically, this term carries with it a different to sense – to direct ‘in a straight line’. To reign is ‘to keep straight’, or as we might say today, to cohere and to render coherent; to ensure that the whole ‘hangs together’ as a whole. The secret king is thus the idea influence that permits all other ideas enter into ‘meaningful’ relations with each other; it is what life processes cohere around in ways that transforms them into a world with value and significance. What then is the name of this idea-influence in relation to the contemporary world? On one level, in modernity the answer is clear: it is mathematical science, that reigns in such a way that world is organised around its central notions of logic and method (deduction and induction), quantification and natural law. Here the whole is shaped and limited by logic and experience. In scientific contexts what does not meet these criteria is dismissed as either nonsense or whimsy (and often committed to flames, after Hume, as ‘sophistry and illusion’). In this regard, mathematical science is not simply a method but a force that is expressed in terms of a number of discrete elements, it is a way of worlding the world, a ‘value form’ in its own right that only appears value-free from the point of view of another set of (typically pre-modern) values. In this way, positivism is the ideology of modernity’s hidden king. Science, today, we might say is king, in the sense that it ‘reigns’, directs and guides, often in secret ways. It is a force that binds the discrete moments of life’s happenings into a world-form, even if that world-form has far less significance when compared to those maintained its religious ancestors.

However, science has its limits as the hemeneut points out. This hidden king is weaker than initially appears – and his ability to maintain the world is weakening. Moreover, he has a rival – a potential usurper and here we can see that the hidden king cannot be one – he must be two. Science claims that it is the true king as it the natural king, the king that rules because he cuts nature at the joints, describing reality in terms of natural law and making the world move and cohere according to the force of techno-science. But science has little kingly resonance in relation to other idea-influences at work in everyday life; it is too specialised, both technically and theoretically, to perform this role. Indeed, the world as whole today does not cohere at all but rather ‘clashes’ with itself, as science seems to refute the validity of all other worlds. Science influences and directs at the level of life through technics and its relationship to the body.⁷ But even here it disrupts the value-spheres on the traditional lifeworld. Here, a much older king, metaphysics, with its associated conceptual princes (ideas of the good, the idea of the person and personality) still reigns in tired form over the life-world (often in ways that are obscured by science) defending it with a discourse that the scientific usurper rejects as anathema. In this regard, the metaphysical king, with its personalist ideal of the social that values the individual in its capacity for rationality, responsibility and autonomy still holds the modern world

⁷ Indeed, this suggests that science the vassal of another king: technology; modern technics being the hidden king disguised within the more visible regality of modern science.



together in ways that render its value-productions coherent. In this regard, metaphysics exists as king more secret than even that of science.

But which king is the *true* king – science or metaphysics? Which world, the particulate world of techno-science or the world of personal autonomy and responsibility, is the true realm of value? To experience modernity is to experience the duality of worldhood in this sense. Modernity, to date, is not the disappearance of the ancient but the endless conflict between these two kings. Although liberalism tries to put both of these ‘regal powers’ to political use (in the form of bio-politics), the clash of these forces continuously threatens to undermine liberal governmentality by delineating the metaphysical limits to governmental reason shaped by positivist logics. Metaphysics still sets limits to techno-scientific modernisation in that the person remains the site of a traditional ethics and politics that offers resistance to the world administering powers of modern technics. Although the counter-modernising regality of metaphysics is masked by neo-liberal governmentalities (that mistakenly believe that the secret kings of modernity can be rendered constitutional and wholly adapted to modern capitalist imperatives) both of these kings, in the end, will resist all incorporation into secular liberal schemes and will ultimately provide a succour to a new idea of the social grounded within a notion of the modern *as a sharing of power between these two forms of reign*. When this happens, a new social imaginary will allow us to see that knowing is always ethical and political - a matter of seeing connections between nature and history, between the closed space of science and the open space of metaphysics; between the processual and the personal. True knowledge will be seen a product of the compromise between the ancient and the modern – not the rejection of the latter in the name of a radical *mathesis* of being, but the re-founding of modernity beyond the false dilemmas posited by positivism and hermeneutics.

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