History supposes Justice

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Abstract: This article seeks to firstly demonstrate in which manner the philosophies of history, through the signifiers of crisis and apocalypse, amount to a form of nihilism by persistently surmounting, each in their own manner, the singularity of historical events by integrating and comprehending these in a teleological and eschatological narrative of meaning and truth. In this sense, our attempt is to deploy a novel manner of rethinking our relation to catastrophic historical events where their very singularities engage a historical responsibility which renounces the recourse to the determined logics of crisis and apocalypse in history. Consequently we focus on the *spectrality* of historical events incessantly returning as occurring singularly to our present, and where each event in history denies its integration in an appeased historical consciousness. This article intends thus to deploy a relation to temporality where the idea of justice provokes a hyperbolical responsibility towards past *and* future deaths and lives in history.

Keywords: Nihilism, Crisis, Apocalypse, Catastrophe, Technology, Temporality, History, Spectres, Aporia, Truth, Justice, Deconstruction.

This reflection will revolve around that which *returns* and which *arrives* in history. Following this approach to history and historical events, the traditional dichotomies or classical concepts of the philosophy of history – contingency and necessity; particularity and universality; accident and essence; destiny; teleology; reason in history, eschatology, etc. – will appear rather inappropriate. Indeed, we will attempt to develop a relation to history capable of engaging with the *singularity* of events, which is precisely to say those events which return from the past and arrive from the future to incessantly haunt our present. We shall seek to deploy the philosophical signification of the Derridian idea of *spectre* in order to approach those events which return to our present *as if* they arrived from the future and those events arriving to our present from the future which remain impossible to simply put in the past. In this respect, the traditional dichotomies just mentioned will be seen to emerge from one apparently unshakable and unquestionable opposition which we are here to *deconstruct*, namely the opposition between life and death, between the living and the dead. Our attempt, therefore, to develop a novel approach of history, one which tackles the irreducible singularity of

historical events, both past and future, will also entail and engage in a re-thinking of the dichotomy between life and death, between what is meant by the living and what is meant by the dead, both past and future. Historical events, according to us, relentlessly produce *spectres* which take hold of our present and for which the different economies and signifiers through which they are rendered graspable, representable, archivable and treatable in a general narrative of reason or meaning – and where historical consciousness can furnish the conditions of possibility to "come to terms" with these very events and history as a whole – will appear inoperative. We will demonstrate how and why the present and hence our relation to the representation of our historical present remain perpetually "out of joint" and haunted by a disarticulation of temporality: on the one hand, past historical events incessantly returning to our present *as* futural and, on the other, future events arriving *as* irreducible to the treatment of a historical representation always capable of inscribing the event itself in our past and comprehending it in a general historical narrative.

Our question, therefore, can be formulated in the following manner: what occurs to the representation of our present when it is assailed indistinctly and undecidedly by that which incessantly returns to it from the past as that which arrives to it from an irreducible future? What occurs to the *idea* and *comprehension* of history, and subsequently to our historical subjectivity, when these are exposed to a type of *temporality* whereby both the possibility of a commemorative remembrance and that of all future anticipation are incessantly overflowed by *spectres* – neither absent nor present and yet also absent and present, neither simply presently living nor simply absently dead and yet also both living *and* dead in some way – whose return and arrival to our historical representation dislocates and disrupts, interrupts and interposes, the dialectic of recognition and reconciliation (Hegel) as well as the ontological appropriation (Heidegger) of history? How are we to rethink and relate to history when historical events – both past *and* future – in their irreducible, unclassifiable, unarchivable singularity command a responsibility unassimilable to the recognition, comprehension and reconciliation of time within the speculative dialectic of reason (Hegel) *or* to the sojourning and dwelling in the truth of the history of Being (Heidegger)? These questions are eminently political as they concern the very foundations of democratic rationality in its relation to history and command a renewed manner of approaching the *spectralities* which, at once and simultaneously, return and arrive to our historical present and for which the economies of memory, truth and reconciliation are seen to produce, against themselves, logics of forgetfulness and the justification of atrocities in history[1].

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[1]   We intend to engage with and deploy this questioning of the foundations of democratic rationality as radically as possible, not in order to leave or abandon the democratic model of political thinking and organisation, but rather to promote and awaken a *supplementing* of democracy and responsibility in the

This opening to a responsibility towards the singularity of historical events and hence towards *spectres* incessantly returning and arriving otherwise than according to the horizon of presence, reason in history or the eschatological meaning of truth in history, and thereby deconstructing all oppositions (Being and nothingness, and most particularly, life and death) recalls and refers to both Levinas' infinite responsibility towards the wholly Other and his singular approach to the face (*visage*) of alterity. Indeed, in one of the last passages in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida suggests a proximity between the face of the Other, alterity and *spectrality*: "This absence of determinable properties, of concrete predicates, of empirical visibility, is no doubt what gives to the face of the other a spectral aura, especially if the subjectivity of the *hôte* also lets itself be announced as the visitation of a face, of a visage. *Host* or *guest*, *Gastgeber* or *Gast*, the *hôte* would be not only a hostage. It would have, according to a profound necessity, at least the face or figure of a spirit or phantom (*Geist*, *ghost*). When someone once expressed concern to Levinas about the 'phantomatic character' of his philosophy, especially when it treats the 'face of the other,' Levinas did not directly object."[2] By following both Levinas and Derrida, and accompanying both the uniqueness of alterity in Levinas and the Derridian idea of *spectrality*, that is, by thinking alterity *as* spectral, we intend to propose here an idea of the singularity of historical events which interrupts the movement and development of history and discloses a hyperbolical responsibility towards both the incessant returns of past *dead* and arrivals of future *living-dying* to our historical present.

Every reflection on our relation to the philosophy of history today, and more generally to history and historical events, cannot avoid engaging with, at least, the three following "phenomena": catastrophe, nihilism, and technology[3].

Firstly, the *singularity* of catastrophes, both past and future, in history recalls here the various genocidal atrocities and wars in human history. To name here but a very few number of these amongst all other singular catastrophic events in our history: World War I (which produced an "impoverishment of experience" according to W. Benjamin); the

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democratic political horizon, which we see as being profoundly marked today by unprecedented forms of exhaustion. See J. Cohen and R. Zagury-Orly, "Standing at the Limits of the Political", in *Derrida-Levinas. An Alliance Awaiting the Political* (Eds. O. Ombrosi and R. Zagury-Orly), Milan, Mimesis International, 2018, pp. 117-152.

2 Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, transl. P.-A. Brault and M. Naas, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 111.

3 Despite it being problematic, we resort to the word "phenomena", for each of these terms – catastrophe, nihilism, and technology – without however reducing these to their traditional philosophical associations and significations – crisis or apocalypse, epoch, and essence. In this sense, we will demonstrate how and why "catastrophe", "nihilism", and "technology" engage a certain form of "historcity", one which does not resume each of these terms, and what they bring forth to our present, in a teleological determination of historical comprehension.

Shoah or Holocaust (radically and brutally posing, in the history of philosophy, the question of representability and irrepresentability, of historical singularity, of possible/impossible testimony, of systematic mass murder and, to use the Lukacsian expression, the "destruction of reason", of the possible/impossible recollection of memory and – by extension – commemoration, possible/impossible reparation, mourning, and forgiveness[4]); and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which created a new threat for humankind, namely its complete annihilation, closely related to the question of technology and of the future catastrophes dawning on our historical present – the environmental disaster threatening to undermine the grounds of our material existence as well as the menace of yet a further, and inevitably greater, nuclear cataclysm (so clearly typified by G. Anders[5]). To this list – which is bound to remain endless – we must also add the multiple, diverse and massive histories of slavery and colonialism in human history (which in turn pose – with renewed relevance in the 20th century – the philosophical and sociological question of the status of Western rationality in the face of alterity, otherness, difference and, furthermore, the question of the manner in which this rationality has politically dealt with alterity, otherness and difference). The singularity of these historical events shows – among other things – how past events contain a future in themselves that projects and produces further future singular historical events.

Secondly, we must not neglect or minimize the relevance of the nihilism pervading our present political and societal, or even philosophical, contexts. For many, nihilism has become a bygone question framed in the history of the philosophical tradition and debate (for example, Jacobi in the German philosophical tradition, Russian nihilism, the Nietzsche-Heidegger debate on European nihilism, etc.). However, according to us, nihilism today is prevalent and the exhaustion of values and norms, as well as the growing impossibility of fixing or setting renewed values and norms for our political and societal situation, is indicative of a generalisable collapse of the capacity of humankind to reinvent itself beyond the repetition of conventional, but used-up, schemas of meaning and signification. Indeed, have we yet posed the question of contemporary nihilism in its diverse and different effects on our political and societal becoming? Have we yet addressed how and why nihilism has come to pervade the very modalities by which our rationality has treated and dealt with historical events? Have we yet grasped how and

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[4]   On these questions, and the relation between philosophical rationality and historical meaning, as well as forgiveness and commemoration, and the *Shoah*, we refer to Levinas' very important text entitled "Useless Suffering", in *Entre Nous*. *Essays on Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. M. B. Smith and B. Harshav, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000.

[5]   See Anders and Eatherly, *Burning Conscience. The Case of the Hiroshima Pilot Claude Etherly*, Plano, Verdun Press, 2015. See also, Anders, *Hiroshima ist überall*. *Tagebuch aus Hiroshima und Nagasaki*, C. H. Beck, Munich, 1982. See also, J. Cohen and R. Zagury-Orly, "Interrupting Apocalyptic Logos. On Nuclear Catastrophe", in *Il Nucleare: Una Questione Scientifica e Filosofica dal 1945 a Oggi – Nuclear Power: A Scientific and Philosophical Issue from 1945 to today*, (Ed. O. Ombrosi), Milan, Mimesis International, 2019, pp. 245-262.

why philosophical rationality is productive precisely of nihilism, by seeking to overcome nihilism through the establishment of sovereign values and norms based on a presumed capacity to collect and assemble the multiple singularities of existences into a generalisable community of reason or unified horizon of meaning? Although neither Levinas nor Derrida have ever clearly and unambiguously thematized the question of nihilism, it is unquestionably the case in our view that their entire philosophies, and thus their call to a hyperbolical responsibility and idea of justice anterior and antecedent to truth, are precisely addressing the exhaustion of values and norms typified by contemporary nihilism. However, we would argue that both Levinas and Derrida do not simply seek to re-establish values and norms in the face of their structural exhaustion, but rather charge philosophy, as well as politics and ethics, with inventing and deploying *another* call to responsibility and *another* idea of justice which stem from an entirely different source than that of values, norms, autonomy, and rational universality. This other source, irreducible to universality, invokes the singularity of an act, each time seeking to respond incessantly *more than it can* to the call of each singular Other, and the singularity of historical events, both past and future.

Thirdly, the development of technology actively *enframing* the possibilities of thinking, and thereby reducing these to ordering, norming, corrective and instrumental rationality, could engage in what Anders called – provocatively yet at the same time highly significantly – the "obsolescence" of mankind. We turn to Anders in this reflection to mark the radical difference between his thinking and Heidegger's ontological analysis of technology. Indeed, for Anders – and we consider him as only one among many examples of thinkers who have actively criticized Heidegger's ontological analysis – the nuclear catastrophe and cataclysm stemming from the all-too rapid and uncontrollable development of technology represents the symbol of the complete self-destruction of human life, whereas for Heidegger the planetary devastation of technology marks an occasion, or even chance, to engage in a *turn* towards the essential *clearing* (*Lichtung*) of the meaning and the truth of Being. Where the former sees the menace of complete destruction of mankind by mankind, the latter perceives the apocalyptic occasion for yet a further possibility for mankind to re-engage with Being itself. In this sense, we shall seek to critically question the Heideggerian determination of technology by demonstrating how and why this analysis wholly fails to consider and confront its proliferation of technology – that is, of both its dangers and opportunities – by only engaging it in a reactive, and reactionary, "step back" into an original truth and historical deployment of the truth of Being. Anders, on the contrary, explores the possibility to think outside and beyond Heidegger's binary dispositive and to disclose a critical analysis of technology where responsibility supersedes the ontological determination of truth and

meaning in order to render humankind wholly concerned and involved in both the perils and the opportunities offered by technology. We could add that Anders, who – unlike Heidegger – never seeks to abandon *our* history in order to sojourn in a supposed history of Being, and expects humankind to respond to what we would call an idea of justice wholly detached from the ontological determinations of history and therefore entirely associated to a certain form of responsibility towards humankind itself, its sustainability and historical accountability.

"Catastrophe", "nihilism", "technology" – these three "phenomena" tightly woven together and rethought in the light of the irreplaceable *singularity* of human existence and in the face of an idea of justice irreducible to normative judgment, moral values or the predominant logic of our courts of law, require us to *rethink* our relation to history. These "phenomena" require a reformulation of historical temporality which would, in this sense, resolutely depart from the structure of *crisis* actively ordering the critical philosophy of history from Kant to Husserl and Habermas. These three "phenomena" also point to a novel idea of history which notably parts with the speculative dialectic of historical recognition and reconciliation in Hegel, while also distinctly diverging from the dispositive of the *apocalyptical* logic of history which we will be illustrating by focusing on Heidegger and especially his analysis of technology.

The two central motifs by which our philosophical tradition has comprehended history, grasped and seized the meaning of historical events, can be understood according to two fundamental signifiers: on the one hand, a structure of *crisis* and, on the other, an *apocalyptic* logic. These two signifiers contain different discursive modalities of *giving* meaning to historical becoming, distinctive logics to grasp the development of signification in history and thereby to deploy unique conceptions of historical temporality. Indeed, in each of these lie powerful economies of sense and signification which furnish the ground and foundation whereby historical events are seized and interiorised, and ultimately brought to a general narrative of historical meaning.

Modern philosophy has constituted itself in a perpetual relation to what it defines as *crisis*. Hegel emphasised this very thesis as early as his first years in Jena, when he engaged in the philosophical explication and structuration of dialectical speculative logic, and therefore, of the deployment of meaning *as* history: crisis always signifies the "source of the *need for philosophy*"[6], that is for comprehension and reconciliation beyond the negative critical moments in history. Crisis represents the resource of the

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[6]   See Hegel, *The Difference Between the Philosophical Systems of Fichte and Schelling*, trans. H. S. Harris and W. Cerf, New York, SUNY Press, 1988, p. 89.

philosophical appropriation of the truth of Spirit *as* history since it inscribes a *dissension* – always conceived as a moment of negativity – in the becoming of history, and hence at once a break or a moment of strife in history *and* the possibility for history to unfold its proper and own-most reconciliatory meaning. Thereby, through crisis, Spirit incessantly hoists itself beyond the *caesura* which it encompasses within its own dialectical historical narrative. In that the crisis marks a rupture, of division or tearing apart of the meaning in history, it also calls for its surpassing, its surmounting, the overcoming of that which divides and alienates in history[7].

Philosophically, it is noteworthy that the word crisis is in no manner conceivable *only* as a negative moment. For Hegel – who here fulfils the Kantian critical tradition – it is always the negative moment which situates and institutes the possibility of a shift, of a conversion, of operating a turn-over or a transformation from the negative to a positive resolution – a reconciliatory movement whereby the negative harbours its truth as the "negation of the negative". Crisis calls for the possibility of its own-most resolution into a reflexive meaning capable of encompassing the critical moment dialectically and therefore of surpassing the limit it will have imposed on theoretical understanding as well as on practical reason – to recall here the modern Kantian distinction. In this sense, the logic of crisis always and already aims at sowing the seeds and healing the scars of history, to paraphrase Hegel again. But however adjusted and rationally consequent this logic of crisis may be, must we not, with Levinas, question this justifying and self-justifying logic of crisis in the face of the unjustifiable in history? Indeed, in *Useless Suffering* Levinas very clearly not only points to the ethical problem caused by a logic

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[7]   The "crisis" is always *but a* crisis if it is also transformed into a transitory moment capable of surpassing itself or being exceeded, a simple instant of dysfunction, translated into a larger historical narrative determined by the reconciliation of meaning in history. It is perhaps here that we ought to evoke the etymological source of the word "crisis". "Crisis" comes from the Greek verb *krinein*, meaning: "to cut", "to separate", "to sort out" and, by extension, "to discern", which implies a "deciding" or "judging" moment. The word "crisis" comes from the medical lexicon. It is used by Hippocrates: the "crisis" is that precise instant where we ought to decide about the treatment of a patient, for it is at that moment that the patient will *either* recover from the illness or succumb to it. "Crisis" thus marks the interval, the gap, the *hiatus* where we ought to decide on what action to undertake. By retrieving Hippocrates' medical definition, Aristotle will underline how and why the "*crisis*" signifies the action of choosing, and thus the decision, and by extension the judgment by which one is capable of engaging in and carrying through a concrete and resolute action.
         The word "crisis" is also central to law and belongs to the language of institutional justice. Indeed, the judge (in Greek, *kriter*) acts out a decision which resolves a litigious dispute or discord. After discerning things, after assessing the accusations and pleas, the judge settles matters and decides what action to undertake – punishment or acquittal – which in turn enables a *just return to the order of things.* "Crisis" signifies therefore, in law as in medicine, this instant of change-over, and – at a deeper level still – a turning-point – the moment which decides the possibility to overcome litigious situations by resolving these into a restored historical narrative.
         In its modern acceptation, "*krisis*" leads to "criticism" and "critical discourse". "Crisis" signifies at once the instant where a limit to our understanding appears, a limit to our grasping and comprehension of a given situation, *and* the moment where understanding, starting from the critical situation itself, initiates a reflection and thus "separates" and "distinguishes" the objectively sound and unsound, "discerns" the just and unjust trajectory to follow in order to engage in an action capable of restoring a comprehensibility, and therefore to move out of the impasse or dead-lock. Let us add here that Hegel, who retrieved the modern definition of "crisis", also redefined its breadth whilst attempting to free it from the horizon of a critical philosophy of history and integrate it within the speculative reconciliatory movement and becoming of the absolute comprehension of reason in history.

capable of justifying historical events, but also shows how and why to pursue such a logic in history ultimately means to negate the suffering of the other in history, and furthermore to excise from history the call of the other and thus to obliterate the very possibility of responsibility for the other.[8]

Let us pose the question explicitly: is the logic of crisis adequate for thinking of the multiple past catastrophes in their singularity as well as the singularity of those catastrophes still to come and lying ahead of us in our history? Is the logic of crisis able to confront "catastrophe" without reducing it to a historical moment already signified and thereby always justifiable in the deployment of a determined historical narrative where reconciliation remains the essential meaning of history? Does the logic of crisis contain the resources required to *justly* think the singularity of a historical catastrophe – its irreversibility, its non-substitutability, its event – without already rendering it treatable, incorporable and eventful, *if and only if* it is rendered *un-eventful* in the process of a greater historical narrative of meaning, signified commemoration, and recognizable, communicable, representable, categorizable and essentially pacified remembrance through the acceptance of the past for the present and for the future, that is in a resolved "mourning work"[9]? And if so, what are the effects of such a codification of singular historical catastrophes for our relation to past, present and future? Does not the logic of crisis, in its very operation, show its perpetual failure to think the singularity of catastrophes whilst attempting precisely to seize and comprehend these? And – getting to the very limit of this highly critical situation, the *crisis of criticism*, of its discourse and of its logic – does not the signifier crisis contain in itself a powerful denial or denegation insofar as it always perpetuates its own categorization, its own technicality of discursiveness in the face of singular historical events?[10]

Our use of the term "catastrophe" implies a space of interrogation, both ethical (in which conditions can a just memory of historical singularities be thought?) and epistemological (in which conditions can a just approach to singular historical events be developed?). But also, and perhaps more profoundly, our introduction of the term

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[8]   See Levinas, "Useless Suffering", in *Entre-Nous. Essays on Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. M. B. Smith and B. Harshav, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000, pp. 91-102.

[9]   On Derrida's deconstruction of Freud's "work of mourning", see Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, trans. P. Kamuf, New York-London, Routledge, 1994.

[10]   What we are calling here the non-operativity of the structure of crisis, and subsequently the *exhaustion* of the norm and value of the signifier crisis in confronting the singularity of past, present, future events in history, is indebted to a nihilism which perpetually affects and empties the possibility of thinking history itself, its singular events. Indeed, we are seeking to dismantle the structure of the signifier crisis in order to disclose a different way of thinking the singularity of historical events past, present and future. Taking our lead from Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, which opens up precisely the possibility of thinking "another historicity" (See *Spectres of Marx*, *ibid*., p. 94), we are here exploring the possibility of rethinking the singularity of historical events outside the signified structure of crisis. For, according to us, this signified structure reduces historical events to a determined movement of historical rationality and, furthermore, by its prevalent movement of interiorization and integration, empties and neutralizes altogether the very possibility of relating, thinking, and responding to the singularity of events in history.

"catastrophe" seeks to disclose *another* way of thinking about *temporality* in history, and thus about historical temporality. This temporality could not be reduced to the codification of singular catastrophes within the horizon of a recognizable historical reconciliation. For this temporality would remain persistently haunted by that which remains unrecognizable and unreconcilable in the singularity of historical events. Furthermore, it would entail an idea of justice attentive to the singularity of historical events as these endure in our historical subjectivity, namely as events which remain irresolvable and unassimilable to a normative or eschatological historical narrative, thus requiring the invention of a wholly other relation to history. In this sense, we seek to furnish an interpretation of the phrase shared by both Derrida and Levinas, "truth supposes justice",[11] and to attribute it to the singularity of historical events, and more generally to our relation to historical temporality and responsibility.

The historical temporality which we are discussing here does not stem from the ontological comprehension or rational determination of meaning in history, nor does it rely on the speculative possibility of grasping any catastrophic singular historical event as a moment in the process of a historical time signified by forgiveness, sacrifice and reconciliation. We are envisaging another temporality which would mark the dis-location of presence, recognition, representation and reconciliation. In this sense, our attempt is to conceive of a *diachronic* temporality whereby each historical event would engage and produce a *proliferation of aporias* – to borrow a Derridian idea which we will further resort to later on – overflowing and exceeding the structure of recollection and anticipation, remembrance and projection in history.

What we are calling a *proliferation of aporias* in each singular historical event means that: (1) each historical event, past and future, always contains *more than one* event; (2) each historical event, past and future, always produces *more than its eventuality*; (3) each past historical event *always returns otherwise* than how it occurred; (4) each future historical event *always arrives otherwise* than how any prevision can predetermine it, and thus each time *otherwise* than any other event; (5) every comprehension of a historical event always contains and produces *more* than its comprehension, thus producing other incomprehensible singular events. After having

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[11] The phrase "Truth presupposes justice" first appears in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* (See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1969) and is retrieved by Derrida in *Force of Law* (See Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority", trans. M. Quaintance, in Cardozo Law Revue, Vol. 11: 919, 1989-1990, p. 969) We are, in turn, applying the profound displacement provoked by the idea that justice comes before truth in order to envisage a kind of justice resolutely turned and open to the *singularity* of historical events, which do not and indeed cannot settle for their interiorization and incorporation into a philosophical justification, rationalization or even ontological comprehension of the truth of history. In this sense, the idea that justice comes before truth entails that the unrepresentable singularity of historical events exceeds the possibility of structuring history itself as a reasoned process of representable meaning and, and at the same time, the possibility of determining history as the deployment and unfolding of an ontological truth.

sketched these five trajectories marking, each in its own way, the irreducibility of singular historical events, and furthermore how this singularity provokes further singular historical events to the point of exceeding the possibility to structure history itself as a rational or ontological narrative, we need to indicate how in its appropriation of history philosophy has always attempted to fulfil its need for comprehension and thereby to reduce, seize and thus annul, grasp and hence level, the singularity of these events in order to fix them within its own justificatory, rational or ontological determination of historical eschatology and teleology.

In the light of the insufficiency and inaptness of the structure of crisis to address the singularity of historical events, we urge to redefine *historicity*, that is engage with historical events in their singularity as both returning and arriving in our historical present *without* systematically converting them into *past* events for an appeased present. In this sense, the *logic of spectres* we are developing – as events both returning and arriving, without determination or recognition, to our historical present – seeks to advance a conception of historical temporality whereby both past and future remain undetermined and undistinguishable, that is where both past and future incessantly generate *aporias* in our historical present. We are seeking to rethink our philosophical relation to history by firstly refuting the categorical determination of historical events *as* historical – that is, as past events which are fixed and recognized, archived and identified as such – and, secondly, by refuting such a determination, by adopting a novel approach to the events indiscriminately *haunting* our present, by dislocating and exceeding, problematizing and questioning all forms of pacified historical and hermeneutical comprehension.

Refusing to settle for a melancholy of infinite mourning and yet without limiting ourselves to the too facile work of mourning, always capable of treating and ultimately overcoming a traumatic event, we will here attempt to approach our *historicity* within a relation to time that persistently marks the limits of the signifier "crisis", in order to grasp historical events in their singularity and embark on the task of redefining our relation to history and the concept of time through which history is thought as *given* and therefore deployed or bestowed. It is as though rethinking history meant engaging in a *deconstruction* of the temporality through and according to which we have thought, related, comprehended, and recognized the becoming and development of our history.

Another way of relating to historical temporality which we will attempt to unpack here and which is significantly at work in Heidegger's "fundamental ontology" and "thought of Being" is the *apocalyptical* – a way of comprehending history which pretends

to develop an even more authentic relation to its *truth* than the structure of crisis. The apocalyptic logic of history is, properly said, *a-critical*[12], both in the Kantian and the Hegelian sense. It aims to *reveal* the inherent *truth* and *essence* of history as a whole through a determined appropriation of the original truth and meaning of history. This return to the essence of the truth of history discloses a new beginning and a resurrection of the original meaning of history.

What do we hear in the word "apocalypse"? What occurs when the Greek *Septuagint* translates the Hebrew term "*gala*" as *apocalupsis*, that is "revelation", "discovering" or "unconcealment"? Firstly, it is precisely in order not to restrict this term to the religious sphere, but link it to *philosophical logos* and render it operative, effective, and active within an ontological horizon of meaning through which history reveals its initial essence in the light of an original truth of Being[13]. In other words, the translation constrains the word *apocalupsis* and associates it with a clearly defined *truth function*, resolutely specified and established as *the* essential way in which the meaning of Being reveals the ultimate truth of history.

The signifier *apocalupsis* pretends to comprehend, illuminate and clarify, through a structure of revelation, every historical event in the light of the truth and essential meaning of Being itself. In this sense, any discourse (be it critical or mystical) purporting to enlighten or instruct would always be marked by what – following Derrida's analysis in *Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy* – we could call an "*apocalyptic desire*"[14]. By this expression, Derrida intends not only to distance himself radically from this structural logic, but also to demonstrate how and why the philosophical tradition and especially the onto-theological determination of history have persistently sought to erase singularity in favour of an economy of the meaning of Being, whereby what occurs in history is always revealed as inscribed within the revelation of an essential truth, to the point that history always extends into its utmost possibility by converting and transforming itself in the revelation of a *new* or *novel* beginning of history as a whole.

Let us pose three questions with regard to this ontologically determined logic:

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[12]   For an analysis of the *a-critical* standpoint which projects thinking outside the horizon of crisis, and therefore of critical judgment, in relation to Heidegger's philosophical and political decisions, see chapter 7 in Derrida, *Of Spirit. Heidegger and the Question*, trans. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989.

[13]   Note that the signifier *apocalupsis*, here used in relation to Heidegger's thought of Being, typifies a philosophical appropriation which maintains a distance, if not a profound difference, with the Christian idea of the Apocalypse. The relation between Heidegger's fundamental ontology and Christian theology is extremely complex and intricate. However, it remains important here to distinguish the two and furthermore to underline that while a certain apocalyptic logic structures Heidegger's philosophy, this very logic is adopted and conceived in a way that is deeply and profoundly different from its Christian and historical definition.

[14]   Derrida, *Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy*, trans. J. P. Leavey Jr., *Semeia,* 1982, p. 82.

1. How has "apocalypse" – which always entails the announcement of the essential truth of Being through a "revelation", an "unveiling", an "unconcealment" in view of a *turn* or *transfer* to a novel beginning of history, in which humanity is aligned with the predetermined essence and the truth of Being – become a synonym or substitute for "catastrophe" and, in this sense, the equivalent of an "end of history", a complete devastation and cataclysm of humanity?

2. Does this shift of the original meaning of apocalypse mean, in turn, that we may only think of a historical "catastrophe", its irreducible singularity, as an instant already inscribed in the logic of the truth of the history of Being? Are we then condemned to think of "catastrophe" only through the horizon of a meaning entirely structured by the apocalyptic logic of the truth of Being? Furthermore, is "catastrophe" necessarily comprehensible only within the determined ontological meaning of apocalypse?

3. According to what "law" and from what perspective can we dissociate and differentiate the idea of "catastrophe" from the hold of this apocalyptic logic, which is so significant for philosophical ontological discourses on the essential truth of history, and so profoundly engrained in our own cultural make-up and heritage (in visual culture and in a certain literary tradition, for instance), and hence open to a sphere of responsibility and justice which would remain radically *non-apocalyptical* for our way of thinking about history, and most particularly of each singular "catastrophe" in history?

By these questions, which reveal the persistence of the apocalyptic logic, we seek to propose a singular signification, a somewhat unusual or unfamiliar meaning for the word "catastrophe", one which places this ontology of history in front of its own-most limits and exposes it to an occurrence irreducible to its modality – a "catastrophe" as a unique historical event capable of both *exposing* and *deconstructing* the all too good and efficient operativity and agency of apocalyptic logic, and especially its *denegation* of singular historical events.

"Catastrophe" remains irreducible to apocalypse. It acts as an obstinate contesting of its reduction to a revelatory temporary instant of history, and thus as a form of resistance to the apocalyptic logic according to which the catastrophic singular historical event *turns* and *transfers itself* into the possibility to overcome it through the advent of a novel beginning of history. Each "catastrophe" singularly projects discourse in the space of the "non-apocalyptical". Each "catastrophe" confronts thinking with the incapacity and

impossibility to integrate its singularity as a historical event within the ontological horizon of comprehension and conversion revealed through an apocalyptic logic of history.

We predominantly perceive this logic as being at work in Heidegger's "thought of Being", and in what the philosopher calls the history of the truth of Being. Indeed, this apocalyptic logic revealing the original essence of history through a radical *turn* (*Kehre*) pervades all of Heidegger's analyses of history. This is particularly the case when he presents the "proliferation of technology" as the *dispositive* which "abandons" the truth of Being in order to "enframe" (*Gestell*) entities in the progressive forgetfulness of the meaning of Being throughout its historical epochs. Heidegger's philosophy is structured according to a meaning which the history of Being – despite its nihilistic forgetfulness in technology – calls and recalls, through a *turn back* to its initial source: the clearing (*Lichtung*) of the truth of Being through which a novel beginning of history can be inaugurated. Therefore, we must now analyse the operation and breadth of this apocalyptic logic in Heidegger's thinking and try to develop an inherent critique of the presuppositions on which this ontological comprehension of history rests.

Technology, for Heidegger, is a historical "provocation" in that it situates and fixes, places and circumscribes, the human being through the ordering and "enframing" of entities, thereby leading humankind to "abandon" the truth of Being. Throughout history, technology leads the human being to the loss and forgetfulness of the truth of Being, as it projects the existent in the simple use of entities *without* inscribing these in their initial meaning, namely Being itself. Hence, for Heidegger, the task of philosophy in the face of the proliferation of technology is to *turn* the human being towards that which remains irreducible to the realm of entities, the "non-technological essence of technology". However, for Heidegger this *turn* is never a simple denunciation of technology. Rather, he maintains that the ordering and "enframing" of entities through technology is always a mode of the revelation of Being, a revelatory modality through which Being gives itself in history. Henceforth, for Heidegger, technology already belongs to the truth of Being, it constitutes a mode of its revelation and donation, and contains within itself the possibility of seeing and hearing something *other* than its technological propagation. It contains the possibility of revealing what is *other* than the entity, *other* than technology, where one can also hear what Heidegger calls the "liberating call", "that which saves".

> The essence of modern technology lies in enframing. Enframing belongs within the destining of revealing. These sentences express something different from the talk that we hear more frequently, to the effect that technology is the fate of our age, where "fate" means the inevitableness of an unalterable course. But when we consider the essence of technology we experience enframing as a

destining of revealing. In this way we are already sojourning within the free space of destining, a destining that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology or, what comes to the same, to rebel helplessly against it and curse it as the work of the devil. Quite to the contrary, when we once open ourselves expressly to the essence of technology we find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim.[15]

This apocalyptic economy – which Derrida detected within Heidegger's philosophical writing early on[16] – significantly shows that, through the proliferation of technology, whereby the forgetfulness and abandonment of the meaning and truth of Being is progressively accentuated and aggravated, the possibility is also revealed of a *turn* outside this forgetfulness, beyond this abandonment, and towards "a freeing claim". Heidegger claims that the "enframing" always contains an "other unveiling", in which "truth produces itself" and thus gives itself. In covering up, forgetting, and abandoning Being, technology also unveils something. In obliterating the truth of Being, the *Gestell* engages the *Gefahr*, the danger, the peril, the proliferation of nihilism and, simultaneously, a certain consenting to a *Geschick*, a "destiny", that is, for Heidegger, a "bringing together", unification, and appropriation which is nothing other than the gift of the truth of Being. The "enframing" of technology reveals the history of Being as a danger and peril, as the forgetfulness of its essential truth, but also as the place where it befalls the human being – whom Heidegger will later call the *mortal* – to decide and resolve things, by moving beyond nihilism and overcoming it, to rediscover, re-sojourn, and return to the origin and the source from which the truth of Being gives itself as *an other history*. Technology, accordingly, never dismisses the truth of Being and the possibility to *turn* outside of itself and to disclose a different history from its own, the history of the essence of Being. It can never simply dissociate itself from Being nor confine it to a forgetfulness without trace – on the contrary, technology *participates* in the gift of Being. At once in its planetary devastation and in the always actual possibility of its *turn* outside its frenetic and nihilistic abandonment of the meaning of Being, it testifies to its essential belonging to the truth of Being.

Because of this apocalyptic economy, which is ontologically determined, the devastating "enframing" of technology calls for and bring into play the possibility of returning to the full essence of Being. From this standpoint, technology, in its devastation, may always bring the human being back to his primary resource and event, the "non-technological essence of technology", where the concealed and "not yet thought" or "yet unthought" truth of Being enounces itself in its essence. "But where the

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15   Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", in *Basic Writings*, trans. D. F. Krell, San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers, 1992, p. 331.
16   See Derrida, *Of Spirit. Heidegger and the Question*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 *sq*.

danger is, grows the saving power also"[17] – the famous verse by Hölderlin, so often quoted by Heidegger and which captures the apocalyptical nature of "The Question Concerning Technology" –, reveals here its full meaning: the "danger", "peril", *Gestell*, and planetary devastation of technology could never forego the possibility of stepping out or escaping, of seeing or hearing "the saving power" of history.

This apocalyptic logic structuring the very deployment of Heidegger's analysis of technology and its planetary proliferation, and always enclosing the possibility of a turn from the forgetfulness of the meaning of Being to the clearing (*Lichtung*) of the truth of Being, may be seen as the outcome of a profound economy of nihilism. In what sense? Although Heidegger's ontological analysis seeks to overcome nihilism, equated with the planetary proliferation of technology, the question remains of how this overcoming unfolds and occurs? In effect, this overcoming of nihilism is entirely constituted and organized according to *one* determinate signification: the history of the truth of Being. Hence, can the overcoming of nihilism be structured by *one* determined event or is this determination not the very work of the economy of nihilism? That is, is it not precisely nihilistic to *envisage only one single determinate possibility for its overcoming*? Furthermore, the Heideggerian logic deployed to overcome nihilism by turning out of from the proliferation of technology to the sole, unificatory and appropriated truth of Being, not precisely imposed in order to avoid and ultimately circumvent the very propagation of nihilism? Does the Heideggerian dispositive not return to a kind of reaffirmation of nihilism by situating and locating the very possibility to overcome it in the "saving power" at work in the "danger" and "peril"? In this sense, Heidegger's promise to overcome nihilism through one unique event, namely the appropriation of the truth of Being, appears to be yet another reactionary escape rather than a real engagement with the question of nihilism itself which, if taken seriously, impedes the very affirmation of a *unique* freeing possibility. On the contrary, the question of nihilism entails another kind of affirmation or action than the sole or single identity of a resolute overcoming. It requires the multiplicity of inventions and plural performatives whereby the binary economy between question and resolution is dismantled and itself de-activated as a form of thinking. This is why, according to our reading, both Levinas and Derrida – unlike Heidegger – have radically tackled the question of nihilism by deploying a mode of thinking where singularity and the radical differences of singularities in the name of singularity disclose not its overcoming, but rather a deconstruction of the determined binary logic of the turn from one onto-theological "situation" to another ontological "situation", from the planetary devastation of technology to sojourning in the truth of Being, from nihilism as our history to a new or novel beginning of history. In this

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[17]   Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", in *Basic Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

sense, for both Levinas and Derrida, the economy of nihilism is at work not only from Plato to Nietzsche, as Heidegger famously remarked, but catches up with Heidegger's own thinking. It is as though nihilism remained powerfully at work in Heidegger's philosophy: for it remarks how and why a sole and "salvation" or "liberating call" whilst it pretends to ensure an escape from nihilism, in truth, newly bring about an emptying and an exhaustion, a reduction and an effacement of salvation, liberation, and ultimately thinking itself. This is an emptying and exhaustion, reduction and effacement of the multiple possibilities of thinking and action, as well as of the manifold *aporias* which inform singularly thinking and acting wholly otherwise than according to the classical and traditional binary form safeguarding its own-most claim, guarantees and assurances.

By contrast to this tradition which, through Heidegger's philosophy, accomplishes itself through a seminal return to an original essence of Being and which remains caught up in an economy of nihilism, we seek to envisage that which unceasingly suspends, interrupts and foils the promise of this apocalyptic logic, "the saving power". Our question is: what is foreseen in this "saving power"? What is presupposed in this essential possibility of turning from the "danger" or "peril" to "the saving power"? Where does the *turn* (*Kehre*) return thinking and how does it determine history? Why does "the saving power" remain here only and uniquely circumscribed and committed to the sojourning within the determined truth of Being? What has or has been foreclosed in the deployment of this apocalyptic logic where the *enframing* of technology only finds its essence in the presupposition of a concealed truth of Being? Does the question of technology not deserve, and perhaps even command, to be posed *otherwise* than within the confines of the Heideggerian dispositive of meaning, truth, history, and Being? Must not the question of technology require a responsibility wholly other than the one stipulated by Heidegger's analysis and which resembles nothing more than a reactive step back animated by a nostalgic return and sojourn in an origin or source of meaning, truth, history, and Being?

Derridian deconstruction will always unreservedly question the limitations, circumscriptions, and delimitations of philosophical discourses, with particular attention to Hegel and Heidegger, in order to show in what manner – by establishing themselves as forms of protection which can all too often lead to logics of self-immunisation – these determinations end up carrying their own ruin and self-destruction within themselves. And to pursue our deconstructive questioning of the apocalyptic logic in Heidegger further – combining the two sides of a unitary event (the devastating and dangerous "enframing" of technology and the "saving power" of the truth of Being) – to what will this thought have circumscribed the human being, as it always encircles and soon

suffocates thinking, within the essential, essentially binary, and imperturbable turn to its ontological origin?

This thought is entirely riveted to the exemplarity of "Being-towards-death", of the "mineness" of the unsubstitutable and the incommunicable death of *Dasein*, and entirely fixed by the historical duality between the "enframing" of technology and the always actual, or even imminent, possibility of salvation at the heart of the initial truth of Being. Where, within this thought, can there ever occur an event of otherness which would or could open up another relation to temporality and consequently another relation to technology, to metaphysics, to history and historical events, to the dead and the living? Where in this ontology can *another* way of thinking about that which returns and that which arrives from past deaths and the lives yet to come express itself *without* confining these to the dynamism of the "properly dying" or the "authenticity of the lived experience", *without* restricting these to the historical drama of the truth of Being? To state it as straightforwardly as possible, perhaps the time has come to interrupt and suspend the binary determination of the "properly dying" and the "authenticity of lived experience" circumscribed within the economy of the history of the truth of Being and to announce a singular historical responsibility, singularly responding to both the *singularity* of the past deaths and *singularity* of lives to come?

In deconstructing the Heideggerian dispositive in its inherent economy, Derrida engages with a thinking of temporality and consequently of history which refutes the imperturbable movement of the *Kehre*, and the all too serene dichotomy between the "danger" and "the saving power", between the planetary devastation of technology and its overcoming through the authenticity of an existential "Being-towards-death". In this manner, Derrida instigates another mode of "historical subjectivity" and "historicity" whereby, far from being grounded in the existential aperture of the truth of Being, the past dead and the lives to come are incessantly *dismantling* the binary and traditional distinction between life and death maintained throughout the history of philosophy from Plato to Heidegger. It is as though our "historical subjectivity" were incessantly pervaded by the multiple returns and occurrences of past lives and deaths *as well as* future living and dying, exposed to multiple returns from past deaths and lives *as* occurrences from a future that cannot be anticipated *and* future living and dying which remain non-integrable into a past, and hence marked by the *undecidability* between the life and the death of those past and those yet to come amongst us.

What are we to make of this deconstructive *undecidability* between past deaths and lives – never passing into a historical narrative of the past – and lives and deaths to

come – always occurring singularly in the historical present? What do we mean by a "historical subjectivity" which remains exposed to both past and future and where no distinction could predetermine the difference between past deaths and lives and lives and deaths to come? What do we mean by a "historical subjectivity" exposed to the *incessant returns of past deaths-lives*? What do we understand by the idea of a "historical subjectivity" exposed to the *singular arrivals of* the *living/dying to come*? These questions are closely interconnected and, for Derrida, further linked to past historical catastrophes (*Shoah*, colonialism, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, etc.) and to catastrophes yet to come (nuclear, climactic and ecological disasters, etc.) Both past and future, both past *deaths-lives* and the *living-dying* to come, return and arrive to this "historical subjectivity" outside or beyond the distinction between lived presence and the absence initiated by death. Hence, what we mean is a wholly other form of responsibility: a hyperbolic responsibility towards both *past deaths-lives* and the *living-dying to come*. The *undecidability* between life and death, both past and yet to come, in this sense discloses a form of responsibility towards the *singularity* of both the return of past *deaths-lives* and the arrival of *living-dying* to come. Thus a "historical subjectivity" whose responsibility presupposes no ground, no foundation, no established norm or determined value, that is a responsibility *without* any horizon of meaning and *without* any identification or recognition based on the dichotomy between presence and absence, between effectiveness and ineffectiveness, between living and dying (that is between living and non-living). This form of responsibility, far from inaction or inertia, far from mystifying exceptionality or incomprehension, leads to an *excess* and *surplus* of responsible action *for* both past *deaths-lives* and *living-dying* to come. This entails, therefore, a singular responsibility – as well as a "politics of memory, inheritance and generations"[18] – towards events in history, as it marks the space where this "historical subjectivity" is required to respond *without* depending on the assurance of an ontology (which always appropriates the events of history as the essential movement of the truth of Being), or relying on the guarantee of a dialectical reason in history. We thus seek to dismantle the traditional dichotomy between life and death in order to promote a way of thinking about history which would require our "historical subjectivity" to never put the past in the past, or reduce the future to a simple present not yet present. Through this *diachrony* of temporality, it would awaken a certain form of responsibility which would remain exposed, at once and simultaneously, to past *deaths-lives* and the *living-dying* to come as *incessantly returning and arriving* by cleaving and splicing the meaning of the historical present, of the past as past-present and of the future as future-present, thereby leading to a renewed response to the singularities of both these returns and arrivals. Indeed, Derrida affirms the singularity of spectres, both past and to come, which

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[18]   Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, *op*. *cit*., p. XVIII.

demands – in what we have called the *positivity of deconstruction*[19] in the face of history – a hyperbolic responsibility: "This non-presence of the spectre demands that one take its times and its history into consideration, the singularity of its temporality or of its historicity."[20]

Undoubtedly, Heidegger's analysis of the deployment of technology marked the history of philosophy and, in this sense, constitutes a significant way of addressing this question in the light of the whole history of philosophy. However, we are to ask in a Derridian manner: is this ontological dispositive not entirely committed to the philosophical gesture of a return to an original meaning of truth and Being which bypasses precisely that which it was required to question in technology? And furthermore, can this ontological dispositive ever entertain the possibility of *another* way of thinking about technology, a way other than through the apocalyptic turn and return from "planetary devastation" to unified salvation in the truth of Being?

Approaching this *other way of thinking* about technology requires the dismantling of the essential logic at work within the all too determined movement of re-assembling, re-uniting, and re-unifying, a movement which always retraces and identifies the saving appropriation of the truth of Being within the devastating proliferation of technology. In this sense, is it not necessary to radically dissociate the question of technology itself from the modern apocalyptic canon which stretches, according to Derrida, from Hegel to Heidegger? That is, is it not urgent to disassociate the question of technology from the apocalyptic logic of a revelatory unification within an initial truth of Being in order to *justly* approach the deployment of technology itself – its risks, opportunities, and promises in the face of life and death? Furthermore, taking our lead from such questions, is it not necessary to *deconstruct* the fixation of "Being-towards-death" on "properly dying" and thus to dismantle the stark delimitation between an "inauthentic and an authentic" "Being-towards-death", in order to approach both the returns of past *deaths-lives* and the occurrences of future *living-dying* in history? Indeed, can the past *deaths-lives* and the *living-dying* to come, in their radical singularities, be extracted from the essential deployment of the historical destiny of the truth of Being always embodying unification and re-unification within *one* ontological horizon of signification?

These questions seek to disclose another responsibility, response, and historical action from that which is constituted in the *Dasein*'s ultimate possibility, where it

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[19]   See J. Cohen and R. Zagury-Orly, "Beyond the Impossible – The Future of Deconstruction", in *Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida: The Question of Difference*, (Eds. L. Foran and R. Uljée), Zurich, Springer, 2016, pp. 17-29.
[20]   *Ibid*., p. 126.

appropriates itself in its existence and where it resolutely informs the historical destiny of its correspondence to the initial event of the truth of Being. In this vein, through this opening outside the determined scope of Heidegger's philosophy, we are engaging in a *deconstruction* of the logic of donation operating in this fundamental ontology[21]. Never haunted, *Dasein* cannot be inhabited by anything *other* than the call of the truth of Being or exposed to anything *other* than the deployment of the presence of Being. However, beyond this call, we are seeking to conceive of a *haunted historical subjectivity* – haunted each time singularly by *spectres* that return from the past *as* things occurring from the future and which occur from the future as things irreducible to any past – which would not let itself be engaged and entrapped in the foundational trope of ontology always and already too determined by an imperturbable logic of gift, donation, grace, offering, and ultimately of *Ereignis* as the appropriating and re-unificatory event of the essential presence of the meaning, truth, and history of Being. This indicates that the *haunted historical subjectivity* in question remains associated with what Derrida calls a "plural logic of the aporia"[22] and what we have called here an *incessant aporetization* – as Levinas would put it, it is still subjected and responds to the returns and occurrences of past deaths-lives and future living-dying. In particular, it is subjected and responds to the ceaseless returns of past *deaths-lives* and the occurrences from the future *living-dying*, that is of *spectres* which engage it in an endless *supplement* of responsibility whereby the *haunted historical subjectivity* responds to a radical loss of all ground from which a unitary, essential, comprehensive temporal horizon could be determined. In this sense, the hyperbolic responsibility of the *haunted historical subjectivity* is *wholly other* than that of *Dasein*, but also remains entirely other than that structured by the frontiers or the demarcating lines between the so-called vulgar time of metaphysics and the authentic temporality of presence. The *haunted historical subjectivity* multiplies aporias and magnifies both the returns of past *deaths-lives* and occurrences of the *living-dying* to come thereby reflecting a responsibility irreducible to *Dasein*'s task of appropriating itself within the unique and univocal donation of the presence of the meaning, history, and truth of Being. The *haunted historical subjectivity* each time singularly supplements its responsibility by yet further *aporias*, thereby dissociating it from any destiny or eschatology of Being which invariably pacifies, reconciles, and appropriates all historical events within the scope of the presence of its meaning and truth.

The Heideggerian dispositive associating meaning, history, truth and Being in the determination of a unique appropriating event (*Ereignis*) deploys a powerful essentialization of historical events. One passage from what has become a central text in

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[21]   See Derrida, *The Gift of Time*, trans. P. Kamuf, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 8 *sq*.
[22]   Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. T. Dutoit, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993, p. 20.

Heidegger's oeuvre explicitly associates – in the wake of the history of the 20th century – the planetary devastation of technology and those places where this devastation has denied thuman beings the possibility of "properly dying", their "Being-towards-death", thereby abandoning humans to a simple perishing, to liquidation through an improper way of dying. The year is 1949, Heidegger is in Bremen. He gives four lectures[23], one of which is entitled *The Danger*. What does Heidegger say? "Hundreds of thousands die in mass. Do they die? They succumb. They are done in. Do they die? They become mere quanta, items in an inventory in the business of manufacturing corpses. Do they die? They are liquidated inconspicuously in extermination camps. And even apart from that, right now millions of impoverished people are perishing from hunger in China. But to die is to endure death in its essence. To be able to die means to be capable of this endurance. We are capable of this only if the essence of death makes our own essence possible."[24]

Without ever naming the Jews when evoking extermination camps (and it would be worth examining in detail the reasons for this silence, which are many and profoundly anchored in Heidegger's philosophy, and which call for a singular deconstruction of the entire dispositive of the thought of Being[25]), Heidegger underlines how the devastation of planetary technology will unleash itself to the point of denying the "own-most mineness" of the human being, thereby eradicating man's utmost and exceptional possibility: the possibility of dying properly. When the denial of "Being-towards-death", the human being is seen here – through the devastation of technology, its "enframing" – as having been abandoned to a simple perishing. This passage has often been evoked to show that Heidegger has indeed furnished an explanation for the extermination and that he had measured the thought of Being to the extermination camps. What explanation does Heidegger's offer for the extermination camps and the extermination of European Jewry more generally? The "enframing" of technology has condemned the human being to the impossibility of accessing his utmost proper possibility, his "Being-towards-death".

But we ought here to question and assess this presumed explication as well as its supposed understanding of the extermination camps. even though Heidegger pretends here to think the extermination of human beings as the effect of planetary technology, if the "enframing" of technology always remains indebted to the history of Being, and if

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[23]   Heidegger, *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures. Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, trans. A. J. Mitchell, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2012.
[24]   Heidegger, "The Danger", in *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures. Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-63.
[25]   See J. Cohen and R. Zagury-Orly "Heidegger Caught Up. Antijudaism and the Question of Technology Re-examined", in *Cosmopolitism, Heidegger, Wagner – Jewish Reflections* (Ed. D. Pedersen), Stockholm, *Judisk Kultur i Sverige*, 2019, and "Beyond Apocalyptic Logos", in *Heidegger and Jewish Thought. Difficult Others*, (Ed. E. Lapidot and M. Brumlik), Lanham (Maryland), Roman & Littlefield, 2017.

technology constitutes a mode of revelation of the truth of Being, how can we not read the complete negation of the singularity of *this* historical event within the truth of Being? And furthermore, how can we not see an essentialisation of history at work here that denies and perjures in advance all historical events as already re-assembled and unified within the destiny of the history of Being? How can we not to see an ontological destiny at work where all events returning or occurring to it only emanate from one unique source and are gathered in one essential *telos*? What is left of *singularity* in Heidegger's thinking when all historical events are already seen as being delimited by the confines of the determined play of the history of Being, where all that returns and arrives of the event is already situated, placed, and consigned within this over-determination between the "enframing" of technology and the apocalyptic revelation of the history of the truth of Being? What of the possibility of thinking the *singularity* of *these* deaths, of *this* extermination, of *these* extermination camps, when they are already determined and fixed in a "perishing", a "technological manufacture of corpses", a planetary devastation operated by technology which is always presupposed by a "properly dying" and by a history of Being that remains unaffected by technology itself? What is left of the returns and the occurrences of past and future deaths and lives "which do not command and are not commanded by the memory of an original event where the archaic allies itself to the final extremity, to the excellency of the finality of a *telos* or an *eschaton*[26]"?

These Derridian questions evoke a wholly other experience of *mourning*, one that is singularly aporetic – without *telos* or *eschaton* and incessantly engaging *more than one aporia* in mourning. These questions disclose a certain type of *impossible mourning*, that is a type of exposition to the incessant *returns of past deaths-lives and ceaseless occurrences of the living-dying to come* which return and occur both always in advance and already too late for the possibility of inscribing these in an experience, a representation, a presence, a destiny, a history. In advance and too late, arriving and returning without being determined by a presence and without being confined to an irrepresentability of absence, this *impossible mourning* would arise each time singularly *without* these returns of *past deaths-lives* and occurrences of future *living-dying* being appropriated within the confines or limits of truth, without engaging their denegation in a type of mourning work.

These Derridian questions also point to another experience of life/death, which we ought to call *surviving.*[27] This is another experience of *survival* where our *haunted*

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[26]   Derrida, *Aporias*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
[27]   See Derrida, "Poetics and Politics of Witnessing", in *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today* (Ed. M. P. Clark), Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 2000, pp. 179-207.

historical subjectivity is incessantly exposed to the returns and arrivals of past deaths-lives and the living-dying to come whilst always and perpetually invoking them. What we have, then, is the *undecidability* between exposition and invocation which awakens our *haunted historical subjectivity* wholly otherwise than in the delimitation of life and death by "properly dying" and the "authentic lived experience". Our *haunted historical subjectivity* remains exposed to the perpetual, and each time singular, reiteration of plural aporias which affect the distinction between life and death as well as the categories of the self and the other, the distinction between "authentic and inauthentic", the difference between "presence" and "absence", law and grace, the revealed but also the secret, identity and difference, and ultimately the idea of history. As Derrida remarks again whilst identifying the point where the determined concepts of history – Kantian (crisis), Hegelian (speculative) or Heideggerian (ontological) – negate the movement of history itself and hence fail each time, by appropriating them within their own-most determinations, in order to think the singularity of historical events, the *spectres* returning from these as well as from the future *living-dying* arriving each time in these, this "law would signify the following to us: in the same place, on the same limit, where history is finished, there where a certain determined concept of history comes to an end, precisely there the historicity of history begins, there finally it has the chance of heralding itself—of promising itself."[28]

This *other* "historicity of history" heralds a responsibility which has none of the features of a paralysis or a failure and whose type of hyperbolic questioning remains without reserve or restraint. This is a *surplus* of responsibility each time singularly exceeding the responsibility capable of assuming itself as responsible whether through its foundation in an autonomous subject, or through its appropriation in a speculative teleology of reason in history, or again always and already responding to the ontological eschatology of the history of the truth of Being. In this sense, we have the idea of a «must» whereby our *haunted historical subjectivity must* dismantle, each time singularly, all the conditions of possibility where the experience, the essence, the presence, the truth and the being of X are said or could be said, and where this dismantling, far from interrupting action, would awaken it wholly otherwise than in the horizon of a comprehension of the truth of history. It is as though the responsibility of this singular *must* always responded in dual fashion, at once and simultaneously, liberating action whilst constraining it – that is, liberating it whilst depriving it of any justification or self-justification and assured ground, thereby depriving it of all refuge in the horizon of truth or reason in history. By liberating and denying action each time, freeing it of all limits and delimitations whilst restraining it to reveal its inherent perjury, which brings it back

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[28]   Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

to it the limits and the delimitations it insures, deconstruction enjoins an incessant *aporetization* which, without recourse to any value or norm, yet not without denying the value of the normative, never ceases to reformulate itself singularly in the face of each historical, political, or philosophical event. The positivity of deconstruction compels a perpetual invention of *more than one aporia* for each historical, political, or philosophical event. Facing each time a singular event, the *positivity* of deconstruction incessantly invents and re-invents more than one singularity through singularity, in order to approach it *justly*, and through its multiple *aporias* it deploys the act of singular justice in each singularity.

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