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Infrapolitics¹ and *Shibumi*. Infrapolitical Practice between and beyond Metaphysical Closure and End of History

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For Nicola

That philosophy died yesterday, since Hegel or Marx, Nietzsche, or Heidegger—and philosophy should still wander toward the meaning of its death—or that it has always lived knowing itself to be dying . . . that philosophy died one day, within history, or that it has always fed on its agony, on the violent way it opens history by opposing itself to non philosophy, which is its past and its concern, its death and wellspring; that beyond death, or dying nature, or even, as is said today, is still entirely to come because of what philosophy has held in store; or, more strangely still, that the future itself has a future, all these are unanswerable questions. By right of birth, and for one time at least, these are problems put to philosophy as problems philosophy cannot resolve. (Derrida “Violence and Metaphysics” 97-98)

“Do we still speak of Gô, Teacher?”
“Yes. And of its shadow: life.”
(Trevanian, *Shibumi* 110)

1- R.I.P.

In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida highlights how, since the 1950s, a certain “apocalyptic tone”² has been marking philosophy. He, indeed, pointed out that deconstruction developed throughout the engagement with those “*classics of the end* [that] formed the canon of the modern apocalypse (end of History, end of Man, end of Philosophy, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, with their Kojévian codicil and the codicils of Kojève himself)” (16, emphasis in original). Another half-century has gone by now since the moment Derrida is referring to and since Maurice Blanchot's text “The End of Philosophy” (1959). In his lecture, Derrida quotes and discusses a long passage of the text where Blanchot wrote: “This *death of philosophy* would belong, therefore, to our philosophical time. The death does not date from 1917, not even from 1857, the year in which Marx, as if performing a carnival test of strength, would have overturned the system. *For the last century and a half,*

with his name as with that of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, it is philosophy itself that has been affirming or realizing its own end” (*Specters* 44, emphasis in original). Therefore, now we should say that *for the last two centuries* “it is philosophy itself that has been affirming or realizing its own end,” because beyond a doubt the *death of philosophy* “belong[s] to our philosophical time” (*Specters* 44). The question rather ought to be whether it belongs to our philosophical time *too* or *still*. Whether our philosophical time may be *still* the same Blanchot is referring to or whether we are actually inhabiting another, new philosophical time that is marked by the *death of philosophy, too*. Whether we could claim for ourselves a specificity that positions us differently with respect to the mourning of onto-theological thought.

In order not yet to answer, but to be able to dwell in such an interrogation, we should take a step back with respect to the collection of the *classics of the end* and focus on the different ways philosophy has announced and accomplished its own death. If it is true—as Heidegger said—that “the ending lasts longer than the previous history of metaphysics” (*End* 85), the way thinking conducts itself at the sunset, or, as Blanchot would say, the way every thinker is “leading its slow funeral procession” gets to constitute the real event of thought and to determine any possible, although spectral, future at stake. Since infrapolitical thought, which is both the frame of references and the theoretical aim of this work, is strictly related to a certain heterogeneous tradition fundamentally marked by Heidegger's thinking of the ontico-ontological difference and of the end of metaphysics, I shall take as point of departure the Heideggerian account on this matter. One can distinguish, in a Heideggerian manner, between the completion of metaphysics and its overcoming, intended as “the delivering over of metaphysics to its truth” (Heidegger, *End* 92). And, in this sense, the Hegelian sublation of philosophy (and theology) into absolute knowledge, that takes History to its end, begins the completion of metaphysics that is achieved by the Nietzschean Will to Power:

With Nietzsche's metaphysics, philosophy is completed. That means: it has gone through the sphere of prefigured possibilities. Completed metaphysics, which is the ground for the planetary manner of thinking, gives the scaffolding for an order of the earth which will supposedly last for a long time. The order no longer needs philosophy because philosophy is already its foundation. *But with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in transition to another beginning.* (Heidegger, *End* 95-96, my emphasis)

With Nietzsche, Plato's myth of the cavern, which is the allegory that reveals the understanding of truth that founds metaphysics, finds itself overturned, metaphysical values transvalued, reversed, but in this way kept together. Nietzsche leads philosophy to its end, earns the final closure of philosophy as metaphysical thinking, but does not achieve the transition to another beginning. The conquest of the transition, the displacement of thinking into the passage to another beginning, is the privilege of a deconstructive an-archic thought that dwells in the metaphysical closure. This means a thought that addresses the history of philosophical thinking through an interpretative analysis that is both phenomenological and deconstructive at once, which is the kind of analysis that the first Heidegger tries to name with the term *hermeneutics* (which comes from the Christian theological tradition) with the intent of transforming thinking itself. There is a positive, constructive perspective leading the work of mourning for the end of philosophy: what follows the passing of metaphysics is a *passage*, or rather a transformation of thinking that “occurs as a passage” (Heidegger *On the way* 42). I believe it is extremely important to recognize the positive implication of the Heideggerian retracing of the history of Being, to recognize the “hopeful” expectation that oversees this slow mourning work for the end of ontotheology, which—we can say keeping ourselves within the Freudian frame of reference—has been mistaken quite often, instead, for a pathological, constitutionally ambivalent, melancholia.³ I would probably not say—as does Blanchot in the passage quoted by Derrida—that philosophy celebrates its funeral in a joyful exaltation because “it expects, in one way or another, to obtain its *resurrection*” (Derrida *Specters* 44, emphasis in original). But the condemnation of Heidegger's thought as bearer of a sterile ambivalent melancholic negativity—even if is indisputable that there are many aspects of it that have to be thoroughly questioned and disavowed—risks (and actually it has already happened) producing also a radical misunderstanding of the Derridian deconstructive project of thought, as well as of the various attempts to bring the Heideggerian thought of ontico-ontological difference to bear on a reflection on radical democratization, referred to as “Left-Heideggerianism.” Such a misunderstanding would compromise the possibility of grasping what is actually at stake in infrapolitical discourse.

Both the work of Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: from Principles to Anarchy* (1982), and the more recent work of Catherine Malabou, *The Heidegger Change* (2004), have drawn attention to the more fruitful aspects of Heideggerian thought, not only giving extremely original and fecund interpretations, but also opening it up toward new possibilities of affirmative

deconstructive anarchic thinking that goes beyond it. According to Schürmann, Heidegger's deconstruction (*Abbau*) of metaphysics inaugurates the possibility of breaking the succession of principal phantasms, that is, breaking with the ultimate hegemonic principles (*archai* in Greek) that organize the normative horizon in the diverse epochs of the history of Being. Moving from the hypothesis of the closure of metaphysics, the Heideggerian deconstructionist enterprise can be adequately summarized by Schürmann's felicitous paradoxical expression “principle of anarchy”:

This paradox is dazzling because in two words it points within and beyond the closure of metaphysics, thus exhibiting the boundary line of that closure itself. The paradox that the expression principle of anarchy articulates locates the deconstructionist enterprise, it indicates the place where it is situated: still implanted in the problematic of *ti to on* (What is being?), but already uprooting it from the schema of the *pros hen* that was connate to that problematic; retaining presence, but dislocating it from the attributive schema; still a principle, but a principle of anarchy. It is necessary to think this contradiction. . . . The deconstruction is a discourse of transition. By putting the two words principle and anarchy side by side, what is intended is to prepare oneself for this epochal transition. (“What must” 9)

The affirmation of the end of the hegemony of epochal principles, insofar as it is an-archival, also marks the end of epochality itself, but it is, at the same time, the beginning of a passage, of the time of the transition from the passing of ontotheology to a new historicity. It is in this passage, in this transition, which is a transformation and a displacement of thinking itself, that deconstructive discourse takes place; and it is the very place to which our philosophical time belongs. Malabou refers to the hermeneutic triad of change (change, transformation and metamorphosis) in order to describe it as the place that “the Heidegger Change” inaugurates, through the introduction of the fantastic “in philosophy”:

Constructing the Heidegger change therefore involves elaborating the schematizing instance that will alone permit us to perceive, with Heidegger and beyond him, this *conceptually depatriated* place—the very enigma of our philosophical moment—*this point of rupture and suture between metaphysics and its other* that imposes upon philosophy, whether it admits it or not, its limit; a limit that is also its *reality*. *This point is the phantasm of our philosophical reality. Lodged at the heart of the triad, it is what gets displaced with it; unlocatable,*

undatable, and unthinkable, it is nonetheless the motor of thought. (13, emphasis in original)

Moving from the metaphysical closure, one finds oneself lacking in any normative principle upon which to determine whether one is on the right path: there are no right paths, there are no routes since there is no destination, neither teleological nor eschatological, and not even any criteria by which to chose *pathmarks* on the way, just paths lost in the woods, *Holzwege*, or *Off the Beaten Track* (the English translation of the title *Holzwege* that is one of Heidegger's collection of essays). Trying to be on the trail of “the very enigma of our philosophical time” is rather a matter of trying to follow sporadic traces, of trying to find your anarchic, and so rootless, way toward the unlocatable, nameless, place of your displacement that you can inhabit and experience, where you can be-there, *Dasein*, but never either go back or project to be, because it “occurs as a passage” (Heidegger, *On the way* 42). This is why, on a hunch, I started gathering quasi-random traces going on the way that I shall present in the next pages, that is, the way through “this *conceptually depatriated* place” that is “the very enigma of our philosophical moment,” and is a way toward infrapolitics as an attempt to think through “*the phantasm of our philosophical reality*” (Malabou 13). Perhaps one could say that infrapolitics is the way to deal with the proliferation of the haunting that inhabits existence in our philosophical time, since the closure of metaphysics and since the consequent loss of ultimate universal principles arranging the historical normative order that once arranged the frame of action.

The quasi-random traces I gathered to build my own pathway to infrapolitics are those left by certain attempts to dwell in the twilight of Western philosophy looking at it as prefiguration of a coming dawn, more than a mere announcement of a coming dusk, that have sought the possibility of displacement, the transition to a new beginning of thought, the chance of a change of thinking, when such attempts—these events of thinking—have taken place somehow looking to the Orient, particularly and significantly to Japan, hoping to see the rising daylight that could enlighten “toward the conceptually and historically depatriated place of the point of convertibility between metaphysics and its other” (Malabou 68). In particular, to open my way I chose to follow the track left by Heidegger's 1953 text “A dialogue on Language: Between a Japanese and an Inquirer,” and by the famous note that Kojève added—after a voyage to Japan in 1959—to the second edition of his book on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in order to unravel the ambiguity of the preceding note stating “the disappearance of the Man at the end of History.” Both texts—which are also especially compelling because of the, more or less explicit, intertextual relationships to them that can be found

disseminated throughout “our philosophical time”—give important indications as to how to think about and in the “*point of rupture and suture between metaphysics and its other.*” Their tracks lead me to introduce infrapolitics as a particular way of inhabiting the passage and relating to the enigma of our philosophical time; and finally, to engage with an infrapolitical form of life through Trevanian's novel *Sbibumi*.

Before getting into the analysis of what kind of tracks these texts have left, it has to be clarified that neither one of them should be read as an attempt to represent Japan as a reality, nor by any means (as an attempt) to contribute to the European “system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness” to which Edward Said referred as *Orientalism* (6). I would suggest that we could understand the kind of approach they take toward Japan in a way not too far removed from the one evoked by “Faraway,” the first of the notes comprising Roland Barthes's *Empire of Signs* (1970), so long as we highlight that neither of them takes Japan as a direct object of thinking, whereas Barthes seems to remain trapped into the objectifying discourse of metaphysics when he is relating to Japan, trying to isolate certain features and treating them as a system, even though it occurs on a fictive level without the pretense of representation or knowledge. Barthes's text in question begins with these words:

If I want to imagine a fictive nation, I can give it an invented name, treat it declaratively as a novelistic object, create a new Garabagne, so as to compromise no real country in my fantasy (though it is then that fantasy itself I compromise by the signs of literature). I can also—though in no way claiming to represent or to analyze reality itself (these being the major gesture of Western discourse)—isolate somewhere in the world (faraway) a certain number of features (a term employed in linguistics), and out of these features deliberately form a system. It is this system which I shall call: Japan. (3)

Barthes is very clear in stating that it is the possibility of a difference, the possibility of a different symbolic and linguistic—symbolic because linguistic, and linguistic because symbolic—order what is at stake in turning the gaze toward the Orient (and not the objectified Orient of Orientalism), and toward Japan:

Hence Orient and Occident cannot be taken here as “realities” to be compared and contrasted historically, philosophically, culturally, politically. I am not lovingly gazing

toward an Oriental essence—to me the Orient is a matter of indifference, merely providing a reserve of features whose manipulation—whose invented interplay—allows me to “entertain” the idea of an unheard-of symbolic system, one altogether detached from our own. What can be addressed, in the consideration of the Orient, are not other symbols, another metaphysics, another wisdom (though the latter might appear thoroughly desirable); it is the possibility of a difference, of mutation, of a revolution in the property of symbolic systems. (3-4)

What is at stake is not at all a hunt for the proverbial oriental wisdom as a more or less cheap wholesale trade, in the context of some New Age philosophy, but “a slender thread of light [that] search[es] out not other symbols but the very fissure of the symbolic” (4).

2. Metaphysical closure and Japan

Heidegger's “A Dialogue on Language: Between a Japanese and an Inquirer,” written in 1953-1954, on the occasion of the visit of Prof. Tomio Tezuka from the Imperial University of Tokyo, is particularly remarkable, not to say unique in the Heideggerian production and in general in contemporary philosophy, because of the choice of the dialogue, the oldest form of philosophical discourse, whose significance becomes completely explicit at the end of the text. It is a dialogue on language, and it could not be anything but *on* language (and not *about* because “I: Speaking *about* language turns language almost inevitably into an object” (50, emphasis in original) since it is a dialogue that thematizes its own impossibility from the very beginning: “The danger of our dialogue—the interlocutor-Heidegger says referring to his encounter with another Japanese professor—was hidden in the language itself, not in what we discussed, nor in the *way* in which we try to do so” (4, emphasis in original). And then, referring to “The Letter on Humanism,” he clarifies: “Some time ago I called language, clumsily enough, the house of Being. If man by virtue of his language dwells within the claim and call of Being, then we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely different house than Eastasian man . . . And so, a dialogue from house to house remains *nearly* impossible” (5, emphasis in original). Here “nearly” is the key. The possibility that is left is the possibility of a step back with respect to language, a step back from the language of metaphysics, namely backtracking from the metaphysics that sticks to the language, adheres to its skin.

The “backtracking” (*der Schritt zurück*) names Heidegger's dialogue with the history of

philosophy, and his way to dwell in the metaphysical closure. This backtracking goes in the opposite direction of the Hegelian sublation (*Aufhebung*), and “does not imply taking an isolated step in one's thinking, but a kind of thought movement, and a rather long way” (*Essays in* 43). Backtracking, Heidegger goes toward what metaphysical tradition left unthought, that is, the ontological difference, the difference between Being and beings which still has to be named in the language of metaphysics. In order to overcome metaphysics, that is, to “bring[s] back metaphysics within its own limits” (*On the way* 20), it is not enough to think the difference as such, to correspond to the call of the *Two-fold* (*Zwiefalt*) of Being itself and beings. In order to open the possibility of a radical transformation of thinking, what has to be thought is the nature of language insofar as it defines the hermeneutic relation: “What prevails in and bears up the relation of human nature to the the *two-fold* is language” (*On the way* 30). The reciprocal belonging of hermeneutics and language in turn bears on one of the pivotal moments of the dialogue:

J: . . . I believe that now I see more clearly the full import of the fact that hermeneutics and language belong together.

I: The full import in what direction?

J: Toward a transformation of thinking—a transformation which, however, cannot be established as readily as a ship can alter its course, and even less can be established as the consequence of an accumulation of the result of philosophical research.

I: The transformation occurs as a passage...

J: ... in which one site is left behind in favor of another...

I: ... and that require the sites to be placed in discussion.

J: One site is metaphysics.

I: And the other? We leave it without a name. (42)

Earlier in the dialogue, when the Japanese asked why Heidegger did not give his own name to the aim of his research rather than surrendering to metaphysics calling it “the sense of Being,” he said: “How is one to give a name to what he is still searching for? To assign the naming word is, after all, what constitutes finding” (20). So, it is a matter of a passage that puts into question both the site from which it comes, that is metaphysics, and the nameless site of the new beginning of thought.

Here, a topology and a tropology are at stake at the same time. Saying this, I am picking up another quasi-random trace found, not too accidentally, on my way. This is “Faxitexture,” the

lecture Derrida gave in 1991 at a conference with architects and urbanists regarding the city of the new millennium. The conference was titled “Anywhere,” and it was held in Japan, on the island of Yu Fuin. The binomial topology-tropology, which opens Derrida's remarks, and that constitutes an important key for the rest of the lecture, is pivotal to understanding the subject matter of the dialogue, and also what kind of role Japan is coming to play at the end of philosophy. “Tropes are tours, changes of places, from somewhere to somewhere else: displacement, voyage, transfer or transposition, metonymy or metaphor, translation or transhumance” (20). Heidegger's destruction of the history of Being takes into question the topology of metaphysics, that is, the dualism between the sensuous and supra-sensuous world, which is also the *arché* of its tropology (first of all allegorical and metaphorical); but since it calls for an an-archic thought, it cannot simply move on toward a new topology. An-archic thought loses its mooring, it is displaced, dislocated into *tropologies* without return. This is the condition of the passage. In the passage, thinking can just expose itself to singular tropes, singular displacements without any expectations of stability neither as return to an originary birthplace nor as relocation elsewhere. The passage itself is, indeed, as we have seen, what Malabou called “the conceptually and historically *depatriated place* of the point of convertibility between metaphysics and its other” (68, my emphasis). It is a matter of dwelling within the passage that places in discussion the site left behind as well as its nameless landing place: “Place itself and, among all places, the place of habitat or possible residence, the end of a transhumance, is defined after the fact” (20), but since it can never get stabilized in a principle, be represented, grasped in a concept, it will remain nameless, and so fated to be constantly re-placed and provisionally re-named.

The hermeneutic relation to the *Two-fold*, to the ontological difference—but we could also say *différance* with Derrida—takes place as an event of language that strives to name it, to grasp it, and fails. Each attempt is an adventure and is a “trope,” a turn of thinking against the limit of language to go beyond the presence of what is present. Each attempt and failure lets the difference be as what cannot be mastered by language, as what leaves always a trace, hides a mystery, a secret. The “Dialogue on Language,” with its silences, its suspensions, its being nearly impossible, tries to respond to this paradoxicality. And the silence, the suspension, the hesitations, are not renunciation, rather they are traces of the mystery of originary “Saying” (*die Sage*), to account for the paradox of the attempt of “speaking from the Language,” that is, trying to correspond to such a Saying that cannot be said. “Only a dialogue could be such a saying correspondence,” Heidegger says: “Above

all, silence about silence ...” (52).

Each trope is haunted by the specter of its failure. So, the “figural” aspect of such tropes has to be understood as an emerging of a spectrality, of phantasms, insofar as an “improper metaphor” that is not resting upon any “proper sense,” and whose catachrestic function is always already known as impossible.⁴ Each attempt, since it cannot be justified by a principle (an *archê*), bears already with itself the possibility and the need for its “replacement (more precisely, replaceability) as repetition (or rather as iterability) gives place to place” (24).

In 1965, in his course about “Heidegger: the Question of Being and History,” Derrida spelled out the paradoxical condition of the philosophical work thinking through the destruction of metaphysics by the means of language:

The work of thinking is nothing but . . . this operation of destruction of the metaphor, of determined and motivated reduction of the metaphor. This does not mean that one comes out from the metaphoric element of language, but rather that in a new metaphor the previous metaphor appears as such, is denounced in its origin, in its metaphorical function and its necessity. It appears as such. One can perhaps call “thinking” and “thinking of Being” (the thinking of Being insofar as horizon and appeal to an impossible non-metaphoric thought) the one that appeals to such a gesture of de-metaphorization. (My translation, 278)

In this sense, the thinking of/in the passage finds itself trapped in what Derrida called in his lecture “an incontrollable paradox of replacement, of *re-building* as replacement—and of replacement as the very possibility of place, the originary and non-supervened possibility of all placement” (24, emphasis in original). Such a paradox constitutes, actually, the affirmative kernel of deconstruction, which too often gets lost “because of the grammar of the word (de-),” as Derrida complains in his “Letter to a Japanese friend.”⁵ Deconstruction is to be understood in its link to re-building:

In this respect it would be easy to demonstrate that between re-building and deconstruction there is no opposition, nor even any difference: because deconstruction is affirmation, no doubt, but also because the displacement of the accent, the strategy of the emphasis, that seems to privilege sometimes (here) deconstruction and sometimes (there) re-building, will never erase this hard paradoxicality. (24)

So, what is at stake when Heidegger inquires about the Japanese word *Iro, Ky*, or about the sense of emptiness of the stage or of the gesture in the *No*-play, or moreover when he is asking his interlocutor: “What does the Japanese world understand by language? Asked still more cautiously: Do you have in your language a word for what we call language? If not, how do you experience what with us is called language?” (23) It is not, certainly, a hunt for a universal essence of language that is found in the dialogue itself. Nor is it a quest to name the nameless site to which the passage is passing. It is not a matter of metaphorical representation of the new beginning either. It is no more and no less than what we could call, paraphrasing the title of an important book of Gianni Vattimo of 1980, an *adventure of difference*. In this sense, we can also begin to understand the displacement toward Japan, which the dialogue stages, as a trope of thinking just as well as the displacement into the poetic horizon of Hölderlin or Rilke. Tropological adventures mark our philosophical time as the time of the end of philosophy. In the closure of metaphysics, a-principial thought is assigned to adventurous thinking, to that kind of thinking that is a gathering of quasi-random traces “off the beaten track” dwelling within the passage to the transformation of that very same thinking. As Derrida put it in 1968:

For what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principial responsibility. . . . In the delineation of *différance* everything is *strategic* and *adventurous*. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the development of the field. Finally, a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics, or empirical wandering if the value of empiricism did not itself acquire its entire meaning in its opposition to philosophical responsibility. (“*Différance*” 6-7, my emphasis)

The strategies are adventurous, they are always singular and eventual, free from the mastery of teleologies or final destinations. They are neither necessary nor contingent, rather beyond the metaphysical dichotomy between necessity and contingency, in the unity of necessity and chance. The adventures are, indeed, strategic, they are not rigidly oriented toward a goal, but they are not arbitrary either, rather they rely upon traces, which are the traces of the ontological difference haunting the experience presumed exhausted in the presence. Those traces are never simply present

by themselves: as trace of what can never be presented, they themselves can never be presented. But they are to be found in the repetition of the history of metaphysics as the forgetting of the onto-ontological difference, as well as in the excess with respect to what we have provisionally called “tropological adventures,” which are the other side of the deconstruction of metaphysics. The historicity of thinking, after the closure of onto-theological historicity, consists precisely in corresponding to those twofold traces, which come as much from the past as from the future: “This point, where the metamorphosis of metamorphosis or migration of migration is achieved, can only be invested with phantasms, with images of these extra- or hypo-historical processes. The enigma of history, in the double sense of *Historie* and *Geschichte*, is the spatial and temporal location of the point of collision between philosophy and what is not, between metaphysics and its destruction” (Malabou 68). Through the triad of change, Malabou suggests that such a collusion occurs in a “fantastic margin,” “in both the light and the shadows of the philosophical imaginary” (68), and those are the tropological adventures and the specter of their failure/impossibility that always haunts them: “What is fantastic is the simultaneously metaphysical and non metaphysical visibility of being” (68). Once the domain of hegemonic metaphysic principles that found the epochality of Being is brought to its end, another historicity has to be thought. Here in question is not just the ambiguous historicity of the passage as such, but also the historicity of a new beginning and of “who” would exist there (*Da-sein*). Those are also the questions involved in the Kojévian note and in Derrida engaging with it in the second chapter of *Specters of Marx*.

3- End of History and Japan

Before starting to examine the emendation Kojève wrote as a footnote for the second edition of his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, a review of the Kojévian interpretation of the end of History is opportune. According to Kojève's reading of Hegel, “if the revealed human reality is nothing but universal history, that history must be the history of the interactions between Mastery and Slavery: the historical ‘dialectic’ is the ‘dialectic’ of Master and Slave” (9). This is because at the ground of the “dialectic” of Master and Slave there is human desire, that is, the anthropogenetic desire for recognition, that is, for the other's desire. It is the desire directed toward another desire, instead of toward a natural object, which triggers the struggle to death that first determines the distinction between autonomous and dependent existences, or between Mastery and Slavery as the

essential determination of the social reality that is the only human reality. Risking its own life for the sake for recognition, the animal becomes human, becomes the man that is “nothing but his becoming”(9). This means that human reality is the historic fight for the satisfaction of his Desire and that, once the dialectic interaction of Master and Slave finally has ended in the overcoming of both of them, History will necessarily end too. The first Human action, the anthropogenetic action, is the fight for domination in the search of recognition, or rather the war: “man is human only to the extent that he wants to impose himself on another man, to be recognized by him”(13). The dialectic overcoming (*Aufhebung*) of the other is, at this point, his enslavement. The Master, however, finds himself in a tragic existential impasse because he has been recognized by a Slave, that is to say, by someone who is not human yet since he has not freed himself from Nature risking his life in the name of human desire for recognition. The recognition achieved by the Master is thus worthless because it comes from a natural being and not from a peer. And, he can never become a true self-conscious Man. The satisfied man will be rather the Slave who dialectically overcomes his slavery through his work, upon which the surviving of the Master depends. By working, the Slave becomes master of Nature freeing himself from his own nature, from the instinct that tied him to the Master in order to preserve his life: “The future and History hence belong not to the warlike Master, who either dies or preserves himself indefinitely in identity to himself, but to the working Slave. . . . If the fear of death, incarnated for the Slave in person of the warlike Master, is the sine qua non of historical progress, it is solely the Slave's work that realizes and perfects it” (23). The Master finally is the catalyst of the historical anthropogenetic process, but does not participate actively in it, because it is by means of work that man becomes man, that is transforming both himself and the world at the same time. The transformation of man and the world (i.e., universal history) is the long and bloody process toward the realization of the human ideal of freedom, which will be assured just when the Master will be overthrown and the full recognition of everyone by everyone will have taken place. As part of the progress, which is described by Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, self-consciousness goes through Christian religion and philosophy (up to Hegel). The end of history, as the ultimate accomplishment of freedom, is also the end of philosophy (*philo-sophia*) and the coming of wisdom (i.e., *sophia*): “not only does the coming of Wisdom complete History, but this coming is possible only at the end of History” (95). And here, we are exactly at the point where the famous footnote comes into play.

In the first edition, the sixth footnote of the chapter devoted to the interpretation of the conclusion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* asserted the disappearance of man at the end of history, postulating that such a disappearance should be understood just as disappearance of the man as subject of the action negating (transforming through his work) the object. What survives the end of history is rather man “as animal in *harmony* with Nature or given Being” (158, emphasis in original). This means the cessation of wars and revolution, as well as philosophy, since there is no more need for the man returned to animality to pursue any change for/of himself or of the world: “But all the rest can be preserved indefinitely; art, love, play, etc., etc.; in short everything that makes Man *happy*” (159, emphasis in original). And this would be what Marx called “the realm of freedom.”

The long “Note to the second edition” is comprised of three parts. First, Kojève rectifies the striking contradiction of the note in the previous edition about a return of man to animality that would not affect his arts, loves or play, and his ability to enjoy them and be *happy* because of them; a return to animality that would not affect the discursive understanding that bears wisdom itself. The second part is a distillate of what Derrida in *Specters of Marx* called “the neo-Marxist and para-Heideggerian reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* by Kojève” (91), that has already been picked up by Aimé Patri, an unsympathetic critic quoted by the editor of the book in the introduction, who wrote: “M. Kojève is, as far as we know, the first . . . to have attempted to constitute the intellectual and moral *ménage à trois* of Hegel, Marx and Heidegger which has since that time been a great success” (vii). Indeed, this second part of the Kojève's note combines the Hegelian-Marxist end of history with Heidegger's repeated evening out of Americanism and Bolshevism as embodiment of the essence of modern technology, and his characterization of the world wars as already beyond the difference between war and peace,⁶ recounting that, after several voyages to the US and to the Soviet Union (between 1948 and 1958), he “was led to conclude from this that the ‘American way of life’ was the type of life specific to the post-historical period, ...prefiguring the ‘eternal present’ future of all of humanity” (161). The third part of the note, which is undoubtedly the most interesting, again turns the perspective on its head: “It was following a recent voyage to Japan (1959) that I had a radical change of opinion on this point. There I was able to observe a Society that is one of a kind, because it alone has for almost three centuries experienced life at the “end of History”—that is in the absence of all civil or external war . . . “Post-historical” Japanese civilization undertook ways diametrically opposed to the “American way” (161). The post-historical civilization that captures

Kojève's interest is the "anything but animal" existence of Japanese nobles, whose "Snobbery created disciplines negating the 'natural' or 'animal' given which in effectiveness far surpassed those that arose, in Japan or elsewhere, from 'historical' Action" (161), that is work. Even though the peaks of such a Snobbery (i.e., the Noh theater, the ceremony of tea, and the art of bouquets of flowers) are a prerogative of nobles—Kojève clarifies—all Japanese have access to a formalized life, that is, a living according to "values completely empty of all 'human' content in the 'historical' sense" (162). Here, the annihilation of animality goes together with the annihilation of the Human Desire for recognition, but in no way is a "definitive annihilation of Man properly so-called" at stake. The action negating the object, namely its content, that aims to transform the world according to the human ideal of freedom—which would be the universal fulfillment of the Human Desire for recognition—represents the kernel of History. Therefore, in the post-historical of content throughout time, what vanishes is this very content of the action insofar as being susceptible to historical transformation. No less surprising, as Derrida highlighted in his reading, are the last few lines concluding the note introducing the projection of a duty for the future: "This means that, while henceforth speaking in an *adequate* fashion of everything that is given to him, post-historical Man must [*doit*] continue to *detach* "form" from "content," doing so no longer in order actively to transform the latter, but so that he may *oppose* himself as a pure "form" to himself and to others taken as "content" of any sort" (162). Such a projection betrays that also Kojève, at this point, is taking his stance in the passage that left off from the end of history to the nameless post-historical site, which is also the post-metaphysical site, the *conceptually depatriated place*, or "the very enigma of our philosophical moment" that we have been discussing with respect to Heidegger. In the conclusion of *The Heidegger Change*, Malabou brings together Heidegger and Hegel; she says [they] "are not strangers to each other" (281), emphasizing that the incision that severs them one from the other has to be thought of as jointure uniting and articulating them while it maintains their distance. I would venture to say that we could and should consider this Kojévian note such a jointure, even though Malabou does not take Kojève into consideration (and this is surprising on many levels) at all in her book. The Kojévian perspective on the passage draws attention to the other-humanity of man, to the other-existence of the "who" of the new-beginning, that is, after the end of History, while it raises implicitly the question about the historicity of it, namely about the historicity of the end of history as an event closing the historicity as teleologically-oriented development and

transformation of man. Doing so and doing it in a perspective that looks at a future to-come—this is a bridge between Hegel/Marx and Heidegger–Kojève is also introducing the issue of the kind of historicity that is to be granted to the event that comes after the end of history, to the new-beginning itself, to Heidegger's *Ereignis*, and, so, also of the possibility of transforming thinking.

Redeeming it from Fukuyama's manipulation, Derrida sees in Kojève's perspective on the future beyond history the “purely necessarily form of the future as such,” the form of the historicity of what he called “the messianic without messianism” (Derrida *Specters* 92). In this sense, he reads in the lines quoted the enunciation of a law, that can be taken, with the paradox that this implies, as the anarchic law of the passage: “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” (93). It is a matter of opposing what Derrida calls the “onto-theo-archeo-teleological” concept of history that “locks up, neutralizes, and finally cancels historicity” (93), in order to think another historicity:⁷ “not a new history or still less a “new historicism,” but another opening of event-ness as historicity that permitted one not to renounce, but on the contrary to open up access to an affirmative thinking of the messianic and emancipatory promise as promise: as promise and not as onto-theological or teleo-eschatological program or design” (94). In this context, what does Kojève's tropological adventure in Japanese snobbery finally tell us about the nameless site that is promised in the passage? Does he give us any key to understand *the enigma of our philosophical time*? I believe that it points up at least four pivotal indications, traces to find our way out from metaphysics, toward and through the Other of metaphysics.

First, Kojève says that the post-historical life is “in the absence of all civil and external wars,” that is, a life that is not at risk. Second, he says snobbery created disciplines that negate the animality more effectively than the “historical” action, that is, “warlike and revolutionary Fights” or “forced Work” (161). Third, it is a matter of living “according to totally *formalized* values,” free from any determination on the ground of “historical values that have social or political content,” like in the case, quoted by Kojève, of a perfectly “gratuitous” suicide (162, emphasis in original). Finally, and most importantly, he says post-historical man has to detach himself as pure form in order to *oppose*, that is, to counterpose, himself and the others “taken as content of any sort,” and, that is, as objects of Desire, recognition, exploitation but also as content entirely accessible to technical-calculative-

manipulative thinking. Kojève, appealing to the formalism of post-historical man, is appealing to an exodus, a withdrawal from the dynamics of appropriation-expropriation as the dynamics that lie beneath and bear the onto-theo-archeo-teological dialectic of history. Therefore, he calls for a twofold retreat from the ontology of war as well as from the ontology of work/value. This way, he also implicitly suggests renouncing any emancipatory logic founded in the identitarianism of the “proper,” in identitarian subjectivation.

4- Infrapolitics and *Shibumi*

At the end of philosophy, a transformation and a displacement of thinking are announced. But such a transformation depends upon the impossible task of thinking thoroughly the closure of metaphysics; and such a displacement is actually a displacement into the passage by which thinking itself should be brought from the end of ontotheology to the new beginning. The passage itself is the very enigma of our philosophical moment because there, the rupture and the suture between metaphysics and its other take place. Through Heidegger and Kojève, in the first instance, and through Derrida, Malabou and Schürmann, in the second instance, we have depicted the fading horizon of thinking such an enigma, because this horizon is where infrapolitics occurs.

Since what is passing away in the passage is philosophy itself, at the opening I suggested that the question is whether the death of philosophy belongs to our philosophical time *still* or *too*. Whether our philosophical time may be *still* the same Blanchot was referring to or whether we are actually inhabiting another, new philosophical time that is marked by the *death of philosophy, too*. Now, I would venture to answer: both. On the one hand, indeed, the passing of metaphysics is *still* the phantasm that haunts our philosophical reality, as a passing on that never passes away. And the juncture, which is the point of rupture and the suture between metaphysics and its other, is still what we ought to think. On the other hand, I do believe that infrapolitics, insofar as an event and a practice of thought of our philosophical time, does belong to the passage *too*, but in a way that produces a radical incision in it.

Infrapolitics is not to be understood either as an attempt to name the nameless site to which the passage is passing or just as another tropological adventure. In the first case, it would mean to objectify it, surrendering it to the representative metaphysical thought. In the second, it would just fall within Deconstruction, and that is only partially the case. Infrapolitics is a deconstructive

theoretical practice, or discourse, which takes place in the time of the closure of onto-theology, that puts into question the history of thought with a view to the affirmation of the transformation of thinking. Infrapolitics dwells in the passage. The motor of infrapolitical thought is still the very same “*unlocatable, undatable, and unthinkable*” juncture between metaphysics and its other. But, nevertheless, it aims to introduce a radical turn in the philosophical gaze, a shift in the thinking of the end. This shift consists of the fact that it seeks access to an affirmative and emancipatory thinking, through the thinking of another historicity, a radical historicity as event-ness, not as onto-theological or teleo-eschatological program or design, but not as a messianic promise either, rather in the perspective of an “always-already-there.” Infrapolitics takes the post-historical promise of Kojève among the possibilities of the existence always-already-there. With Derrida, infrapolitics can say “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” (*Specter* 94), but not as a promise, not as a new beginning rather as a dimension of experience that has always-already been there neglected, covered up by onto-theo-archeo-theological thinking and language. This way, the phantasm of the fissure between metaphysics and its other is incorporated into the thinking of the passage, into this new thinking of the passage: so that “the transformation occurs as a passage,” and the displacement takes place within the passage. In this sense, I believe infrapolitics is the attempt to take one step further with respect to deconstruction.

One could say that infrapolitics is a vertigo in the thinking of the passage; it is the vertigo of the thought that escaped from ontotheology and is facing the breach of language. This vertigo occurs as a new dimension of experience is brought into play. This is the infrapolitical dimension. Infrapolitics, insofar as it is *an-archic* thinking, occurs through tropological adventures that begin in the infrapolitical dimension and measure themselves with the *nearly* impossible task of demetaphorization of metaphysical language. But it occurs also in the form of a kind of Heideggerian “backtracking,” specifically concerned with retrieving traces of the previous heralding of the infrapolitical dimension. This is the hermeneutical effort of dialoguing with a certain “tradition” of thinking involved in dealing with the end of onto-theological thought.

Infrapolitics depends upon a thinking of the ontico-ontological difference, although it does not coincide with it. One could say that infrapolitical thought is a manner of relating to the ontico-

ontological difference as the abyssal, and always forgotten, obscure ground⁸ of experience through the attempt to dwell in this ulterior and arcane dimension. This is a dimension of experience that exceeds subjectivity and cannot be captured by politics or ethics, otherwise it irremediably challenges war and work as paradigms of understanding of action and historicity. The vertigo, then, is engendered by infrapolitical affirmation, that is, the affirmation of the fact that human experience overflows its onto-theological articulation in ethics and politics. Infrapolitical dimension overflows representative thinking, that is, the thinking that proceeds from the assumption of the essence of truth as *adaequatio* of thought to things. As Alberto Moreiras—in dialogue with Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*—says in one of the first pages of “Infrapolitical Literature”: “Experience is therefore the essential non-adaequation to the reality of war, to the reality of politics” (185). This is, in other words, the affirmation that the possibility of an action, which is anything but animal, that is free from any determination on the ground of “historical values that have social or political content” (Kojève 161), is always-already there. It is a matter of postulating the possibility of a singular acting that exceeds any determination from normative principles, warlike logic or productive perspective, and that exceeds subjectivation and challenges it. As Moreiras explains, infrapolitics is not directly political.⁹ But pointing to this region and/or possibility (in the sense of a *dunamis*) of experience that exceeds subjectivation as a condition of politics intended as what brings together the historical dialectics of exploitation/domination, infrapolitics unconceals the possibility of withdrawal, exodus from any politics of exploitation and domination. This possibility is not a possibility to-come, it is not a future projection, but it is a spectrality that always already haunts the experience itself that pretends to be exhausted by an ethical-political matrix of comprehension. There, infrapolitics is the practice of thought that concerns itself with this dimension of experience and the affirmation of the possibility of withdrawal that is always-already there. In these last pages I shall explore the affirmation of the possibility of a similar withdrawal in the form of a style of existence, in what we could call an infrapolitical style of existence or form of life. I will do it through a tropological adventure into a novel: the 1979 Trevanian's novel *Shibumi*. As Moreiras has shown,¹⁰ the infrapolitical affirmation has in literature—or better in some, therefore infrapolitical, literature—an important instance. And I consider *Shibumi* to a certain extent a paradigmatic instance of literary infrapolitics.

The whole novel can be read as a literary engagement with the post-historical life sketched

by the last part of Kojève's note. The principal character of the novel, Nicholai Hell, embodies, at the same time, the sunset of Western ontotheology and the paradoxical displacement to the Orient to find a form of life that exceeds and survives it. He is—as a Japanese friend mocking him says—“a man of the twilight!” (196). Nicholai Hell is somehow Occidental, since he is the son of an aristocratic Russian woman and a German father. But, he was born in Shanghai during the chaos of World War I, and there gets adopted by the Japanese General Kishikawa and then is sent by him to study with a Gō master in Japan, where he survived the destruction of Hiroshima: “But then—considering that Nicholai was born of the best blood of Europe but raised in the crucible of China—was he really Western? Certainly he was not Oriental either. He was of no racial culture. Or was it better to think of him as the sole member of a racial culture of his own?” (72). From the beginning, he lives at the margins of political subjectivation since he has neither citizenship, nor a proper homeland or national sense of belonging. He speaks six languages and thinks in five. When he is asked by the general “Do you ever think about the war?,” his answer is “No, sir. It has nothing to do with me”(75). Thanks to this originally ex-patriated/de-patriated condition, he finds himself always-already outside and beyond war and capitalism, which appear more and more intimately connected in the background. In general Kishikawa's words: “All wars are lost ultimately. By both sides, Nikko. The day of battles between professional warriors are gone. Now we have wars between opposing industrial capacities, opposing populations. The Russians, with their sea of faceless people, will defeat the Germans. The Americans, with their anonymous factories will defeat us. Ultimately” (95). The old general is still in some way committed to an “us:”

Oh, yes, Nikko. I am a patriot after all. Not a patriot of politics, or ideology, or military bands, or the *hinomaru*. But a patriot all the same. A patriot of garden like this, of moon festivals, of the subtleties of Gō, of the chants of women planting rice, of cherry blossoms in brief bloom—of things Japanese. The fact that I know we cannot win this war has nothing to do with the fact that I must continue to do my duty. Do you understand that, Nikko?” “Only the words, sir.” (95)

On the contrary, Nicholai belongs always already to the infrapolitical dimension. This means that he is already beyond the history as dialectics of recognition through fight and labor: since he does not act from a proper identitarian position, he remains excluded from any dynamic of appropriation and expropriation. He is tied yet to Japan insofar as Barthes's *fictional nation*, as the birth place of the game

of Gō and the ideal of *Shibumi*, the two elements by means of which he builds his infrapolitical style of existence, the two elements where he finds refuge in his retreat from the ontology of war and capitalism. Japan is the object of his cathexis, and the site of his super-egoic projection. But, it does not become a motive of political subjective militancy for him. He is not a patriot and cannot be a patriot. He cannot understand patriotism from the uncanniness-homelessness (*Unheimlichkeit*) of the infrapolitical position: “No one observing the delicate young man standing at the rail of the rusty freighter, his hooted green eyes watching the wallow and plunge of the sea as he contemplated the two gifts the General had given him—these Gō *ke*, and the lifelong goal of *Shibumi*—would have surmised that he was destined to become the world's most highly paid assassin” (78). The entire structure of the novel is built around the phases of the game of Gō. Through Gō the relationship between the teenager Nicholai and general Kishikawa is first established. But even before, it is by learning how to play Gō from reading books, when he is still a boy in Shanghai, that Nicholai initiates the exodus toward his fictive Japan. The first time they play, asked by general Kishikawa about the qualities necessary to a fine player, Nicholai says: “Well, of course one must have concentration. Courage. Self-control. That goes without saying. But more important than these, one must have... I don't know how to say it. One must be both a mathematician and a poet. As though poetry were a science; or mathematics an art. One must have an affection for proportion to play Gō at all well” (72). He also recognized that his initial weaknesses lie in what he called poetry, or rather in what exceeds linear logic. Because of this excess, because of this poetry “Gō is to philosophers and warriors, chess is to accountants and merchants” (73), or, as he will say later, “Gō is to Western Chess what philosophy is to double-entry accounting”(165). In rapport to the game of Gō, life shows itself in its lacks: “Do we still speak of Gō, Teacher?”—“Yes. And of its shadow: life.” “For Otake-san life was a simplistic metaphor for Gō” (107). Whereas life is dominated by the simple problem/solution grid of Western culture, by the principle of equivalence that holds the logic of value, that it, ontotheology, Gō calls for a thinking of liquid permutation and for an extremely complicated abstract strategy about balance and internal tensions. Dealing with this deficiency of life calls into play the search for *shibumi*. It is a non-achievable goal, a non-subjective ineffable quality that ought to be discovered more than attained. It requires going beyond the rigid metaphysical dualisms (activity and passivity, form and content, subject and object, natural and cultural) to keep them in a non-dialectical relation, in a paradoxical unity that makes their reciprocal deconstruction

happen and makes appear the excess of experience they could not account for. I would say that it is indeed an infrapolitical style of existence, since it is an-archic, free from principal normative prescription, and demands a transformation of thinking and a displacement into an infrapolitical dimension of experience. The general describes it to Nicholai, this way:

As you know, *shibumi* has to do with great refinement underlying commonplace appearances. It is a statement so correct that it does not have to be bold, so poignant it does not have to be pretty, so true it does not have to be real. *Shibumi* is understanding, rather than knowledge. Eloquent silence. In demeanor, it is modesty without pudency. In art . . . it is elegant simplicity, articulate brevity. In philosophy . . . it is spiritual tranquility that is not passive; it is being without the angst of becoming. And in the personality of a man, it is . . . how does one say it? Authority without domination? Something like that.” . . . “Meaning that one must learn a great deal to arrive to shibumi?” “Meaning, rather, that one must pass through knowledge and arrive at simplicity.” (77-78)

Shibumi becomes the lifelong goal of Nicholai Hell and his fate. Gardening and caving are exercises on the path toward it, and they correspond to post-historical Japanese snobbery evoked by Kojève in his note; especially caving, where the foes are the specter who haunts you, where there are no public or lighted and praised victories, comes as a figure of infrapolitical practice insofar as a singular engagement with the facing of one's own demon. Both *Gō* and *shibumi* get combined in the book *Blossom and Thorns on the Path toward Gō* that, at the end of the war which had nothing to do with him, Nicholai Hell writes to find a mental post-historical escape from the mechanical work he had to do to survive:

The book was an elaborate joke in the form of a report and commentary on a fictional master's game played at the turn of century. While the play of the “masters” seemed classic and even brilliant to the average player, there were little blunders and irrelevant placements that brought frowns to the more experienced of the readers. The delight of the book lay in the commentary by a well-informed fool who found a way to make each of the blunders seem a touch of audacious brilliance, and who stretched the limits of imagination by attaching to the moves metaphors for life, beauty, and art, all stated with great refinement and demonstration of scholarship,

but all empty of significance. (130)

This book—“a subtle and eloquent parody of the intellectual parasitism of the critic”—is at the same time the ultimate gesture of snobbery and allegory of the very same *Shibumi* and of all the work of Trevanian (viz. Rodney Whitaker), which is a sarcastic constant deconstruction of “genre literature,” of literary genres and the dichotomy between high and low literature. His explicit attack on the reduction of the literary to value judgment, his emphasis on the fictional character of the author, his refusal of the priority of the subject creator and of the mastery of capitalist/consumerist logic over the literary, place Trevanian in an infrapolitical position.

Nicholai Hell is an infrapolitical, post-historical, anti-hero. Indeed there cannot be heroism from an infrapolitical position, because it is always-already beyond subjectivation. He is—as “the Gnome” makes explicit in his long speech toward the end of the book—an anti-hero in the sense that leads toward a different kind of salvation: “There was a time in the comedy of human development when salvation seemed to lie in the direction of order and organization, and all the great Western heroes organizes and directed their followers against the enemy: chaos. Now we are learning that the final enemy is not the chaos, but organization” (376). Such organization, which is depicted as the conjunction/submission of the ontology of war to the logic of capitalism, is called twice in the book “infragovernment.” Is not, finally, the infrapolitical form of life, or style of existence, insofar as a withdrawal from the appropriation/expropriation dynamic, the only possible interruption of the last figure of ontotheological mastery, that is, infragovernment? Such a discussion ought to be a matter for further research. But, as seen here, the most important contribution of an infrapolitical thought consists of bringing back, from a messianic perspective, the possibility of such a withdrawal; even though it implies a displacement into a less bright, “sunny,” and open horizon of thinking. In this sense, and staying within the frame of reference of this essay, we could oppose the displacement of thinking toward the Orient as prefiguration of a coming dawn, with the speleological displacement of infrapolitics, under the surface of experience, into the dark of its subterranean system of faults, fissures and caves.

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Notes

¹ When I refer to “infrapolitics” or “infrapolitical,” I am referring to the work of Alberto Moreiras that introduced the term in 2002 with the essay “The Villain at the Center: Infrapolitical Borges,” then developed it in *Linea the Sombra* (2006) and in the following work in the sense that then became the center of the discussions of the collective research project, “The Infrapolitical Deconstruction Collective” that in 2014 started on the idea of the need to discuss the legacies of deconstruction in contemporary thought and that incorporates many scholars from Europe, Latin America, and the United States.

² The expression actually refers to the title of Derrida’s 1984 essay “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy.”

³ See Freud “Mourning and Melancholia,” in particular pp. 256-257.

⁴ Here I am referring to Pierre Fontanier’s definition of “Catachresis” quoted and discussed by Derrida in his essay “White Mythology: Metaphor in the text of philosophy.” “Catachresis, in general, consists in a sign already affected with a first idea also being affected with a new idea, which itself had no sign at all, or no longer properly has any other in language. Consequently, it is every Trope of forced and necessary usage, every Trope from which there results a purely extensive sense; this literal, proper sense of secondary origin, intermediate between the primitive proper sense and the figurative sense is closer to the first than to the second, although it could itself be figurative in principle” (“White” 255) An extensive discussion of tropology and the end of ontotheology would take me away from the focus of this essay even though I recognize that it would be an important and necessary integration of the discourse here at stake.

⁵ See Derrida “Letter” 2. For a discussion on this text of Derrida, see Alberto Moreiras’s contribution to this issue: “Infrapolitics: the Project and its Politics. Allegory and Denarrativization. A Note on Posthegemony.”

⁶ See Heidegger’s “Overcoming Metaphysics” 103-104.

⁷ It has to be noticed that, here and in other occasions, Derrida denies Heidegger access to such “another opening of event-ness” referring to his “epochal thinking”.

⁸ On infrapolitics as relation to obscure ground see Moreiras’ “Infrapolitical Literature.”

⁹ For a discussion of the political implication of Infrapolitics, see here Moreiras’s “Infrapolitics: the project and its Politics”

¹⁰ See Moreiras “Infrapolitical Literature,” “The Villain,” “Infrapolitics and the Thriller.”