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The Beast & the Sovereign

Volume I

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on the fact that the fable is made up of words. The fabulous also engages act, gesture, action, if only the operation that consists in producing narrative, in organizing, disposing discourse in such a way as to recount, to put living beings on stage, to accredit the interpretation of a narrative, to faire savoir, to make knowledge, to make performatively, to operate knowledge (a bit like the way Augustine spoke of making the truth, veritatem faciare). Well, given this, the fabulous deployment of information, of the teletechnologies of information and of the media today, is perhaps only spreading the empire of the fable. What has been happening on big and small television channels, for a long time now, but in particular in time of war, for example over the last few months, attests to this becoming-fabulous of political action and discourse, be it described as military or civil, warlike or terrorist. A certain effectivity, a certain efficacy, including the irreversible actuality of death, are not excluded from this fabulation. Death and suffering, which are not fictional, are yet carried off and inscribed in the fabulatory score.

We could take countless examples of this. I'll do no more than recall a few of them. One wonders what would have been the sense and efficacy of an operation of so-called “international terrorism” (we shall no doubt have the opportunity to return to this notion, which for the moment I shall do no more than cite) [one wonders what would have been the sense and efficacy of an operation of so-called “international terrorism”] if the image of the airplanes gutting the Twin Towers, if the image of <what> I would call, between two languages, the collapsus of the World Trade Center towers, had not been, as an image, precisely, recorded, not only archived and filmed but indefinitely reproducible and compulsively reproduced, immediately, throughout the USA, but also, all but instantaneously, via CNN for example, from New York to Paris, from London to Berlin, Moscow, Tokyo, Islamabad, Cairo, even Shanghai, where I happened to be at that moment. This technical reproducibility is an integral part of the event itself, from its origin on. As are the making-known [faire-savoir] and the know-how savoir-faire of the making-known that are immediately at work, put to work in organized fashion on both sides of the front, by the supposed aggressor no less than by the supposed victim who have an equal interest in knowing how to make this making-known as efficient, powerful, reproducible, and widely broadcast as possible. In other words, the technical reproducibility of the archive does not come along after the fact to accompany it, but conditions its very putting-to-work, its efficacy, its scope and its very meaning, if there is a meaning. Even if the interminable looped repetition of these disaster-movie images could serve, in a sort of jubilatory grief, both the work of mourning and the deadening of a trauma which depended less on the announced numbers of “innocent victims” and the suffering provoked by a terrible aggression in the past, than on the experience of the vulnerability of the invulnerable, on anxiety about what to come, about the risk of attacks to come, which threaten to be still worse, still more terrible (similar attacks, or the use of nuclear, biochemical, or bacteriological weapons, etc.). Without the deployment and the logic of image-effects, of this making-known, this supposed making-known, without this “news,” the blow struck would have been, if not nothing, at least massively reduced (let's say reduced to what is made of the news of a famine or a typhoon scarcely reported or felt when they come from a county far from Europe or America, or reduced to the number of traffic accidents in all the holiday weekends in a year, or those dead from AIDS in Africa, or the effects of the embargo on Iraq, so many human catastrophes which are anything but natural and inevitable accidents like an earthquake—and even there, hurricanes or earthquakes, qua catastrophes said to be natural and inevitable, do not produce the same effects, as we know so well, according to the wealth and level of development of the country concerned. Which reminds us of this obvious fact: the effect and repercussion of these cataclysms are also conditioned, in their breadth and their impact, by a politico-economical situation, and therefore by the power of the media, a signifying power, then, both ethological and ethical, the ethos of ethology here making the link between the organization of the natural habitat and ethics, therefore so-called human responsibility in the fields of economics, ecology, morality, law, and politics). The putting to work of the image, as we well know, is not, then, limited to archiving, in the sense of a preserving recording, but it makes archiving an active interpretation, one that is selective, productive qua reproductive, productive of a “making-known” narrative as much as reproductive of images: know-how of making-known which works just as well for the collapsus of the Twin Towers as for the name, and much less the image, of the Pentagon, as much for the apparitions (I think that's the best word) of Osama bin Laden on screens the world over, initially relayed by the channel Al Jazeera, whose role in this process would be worth more than one seminar.

Among the innumerable indices of this power of high-tech archiving which conditions the political efficacy of the event, rather, earlier [plus tôt, plus tôt], than it records it so as to preserve it, which produces, co-produces the event that it is supposed merely to reproduce and archive, I am thinking, for example (there would be so many other examples), of what I saw.

5. [Translator’s note] The words “high tech” are in English in the text.
ity of fear.) “Nay (excepting some generous natures,) it is the onely thing (when there is appearance of profit, or pleasure by breaking the Lawes,) that makes men keep them. And yet in many cases a Crime may be committed through Feare” (p. 150).

What is becoming clearer here is that the fear that pushes one to respect the laws and therefore to respect a sovereignty destined, by convention, to ensure the protection of the citizens—that this fear is here defined as a human thing, as proper to mankind. Hobbes twice specifies this humanity, this properly human quality (“Of all Passions, that which enclineth men least to break the Lawes, is Fear. Nay [. . .] it is the onely thing (when there is appearance of profit, or pleasure by breaking the Lawes,) that makes men keep them”). This humanity, this proper to man here signifies that sovereignty, laws, law and therefore the state are nothing natural and are posited by contract and convention. They are prostheses. If there is a prosthetic structure to the Leviathan as political animal or monster, this is because of its conventional, thetic, contractual structure. The opposition between physis and nomos (nature and law), as opposition between physis and thesis (nature and convention, or nature and positing), is here fully and decisively functional. It follows that law, sovereignty, the institution of the state are historical and always provisional, let’s say deconstructible, essentially fragile or finite or mortal, even if sovereignty is posited as immortal. It is posited as immortal and indivisible precisely because it is mortal and divisible, contract or convention being destined to ensure for it what it does not have, or is not, naturally. So that if sovereignty is, as Hobbes says, the “Soule of the Commonwealth,” this soul is an artificial, institutional, prosthetic and mortal soul: it lasts only as long as law, sovereignty, and the state are able to protect fearful subjects against what is causing them fear. The word protection here bears the whole burden of the political, i.e. the insurance contract made between scared or terrorized subjects to delegate to the state or the sovereign the charge of protecting them when they cannot protect themselves. They must then obey what protects them. For the fear that pushes them to obey the laws, obedience to the laws, their condition as subject to the law only lasts the time that the sovereign can ensure their protection. This insurance policy [police d’assurance] which basically entrusts to sovereignty the very police [police], the protection of security, comes down to moving from one fear to another. One institutes sovereignty because one is fearful (for one’s life, for one’s own body) and therefore because one needs to be protected, and then one obeys the law one has instituted through fear of being punished if one breaks the law. Between protecting and obliging to obey there is an essential link. “I protect you” means, for the state, I oblige you, you are my subject, I subject you. Being the subject of one’s fear and being the subject of the law or the state, being obliged to obey the state as one obeys one’s fear, are at bottom the same thing. If you like, in the two senses of the word “oblige.” I oblige you by forcing you to obey, by constraining you, because I oblige you by doing you the service of protecting you. I oblige you by forcing you to obey in the same movement by which, obliging you by doing you the service of protecting you, I oblige you to have gratitude. I oblige you to recognition [reconnaissance: recognition and gratitude] to recognize the state and the law, and to recognize them for obliging you (in both senses of the word: constraining and doing a service by protecting, obliging to recognize). It is in this sense that Schmitt, in a passage that I shall read in a moment, will say that “Protego ergo obligo est cogito ergo sum of the state.” In the paragraph of Leviathan that I am going to read, I emphasize the lexicon of protection, where this lexicon and its logic explain the paradox of the mortal immortality of sovereignty. Sovereignty—the soul, and therefore the life of the state, the artificial respiration of the state—is posited, instituted, promised, contracted, artificially, as immortal only because it is naturally mortal. It is prosthetic and artificial technique that immortalizes it or in any case guarantees it an indefinite survival: (read and comment)

The Obligation of Subjects to the Soveraign, is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them. For the right men have by Nature to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no Covenant be relinquished. The Soveraignty is the Soule of the Commonwealth; which once departed from the Body, the members doe no more receive their motion from it. The end of Obedience is Protection; which, wheresoeuer a man seeth it, either in his own, or in another’s sword, nature applyeth his obedience to it, and his endeavour to maintain it. And though Soveraignty, in the intention of them that make it, be immortal; yet is it in its own nature, not only subject to violent death, by foreign war; but also through the ignorance and passions of men, it hath in it, from the very institution, many seeds of a natural mortality, by Intestine Discord. (p. 121)

As it is for Schmitt, here a good disciple of a Hobbes he often quotes and in whom he sees a decisionist theorist of sovereignty, evil is civil war. This is what Schmitt says about the great law of protection, which he analyzes in utterly historical fashion, i.e. both as historical in the sense of being produced by pact, contract, alliance, institution, and as a historical theory, i.e.

produced, as political philosophy, on the basis of historical experiences such as those that dictated to Hobbes his political theory:

Furthermore, it would be a mistake to believe that a nation could eliminate the distinction of friend and enemy by declaring its friendship for the entire world or by voluntarily disarming itself. The world will not thereby become depoliticized, and it will not be transplanted into a condition of pure morality, pure justice, or pure economics. If a people is afraid of the trials and risks implied by existing in the sphere of politics, then another people will appear which will assume these trials by protecting it against foreign enemies and thereby taking over political rule. The protector then decides who the enemy is by virtue of the eternal relation of protection and obedience.

[Schmitt's Note]

On this principle rests the feudal order and the relation of lord and vassal, leader and led, patron and clients. This relation is clearly and explicitly seen here. No form of order, no reasonable legitimacy or legality can exist without protection and obedience. The 
protego ergo obligo
is the cogito ergo
sum
of the state. A political theory which does not systematically become aware of this sentence remains an inadequate fragment. Hobbes designated this (at the end of his English edition of 1651, p. 396) as the true purpose of his Leviathan, to instill in man once again "the mutual relation between Protection and Obedience"; human nature as well as divine right demands its inviolable observation.

Hobbes himself had experienced this truth in the terrible time of civil war, because then all legitimate and normative illusions with which men like to deceive themselves regarding political realities in periods of untroubled security vanish. [...] The fundamental correctness of the protection-obedience axiom comes to the fore even more clearly in foreign policy and interstate relations: the simplest expression of this axiom is found in the protectorate under international law, the federal state, the confederation of states dominated by one of them, and the various kinds of treaties offering protection and guarantees.8

A little further on, Schmitt explains, as he often does, what he calls the anthropological bases of political theories, namely that the only theories of politics worthy of the name are based on a pessimistic anthropology, on a vision of man as bad, corrupt, dangerous, fearful, or violent. On the basis of this criterion (a pessimistic anthropology of man as a dangerous animal), Schmitt grants the quality of political theorist worthy of the name to Ma-


chiavelli, Bossuet, de Maistre, Donoso Cortés, Hegel, Marx, Taine—and above all Hobbes. All of them are thinkers of evil, whatever form that evil may take, and one has no difficulty recognizing the features generally attributed to the beast (brutality, poorly controlled instincts, the irrationality of the living being, etc.: these are Schmitt's terms). And this is when Schmitt evokes the fables that put on stage animals whose behavior can be given a political interpretation. I quote (read)

The problematic or unproblematic conception of man is decisive for the presupposition of every further political consideration, the answer to the question whether man is a dangerous being or not, a risky or a harmless creature.

[Schmitt's Note]

The numerous modifications and variations of this anthropological distinction of good and evil are not reviewed here in detail. Evil may appear as corruption, weakness, cowardice, stupidity, or also as brutality, sensuality, vitality, irrationality, and so on. Goodness may appear in corresponding variations as reasonableness, perfectibility, the capacity of being manipulated, of being taught, peaceful, and so forth. Striking in this context is the political signification of animal fables. Almost all can be applied to a real political situation: the problem of aggression in the fable of the wolf and the lamb; the question of guilt for the plague in La Fontaine's fable, a guilt which of course falls upon the donkey; justice between states in the fables of animal assemblies; disarmament in Churchill's election speaker of October 1928, which depicts how every animal believes that its teeth, claws, horns are only instruments for maintaining peace; the large fish which devour the small ones. Etc. This curious analogy can be explained by the direct connection of political anthropology with what the political philosophers of the seventeenth century (Hobbes, Spinoza, Pufendorf) called the state of nature. In it, states exist among themselves in a condition of animal danger, and their acting subjects are evil for precisely the same reasons as animals who are stirred by their drives (hunger, greediness, fear, jealousy).9

Human nature, political anthropology, conventionalist theory of sovereignty, and therefore of the state, thesis, prosthesis, prosthatic—all of that presupposes, recalls or entails at least three assertions that we shall have ceaselessly to take into account.

On the one hand, this conventionalist (and not naturalistic) theory makes prosthatic sovereignty proper to man. And this artificial prosthesis of the

The sovereign state is always a protection. The prosthesis protects. Protection is its essential purpose, the essential function of the state.

On the other hand, this protectionist prosthstatic posits the absolute indivisibility of sovereignty (indivisibility is an analytic part of the concept of sovereignty: divisible or sharable sovereignty is not sovereignty).

Third, finally, the convention, the thesis, the prosthesis, the contract at the origin of sovereignty excludes God just as much—and this will be the important point for us here—as it excludes the beast.

In order to recognize the logic of these three theses, which are, at bottom, posited on the originary thesis or prosthesis, you can read, among other things, chapter 18 of Leviathan, entitled "Of the Arts of Sovereigns by Institution." Hobbes begins by positing that a state is "instituted" ("A Common-wealth is said to be Instituted") when a multitude of men, as it were, become One in their representation, when the One emerges to represent the many. To this end, the multitude comes to an agreement and a convention, a Covenant (a word that is also used, as you’ll remember later, to translate the Alliance between God and the Jewish people—and "cov¬enant" is both a noun meaning contract, convention, alliance, commitment, and a verb: "to covenant," meaning to commit oneself, to sign a convention, to be party to a contract or an alliance): they "Agree and Covenant," says Hobbes: "A Common-wealth is said to be Instituted, when a Multitude of men do Agree and Covenant, every one with every one, that to whatsoever Man, or Assembly of Men, shall be given by the major part, the Right to Present the Person of them all, (that is to say, to be their Representative) [...]" (p. 121). According to this Covenant, according to this convention designed to protect them from each other in peace—protect is the most frequent word in these pages, along with convention—they “authorize” themselves to authorize all (I repeat: all) the actions and all (I repeat: all) the judgments of the man or assembly of men that the majority of this multitude has given the right to represent them. Even those who voted against are obliged, they oblige themselves to be obliged to obey unconditionally. And it is during the exposition of everything that is entailed by this unconditional obedience to the convention (I leave you to follow this at the beginning of chapter 18) that Hobbes encounters and rejects the objection that one can place a convention or a commitment above the one that institutes the state. For example, a commitment with respect to God. Some people might claim that they are disobeying the human sovereign because they are obeying God, whose sovereignty trumps that of statesmen. As you can imagine, this point is a delicate one for those who, like me, often speak of an onto-theologico-political structure of sovereignty (to be deconstructed). For Hobbes’s re¬sponse (like Bodin’s, for that matter) seems, I say seems, to want to unite so-called modern state sovereignty, as established by convention or institution, from divine sovereignty. But things get complicated, in Bodin as well as in Hobbes, and we shall have more than one sign of this: in any case in Hobbes, as that’s where we are, it gets complicated by the fact that this humanity, this anthropological essence of prosthstatics is produced, from the opening pages of Leviathan, on the divine model. The artificial man, as Hobbes says, the artificial soul, the "Artificial Animal" that the Leviathan is, imitates the natural art of God: "NATURE (the Art whereby God hath made and governs the World) is by the Art of man, in as many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal" (p. 9). These are the opening words of Leviathan, we already read them, and the consequences can be seen constantly and everywhere. And this human mimesis produces automats, machines that mimic the natural life created by God. The life of these automats, of these machines, is compared to that of clocks and watches. Why could we not say, Hobbes asks immediately afterward, that all the automata (machines or engines that move by virtue of springs and wheels, like a watch) have an artificial life? In this way, a philosophy and even a theology of mimesis grounds in the last analysis the most humanist and anthropologist discourse of sovereignty. So that, however difficult it remains, we must ceaselessly understand how the so-called modern humanist or anthropologist insistence on the specificity of the state or of so-called modern political sovereignty gets its irreducible originality, i.e. its artificial, conventional, if you will techno-prosthstatic nature, only by grounding itself in a profound onto-theology, or even in a religion. If you read at least chapter 8 of the first book of Bodin’s Six Books of the Republic (1583; Leviathan dates from 1651), a chapter entitled "On Sovereignty" (and which begins by defining sovereignty, "absolute and perpetual power of the state" in more than one language—majestas, majestatem in Latin, akrain exousian, kuriar arkhi[ε], kurion politeuma in Greek, segnoria in Italian, tsinar shabat in Hebrew)," you will see that although he posits that "sovereignty

10. Jean Bodin, Les Six Livres de la République (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1999), book 4, chap. 8, pp. 111-17. In this edition, the Greek expressions contain a number of errors. Jacques Derrida had noticed only some of them (corrected in pencil on his printout), and consequently his transcription was not completely correct. Having verified the text in the edition of the "Corpus des œuvres philosophiques en langue française" (in Les Six Livres de la République: Livre premier, ed. Catherine Frémont, Marie-Dominique Cousinnet, and Henri Rochais [Paris: Fayard, 1986], p. 179), we confirm that the exact text should read: "que les Latins appellent majestatem, les Grecs ἀυτοκράτορ, et Κύριος δόξαι, et κύριον πολιτεία [...]; les Hebreux l’appellent טב יהוה." We give
is not limited, neither in power, nor in charge, nor to a certain time,” and although, infinite though it be, it remains human, its model is divine, and the sovereign remains the image of God. “Model” and “image” are Bodin’s words, in the conclusion of this chapter: “For if justice is the end of law, law the work of the prince, the prince the image of God; then by this reasoning, the law of the prince must be modeled on the law of God.” Elsewhere, in the same chapter, Bodin has remarked that “he is absolutely sovereign who recognizes nothing, after God, that is greater than himself,” and again that the sovereign Prince “is answerable only to God.” These are also what Bodin calls, as will Hobbes, the “marks of sovereignty” and the end of the first of the Six Books of the Republic declares that he who usurps the marks of sovereignty must be punished by death. The expression “marks of sovereignty” is common to Bodin and Hobbes, and on this subject I refer you to a fine article that Étienne Balibar published last year in a special issue of Les Temps Modernes devoted to sovereignty, in which he recalls that the expression “marks of sovereignty” comes “no doubt” from “a whole theological and juridical history,” and in passing he contests the appropriation of Bodin by Schmitt, who sees in him the first decisionist theorist of sovereignty, the first theorist of the exception that authorizes the sovereign to suspend right, that gives him the right to suspend right and place himself above the law that he embodies. I cannot get into this debate here. Balibar thinks that

bodin’s whole doctrine belies this “[Schmittian] primacy of the exception.” And in support of his thesis, Balibar affirms that Schmitt’s interpretation amounts to “distorting the sense of Bodin’s construction, which considers the state of exception precisely as an exception, the status and treatment of which depend on the constituted norm.”

No doubt. But does Schmitt say anything different? The exception is the exception, it must remain the exception, it is not the norm even if it appears as exception only with respect to the norm. Schmitt has not said that the exception is normal, which would be absurd, any more than sovereignty is normal, even if he has said that the exception is more interesting and decisive than the norm . . . But let’s leave that there—it refers us again to the paradoxes of a philosophy or a theory of the exception (and of the sovereign decision). A theory of the exception, especially a juridical or political theory of the exception, is impossible qua philosophical theory, even if the thought of exception is necessary. This is perhaps the site of a difference between, on the one hand, the theoretical, science, philosophy, even the concept, and, on the other hand, what one can call, for want of a better term, thought. But it goes without saying that at the very place at which he attempts to think the exception, Schmitt, for his part, would not accept the distinction I have just proposed and would claim to remain within the order of political philosophy, of theory, and even of the concept, of conceptual generality or universality. That one cannot make the exception into a general norm, a rule, a law, or a theorem is indeed the question. But precisely, sovereignty, like the exception, like the decision, makes the law in excepting itself from the law, by suspending the norm and the right that it imposes, by its own force, at the very moment that it marks that suspend in the act of positing law or right. The positing or establishing of law or right are exceptional and are in themselves neither legal nor properly juridical.

Hobbes, less than a century after Bodin, would also like to save the human autonomy of the institution of state sovereignty, while basing himself on the model of divine art. He will reject the objection of a convention above the human convention, for example a convention with God. And what I would like to emphasize is that this exclusion of any convention with God will be, as it were, symmetrical with another exclusion, that of a convention with the beast. This symmetry of the two living beings that are not man, i.e. the beast and the sovereign God, both excluded from the contract, convention or covenant—this symmetry is all the more thought-provoking for the fact that one of the two poles, God, is also the model of sovereignty,

the Greek transliteration on the basis of this edition. The expressions transliterated by akthn exousias, kurion arch and kurion politeuma can be translated, respectively, as “supreme power,” “sovereign power,” and “sovereign government,” according to Georges Leroux. For the Hebrew, Derrida here gives the transliteration tsmr shatb; further on, in the eighth session, he writes Tsmr shabet. According to Jean-Jacques Lavioz, the retranscription of these words also involves errors, and the text cited is difficult to read because the last letter is cut off. The Hebrew expression corresponding to the Greek text is the following: tomek sht (pronounced tomech shevet). The expression literally signifies “holding a scepter,” and is rare, appearing only in Amos 1:5 and 1:8. [Translator’s note: A selection from Bodin’s book is available as On Sovereignty, ed. and trans. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). The opening of book 1, chapter 8, is there translated as follows: “Sovereignty is the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth, which the Latins call magistra; the Greeks akthn exousia, kurion arch, and kurion politeuma; and the Italians segnoria [. . .] while the Hebrews call it tomek shevet—that is, the highest power of command.”] 11. On Sovereignty, p. 45. 12. Ibid., p. 4. 13. Ibid., p. 87. 14. Étienne Balibar, “Prolégomènes à la souveraineté: la frontière, l’État, le peuple,” Les Temps Modernes, “La souveraineté,” no. 610, September–November 2000, pp. 47–75. 15. Ibid., p. 58.
pronounced, in the French tongue: La bête et le souverain. La... le. This oscillating or vacillating rhythm is imprinted on each of its words, the articles (la, le), the nouns or substantives (bête, souverain), the verb, the copula or the conjunction (et, e[s]t). And as I have just noted, the suspension of this pendulum is double.

On the one hand, first oscillation, the sexual difference marked at least by French grammar (la... le), which seemed by chance (as we illustrated with more than one fact and more than one text) to confirm that the beast was often the living thing to be subjected, dominated, domesticated, mastered, like, by a not insignificant analogy, the woman, the slave, or the child. Remember the Hobbes texts we read on this subject, on the subject of the right over beasts, in the De Cive. And the sexual difference that seemed also to confirm (as we illustrated with more than one fact and more than one text) that the sovereign appeared most often in the masculine figure of the king, the master, the chief, the paterfamilias, or the husband — of the ipseity of the ipse, concerning which a few years ago, reading Benveniste, we had emphasized that, in its very etymology, it implies the exercise of power by someone it suffices to designate as himself, ipse. The sovereign, in the broadest sense of the term, is he who has the right and the strength to be and be recognized as himself, the same, properly the same as himself. Benveniste, to whom I refer you, goes on to wonder about the filiation of potis, Sanskrit pätāya, Latin potius (to have power over something, to have at one's disposal, to possess, posse). "The notion of 'power' [. . .] is then constituted and it receives its verbal form from the predicative expression potius contracted into potest which engenders the conjugation possum, potest, 'I am capable, I can.'" Now, and I insist on this point, for we will not cease to measure its consequences, Benveniste had inscribed the value of ipseity, the ipse, the "oneself," the "him(one)self" in the same filiation, as though power were first of all recognized in the one who could be designated or who could be the first to designate himself as the same, a himself, a oneself. We commented a few years back on these lines of Benveniste, who is surprised that a word meaning "master" (as he had shown a page earlier: potis, in Sanskrit patih [master and husband], in Greek pois [husband], in composition despotes) should become so enfeebled (Benveniste's word and value, but I do not believe one can speak here of enfeeblement, of loss of power — to the contrary) as to signify "himself." On the other hand, Benveniste undersands better that a word signifying "himself" could have taken on the proper sense of "master." In spoken Latin, Plautus, as Benveniste recalls (and let us not forget, let us never forget the wolves in our genealogy, let us not forget that, be this a coincidence or not, Plautus is the author of Asinaria concerning which I recalled last time, during our wolf-hunt, that it contained the first occurrence of Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom quali sit nor nosti) — Plautus, then, uses the word ipsissimus (the absolutely himself) to designate the master, the boss, the most important personage, in short the first, the princeps or the prince. In short, the sovereign. In Russian, sam (himself) names the lord. Among the Pythagoreans, the master Pythagoras was designated as autos, autos ephe: he said it himself, i.e. the master said, "In Danish hun gølver, 'selbst,' has the same meaning." The master (and what is said of the master is easily transferable to the first of all, the prince, the sovereign), the master is he who is said to be, and who can say "himself" to be, the (self-)same, "myself."

The concept of sovereignty will always imply the possibility of this possibility, this thesis, this self-thesis, this autoposition of him who posits or posits himself as ipse, the (self-)same, oneself. And that will be just as much the case for all the "firsts," for the sovereign as princely person, the monarch or the emperor or the dictator, as for the people in a democracy, or even for the citizen-subject in the exercise of his sovereign liberty (for example, when he votes or places his secret ballot in the box, sovereignly). In sum, wherever there is a decision worthy of the name, in the classical sense of the term. Dictatorship (and in a minimal and strict sense sovereignty is always a moment of dictatorship, even if one does not live in a so-called dictatorial regime) is always the essence of sovereignty, where it is linked to the power to say in the form of dictation, prescription, order or dicta. From the Roman dictatura, where the dictator is the supreme and extraordinary magistrate, sometimes the first magistrate, and so the master of certain cities, to modern forms of dictatorship such as Führer or Duce or the Little Father of the People or some other "papadoc," but also in the figure of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in dictatorship in general as power that exercises itself unconditionally in the form of the Diktat, of the ultimate saying or the performative verdict that gives orders and has no account to render other than to itself (ipse), and not to any superior agency, especially not a parliament — well, that dictatorship, that dictatorial agency, is at work everywhere, wherever there is sovereignty.

5. Ibid., p. 91.
obvious that this is more than difficult, and that's why we are working, why we are working at it and allowing ourselves to be worked on by it.

When I say "slow and differentiated deconstruction," what do I mean by that? First, that the rhythm of this deconstruction cannot be that of a seminar or a discourse ex cathedra. This rhythm is first of all the rhythm of what is happening in the world. This deconstruction is what is happening, as I often say, and what is happening today in the world — through crises, wars, phenomena of so-called national and international terrorism, massacres that are declared or not, the transformation of the global market and of international law — what is happening is so many events that are affecting the classical concept of sovereignty and making trouble for it. In this seminar, we are only beginning to reflect on, and take into account, as consequentially as we can, what is happening. On the other hand, as we are already realizing — and this is why I say "slow" but especially "differentiated," it cannot be a matter, under the pretext of deconstruction, of purely and simply, frontally, opposing sovereignty. There is no sovereignty or the sovereign. There is not the beast and the sovereign. There are different and sometimes antagonistic forms of sovereignty, and it is always in the name of one that one attacks another: for example (we were alluding to this earlier), it is in the name of a sovereignty of man, or even of the personal subject, of his autonomy (for autonomy and liberty are also sovereignty, and one cannot without warning and without threatening by the same token all liberty, purely and simply attack the motifs or the rallying cries of independence, autonomy, and even nation-state sovereignty, in the name of which some weak peoples are struggling against the colonial and imperial hegemony of more powerful states).¹¹

In a certain sense, there is no contrary of sovereignty, even if there are things other than sovereignty. Even in politics (and the question remains of knowing if the concept of sovereignty is political through and through) — even in politics, the choice is not between sovereignty and nonsovereignty, but among several forms of partings, partitions, divisions, conditions that come along to broach a sovereignty that is always supposed to be indivisible and unconditional. Whence the difficulty, awkwardness, aporia even, and the slowness, the always unequal development of such a deconstruction. This is less than ever the equivalent of a destruction. But recognizing that sovereignty is divisible, that it divides and partitions, even where there is any sovereignty left, is already to begin to deconstruct a pure concept of sovereignty that presupposes indivisibility. A divisible sovereignty is no longer a sovereignty, a sovereignty worthy of the name, i.e. pure and unconditional.

Whether or not one agrees with these propositions of Schmitt's, one can understand why, even though they come from a right-wing Catholic who was more than compromised a few years later with Nazism and anti-Semitism, they should have seduced, and still today retain their power of seduction on the Left for all those who are ready at least to share this vigilance with respect to "humanistic" and "humanitarian" rites and allegations, which constitute the rhetorical weapon but also the weapon pure and simple, and sometimes a hugely murderous weapon, of new political or economical imperialisms. This argument of Schmitt's, and this is all I want to retain from it for now, is that there is no politics, no politicity of the political without affirmation of sovereignty, that the privileged if not unique form of that sovereignty is the state, state sovereignty, and that such a political sovereignty in the form of the state presupposes the determination of an enemy; and this determination of the enemy can in no case take place, by definition, in the name of humanity. The concept of this sovereignty which never goes without an enemy, which needs the enemy to be what it is, is not necessarily linked or limited to such or such a state structure (monarchical, oligarchical, democratic, or republican). Even when the sovereign is the people or the nation, this does not damage the law, structure, or vocation of sovereignty, as Schmitt defines it (the positing of an enemy without humanist or humanitarian invocation; the right to exception; the right to suspend right; the right to be outside the law).

This is why Schmitt will have quoted, before the passage I just read, an eloquent declaration in this respect by the Committee for Public Safety, in 1793. This declaration, quoted by Schmitt, is first quoted by Ernst Friesenhahn <in> Der politische Eid (The Political Oath). (I recall this title to re-inscribe this statement in a logic of the oath that makes of the affirmation of sovereignty a performative, a commitment, an act of sworn faith, of war declared against a sworn enemy: sovereignty is a posited law, a thesis or a prosthesis, and not a natural given, it is the sworn institution — a faith sworn, and therefore structurally fictional, figural, invented, conventional, as Hobbes clearly shows, moreover — the institution of a law that was never found in nature; but precisely the question then returns of the link between this right, the force of law and force tout court, the disposition of force tout court, of a force that makes right, of a reason of the strongest which is or is not the best; but I emphasize this reference to oath and fidelity to sworn faith to announce a detour that we shall need to make in a moment, toward Machiavelli's Prince and his wolf — that we must not forget). Now this Dec-

¹¹ [Translator's note] This sentence is possibly incomplete in the French text.
laration of the Committee on Public Safety, twice quoted by Friesenhahn and by Schmitt, says:

Since the French people manifested its will [so, by this manifestation of a will, the French people posted itself as the French people and as its own sovereign], everything that is opposed to it is outside the sovereign; everything that is outside the sovereign is an enemy. . . . Between the people and its enemies there is nothing left in common but the sword.14

Which is what is called sworn faith, and sworn enemy.

Pack [meute] of wolves. For a first reconnaissance of these territories, you remember, we had begun to meuter (to whip up, literally to raise, to put in motion, motus), to whip up, if not to hunt, not dogs but wolves. Never forget the wolves, all the wolves. Many wolves will have crossed the room. You have understood that all of that was, among other things, a way of preparing us, of advancing us, stealthy as wolves, toward this fable of La Fontaine, The Wolf and the Lamb, which begins, as we ourselves began, with

The reason of the strongest is always the best
As we shall shortly show.

We began thus, saying also that no seminar should begin that way, like a fable, nor should it recommend or command that one begin that way, by “we shall shortly show.”

Show — what? Well, that “the reason of the strongest is always the best.”

A violently tautological proposition, then, pragmatically tautological (in La Fontaine and here too, as though this still remained, as a seminar, a fable or an affabulation) since I am here using, by force of law, taking into account my accredited position as a professor authorized to speak ex cathedra for hours, weeks, and years (accredited by a convention or by a fiction the honesty of which remains to be proved, by you or by me, and even then an always revisable and renewable consensus gives force of law to the force of law), a violently tautological proposition, thus, pragmatically tautological, for if “we shall shortly show,” what are we going to show, with La Fontaine? Well, that the reason of the strongest is always the best. As the reason of the strongest is always the best, I authorize myself by the reason of the strongest (that I am here, by situation, by hetero- and autopoision) to defer the moment at which I shall show or demonstrate that the reason of the

14. [Translator’s note:] This passage is omitted from the English translation of Schmitt’s book: I have translated from the text as given by Derrida.