

SOVEREIGNTY AND SACRIFICE

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Author's Note

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INTRODUCTION

A friend once told me a story about her little boy making these roaring sounds somewhere in the house. When she asked him what he was doing, he replied: I am scaring this spider before I trample it to death.

My engagement with Agamben will concern the difference and crossing between this roaring and trampling, this scaring and squashing to death. Perhaps there is even the cleaning of the shoe or the foot with or without shuddering to consider here.

According to Agamben, homo sacer is the one who can be killed, but he cannot be sacrificed. And for him sovereignty relates to or is constituted by this non-sacrificial killing.¹ Sovereignty concerns the power to determine or simply *manage*, manage merely technically what is to be done with life that has no or no longer has meaning in excess of mere life. Sovereignty would be managing merely technically the ultimately uninteresting managerial decision, or non-decision rather, to continue or discontinue an instance of bare life. Sovereignty would be the trampling of the spider without the need or the wish to scare, the wiping of a shoe without shuddering.

Agamben relates the technical reign of sovereignty to the camp, the death camps and the increasingly ubiquitous realm of the exceptional managerial crossing between bare life and death in contemporary medical practices.² This clearly resonates with Heidegger's understanding of the holocaust in terms of the technical essence of western metaphysics coming into its own with the production of death on the production line of the death camps.³ And Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe gives us another statement in this regard when he refers to the absence of even the least of ritual elements in the extermination camps.⁴ The

* Professor of Law, Rand Afrikaans University. Conversations with Ann van Sevenant, Carol Clarkson, Louise du Toit, Peter Fitzpatrick, Costas Douzinas and Adam Thurschwell gave impetus to many of the themes developed in this article. Concomitant shortcomings and inaccuracies, as always, are strictly mine.

¹ Cf. Agamben *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) 71, relying on the following passage from Pompeius Festus' treatise *On the Significance of Words*: “At homo sacer is est, quem populus idudicavit ob maleficium; neque fas est eum immolari, sed qui occidit, parricidi non damnatur.” (The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide.)

² Cf. Agamben *Homo Sacer* (fn. 1) 119-188.

³ Cf. Heidegger *Bremer Vorlesungen* 1949.

⁴ Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe Heidegger, *Art and Politics* (1990) 36-37.

argument that follows doubts this complete assertion of a complete absence of ritual and sacrifice in the holocaust and in the practice of modern medicine, but the thought that Agamben, Heidegger and Lacoue-Labarthe pursue with this assertion is a forceful one that requires thorough scrutiny.

The desire of sovereignty is indeed to be so completely self-identical and absolutely self-related that its engagement with others, from the point of view of sovereignty, had best be reduced to a silent managerial processing of the other. As such, sovereignty would indeed seem to relate to an event beyond sacrifice. But this sovereignty remains impossible, Derrida tells us. And attempts at sovereignty cannot therefore only remain attempted sovereignties and all too sacrificial at that. Attempted sovereignty is characterised by its exertion, by its ritual sacrificial crossing of the line between meaningful life and death, the scaring noise that precedes the squashing of the spider. The silent and technical killings in the death camps can ultimately not be separated from the pictures we know of a raving and ranting *Führer*. The very last moment, if something like this can be hypostasised or distinguished at all, the last moment in which life would become bare or mere life before it finally turns into death, cannot be separated from the symbolic meaning or force of life that precedes the supposed moment of bare life. To put this simply: *Homo sacer* must have been sacrificed along the way before it reached the stage of mere or bare life and the final “non-sacrificial” killing of *homo sacer* cannot be separated cleanly from its sacrificial or sacrificed past.⁵ Hence the greater plausibility of Jean Luc Nancy’s assertion that sovereignty is always a matter of sacrifice. Nancy writes:

⁵ The explanation of the figure of *Homo Sacer* by Mommsen, Lange, Bennet and Strachan-Davidson confirms this point. According to them the death sentence itself constituted a sacrifice to the gods. This would make sense, because one can imagine the highly ritualistic character of archaic Roman law to have evinced many if not most of the features of ritual sacrifice. Agamben nevertheless questions the plausibility of this explanation, since it fails to explain “the ban on sacrifice”. Cf. *Homo Sacer* (fn. 1) 72-73. One must bear in mind, however, that Festus’s text refers only to a ban on immolation (*immolare*), not to sacrifice (*sacer facere*) as such. And it is moreover not incomprehensible that the early Romans would deem it improper to deal with convicted criminals in the same way that other consecrated objects were treated. Compare in this regard the old Hebrew devotion or consecration of impious sinners, criminals and enemies of society to the deity of the community by utter destruction to which Agamben himself refers a few pages further on (at 76) quoting Robertson Smith: “But in oldest Hebrew times it involved the utter destruction, not only of the persons involved, but of their property ... and only metals, after they had been passed through the fire were added to the sanctuary (Josh. 6:24). Even cattle were not sacrificed, but simply slain, and the devoted city must not be revealed (Deut. 13:6; Josh. 6: 26).” Agamben appears to make too much of the simple or strict equation of sacrifice and immolation that is also evident in this quote from Smith’s work. Sacrifice can easily be understood to be a much broader phenomenon than just immolation. Agamben himself appears to acknowledge this when he makes mention of the sacrificial status of *every social act and of language*. Cf. the following passage from *Potentialities* (1999) 135: That man – the animal who has language – is as such the ungrounded, that his only foundation is in his own action, his own giving himself grounds, is a truth as ancient that it lies at the basis of humanity’s most ancient religious practice: sacrifice. However one interprets the sacrificial function, in every case what is essential is that the activity of human community is grounded in another one of its activities – that, as we learn from etymology, all *facere* is *sacrum facere*. At the center of sacrifice simply lies a determinate *activity* that is as such separated and excluded, becoming *sacer* and hence invested with a series of ritual prohibitions and prescriptions. Once it is marked with sacredness, an activity is not, however, simply excluded; rather it is henceforth accessible only through certain persons and determinate rules. It thus furnishes society and its unfounded legislation with the fiction of a beginning; what is excluded from community is in truth what founds the whole life of community, being taken up by a community as an immemorial past. Every

“À ce compte, la politique *doit* être destin, avoir l’histoire pour carrière, la souveraineté pour emblème et le sacrifice pour accès. Il faudrait retracer l’histoire impressionnante du sacrifice politique, de la politique sacrificielle - ou de la politique *en verité*, c’est-à-dire du ‘théologico-politique’ : depuis le sacrifice expressément religieux jusqu’aux diverses Terreurs, et à tous les sacrifice nationaux, militants, partisans, Politique de la *Cause* à laquelle le sacrifice est dû. En cela, tout le théologico-politique, jusque dans sa ‘sécularisation’, est et ne peut être que sacrificiel.”⁶

But this sacrificial sovereignty, we shall see below, is not quite *real* for Nancy. We should recall that the second essay of *La communauté désœuvrée* moves towards an interruption of myth.⁷ The question that I wish to raise in this regard is whether this lack of concern for the reality of sacrifice in Nancy’s work does not risk turning one of its central themes into a myth. Let us refer in this regard, to go all too quickly, to the myth of the *partage* that shares existence freely and without sacrifice. We can also refer to it as the myth of “Psyche that is pure extension and does not know thereof.” Section II to which I turn now shall raise the question regarding this myth in Nancy’s work. It shall also look into the possibility of a certain Derridean interruption of this myth. Section III will thereafter pursue this interruption of the myth of the *partage* further with reference to Derrida’s political engagement with psychoanalysis. But to be sure, the interruption of the myth of the *partage* that will be attempted in what follows, must also be understood as an engaged contemplation of the *partage*. The interruption of the myth of the *partage* is in fact a contemplation of the interruption *of* the *partage* itself. The “*of*” here must be read as a subjective genitive. At issue is thinking through, thinking through, *without illusion* we shall see, of the interruption that belongs to the *partage* or the interruption that the *partage* is “itself”. We shall move away from Nancy in order to get closer to him.

II INTERRUPTING THE MYTH OF THE PARTAGE

Both Nancy and Derrida’s thought can be understood to articulate a certain resistance to the sacrificial essence of Western metaphysics. There are complex differences and

beginning [*inizio*] is, in truth, initiation; every *conditum* is an *ab-sconditum*....The ungroundedness of all human praxis is concealed in the abandonment to itself of an activity (*a sacrum facere*) that founds every lawful activity; it is what, remaining unsayable (arréton) and untransmittable in every human activity, destines man to community and transmission.” Now, “*homo sacer*”, writes Festus in the passage on which Agamben relies so heavily, “is the one who has been judged by the people on account of a crime” (quem populus iudicavit ob maleficium). How can one at all argue plausibly that he is entirely exempted from the sacrificial logic of this judgment and of sacrificial self-foundation of society at issue in this judgment, solely for reason of his *immolation* not being permitted. If all acts of society are sacrificial, as Agamben says, certainly all forms of killing other than immolation must be said to also constitute some form of sacrifice.

⁶ Nancy *Le Sens du monde* (1993) 141. Nancy also relates sacrifice expressly to the attempt of the body to become fully one with itself and absolutely self-related. Cf. *Corpus* (2000)70: “[sacrifice] ... dit (en principe) le passage d’un corps à une limite où il devient corps commun, esprit d’une communion dont il est l’effectif symbole matériel (*hoc est enim*...), rapport absolu à soi du sens dans le sang, du sang dans le sens.” Cf. also *La communauté désœuvrée* (1999) 215 : “l’être commun se constitue de lui-même comme son propre sens. Ce sens est donc nécessairement celui d’une *fin* : but et achèvement, fin de l’histoire, solution finale, humanité accomplie. Seule la fin est auto-suffisante. Et c’est ici que la communauté s’achève, en échec persistant ou en catastrophe terrifiante : l’amour, l’État, l’histoire n’ont de vérité que dans la mise à mort. L’être du sens, le sens de l’être sont leur propre et commun sacrifice.”

⁷ Cf. the essay *Le mythe interrompu* in Nancy *La communauté disœuvrée* (fn. 6) 109-174.

tensions between them, though. An important aspect of this is a certain elision in Nancy's writing that one does not find in Derrida. As Derrida puts it, Nancy's thoughts regarding the *partage* concern the impossible. The thought is thoroughly aporetic, but he never mentions the aporia or the impossible. He refers to it, instead, with the dubious word "fraternity":

"La difficulté surgit au moment où l'on doit déterminer en politique, voire en démocratique (mais on pourrait aussi bien dire ici en juridique et en éthique) l'espacement d'une liberté présubjective ou précratique et d'autant plus inconditionnelle, immense démesure, incommensurable, incalculable, inappropriable qu'elle ne peut, dit Nancy, 'en aucune façon former une propriété' et qu'elle consiste, Nancy le répète à l'envi, à excéder toute mesure. Elle est l'incommensurable même. 'La liberté *ne se mesure à rien*' souligne-t-il; ou encore: La liberté : se mesurer au rien... Toute la difficulté logera dans l'injonction du partage, et de partager de façon juste, équitable, égale, mesurée, l'incommensurable. Et cette difficulté, je la crois plus difficile qu'une difficulté, je lui trouve tous les traits de l'impossible même. À ce partage de l'incommensurable, Nancy va donner, mais je voudrais y revenir encore et encore, le nom à mes yeux douteux de 'fraternité'. Il écrit, au terme d'un raisonnement sur lequel je reviens dans un instant: "La fraternité est l'égalité dans le partage de l'incommensurable...."⁸

"Rien de nouveau à ce que j'appelle ici la difficulté rencontrée par Nancy, et que je préfère donc nommer l'impossible, l'impossible comme seule possibilité et comme condition de possibilité."⁹

Nancy ne parlerait pas, lui, d'aporie, je crois, là où pourtant ses formulations ressemblent, à mes yeux, à ce que j'appelle, moi, aporie."¹⁰

Now, Nancy does refer to the impossibility of the possible that Derrida invokes here. However, he relates it to an experience of *the necessity* of existence. And this leaves one with the question whether, despite the sense of wonderment that he expresses with regard to the miraculous possibility of the impossible, the impossible does not become *regularly* possible for him. He even refers to an *absolute knowledge* regarding the possibility of the impossible.¹¹ Is his work also concerned with the aporetic condition of a scarce or slender possibility of the impossible to which Derrida constantly refers, a possibility of the impossible with regard to which we can never be certain? This question must be asked in view of indications in his work that he wants us to contemplate a non-sacrificial existence that is *just there*, so to speak, a non-sacrificial existence that shares itself freely between singular beings. Existence cannot be sacrificed, he writes in *Une pensée finie*:

"L'existence n'est pas à sacrifier, et on ne peut la sacrifier. On peut que la détruire, ou la partager."¹²

⁸ Derrida *Voyous* (2003) 73.

⁹ Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 74.

¹⁰ Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 76.

¹¹ Cf. *Une pensée finie* (1990) 209: "Que *cette* chose exist, et qu'elle soit quelque chose, c'est le contenu d'un savoir absolu qui précède toute pensée dans la pensée même. C'est l'expérience de la nécessité de l'existence, en tant qu'expérience de la liberté... L'expérience dont il s'agit ici n'est pas celle qui a lieu dans la circonscription d'une "expérience possible". Sa réalité précède toute possibilité. Elle est l'expérience impossible et réelle, impossiblement réelle, de quelque chose."

¹² Nancy *Une pensée finie* (fn. 11) 105.

The all too easy distinction between *détruire* and *partager* in this sentence goes to the heart of the myth of the *partage* that must be interrupted here. The interruption of the myth of the *partage*, the thinking through of the *partage* without illusion, requires that we consider destruction as *ineradicably* part and parcel of the *partage*. Destruction should in fact be considered to be the very *partage* of the *partage*, the interruption at the heart of the *partage*, the a-apartness of the *partage*.¹³ What, after all, becomes of the all too real and seemingly *ineradicable* sacrificial attempts at sovereignty, to invoke already here Freud's use of the word "ineradicable" that we shall encounter below? This is the question that I shall be asking Nancy in what follows. Existence cannot be sacrificed, he maintains. He would perhaps have us understand that sacrifice, as is the case with the malevolent and evil decision as such, resists existence and attempts to appropriate for itself *an essence outside existence (s'appropriier comme essence hors de l'existence)*. As such sacrifice would constitute a decision in favour of *the fury of the essence (la fureur de l'essence)* and against the grace of existence (*la grâce de l'existence*).¹⁴ But what is at issue in or the significance of this rather classical distinction between essence and existence? Why is the one gracious and the other furious? Nancy seems to contemplate *the other mode of sovereignty* of a togetherness that exceeds the sacrificial attempts at subjective sovereignty, the sacrificial attempts of the subject becoming one with itself or an essence in itself.¹⁵ But what is the status of this contemplation as far as a critique of political sovereignty is concerned? What is achieved by calling sovereignty an *essential* separation or alienation from existence? More importantly, *what is required for human beings to decide in favour of the grace of existence and against the fury of essence?*

And what is the status of the singularly beautiful text of this contemplation? Nancy writes about the *partage* in a way that seems to suggest that, or at least leaves us wondering whether his own thought or writing can access or imagine in a non-sacrificial way an ultimately non-sacrificial existence. He has a singular style of naming and asserting, naming and asserting so poetically, the play of the *partage* and of liberty, the play of

¹³ He comes close to doing this or is perhaps in fact doing this when he refers to the hate of existence as also the most characteristic possibility of the freedom of existence. Cf. *L'expérience de la liberté* (1988) 168: "[L]a haine de l'existence est aussi la possibilité la plus propre de la liberté." Two pages before this passage (at 166) he also refers to a malevolence that hates, not this or that singularity, but singularity as such, hates liberty, equality and fraternity, hates the *partage*. And this hate is not external to but indeed belongs to or is part and parcel of the *partage*, liberty and equality. It is the self-hate of the *partage*. He refers in this regard to evil as the hate of existence (subjective and objective genitive) as such: "La méchanceté ne hait pas telle ou telle singularité : elle hait la singularité en tant que telle, et le rapport singulier des singularités. Elle hait la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité, elle hait le partage. Et cette haine est celle de la liberté elle-même (elle est donc aussi la haine de l'égalité et de la fraternité elles-mêmes; le partage se hait, et se voue à la ruine)...*Le mal est la haine de l'existence comme telle.*" The question that must nevertheless be asked in this regard is this: Why is Nancy prepared to refer to a hate and an evil that is part and parcel of the *partage* and of existence while refusing to thus also acknowledge sacrifice, which certainly constitutes the institutional life of this hate. A regard for and a critique of sacrifice, I endeavour to show in what follows, offer us critical access to the *institutional life* of the ontological or existential hate and evil that Nancy attributes to existence or liberty as such. Why not recognise it as such? And what, after all, would be the status of political, legal and economic sacrifice if it is not to be understood as part and parcel of the *partage*?

¹⁴ Cf. Nancy *L'expérience de la liberté* (fn. 11) 179.

¹⁵ Cf. Nancy *Le Sens du monde* (fn. 6) 143: "Mais cela ne veut pas dire que le sens d'être-en-commun, pour autant que le sens lui-même est en commun, n'ait pas à se faire autrement souverain."

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existence. Does this style not suggest that thought can access imaginatively or thoughtfully the different sovereignty of existence or of Being itself, albeit so that this Being that is accessed by his thought is not a Being resting quietly in itself, but Being or truth in the event of making sense, a making sense that calls forth language and thought, language and thought that constitutes an interruption of truth? According to Nancy, the *partage* constantly agitates the space between sense and truth.¹⁶ But the question persists: Can the making sense of the world or of Being that calls forth language be accessed by Nancy's thought? Sometimes it is, despite Nancy's thorough caution in this regard, as if there is a Heideggerian contemplation of Being at work in his work that elides even Heidegger's own at least part-time concern with the aporetic passage or non-passage of language on its way (*unterwegs*) to Being.¹⁷

Sometimes his writing evokes a thinking of Being that elides, in fact, the non-passage of language on the way to language. The *unterwegs* to and *unterwegs* of language are not always pronounced in Nancy's text. It is this aporetic *unterwegs*, this aporetic difference or *differánce* to and of language that Derrida, on the other hand, never or hardly ever fails to mention. And it is exactly at this aporetic junction or disjunction of the *unterwegs* to Being and the *unterwegs* to language that the whole problem of sacrifice has its origin and location.

Sacrifice consequently remains a real issue for Derrida. We sacrifice in order not to be sacrificed, he writes in *Donner la mort*.¹⁸ Everything takes place between sacrifice and non-sacrifice or between the sacrifice that binds and the sacrifice that cuts, he writes in *Resistances*.¹⁹ Yet, he continues to dream, in *feu la cendre*, of a pure place (a place that is

¹⁶ Cf. Nancy *Le Sens du monde* (fn. 6) 25-40, especially at 39: "Il ne cesse de tender et d'agiter l'espace entre sense et vérité."

¹⁷ Derrida has all along maintained that Heidegger ultimately always privileges a certain belonging and propriety (the *Eigentum* evident in *Eigentlichkeit* and in *Ereignis*), fittingness or fitting into the fold (the *fugen* of the *Fug*), homeliness (*Heimlichkeit*) or gathering (*Versammlung*) as far as humanity's relation to Being is concerned. Cf. *Of Spirit* (1989) 106; *Specters of Marx* (1994) 28. Lacoue-Labarthe, on the other hand, argues convincingly that, from 1929 onwards, the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) becomes the crucial term for Heidegger as regards his understanding of the relation between man and Being. Cf. his outstanding essay "In the name of ..." in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (eds.) *Retreating the political* (1997) 55-79. I cannot claim the competence required to enter this debate, but shall nevertheless venture one statement in this regard. If the gathering or *Versammlung* that gathers up man and Being ultimately consists in pain (*Schmerz*) that rends apart (*reißt Auseinander*) as Heidegger suggests with reference to Trakl's poetry, he certainly goes some way (he is certainly to some extent on the way or *unterwegs*) towards contemplating the falling apart of the *partage*, albeit only to ultimately stress the gathering as Derrida avers. Cf. *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1986) 11-82, especially at 27: "Doch was ist Schmerz? Der Schmerz reißt. Er ist der Riss. Allein er zerreißt nicht in auseinanderfahrende Splitter. Der Schmerz reißt zwar auseinander, er scheidet, jedoch so, dass er zugleich alles auf sich zieht, in sich versammelt." If it is pain that brings us together, according to Heidegger, he is indeed quite *on* the way (and who will ever claim to be *all* the way?) towards thinking through the *partage* without illusion.

¹⁸ Cf. Derrida *Donner la mort* (1999) 119: "[L]a même "société" fait mourir ou, différence secondaire dans le cas de non-assistance à personne en danger, laisse mourir de faim et de maladie des centaines de millions d'enfants (de ces prochains ou des ces semblables dont parle l'éthique ou le discours des droits de l'homme) sans qu'aucun tribunal moral ou juridique soit jamais compétent pour juger ici du sacrifice – du sacrifice de l'autre en vue de ne pas se sacrifier soi-même."

¹⁹ Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (1996) 51 n.1, quoted in full at fn. 60 below.

purely place, a place that is nothing but a taking place) of cinders, incineration and purification, a place that is nevertheless not haunted by the shadow of sacrifice.²⁰

Language or the way to language is the first scene of sacrifice. This is the single thought that guides his engagement with Paul Celan in *Shibboleth*. Language, the poetic language that is to mark the date, the original and originating being of the poem, destroys the singularity of the date and thus also of the poem by rendering it readable in language that remains, however uniquely poetic, a product of generic and non-singular readable signs.²¹ That is why Celan proclaims the poem to be impossible.²² Let us also recall for a moment that replacement or substitution is also the key element of sacrifice according to Horkheimer and Adorno.²³ Language re-places and thus displaces the mute oneness, once-ness or singularity of existence. Both the poet and the sovereign resist the linguistic loss of the singular. Sovereignty, writes Derrida in *Voyous*, concerns an impossible return to a first or early silence.²⁴ It thus concerns an always thwarted return to silence that ultimately cannot but remain ridden by noises and sounds, the roars and the screams of sacrifice. Sometimes the voices of the sacrificed are raised to bring them to our attention, writes Derrida. But these voices remain powerless. They cannot change the sacrificial structure of language and society.²⁵

The aim of language, the aim of every attempt at accurate reference, is of course always to restore existence to a state of animal wholeness, to return to the non-violent force of Being or existence,²⁶ but this very restoration or return or *attempted* restoration and return cannot but fracture and violate again and again the wholeness of what is not whole and cannot be whole without reference or referring, the wholeness that cannot be whole without these very fragmented and fragmenting attempts at wholeness. This is not a matter of the whole originally having being whole prior to the fragmentation wreaked by referencing. It is a matter of the whole originally being fragmented and in need of reference.

Let us return to Agamben's genealogy of the biopolitical in *Homo Sacer*. The biopolitical, the politics of life or the politics concerning life, is introduced, he argues, with the metaphysical concern with the movement from potentiality to actuality in Aristotle's thought.²⁷ So much for a genealogy that has its actuality already so evident in the furthest or earliest recesses of its potentiality. It is a long way from Aristotle to Auschwitz, but according to Agamben, (and to Heidegger) Aristotle already tells us a lot

²⁰ Cf. Derrida *feu la cendre* (1998) 21: "Pas de cendre sans feu. Cela se doit au feu et pourtant, si possible, sans l'ombre d'un sacrifice, à midi, sans dette, sans Phénix et l'unique phrase vient à placer, au lieu d'aucun placement, le lieu seulement d'une incineration ...[où] rein n'aura eu lieu que le lieu. Il ya là cendre : il y a lieu." And as for the abundance of reflections on sacrifice in Derrida's work, cf. the following remark in *Voyous* (at 205): "Quant à la notion du sacrifice... j'en tant écrit qu'un page de références n'y suffirait pas."

²¹ Cf. Derrida *Shibboleth* (1986) 83-84.

²² Cf. Celan *Gesammelte Werke III* (1992) 199, Derrida *Shibboleth* (fn. 21) 33.

²³ Cf. Horkheimer and Adorno *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung* ((1969) 55-56.

²⁴ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* 143-144.

²⁵ Cf. Derrida *Donner la morte* (fn. 18) 119-120.

²⁶ Heidegger in *Beiträge*. Indebted to Ann van Sevenant. Cf. her article in *Europe*

²⁷ Cf. Agamben *Homo Sacer* (fn. 1) 166-188.

about the thrust towards wholeness, full presence or actuality embodied or conclusively disembodied in Auschwitz. Nancy refers to this very concern with the movement from potentiality to actuality as the trans-appropriating sacrificial thrust through which Western thought has all along sought to suppress otherness. Sacrifice attempts the conclusive return to and appropriation or re-appropriation of otherness, the otherness, that is, that keeps Being *unterwegs* to or apart from itself.²⁸ The concern with full actuality and absolute selfness that Agamben identifies in the biopolitics of modernity is evidently the same one that Nancy associates with sacrifice. Hence perhaps the question above as to why Agamben insists on the non-sacrificial status of biopolitics. Why does he insist to make so much of Home Sacer as the one who could not be sacrificed?

All of this resonates clearly with the anthropological studies of sacrifice by Hubert and Mauss. Ritual sacrifice, they argue, concerns the restoration of the primordial or pre-primordial oneness with the sacred.²⁹ Sacrifice concerns the return in myth and of myth to the unrelated or non-related oneness of the sacred. But Being or existence is irreducibly apart from itself, writes Nancy. It is the free movement of the *partage*, the parting that shares and divides Being between beings. It is thus always irreducibly *unterwegs* to itself. No, not even *unterwegs* to itself, just *unterwegs: Unterwegs zur Sprache*, on the way to language, or *unterwegs als Sprache*, on the way as language. It is the infinite interruption of the *unterwegs* that interrupts the myth or myths of sacrificial oneness and thus guards the finite and the singular.³⁰

But sacrifice, like language, has a double status here, a double status that also ties it to otherness. Sacrifice is not only the movement towards *oneness*. It is also the *movement* towards oneness. It is also the *no longer* or *not yet* oneness suggested by this movement. In an oblique way, sacrifice also signifies the *unterwegs* and *apartness* of existence. Why then does Nancy aver existence to be insacrificable? Should he not concede that sacrifice is not only directed at *essential* wholeness, but also that through this as yet always only directedness at wholeness, sacrifice also constitutes a mode (and perhaps a regular one at that) of the very *existential* diversion from wholeness that he attributes to existence? And if he cannot, would this not constitute a certain lack of concern with the all too often traumatic apartness of Being? And would such a lack of concern for the trauma of apartness and the reality of sacrifice as part and parcel of the *partage* not indeed constitute an uninterrupted myth (a myth without apartness)? Would the *unterwegs*, apartness, being-apart or coming apart or *partage* of existence that is also a traumatic *falling apart*, to recall Achebe here,³¹ not also have to account for the falling apart that in South Africa went and still goes by the name of *apartheid*? Would an incisive and non-illusionary (which need not be a disillusioned) concern with the *partage* of liberty or existence not require one to come to terms with the sacrificial logic of *apartheid*?³² What is the status, for instance, of the 1990 massacre in Monrovia that Nancy cites in *Une*

²⁸ Cf. Nancy *Une pensée finie* (fn. 11) 83.

²⁹ Cf. Hubert and Mauss *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice* in Mauss *Oeuvres 1. les fonctions sociales du sacré* (1968) xxx.

³⁰ Cf. Nancy *La communauté disoevrée* (fn. 6) 109-174

³¹ Cf. Achebe *Things fall apart* (19xxx)

³² In this regard, cf. Van der Walt *Apartheid and partage: towards a post-sacrificial theory of law and politics* (Birkbeck Law Press, forthcoming 2004).

pensée finie in a footnote to a passage in which he announces the dawn of a new or other community in which there will be no sacrifice and no sacrificial mimetic appropriation of the other?³³ And what is it that signifies for Nancy this drastic change in the destiny of the *partage*?

Moreover, can sheer corporality, the non-sacrificial movement or *exposition of the skin* (*expeausition*) that Nancy invokes in *Corpus* at all be imagined without taking account of the sacrifices involved in the language that would endeavour to describe this very movement, exposition or extension? Can the *partage*, *corpus* or *corporality* be named? Is Nancy not indeed here to doing the impossible without saying that he is doing the impossible? Nancy refers repeatedly to the phrase Freud wrote shortly before his death: *Psyche ist ausgedehnt, weiss nichts davon*.³⁴ “Psyche is extended, knows nothing thereof.” He also follows Aristotle in *Corpus*: Psyche or the soul is the form of the body.³⁵ The reference to Freud’s phrase would nevertheless suggest that the soul is not the form of the body that returns to itself or forms itself in the form of knowledge. Psyche is extension, [but] knows nothing thereof. Psyche does not return to herself in a hermeneutic circle, or a circle of sovereignty, which is the same circle.³⁶

However, let us first take a look at Psyche to see whether Freud’s note on Psyche holds true. The myth of Psyche tells us so much about the elision of the aporia in Nancy and the reversal of this elision in Derrida.

“Psyche is tangible, but untouchable, at least for Eros who has the art of the caress,” writes Derrida, commenting on Nancy.³⁷ One can venture the following comments on the myth of Psyche so as to begin or prepare its interruption: Eros is prepared to love and make love to Psyche in darkness, thus in a way not touching or touching without touching her beauty. Psyche, however, is curious. She wants to know whether Eros is not the monster the priestess predicted she would have as a lover. Eros has the art of the unknowing, non-touching, unseen and un-seeing caress. Psyche does not. She switches on the light in the chamber of passion. She is the one with the *archive fever*, so to speak. She has to have knowledge of the origin.³⁸

We shall presently be turning to Derrida’s engagement with the political and ethical responsibility with and of psychoanalysis, but a certain preparatory interruption of psychoanalysis without which the responsibility of psychoanalysis cannot be understood requires our attention before we do so. The interruption can be phrased thus: *To the extent that psychoanalysis claims to know the origin of the passion or pathology, to the extent that it is overcome by archive fever, it itself succumbs to the quest for and the attempt at sovereignty. It itself then becomes a sovereign turn or return to the origin, albeit of course a failed sovereign turn or return to the origin.* Only through a double interruption

³³ Cf. Nancy *Une pensée finie* (fn. 11) 105.

³⁴ Cf. Freud xxxx

³⁵ Cf. Nancy *Corpus* (fn. 6)107-128.

³⁶ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 39.

³⁷ Cf. Derrida *Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* xxx.

³⁸ Cf Derrida *Archive Fever* xxx.

of its return to the origin can psychoanalysis become the science without alibi,³⁹ the science that illuminates like a faint flickering in the dark without ever being able to switch on the lights and find, resolve or heal, onto-theologically or sacrificially, the origin of passion, pathology and sovereignty. Only through a double interruption can psychoanalysis become more like Eros and less like Psyche.

Double interruption? Yes. Psychoanalysis can become and remain to become the science without alibi only to the extent that it can interrupt, on the one hand, the myth of *Psyche* bent on *knowing* her lover beyond knowing him *as a lover*. However, it can also only become a science without alibi, if on the other hand, it can also interrupt the myth of a Psyche that would be reconciled with her lack of knowledge, relaxed and extended under the caress of her unknown lover. The former myth Nancy interrupts so well. The latter myth, which is clearly no less mythical and fantastic, he omits to interrupt. And this omission goes to the heart of the elision in his reflections on sovereignty and sacrifice. It goes to the heart of his silence as regards the inability of language to give a name to the Psyche who does not name, touch or know herself and her lover, the inability of language to give a name to the free movement of a *partage* beyond sacrifice.

Nancy's contemplation of the *partage* and the exteriority affected by or concomitant to it requires a more explicit account of the transcendental or quasi-transcendental role of sacrifice in the play of the *partage*. Without such an explicit account of sacrifice as part of the *partage*, his own concern with exteriority risks reduction to a Deleuzian immanence, that is, to an uninterrupted and ultimately benign and non-traumatic movement of existence within itself which would ultimately explain very little of the real crises and traumas of political life. Towards the end of the first chapter on Nancy in *Voyous* Derrida makes mention of a thousand questions that abound here:

“Mille questions se present ici. Que faire alors de ce qu'on appelle l'inconscient et donc de la divisabilité espacée, de la multiplicité hiérarchisée, du conflit de forces qu'il impose à l'identité souveraine? Combien de voix pour un inconscient? Comment les compter? Qu'est-ce qu'une psychoanalyse passée ou à venir peut nous dire de la démocratie?”

This passage almost comes out of the blue and figuratively splits the engagement with Nancy in chapters four and five of *Voyous*. This psychoanalytic interruption and the two chapters that it splits and ties together constitutes a critical interruption of Nancy's concern with the *partage* and with natality and fraternity. The interruption at issue, however, does not entail a rejection or dismissal of the notion of the *partage*. It entails thinking through *without illusion* the very *partage* of the *partage* so as to move closer to it. This, I wish to argue, is what is at issue in Derrida's concern with the psychoanalytical responsibility of politics and the political responsibility of psychoanalysis to which I shall turn now.

III CRUELTY

³⁹ Cf. Derrida *États de l'ame de la psychoanalyse* (2000) xxx

The transformation to come of ethics, law and politics, writes Derrida, would have to take into account psychoanalytical knowledge (*le savoir psychoanalytique*). And the community of psychoanalysis or psychoanalysts (*la communauté psychoanalytique*) would have to take into account history, notably the history of law, the recent performative mutations of which it has not shown any interest in.⁴⁰ Law and politics constitute a psychoanalytical problem and psychoanalysis has or is a political responsibility. At the heart of this problem and this responsibility lies an irreducible and ageless cruelty, a cruelty as old as if not older than man – *une cruauté sans âge, aussi vieille et sans doute plus vieille que l'homme*.⁴¹ What remains to be thought psychoanalytically are the mutation and novel historical manifestations of this ageless cruelty.⁴²

This ageless cruelty, the death drive, the drive for power and sovereignty, is irreducible or ineradicable, claims Freud. He holds the eradication of human aggression for an illusion.⁴³ Psychoanalysis thus never amounts to a direct ethical or moral evaluation of sovereign power or the sovereign exercise of power. At issue is after all a cruelty older than man, a cruelty that exists without anyone really wanting to be cruel.⁴⁴ It can therefore also not claim to provide us with an ethics or a sound system of law and politics that would resolve this ageless cruelty. So what can this non-evaluative or non-moralistic responsibility of psychoanalysis entail? Derrida's answer is somewhat circular. The responsibility of psychoanalysis in these domains is simply that psychoanalytical knowledge be taken into account in these domains.⁴⁵ But this circularity is not a sovereign one that ultimately seeks to ground itself. It is a circularity without ground, one that becomes (in both senses of the word) a science without onto-theological or moral alibis.

But what does this indirect, circular and ungrounded responsibility require from us? What does this indirect progressivism without illusion (*ce progressisme sans illusion*), as Derrida refers to it, entail?⁴⁶ According to Freud it involves the teleological progression of a dictatorship of reason that would indirectly displace and restrict the pulsating forces of cruelty so as to steer it away from war, murder and the extermination of the adversary.⁴⁷ And it is especially in the context of international law that this psychoanalytical responsibility is needed, argues Freud. In the context of domestic law, individuals have largely transferred their capacity to use force and aggression to the community, hence the fairly stable balance of power in the domestic sphere. The law is nothing particularly noble. It is nothing but this fairly stable balance of power between

⁴⁰ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 78.

⁴¹ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 70.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 72,73.

⁴⁴ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 89.

⁴⁵ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 77: "La psychoanalyse en tant que telle ne produit ou ne procure aucune éthique, aucun droit, aucun politique, certes, mais il revient à la responsabilité, dans ce trios domaines, de prendre en compte le savoir psychoanalytique."

⁴⁶ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 72.

⁴⁷ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 75.

individuals due to the monopoly of power by domestic or municipal authorities.⁴⁸ But this transfer of power and the capacity to exercise aggression to a communal monopoly has not really happened between individual states. Hence the persistence of the problem of sovereignty on an international or inter-statal level. Hence the absence of a real body of international law, according to Freud.⁴⁹ Derrida points out an array of remnants of sovereignty in international law and resistances of sovereignty to international law in *Voyous*.⁵⁰ But it is on the movement of resistance itself that I wish to concentrate in what follows.

IV. FEAR

Sovereignty or attempted sovereignty manifests itself in a variety of possible resistances. There is the attempted sovereignty evident in the resistance of the patient to the analyst. There is the resistance of the analyst to the resistance of the patient. There was a time that that Freud believed the responsibility of the analyst to stop with the finding and offering of a meaning of the pathology or the dream. Then it was up to the patient to accept the meaning and be healed or relieved by it. Only later did he realise that the responsibility of the analyst also extended to overcoming the resistance of the patient itself.

But then there is the more fundamental or deeper resistance of the pathology or the dream to analysis. And here Freud distinguishes between two kinds of resistances. There is the temporary resistance that can increasingly if incrementally be outflanked by the analyst. And then there is the impenetrable, insurmountable and thus interminable resistance of the navel or *nabel* of the dream, the *omphalos*, to all analyses. Freud refers in this regard to an absolute limit of knowledge, *der Unerkannte* that cannot be gauged. *Unergründlich*, he calls it. But the navel at issue here also involves a knot (*un nouage*), the knot that ties up the umbilical cord. Derrida emphasises this knot, in contrast with Lacan who puts more emphasis on the hole or opening or gap (*le trou* or *la béance*) of the navel that is closed or tied up by the knot.⁵¹

At issue then is that which forever exceeds the analysis of the dream, a knot that cannot be untied.⁵² Every dream, says Freud, has such a dark place that is unfathomable, *unergründlich*,⁵³ a place that one must leave in the dark (*der man im Dunkel lassen müssen*), a place where analysis must stop (*le lieu même où l'analyse doit s'arrêter*).⁵⁴ So much for the knowledge of psychoanalysis that law and political theory must take into account, one is tempted to say, but perhaps it is this very limit of psychoanalytic

⁴⁸ Derrida *États d'âme de la psychoanalyse* (fn. 39) 71: "Le droit devient le pouvoir ou la violence de la communauté qui, monopolisant la force, se protège contre la violence individuelle. Force contre force, économie différée de la force, voilà le droit."

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 137-151.

⁵¹ Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (1996) 23-24.

⁵² Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (fn. 51) 24 "Or ce qui à jamais excède ici l'analyse du rêve, c'est bien un noeud qu'on ne peut délier, un fil, qui, pour être coupe, comme un cordon ombilical, n'est reste pas moins à jamais noué, à même le corps, à la place du nombril".

⁵³ Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (fn. 51) 24.

⁵⁴ Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (fn. 51).

knowledge or the knowledge of this limit that constitutes its most profound knowledge, its most profound comment on politics, law and ethics.

Below I shall shift the metaphor from that of the umbilical knot to a knot of nerves in the brain, one that perhaps allows us to say more about the entangled mat of multiple or innumerable memories than the single memory of birth that the single knot in a single umbilical cord would seem to allow. I shall do so to throw some light, perhaps, on the multiple traumatic memories that inform sovereignty and the ageless cruelty of sovereignty. But I shall do so without denying that the two knots are also tied to one another, by a spinal cord, to be literal. Perhaps all political memories and memories of sovereignty, memories that constitute sovereignty, are ultimately haunted by the memory of birth. Hence perhaps also Derrida's questioning of the more optimistic engagement with birth or *naissance* in Nancy's expositions of the *partage*. Hence the link he makes between birth and birthrights such as citizenship, the link that also links citizenship to territory, to *Bodem*, and thus to claims of sovereignty.⁵⁵ Hence again, in other words, Derrida's interruption of the myth of the *partage*.

Derrida himself traces a shift from the knot to a braided mat or *Geflecht* in Freud's text in his analysis of resistances. The thoughts of the dream must remain inconclusive and without closure (*ohne Abschluss*) and they must run through every strand of the netlike entanglement (*netzartige Verstrickung*) of our world of thoughts.⁵⁶ The desire of the dream, says Freud, rises from the place where this mat of thoughts is the thickest.⁵⁷ And Derrida links these endless and repetitive attempts at the unraveling of this thickest interwovenness of our thoughts, this endless proliferation and teasing out of thoughts that is the heart or passion of deconstruction, directly to the science of politics. Well not quite directly. He relies on Plato to do so:

"Il s'agit de savoir tirer les fils, tirer sur le fils, selon cet art du tisserand dont le *Politique* de Platon faisait aussi un paradigme royal : pour la division analytique (*diairesis*), pour la dialectique, pour la science royale (*e basiliké tekhnè*) of politics."⁵⁸

But this royal science, this royal science of deconstruction, is not a simple science. It runs into double binds, into *aporias* where the untying of one thread ties up, knots or entangles another. Derrida writes:

"D'autre part, un *double bind* ne s'analyse jamais intégralement : on ne peut délier un des ses noeuds qu'en tirant sur l'autre pour le serrer davantage dans ce mouvement que j'appellé la stricture."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 87, 92-93.

⁵⁶ Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (fn. 51) 27, 28.

⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁵⁸ Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (fn. 51) 28. "At issue is to know how to tease out the threads, pull on the strings in accordance with the art of the weaver of which Plato's *Politeia* constituted a royal paradigm, a royal paradigm for analytical divisions (*diairesis*), for dialectics, for the royal science (*e basiliké tekhnè*) of politics."

⁵⁹ Cf. Derrida *Resistances* (fn. 51) 51. "A double bind does not let itself be analysed fully. One can only untie one of its knots by pulling on another so as to tighten it first in this movement that I have called the stricture"

It is here that Derrida inserts the footnote already cited above:

“Alors tout se passerait peut-être entre le sacrifice et le non-sacrifice, à moins que cela ne reste suspendu – dans l’*approche* – entre le sacrifice qui *noue* et le sacrifice qui *tranche*, les deux grandes expériences, en somme, d’Isaac et d’Abraham.”⁶⁰

This faraway word “sacrifice”, he adds, can only be used in an approximating fashion and not without resistance to and of the idiom.⁶¹ He remains aware of the sacrifice already involved in using the word sacrifice.

Much of *Voyous* turns on analyses of the self-sacrifices of democracy, the auto-immunitarian resort to undemocratic means so as to preserve democracy, undemocratic means to protect democracy evident world-wide but perhaps especially so in the United States in the wake of 9/11. Undemocratic means to preserve democracy, a double bind that already preoccupied Schmitt during the Weimar period. How does one tease out further this thick knot or entanglement of thoughts from which can sense but not grasp the dream of democracy, the dream of democracy to be exposed and not exposed to risk, to be hospitable to and indeed erotically attracted to, but also safe from strangers and from rogues?⁶² Derrida notes the paradox of the United States: So fearful of strangers and yet the most exposed and hospitable to strangers, hence the possibility of pulling off 9/11 in this country.⁶³ How to think further through or at least around this paradox? How to tease it out further? Perhaps by invoking another sacrificial idiom that can also just approach again and not conclude the matter: *Fear and the fascination with fear*.

Why does the little boy want to scare the spider if not to instill in the spider the fear that the latter instills in him? And why instill fear in the spider and not just kill it if you are scared of it? Perhaps because of a dark erotic fascination with this fear that *resists* the direct resolution of fear by the technical killing of the other that Agamben associates with sovereignty. Lacan refers somewhere to the dark god that the Nazis worshipped. Perhaps this dark god was fear and the fascination with this fear. A bad god, Anil calls it. She does so against the background of the darkest times of the Sri Lankan quests for sovereignty.

“*Amygdala*. The name had sounded Sri Lankan when Anil first heard it. Studying at Guy’s hospital in London, having cut tissue away to reveal a small knot of fibres made up of nerve cells. Near the stem of the brain. The professor standing beside her gave her the word for it. *Amygdala*.

‘What does it mean?’

‘Nothing. It is a location. It’s the dark aspect of the brain....A place to house fearful memories.’

‘Just fear?’

We’re not certain of that. Anger too, we think, but it specializes in fear. It is pure emotion. We cannot clarify further.’

‘Why not?’

⁶⁰ Ibid. “Everything perhaps comes to pass between sacrifice and non-sacrifice, if it does not remain suspended, in the approach, between the sacrifice that binds and the sacrifice that cuts, the two main experiences of Isaac and Abraham.”

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 42, 48, 65.

⁶³ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 65.

‘Well, is it an inherited thing? Are we speaking of ancestral fear? Fears from childhood? Fear of what might happen in old age? Or fear if we commit a crime? It could just be projecting fantasies of fear in the body.’

‘As in dreams.’

‘As in dreams,’ he agreed. ‘Though dreams or not the result of fantasy but old habits we do not know we have.’

‘So it is something created and made by us, by our own histories, is that right? A knot in this person is different from a knot in another, even if they are from the same family. Because we each have a different past.’

.....

‘We don’t know, Anil.’

‘It sounds Sri Lankan, the name.’

‘Well, check its derivation. It doesn’t sound scientific.’

‘No. Some bad god.’⁶⁴

IV COURAGE

Perhaps the problem with fear is that it is such a powerful and exacting god. In his interview with *Der Spiegel* Heidegger invoked a god that would come to save us, save us, however, in a rather non-exact and incomplete way. This god, he said elsewhere, would have the mortals simply hoping for that which cannot be hoped for or expected. “*Hoffend halten sie das Unverhoffte entgegen.*” Unsaved would they wait upon their withdrawn salvation. “*Im Unheil noch warten sie das entzogenen Heils.*”⁶⁵ Derrida comments on the words “saving” and “salvation” (“*retten*” and “*heilen*”) in Heidegger’s texts in a terrific chapter of *Voyous*, noting their heterogeneity to the *salute* of *otherness* or *the other* with which deconstruction is concerned. The *salute* is a greeting but it is of course also related to salvation and health. And then Derrida himself proceeds to make a most remarkable statement about the sovereignty or non-sovereignty of the god who would save us or not save us:

“Sans pouvoir le montrer ici, je tiens qu’entre ces motifs (les trios sens du salut – retten, heilen, grüssen - , le sauf, le sain, l’immun, la santé et la sécurité, l’assurance du salut et le salut sans assurance à l’autre qui vient ou qui part) et la question de la démocratie, la consequence nous conduirait vite aussi bien vers ce qu’il advint de la Terreur et des Comités de salut public sous la Révolution française que vers tout ce qu’il es urgent de transformer, aujourd’hui et demain, et quant à la santé ou la sécurité publique, et quant à la structure institutionnelle et souveraine de ce qu’on appelle le Conseil de sécurité dans la guerre qu’il a engagée contre la Terreur dudit terrorisme international. Si, ce qu’à dieu ne plaise, un dieu qui peut nous sauver était un dieu souverain, il ferait advenir, après un Révolution don’t nous n’avons pas encore l’idée, un tout autre Conseil de sécurité. Rien n’est moins sûr, qu’un dieu sans souveraineté, rien n’est moins sûr, qu’un dieu sans souveraineté, rien n’est moins sûr que sa venue, bien sûr. Voilà pourquoi, voila de quoi nous parlons...”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ondaatje *Anil’s Ghost* (2001) 134-135.

⁶⁵ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 159.

⁶⁶ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 160-161.

Now, imagine a non-sovereign god forbidding the sovereign god. Imagine the lesser, the vulnerable god, as he puts it a few pages further, forbidding the greater, all powerful and omnipotent god.⁶⁷ In contrast to the god of fear, this vulnerable god would certainly not be the god of fearlessness, of the sovereign fearlessness, for instance, that Bataille admired, ironically enough, in the young Stalin.⁶⁸ Perhaps this non-sovereign and vulnerable god would be less inclined to exact sacrifices, less inclined to have us kill, with or without ritual, enemies and other spiders, more inclined to have us live with fear and uncertainty. Perhaps this god's name would simply be "courage", that is, the vulnerable and precarious strength to live the uncertain life of mortals. Perhaps it is simply courage that is required to decide in favour of "the grace of existence" and against "the fury of essence". Courage, not goodness, may just be the real antidote to evil. Perhaps this word "courage" and the hope that attaches to it conveys so much of what Derrida has ever said about the impossibility of the possible, the possibility of the impossible and of the *perhaps* itself.

But how to attain to courage? William E. Connolly suggests that rational and secular thought is unlikely to help much in this regard. The responses of the amygdala (the small almond shaped brain at the base of the cortex) is more likely to influence and direct those of the prefrontal cortex, that is, the seat of rational thought in the brain, than vice versa. Connolly writes with reference to the findings of the neurophysiologist Joseph LeDoux:

"When receiving, say, a sign it has stored as an indication of danger, the amygdala reacts quickly, relatively crudely and with intense energy. Exposure to signs that resemble past trauma, panic, or disturbance 'pass like greased lightning over the potential pathways to the amygdala, unleashing the fear reaction.' The prefrontal cortex receives its version of the message more slowly, processing it through a sophisticated linguistic network in a more refined and forming a more complex judgment."

One shudders to think that Schmitt's sovereignty, the intensification that gives rise to the exceptional decision that draws the line between the friend and the enemy, may well be explained by all of this. No wonder that even Derrida utters a "god help us" in this regard. As does Connolly. He suggests (in an argument aimed at pointing out the limits of secular thought) that an education of the amygdala through "non-secular rituals and intersubjective arts [as] thematised by religions of the Book" should supplement our rational and secular efforts to come to grips with fear.⁶⁹ Our religions, however, have thus far proved to be such a frightened and frightening response to fear. Our children should perhaps much rather or at least also be religiously exposed to the myth of the *partage*, interrupted or uninterrupted. It will teach them that there is good fortune and bad fortune and that nobody is or can be exempted from this precarious play of fate.⁷⁰ It should also teach them that the idea that one can be exempted from this precarious play of fate, the idea that one can sacrificially enforce a separate, insulated and sovereign *essence* immune to this precarious play of *existence*, is part and parcel of the bad fortune that everyone has

⁶⁷ Cf. Derrida *Voyous* (fn. 8) 215-216.

⁶⁸ Cf. Bataille *Oeuvres Complètes VIII* (1976) 343.

⁶⁹ Cf. Connolly *Why I am not a secularist* (1999) 28-29. I am indebted to Peter Fitzpatrick for this reference.

⁷⁰ Cf. Nancy *Le Sens du monde* (fn. 6) 219.

to deal with. Thus we might come to live more courageously not only with bad luck, but also with bad responses to bad luck that most often aggravate bad luck.