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THE TRAPS OF THE ALL

An organon is needed. I find it in Lacan and his doctrine of wholes [*touts*]. This doctrine is developed principally in “*L’Étourdit*” and in *Seminar XX*.¹ It establishes the ways in which the subject is inscribed as Man or as Woman with respect to what is properly considered a propositional function: the phallic function. I will take the liberty of giving this an expanded use, to objects other than the names Man and Woman, and to other functions than the phallic function; also, I will not be using Lacan’s notations. Even if this means, at the right moment, that we must go back to his express doctrine.

§ 1.

According to Lacan, the word all [*tous*] is not univocal.² Nor are any of its variants—all [*tout*], universal, universe. On this precise point there is a discovery. It is founded on a formal reflection. Aristotle is in view, and, set in motion by him, the entirety of logic. Leibniz, Frege, Russell are cited or alluded to. The writing of logical quantifiers—Lacan prefers to speak of *quanteurs*—is put to work, not without distortions given as such.

In its first aspect, the all supposes a limit. This means that, despite appearances, the operator ‘for all’ does not have any meaning when it is used in a single formula; it only takes on meaning when *two* formulas are correlated to each other, usually reading: *for all x, Fx* and *There is an x such that non-Fx*. Or, as Lacan verbalizes it: for all *x*, *Fx* is satisfied and There is an *x* for which the function is not satisfied.

With respect to the phallic function, this aspect determines the inscription of the subject as man.

1. Jacques Lacan, *Autre Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001: 449-495; *Scilicet* 4 (1973): 5-52; *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XX* (Paris: Seuil, 1975); *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX, Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (1972-1973), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998).

2. TN: The French word ‘*tous*’ (and ‘*tout*’) can be translated as: ‘all,’ ‘every,’ ‘whole.’

In its second aspect, the all is unlimited. Here too, two modes are required. One handles existence: *there is no x such that non-Fx*. The other institutes an all of a new type: “Since there is no suspension of the function [...], all can be said of it, even if it comes from that which is without reason. But this is an all beyond the universe” (*Autres Écrits*, 466).

With respect to the phallic function, this aspect determines the inscription of the subject as woman.

In his tireless will for clarity, Lacan wants a name other than the one for the limited all to be set aside for the unlimited all. In his tireless will not to break the crystal of inherited language, he conserves for the limited all, which is the classical all, its classical name: the all. In his tireless will to simplicity, he fabricates for the unlimited all the most elementary name possible, which says only that it is not the classical all: the *not-all* (in a single word).

§ 2.

Some technical precisions. They do not aim at sorting out all the aspects of the doctrine, but only those that play some role in the *organon* that I need.

Limited does not mean finite; unlimited does not mean infinite. The set of possible values for the variable x in the function $1/x$ is infinite; but it is limited since there exists a value for x that does not satisfy the function, namely, $x = 0$ (this example is from Lacan himself, *Autres Écrits*, 457, corrected from *Scilicet* 15).

Another example: scholastic logic distinguishes between two types of terms:

Divisive terms, which separate the universe into subjects that fall under the concept in question and subjects that, not falling under it, limit it; in this way the term “biped” is divisive and the collection of bipeds forms a limited all (finite or infinite, it doesn’t matter);

Transcendent terms, which are not divided; for example, the term ‘being.’ Every term, just by being posited, refers to being. Including when it is said of it that it is not. The collection of beings is thus unlimited; however, it is not necessarily infinite. In a world, even imaginary, which would contain only a finite collection of beings, being would not be a transcendent, and the totality of beings would be not-all, although finite.

An easier example: in the game of checkers, the collection of possible kings is finite, since only the checkers become kings; and they are of a finite number. But the collection is unlimited, since there is no checker that cannot become a king. Whence the name of the game, Lacan would say; as we see when he writes, in *Seminar XX*, of the ‘*femmes pas-toutes*’ catalogued by Mozart and Da Ponte’s Don Juan that they

are “open sets that constitute a finity and that can, in the end, be counted” (Seuil, 1975, 15 [Fink’s translation, page 10–TN]).³

The decisive step in any case is clear; just as the false, by virtue of being the inverse of the true, designates it (*Autres Écrits*, 459), the formula *there exists an x such that non Fx* confirms the formula *for all x, Fx*. In a parallel manner, the *not-all* requires, as a positive condition for its emergence, that no existence be posited that limits it, “that nothing existing limits its function” (*Autres Écrits*, 466).

§ 3.

Common philosophy banks on the evidence and univocity of the universal. Lacan maintains, conversely, that the universal is an obscure and confused idea. He shows that it can be clarified by opposing the limited to the unlimited.

I draw from this a minimal conclusion: the *all*, in its theoretical and practical usage, must be submitted to critique. Now, politics and society constantly use the *all* with respect to speaking beings. In fact, they are nothing if they do not propose an answer to the question: how can speaking beings use for themselves the words for “all” [*tout*, *tous*, *toutes*]? Whether the answer is formalized or strictly pragmatic does not matter; the *all* is put to use. To its necessary critique, the Lacanian *organon* furnishes the most effective arms. At the same time, it permits us to determine better the relationship between politics and society.

§ 4.

What is modern society? It is the society born in Europe from the rupture of 1789–1815. Of course, it was not established immediately, or everywhere, but an ideal was constructed. The most enlightened observers of the Congress of Vienna—among them Talleyrand—understood more or less quickly that a type of society was being proposed to Europe, and not a type of government. A big innovation.

In the seventeenth century, the political ideal was a type of government: absolute monarchy; same thing in the eighteenth century, with enlightened despotism or the English government. The French Revolution strove to construct the government that would act to regulate the free, equal, and fraternal society. Among thousands of examples, consider the concept of “Republican Institutions” formulated by Saint-Just. The nineteenth century, going backwards, put society at the center of the plan. Governmental forms could keep their autonomy, but even when they did, they were instruments of society such as it had been in fact realized; not the perfect society, but the society such as there is no better—as bad as it is. Whence the failure, despite their genius or their talent, of all those who continued to believe that types of government were more important than society—that it was necessary, for example,

3. TN: the game of checkers is called “dames” in French, and the promoted pieces are not called Kings but Queens. Milner’s comment above, “whence the name of the game,” plays on the feminine name of the game in French.

to prefer legitimate monarchy to any other form; such as Chateaubriand or Metternich.

The emergence of society—and no longer good government—as an organizing point for the political vision of the world constitutes Balzac's great discovery. He made it in Paris. He couldn't have made it anywhere else. There and nowhere else the eminently cobbled-together [*bricolé*] character of governments was staged. Even if nothing but the Hundred Days had happened.⁴ This is why Paris is indeed the capital of the nineteenth century—the expression is the young Marx's—and not London, Vienna, or Berlin. In fact, the clearest example is found there of a society which, in order to remain identical to itself, spends its time looking for a government, rejecting any as soon as its degree of adequacy falls below the tolerable. But more generally: the same society unfolds progressively on the two sides of the Channel and the two sides of the North Atlantic, with different types of government: Republic in the US, parliamentary monarchy in Great-Britain, variable forms in France, empire in Germany.

Eventually, the Doctrinaires⁵ would construct a model of government that was to be the common denominator for all the diverse governments, and was to bring together the minimal requirements needed to serve as best as possible the ideal society. It was up to each national tradition to fill in the details, provided they did not get in the way of either the docility or the efficacy of the servants. The name of the common denominator varied. But since 1918, indecision is no longer permitted: the common denominator is called *democracy*.

§ 5.

Every society can be thought as a function that assigns to each speaking being the property of belonging to the social body; let's call this *sociality*. The society-function has, moreover, the following in common with a propositional function; social belonging, like propositional truth, is most often thought of as being bivalent. Thus, being in society is held to be dominant or dominated, master or slave, included or excluded, powerful or miserable.

Almost all known societies admit of cases in which the society-function is suspended; they confirm this function. According to Foucault, madness was considered this way in the classical age: an existence that says no to sociality. Modern doctrines, insofar as they are modern, do the exact opposite. Their point of view touching sociality is characterized as follows: by right, nothing exists that says no to the society-function. They even go so far as to re-read the past according to this model, in order to show, for example, that classical incarceration is actually

4. TN: 'The Hundred Days' refers to the period between Napoleon's return from Elba and the second restoration of Louis XVIII.

5. TN: The name for a group of French Royalists during the period of the Bourbon Restoration in the early 19th century, who fought against the more reactionary "ultra-royalists" of the time.

a misrecognized form of inscription into sociality. From 1815 on, modern society is the putting into practice of the modern point of view, even before the latter is declared expressly; it begins with the plan it proposes resolutely and explicitly: act in all domains such that the *de jure* inexistence of the exception becomes a *de facto* inexistence. In relation to societies that preceded it in history, modern society is the regime of the unlimited. Not only can and must no one existing limit or be an exception to it, but henceforth the society-function includes among its possible variables any being whatsoever, human or non-human, animated or inanimate. Nothing and no one exists for whom the function ceases to make sense. Nothing and no one exists that suspends society.

§ 6.

Writers have described the unlimited. Either to condemn its consequences and avoid them; such is the solitary promenade of Rousseau—a prescient genius, anticipating what was still to come. Or to contest them and combat them by strategies of reversal: the big city and the crowd, from Baudelaire to Brecht. Consciousness itself became as traversable as the mirror of Lewis Carroll; the Marxist notion of ideology theorizes this, but Chateaubriand did nothing else, and, since Flaubert, the French novel tells a perpetual story of mutual porosity. This is perhaps why it is so rarely, to use the expression of Natacha Michel, a “compelling novel/indisputable novel” [*roman incontestable*]; it never offers an uncontested suspense, epic or lyrical, sad or cheerful, terrifying or reassuring, of society’s stranglehold on the intimate. In a language opposed to that of the Newspapers, it says what the Newspapers show: that modern society’s vocation is to cover the entire earth and to encompass the totality of beings.

Philosophers were not at all content with repeating in a weak manner what the writers had articulated before them, and better than them. I could cite Sartre; it is too clear that the doctrine of seriality, in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* entails a theory of modern unlimitedness. For contingent reasons, I prefer to comment on Foucault. Because perhaps he is more obscure. In *History of Madness*, he had shown (without really saying it) what could be an example of an exception to sociality; but it was the sociality of the classical age, modern sociality only emerging in the third and last part of the book. In *The Order of Things*, he takes on the archaeology of the modern. Knowingly or not, at the same time he takes on an archaeology of the unlimited. This will occupy him all his life, as an incessantly necessary precondition to an incessant, fragmented, and cumulative reexamination of sociality.

One term must be taken especially seriously: “quasi-transcendental.” The three quasi-transcendentals, Work, Life, Language, are “like” transcendentals. They precede every empirical representation, since every empirical representation depends on their validity. If they are not given to the discourses, nothing can be articulated in discourse. But they are also “like” transcendents; they function as if they had the following distinctive property: they do not divide. There is no being—person or

thing—that is not inscribed in Work, no being that is not inscribed in Life, no being that is not inscribed in Language.

Now, one does not understand *The Order of Things* if one does not do violence to the book, reconstructing the empirical details—historical in the most banal sense of the term—that accompanied it. Foucault announces that he is speaking of the nineteenth century. He establishes, moreover, that, by a delayed effect, the discursive laws of the nineteenth century continue to exert their influence at the moment of his writing (1966), that is, at the exact bisection of the historical twentieth century. The book thus also speaks of the twentieth century. It discovers its signs of decrepitude; it announces and describes a process of reconstruction; it does not determine if the process will be slow or rapid. In this way, nothing rules out that it is speaking in fact of the twenty-first century to come. Of the moment, thus, in which I am writing.

§ 7.

The Order of Things ends with a phrase that has become famous. Man is effaced, Foucault writes, “like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” [*comme à la limite de la mer un visage de sable*].⁶ It was believed that the heralded event consisted of the effacement of the face. Foucault perhaps believed this himself. Forcing the literalness of the phrase, or rather supporting myself on it, I affirm that the words reveal a sense beyond their signification. They state expressly the disappearance of the limit. Under the sand that the sea erodes, appear the cobblestones of society, in which there is no longer a limit to the human face.

According to Borges, the answer to the riddle is the word that is not stated in the riddle.⁷ *The Order of Things* does not name unlimited society. For this reason precisely, it designates it. The three quasi-transcendentals have the same structure, being homologically non-divisive; for this very reason, they tend towards a fundamental synonymy. Precisely because they have the same logical structure, they can be reduced into a single one, which concentrates in itself their common and parallel unlimitedness. Up to the present, Foucault says, the quasi-transcendental of the quasi-transcendentals, the quasi-transcendent of the quasi-transcendents, their One-all, was Man. But Man is effaced, and with him the limit. Because Man was the figure of the limit.

A new *One* arises that Foucault does not name. Because without a doubt, at that moment, he did not discern its traits. I hold that he will name it later, in his course from 1975-1976: it is Society.

6. TN: literally, this phrase is translatable as: “as at the limit of the sea a face of sand.”

7. TN: Milner is likely referring to the question posed in Borges’ short story, “The Garden of Forking Paths,” which asks: “in a riddle whose answer is chess, what is the one word you must under no circumstances use?” The answer is “chess.” Note how the question does what it says not to do; it seems to violate the rule it articulates, since the answer to it is actually present in the question!

To determine modern society, the modern form of the sociality-function, as this society whose watchwords were Work, Life, and Language, is in fact in the strict sense a tautology; the name *modern society* announces that by which the three count for one. It encapsulates their synonymy. With one exception. The count-for-one is no longer the Greek *hen*, distinct and limited. The effacement of the human face reveals, in a sandy desert, that the three are one, but this one is the one of the indistinct. Such that the synonymy is accomplished by means of dissociation and dispersion. It must no longer be said only that there is not one being that is not inscribed in Work, or in Life, or in Language; it is necessary to complete this: all that is inscribed in Work, or in Life, or in Language, is inscribed by that very fact into Society. From the moment it is inscribed in Society, its anterior inscriptions—Work, Life, or Language—can persist or disappear, or be absorbed into each other, into Life, for example. It makes no difference. Once Man is stuck in the sand, there no longer exists a being that is not inscribed in Society. There is no being that, as being, suspends Society. All being is social being; to be subject to Being and to be subject to Society are the same thing; if Being is the transcendent par excellence of metaphysics, Society is the transcendent par excellence of modernity. Here our point of departure is found again: Society is unlimited; it is the unlimited itself.

II. Europe, politics, and democracy

The Europe born in 1815 rests on a paradox: in it, modern, unlimited society collides with political theory, which is a theory of limited alls. European political theory has two fundamental sources. One is Thucydides, and through him history, in its double status as *Geschichte* and *Historie*. The other is Aristotle. The Europe born between the two world wars centers the paradox on an object of election: democracy. None of the two inherited political discourses has a good opinion of either democracy or the unlimited. Evidently, the parts do not fit together.

§ 8.

What does Thucydides tell us? The history of a war, thought by him to be the most important of them all: the Peloponnesian war. In fact, he considers it to be exactly what the twentieth century would call a world war: “This was indeed the biggest crisis facing Greece and a fraction of the barbarian world: thus, it involved the major part of humanity” (I, 1, 2; trad. Romilly). By contrast, he will show at the beginning of his work that the Trojan War was nothing. In this way he dismisses Homer, just as Plato will do after him. Dismissing Homer, he dismisses the epic and all that it tells of war: of gods, kings, heroes, decorative weapons, loves, mercy. He dismisses, ultimately, the distant or, more exactly, the immemorial past.

He was an actor in the war of which he speaks, and then a witness to it. When he died, it was not yet over. Thus it is a history in progress, and close to home. It was possible and appropriate to draw some lessons from it for the present. The Athenian

city had to understand, in the light of what happened to it, that it must transform itself. Thucydides thus creates a model that is still operative: history deals with a time that is in continuity with the present time. This continuity can be guaranteed by chronological proximity, as in the case of Thucydides. It can also be guaranteed by a distance, which authorizes the restitution of genuine continuities. The modern historian most often deals with a distant past. He is none the less Thucydidean, because this past is not separate; more exactly, its separation is only the form of its continuity—an oblique way to shed better light on the present, which remains the object aimed at, in the final analysis.

Not all historians identify with this tendency. Fustel de Coulanges and his most substantial disciple, Dumézil, resolutely turn away from it. For them, the distance is a real rupture, impossible to cross over. From the distant point, one does not get back to the present, even if the chronological distance were tiny. The historian who would believe himself able to clarify the present and, why not, advise people or decision makers, would be making himself into Nostradamus; Dumézil mocks him in his famous farce, which is a vicious satire on non-Fustelian history.

On the contrary the Annales School, or at least one of its strains, adheres to the Thucydidean model. Let's say, to simplify, that of Lucien Febvre rather than that of Bloch. In this strain, it is understood that the historian can and must think of himself as a political mentor. In the case of Thucydides and in the model he created—*es aei*, for always, to use his own terms—the present moment is in effect political. Reciprocally, politics is fully in the present. The fact that history speaks of a past, as distant as it may be, that is not separated from the present entails that it is immediately political. We arrive at what I will call the Thucydidean axiom: *the language of history and the language of politics are one and the same language*.

§ 9.

Same names, same verbs, same adjectives. But what are the names in Thucydides? They are the names of peoples, in the plural: the Athenians, the Thebans, the Spartans, the Persians. Sometimes they are put in the singular by names of entities—names of cities, precursors of the national names moderns will use; but these names only abstract the names of people. Sometimes even proper names are mentioned—Alcibiades, Nicias, Pericles, etc.—but these are the proper names of ones who, at a certain moment, encapsulate in themselves the name of a people. Encapsulating, trying to encapsulate, failing to encapsulate, it hardly matters in fact; only the articulation is important.

One can believe what Hobbes says about this. He says of Thucydides that he is the most political of historians. His first published book is a translation of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*; at the end of his life, he deems it appropriate to complete his *Leviathan* with a *Behemoth*, which is a Thucydidean history of the English Revolution and Cromwell's Republic (1640-1660). These three works, taken together, complete a real discursive operation. Eyes fixed on a history constituted by the names

of peoples and individuals, Hobbes systematically reintroduces into it the political names of democracy and monarchy, so convinced is he that the two systems of nomination are appropriate to each other.

If one takes the axiom of Thucydides seriously, one can argue that history provides political theory with the names of peoples and proper names that occasionally encapsulate the names of people. One could easily conclude from this that without history, political theory would be empty, whereas history without politics would be blind. As a matter of fact, the exact opposite could also be maintained: political theory is blind without history, history is empty without politics. Only, whatever the case may be, we do not yet know what politics is. In order to determine that, we have to consider Aristotle or, more exactly, the version of him that is widespread in the European philosophical tradition.

§ 10.

The Aristotelian vulgate determines politics in Europe. By at least two gestures. One engages in a reflection on the all as a rule of thought, under the form of the universal; it's the object of logic, whose first masterpiece is the *Organon* of Aristotle. The other engages in a reflection on the all as a rule for diverse human groupings; this is the object of political philosophy, whose greatest masterpiece is the *Politics* of Aristotle. Thus, on the basis of Aristotle (but also against him, we shall see) a fundamental paradigm is constructed that I will call logico-political parallelism; it is based on a few axioms and definitions. Here are the principal ones:

- a) The political "all" and the logical "all" are the same.
- b) The tripartition of the three regimes (democracy, oligarchy, monarchy) repeats the tripartition of propositions (universal, particular, singular).
- c) There is a political syllogism just as there is a logical syllogism; and just as the syllogism of the textbooks (all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, etc.) connects, by a middle term, the universal to the singular, a political constitution can be thought of as a syllogism connecting the all of the political body (governed and governing) to the singular of the individual, a member of the political body. The doctrines vary on which middle term to use, according to the form of the major, minor, and concluding statements, but they all share a common foundation.
- d) The role of the *dictum de omni et nullo*. What is affirmed or denied of the all is by that very fact affirmed and denied of each particular; it is known that this principle founds the possibility, evoked earlier, of passing from the *all* to the *some-ones* or to the name of the individual. The logical syllogism depends on this. But political theory depends on it none the less: only the *dictum de omni et nullo* enables the dominant, by imposing its domination on all the dominated, to impose it on each. It alone enables the assent of all to equal the assent of each. Thus is founded logically the political

function of the “every last one of them” [*tout un chacun*], equally important in the three regimes and crucial for politics itself.

§ 11.

The *dictum de omni et nullo* serves a crucial function. It connects the *omnes* to the *unus*. On this point, precisely, it cancels out, element by element, the pastoral paradigm of Plato, as Foucault reconstructed it in *Omnes et singulatim* and as Benny Levy, drawing on Foucault, does equally in *Le Meurtre du Pasteur* (Grasset/Verdier, 2002). Benny Levy dismisses Aristotle straightaway. Because for Aristotle, politics is a given, he writes (Levy 20, n.1).

Even stronger reasons can now be discerned. The discord concerns the relation of all to each, taken one by one (*singulatim*). According to the pastoral paradigm, a specific and positive action is required for the one and the all to be connected—the action of the minister, who takes care, one by one, of each living individual. In the Aristotelian vulgate, on the contrary, the connection of the one to the all is posited as a non-deducible principle, anterior to every judgment and every action. No practice—pastoral or otherwise—is necessary.

The difference with Plato is understood; certainly, he ends up subtracting politics from the pastoral paradigm, but for a moment he gave it a bit of relevance; he did problematize it. In the Aristotelian vulgate, no place is given to it at all. It must not only be said that politics is given, it also must be said that, thanks to the *dictum*, the essential cogs that preexist the possibility of politics are given too. Insofar as they are given, no decision is required, neither human nor divine, which validates it or puts it into play.

§ 12.

A small detail: the Aristotelian vulgate is not Aristotle. Logico-political parallelism comes from Aristotle, but it is not in Aristotle. It is not only philological exactitude that leads to this conclusion. In the trajectory that goes from the original texts to the vulgate, a distortion occurs. Properly speaking, it is an event. First among its actors the Church must be named, in all its variations.

Perhaps the Church was the only actor. With scholasticism, whose history is long and whose influence is even longer, it patiently put together, in politics and in logic, the three-ringed chain all/some/one. Aristotle didn't know anything about this, in politics or in logic. In politics he only knew, in answer to the question “who governs,” the opposition many/few/one; the notion of a “government by all” can appear occasionally in his descriptions, but it is not for him a structural requirement. If the “one” of the individual was the highest point in politics for him, it did not at all exist in the syllogism. There is no syllogism on Socrates for Aristotle. The chain of

the *dictum de omni et nullo* only has two rings, from “all men” to “some man.” The *unus* as such remains out of reach. We are far removed from the vulgate.

Having for its part allowed for a reasoning on the individual, the Church also constructed the possibility of going back and forth without difficulty from the grammatical singular (*tout homme/quelque homme*) [all men/some man] to the grammatical plural (*tous les hommes/quelques hommes*) [all men/some men]. Aristotle, on the contrary, strictly divided up the forms; he only admitted into his logic the grammatical singular (“all men are mortal”) and set aside the plural for historians, politicians, and orators. Correlatively, he excluded from his logic the names of individuals, and especially the names of famous individuals; he set them aside, once again, for the historians, politicians, and orators. The split between logic and politics was thus, in his eyes, maximal. It is, however, in the name of Aristotle that the split will be changed into its contrary, replaced by an indissoluble link.

We recall the scholarly syllogism “All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal”? It diverges completely from Aristotle. The self-evidence it assumes testifies to the success of the Church.

Obviously, this is not just a technical matter; there are high stakes involved. Nothing less, in fact, than the doctrine of sin and salvation.

§13.

Paul of Tarsus formulates it this way: all men have sinned in a single one, Adam; all men are saved in a single one, Jesus (Rom. 5, 18). The symmetry is decisive; it must allow, as a necessary and sufficient condition, the New Covenant to be superimposed over the Old; then, to fold the symmetry back, as in a diptych, so that the Old can be incorporated into the New without anything being lost, and without anything being conserved. For the Church, there is no compromise; it needs a theology that is a science; if theology must be a science, it is necessary that it express itself completely in a logical language. There is no logical language outside the syllogism. Thus, it is necessary that the syllogism fully articulate the Pauline symmetry. This symmetry coordinates the “all” and the “one”; it is thus necessary that the syllogism be able to speak validly of the “all” and the “one.”

But theology, at the same time, founds a universal Church, whose teachings are compulsory for all Christians—in the plural—up to what is most intimate to each of them. It is understood straightaway that the plural does not simply designate a multitude—as “the Athenians” did for Thucydides or *pantes* (“all”) for Aristotle; the pertinent trait is not only the large number, but also the exhaustiveness with which all men past, present, and future are encompassed, without any being omitted. The expression “All men sinned in Adam” must be able to be the *strict* logical equivalent of “Every man sinned in Adam.” The expression “all men are saved in Jesus-Christ” must constrain each to repeat, for himself, in the first person, the singular proposition par excellence, “I believe in Jesus Christ.”

Logical language, theological language, and political language must be one and the same. The doctrine of Paul of Tarsus forms the cornerstone for this; more than any other, it must imperatively let itself be translated into universal propositions of full status. But for that to occur, it was necessary to adjust Aristotle on two points, the name of the individual and the plural name. Once that was done, the logico-political became, in addition, possible; notice that initially it was just as much a matter of a political theology. The collection of men counted for one with regard to sin, and the collection of the faithful counted for one with respect to salvation, the *oikoumene* and *Ecclesia*, humanity and the Church, replaced the *polis* and the Empire as models of the *politikon*.

§ 14.

It is known that at the end of the classical age, political theology was dismantled. But logico-political parallelism had acquired sufficient solidity to be able to stand on its own. A particularly precise expression of its secular version is found in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*, Doctrine of Right, II, section 45: "Every State contains in itself three powers [...] similar to the three propositions of a syllogism of practical reason" (GF, II, p. 128); section 51: "Either one alone, in the State, commands all, or else some, equal to each other, jointly command all the others, or else all command together, and consequently, also themselves, which amounts to saying that the form of the State is either autocratic, aristocratic, or democratic" (GF, II, p. 162). Kant prefers the term "autocratic" to the term "monarchic." He explains himself on this point, but the modification does not affect how the parallelism is put into play.

One can measure in passing the weight of the conviction, stated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, according to which logic is a completed science and that it was put by Aristotle onto the royal road. This conviction does not only determine the philosophy of knowledge; it also organizes the approach to political philosophy, as we will see. The tripartition of possible powers and the tripartition of possible State forms are both presented as evident; this evidence has its source in the Aristotelian vulgate. In particular, the definition of the democratic form depends on a direct application of the *dictum de omni et nullo*.

§ 15.

Despite the detours in the history of logical and political thought, one certitude persists: the political *all* is a limited all. It is so in its Thucydidean version, written in the language of people and cities. It is so in its logico-political version, since the logic coming from Aristotle knew only of limited alls. It is so in its Christian version and in the secular variants of this version. The holy, universal Church, in which all Christians believe, whichever confession they belong to, can be potentially infinite in number; but there will always be non-Christians, even if these are only subjects from before the New Alliance. It, too, is a limited all.

Marked by the triple heritage of Thucydides, Aristotle, and the Church, the political *all* comes within the scope of the possible or real existence of an *x* that says no to it. This limit can come from the most lifeless empirical detail; for example, a constitution is only valid for a territory and a determinate people; far from being weakened by this, it is confirmed by the empirical existence of nations to which it does not apply. The limit can come from the concept; for example, of an Idea of justice or a natural right. The American constitution of 1776 inaugurated a still lively tradition by beginning with a Bill of Rights. It must be understood that this Bill marks out the limits that the constitution will not be able to transgress.

By contrast, it can be discerned that the slogan “everything is political” contains within it the mark of the *not-all* and from this fact, a challenge, conscious or not, to logico-politics. That this was henceforth proffered in the name of the masses, an unlimited figure, and that it was taken up again more recently by garden-variety feminism as a slogan for “political correctness,” the doctrine predicts. Insofar as it is founded on the *all*, the logico-political tips towards the masculine, at least as Lacan understands it. That garden-variety feminism objects to this is part of its very definition. It has a choice: political correctness relies on the unlimited; equality relies on the limited and even the finite. Equality in an unlimited society, at a moment when we can plainly see that institutional forms have no more weight than table manners? Really, there is no need to be a man to be Don Quixote.

§ 16.

We have said it already. Since 1918, it is generally accepted that among the inherited political forms, only one is appropriate to modern society: democracy. To speak of the relation of society to politics is thus to speak of the relation of society to democracy.

If one adheres to the strict logico-political tradition, it is the government of *all*. A limited *all*, of course.

Now, there is not even any need to evoke the unlimited for the problems to arise. The majority of them have been commented on; the most opaque, nevertheless, enjoys a sort of consensual immunity. At least in our time. Let’s admit that logico-political parallelism requires the strict correspondence of two tripartitions. In fact, this correspondence is guaranteed by a logical violence: that the majority counts as *all*. This is what is called *majority rule*. Many theoreticians have held that this logical violence inevitably leads to a material violence. In fact, why should those who are less numerous bow down before the more numerous? Isn’t this just a variant on might makes right? And why should might make right prevail when it is a matter of making good, or fair, or simply expedient, decisions? What’s more, the less numerous must not only give in, but in addition—notably in the French tradition—they must give way on their convictions and rally behind the majority. Even if in their inner conscience they are not so rallied, it is asked of them to act entirely as if they were. The decision of the majority becomes the decision of *all* and of each;

as partial and possibly biased as it may be, it is imposed on all and each. Doesn't this go against common sense?

Whence the idea that the most good-natured democracy is intrinsically a regime of violence and that this violence is manifested sooner or later. This idea is especially widespread among the Ancients. This explains why *kratia* is in the word, and not *archia*: a regime of force (*kratos*) and not of ordered power (*arche*).

§ 17.

The moderns do not judge matters this way. The most dishonest act as if there is no difficulty, and get offended: how can one think that majority rule is not best? How could one admit for even a moment that there could be any exception to it? But the most honest recognized the difficulty, since they made an effort to get around it. They explained that democracy is founded on a fictive contract that stipulates a pledge, freely taken up by each, to accept majority rule. This contract is alleged to have been accepted by all; there is only a majority rule if it is founded on unanimity.

It is blindingly obvious that this original unanimity is a creature of pure reason. Democracy avoids violence, to the exact extent that it is fiction. Now, the material of the fiction is do-it-yourself [*bricolé*]. The democracy that comes from the logico-political can and must be fulfilled as do-it-yourself [*bricolé*]. Equipment such as an electoral system, agendas, taking turns speaking, points of order, quorums, etc. Nothing can call itself a non-violent democracy without recourse to such things—whether they are taken seriously or not. In this respect, nothing is sillier than the virtuous indignation surrounding the election of George W. Bush. It is recognized in adjustments of this type and in nothing else that majority rule works, since it can only work by making its constitutive logical violence bearable. That which it imposes on the definition of all. It can only go back to being bearable by technical manipulations. The essence of the rule of law is that these manipulations are legal, public, known in advance, and limited. This does not mean that these manipulations are fair. Whoever would like, a bit too much, for fairness to have the last word in matters of the vote always runs the risk of choosing for the obscure face of force.

§ 18.

Not only is the political all limited, and by that fact foreign to real society, but it is moreover do-it-yourself [*bricolé*]. The conclusion lacks charm. Always ingenious, Carl Schmitt proposes a way out; he defines democracy as the identity between the governing and the governed;⁸ the original dates from 1928). At first view, the attempt is full of interest, since it eliminates any reference to the quantifier all. But only apparently.

8. Carl Schmitt, *Théorie de la constitution* [Constitutional Theory] (Paris: PUF, 1993) 372.

In truth, the all remains present. In Schmitt's language, the grammatical singular ("the governing" and "the governed") is only a refined substitute for the plural forms of "the governing" and "the governed" [*les gouvernés*]. The reader of Constitutional Theory can find in some lines the irrepressible return of the plural. Using the definite article and the plural suffices for an all to be posited. Schmitt's only superiority—which isn't negligible—is that he isolates the problem, by generating the locution "the governed" [*les gouvernés*].

Does it designate a limited all? This is Schmitt's answer: this limited all is a people (Schmitt, 365); since it is limited, it is of capital importance that the notion of "not belonging to the people" be defined. Answers in terms of nation, ethnic group, race, were mere variants in the eyes of Schmitt, strongly inclined since 1928 to accept the Decrees of 1933; he was not the only one; beautiful souls would do well to read the disturbing list of examples that he brings forward (Schmitt, 369-371); they would be astonished at the number of constitutions called democratic that rely on declared exclusions.

Whatever the case, the conclusion is obvious: if the collection of the governed [plural] is a limited tout, it is heterotopic to modern society; it would not be able to express it or represent it or cover it up. Reciprocally society, as society, is not governed. It is, from the point of view of politics, a void, or a virgin forest. Which amounts to the same thing.

Does the locution "the governed" [*les gouvernés*] refer on the contrary to an unlimited all? This is the American response (since the Jacksonian revolution described by Tocqueville). In this case, the collection of the governed [*les gouvernés*] is society itself. If democracy relies on the identity of the governing and the governed [TN: both plurals], the collection of the governing is also society itself, incessantly broken down and built out of minorities.

The terminology of experts bears traces of this. One will observe how in France, the Christian Socialists progressively substituted society for the people. Content with speaking of a lost people, the obsolescence of a limited all is diagnosed; from the moment that society, an unlimited all, takes its place, the people became as lost as water in desert sands. But, in such a situation, it is necessary to speak plainly: it's over for logico-politics. In particular, it's over for majority rule as the place holder of the *all*. It has been replaced, in American democracy, by a rule of minorities in the plural, as is appropriate for the *not-all*. This is beginning to be found in Europe as well.

§ 19.

One thus concludes that the equivocation is irremediable. It has been felt often, and at the same time misrecognized. Opposing political democracy to social democracy is a platitude of the semi-skilled. It amounts to a swindle, if it is not broken down into its elements: either the term democracy refers to logico-politics, or else

it denies it. Democracy as a political form is not the same thing as democracy as a form of society. Nothing proves that they have anything to do with each other. One could even suppose that in fact each turns out, in turn, to be a hindrance to the other. After all, it has happened quite often that democracy as a political form was put into place by the power of forces overtly hostile to democracy as a form of society; inversely, democracy as a form of society declares itself to be more and more indifferent to democracy as a political form; complaints about non-voters testify to this. Since the fracture is real, it is no surprise that it is vigorously denied. The denial, as is fitting, relies on a pure decision, that is, one purified of any rational demonstration. In theoretical language, this called an axiom. In material language, it is called a posture.

In fact, the good people recognize each other by the positing of a double axiom:

- a) Democracy as a form of society is the putting into act of democracy as political form;
- b) Democracy as a political form is the means and condition for democracy as a form of society.

Whoever questions either of these axioms is denounced as a villain; he deserves condemnation, pity, or a contemptuous indifference, according to mood or circumstances. Or, rather, according to the relations of force. But the tranquil and virtuous self-confidence of the good folk is not convincing. It does not do enough to mask the real existence of a structural contradiction: modern society is unlimited and politics, such as it has been configured by history and theory, handles limited alls. These two structures collide.

Far from democracy offering a solution to this, its proper characteristic is to be traversed by it in its very name, that is, in its being. The *demos* that defines it oscillates incessantly between *all* and *not-all*. Like happens to a boat caught in a storm, the oscillation can rapidly provoke internal jolts. At the points of collision, the *problem* arises.

§ 20.

Whether the language of limited alls encounters a figure of the unlimited, or whether the unlimited encounters a figure of the limit, in either case the structure of the problem is present. In the two cases, it takes on the appearance of a problem that society poses to politics. All at once the structure of the solution is born; it takes on the appearance of a solution that politics finds, under the pressure of society. Ideally, every solution tends to be definitive. In two alternative manners: either, in order to save the all, make the figure of the not-all disappear (the European solution); or else promote the not-all, by plunging the exception into the fluidity of the unlimited (the anti-European solution). In any case, the heterotopia is resolved.

One can foresee that the problems multiply in number and accentuate their intensity bit by bit as society becomes, by its own movement, more and more overtly unlimited. At the same time, politics finds itself to be more and more troubled by its Thucydidean and Aristotelian heritage, precisely because it is more and more worried about the democratic ideal. One can say that the twentieth century consists in this repeated discovery.

For example, the problem of pensions, often mentioned today, is born from the collision between two demands: the demand that human life be unlimited and the demand that the time of work be limited. The European solution is to plunge the unlimited demand into the mechanism of solidarity, which only has sense in the limited configuration of the social all—in truth, the Nation-State. The anti-European solution (accepted for example in the US): trust in the unlimited of financial profits.

Another example: the problem of war; when society is thought as unlimited, war begins to be thought of as a limit to society. And thus, intolerable.

The European solution: prevent war. The ideal of perpetual peace (with all its variants) consists of expanding the grasp of the limited on global society: organize the world into one unique society, and treat this unique society as a limited all (the limit being determined by the moral law and materialized by a deliberative assembly of Nation-States). As much as they take themselves as a Great-Europe and an expanded Nation-State, the US promotes this model (the League of Nations and the UN). They break away each time that the oscillation leads them to take themselves as the Other of Europe, as much by isolationism as by extreme interventionism.

The anti-European solution: plunge war into the unlimited. The Nazi variant: total war. The humanist variants: the zero casualty warfare of the US, according to which the serviceman is thought of as an employee whose contract does not include the risk of dying; the surgical strike, a simple prolongation of the techno-structure; the Keynesian war, a way of restarting a depressed economy by having recourse to the disguised intervention of the State, via a military politics. Finally, the supreme form, social war: it gives itself the military aim of “defending society”—I am using in full knowledge Foucault’s expression—unless the society in question is not simply an accumulation of practices and legends. Modern society, one of a kind, and at the same time the model for all the others.

A recent illustration: American democracy has become more and more exclusively a true Nation-State, in the place of the Nation-State handed down by Old Europe: since September 11th, it takes itself to be in a condition of legitimate defense, as a society and thus as a nation. It gives itself the right to strike out at all the links in the enemy chain, one by one, beginning with the weakest. It now seems that, in its strategic analysis, the weak link was Iraq. Not lashing out, not savagery, but the logical consequence of a structural necessity.

Taking off from the same structure of illimitation, European ideology says no to the war; anti-European ideology says yes. The first thinks of war as a suspension of society and it is for that reason that it says no to it. The second thinks of war as a continuation of society by other means, and it is for that reason that it says yes to it.

A final, significant example: the problem of politics itself. That is, the problem of the relation of politics to society. After the First World War, one notices that all that the nineteenth century had handed down as limited political forms, whether it was the people, the State, or the nation, underwent a sudden mutation. Either the forms were lost—lost people, but also lost State and lost Nation—or else they tipped over into the unlimited—total people, total State, total Nation. One can claim that the entirety of twentieth century theory and practice confronted the problem and proposed solutions to it, constructing a politics that acknowledged the mutations, with different ideological colorations. Beyond the ideological variations, there are oscillations between two structural possibilities:

- a) reestablish the limited in society by *constructing* it;
- b) adapt politics to the unlimited.

Here again, the first possibility prevails widely in Europe; since the Catholic tradition provides an abundant reservoir of limitation techniques, one understands that, in a concealed fashion or not, the reference to the Roman Church is prevalent in minds there, no less than the direct or indirect influence of its best servants. All one has to do is correctly decode what is at stake in the current expansion towards the countries of the East. Not only the ideal thematic (Christian Socialism), but the organizational apparatus of Catholicism plays a role therein that will be increasing.

The second possibility prevails in the US and since the Protestant tradition, of Christians without Church, furnishes an abundant reservoir of un-limitation techniques—what Bossuet, with the unequalled discernment of the blind, called “the variations”—it is understood why, directly or not, the reference to Churches (multiplied) is prevalent there. Including cults.

To say that there is a Jewish problem is, on a first approach, to say that the name Jew is caught at the collision point between all and not-all. According to the classical European version, society is where the problems are, and politics provides the solutions. If, therefore, there is a Jewish problem, and if it is posited in society, it is because the Jew appears there as the support of an exception, of a limit, of a saying-no to the society-function. The solution is political; despite different circumstances, its formula is simple: the voice of the no must be silenced, either by an interior transformation of the Jew, or by the material disappearance of the Jew.