

THE LEVIATHAN'S ACHILLES' HEEL ON DECONSTRUCTION AND CONSCRIPTION¹

El talón de Aquiles del Leviatán. Sobre deconstrucción y conscripción

Giustino De Michele

Université Paris 8
giustinodemichele@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper situates the problem of military service in the thought of Jacques Derrida. The first part retraces this issue in *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminar, between Hobbes's *Leviathan* and three classic fables. The second part solicits some classic references such as Rousseau, Heidegger, and Renan, in order to question conscription such as is at issue, in an exemplary way, in contemporary France. The third and last part convokes Kant, the Catholic Church, and the issue of the death penalty, before sketching the role of military service in deconstruction's point of view on cosmopolitanism.

Keywords:

Military Service, Fable, Europe, Death Penalty, Deconstruction.

Resumen:

Este ensayo trata de situar el problema del servicio militar en el pensamiento de Jacques Derrida. La primera parte explora esta cuestión en el seminario *La bestia y el soberano*, entre el *Leviatán* de Hobbes y tres fábulas clásicas. La segunda parte solicita algunas referencias clásicas como Rousseau, Heidegger y Renan, con el fin de cuestionar la conscripción tal y como está ejemplarmente implicada en la Francia contemporánea. La tercera y última parte convoca a Kant, la Iglesia Católica y el problema de la pena de muerte para esbozar la función del servicio militar desde el punto de vista de la deconstrucción del cosmopolitismo.

Palabras clave:

Servicio militar, fábula, Europa, Pena de muerte, Deconstrucción.

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THE FABLE OF MILITARY SERVICE

La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure.
 Nous allons le montrer tout à l'heure.

1.

Thus begins *The Wolf and the Lamb*, the fable that Jacques Derrida chose as an emblem to the first year of *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminar (Derrida, 2009: 7). Reason and strength are those of the Wolf. We are in nature, or *dans la nature*, as one says in French to designate the imaginary space where an outlaw is on the run. We are in the wilderness: in a time and space not ruled by norms, be it a forest, a spooky suburb, or the heart of a capital city. Or rather, we are at some frontier, in a no man's land, the place of a primitive accumulation: the accumulation of water, and of the flesh of the Lamb; drink and food for the Wolf.

La Fontaine's fable (1985: 51) and its exergue illustrate the law of a pessimistic anthropology, a Hobbesian state of nature. Of nature as the site of a war for survival among individuals or nations, where everyone is everyone else's enemy. Derrida's commentary insists on this direction, designating the Lamb as the weak, the "defenseless enemy" (2009: 211) of the Wolf.

Yet, the fable does not speak of sheer cruelty and nature. The Wolf is indeed said to be cruel, but he hesitates, he seeks a justification. He needs to carry out an actual trial against the Lamb, albeit a summary one, before the predictable death sentence. As if some natural law was in force, in spite of all. Or rather, as if he were attempting to legitimate his position. If things were so, the Wolf would be a criminal, maybe a lord of war, longing for legitimacy.

But in fact, as Derrida remarks, the attribute of the Wolf is majesty: "Sire, Your Majesty", says the Lamb answering the other's overbearing address. So the Wolf might be a legitimate sovereign. At least, the Lamb seems to qualify him as such, and, if he is a Lamb worthy of his name, without calculated irony or hypocrisy. If things were so, then, the Wolf would be a sovereign looking for a justification to behave like a beast. But the Lamb would *not* be his enemy: rather, a defenceless citizen in the hands of authority.

To bring all these possibilities together, we must say that the fable indicates a threshold, the site of an oscillation. The Wolf is at once a criminal, a sovereign, a criminal becoming sovereign and a sovereign behaving like a criminal. But let us concentrate on the Lamb. He is at once an enemy and a citizen. So, the fable indicates the site of the becoming-enemy of a defenceless citizen and of the becoming-citizen of a defenceless enemy. Force and law, the articulation between the two, is what makes the moral of the story.

2.

According to Derrida, the most powerful manifestation of this configuration, of the sacrificial foundation of authority, is the death penalty, institutional delegate of totemic meal. Indeed, the Wolf kills the Lamb at the end of the story. Yet, we can give the story a slightly different turn. What happens afterwards? The Wolf does not only kill the Lamb. He eats him. He incorporates him. And so he lives on. As for the Lamb: he integrates the Wolf, he becomes the Wolf, or part of it. That is how, to some extent, he perseveres in existence. That is how *he* survives.

This ruse of survival leads us to another political fable: the fable of the Leviathan, the epistemological fiction of the contractual origin of state authority and of the building of the sovereign golem or robot. Hobbes's sovereign functions as the *analogon* of an actual human organism; all its limbs in the right place, its parts are made of its subjects. But these are former *or* potential mutual enemies, or enemies of the state, that have *become* citizens. Just like the Lamb becomes a part of the Wolf, every subject becomes a part of the sovereign body of the Leviathan. A more or less specialised part, according to a sophisticated division of labour. In the worst case, muscles and bones, maybe fangs and claws, or just flesh. Cannon fodder. *Chair à canon*.

Former enemies become citizens when a state is founded. And so they live on: both the state, that has no life without a body, and the subjects, that risked death at every step before founding the state. But also *potential* enemies become citizens. Who are these? After the foundation of the state, if this is to live on, they are newborns, innocent *nurselings*, like the Lamb of the fable. Whose fault is to be born, according to the summary trial of the Wolf. Birth is the original fault that, in exchange for an identity card and a set of rights, in exchange for a *name*, accords the duty to give one's life for one's birth nation, if demanded. But without ever being asked.

What we are suggesting is that the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb can be bent to be the allegory of the institution of military service, specifically of mandatory conscription. And so, we suggest to shift the focus from death penalty, the sacrificial *manifestation* of the mystical foundation of authority, to military service as the *condition of possibility* of the conservation of state authority. In Kantian terms, if a law does not exist without coercive force, a state does not exist without an army.

3.

Just as a human body is not only made of flesh, every service is not military. There are different assimilations and digestions in the Leviathan's realm. One can serve it through the arms, but also through work, or knowledge, as Heidegger asserted in his *Rectorate Address*. But military service occupies a particular place or is particularly apt to show a number of paradoxes.

Before mentioning some of these, and in order to bend more convincingly our fable to such ends, we shall pass through a third fable: the fable of the Poet and the Snake. We are referring to D.H. Lawrence's (2007: 127) poem *Snake*, also

commented upon by Derrida (2009: 238, 247) in *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminar:

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

The waiter is the Poet, a man, sovereign of all the creatures that swim, fly, walk, and “crawl on the ground”, says the Bible. While the first comer is precisely a crawling creature: if not the humblest, the most despicable one. Yet, the Poet cedes the passage to the Snake. He respects the law of hospitality, be it natural or not, but most of all in doing so he cedes his sovereignty. And more, he recognises the other’s hidden majesty:

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

In fact, after stopping in contemplation in front of the drinking Snake, and precisely while this was crawling back through a fissure into the Poet’s wall, perhaps under his very house, the Poet, overcome by horror, had tried unsuccessfully to smash the Snake with a log. Cowardly, against any rule of engagement, while the other was turning his back to him.

In fact, Lawrence’s Poet happens to behave quite like La Fontaine’s Wolf: he is the second comer to a water source, in front of a humbler first comer, and after a certain hesitation, as if scared by the other and by his own hesitation, he acts to kill the other, criminally.

What about the Snake, and his *uncanny* majesty? And what about military service? In the first place, we must remark that the majesty of the Snake is coessential to the very impossibility of putting him to service: the Snake is venomous and inassimilable, but also idle and unemployable. He is no food, he has no hand. A Snake is no part of a Leviathan. Not even cannon fodder.

But the problem that he represents for the sovereign is the same as the Lamb’s: how to employ him, the impossibility to be put to work, or, if possible, the necessity to do this as fast as possible, even before one is born. We mentioned the Lamb’s birth fault. But if the Lamb can expiate it by being assimilated, the snake is the very figure of the unamendability of an original sin.

The analogy between the two fables still needs to be perfected. In particular, insomuch as a Snake can be said to drink and stare “as cattle do”, we have to make clear how a Lamb can turn into a Snake. Three elements permit us to move towards a third fable, where a Lamb becomes a Snake and actually eats the Wolf or ravages a sovereign. 1) The Snake is a king in exile. 2) “In certain religions”, says Derrida, “the manifestation of sovereignty passes through the small, the smallest: the weakness or smallness of the baby Jesus for example, or the lamb” (2009: 258). 3) “This is a classic scene, a classic biblical scene, a classic Middle Eastern scene: it happens

near a source of water, the scene of hospitality takes place near a source of water" (Derrida 2009: 241). Such as a baptismal rite, we shall add.

4.

The biggest water source in the Bible is most likely the Nile. And our last fable is the story of Moses. Sheltered in a papyrus basket, placed among the reeds on the river bank, Moses is our third first comer. As for the third second comer, this time it is not a man, but a woman: the Pharaoh's daughter. Moved by pity at the sight of the Hebrew child crying, she decides not to kill him (as she should have, according to the law dictated by her father), but instead to call for a nurse: "take this child and nurse it for me" (Exodus, 2:9), says Her Majesty. Perhaps because she is a woman; perhaps because she delegates the nurturing of the baby to a Hebrew midwife. In any case, this time the corporal and alimentary bonding to the sovereign body does not work. Moses is the paradigm of a Lamb that turns out to be a Snake nurtured in one's bosom.

So the Lamb was in fact an uncanny sovereign to come. His strength, the Pharaoh had to see it *tout à l'heure*, didn't reside in phenomenal force, but in ruse, dissimulation (and godly election of course: it should be noted that a snake and a stick appear in the scene in which Moses is chosen by God to ransom his people). According to Machiavelli, the Lamb would be, after all, a fox in disguise.

So, going back to the Wolf, and to his trial against the Lamb, we should recognise that he was just carrying out a preventive police operation, maybe a secret one, but entirely within his own rights. The fact that this operation implies a sort of birth control, or ethnic police, should disquiet us, yet, not as a pernicious exception, but as the ordinary exercise of a sovereign faculty.

And going back to the time before Moses' birth, we can point out the role of military service, and of service in general, in his story. It is the beginning of the *Exodus* book: a story of immigration, exploitation, and birth control:

the Israelites were fruitful and prolific. They became so numerous and strong that the land was filled with them.

So the new king

said to his subjects, 'Look how numerous and powerful the Israelite people are growing, more so than we ourselves! Come, let us deal shrewdly with them to stop their increase; otherwise, in time of war they too may join our enemies to fight against us, and so leave our country' (Exodus, 1:7-22).

So the Hebrews – unfit to join the army – were put to forced labour. But this was not enough. The Hebrews grew on. The Egyptians feared them, just like the Poet fears the Snake, just like the Wolf, hesitating, somehow fears the Lamb's innocence. Fear led the king to the extreme measure: kill all the boys, throw them into the river. Then Moses came.

5.

All these fables indicate a site where a number of crucial political oppositions are at stake, and still to be decided: assimilation and rejection, citizen and enemy, criminal and sovereign, right and arbitrariness, partisan (or deserter, or terrorist) and regular soldier (trooper or policeman), state of nature and institution, civil and inter-national war (normalised by treaties and fought by regular armies). Military service, especially universal conscription, is a privileged manifestation of this site. Perhaps even better than, or in any case complementary with the death penalty. In both cases what is at stake is the sovereign's right of life and death over his present, potential and past subjects. Either device is the condition of the other: the death penalty founding the state body, military service allowing its survival². If there is a privilege of the latter, it is that it lasts more than the former. It is more persistent, less likely to be abolished, if at all. From an Aristotelian point of view, it is perhaps *more essential*.

Current affairs today seem to confirm this: we are referring to the debates concerning on the one hand the reactivation of national mandatory draft (which in most cases is only suspended, not abrogated), and on the other the institution of a European armed force on voluntary basis (in order to face supranational crisis scenarios). But also to the recent repudiation, by Catholic Church, of the death penalty, yet not of its own military force. In this vein, Derrida sketchily refers to military service as the peak case of the authority that the death penalty dwells upon:

One can abolish the death penalty within a society or nation without in the least infringing on the right to kill an enemy at the front in wartime [...] (the enemy soldier, sometimes the enemy civilian) but also its own soldiers sent to the front or even condemned to death in wartime for treason or desertion (2017: 19).

6.

We can now return to the *Leviathan*. Military service is the weak point of Hobbes's construction, or the Leviathan's Achilles' heel. We shall quote this passage, where the contradiction of Hobbes's logic exposes itself:

A covenant not to defend myself from force, by force, is always void. For no man can transfer, or lay down his right to save himself from death, wounds, and imprisonment, (the avoiding whereof is the only end of laying down any right); and therefore the promise of not resisting force, in no covenant transferreth any right; nor is obliging. For though a man may covenant thus, *unless I do so, or so, kill me*; he cannot covenant thus, *unless I do so, or so, I will not resist you, when you come to kill me*. For man by nature chooseth the lesser evil, which is danger of death in resisting; rather than the greater, which is certain and present death in not resisting. And this is granted to be true by all men, in that they lead criminals to execution, and prison, with armed men, notwithstanding that

² According to Walter Benjamin (1986: 286), nevertheless, both death penalty and (yet to a much greater extent) police manifest the pernicious mixture of founding and preserving state violence. See Derrida, 2002a: 276.

such criminals have consented to the law, by which they are condemned (1996: 93).

According to Hobbes, there exist natural political laws. The first imposes auto-conservation. Importantly: this is not a right. It is an *obligation*. The second obliges us to found a state to maintain peace and allow auto-conservation. *This* is the *telos* of the state and of the cession of sovereignty. The third imposes on us the respect of pacts. But military service makes the third law prevail on the first, that which is against natural law: literally aberrant. Hobbes's construction is based on deterrence. What happens when I am at the front, at the frontier of the state and of the rule of law, *dans la nature*? On the battle line the pact becomes void, just like on the scaffold, because I am most certainly risking my life (and the state is my enemy). According to the first natural law, I should establish a non belligerence pact with the enemy soldier standing in front of me. In *that* specific moment, my *interest* should prevail on the state's one. Or, since according to Hobbes a calculating *fear* is the fundamental political passion that suggests the foundation *and* the respect of pacts: my fear should calculate *whether* obedience is more reasonable than desertion. And each time this is a sovereign decision.

On this point, what can a comparison of the death penalty and military obligation tell us? On the one hand, we have certainty, on the other probability, of death. Correlative to certainty is a crime enacted by the subject against the institution: the subject broke the pact that he had agreed to. Correlative to probability is a colonisation, enacted by the institution, differentiated according to *class* (age, social, ethnic). Yet the certainty of birth, for who is alive, condemns one to undergo the procedure of enlistment based on a contract he has not signed. This difference reflects Hobbes's distinction between state by acquisition and state by institution. Whereas consensus is implied in state institution, all perpetuation of a state is by acquisition, by auto-colonisation. The exercise of *patria potestas* is the example chosen by Hobbes to illustrate the second case.

7.

To conclude in this register by referring to the generality of the fable, we can ask: what makes Hobbes pass over, if not solve, the contradiction? What makes the respect of pacts prevail on auto-conservation, and freeze my fear's calculating power? Opening the *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes:

the *pacts* and *covenants*, by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, and united, resemble that *fiat*, or the *let us make man*, pronounced by God in the creation (1996: 7).

And later (114):

This is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, of that *Mortal God*, to which we owe our peace and defence, peace at home, and mutual aid against enemies abroad (114).

The sacredness of the covenant and the fabulous *unity* of the Leviathan guarantee the infringement of natural law. This covenant is a fable. The supposedly *given word*

that is supposed to count more than my interest. This is the spiritualistic root that bends Hobbes's rationalistic, utilitarian geometry. And justifies (military) service.

Such fable *makes* the truth. It produces unamendable effects, such as the very effective fear, if it is not some spirit of service, which prevails on the fear of risking one's own life.

To quote Derrida, "a certain effectivity, a certain efficacy, including the irreversible actuality of death, are not excluded from this affabulation" (2008: 217).

NEWS ON MILITARY SERVICE

1.

As Derrida points out, even the most utilitarian, rationalistic foundation of sovereignty is rooted in a spiritualistic, theological perspective. This is so by definition, if it is true that the very principle of reason is theological; this means: if the history and the notion of a human reason, even of the most secular one, depend upon the model of divine reason. But divine reason, that is, the model of reason, or reason itself, is the notion of a living and dictating intelligence, and absolutely so. In other words: reason is spirit, and spirit is sovereign.

Thus, in Hobbes's construction, the reason of fable can prevail on the reason of interest: fable, *fabula*, *spiritus*, *logos* prevails. This is not simply the supremacy of the collective over the individual, of law over interest. The plan of mere force is not the plan of legitimacy, but the conservation of one's life is an obligation, according to natural laws. Not only cannot the sovereign expect the prisoner to compliantly offer his own life on the scaffold. He also is, as Hobbes (1996: 145) recognises in an astounding passage, not supposed (or we should perhaps say obliged?) to punish whoever runs away from a battle: "natural timorousness", just like "feminine courage", is not a crime. This is so because, no more than by force itself, "no man is bound by the words themselves either to kill himself, or any other man". By what, then? By the "intention" of words and acts: literally, by their spirit.

If a war of religion shelters itself under the eye of the Leviathan, the most intestinal one, this takes place in the heart of the soldier on the battlefield: one obligation fighting the other, one form of life fighting the other: the spiritual against the physical. Thus, the fable of the sacredness of the Leviathan does not only freeze, repress, nullify fear and the calculation of personal interest: it sublates them. Going back to the Aristotle's *Politeia*, this amounts precisely to a supremacy of meaningful, intentional *phonè* over animal musings: of spirit as *logos*. Passing through Romanity, Christianity, and the conflicted European history of relations among spiritual and temporal authorities, this legacy still obliges Hobbes.

2.

Yet, as regards military service, Hobbes's account might offer as disenchanting a theory of absolute sovereignty as can be found. The reactivation of the national spirit of the *polis*, its fable, would be strategic for the elaboration of a popular, revolutionary contractualism. But it would imply the re-enchantment of military service. The

polis's is the fable of the gracious correspondence between state and nation, freedom and obligation: the fable of the citizen whose harmonious balance of mind and body provides its highest exploits on the battlefield. Yet, it is a fable: on the one hand the army of a classical *polis* was far from being exclusively composed by its citizens; on the other some of these, even *strategoi*, would become appraised mercenaries. Just like some of the famous Swiss corps, a model so successful as to be systematically exported.

If the ideal of the city-state is seminal in Rousseau's re-elaboration of Hobbes's theory, the ideal of cantonal civil militias is central to his views on military service. Keeping in mind our Derridian drop point, we shall stress the place of conscription in *The Social Contract*:

The purpose of the social treaty is the preservation of the contracting parties. [...] He who wills that his life may be preserved at the expense of others must also, when necessary, give his life for their sake. But the citizen ceases to be the judge of occasions on which the law requires him to risk danger; and when the ruler has said: 'It is in the state's interest that you should die', he must die, because it is only on this condition that he has hitherto lived in safety, his life being no longer only a benefit due to nature, but a conditional gift of the state. The death penalty for criminals may be considered from broadly the same point of view: it is to avoid being the victim of murder that we consent to die if we become murderers (Rousseau, 1999: 71).

In this "extraordinary sentence" (Derrida, 2014: 15), Rousseau *deduces*, as it were, the death penalty from military duty. His logic of the calculation of (lives') interests is the same as Hobbes's. Military service is still a limit-case. Yet, in quite a different sense: since not fear, but rather love, is the passion underpinning the constitution of this sovereign body. Military service, therefore, is the very expression of a fully civil sovereignty. According to a conception of the secular political bond which is more a religious than a moral one, it is not the sovereign that takes the citizen's life, but the latter who gives it for him. The citizen's sacrifice on the battleground, the alienation of his life in favour of the sovereign, confirms the sublation of natural liberty into civil liberty that the stipulation of the covenant enacts. This bond, this *logos*, is national spirit.

Hence, fiercely opposed to professional permanent armies, a tool for despotic regimes and a motive for wars, Rousseau highly praises universal, mandatory conscription: the expression of a genuine spirit of service, and the condition of possibility of a cosmopolitan utopia of perpetual peace.

3.

Both the nationalistic and the cosmopolitan versants of this conflicting logic, spirit, were to craft French revolutionary ideology and to be developed within German idealism, notwithstanding the concurrent, long-lasting Franco-German hostility³. Heidegger's *Rectorate Address* is perhaps the deepest meditation of the nationalness

³ See Hippler, 2006.

of this spirit. It surely is one of the last, because of some historical contingencies. Nevertheless, Derrida's referral to the "massive voluntarism" (1989: 37) of this speech allows to grasp its continuity with the classical tradition, and to consider it as a peak of sorts. With an aim of considering the contemporary relevance of military service, and of the military as exemplary of service in general, we shall highlight some of its elements.

What the speech performs is the *Self-Assertion of German University*. German University's function is the *spiritual* guidance ("*geistige Führung*") of the nation, inasmuch as it teaches (guides) its leaders, and is guided, in turn, "by that unyielding spiritual mission that forces the fate of the German people to bear the stamp of its history" (Heidegger, 1985: 470). Spirit guides the university which guides the leaders of the nation. In turn, this guidance must be "*most deeply willed*": first of all, by the University, which must determine itself according to its own essence. This auto-determination, well beyond disciplinary and accounting autonomy, means *Gefolgschaft* (devoted allegiance) to the essence of science. Liberty is consent beyond calculation. Spiritual service.

But what is science? It is "*the questioning, unguarded holding on one's ground in the midst of the uncertainty of the totality of what is*" (474). More concretely, it is "*the power that most deeply preserves the people's strengths, which are tied to earth and blood*" (475). And native tongue of course. Science is not a superstructure: it is popular, inasmuch as a people is authentic. This means that, following the new covenant of the university with essence, hence willing science, the nation wills itself according to the essence of self-assertion. Naturally, this means reactivating a Greek attitude towards the world. Once again, this fable is that of *logos*. Which means, of "*die innerst bestimmende Mitte des ganzen volklich-staatlichen Daseins*": "*the innermost determining centre of the entirety of the national-and-state Dasein*" (473). *Logos* is the *bond* of the covenant.

If the covenant is scientific, genuine, then "*to give the law to oneself is the highest freedom*" (475). "*Henceforth*" freedom, national students' *scientific* freedom, involves three *bonds* (*Bindungen*), and must be carried out through three services: Labor, Armed, Knowledge Service. Heidegger insists on the equal rank of the three. Yet, on the one hand knowledge permits the unfolding of the essence of self-assertion: and therefore of the military and working constitution of a nation. Thus Heidegger stresses the non-coercive tenor of the covenant, of *Führung* and *Gefolgschaft*, of service. But on the other hand this tenor, which defines firstly the relation between the *Lehrer* and the *Schüler*, is a battle: *Kampf*. The university is a *Kampfgemeinschaft*. As is the nation, of which it is the peak. "*Der Kampf* then is what gathers the three duties" (Derrida, 1993: 198). The bond is a fight, *logos* is the gathering of *polemos*.

Enduring this battle means being closer at once to the origin and future of Western civilisation. This is a battle against decadence, and for man's dignity. Heidegger spiritualises a more blatant German militarism (like Fichte's), but concurrently deepens the reach of a spiritualization of death, of the cult of military death. An honourable exploit, rather than a medicalized agony, is the model of *Dasein's* end. Similarly, if Heidegger's *logos* is the very power of synthesis, of historical

universalization, insomuch as it is enrooted in a national conjuncture it is unlikely to spiritualize a policy other than a national imperialism.

4.

This 1933's speech seems too German, and too anachronistic.

And yet. Reading it, Derrida suggests that the belligerent spiritualization of service in general, as much as the intertwining of the military, economic, scientific functions, are not a relic of a totalitarian past. Let alone nationalism, and its spirit.

Let us move, then, from the Freiburg Rectorate to the Sorbonne Amphitheatre. Fifty-one years before, this was the venue of another speech about scientific nationalism. Better still, another scientific speech on another national universalism. Another fight for the appropriation of *logos*, fable: this time in view of a European, cosmopolitan confederation of states. Such is Ernest Renan's *What Is a Nation?*. Twelve years after the Sedan battle, Renan confronts programmatically a Germanic conception of nationality (and expansionism), as based on race, language, religion. His refutation rests on scientific ground: on philology, linguistics, ethnography, empirical historiography. His method, his French ideal of science could not be more distant from Heidegger's. And yet, what is a nation? "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" (Renan, 1990: 19). A faculty that recollects the dispersion of time and space. Again, this *logos* could not be more distant from Heidegger's: Renan's is as much a faculty of memory as it is of oblivion⁴. Much must be recalled, but also forgotten, for a nation to stand on its feet, and project itself into the future. Yet, the condition of possibility of this perseverance into being, of the endurance of this "daily plebiscite", is suffering: since suffering must be forgotten; but mostly, because sharing suffering *unifies* more than anything else.

This suffering is not a generic one. Legitimacy rests on military honour.

So long as this moral consciousness [i.e. nation] gives proofs of its strength by the sacrifices which demand the abdication of the individual to the advantage of the community, it is legitimate, and has the right to exist (Renan, 1990: 20).

The model of this spirit of service is once again the Greek *polis* and its state religion. Not a revealed, but a secular one.

This religion was in the strongest sense of the term. One was not an Athenian if one refused to practise it. [...] To swear [...] was to swear that one would die for the *patrie*. This religion was the equivalent of what the act of drawing lots [for military service], or the cult of the flag, is for us. Refusing to take part in such a cult would be the equivalent, in our modern societies, of refusing military service (17).

⁴ See Derrida, 2008: 293.

5.

Still, what about anachronism?

Let us remain in the Sorbonne Amphitheatre. We shall listen to another French speech about the spirit of national universalism, that is, about the memory, present and destiny of Europe such as it is inscribed in the essence of university. And, of course, based upon military service.

This time we can literally listen to the speech, available on the internet: it is 2017's allocution by freshly elected French President Emmanuel Macron, *Pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique*. Beginning as follows:

I have come to talk to you about Europe. 'Again', some will say. They will have to get used to it, because I will not stop. Because this is where our battle lies, our history, our identity, our horizon, what protects us and gives us a future⁵.

And thus paying his respects to the Rector:

And to come to talk about it at the Sorbonne, *Monsieur le Recteur*. We are all sensitive to the prestige of this amphitheatre. But the Sorbonne did not start out as a prestigious building. It was first and foremost an idea. An idea supported by a few scholars and their disciples who built their future sitting on straw. [...] Europe, too, is an idea.

And to the military foundations of this renewal of sovereignty:

The only route which ensures our future [...] is the re-foundation of a sovereign, united and democratic Europe. [...] Why? Because what constructs and forges our profound identity, this balance of values, this relation with freedom, Human Rights and justice cannot be found anywhere on the planet. [...] *The first key* [to it], the foundation of any political community, is security.

Europe is the name of *logos*, spirit. The issue of a *combat* for memory, present and future of civilisation, of protection and promise. An idea embodied in the relation between masters and disciples. To be served in the name of the dignity of man; here, under the species of human rights (and free market). If necessary, and necessary it is, by essence, in arms.

We are not suggesting a philosophical comparison between Macron's and Heidegger's speeches. What is meaningful, though, is that a contemporary address for a renewal of sovereignty, albeit of a supranational, multicultural, utterly liberal one, in order to legitimate itself resorts to the very same *stamp* as explicitly required by the spiritualistic, voluntaristic, nationalistic, socialistic address of the other. That, albeit its *Stimmung* is that of tourism marketing and sports competition rather than of stifling blood-spread soil, this renewal is founded on the reactivation of military service. Perhaps there is more to this. *Insomuch* as it addresses a renewal, this project of sovereignty needs to renew military values: action and discipline,

⁵ Tr. mod., as in following quotes from Macron.

according to Heidegger. The military guarantee more than the mere life of the sovereign. They bring and mould its renewal: *youth*.

6.

The attitude towards military engagement is a tenuous but significant symptom of the state of contemporary Europe. Macron's speech and its context permit to seize its role in foreign and domestic policy. In both cases, its investment is ideological: fabulous.

In 2018, France actually launched the "European Intervention Initiative" announced in 2017. The initiative aims to establish a common ready intervention force, defence budget, and strategic culture, and is initially based on "exchange programs", to host service members of foreign armies. The adhesion of states is voluntary: this is not a communitarian institution, but a national multilateral covenant. Furthermore, it is open to non-EU states, and explicitly based on a Franco-German axis. This is significant as concerns the legitimation of a European sovereignty renewal. This renewal is based on the logic of *protection*. Europe must be *defended*. Against what? Against the very state of history, political and natural: "from climate change to digital transition, migration and terrorism" (Macron, 2017). Against globalization, or *mondialisation*. On this ground, Macron identifies two critical targets. Firstly, of course, "nationalism, identitarianism, protectionism, isolationist sovereinism". These ideas capitalise on fear, but are unfit for *mondial* protection. Therefore they menace Europe. Yet the same is true for actual Europe itself: forgetful of its own sovereignty, too slow, rigid, technical, old, sick. Thus: Europe must foremost be defended against itself. It must defend. Whence the just fear, the good will, and the third way proposed by Macron to face the "vital issue".

Once renewed, how shall Europe exert sovereignty? Firstly, it must acknowledge the state of the post-Cold-War World: Russian pressure, Chinese rise, terrorist menace, exhaustion of international military initiatives (UN, NATO); and mostly the disengagement of the USA. Europe grew sheltered by their power: it cannot anymore. This might sound like a decolonization project. It goes without saying that after Brexit (formalised six months before Macron's speech), France is the only European nuclear power. Yet, here is a first contemporary fable. How unrealistic can a military sovereignty project be, as such, when the body of the sovereign is belted with foreign (nuclear) explosives? Is such a decolonization of Europe ever likely to take place?

If not absolute, a conditional exert of sovereignty is therefore aimed at promoting (multi)national interest on a regional basis: thus Macron's speech stages a quick progression from the enactment of right to asylum, to the control of immigration and national frontiers, to the Southern border of the Mediterranean, to Sahelian Africa: this, more concretely, shall be Europe's "horizon". It would be particularly surprising to not locate a colonization project as corollary to a plea for armed empowerment, albeit a cosmopolitan one aimed at guaranteeing freedom to market and right to man. It would also be dull to consider every colonization as equivalent to another. As to condemn force *per se*: yet the typical ideological layouts of its display are worthy of consideration. Thus, in Macron's discourse, after the geographical one, a

thematic progression takes place: the military occupies the economical. This happens for essential reasons: the world, as a global actor, is the cause of emergence; even if the *oikos* were not actually burning, insofar as it might, its consideration requires, as such, emergency measures. And this concerns foreign as much as domestic economy, today's globalization entailing the effacement of this distinction.

Beyond the African horizon as well as within national borders, the military must face criminality, terrorism, natural yet anthropically catalysed catastrophes, but also such "tomorrow's challenges: youth employment, mobility, combating climate change, and technological revolutions" (Macron, 2017), as well as cyber security, alimentary, energetic, water sovereignty. It is worth noting that the "challenge" represented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic emergency potentially encompasses all of the above. Yet, as foreseeable as it was, no military *promptness* has impeded its critical bursting in Europe and the USA. Furthermore, one might ask if, in order to govern the above-listed processes, a united fiscal and sanitary policy would not be of more use to European sovereignty. Let alone in order to supply a *disciplined* supply of basic health devices, or the *collegial* purchase of a vaccine. A militarization of economic processes, on the contrary, inevitably erodes the realm of civil control over collective life, undercover of a nationalistic emphasis.

Thus the inevitable progression described above is, by definition if not by intention, one toward a state of police. And, as per Macron's third way, of a loosely defined multinational international good-will police. According to Walter Benjamin, this progression would be the precise consequence, not the solution, of the impotence of political authority and of a lack of normative deliberation. In other terms, this progression is a form of auto-colonization.

7.

In the domestic realm, auto-colonisation becomes the proclaimed purpose of military service.

During the 2017 French presidential campaign, Macron had proposed the reinstatement of mandatory universal military service. In 2019, France actually launched a *Service National Obligatoire*, both military and civil, for the moment in a pilot form, destined to be fully implemented in 2026.

In 2017, the leader of En Marche was not the only candidate to promise a similar measure. Jean-Luc Mélenchon of La France Insoumise, and Marine Le Pen of Le Front National did the same. Unlike Benoît Hamon and François Fillon, the Socialist and the Republican candidates. If it is true that the call for military service is a call for national renewal, it is meaningful that in France it came from three differently oriented populist movements, rather than by traditional parties. Besides, this is not the case in Germany, where both the Christian – and the Social – Democratic parties discuss this measure. Or in Italy, where the measure is sustained by Lega Nord and Fratelli d'Italia, two alt-right ("newly-fascist", as it were, and post-fascist) parties.

Let us stress that what is at stake, at least in these countries, is not a reintroduction of military service, because this has never been abolished: only suspended.

Conscription lists are still drafted, but conscription is not applied. It can, in case of necessity. This is coherent with its foundational status. In other European countries, such as Lithuania, conscription has been reactivated because of the perception of an actual military (Russian) menace. But what about France? What is the declared sense, the aim being the cause, of this reactivation?

It is the strengthening of the bond between the state and the nation, between the army and the youth. The awakening of national solidarity, order, discipline. In a word, *assimilation*: social and ethnic integration. Auto-colonisation. This expression is far from a simple metaphor in today's France. Moreover, with an ear to Cicero we can find tautological the association between conscription, colonisation, cultivation, pedagogy. Not only because the youth is actually enlisted. But because, as shown by Hobbes's⁶ Lamb as well by Rousseau's Emile, regardless of the opposite axiology of their anthropologies, the position of the social bond *is* a matter of education: ontological enhancement of the individual. If the social bond *is logos*, conscription is the yearly renewal of its fable.

Thus, here is a second contemporary fable. On the one hand, conscription is unlikely to satisfy the needs of a contemporary military apparatus. Especially if this is supposed to execute the complex operations that Macron's third way envisages. Most surely so, under the forms proposed nowadays, and if one can put forward an objection of conscience, or choose civil over military service. On the other, when fully operational, conscription is esteemed to be a severely expensive device (up to several tenths billion euros per year). Then why to prefer *this* declination of service over the other classical two: work, and especially knowledge – since conscription is supposed to educate? Also, Macron's bills in these two domains have not been saluted warmly by the youth. Hence the ideological tenor of conscription bills.

Moreover, this ideologization entails counterintuitive effects: a promotion of the military, on voluntary basis and oriented towards European sovereignty, might enhance the sovereignists' position (and military training); whereas a sovereignist universalistic call to duty might enhance the position (and military training) of groups marginalised upon ethnic, gender, cultural basis, or opposed ideologically, notably as regards bellicism. These contradictions rest on the twofold composition of our matter: the Greek and the Roman-Christian, the *polis* and the empire, the national and the universalistic. And reflect into the twofold status of Europe, at the same time a quasi-confederation and a macro-state among others.

The military model of the *polis*, or of the *Kanton*, is unlikely to be widely efficient, technically reproducible, ideologically suitable, nowadays. Unless sublated in sports, where characteristically ethnic integration is tortuously at work in a context where the supreme value is national and even city soil-and-blood bonding; or into a

⁶ So to speak. "But civil Societies are not mere Meetings, but Bonds, to the making whereof, Faith and Compacts are necessary [...]. Manifest therefore it is, that all men, because they are born in Infancy, are born unapt for Society [...]; yet have Infants, as well as those of riper years, an humane nature; wherefore Man is made fit for Society not by Nature, but by Education" (Hobbes, 1984: 44).

cosmopolitan point of view, where nonetheless it should count on the belief in a universal essence of man, and rely on the *pathos* of adoptive brotherhood.

MILITARY SERVICE TO COME

1.

We have stressed the national trait of Macron's speech and the pedagogical role of the military in order to guarantee cohesion within national borders. We shall rapidly stress its universalistic one, recalling the other pedagogical model it mobilises in order to gain supranational unity.

Macron's model for the unity of Europe is the spirit of the Sorbonne: the gathering of scholars from all over the continent. A Franco-Roman model. A gathering of languages, as Macron (2017) stresses: "Europe must be made of these languages and it will always be made of the untranslatable. We must work hard to keep this". This wink at Barbara Cassin, deconstructive as it were, is not occasional of Macron's. Interestingly, his one example is Franco-German and concerns obligation: *Schuld, dette*. Standing on the same ground as Renan, also literally, we are not yet going to scrutinize Macron's philosophy of language (which seems to presuppose the possibility to dissolve discursive "*blocages*").

We shall nevertheless remark how the *logos* of this unity, which (that which Macron forgets to mention) was *Latin* at the time of Robert Sorbon, is here market. Precisely, the 1957 Treaty of Rome's "four fundamental freedoms of movement": of goods, services, capital, persons. This is the declination of the democracy that a sovereign and unite Europe shall protect (and of work service in the context of this speech). Between a reinforced ERASMUS project and a Mona Lisa smile, a Greek temple and a Vienna café, between a good book, a piece of folklore, and a picturesque landscape, shall we call this democratic declination of *logos* tourism?

Tourism is as serious a matter as Kant's philosophy: deducing its aesthetic and normative conditions of possibility, natural beauty and cosmopolitan right. This encourages commercial and visitation rights, but concurrently forbids colonization. With our Derridian ends still in view, let us spot the role of military service in this frame. This will again convoke the death penalty.

According to Kant's (2006: 69) own project *Toward Perpetual Peace*, "Standing armies (*miles perpetuus*) shall gradually be abolished entirely". This notorious assertion reflects Rousseau's positions and rests as well on republican basis. Kant concedes, indeed, a teleological virtue to militarism and to the constant rise of military power: showing their irrationality, they plead for their own abolition, as for the abolition of an international state of nature. Professional armies fuel this mechanism. They are a constant threat to peace, and moreover, the tool of a despotic disposal of the individual by authority. Their logic is not only irrational according to teleology, it is unjust:

being hired out to kill or be killed seems to constitute a use of human beings as mere machines and tools in the hand of another (the state), a use which is incompatible with the rights of humanity in our own person.

The situation is quite different, however, when citizens of the state voluntarily and periodically undertake training in the use of weapons in order to protect themselves and their country from attacks from the outside (*ibid.*).

Indeed, Kant (1991: 135) implicitly recognises that the right to conscription rests on the property of the land: on old serfdom, as Georg Simmel (2004: 430) recalls; on primitive accumulation. Yet, the sovereign cannot dispose of the citizen as if it were its property, a simple means: such as an animal in a hunting party. Or such as a piece of "a mere machine (like a hand-mill)" (Kant, 2007: 179). But as a limb of a republican body. As we saw, the just bond of military service, the bond, universalistic and potentially cosmopolitan, of just military service, is living *logos*.

Kant's cosmopolitan ideal, then, is not based on deterrence, but on deterrence's own teleological overcoming. This overcoming is based on the rationality of the republican paradigm, whose military service model is *Kantonal*: voluntary and defence-aimed. This paradigm, in its turn, is not based first on "the social order [as such, as] a sacred right [that] provides a foundation to other rights" (Rousseau, 1999: 46), but on personal "juridical freedom" as "the authority to obey no external laws than those to which I have been able to give consent" (Kant, 2006: 74).

2.

What then of conscription in the cosmopolitan age?

Kant leaves thing quite undetermined. Permanent armies should disappear. As such, conscription should too, in favour of voluntary, defence-aimed enlistment. This should disappear too, *ideally*, although this is not likely to ever happen: a *world republic* is a regulative entity. Yet, let alone in a growing federation of states, also in a universal (earthly) republic the principle of right shall remain active. And therefore also a form of armed *service*, be it a national or supranational police. Without coercive force, penal justice would be inapplicable.

As Derrida has shown, for Kant the death penalty is more than the eminent sign of sovereignty. It is the categorical imperative of penal justice: the very principle of right, rational condition of the possibility of punishment. The death penalty is based (at once) on the priceless dignity of human life, and on the *jus talionis* as principle of equivalence between men's lives considered (yet) as ends, rather than means. And "since *homo noumenon* must raise himself above the *homo phaenomenon* who clings to life and to the motives of vital interest" (Derrida, 2014: 124), this imperative is categorical, not conditional. It represents the transcendental foundation of the exertion of the social bond (law) not in the empirical life of the state, nor of the individual, but on the latter's metaphysical dignity.

In an ideal collective setting, "the categorical imperative that presides over the death penalty will be fully coherent, with neither cruelty nor indulgence, but of course, there will be no more need to sentence to death" (127). Conversely, in an ideal individual setting, the purely accomplished execution of the death penalty would be not coercive: it would be a *suicide* (Derrida, 2017: 66). In this case, no police would be needed to escort the guilty to the scaffold. More than this: there

would be no contradiction between punishment and service: they would coincide as the exertion of the spiritual bond which ties the empirical individual to the meta-empirical principle of right: the dignity of *homo noumenon*. The honour of man. Spirit. Hero and martyr, the battlefield and the cross would be one. But such state does not exist.

Thus, in a cosmopolitan yet earthly setting, the death penalty shall be inscribed “in the law, even if the ideal is to be never obliged to pronounce it in a verdict” (Derrida, 2014: 127). As shall the condition of possibility of its prompt application: a permanent armed force. From a logical point of view, military service and the death penalty stand together, *de iure* and *de facto*. Indeed, in the name of human dignity, Kant’s logic has the second prevail. As a matter of fact, as we have pointed out, the opposite seems to be true. The case of Catholic Church is eminent in this regard.

3.

In 2001, Derrida (2017) would stress that no Pope had yet officially condemned the death penalty. This has actually happened in 2018⁷, when Pope Francis approved the new version of the 2267 article of the Catechism, now teaching as follows: “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person”⁸, and [Church] works with determination for its abolition worldwide”. What has not been abolished is the Vatican military: the Pontifical, and the famous Swiss Guard, which is a fuzzily defined mercenary army (according to Swiss legislation, where mercenarism is illegal since 1848, a police corps).

Yet again, logically speaking, the renewed Catechism is far from adamant. The new version of the 2267 article might still not be less problematic than the old (puzzling) one, teaching that “Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty if this [were] the only possible way of effectively defending the human lives against the unjust aggressor”.

Moreover, at the same time, the Catechism does not abolish the notion of “just war”, let alone military service, and the principle of legitimate defence⁹. Indeed, as John-Paul II personally objected to the death penalty, Francis has personally stated that no war is just. Yet, he still acknowledges legitimate defence. This is not fully evident given his chosen name, Francis, and the deeds of his namesake saint. Nor if, as Derrida (2017: 42) remarks, the principle of legitimate defence is the same that the death penalty dwells upon: a life for a life.

⁷ Cf. the “Letter to the Bishops” (2018).

⁸ The Catechism integrates a quote from Francis (2017).

⁹ Catechism, n. 2309, 2310, 2265, 2266.

4.

What, then, of a cosmopolitan military service, from a deconstructive point of view?

Conscription is at stake in Derrida's "Interpretations at war". Let us point out some elements, reflected in the analyses that we have carried out so far, from the last part of this text.

The essay analyses Hermann Cohen's *Deutschtum und Judentum*. Derrida stresses how Cohen, who is a Post-Kantian, but also a Post-Fichtian thinker, pleads for "the compulsory character of military service [as] correspond[ing] to a democratization of the military institution" (2008: 289). This militaristic position is asserted according to an ideal that can be pacifist in principle, but only insofar as it is embedded in an authentic socialist and national spirit: happening to be the German one. As in Heidegger's *Address*, military service, along with right to vote (instead of work) and compulsory education, is the first of the three duties defining this "populist" bond. Derrida stresses the logic of assimilation that this Jew thinker, through his ideology of conscription, deploys in order precisely to demonstrate the legitimate belonging of German Jews to the German nation (as demonstrated by their patriotic military zeal). In 1915, Cohen's speech is also addressed to the American Jews, to show the spiritual necessity of a German victory: necessary for the Jew-Greek koine, for Western civilization, whose name across the ocean remains Europe, to survive. Better: more than for mere life, or survival; necessary for "the social rejuvenation of our entire people" (Cohen, 1915, §43; as in Derrida, 2008: 291). Derrida adds that this text, inscribed on the post-revolutionary Franco-German front, belongs to the same conjuncture as Renan's *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* In spite of all the differences, the two texts expose the same "spiritualist determination of national exemplarity" (Derrida, 2008: 292). One typically exposed in the celebration of the natural appeal of one language, this being exemplarily the one in which the exposition is carried out; or hidden in forgetfulness about the violence of linguistic compliance, of the ground of smooth translation. Finally, according to Cohen, as opposed to Kant, not the suppression of permanent armies, but precisely national militarism, is what shall effectively realize the cosmopolitan ideal. His war is then a just war, preparing for perpetual peace within a European confederation of nations. This is why Cohen opposes the German conception of military service to the English, which would be prone to particular economic interests¹⁰, and incline to war, rather than to confederate peace. Cohen's national militarism, in sum, aims to be republican, universalistic, pacifist, human, logical.

In the pages above we have tried to follow the twists of similar logics in different contexts. Derrida ends his text in a sibylline way, leaving the word to the other, without further commenting. Previously he had strongly stressed that Cohen's confederate pacifist teleology, insofar as it is militarist, is not Kantian. And yet, Cohen's principle of the maintenance of permanent armies in view of the

¹⁰ On the (English) convergence of consolidate debt and belligerent militarism, see Kant (2006, 69).

establishment of a peaceful confederation is still a Kantian one: “the exercise of right implies the ability to constrain” (Derrida, 2008: 292)¹¹.

Let us try to follow this last twist.

5.

In the *Death Penalty* seminar, on 12 January, 2000, Derrida puts into question the 1948’s Declaration of Human Rights for two reasons: its exceptions to the right to life (amongst which, wartime); and its non coercive status:

it is not a text of law; it does not have the force of law to the extent that no coercive force is placed at its service, even with regard to the states that officially subscribe to it. As Kant rightly says, there is no justice in the strict sense, in the legal sense, in the judicial sense, as long as there is no binding force (2014: 80).

Kant is right. And this situation is lamentable.

Let us then move to the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where on 6 November, 1999, Derrida delivered a speech entitled “La mondialisation, la paix et la cosmopolitique”. Here perplexity becomes a stance. Condemning that all sorts of “just” international interventions and wars are waged by the hand and in view of singular powers’ economic interests, Derrida says:

A world contract to come would have to acknowledge this fact: as long as the international agencies do not have an autonomy of deliberation, of decision-making, and especially [*surtout*] of military intervention, as long as they do not have the force of law it is their mission to represent, well then, all the infractions of sovereignty in the name of the rights of man, which should be just in principle, will be suspect and contaminated by strategies before which vigilance will always remain de rigueur (2002b: 385).

And there is more:

the serious question of the death penalty in the world cannot be dissociated from what I have just said. [...] It is always an international and supra-state agency, transcending the sovereignty of the state, that enjoins the states (both the death penalty and the right of pardon have always been the eminent signs of state sovereignty) to abandon the death penalty (seemingly on their own but, in fact, by international obligation) (*ibid.*).

Derrida asserts the necessity of international armed forces to limit abusive, cruel exertion of national sovereignty, of which death penalty is the eminent sign. But then, in principle, since an armed force must be available when needed, and need is urgent, conscription cannot be abolished: it is the condition of possibility of a

¹¹ Quoting Cohen: “The individual state may thus – not only for its protection, but also for the protection of the idea of the confederation of states – not renounce its army, just as the confederation, like any constitution founded on right, also presupposes the power to protect itself” (1915: §48).

cosmopolitan right. Besides, if such enlistment were to be voluntary, how would this institution escape a humanistic voluntarism?¹²

Whereas for Kant law (death penalty) takes away the army, for Derrida the opposite might be true. Whereas conscription is the Achilles' heel of the Leviathan, it is a classical point of resistance of deconstruction.

The notion of such an armed force raises evident problems. Is it an army? Is it a collective mobilization tool, in front of catastrophes, apocalypses, crises? Is it a police? And as such, does it counter terrorism? How can it counter nuclear powers, and besides, how to tell nuclear war from terrorism, nuclear deterrence from terrorism, nuclear peace from terrorism? And what about all sorts of techno-bio-scientific powers?

It remains that force must be exerted and some life risked for another life to be countered, and yet another defended, *preferred*. Derrida does not endorse the notion of Human Rights, of Crimes against Humanity, nor the logic of abolitionism. These notions, and urgently so, must be deconstructed; yet not opposed; and even supported. What remains is negotiation: "incalculable justice *commands* calculation" (Derrida, 2002a: 257).

6.

Such an imperative, commanding calculation, dictating negotiation, reflects a relation between justice and law, or right, which, according to Derrida, is aporetic. On the one hand, justice is incommensurable to right: whereas right is conditional, justice is unconditional; whereas right is universal, justice concerns singularity. Justice is the very suspension of calculation which opens the possibility of normative calculation, deliberation, application. But on the other hand, justice is indissociable from right: since it is unconditional, justice, strictly speaking, does not exist. In order to exist, in order to *be* just, it requires conditions: application, determination, precipitation: into right. This brings force into the equation, since force, according to a classical position shared by Derrida, is an analytical attribute of the notion of right, of law: law is and must be enforceable. Force is, therefore, the condition of possibility of the existence of justice. Force remains. Of course, such force is to be intended as the differential force, force of difference, *différance*, which drives deconstruction. Such force is the condition of every application, performance, enforcement in the realm of finite experience and historicity that deconstruction exposes. Deconstruction, or justice: as we have implied, and insofar as "deconstruction is justice" (Derrida, 2002a: 243).

Force remains, *de facto* and *de iure*. It remains, so to speak, as the condition itself. Military force is not the first or the last word of deconstruction in politics. The force, even the violence of some rhetorical devices can and does couple, back, precede it. Such is the call, the promise, or the fable of a "democracy to come": to come beyond power and *demos*, right and man, world and state, beyond any future, beyond every presentifiable condition, but not beyond all conditions: not *Beyond*.

¹² See Derrida, 2003: 114, 119, 130).

Thus, since force is the condition, and since it is not a disembodied one, some sort of military investment remains necessary in this realm: be it utopically oriented in its activity; or even passive, resistive, in the undeniability of its insistence.

7.

We have shown why the institution of military service constitutes a sensitive lever for the deconstruction of the classical architecture of the political, just like the death penalty. Moreover, we have seen that in a deconstructive perspective military service does not only concur with the death penalty: it can even counter it. This entails that, in such perspective, some form of military service is esteemed convenient to survive, or to prevail over the configuration of which the death penalty is the metonymy. We have shown why this convenience reflects the necessity of force itself, and moreover, we have seen that a certain fable, the deconstructed promise of a deconstructive *to-come*, still propels the enforcement in the interest of which such service is esteemed convenient to survive.

Justice commands calculation, and calculation implies force.

The imperative of deconstruction, a quasi-categorical one, imposes negotiation, preference: interest, beyond good and evil. Negotiation, preference, belief: but beyond true and false. Pure belief is not purified of arbitrariness: it is not knowledge. Just like pure interest is not moral. If deconstruction dismisses the belief in such fables as those of man, state, nation, empire, honour, holiness, death, life – it does not dismiss belief, and fable, *as such*. *Voire*.

After gaining our conclusions, we shall then advance an ulterior question. What is the fable, in this context? Better still: what fable does military service itself still represent? Military service itself, and in general?

As Derrida puts it, fable, and in fact an eminently deconstructive fable, that of the end of the world, is the very fuel of the military in the nuclear, world epoch:

For the 'reality' of the nuclear age and the fable of nuclear war are perhaps distinct, but they are not two separate things. It is the war (in other words the fable) that structures not only the army, diplomacy, politics, but the whole of the human *socius* today, everything that is named by the old words culture, civilization, *Bildung*, *scholè*, *paideia* (1984: 23).

Our preliminary answer will be: the fable is youth.

The fable is the fuel of the military. But, as we have seen above, the fuel of the military, and in fact of *societas*, and of service and in general, is youth. This seems to remain true at least since the times of the Old Testament and up to the contemporary nuclear, *mondialised*, but no less fabulous context; and as we have seen, youth remains the subject and target of many fables of military service across all this time. The answer to our question shall then be: the fable is pedagogical, the fable pertains to youth, the fable is youth.

Such definition, albeit resulting from a syllogism, remains cryptic, but also disquietingly classical. This might help keep the ground of these considerations open, and problematic.

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