
Anarchistic Tendencies in Continental Philosophy

Reiner Schürmann and the Hubris of Philosophy

“What is to be done at the end of metaphysics?”

“What is to be done at the end of metaphysics?” It is Reiner Schürmann’s question, and it is one that deserves to be posed. For, if indeed we would agree with Schürmann and Heidegger that the collapse of metaphysics and its addictive afterworlds is “of immediate historical concern to us,”¹ the question of action, attitudes, and comportment toward such a collapse seems all the more urgent.

It is to the latter question that Schürmann has contributed considerably. Reginald Lilly, the translator of Schürmann’s *Des Hégémonies brisées*, for instance notes that

the connection between the existential analytic and the history of being as onto-theology has never been made clear by Heidegger or his commentators. [I]t is precisely such a connection that Schürmann means to make in basing his topology on an analytic of ultimates. [This] analytic promises to give us those elements, structures, and dynamics that are fundamental to human existence and are presumed by any history of philosophy.²

It would be unfair, however, to see Schürmann as but one more “Heideggerian” or, as I show below, “deconstructionist.” To be sure, his interpretation of Heidegger is intriguing and often innovating: one need only think of his efforts “to read Heidegger backward” without regard for the fashionable distinction between the early Heidegger and its mystical and

mythical sequel or of his interpretation of Heidegger's work on Nietzsche, which, as Schürmann convincingly shows, "speak *formally* of Nietzsche, but *materially* about technology."³

And yet Schürmann pushes one to look beyond Heidegger, and perhaps indeed to "consequences more extreme than Heidegger would wish."⁴ It remains to be considered whether Schürmann actually succeeded in showing the fundamental unity of thinking, acting, and being, but in Schürmann finally the tragic condition of the human being is given a voice in contemporary philosophy. In effect, Schürmann might even have the strongest case to date to take the existential character of metaphysical questions into account.

In its simplest form, we all know or at least have a pre-understanding of our tragic condition, for the "point of departure" of the analytic of ultimates "is the knowledge from which no one escapes and which escapes no one, even if the natural metaphysician in each of us closes his eyes to it [. . .]: the knowledge that we arrive by our birth and go to our death."⁵

In addition to the "practical" and existential character of metaphysics' most intimate questions, this chapter addresses the import of Schürmann's notion of "the natural metaphysician in each of us," for the question that seems to divide Derrida and Schürmann seems to hinge on precisely this issue of a metaphysics that comes naturally to us. Finally, this chapter, in relating Schürmann not only to Heidegger but also to Levinas and Derrida, pays attention to the new understanding of philosophy that seems to emerge from Schürmann's work which is due precisely to its "practical" starting point.

Heideggerian Anarchy

The title of this section, which may surprise the "Heideggerians," is not mine but Schürmann's.⁶ This section addresses Schürmann's *temporalizing of the ontological difference*, turning it into a temporal and therefore an-archic difference, and conveys the practical import of it.

The "Practical a Priori"

The existential character of metaphysical questions comes to the fore in Schürmann's beautiful contradictory notion of "the practical a priori." If Lilly's statement that only the analytic of ultimates of *Broken Hegemonies* shows the connection between Heidegger's history of being and some form of existential analytic, the "practical a priori" of *Heidegger on Being and Acting* can serve as a hermeneutic key to bring the profound continuity between Schürmann's

two major works to light. In this sense, my effort here is a sort of “reading Schürmann backward.” This will allow me to interpret Schürmann’s nuanced stance on the question of overcoming metaphysics and to correct some of the views on his oeuvre that have emerged in secondary literature, as for instance in Vahabzadeh’s entirely metaphysical characterization of the 1982 work as “bearing the stamp of a flourishing life, an effect of natality [. . .] while *Broken Hegemonies* certainly comes from a life pulled toward death.”⁷

If one of the main theses of *Broken Hegemonies* is that all of the major metaphysical systems (mainly, Plotinus, Cicero and Augustine, and modern philosophy) have arisen from the ultimate analytic of natality and mortality, in that all of these systems are subjected to a sort of natural drive to maximize or overdetermine one phenomenal region over others—according to Schürmann, the main mode of procedure of metaphysics is to focus on the phenomenon of fabrication, those things that are manmade—then this native and natural tendency toward generalization, universalization, and “de-phenomenologisation” inevitably gives birth to its “other,” namely the pull and pressure of finitude. For the phenomenological and singular encounter with finite beings in and through our finite comprehension of those beings resists precisely such a “fantasmic” maximization under the rule of one overarching and hegemonic phenomenon (whether it be the One, nature, or the modern *cogito*). It is death, as the one and only singularization to come, that throws the hubris of these philosophies, rendering reason of all beings, back on its “humble condition,”⁸ the lives and deaths that you and I will have to lead.⁹ The ontology of natality, that is, of the natural metaphysician in us, inevitably gives way to its parasitical other in the return of the denied,¹⁰ namely the contingency and historicity of time as that which will lead us to our deaths.¹¹

It is true that *Broken Hegemonies* offers an elaborate discussion of the historical moments of such metaphysical madness that was perhaps lacking at the time of his Heidegger book. Nevertheless, the main theses of the first-mentioned book are present in the latter book as well—which already makes it impossible to consider it solely as “stamped by a flourishing life.” Both what Schürmann will later, with Arendt, name as the ontological traits of mortality and natality figure in his earlier book as well. Take, for instance, the trait of mortality. Commenting on the lineage from Ancient philosophy, the Nietzschean overturning thereof, and its connection with our (post) modern technological era, Schürmann writes that for “the [technological] manipulable to inherit the prestige of the ancient Good, the representation of an ideal hierarchy *must have contained its fatal agent within itself ever since its conception.*”¹²

Not only does metaphysics therefore write, so to say, its own testament, as if its birth certificate were at the same time its hour of death, but, even in Schürmann's *Heidegger*, the dawn of metaphysics originates in the human being's natural—should I say: compulsive?—behavior. Indeed, even the Heidegger book intimates the natural origins of metaphysics, for metaphysics results from a “need for an archaeo-teleocratic origin,” the “want of a hold” on our epoch, and is therefore perhaps nothing more than a “self-incurred illusion of perfect presence.”¹³ It is this need and this want that, according to Schürmann, account for the tragic condition of human beings and force them to, on the one hand, posit in one way or another a grand narrative while, on the other, being forced to hear the demand of that which such metaphysical narratives precisely deny, namely finitude and mortality, that is, time. If one of the aims of *Broken Hegemonies* was to show how metaphysical positions are rooted in everyday experience, one can find thus the appeal to experience in Schürmann's anarchy book as well.

Such a priority of praxis and everyday experience crystallizes in what Schürmann coins as “the practical a priori.” With this notion Schürmann espouses what seems to be an extraordinary everyday banality, namely, that “to understand authentic temporality, it is necessary to ‘exist authentically’; to think being as letting phenomena be, one must oneself ‘let all things be,’ to follow the play without why of presencing, it is necessary to ‘live without why.’”¹⁴ In short, “a mode of thinking is made dependent on a mode of living.”¹⁵ Schürmann shows that such a practical a priori is present in both the early and the later Heidegger.¹⁶ For reasons of space, I limit Schürmann's argument to Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Schürmann asks: “what is it that conceals the transcendence of Dasein?” and answers thus: “A certain way of behaving, a certain attitudinal way of being in the world—inauthenticity,” adding that in “*Being and Time*, the classical ontologies [. . .] spring precisely from inauthentic existence” and he concludes that all this “indicates first and foremost that the retrieval proper of the being question is bound to fail unless it is preceded by what [Heidegger] then calls an existentiell modification”—“First comes an appropriation of existentiell possibilities, then existential ontology.”¹⁷ The later Heidegger, Schürmann argues, will move away from the individual implications that *Being and Time* still could admit and will espouse the public and political dimension of the practical a priori: *Eigentlichkeit* or authenticity is substituted for “*Ereignis*” and, yes, “*Volk*.”

One must note that the practical a priori is, for Schürmann, a method rather than an empirical stance: it is the path that may lead “from a way of living to a way of thinking.” It is to avoid “the ‘methodical’ errancy” of

metaphysics, which substitutes the contingency of time for the consolations of the eternal or the permanent presence of consciousness and forgets about its humble and historical origins, and which therefore is accompanied by “a methodical retrenchment of life or of praxis” to the point that one can, as angels supposedly once did, “speak from mind to mind.”¹⁸

Such a priority of praxis is by no means absent from contemporary continental philosophy: it is for instance to be found in the phenomenology of the other of Emmanuel Levinas and in the phenomenology of givenness of Jean-Luc Marion. For both authors, the response to the appeal (whether it be from God or givenness) lies phenomenologically prior to the appeal: it is only in and through men’s and women’s responses that the appeal appears. It matters little that, for Marion, the responsiveness of human being is broadened to entail more than the (Levinasian) human face. It matters that in both cases a certain mode of comportment accompanies the act of thinking, whether it be, for Marion, the abandoning of oneself to whatever gives itself, or the ethical bearing witness to the other in Levinas.¹⁹ Levinas’s analysis of “enjoyment” in *Totality and Infinity* definitely shows that such a “practical a priori” is accompanied by an attentiveness to life.²⁰

Though all these thinkers would therefore agree that such a practical a priori does not consist of an ontic, determinate and individual act, but rather of an ontological and transcendental attunement—from Heidegger’s *Stimmung* or mood—they diverge as to that which is capable of uttering such an appeal.²¹

The Event and the Phenomenology of Presenting

For Schürmann, this appeal is obviously Heideggerian in nature: it is to the presenting of being that the human being is to correspond. Schürmann’s phenomenology of presenting presents a temporalized version of Heidegger’s ontological difference. According to Schürmann, “Heidegger’s entire effort consists in recovering [. . .] that broader sense of being as coming into presence (*Anwesenung*) or presenting (*Anwesen*).”²² At this point, it is necessary to consider Schürmann’s interpretation of Heideggerian anti-humanism: for the history of being to appear as ontotheology, it is necessary that all reference from being to human beings (as a privileged relation) disappears. To think being as time, it is no longer necessary to think human temporality, that is, the human being as time.²³ In this sense, Heidegger’s lesson for Schürmann would be a sobering one, resisting all consolation and consolidation of an ultimate yet fantasmic referent that would guide and orient our actions. The (presenting of the) world has become a contingent and goalless process.

Schürmann will see the event of presencing as that which liberates us from the anthropocentrism that still accompanied modern philosophy, according to which nothing can be said to come to pass if it does not appear to the transcendental subject. To temporalize the ontological difference between being and beings, Schürmann will distinguish between (originary) being as the event of presencing *and* the different, “original” and epochal economies of presence (the epoch of the cogito and of “God” is that which presences thus). If the phenomenologist wants “to address presencing and its manifold ways of differing from the economies of presence,”²⁴ the three terms of the ontological difference will have to be temporalized accordingly: whereas, in the unfolding of the ontological difference beings (*Seiendes*) lie present in their being (*Seiendheit*) from out of their difference with destinal being (*Sein*), the temporalized version of this difference states that the presence (*Anwesenheit*) of that which is present (*Anwesendes*) unfolds from out of the event of presencing (*Anwesen*)—the sheer coming of being.²⁵

This “event” is sobering because it unfolds without why, without any other goal than its simple presencing of beings. *Ereignis* grants us its unfolding as, in the later Heideggerian terminology, world and thing (in its difference from objects). These terms try to suggest

that the world, or contextuality, announces itself in the “as”—the thing “as” thing. This deals a blow to transcendence, since the world is not elsewhere than the thing [. . .] A phenomenon is taken as what it is only when we understand it as gathering its context, as “worlding.” And the context is taken as such only when we understand it as gathering the phenomenon, as “thinging.”²⁶

The “worlding of the world,” according to Schürmann, marginalizes human beings: they are only “one of the elements” of “the [. . .] autonomous play of the world.”²⁷ Schürmann concludes that only this openness toward the presencing of the world allows the thing to appear, divorced from metaphysical overdeterminations that cover up radical finitude, thus “not in its unchangeable essence” but rather “in [its] singularity.”²⁸ It is this contingent and historical process that is the issue of thought: bereft of any single origin (be it God, nature, or the cogito), presencing shows itself in its very contingency as the “ceaseless arrangements and rearrangements in phenomenal interconnectedness,”²⁹ as if thinking were thanking “the goalless showing-forth of phenomena.”³⁰ *Ereignis*, then—and here is the sobering part—is “what establishes us in our precarious dwellings,” not as “some thing,” but rather as “nothing—a mere coming to pass.”³¹ The

(Heideggerian) worlding of the world, thus, and I will show that this is a major difference with Levinas's thought, conveys a "non-human facticity,"³² as if being can do without beings or in any case without a subject to which it, since time immemorial, ought to appear.

All this might be unbearable for a modern mind. Nevertheless, it is close to what Heidegger's course on *Plato's Sophist* intimated already, namely that to philosophize is to make explicit the prereflexive and "pregiven [. . .] unitary being" from out of the "the whole, present, givenness":³³ the unity of the thing appears out of the givenness of the world *as* a world. It is to this unity of our contingent world that Schürmann still refers in his 1987 book when saying that "what is one is the process of *coming to presence*":³⁴ the world as it worlds, now, in our times, as *our* world, as qualitatively different from past worlds and modes of presencing. Common to all epochs is the presencing of the world, but the presencing of the world differs from epoch to epoch.³⁵

A final point then is Schürmann's separation between the event of presencing, *Ereignis*, and the epochal "economies of presence." The first is deemed, rather surprisingly, ahistorical, albeit that our access to it is granted in and through its various, historical, and epochal expressions. The "ahistorical [. . .] showing-forth"³⁶ is however to be understood correctly: "the event itself has neither history nor destiny. [. . .] Not that the event is atemporal: its temporality is the coming about of any constellation of thing and world."³⁷ The presencing of the event is that which makes possible a gathering of things present, an "epoch." Such presencing pushes beyond modernity's one-sided emphasis on the human subject. An example will perhaps make this clear: whereas a modern mind would have a hard time affirming the "happening" of the world outside the solipsistic ego's lived experiences, Heidegger's thought of presencing would take into account how the world persists beyond and outside the subject. The world "worlds" outside the finite horizons set out by human beings and regardless of whether or not it appears *to* a finite subject. The event of presencing is not man-made: it "happens"—"worlds"—without any reference to the human being. The presencing of the event is irreducible to the given constellations of any epoch.

With this last point, Schürmann, not unlike Foucault, introduces the thought that there is a radical break between the different epochs: "past presencing is mute."³⁸ In each epoch newness arises, because the worlding of the world presences in ever new and manifold ways. That which was present in a past age, however, stamped and marked—Heidegger's *Prägung*—as it was by principles and ultimate referents that are no longer ours, lies beyond our understanding. Schürmann insists that the existential analytic turns into an "epochal analytic"³⁹ when Heidegger discovers that even everydayness

has a history, that the being-in-the-world of the Ancients differs irreducibly from the presencing of the world that is the lot of our technological age. One is thrown not into a universal or ahistorical world, but into an epoch. The epochal analytic shows the different metaphysical options as ever so many illusory attempts at total reflection, to “grasp” the contingent world in eternal principles. The epochal analytic shows the return of what thus has been denied—because it could not be coped with: the simple presencing of world, of time and as time, of mere “happening”—as if being is a playful performance art without a performer. After the “turn,” which for Schürmann is not an experience in Heidegger’s life or writings but rather a “turn” we all could experience—the turn from metaphysics to that which will surpass it—“the reference to daily experience becomes inoperative [. . .] If presencing—“being”—is grasped only through its difference from epochal presence, then our everyday experience of being is *lost forever* as soon as a new fold unfurls presence in a new constellation.”⁴⁰ This “epochal discordance”⁴¹ should not be underestimated: it means that the *arche* of the Medieval age can tell us how medieval men and women lived; it does not tell *us* how to live. And die.

Technology, the Closure of Metaphysics, and Anarchic Praxis

Yet, according to Schürmann, our age, the technological one, stands out for a particular reason. With Heidegger, Schürmann agrees that technology inaugurates the closure of metaphysics, and that our age might be the one that witnesses the happening of such a turning. An “other beginning” (Heidegger) permeates the end of metaphysics. Technology exposes the illusory character of “past principles” in that it shows that all archic principles are maximizations of the regional “fabrication” and “representation.” With the appearance of technology, the “metaphysical lineage comes to an end.”⁴² Schürmann’s anarchy consists in rejecting all past principles, because technology shows the human, all too human character of all such principles: these epochal principles appear as every so many ontically originated, totalizing and hegemonic representations. Yet one might say that Schürmann is inspired by a sort of Heideggerian anarchy in that the (Heideggerian) phenomenology of presencing might indeed be taken to point to the difference between presencing—transcendental and a priori—and that which in each case, that is, in every given epoch, lies present to the subjects of that given age. It is in the latter sense that both Schürmann and Heidegger would agree that technology inaugurates the “annihilation” and “extinction” of metaphysical principles and positions and opens onto the anarchic origin

of being as simple presencing—nothing more, nothing less.⁴³ An-archic, that is, without “a whence and a whither,”⁴⁴ existence without why, neither origin nor goal. Our technological metaphysics is, according to Schürmann, Janus headed: both the completion of metaphysics in espousing all its inherent possibilities *and* intimating in and through the crisis and absence of justification of past principles the anarchic presencing of the world and being.

The ontological and anarchic presencing of the event singles out being as a contingent process across the various ages, delivering to each its epoch and setting the standards of that which is epochally possible and that which is not. If technology is the inauguration of the withering away of every metaphysical principle because it exposes these as illusory, then what kind of praxis would be appropriate to correspond to this contingent event? According to Schürmann, this would be nothing less than an *anarchic praxis*, for “legitimate praxis can no longer mean to refer what is doable to a first ground or some supreme reason, to a final end or some ultimate goal.”⁴⁵ If we must still learn to see “things” instead of objects, and if we still must learn to think instead of representing, then the Heideggerian candidate for accompanying action is releasement or *Gelassenheit* because “an acting other than ‘being effective’ and thinking other than strategical rationality is what Heidegger puts forward under the name of releasement.”⁴⁶ Only then are we able to see the relation between liberation and releasement.⁴⁷ Releasement is freed from the hold that past principles exercised on thinking and is more properly attuned to the presencing of the network of “phenomenal interconnectedness”: it corresponds to that which the event does—letting be. For Schürmann, releasement is to be taken both politically and philosophically. Philosophically, it is that responsiveness that makes possible the setting free of the “thing” out of the representational clutches of our epoch in which any phenomenon always already appears like a present-at-hand object.⁴⁸ It responds to the event of presencing without resorting to the objectivation of this presencing.⁴⁹ Politically, releasement is the act of a rebellious philosopher—Schürmann mentions Socrates—renouncing his or her age-old role as a “covert civil servant”: once it is clear that a radical fluidity is introduced into social institutions as well as into practice in general, “the entry into the event [. . .] remains thinkable and doable only as the struggle against the injustice, the hubris, of enforced residence under principal surveillance.”⁵⁰

Rather than focusing on the concrete technological aspects of the metaphysical closure, the remainder of this chapter addresses Schürmann’s relation to other continental philosophers precisely on this topic of a “possible” closure of metaphysics in order to confront the tragic thinker

Schürmann with a remainder of an unjustified “optimism” and “hope” when it comes to overcoming metaphysics.

Levinasian Anarchy

The relation between Schürmann and Levinas is an odd one. Schürmann’s Heidegger book seemed to be sympathetic to Levinas’s anti-metaphysical and anarchic attempt to think the approach of the Other. For Schürmann, Levinas seemed, unlike Deleuze (who turns to jubilation) and Derrida (who mourns its loss), sufficiently sober to cope with the loss of the One.⁵¹ On the back of the book, Levinas in turn praises Schürmann’s work for its “speculative and pedagogical value [which] make[s] it a highly welcome publication.” In this respect, it is all the more striking that *Broken Hegemonies* does not even mention Levinas by name.

Identities: Totality and Hegemony

The similarities between Levinas and Schürmann may be obvious: just as Schürmann rejects at the end of metaphysics any hegemonic fantasm, so too Levinas is wary of the idea of a closed totality. Both Levinas and Schürmann then display an attentiveness toward that which cannot be represented and thus forced into a system. Moreover, both thinkers would in and through their rejection of the monism and the quest for unity characteristic of metaphysics endorse a fundamental plurality and multiplicity of being. Schürmann’s “radical multiplicity”⁵² thus might very well be, for Levinas as it is for Schürmann, accompanied by a certain anarchism—taken as the absence of any common or unifying principle or foundation of our world once all “*archai*” have shown themselves to have originated in an ontic “projective” manner—for “there is an anarchy essential to multiplicity.”⁵³ Levinas and Schürmann furthermore share a similar attentiveness to the inner divide that haunts the human being once thrown upon its span between birth and death. A certain form of such “tragedy” might be discerned primarily in Levinas’s early works and their effort to “break with Parmenides” through a pluralism that “appears [in] the very existing of the existent itself.”⁵⁴ By that token, the existence of the human being is, according to Levinas, double: at once chained to itself and turned to the other. Chained to itself, that is, to the impersonal nature of the “*il y a*” contaminating the human being’s person, which Levinas describes through the analysis of insomnia, in which it is not “I” that is awake but rather an impersonal “me” that is waking.⁵⁵

Chained to itself, because in this rift between the “I” of consciousness and the “*il y a*” of impersonal existence threatening it from within, the human being inevitably has an awareness of its imminent death. Turned to the other, for existence’s duality might take another direction and accomplish itself in fecundity.

This latter route is taken by Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity*, which still affirms the necessary break with Parmenides to think transcendence’s anarchic plurality. *Totality and Infinity*, moreover, conveys its philosophy of pluralism in the same formula as Levinas’s earlier works. In this work—and even more so in his later works—Levinas will identify the rupture with the system of being with the very existence of the human subject: “the break-up of totality, the denunciation of the panoramic structure of being, concerns the very existing of being.”⁵⁶ It is true that in Levinas’s works this interruption or “distance” will be progressively connected with (divine or not) transcendence, because “the distance [transcendence] expresses [. . .] enters into the *way of existing* of the exterior being.”⁵⁷ Concerning the debate between Levinas and Schürmann, it matters little whether Levinas associated the anarchic undertow accompanying all discourse on being with divine transcendence; it matters all the more that Levinas consigned his anarchism to a principle nevertheless: the “exterior being” is to be equated with the face of the other, and only the face in turn is to be equated with that which forever disrupts the system. Levinas’s “essential anarchy” thus concerns only the intersubjective encounter. Therefore indeed “a principle breaks through” this essential anarchy “when the face presents itself, and demands justice.”⁵⁸ The essential anarchy is undone by the principle of the face.

Differences: With/out principle

In this sense, the debate between Schürmann and Levinas might turn on the latter’s humanism and anthropocentrism, for even if it is a “humanism of the other man,” it is a humanism nonetheless. Let us turn to Schürmann again to consider what the difference between the presencing of being and the interruption of the exterior being or the face might be. Commenting on Heidegger’s pathway to presencing, Schürmann writes: “in *Being and Time*, to be present still means to be present ‘for man’ [. . .] A new way of thinking is required to understand presencing independently of such a reference.”⁵⁹ Now, if Schürmann is considering the presencing of being(s) “independently of every position we would have taken in its regard,” then it is obvious that that which Levinas reserves for one region of phenomenality, namely the human being, must be extended to the whole of phenomenality.

It would thus be necessary to state that for Schürmann not only the human face but also the world and perhaps nature would be able to occur independently of any reference to “man.”⁶⁰

Not only Schürmann would deem this anthropocentrism in Levinas a residue of metaphysical thought, Derrida has also accused the ontotheological character of the excessive importance Levinas attributed to the face: this “*intra-ontic* movement of ethical transcendence” props “up thought by means of a transhistoricity.”⁶¹ This intra-ontic movement, which, just as traditional ontotheology does, thinks beings (“the face”) rather than being, seems to be in need of some theological legitimation. Indeed, because “the Other resembles God”⁶² it seems that it is ultimately God who, like a supreme being, bestows the face of the human other with the power to interrupt the subject’s egoistic being. Hence Derrida’s critique, for, in his words, “the question of Being is nothing less than a disputation of the metaphysical truth of this schema.”⁶³

Again, it is not because Levinas resorts to God to justify the interruption and the distance of the other that his endeavor is “ontotheological.” It is rather that through this recourse to God the human face is attributed the rank of a “principle”—an ultimate referent—which attests to Levinas’s metaphysics. In this way, Derrida’s and Schürmann’s critiques of Levinasian humanism would coincide: the critique of ontotheology does not point to one or the other “theological” residue in Levinas; it is rather that “the human face” still functions as an “ultimate signifier” that orients all other significations that accounts for Levinas’s ontotheology. In Schürmann’s words: the face turns out to be yet another hegemonic fantasm in that it inappropriately singles out one phenomenal region (intersubjectivity) at the expense of all other regions (e.g., nature).

In this respect, it might be good to turn to Levinas’s later work, especially *Otherwise than Being* and *God, Death and Time*, in which Levinas proceeds to a separation of anarchy and principle.⁶⁴ Indeed, in these later works divine transcendence is utterly separated from any principle, even that of the human face: “this glory is without principle: there is in this infinity an *anarchical* element.”⁶⁵ If the face at the time of *Totality and Infinity* was erected to the point of a principle—a being that would be singled out as the highest of beings—and if it therefore would be subject to that which *Broken Hegemonies* would deem a “maximization” of one phenomenal region over others, then it must be noted that the face in *Otherwise than Being* is de-phenomenalized to a great extent: it is not so much the concrete encounter with a human face that is at issue but rather our pre-original

trauma or susceptiveness toward the other's otherness that is judged to be anarchic, that is, without principle.⁶⁶ This susceptibility, always and already turned toward otherness, is called by Levinas "a bottomless passivity"; it is without ground.⁶⁷ The primacy of otherness thus makes up a susceptibility of all for all, which Levinas interprets as fraternity. One might formulate the difference between the early and later Levinasian anarchy in this way: whereas *Totality and Infinity*, although it agreed on the essential anarchism of intersubjective pluralism, assumed and perhaps had to assume "the commonness of a father," which according to Levinas is the great contribution to thought of "monotheism,"⁶⁸ in *Otherwise than Being* fraternity is given a strictly philosophical explanation,⁶⁹ and the face is so to say replaced by the trace. The trace is not a unifying principle, it is an "outside" of thinking that somehow operates from within my being and orients (my) existence toward otherness. It is an "*à Dieu*," which implies a goodbye to a (certain) God as well. It might be such a trace, which is just as much "without why" and "without ground" as Schürmann's and Heidegger's presencing of being, with which Schürmann agreed when confirming, with Levinas, that "being is exteriority."⁷⁰ Considering the later Levinas's assertion concerning the "impossible indifference with regard to the human,"⁷¹ one can safely conclude that on the topic of humanism the differences between Schürmann and Levinas would still stand.

If the difference between the early and the later Levinas thus implies a difference in the status of "anarchy," then it is worth noting the confusion this thinking "with/out principle" has caused among commentators: Abensour celebrates Levinas's distinction between anarchy and principle *because* it refuses a political conception of anarchy that would impose yet another principle on anarchy,⁷² while Rolland suggests that the unprincipled anarchism *includes* such a political conception—I come back to this below.⁷³

Schürmann might have experienced a similar confusion, considering that *Broken Hegemonies* makes little mention of "a principle of anarchy"—if at all. This confusion comes to the fore in both Rudolphe Gasché's article on Schürmann's work, which inspired the thesis of the last section, and the brief but harsh discussion between Derrida and Schürmann.

Derridean Anarchy

The thesis of this section is that the definition of "hegemony" of *Broken Hegemonies* might be applied to the thematic of Schürmann's book on

Heidegger as well. Schürmann's debate with Derrida will then help us to underscore the shifts in Schürmann's conception of the "closure of metaphysics" and in the conception of its humble everyday origins.

The whole debate centers on one citation of Derrida—to which Schürmann tirelessly returns—from Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy*: at the end of metaphysics it is for Derrida a matter "to decide to change terrain, in a discontinuous and irruptive fashion, by brutally placing oneself outside, and by affirming an absolute break and difference."⁷⁴ Schürmann has most forcefully responded to Derrida's "deconstructive naiveté" and its desire to switch terrains, to go to an anti-metaphysical site, when stating that the philosopher's task "[is] more modest, for from what lofty position would we be able to draw the geographic map of discontinuous planes? What field outside the terrain must one occupy in order to affirm rupture? I know of no other place than the one whereupon the waning twentieth century has planted us," commenting in a note: "Derrida seems to speak here as a chronicler of what was going on in France at the time he signed the text—'May 12, 1968,'"⁷⁵ implying, importantly, that Derrida mistakenly took an ontic event to have (anti)metaphysical significance. Schürmann's desire, then, was not to "change terrain" but to change to another thinking, "beyond deconstruction."⁷⁶ Janicaud confirms: "[Schürmann] neither accepted the idea of an end of metaphysics nor the possibility of 'placing oneself outside,' even if by a kind of play."⁷⁷ Yet the latter point stands in need of some proof, for it might be the case that at the time of his Heidegger book Schürmann was himself riveted to a naive deconstructive site. Indeed, several passages show that Schürmann envisaged an "outside of ontotheology," or at least that an other than metaphysical thinking was a "possibility."⁷⁸

In this way, Derrida's *History of the Lie*, which appeared in a volume dedicated to the memory of Schürmann but which cites him merely two times, might be read as turning Schürmann's critique against himself. Derrida's text, though it deals mainly with Arendt, can indeed be read as a critique of the grand Heideggerian rhetoric, recounting a history of being and of metaphysics, for is not such a rhetoric compromised by "an indestructible optimism" in that it seems to presuppose *already* how the lie or the error of metaphysics might be overcome?⁷⁹ This optimism is concerned not with a personal attitude but with claiming to be "in the know," whether it concerns the end of metaphysics or truth in general.

But let us not agree with Derrida too easily and turn to Schürmann's critique of Derrida in the 1982 book to understand what the difference between this book and the later *Broken Hegemonies* might be. Schürmann

criticizes Derrida for a large part in the notes of the first-mentioned book. Schürmann mentions the game Heidegger played with Nietzsche and poses that Derrida is playing a similar game with Heidegger: just as Heidegger could turn Nietzsche into the “last metaphysician,” so too can Derrida, by ruse, turn Heidegger into the “last metaphysician.”⁸⁰ Schürmann argues that Derrida can only turn Heidegger into the last metaphysician of presence by forgetting the temporalizing of the ontological difference, the difference between presencing and that which is present in each given epoch. Derrida can only claim that Heidegger’s question of being remained an “intra-metaphysical effect” by obliterating presencing and reducing Heidegger’s dwelling to a homecoming that interpreted being as “maintaining” and “belonging” and thus as presence. In this way, Derrida can play with Heidegger as Heidegger played with Nietzsche: just as Nietzsche remained “metaphysical” for Heidegger and therefore “attempted an exit and a deconstruction” from metaphysics “without changing terrains,” so too, for Derrida, Heidegger is still metaphysical without switching terrains. Deconstruction then would be anti-metaphysical insofar it knows how to change terrains.⁸¹ For Schürmann, the difference between presencing and presence means precisely that being cannot be understood in an optimistic sense as the place where we dwell and belong. Because of “epochal discordance,” the presencing of our world radically differs from the presencing of any other epoch. For Schürmann, we indeed dwell in the world, but this world now worlds in ways it hasn’t worlded before—if I may play with Heidegger’s vocabulary—and resists therefore any sense of “belonging.”⁸²

Thus, just as Derrida criticizes Schürmann for being optimistic concerning the matter of overcoming metaphysics, so Schürmann criticizes Derrida for being too optimistic when depicting Heidegger as the *last* metaphysician. Might it be that the confusion comes from the fact that both adversaries are “playing a game,” even more grave than that which prevails in Derrida’s “step outside the destruction game” and which “watch[es] the destroyers destroy each other reciprocally”?⁸³ This game, then, would concern “the natural metaphysician in us,” and I risk a bold hypothesis in favor of this natural metaphysics in the conclusion to this chapter.

Conclusion: In Praise of Everydayness

If, then, Derrida utters a similar objection to Schürmann as Schürmann toward Derrida, it might be the case that Schürmann’s accusation of a “deconstructive naiveté” can be turned against himself. I turn to Rodolphe

Gasché's article and to the remarkable conclusion of *Broken Hegemonies* to make this point. In this conclusion, Schürmann seems to address this game, which throws the accusation of metaphysics around and around. This is a game, so it seems, of endless reversals in and of metaphysics in which in the end no one escapes the accusation of being the "last metaphysician"—Schürmann calls it "the inversion thesis." For instance,

to report that sometime after 1830 values got inverted [. . .]—such storytelling is not exactly free of interest. It allows one to classify one's neighbor, if he locates his referents up high, as "still a metaphysician," for two centuries now, a professional insult.⁸⁴

It is, however, such insults that accompanied the debate between Derrida and Schürmann and through which the destroyers of metaphysics are destroying themselves. It seems, therefore, that the concept of "counter-philosophers" that Gasché has drawn from *Broken Hegemonies* is applicable to both Schürmann and Derrida as well. Counter-philosophers are those who, in a given epoch, emphasize the negative, the pull to singularity and mortality, and thereby tend to "maximize" these negative experiences as if they merely reverse the "maximization" of metaphysics' ultimate referents.⁸⁵ The danger, then, is that both positions would miss the originary double bind and *différend* of natality and mortality, which posits that "metaphysics" is "natural," "ontic," or "existential" because it originates in the natural tendency to look away from that from which one cannot not look away from, namely death and finitude. Thus, while "metaphysicians" stress the aspect of natality, the "counter-philosophers" seem to stress the aspect of negativity and mortality. It is at this point, however, that the conclusion of *Broken Hegemonies* gets enigmatic, for if Gasché is right when saying that a hegemonic fantasm is accomplished when the phenomenality of the phenomenon is constituted by turning this phenomenality "into parts of an interconnected world,"⁸⁶ then this is, as I have shown, exactly what Schürmann's Heidegger book sought to do when insisting on the oneness and the unity of the presencing of a world.

It is thus a possible escape of metaphysics that is at stake in the conclusion to *Broken Hegemonies*. On the one hand, one still finds statements in line with the Heidegger book. Gasché, for instance, scrutinizes Schürmann's treatment of Eckhart, for whom it would have been a matter of "leaving [the principles] behind, of no longer having recourse to them," and then asks poignantly: "one may question this possibility by recalling everything that Schürmann has established in this work [*Broken Hegemonies*]."⁸⁷ One may

question Gasché's statement in turn, though, because Schürmann's point was that the "natural metaphysician in us" *inevitably* has recourse to principles and ultimate referents. But, on the other hand, it is the latter thesis that the conclusion to *Broken Hegemonies* seeks to overturn in sticking to the ultimate double bind as much as possible by stating that the natality "impulse that unifies life" cannot be equated with the good just as the singularization to come of death cannot be equated with "evil pure and simple."⁸⁸ In this sense, Schürmann realizes that unifying principles and hegemonies are not in advance to be considered as "bad," "evil," and "insulting," as the Heidegger book would have it. In this way, it opens the terrain from which an escape might be possible, rather than leaping into an "other terrain."

The "escape" of metaphysics, then, it seems, has to do with the question of just how far we can heed Nietzsche's "extra-moral" view on metaphysics. For, if the unitary presencing and "the oneness of 'phenomenal interconnectedness' (Schürmann), or the one fraternal humanity for that matter (Levinas), shows itself to be yet another metaphysical convulsion, then the most sobering question to ask is to where the "epochal discordance" extends. The question of the relation between the one and the pluralistic manifold would then need to address a possible discordance not only between epochs (as in the grand Heideggerian rhetoric) but also between cultures and perhaps individuals. Another warning of Derrida to Schürmann might thus be incorporated into the debate over the end of metaphysics, namely that if one wants to philosophize in a manner free of interest, then the history of metaphysics must be recounted free of moral denunciation.⁸⁹

To conclude: to understand the fact that the end of metaphysics might be related to the question of whether we can still attain to the level of transcendental, ontological, and therefore extra-moral thinking, it is useful to turn to the debate between Schürmann and Levinas. For if Schürmann at the end of *Broken Hegemonies* realized that the natural metaphysician in all of us cannot do without ultimate referents, that thus anarchy is from time immemorial indebted to a "principle," it is not sure whether Schürmann would have applauded the later Levinas's contention that anarchy is separated from any principle (be it a political one). It is furthermore worth noting that Rolland's appreciation of the political anarchism depends on an *ontic* argument. It can also be shown that Levinas's distinction between anarchism and politics is indeed dependent on the turmoil of 1968.⁹⁰ It is only then that we can understand Schürmann's ultimate reluctance toward any such ontic point of reference for the question of the end of metaphysics, for such a point would make the issue of metaphysics an issue for a report

in a chronicle (whether it is 1830, 1933, or 1968). Schürmann indeed never considered May 1968 as one of the “rare moments of freedom” that Arendt noticed in history.⁹¹ On the contrary, he seems to have recoiled before any such ontic point of reference, as is obvious from his recounting of the events of 1933 surrounding Heidegger.⁹²

It is surprising indeed that a thinker who takes great pains to show the ontic origin of epochal presence, who singles out the exceptional nature of our age of technology, and moreover advances the public character of philosophy, ignores the ontic events of our current epoch. It is strange finally that a thinker concerned to such an extent with freedom and everydayness (to the point that an intellectual always and already is a “public intellectual”) remained silent on the cultural and everyday implications of *our* metaphysics.

The reason for this? Perhaps even Schürmann had too much reverence for the hubris of the hegemonies he contested. Indeed, if the Heidegger book hesitates to criticize Heidegger for the “inability” of this thinking “to emerge effectively from the philosophical tradition,”⁹³ this might be the case precisely because, even in Schürmann and even though he has pointed to it, the relation between the ontic and the ontological realm, between everydayness and epochal presence, between the public realm and philosophy, is left hanging. Even more grave, precisely because it remains unclear how one can change terrain from everydayness to the terrain of ontology, Schürmann may repeat one of the most traditional hierarchies since the inception of metaphysics: the hierarchy (and the hubris) that separates “ontology” from all things ontic, philosophy from culture, authenticity from everydayness.