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# **Violence, Self-Authorship and the 'Death of God': The 'Traps' of the Messianic and the Tragic**

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## **Abstract**

Nietzsche's heralding of the 'Death of God' announces and exposes the condition of foundationlessness underpinning (Western) modernity and provokes the crucial question of the goals and purposes of political life. Without the figure of the divine as sanction and guide, political society lacks a stable foundation upon which to identify and legitimate itself. This paper explores the respective responses of two traditions of critical thought which engage explicitly with the challenges this poses, namely the messianic and the tragic. The central aim is to trace a series of 'traps' in evidence in both messianic and tragic thought which lead them to (re)turn to particular forms of transcendentalism; both traditions, it is argued, turn towards the divine in their responses to the 'Death of God'. However, the paper suggests that while the messianic is inextricably bound up in such a return to the divine, the tragic, as well as comprising several problematic violences, retains a particular salience in theorising subjectivity and the political under the condition of foundationlessness named by the 'Death of God'.

## **Introduction**

Nietzsche's proclamation of the 'Death of God', understood both as an observation and an affirmation, poses profound and enduring questions for the political, broadly understood. As the Introduction to this forum demonstrates, far from a concrete and temporally confined historical event, the 'Death of God' has come to function in International Relations (IR) and associated disciplines as a shorthand by means of which to refer to the foundationless or abyssal nature of the (post)modern condition, in which appeals to the divine, the transcendental, or the universal as a guide to political thought and action have become radically problematic.<sup>1</sup> Despite the far-reaching consequences of such metaphysical disruption, however, Nietzsche's thought and the specifics of his claim of the 'Death of God' have received only limited attention in IR. With notable exceptions, including the work of James Der Derian<sup>2</sup> and William Connolly,<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche has tended to remain somewhat marginal in the discipline and, while the 'Death of God' trope is invoked intermittently as a synonym for modernity's foundationlessness, it has not been treated extensively as an object of study in its own right. This is problematic, however, not least because, as Chris Brown observes, 'Nietzsche's stress on the deep, but largely unrecognised, significance of the "death of God" prefigures twentieth century anti-foundationalism.'<sup>4</sup> As forms of critical thought associated with anti-foundationalism continue to expand in influence and popularity within IR, a detailed exploration of this inheritance would seem to be of some import. The paper seeks to address this anti-foundationalist inheritance via an exploration of the ethico-political implications of two broad tones of response to the challenges associated with the 'Death of God' at work in critical IR today, namely the 'messianic' and the 'tragic'.

The importance of this in the context of IR relates to the question of violence. Within those geo-cultural contexts affected by it,<sup>5</sup> the 'Death of God' invokes not simply the destabilisation of a particular set of established social conventions in themselves, but rather poses the far more extensive challenge of the removal of the possibility of divine sanction for any such configuration. The 'Death of God' thus amounts to an ongoing series of violent ruptures. These are violent both in the sense that connections to the divine, and to the earthly community bound together by the divine, are compromised, and because they provoke the need for meaning and subjectivity to be established and maintained via means other than transcendental or divine guarantee. If particular (Western) forms or modes of be(com)ing are decoupled from legitimating connections to the divine or the universal as a consequence of the ongoing ruptures caused by and causal of the 'Death of God', the possibility of any form of defensibility based on the transcendental is undermined. Taking seriously the indefensibility that arises from this is to take seriously the problem that such be(com)ing is not benign but rather a violent process predicated on necessarily indefensible principles and premises. As Michael Dillon notes of Jacques Derrida's thought, the latter sought to expose the violence that 'is sutured into the very fabric of the world ... [because] everything we do is irresolvably implicated in violence.'<sup>6</sup> As a consequence of the ruptures associated with the 'Death of God', be(com)ing is violent both because every decision to pursue a particular end or value is to the exclusion of every other such end or value, and because such a decision locates and defends itself via points of reference that are themselves indefensible. The ethical imperative thus emerges to mark, respond to, and theorise this violence.

Taking its prompt from such an injunction, this paper engages with two broad traditions of thought which respond to the abyssal condition which the 'Death of God' invokes: the messianic and the tragic. In different ways, messianic and tragic thought can both be read as important responses to this foundationlessness, as their respective widespread influence throughout various critical traditions within IR and related disciplines attests. Common to both is an engagement with the vast and urgent problem posed by the 'Death of God' of the 'for the sake of' of political life; as Nietzsche claims, the 'Death of God' raises the question of 'for what?'<sup>7</sup> Without divine or transcendental meanings provided by God, stable values and goals from which society may take its bearings are lost. Accordingly, under this condition of foundationlessness the 'for what' of the political can, Nietzsche argues, be sourced either from some external point of reference or sought within the subject itself. He explains:

The question 'for what?' is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded from outside – by some superhuman authority. Having unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks another authority that can speak unconditionally and command goals and tasks. The authority of conscience now steps up front (the more emancipated one is from theology, the more imperativistic morality becomes) to compensate for the loss of a personal authority.<sup>8</sup>

What this suggests is that Nietzsche identified two broad tendencies provoked by the ongoing ruptures of the 'Death of God': either the 'for what' must be found in some 'outside' authority or value, or alternatively it may be sought 'inside', from within the 'conscience' of the subject itself. The paper begins from Nietzsche's account of these two responses to the 'Death of God' by identifying in current critical thought firstly a 'reaching outward' in search of the 'for what' characteristic of

messianic thought, and secondly a 'turning inwards' as a part of such a search, a tone discernible in the tragic.

The central concern of this paper is to trace the different forms of violences or 'traps' associated with messianic and tragic responses to conditions of foundationlessness. It argues that both the messianic and the tragic ultimately invoke and rely upon standards and categories which, according to their own interior logics, are rendered indefensible by the ongoing metaphysical destabilisations signified by the 'Death of God'. More specifically, through an engagement with the messianic thought of Jacques Derrida and the accounts of the tragic provided by Michael Dillon and Friedrich Nietzsche respectively, the paper suggests that the 'reaching outwards' of the messianic leads to a problematic re-entanglement in the transcendental, while the 'inwardness' of the tragic at least risks an acute and potentially colonising self-referentiality, a political quietism or fatalism, and ultimately, albeit in a different way to the messianic, also a return to the transcendental. It will be shown, however, that an agonistic engagement with these traditions is important in responding to the political implications of challenges posed by the 'Death of God'; it is suggested that the tragic in particular retains significant purchase in theorising the violence of be(com)ing in light of the ongoing ruptures the 'Death of God' names.

### **The 'Death of God', the Suicide of 'Man' and the Be(com)ing of the Subject**

In the geo-cultural contexts within which the 'Death of God' has been declared, a severing of the connections between the earthly realm of the human and the divine world of God is suggested. As Armando Salvatore notes, '[m]odern global society is heir to a fundamental rupture in human history, through which the human grasp of symbols of godly majesty and divine intervention on both nature and human society is replaced by a reflexive rationalization of their meaning.' For some, he continues, this has been welcomed as 'a swift transition from mythos to logos,' while by others it has been 'decried as the progressive liquidation of human community and its incorporation into the iron cage of the power-saturated, anonymous relations of global modernity.'<sup>9</sup> For better or worse, what these ongoing ruptures suggest is that the subject can no longer rely upon divine points of reference as a means by which to ascertain meaning, value or direction; with the 'Death of God', '[w]hat has died is the "reality" of an order of existence that is "other" than self-perception and subjective appropriation.'<sup>10</sup> As Heidegger similarly frames it, if 'God as the suprasensory ground and goal of all reality is dead, if the supresensory world of the Ideas has suffered the loss of its obligatory and above all its vitalizing and upbuilding power, then nothing remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself.'<sup>11</sup> The 'Death of God' would seem, then, to amount to the breaking of the links between the subject and divinely sanctioned modes of thought and being.

Nietzsche's engagement with this rupture combines tones of awe and affirmation. He celebrates it at least in part because in his view the assumed connection between man and the divine was never in reality possible. He suggests that far from enjoying such a transcendental relation, 'Man' rather mistook his 'inner world', predicated on his ego, for Being. This error led him to believe in a reality 'outside' himself that corresponded to his ego. For Nietzsche, what the 'Death of God' ultimately demonstrates is not a fundamentally new condition in which the connection to the divine has been lost, but rather that what the subject had previously taken to be an independently existing reality 'outside' was only ever a projection of itself:

Man projected his three 'inner facts of conscience', the will, the spirit, and the ego, in which he believed most firmly, outside. He first deduced the concept of Being out of the concept of Ego, he supposed 'things' to exist as he did himself, according to his notion of the ego as cause ... The thing itself, I repeat, the concept 'thing' was merely a reflex of the belief in the ego as cause ... [This] error of spirit [was] regarded as a cause, [and] confounded with reality! And made the measure of reality! And called God!<sup>12</sup>

Thus, for Nietzsche, far from enjoying a connection with the divine, the subject had succeeded only in projecting its own ego outward and had mistakenly construed this for a reality independent of itself; the subject deduced grand ideas about Being by inflating itself to resemble something greater, so great, in fact, that it gave it the name 'God'. The death of this God renders this process of projection apparent, according to Nietzsche. The result of this is that the subject loses its (illusory) connection to the divine: 'man has become incapable of apprehending a reality absolutely independent of himself and of having a relation with it.'<sup>13</sup> As such, the 'Death of God' exposes only what was already the case: the subject must generate meaning without recourse to standards sanctioned by divine licence.

Importantly, what this also means is that, as well as undermining the supposed connections between the human and the divine, the 'Death of God' simultaneously alienates the subject from the communal, earthly realm 'outside' of itself. As originator of the shared values which had underpinned society hitherto, God had previously made possible a meaningful connection between the individual and the community. With the death of this origin and sustaining force, these collective bonds are severed, and the subject loses recourse to shared mores outside itself. The subject is then left to its own devices to make sense of existence; Jacob Taubes notes Hegel's claim that such phenomena as philosophy emerge 'when a gulf has arisen between inward strivings and external reality, and the old forms of religion etc. are no longer satisfying.'<sup>14</sup> The measure of value and meaning must, henceforth, be found not through commonly shared understandings of the sacred or the divine, but rather through the subject's own faculties, through reason and conscience. Such conscience is 'inward, but exists in constant tension with the world, forcing us to bridge the gap between it and the realm of the world.'<sup>15</sup>

These ruptures with the divine and the earthly communal occur not simply as a consequence of God's death but rather of His murder. Nietzsche is explicit that the 'Death of God' is an act of deicide: 'We have killed him – you and I! We are his murderers.'<sup>16</sup> Such deicide is, for Nietzsche, an unparalleled moment in history: 'There was never a greater deed – and whoever is born after us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!'<sup>17</sup> Nothing less than the world is saved, Nietzsche claims, by this 'greatest recent event ... that the belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable.'<sup>18</sup> This great act of deicide occurs, Heidegger shows, because 'Man enters into insurrection.'<sup>19</sup> Through this insurrection, the subject's status shifts from one of 'being-written' by standards and norms the value of which were inherited rather than chosen, to one of 'self-authorship', in which, by virtue of its choosing of them, the subject bestows meaning on such principles. As such, '[t]he earth, as the abode of man, is unchained from the sun. The realm that constitutes the suprasensory, which as such, is in itself[,] no longer stands over man as the authoritative light ... That which is, as the objective, is swallowed up into the immanence of subjectivity. The horizon no longer emits light of itself.'<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, while the vastness of this act is clear, it is also devastating. As Heidegger explains,

thinking in terms of values is radical killing. It not only strikes down that which is as such, in its being-in-itself, but it does away utterly with Being ... The value-thinking of the metaphysics of the will to power is murderous in a most extreme sense, because it absolutely does not let Being itself take rise, i.e. come into the vitality of its essence. Thinking in terms of values precludes in advance that Being itself will attain to a coming to presence in its truth.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, along with God, Being is also murdered. With no possibility of redemption or repentance, because God remains dead, is not resurrected, the ongoing murder of God is thus, in an important sense, 'Man's' suicide. By 'Man', I intend to suggest the human (within the geo-cultural contexts in question) understood as something in particular, a mode or form of being which inherits and is constructed via divine and communal inheritances which provide external justifications for the subject. In Heidegger's words,

[t]hat which formerly conditioned and determined the essence of man in the manner of purpose and norm has lost its unconditional and immediate, above all its ubiquitously and infallibly operative power of effective action. That suprasensory world of purposes and norms no longer quickens and supports life ... That is the metaphysical meaning of the word 'God is dead,' thought metaphysically.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in murdering God, 'Man's' claim to Being is also killed. 'Man' thereby commits suicide. In Foucault's words, 'Nietzsche rediscovered the point at which man and God belong to one another, at which the death of the second is synonymous with the disappearance of the first ... It is no longer possible to think in our day other than the void left by man's disappearance.'<sup>23</sup> What remains is an underdetermined subject-to-be(come) which has precluded from itself points of reference from which its meaning and selfhood may be inferred. In other words, 'in this event man also becomes different. He becomes the one who does away with that which is, in the sense of that which is in itself. The uprising of man into subjectivity transforms that which is into object.'<sup>24</sup> In Taubes' terms, man moves from 'nature' to 'history' through an exercise of this terrible freedom: 'Only mankind's answer [Antwort] to the word of God, which is essentially a negative one [ein Nein], is evidence of human freedom. Therefore, the freedom of negation is the foundation of history.'<sup>25</sup>

In this reading, the 'Death of God' thus simultaneously provokes and compromises the subject's self-authored be(com)ing. On the one hand, it makes possible a willed and agential production of subjectivity: it comprises a call to 'become who we are – human beings who are unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves.'<sup>26</sup> As such self-creating agents, subjects attain a new and, according to Heidegger, superior form of existence: 'humanity which wills its own being human ... is determined by a form of man's essence that goes beyond and surpasses man hitherto.'<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, however, 'Man's' act of deicide is also an act of suicide: as a consequence of the undermining of enduring points of reference from which the subject might take its bearings, it is forced to serve as the only available standard by which to judge. 'Man', understood as something in particular, is thereby undermined. Instead, the underdetermined subject must affirm selfhood, values, meanings, without access to stable principles, guides or inheritances. This ruptured subject and this paradoxical and vertiginous process pose a crucial question regarding the ethico-political implications of self-authorship under conditions of foundationlessness brought about

by the 'Death of God': where might the subject seek out the terms and values via which it may self-create? As noted previously, Nietzsche identified two possibilities, a 'reaching outward' towards shared norms, even after such mores have been shown to be indefensible, and a 'turning inwards' towards the 'inner conscience'. In order to explore this question, the political implications of Derrida's messianic thought, in which the former is in evidence, and Dillon and Nietzsche's respective engagements with the tragic, wherein the latter can be perceived, may be fruitfully explored.

### **Messianic Politics and the 'Death of God'**

Derrida's 'messianic turn' has been widely discussed within IR and beyond. In Gil Anidjar's words, Derrida has been viewed as 'performing acts of religion, as enacting a return to his own "religious" origins, though with the constraints of a necessarily complicated reappropriation.'<sup>28</sup> While themes of the religious and the sacred may have always operated within his thought insofar, for instance, as 'Deconstruction is the "hermeneutic" of the death of God,'<sup>29</sup> the self-conscious introduction of a particular form of messianic imaginary into Derrida's later work provides an important context within which the ethico-political implications of messianic thought might be addressed. As Dillon shows, few thinkers have struggled as relentlessly as Derrida with multiple forms and manifestations of violence, as shown in his 'refusal [of] all safe conduct to good conscience in relation to violence.'<sup>30</sup> The relationship between the messianic and violence is crucial in the context of Derrida's struggle:

One does not raise the issue of violence in order to discredit the messianic. One raises the messianic in order to interrogate, without reserve ... the inescapable violence of existence and the challenges it poses to all thinking concerning the possibility of justice; including that of the thought of the messianic itself.<sup>31</sup>

Variouly celebrated and critiqued, the messianic has comprised part of a broader (re)turn to religion in recent Continental and critical thought, both within and beyond IR: the 'death of the death of God' has been marked by the shift from the secular to the 'post-secular.'<sup>32</sup> Derrida's relationship with this turn is an uneasy one. On the one hand, he explicitly advocated the evacuation of religion from formal political establishments, claiming that 'it is out of respect for religion that we must dissociate things and that we must cease to lead politics in the name of religion, or under the authority of religion, or sometimes under the authority of religious authorities themselves.'<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, however, he employs an extensive religious vocabulary which 'seems so omnipresent and developed in his work that it would be easy to conclude that Derrida too took the famous theological turn in French phenomenology.'<sup>34</sup> His use of such language extends to invoking absolute or undeconstructible concepts animated by it: 'what remains irreducible to any deconstruction, what remains as undeconstructible as the possibility itself of deconstruction is, perhaps, a certain experience of the emancipatory promise; it is perhaps even the formality of a structural messianism.'<sup>35</sup> At the root of Derrida's invocation of such notions is an attempt to evacuate the substantive content of the religious and theological devices he employs, advocating 'messianism without religion, even a messianic without messianism, an idea of justice.'<sup>36</sup>

For Derrida, the messianic is part of, or reflective of, the broader structure of the 'to come', the never-fulfilled promise of the possibility of a never-present future justice, democracy or arrivant. His is not a messianicity 'determined by the way that, in the Bible, we define the Messiah or messianism.' Rather, the 'messianic is a general structure in which the "to come" is absolutely undetermined, absolutely undetermined, and of course I cannot close, I cannot circumscribe this relation to the "to come".'<sup>37</sup> What he intends to invoke is a 'thinking that "repeats" the possibility of religion without religion.'<sup>38</sup> The distinctive and crucial dimension of this religiosity without dogma is the structure of the 'promise': 'the messianism we are speaking about is one without eschatology, without pre-given promised land, without determinate content. It is simply the structure of a promise which is inherent in all experience.'<sup>39</sup> As the repetitions of 'structure' in the above quotations show, Derrida attempts to remove the dogmatic content of the messianic while retaining the structural function of it, the structure of the promise.<sup>40</sup> What this results in, according to Nass, is 'an originary or radical secularity that includes a critique or questioning of religious dogma by means of a more primordial or originary faith'.<sup>41</sup> In other words, it is an underlying faith which animates both disruptive deconstructive interventions into knowledge, religion, metaphysics and so forth, and the structural promise which the 'to come' is predicated upon. Such a faith is the necessary condition, for Nass, of the coming of the event, the other, and the political.<sup>42</sup> In Derrida's words, this

abstract messianicity belongs from the very beginning to the experience of faith, of believing, of a credit that is irreducible to knowledge and of a trust that 'founds' all relation to the other in testimony. This justice, which I distinguish from right, alone allows one the hope, beyond all 'messianisms', of a universalizable culture of singularities, a culture in which the abstract possibility of the impossible translation could nevertheless be announced. This justice inscribes itself in advance in the promise, in the act of faith or in the appeal of faith that inhabits every act of language and every address to the other. The universalizable character of this faith, and not of another or before all others, alone permits a 'rational' and universal discourse on the subject of 'religion.'<sup>43</sup>

In this account, it is an originary faith which is the condition of possibility of the promise of justice to come, indeed one with 'universalizable' potential.

Derrida's invocation of such potential by means of the evacuation of the content of the messianic in favour of its structural promise, and the place of an originary faith which underpins this, provoke a series of problems. While his account has met with a variety of significant challenges,<sup>44</sup> the most crucial in the present context is the possibility that the invocation of messianic thought, even that of Derrida's 'weak' conception, risks a return to the transcendental by means of the reification of standards and values which have been shown, as a consequence of the ongoing ruptures caused by the 'Death of God', to be indefensible. Tracing the origins of messianic thought back to the Axial Age, Salvatore identifies at its core a relation described as the triad of ego-alter-Alter, which refers to the relationship between the subject 'ego', the known or human 'other', and the divine or abstracted 'Other'. Messianic thought emerged, he explains, through a particular conceptualisation of the relationship of care that is expected of the ego towards the earthly alter. Simply put, in messianic thinking, the subject owes a duty of care to the earthly alter, and this is located and justified via reference to the divine Alter. The messianic functions to 'bridge the gap between alter and Alter ... by projecting an obligation to care for alter onto the ego and the authority to sanction such a care onto the transcendent Alter.'<sup>45</sup> In other words, it is the figure of the divine Alter that provides the

momentum for the relation of care which emanates from the messianic logic: 'The engine of the mechanism lies in the operation through which the terrestrial alter is projected onto the Alter/Theos.'<sup>46</sup>

The problem with this in the context of the 'Death of God' is that inherent to messianic thought is a return to precisely the transcendental justifications which have been, and continue to be, ruptured. As Salvatore shows, 'transcendence becomes immediately present to the subject, to ego, by instituting a privileged axis between the transcendent Alter, the divinity, and the concrete alter faced by ego in the world.'<sup>47</sup> This is because messianic thought is 'grounded on the idea that the subject (the ego) gets entangled in a new realm of transcendence via the institution of a strong nexus between the transcendent Alter, a divinity with the character of omnipotence but also mercifulness, and the concrete alter faced by ego in the experience of the world.'<sup>48</sup> Without such a divine origin, the duty of care in the ego–alter relation has no authorising force, and hence breaks down. In short, without the figure, however abstracted, of the divine Alter, and a consequent return to transcendental promises or horizons, the messianic logic is not possible. What this means is that messianic thought necessarily relies on God or His semblance to provide the 'for the sake of' of the political. Consequently, I would suggest that even Derrida's weak messianism implicitly relies on such an authorising force for its conceptual coherence and its ethico-political injunction. It is thus that Derrida's messianism 'serves to elevate our spirits. It is the tone of hope.'<sup>49</sup> Such hope is afforded by a (re)turn to the comforts associated with divine authorship, however abstractly or loosely conceptualised; the vertiginous experience of self-authorship is soothed by this (however abstract and underdetermined) horizon or promise. As a result, all protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, Derrida's 'primordial faith' has far more in common with more traditional forms of messianic thought than might initially appear to be the case, insofar as messianic thought necessarily relies upon the authorising force of an Alter which 'entangles' the subject in transcendental logics. As Dillon alludes, the messianic, while opening certain possibilities, has the effect of tying the human to the divine.<sup>50</sup> Derrida himself issues a pertinent warning: 'onto-theological reappropriation always remains possible – and doubtless inevitable insofar as one speaks, precisely, in the element of logic and of onto-theological grammar.'<sup>51</sup>

As well as reconnecting the subject with the transcendental, indeed, by means of such a recoupling, the messianic also functions to re-establish a connection with the earthly community, the bond with which is also continuously undermined as a consequence of the ongoing ruptures of 'Death of God'. Dillon notes that the messianic 'is a song to be sung with and on behalf of the solidarity of the shaken', and highlights its social dimension: 'the transforming counter-violent juridical appeal of another justice simultaneously operating within and against the law.'<sup>52</sup> It thus seeks its 'for the sake of' by 'reaching outward' towards the transformation of the social order, moving towards an unattainable justice 'to come', by means of the structural promise. However, this also presupposes the possibility of a shared horizon; it is this collective futurity which gives the messianic its tone of 'reaching outwards' towards a justice 'to come'. Yet Derrida himself is suspicious of such horizons: 'his reason for keeping his distance from the Kantian regulative idea or messianic advent is precisely because they are horizons, a term which indicates both "the opening and the limit that defines an infinite progress or period of waiting"'.<sup>53</sup> If, as Nietzsche claims, the shared horizons possible in the earthly realm, much like the God who has died, were only ever projections of the ego's self-sameness, the messianic appeal to an emancipatory promise rooted in or gesturing towards such justice is in serious danger of not only failing to mark the violence of the subject's becoming, but also

projecting such violence outwards in the guise of a collectively pursued justice. By relying upon such horizons, whether divine or earthly, and however abstract, the messianic thus risks reintroducing precisely connections to the universal or given which, according to Nietzsche, and indeed Derrida, were always much more closely related to power than to truth or justice. It thus risks remaining a 'morality play,'<sup>54</sup> operating within established poles of good and evil. Thus, in Derrida's messianicity, perhaps, God is only eclipsed; as Martin Buber notes, an 'eclipse is something that occurs between the sun and our eyes, not in the sun itself.'<sup>55</sup> This speaks of the 'metaphysical need' identified by Nietzsche: in Derrida's framing, his messianicity as a 'faith without dogma which makes its way through the risks of the absolute night,'<sup>56</sup> indicates its function as defending the subject from the depths of the abyssal condition it finds itself in as a consequence of the ongoing 'Death of God'.

The twin dangers of turning back towards transcendental or earthly-communal shared horizons for guidance are further elucidated in Taubes' discussion of the 'price' of messianism. As well as its potential for animating radical social or political change of the kind he would be sympathetic to by providing a 'for the sake of' messianism, through the operation of its own internal logic authorised by the Alter, also 'helps out the constitution of the modern agent of political order, i.e., the state, as the administrator of the profane realm of immanence [by] "hold[ing] down" evil ... according to its so-called "catechontic" function.'<sup>57</sup> In other words, the political uses of the galvanising and legitimating functions of the messianic are not delimited in advance; the authorising force underpinning it may be used for 'repressive' as much as 'progressive' political interventions. As a consequence of this internal logic, one of the prices of the messianic is 'the potential of violence incorporated both in the catechontic nature of the powerful European state and in its replica via Zionism.'<sup>58</sup> Contemporary examples of this are too numerous to note. The messianic in this reading thus functions within and contributes to maintaining existing onto-political orders as readily as it (appears to) subvert them. Consequently Taubes explicitly cautions against the political operationalisation of messianism:

historically speaking it is only via the realm of inwardness that the absurd and catastrophic consequences of the messianic idea are to be avoided ... If the messianic idea in Judaism is not interiorized, it can turn the 'landscape of redemption' into a blazing apocalypse ... For every attempt to bring about redemption on the level of history without a transfiguration of the messianic idea leads straight into the abyss.<sup>59</sup>

While Derrida is careful to invoke as abstract and cautious a messianism as possible, I would suggest, contra Taubes and Derrida, that such refiguration of the messianic to a more 'inward' variant is insufficient to address the violence of Alter-authorship which is inescapably at work in, indeed is the hallmark of, the messianic.

As this suggests, there is, as Dillon shows, a tragic dimension to Derrida's messianism, namely his simultaneous invocation and refusal of an authorising structural promise animated by an abstracted Alter or faith as providing the 'for the sake of' of the political: 'On the one hand, Derrida teaches that we must distinguish between the monstrous and the lesser violence. On the other hand everything he teaches seems to say that we cannot. He is himself racked by the responsibility posed by this radical undecidability.'<sup>60</sup> What this shows is that while Derrida turns to the messianic, he simultaneously shows that 'the advent of the messianic, of the Other, is itself violent and who can tell, how are we to tell, that the violence of the messianic may not itself evoke holocaustal violences

from us?'<sup>61</sup> This suggests that the messianic provides no means by which its own necessarily violent authorising force may be exposed as such, presenting instead terms which reach towards exiting standards of good and evil, authorised by the (however abstracted) figure of the divine Alter. In the context of the ongoing 'Death of God', any and all configurations of these are continuously shown to be indefensible. The implications of this are far-reaching; as Houseman shows, there is a politics to such a politics of the promise: 'No longer can the critique of capitalism be content to wait, in hope, or faith, or certainty, for redemption: such hope has become conjoined, in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, to exactly that system of thought and practice that the critique invoked redemption against.'<sup>62</sup> In other words, far from providing a solution to multiple forms of violent onto-politics, the guiding faith provided by the messianic is, in this reading, intimately connected to them. It is precisely the structure of the promise, and not just its content, that died with God: through the act of decide, the pact of the promise is dissolved, and with it the claim to a messianic 'to come'. The promise and God name the same ongoing loss.

### **The Tragic and the 'Death of God'**

If the 'Death of God' and the death of the promise invoke the same loss, the possibility of a politics authorised by an Alter which 'reaches outwards' towards a 'to come' or shared horizon (however undetermined and abstracted) would seem to be undermined. The isolation that appears to result from this may give rise to a form of self-authorship which is cautious as regards such external sites of connection. Such isolation may be read as provoking a tragic 'turning inwards', an attempt to find meaning and self-author in ways which avoid seeking legitimation from collectively held principles or standards. The notion of the tragic has been the subject of recent debate in IR primarily, although not exclusively,<sup>63</sup> in the context of Realist thought, in particular in conjunction with attempts to disentangle and rehabilitate the Classical tradition from its more parsimonious Structural variant.<sup>64</sup> While there is much to commend and to critique in these accounts of the tragic and the latter's broader salience as regards the study of global politics, this is beyond the scope of this paper. In seeking out the potential violences associated with the tragic in the context of the 'Death of God', the diverging accounts provided by Dillon and Nietzsche are particularly illuminating.

Within tragic thought, according to both Dillon and Nietzsche, all access to defensible, externally justified authoring force is undermined; the experience of the tragic is one of isolation and meaninglessness. This is because the 'for the sake of' of the political is radically underdetermined; without the authorising force of the Alter or the promise, however conceived, indeed as a consequence of the ongoing rupturing of such relations, the vertiginous subject confronts its abyssal condition. It is this experience of the abyssal condition of existence that comprises the tragic. The hallmark of this condition is at once the imperative to self-create and the knowledge of the immanent violence of so doing. Consequently, Dillon argues that while the messianic provides a sense of 'hope' and an 'elevation of spirit', the tragic has a sombre and melancholic quality: 'the knowledge at which we arrive through tragic order is a knowledge that makes us sad. It is a knowledge at which we would rather we did not have to arrive. Its tone is pathos.'<sup>65</sup> In this reading, the experience of the tragic is a one which unsettles, undermines and overwhelms. A tone of ongoing loss is discernible in this reading.

In marked contrast to this, Nietzsche's account of the tragic, far from being an unwelcome ordeal, is framed as an unequalled elation, as a terrible and dangerous rapture: 'Dionysian art ... wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence.'<sup>66</sup> It is, however, not simply an experience of affirmation but rather 'the affirmative pathos par excellence, which I call tragic pathos.'<sup>67</sup> In this account, the tragic is experienced not simply as affirmation, nor only as a pain or loss, but rather as an exquisite interrelation of the two; it is the product (if such a thing were possible) of the impossible coincidence of these contradictory encounters. Insofar as it is affirmatory, this is a consequence of giving oneself up to the excruciating pain of the indefensibility and meaninglessness of existence; the more sensitive one is to such horror and violence, that is, self-authorship under conditions of foundationlessness, the closer to the enraptured experience of the tragic one is capable of getting. It is precisely the pain of existence which makes possible the Dionysian affirmative pathos. Far from wishing oneself to be elsewhere or otherwise, it is the most exhilarating and elating experience possible. Indeed, it engenders the 'annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence.'<sup>68</sup> As Nietzsche puts it, it amounts to 'not freeing oneself from terror and pity, not purging oneself of a dangerous emotion through a vehement discharge ... but, over and above terror and pity, being oneself the eternal joy of becoming.'<sup>69</sup> As inspiration, this joy is experienced, according to Nietzsche, as 'a perfect being-outside-yourself with the most distinct consciousness of myriad subtle shudders and shivers right down to your toes; a depth of happiness where the most painful and sinister things act not as opposites but as determined, as induced, as a necessary colour within such a surfeit of light.'<sup>70</sup>

Thus Dionysian tragic art, broadly understood, is, for Nietzsche, like Dillon, a painful experience; one encounters here, and without defence, 'the terror or the absurdity of existence.'<sup>71</sup> But for Nietzsche, while the pain may be felt as a dread or instinct to recoil, it is also, as well, experienced thusly:

The struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear to us a necessary thing ... We are pierced by the maddening sting of these pains just when we have become, as it were, one with the infinite primordial joy in existence, and when we anticipate, in Dionysian ecstasy, the indestructibility and eternity of this joy.<sup>72</sup>

Far from an experience of loss, the tragic is, then, a creative process; the imperative is: 'Be as I am! Amidst the ceaseless flux of phenomena I am the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally impelling to existence, eternally self-sufficient amid this flux of phenomena!'<sup>73</sup> It teaches that, 'in spite of the flux of phenomena, life at bottom is indestructibly powerful and pleasurable.'<sup>74</sup> The experience of the tragic is, in one sense, a cessation of the mourning of the loss of God, reason, truth, knowledge, security and every other possible onto-politico-theological referent. This implies that the pain one feels when confronted with the tragic is not, as one might expect, a manifestation of the subject's legitimate instinct towards self-preservation against the threat of an all-consuming nothing, but rather a manifestation of the subject's terror at having only itself left to confront. The tragic forces the subject to face, without atonement, forgiveness or redemption, the horrors for which it is always already responsible. It is nothing more or less than the removal of every justification, alibi and explanation for one's existence. It is the giving oneself up and over to the silent cacophony of the abyss; the tragic spectator 'imagines he hears the innermost abyss of things speaking audibly to him.'<sup>75</sup>

Tempting as it might be to remain here in such an enraptured space, and precisely because of the tragic's intoxicating appeal, the politics of this response to the 'Death of God' require interrogation. Far from functioning as an antidote to the immanent violence of be(com)ing or the authorising force of the messianic Alter, the tragic contains within itself various violences. It is, firstly, the case, as Mustapha Pasha shows, that the tragic loss associated with the 'Death of God' is overwhelmingly a Western experience, and, true to form, betrays the same universalising tendencies and privileging immanentisms of Western thought more broadly. He cautions:

The modern subject is driven by a quest for autonomous self-creation, unavoidably to return to a void, unfulfilled and scandalously close to self-annihilation. The modern condition is one without substance. Meaning is what is poured into existence. But where does it come from? The deities of modernity come in various forms: self-aggrandisement, material progress, consumption, pleasure and, above all, self-mastery.<sup>76</sup>

The self-creating tragic subject is thus implicated in a series of politically urgent questions, not the least of which is the danger of the fetishisms of Western modernity. The Alter is, here, simply replaced by these alternative 'deities', by which the subject takes its bearings. In so doing, the subject becomes so entirely self-referencing that it mistakes itself for the essential or the 'human' and ignores the colonialisms of such essentialisation. Such a danger cuts right to the core of the Western philosophico-political tradition: the reification of the Western subject as the fount and author of the political is undeniably widespread. As Robbie Shilliam notes, it is crucial to loosen 'the obsession the Western Academic often holds of her/himself as subject, and to imagine herself/himself – for a while – as objects in the drama of someone else's awesome subjectification.'<sup>77</sup>

The tragic, privileging as it does a 'turning inwards', also risks both an inadvertent political quietism and a conservatism, as Nietzsche's account of a certain withdrawal from the political associated with the Dionysian rapture shows: 'Flee, my friend, into your solitude! I see you deafened with the noise of the great men, and stung all over with the stings of the little ones.'<sup>78</sup> Such a flight to solitude suggests a turning away from political life, and therewith the urgency of the political moment and the violence within which one is always already implicated. Turned inwards in its solitude, the tragic subject is free to revel in agonistic ecstasy, but this comes at the cost of responsibility. The tendency of the tragic to turn inwards can result in endless processes of exquisite self-torturing/pleasuring, writhing at the precipice of a self-styled abyss. Meanwhile, the political continues. Nietzsche marks this in his description of

a lethargic element, in which are submerged all past personal experiences. It is this gulf of oblivion that separates the world of everyday from the world of Dionysian reality. But as soon as we become conscious again of this everyday reality, we feel it as nauseating and repulsive; and an ascetic will-negating mood is the fruit of these states. In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have for once penetrated into the true nature of things – they have perceived, but it is irksome for them to act; for their action cannot change the eternal nature of things; the time is out of joint.<sup>79</sup>

This means, crucially, that '[k]nowledge kills action' because 'action [requires the veil of illusion].'<sup>80</sup> In other words, faced with the terror and absurdity of existence, the tragic subject finds intervention highly problematic; acting without recourse to knowledge or justice is experienced as an ordeal.

Thus the tragic risks a fatalism towards, or an attempt at withdrawal from, the political, which results not in non-intervention, but, which is worse, tacit acquiescence to the status quo because intervention is always already in process, always, and especially, when one fails to take account of it.

Importantly, it is also the case that, while pushing the boundaries of good and evil further, perhaps, than other conceivable logics, the tragic is ultimately guilty of a return to precisely the 'reaching outwards' that it seeks to subvert. Nietzsche frames the tragic as follows:

[W]e are forced to look into the terrors of individual existence – yet we are not to become rigid with fear: a metaphysical comfort tears us momentarily from the bustle of the transforming figures. We are really for a brief moment Primordial Being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence ... as the one living being, with whose creative joy we are united.<sup>81</sup>

Such a 'metaphysical comfort' to be found in a unitary and knowable 'primordial being' poses profound questions of the tragic. Insofar as the Dionysian response to the 'Death of God' is intended to reflect a giving of oneself over to contingency and the limitless responsibility for one's becoming that radical self-authorship implies, recourse to such comforting onto-theological categories is highly problematic. This is reflected in Nietzsche's description of the Dionysian as being-outside-yourself, *Ausser-sich-sein*; the experience of Dionysian rapture is at its peak precisely at the instant it provokes the swelling sense of oneness, of unity with Being. Put differently, what is risked here is a return to the transcendental, not, as in the messianic, via a reaching out to divine or collective justice (to come) authorised by a more or less substantive Alter, but rather through the subject's attempt to emulate or become a god. In this inward logic, it is the subject itself which must be the originator of value and meaning. It must, in short, perform the functions previously fulfilled by the divine.

This theme of the subject's accession to godhood is present in Nietzsche's thought in a variety of forms. First, there is a certain messianism visible in his tragic madman: having proclaimed man's act of *deicide*, which falls on the deaf ears of the surrounding crowd, the madman

threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and went out. 'I come too early,' he then said: 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder need time; the light of the stars needs time; deeds need time, even after they are done in order to be seen and heard.'<sup>82</sup>

Relatedly, an apocalyptic tone is discernible in Nietzsche's thought: he presents himself as both the apocalyptic agent of the revaluation of all values and the 'destroyer par excellence.'<sup>83</sup> He similarly refers to the 'event' of Zarathustra as 'the immense act of purifying and consecrating humanity.'<sup>84</sup> The figure of the frenzied Dionysus becomes, in this reading, the man-god who is inspired by 'a rush of feeling, of unconditionality, of power, of divinity.'<sup>85</sup> Most concretely, Nietzsche simply asks: 'Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy' of the act of *deicide*?<sup>86</sup> As Deleuze succinctly puts it, 'Why would man have killed God, if not to take his still warm seat?'<sup>87</sup> In this reading, *Ecce Homo* may be understood as a sacrilegious new New Testament in the first person.

The intersection of elation and despair characteristic of the tragic consists in the inevitable failure of the subject to comprise its own self-origin, that is, the subject's inability to act as or become a 'man-

god'. This inevitable failure to fulfil the role of originator can result in an unwitting return to the transcendental. This is visible in Nietzsche's invocation of both Dionysus and also the doctrine of the 'eternal return'. The highest, most sublime experience of the Dionysian tragic is at once a secret reaching back towards the eternal or transcendental: the 'eternal return gives the will a rule as rigorous as the Kantian one.'<sup>88</sup> The suggestion that the eternal return bears a close resemblance to the Kantian Categorical Imperative is not new.<sup>89</sup> The significance of this here resides in the possibility that the 'unconditional universality of the categorical imperative is evangelical. The moral law inscribes itself at the bottom of our hearts like memory of the Passion ... This thesis of Kant – is it not, at the core of its content, Nietzsche's thesis at the same time that he in conducting an inexpiable war against Kant?'<sup>90</sup> As I have shown elsewhere, Derrida's tension-ridden engagement with the Kantian Regulative Idea risks a similar (re)turn.<sup>91</sup> The point is, then, that the tragic can render possible a re-entanglement in the transcendental or divine, points of reference precluded by the ongoing ruptures and raptures associated with the 'Death of God'.

## Conclusion

The 'Death of God', understood as an ongoing series of fundamental ruptures, provokes the urgent question of the 'for the sake of' of the political. Within critical and Continental traditions in IR and associated disciplines, both messianic and tragic responses to the resultant aporetic condition have been articulated. This paper has argued that the messianic and the tragic contain within themselves tendencies to return to the transcendental in ways rendered indefensible by the ongoing challenges associated with the 'Death of God', the former in its reliance upon an authorising Alter, and the latter insofar as it risks a potentially colonising self-referentiality, a political quietism, and, via the problematic projection of the subject as 'man-god', also a return to the transcendental. This means, I would suggest, that the messianic re-performs too great an appeal to an authorising external force which provides too readily a 'for the sake of'. Dillon notes that the tone of Derrida's messianism is one of hope, remarking: 'I would that I could be persuaded by that tone.'<sup>92</sup> It is, in my view, to his credit that he is not convinced. The immanent violence of be(com)ing, so readily reflected in contemporary political life, demands a restless vigilance as regards that which serves to comfort or reassure the subject that the political realm is oriented towards, even if it cannot attain, the promise of an undeconstructible justice 'to come'. Political and metaphysical reassurance underpinned by an authorising Alter does not, I would suggest, lend itself easily to a radically interventionary and affirmatory politics.

Similarly, it is crucial to ensure that the tragic does not become an alibi for attempting to distance oneself from the urgency of political intervention, and that an engagement with it does not result in an explosive return to the transcendental, in the form of 'oneness with primordial being' or the experience of 'Ausser-sich-sein'. However, I would suggest that the tragic's inherent irresolution, its continuous turnings in on itself, the vertigo associated with a perpetual dissatisfaction which resists the temptation to resign oneself to, or impose the final 'is' of meaning, retains important ethico-political implications. The ethical imperative issued by the 'Death of God' amounts to a call to ceaseless revision and vigilance as regards the imposition of onto-political principles and premises. The ceaseless turns and returns of the tragic function to continuously disrupt traditional forms of onto-politics which rely on fixed and stable subjectivities and ontologies. In other words, such

failures amount precisely to a condition of possibility of political contestation. The tragic, by virtue of its recognition of the impossibility of any satisfactory knowledge or resolution in political life, thus provides an important intervention; far from losing the subject in the depths of an abyssal despair, such endless failure to finally self-create can amount to precisely a vital and vitalising site of the political. As Judith Halberstam comments, under certain conditions, 'failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world ... [F]ailure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behaviour and manage human development.'<sup>93</sup> Thus, rather than regretting the loss of the messianic hope, I would advocate an agitated and agitating politics animated in part by the pathos of the tragic and in part by possibilities which can emerge from endless deconstructive disruptions to the logos. In Nietzsche's words, as a consequence of the 'Death of God', '[n]othing has become more alien to us than that old desire – the "peace of the soul".'<sup>94</sup>

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### **Notes**

↵1. See, for instance, Roland Bleiker, 'Postmodernism', in *Introduction to International Relations: Australian Perspectives*, eds. Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke and Jim George (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 94 and Chris Brown, "'Turtles All the Way Down': Anti-Foundationalism, Critical Theory and International Relations', *Millennium* 23, no. 2 (1994): 216.

↵2. James der Derian, 'The Value of Security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche, and Baudrillard', in *The Political Subject of Violence*, eds. David Campbell and Michael Dillon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

↵3. William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

↵4. Brown, 'Turtles', 216.

↵5. An immediate difficulty associated with the question of the 'Death of God' is that while it is important to emphasise the cultural specificity of it and its associated implications in order to avoid the kinds of universalising and colonising generalisations which underpin such figures as 'the modern subject', by limiting the experience of the 'Death of God' to the 'West', the operation of the highly problematic dichotomy presenting the West as secular/rational and (a host of) other geo-cultural locales as religious/superstitious is at least potentially reaffirmed. I have referred to the 'West' in parentheses throughout the paper to indicate that while I am cognisant that the 'Death of God', and the ruptures that result from it, are primarily peculiarly 'Western', and should therefore not be discussed in universalising terms, I am wary of invoking a binary here of suggesting that secularism has come to characterise the Western condition. As Mustapha Pasha, amongst others, has shown, such secularisation has always remained in many ways fictitious.

↵6. Michael Dillon, 'Violences of the Messianic', in *The Politics to Come: Power, Modernity and the Messianic*, eds. Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher (London: Continuum, 2010), 191–8.

↵7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1968), 16, 19.

↵8. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 16–17.

↵9. Armando Salvatore, 'Politics and the Messianic Imagination', in *The Politics of Imagination*, eds. Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand (Abingdon: Birkbeck Law Press, 2011), 125. Salvatore briefly notes the cultural specificity of these phenomena in Western politico-philosophical contexts, but this should, I would suggest, be more strongly emphasised as a starting point. His use of 'modern global society' risks effacing the specificity of the context in question.

↵10. F. Thomas Trotter, 'Variations on the "Death of God" Theme in Recent Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XXXIII, no. 1 (1965): 44.

↵11. Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God Is Dead"', in *Holzwege* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61.

↵12. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), 31–2.

↵13. Martin Buber, cited in Trotter, 'Variations', 44.

↵14. Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 164.

↵15. Jacob Taubes, 'The Price of Messianism', in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Toward a Critique of Historical Reason* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 5.

↵16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 119–20.

↵17. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 120.

↵18. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 199.

↵19. Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche', 100.

↵20. Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche', 107.

- ↵21. Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche', 108.
- ↵22. Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche', 98–9.
- ↵23. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), 342.
- ↵24. Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche', 107.
- ↵25. Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, 5.
- ↵26. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 189.
- ↵27. Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche', 95–6.
- ↵28. Gil Anidjat, 'Introduction: Once more, Once More: Derrida, the Arab, the Jew', in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.
- ↵29. Jeffrey Robins, 'Introduction: After the Death of God', in John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *After the Death of God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3.
- ↵30. Dillon, 'Violences', 191.
- ↵31. Dillon, 'Violences', 201.
- ↵32. Robins, 'Introduction', 19.
- ↵33. Jacques Derrida, quoted in Mustapha Chérif, *Islam and the West: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 65. See also 73.
- ↵34. Michael Nass, *Derrida from Now On* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 64.
- ↵35. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 74.
- ↵36. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 74.
- ↵37. Jacques Derrida, 'Time and Memory, Messianicity, the Name of God', in *Deconstruction Engaged: The Sydney Seminars*, eds. Paul Patton and Terry Smith (Sydney: Power Publications, 2001), 68.
- ↵38. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 49.
- ↵39. Ernesto Laclau, 'The Time Is Out of Joint', *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 91.
- ↵40. An analogy springs to mind in the form of the pitfalls associated with the shift, through the evacuation its substantive claims, from so-called 'Classical' Realism to the structuralism of Neo-Realism from the late 1970s.
- ↵41. Nass, *Derrida*, 64.
- ↵42. Nass, *Derrida*, 64.

- ↵43. Jacques Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge' in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, *Religion* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 18.
- ↵44. See for instance Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Adam Thurschwell, 'Cutting the Branches for Akiba: Agamben's Critique of Derrida', in *Politics, Metaphysics, and Death: Essays on Giorgio Agamben*, ed. Andrew Norris (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Richard Beardsworth, 'The Messianic Now: A Secular Response', in Bradley and Fletcher, *The Politics to Come*.
- ↵45. Salvatore, 'Politics', 125.
- ↵46. Salvatore, 'Politics', 126.
- ↵47. Salvatore, 'Politics', 126.
- ↵48. Salvatore, 'Politics', 124.
- ↵49. Dillon, 'Violences', 204.
- ↵50. Dillon, 'Violences', 197.
- ↵51. Jacques Derrida, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).
- ↵52. Dillon, 'Violences', 199.
- ↵53. Catherine Mills, 'Agamben's Messianic Politics: Biopolitics, Abandonment and Happy Life', *Contretemps* 5, December (2004): 54. As I have argued elsewhere, Derrida marks his own slip towards the regulative idea (see Aggie Hirst, *Leo Strauss and the Invasion of Iraq: Encountering the Abyss* (Abingdon, New York Routledge, 2013)).
- ↵54. Dillon, 'Violences', 196.
- ↵55. Trotter, 'Variations', 45.
- ↵56. Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', 18.
- ↵57. Salvatore, 'Politics', 124–5.
- ↵58. Salvatore, 'Politics', 125. See Taubes, 'The Price of Messianism' for further discussion.
- ↵59. Taubes, 'The Price of Messianism', 8–9.
- ↵60. Dillon, 'Violences', 198.
- ↵61. Dillon, 'Violences', 204.
- ↵62. Tom Houseman, 'Auschwitz as Eschaton: Adorno's Negative Rewriting of the Messianic in Critical Theory', in this forum.

↵63. See, for instance, Mark Chao and Roland Bleiker, 'The Symbiosis of Democracy and Tragedy: Lost Lessons from Ancient Greece', *Millennium* 37, no. 3 (2009): 659–82; Mark Chou, *Greek Tragedy and Contemporary Democracy* (New York: Continuum / Bloomsbury, 2012).

↵64. See the collection of articles in Toni Erksine and Richard Ned Lebow, eds., *Tragedy and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Policies: Ethics, Interests and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Vassilios Paipais, 'Necessary Fiction: Realism's Tragic Theology', *International Politics* 50, no. 6 forthcoming 2013).

↵65. Dillon, 'Violences', 204.

↵66. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Dover, 1995), 60.

↵67. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 66.

↵68. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 23.

↵69. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 47.

↵70. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 68.

↵71. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 23.

↵72. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 60.

↵73. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 59–60.

↵74. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 22.

↵75. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 77.

↵76. Mustapha Pasha, 'Western Nihilism and Dialogue: Prelude to an Uncanny Encounter in International Relations', *Millennium* 39, no. 3 (2011): 692–3.

↵77. Robbie Shilliam, 'The Drama Viewed from Elsewhere', in *Tragedy and International Relations*, eds. Toni Erksine and Richard Ned Lebow (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 81.

↵78. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1997), 48.

↵79. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 23.

↵80. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 23.

↵81. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 60.

↵82. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 120.

↵83. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 89.

↵84. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 49.

- ↵85. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 69.
- ↵86. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 120.
- ↵87. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2010), 143.
- ↵88. Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 63.
- ↵89. See, for instance, Philip J. Kain, 'Eternal Recurrence and the Categorical Imperative', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 45, no. 1 (2010): 105–16; Bernd Magnus, 'Nietzsche's Eternalistic Counter-Myth', *Review of Metaphysics* 24, no. 4 (1973): 604–16.
- ↵90. Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', 50.
- ↵91. See Hirst, *Leo Strauss and the Invasion of Iraq*.
- ↵92. Dillon, 'Violences', 204.
- ↵93. Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2–3.
- ↵94. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 26.