

**To cite text:**

De Michele, Giustino. 2024. "On the Economical Politics of Invention." *Philosophy and Society* 35 (4): 803–828.

Giustino De Michele

## ON THE ECONOMICAL POLITICS OF INVENTION

### ABSTRACT

This article tackles the question of invention in Jacques Derrida's thought of deconstruction according to two perspectives. In the first part, drawing on "Psyché: Invention of the Other", it examines its economic implications; in the second part, drawing on "A World of Welcome" and on the confrontation with Emmanuel Levinas, it examines its political implications. The problem at stake in both perspectives is the role of an idiomatic schematics (a sophistication of Kantianism, as Derrida puts it) in fostering the potential invention of a counterinstitution. In the second part, while interrogating Derrida's views on the possibility and means to deduce a politics from an ethics, we will encounter the current geopolitical scenario, and notably the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### KEYWORDS

invention,  
deconstruction,  
economy, politics,  
Derrida, Levinas, Israel,  
Palestine, schematics,  
hospitality

But today Sinai is also, still in relation to the singular history of Israel, a name from modernity. Sinai, the Sinai: a metonymy for the border or frontier between Israel and the other nations, a front and a frontier between war and peace, a provocation to think the passage between the ethical, the messianic, eschatology, *and* the political, at a moment in the history of humanity and of the Nation-State when the persecution of all these hostages – the foreigner, the immigrant (with or without papers), the exiled, the refugee, those without a country, or a State, the displaced person or population (so many distinctions that call for careful analysis) – seems, on every continent, open to a cruelty without precedent.

### Deduction and deconstruction

Is it possible to deduce a political economy from deconstruction and/or from grammatology? Were this the case, all controversy would be resolved concerning the potential of this current of thought not only to lend a philosophical apprehension of what goes on in the world, but even to foster the definition of legal and social measures aimed at changing the course of things.



Nevertheless, the issue of the seeming early promise of a “grammatology as a positive science” (Derrida 1997: 74 ff) should dismiss such hypothesis: as Derrida would point out later on, such thing as a grammatology was never intended to become a positive science, neither as a method nor as a set of knowledges. How, then, can one hope for positive policies, there where the very notions of a thing or of the world, not to mention of an identifiable course of theirs, are troubled in their logical and existential consistency, this is to say, there where all teleology and ontology are unsettled? Let us add that hope, as such – as the possibility of satisfying a deferral, of satiating “*différance*”, of attaining what is to be and must be attained – might be the very target of a deconstruction.

If the analysis were to be stopped here, then the detractors of deconstruction would be right: there is nothing to it but nihilism, hermetic meditations, logical inconsistencies, irresponsible relativism, even a pernicious advocacy for post-truth. After all, the accusation of nurturing Trumpism might not be worse than that of nurturing Hitlerism. Moreover, were one to remark that deconstruction is also condemned for disrupting all identitarian standpoint (from gender to nationality) and claim (including any call to the greatness or superiority of, say, America or Deutschland), as well as to being fundamentally anti-Semitic at the same time as it reproduces “liberal-Zionist” positions<sup>1</sup> – how could one contradict such charges, might one conclusively add, once having refused all binary oppositions and first of all that between truth and falseness or between invention and effectuality?

By no chance, the invention of the other, the possibility of the impossible, if not more correctly the impossibility of what reveals possible, or of what in fact will have arrived – all these musings, that should render deconstruction’s views on the things and on their course in the world, depend on Derrida’s attempt to read reality through the mirror, quite literally, of fables such as Francis Ponge’s eponymous one.

Instead of tackling our argument through addressing these dilemmas, let us come back to our question. Can one deduce a political economy from deconstruction? In order to tend toward politics and economics, let us not aim to legitimate a positive answer, but rather interrogate the terms of the question: can one *deduce* politics and economics from deconstruction? If the answer is negative, this is because one does not *need* to deduce anything, or to wait for an analysis to be carried out starting from deconstruction. This is to say that politics and economics, institutions and practice, credit and matter, are already there, “here and now”, both as the object and as the framework of all deconstructive description. This double determination – objective and contextual

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1 On the relation of Derrida’s œuvre to the Palestinian question, see in particular Mc Quillan (2016), including the bibliography on this matter, and Anidjar (2013) among the texts of Weber (ed. 2013), as well as Peeters (2013). On the conceptualisation of a “Politics of the heart”, related to the issue of “living together” addressing the Israel-Palestinian confrontation, see the important contribution by Berger (2025). By the author himself, see notably Derrida (2013. 2001. 2004: 118–119).

– being inextricable, any accomplished thematisation of the politics or of the economics of deconstruction (or of their possible combinations) is impossible.

In other words, if a deconstructive approach aims at showing how things go as they go, or to let things show in their course – and since this applies in the first place to such things as its pragmatic means, notably to textual and pedagogical scenes –, then it must carry out this endeavor through leaning and relying on devices or artifacts (be them “originally” natural, they will nevertheless be a priori reflected through an artifactual apprehension) such that their structure reflects the impossible closure of thematisation (this is nothing else but the structure of the real), while at the same time indicating (imperfectly) this contextual insaturability of theirs. Ponge’s poematic invention, *Fable*, is precisely such a device, and an exemplary one. This is why it is the occasion (the object and even the context) of Derrida’s reflection on the political economy of imagination in *Psyche*’s opening essay.

In what follows, I will attempt to bring out the relation of this economy to the problem of the political. If in *Psyche* Derrida speaks of an economy and of an economics of invention, some years later, in *Adieu*, he will speak of a politics of invention. To be true, this expression is a borrowing from Emmanuel Levinas; nevertheless, in integrating this suggestion Derrida will appeal to his own thought of invention and of reinvention (and of borrowing, one shall add). It is then on the ground of this thought, or of this acknowledgement, of invention and reinvention, on the ground of this “reinventive” temporality, that deconstruction exposes an economics and a politics.

What is then the relation between these two terms? Once again one shall not proceed by deduction. On the one hand, it would be totalitarian to deduce the social from the legal, that is, economics from politics – or, by analogy, politics from ethics: we will return to this. On the other, it would be reductionist to deduce politics from economics, or to think the political in terms of a scientific apprehension of the social. But conversely, if an economics must face the values it carries in spite of all claims of a neutral and objective apprehension of the phenomena that it comprehends, a politics must face the calculating and mechanical tenor of its *principles*: both of its conditions of possibility, and of its issues. Strategically, it seems even better to insist on the second side of this last alternative, for not drowning the risks and chances of calculation into the just longing for a righteous destination. The tenor of this politics will then be economic, and it will be so in the sense of “economy as abbreviation” (Derrida 2020b: 33): of frugality, scarcity, finitude, or better still, of metonymical precipitation.

Hence, an *economical* politics – of invention: if an invention, such as Derrida describes it, is a metonymical machine – at the same time a product, a commodity, and a means of production – what can it produce? What else but another invention? Even a political invention, an inventive politics maybe, if not invention as a faculty?

## Semantics of invention

The intertwinement of several meanings and connotations of “invention” is certainly contingent, but since this contingency is due to the finiteness of semiotics, to the necessity of homonymies and of equivocality in general, it is nonetheless stringent. Necessity is the metonymic structure of reality. This confirms our previous conclusion: if an invention can only produce another invention, conversely, in order to produce some invention, one must rely on existing inventions. Similarly, were one to reinvent “invention” in general, one should rely on the existing connotations of it.

This is precisely the problem faced by Derrida while writing “Psyche. Invention of the Other”, the opening essay of his 1987 *Psyché* anthology, which was redacted on the occasion of a conference on the theme of invention. Hence the overture: “What else am I going to be able to invent?” (Derrida 2007a: 1) As if invention could only come out of an exhausted repetition, and depended on a passive power: as if, through the indefinite reiteration of the same, the glitch of the aleatory should produce something different, unpredictably but with statistical necessity.

One can interpret Derrida’s position accordingly, although one thus risks equating it to a rather classical messianism by which one should wait for the end of history, for the exhaustion of all possibilities, in order to have something happen. What if one did not have to wait this long to break the tautology whereas the invention of invention depends on invention? In fact, the contextual singularity of all positions, of all metonymy, and of all signification (including those of “invention”) makes so that the closure of, or in, a tautology is a false problem. But tautology does not equate repetition: and since no method is available to transform repetition into novelty or to interpret it inventively, one still has to face a structure of repetition (“the trace”, or “generalised writing”), and this necessity is what Derrida analyses in his essay. He does so through a semantic, structural, and historical analysis of which we will retrace the scheme in order to highlight its overall “economy”.

In “Psyche” Derrida seeks a narrow path of his among the multiple determinations of a classical notion. Not only can the same noun stand for the object, for the event, and for the faculty of “invention” (Derrida 2007a: 30). As we already saw, a “natural” enchainment of these three (artifactual) moments can even be reversed in a deconstructive perspective: as if the invented item could produce the event that gives rise to the faculty of invention, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, considering these three moments altogether, Derrida insists on their often oppositional determinations.

According to a consolidated rhetorical taxonomy, one can distinguish *inventio* and *dispositio*, or the *finding* of the things (or the expressions) themselves, and of their arrangement. Furthermore, one shall distinguish between the finding of the truth to which expressions refer, and the finding of the best way of exposing it. Invention is then caught between allegory and tautology, between the auto-reference of the found thing (*invenuta*, in Latin), and the hetero-reference

of the invention (the rhetorical device) which permits to refer to it. Accordingly, the truth at stake in invention is at the same time the result of a discovery or unveiling (in this sense one can find – *invenire* – truth itself) or of a creation or production (Derrida 2007a: 4). And even if, according to a more contemporary semantics, one leaves behind the *inventio veritatis* and concentrates on the technical aspect of invention as production, one can still distinguish among the production of a narrative fiction, or of an often mechanical artifact: between art and science, or between “*Fabula or fictio*, on the one hand, and, on the other, *tekhne, episteme, istoria, methodos*, that is, art or know-how, knowledge and research, information, procedure, and so forth.” (Derrida 2007a: 10)

This last distinction entails a more general one: invention regards something new or newly found, *but* this found item must show itself in its regularity (this, in fact, is no less evident in the techno-scientific realm than in the realm of discursive or artistic, and therefore coded, production). An invention must reflect some truth: the truth it refers to, and the truth it deploys in its functioning. Invention finds a new rule, but a rule is referable to and repeatable. Invention is then *at the same time* constative and performative. This is precisely why Derrida devotes his essay to an exegesis of Ponge’s *Fable*, such a device that shows the instability of all these oppositions, and that it renders possible to conceive invention (its own invention, the one it describes) *as* the very oscillation of these determinations: “The infinitely rapid oscillation...” (Derrida 2007a: 13)

This dynamic determination of invention immediately entails its proper social stakes: as we said, “at first we might think that invention calls all status back into question, [but] we also see that there could be no invention without status.” (Derrida 2007a: 34) A new status is invented. Let us stress that invention is not creation: it is not the production of a new item per se, or *ex nihilo*, but the production of a new or previously unseen arrangement of pre-existent items. “For the other is not the new.” (46) So what is invented is a rule, a scheme, a way of approaching (be that of truth itself: classically, *veritas* was already there, for being susceptible of *inventio*). Stated otherwise, what is invented *is an institution*. Hence Derrida insists on the necessity of recognising and inheriting an invention. If an invention is technical and institutional (it has to do with rules, it is the invention of its own rules), then the technical and the institutional dimension are analytically related. A technique must be repeatable (and immanently so, that is to say it must be recognisable), or it is not a technique at all. “[I]nvention is never private” (5). This is also why Derrida insists on the juridical apparatus that surrounds inventions, on the double level of the arts – copyright – and of techno-sciences – patents. Nevertheless, here goes his stress, the semantics of invention entails something new, something else, or something different:

In every case and through all the semantic displacements of the word “invention,” this latter remains the “coming,” the *venire*, the event of a novelty that must surprise, because at the moment when it comes about, there could be no statute, no status, ready and waiting to reduce it to the same. (Derrida 2007a: 24)

In the best case, then, we can define an invention as a counterinstitution, or as an eventful institution.

### Techno-sociality of invention

This is not always the case, and, if Derrida wants to save – if not, and more properly, to invent – the eventful possibility of invention, the object of his historical analysis in “Psyche” is the reduction of the eventfulness of invention, or the possibility to program the invention.

[I]n the domains of art or the fine arts as in the techno-scientific domain[, e] verywhere the enterprise of knowledge and research is first of all a programmatics of inventions. [...] “[...] This programming claims – and it sometimes succeeds up to a point – to extend its determinations all the way to the margin of chance – a chance it has to reckon with and that it integrates into its probabilistic calculations.” (Derrida 2007a: 27–8)

Derrida points at an early 90s context when, as he remarks, an inflation of invention is at the same time a rhetorical *zeitgeistlich* effect and the result and aim of a planification that is both public and private, and that touches all sectors of the economy and of the social and cultural sphere. One shall instruct a parallel among this inflation and that of “language”, or of coding – the “inflation itself” that Derrida recognised in the cybernetic-fed time of *Of Grammatology* –, as well as with the all recent emphasis on “research through creation” – which can be seen as an advanced spectacularisation (in a Debordian sense) of the academic society (see Citton 2018) – and of course with the production or the invention of artificial intelligences, as precisely being devices programmed to invent ever new, possibly interesting, and a priori capitalised, inventions.

As the passage quoted above suggests, Derrida relates this contemporary situation to scientific modernity: to the age of Descartes and of Leibniz in particular. This is when a mutation would have occurred in the semantics of invention: ever since, invention is no more connoted as the unveiling of some truth, but rather, following the above-said distinction, only as the production of a device.

*Production* then means the implementation of a relatively independent mechanical apparatus, which itself is capable of a certain self-reproductive recurrence and even of a certain reiterative simulation.” (Derrida 2007a: 30, trans. mod.) To invent is to produce iterability and the machine for the reproduction, the simulation and the simulacrum. (34, trans. mod.)

This definition applies adequately from Ponge’s *Fable*, to François Jacob’s cybernetics-informed modeling of DNA reproduction, as Derrida suggests in *Life Death* (Derrida 2002a), and of course – as its industrial overtones suggest – to contemporary informatics. As a matter of fact, in “Psyche”, commenting on Descartes’s and Leibniz’s project of an artificial language, Derrida does hint at “artificial intelligence” as such:

The artificial language is not only located at the arrival point of an invention from which it would proceed, it also proceeds to invent, its invention serves to invent. The new language is itself an *ars inveniendi*, or the idiomatic code of this art, the space of its signature. In the manner of an artificial intelligence, owing to the independence of a certain automatism, it will anticipate the development and precede the completion of philosophical knowledge. (Derrida 2007a: 36)

As Descartes wrote, “the *invention* of this language depends on the true philosophy; for it is otherwise impossible to enumerate all the thoughts of men, and to record them in order” (Descartes, 1953: 914–915, quoted in Derrida 2007a: 35). And until this knowledge will be perfect, as Leibniz puts it following on Descartes,

It will be a marvelous aid for the utilization of what we know, and for the perception of what is missing in our knowledge, and for the invention of the means to find it, but most of all for the extermination of controversy in those areas where knowledge depends on reasoning. For to reason and to calculate will then be the same thing. (Leibniz 1903, 27–28, quoted in Derrida 2007a: 35)

Unsurprisingly, after all, this passage is very similar to the first definition of an “AI” research project’s goal: “a 2-month 20-men study of artificial intelligence [...] is to proceed on the basis of the conjecture that every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it”, as the opening of the “Proposal for the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence” declares (McCarthy 1995).

The reason for this continuity can be found in the notion of the “scheme”, in a Kantian sense: what is invented is neither the object nor simply the sign-device aiming at it. Commenting on the *Port Royal Logic’s* distinction between analytic and synthetic method (*ordo inveniendi* and *ordo exponendi*), Derrida writes: “the truth that we must *find* there where it *is found*, the truth to be invented, is first of all the nature of our *relation* to the thing itself and not the nature of the thing itself. And this relation has to be stabilized in a proposition.” (Derrida 2007a: 33) If Derrida underlines the importance of the distinction between invention as discovery (that of truth itself) and as production (that of technical advancements to it), the hegemonisation of the latter marking the seal of techno-scientific modernity, one can add that this *passage* entails the installation of a middle ground without contraries. Here truth and functioning collapse into one another: discovery is the result of a sort of *a posteriori* analysis, at the same time as invention produces truth (*veritas facta est*) according to the necessity whereby object and sign coincide (in a quasi-Parmenidean landscape)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> On more than one occasion Derrida develops explicitly the epistemological implications of this situation of invention: be it as he underlines the unconscious dimension (and the example of psychoanalysis) in the manifestation of invention as “the impossible” (see Derrida 2022: 289, 310; and 2004: 58), or when he deduces the impossibility

As Derrida insists on the continuity between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, he also points out the juridical and political manifestations of this economy of invention. On the one hand, copyright and patents can certify the accomplishment and exploitability of inventions, be they narrative and artistic or technical and scientific. On the other, from Raymond Lull's *ars combinatoria* to E-Learning, and at a more and more institutionalised level, the flourishing of methods and policies to stimulate invention results from a twofold goal: to integrate the hazard and singularity of the process of invention thanks to the development of methods to invent/discover methods or "schemes" as defined above; and to do so thanks to an investment planification which makes so that the economy sustains invention, and vice versa. This goal designs a (restricted) "economic horizon (the domestic law of the *oikos* and the reign of productivity or profitability)." (Derrida 2007a: 40) Leibniz, again, gives us a synthetic formula that expresses the articulation of imagination and of economy, or, as Derrida remarks, a very economy of imagination whereby imagination is at the same time freed, *and* freed from (41): the investment in a universal characteristic (or in a generative AI, for that matter) "saves [*espargne*] the mind and the imagination, the use of which must above all be managed. [...] [A]nd it is finally this science that causes us to reason at little cost, by putting written characters in place of things, so as to disencumber the imagination." (Leibniz 1903: 98–99, quoted in Derrida 2007a: 41)

From a deconstructive perspective, it is first necessary to underline the metaphysical systematic character of this economy: even when – from Kant, to Schelling, to Large Language Model AIs – productive imagination or artificial intelligence (one shall say, natural or produced productive imagination) is at the center of the scene, it can always be interpreted, rigorously, as a supplement for its source to be reflected (be this source spirit as capital, or capital properly speaking as spirit) (see Derrida 2007a: 43). Nevertheless, in a second moment, it is possible to recognise a counterinstitutional chance in the repetition of an institutionalised invention.

Insofar as deconstruction is "the invention of the impossible" (Derrida 2007a: 44), "the invention of the other" (39), or the "reinvention of the *avenir*" (23, trans. mod.), it must certainly contest a restricted economy or what Derrida calls "the economy of the same": "The aleatory advent of the entirely other – beyond the incalculable as a still possible calculus – there is 'true' invention, which is no longer invention of truth and can only come about for a finite being: the very *chance* of finitude." (44, and note 30, trans. mod.). The refrain, which repeats a Batallian trope, is known. Yet, the accent put on finitude and especially on its *chances* – on its occasions, precipitations, even on its fetishes and accidental stilts – shall be insisted upon: Derrida holds that difference or otherness can be found, invented, thanks to the repetition of an old institutional scheme; and it cannot be otherwise, if one does not long for

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of distinguishing discovery and invention in the realm of historical and natural sciences as well as in mathematics or in the juridical field (Derrida 1996: 252–253).



novelty as creation or for transgression as for an authentic way out of the repetition and inflation of a “restricted” economy. This otherness or difference can be found inasmuch as repetition can make the singularity and the contingency of the institution and of its supports remarkable.

### Through identity and locality, toward war

The inventiveness of deconstruction entails an “other transcendental imagination”, a different economy of images that deranges “the good schematics of a constitution of time” (Derrida 1993: 140) and space. We shall insist that the “synthetic image” (94) (the brackets are Derrida’s) is precisely what produces imagination as a faculty. It is through its singular chances that “one must, within economy, manifest this beyond of economy”, “take into account the incalculable, inscribe the aneconomic into the economic” (Derrida 2022: 237). One must, and cannot but, invent the rule singularly: “It is necessary [*Il faut*] that at every instant – this is what the event is – it is necessary that in each singular experience, one invents without rule” (312). This is how the dialectics of actuality and potentiality is deranged, how the impossible is the origin of what will have been possible, or how the other can manifest in the economy of the same. This structure is described by Derrida at the same time with materialistic accents: the metonymy in question is always non-immaterial, it is non-sublatable, even though its materiality must be attentively formalised<sup>3</sup>; and with Kantian ones: the “law of the singular event” is, as Derrida says in “Before the Law”, “neither multiplicity nor, as is believed, universal generality. It is always an idiom, and in that lies [*voilà*] the sophistication of Kantianism.” (Derrida 2018: 61) Between a revolutionary interpretation of legal deposit and an economic acknowledgement of messianicity, this singular, materialistic, and even sophisticated *Typik* of invention manifests its immediate political implications.

The political element is well present in “Psyche”. In fact, the institutional definition of invention makes the political/economic distinction very labile. Invention, as an institution, and either as a discovery or as a production, must be countersigned, says Derrida, who seeks a third path, which is situated beyond heritage, and that nevertheless rests on the recognition that “invention is never be private” (Derrida 2007a: 5). An invention worthy of its name must be an event. But, since an event “does not exist”, in a Kantian sense, then convention, community and exchange cannot be bypassed. Hence the tight path (*or the fiction*) of an eventful countersignature (*s’il y en a* – if there is such a thing).

Let us stress two points that Derrida insists upon in this respect: *identity* and *locality*. On the one hand, the structure of the inventive proposition, that of Ponge’s *Fable*, would be the same as that of scientific and “most of all” of

3 “I leave a piece of paper behind, I go away, I die: it is impossible to escape this structure, it is the unchanging form of my life.” (Derrida 2007b: 32). “If I had invented my writing, I would have done so as a perpetual [*interminable*] revolution. For it is necessary in each situation to create an appropriate mode of exposition, to invent the law of the singular event” (31).

juridical propositions, especially the most instituting ones (Derrida 2007a: 14). The reference is to the “Declarations of Independence” (such as the American one – see Derrida 1986) that, by declaring the institution/invention of an identity (collective as well as personal), constate what they perform and vice versa. This means that identity is a performative arrangement, and that it is inhabited by the paradoxes stated above: “*we are to be invented*” (Derrida 2007a: 45). The same stands for locality: “the relation of invention to the question of place [*lieu*] – in all senses of the word – is evidently essential” (31, trans. mod.), because inventing means to give way while finding (*donner lieu en trouvant*). A place is an inventive arrangement, and conversely, as said above, an invention cannot but *lean on* (*lehnen an*, in a Freudian sense) localised instances, or “chances” as Derrida puts it.

Let us then keep in mind that the inventiveness of identity, of locality, and of their intertwinement – the definition of identity through locality, and of locality through identity – shall characterise a politics of invention. But also, that “a politics of invention” is “is always at one and the same time a politics of culture and a politics of war”<sup>4</sup> (Derrida 2007a: 10).

## Politics of invention

The Levinassian accents of the conclusion of “Psyche”, the allusions to otherness, metaphysical separation and plurality<sup>5</sup>, thus lend us a truly felicitous, alas truly not pacified, *locus* for a transition toward the notion of a “political invention”.

“Political invention” is not an expression by Derrida: this refers, in *Adieu*, to “a politics beyond the political [or] to what Levinas calls a ‘political invention.’” (Derrida 1999: 79) And the following passage is the context of this expression from Levinas’s essay “Politics After!”, in *Beyond the Verse*:

Beyond the State of Israel’s concern to provide a refuge for men without a homeland and its sometimes surprising, sometimes uncertain achievements, has it not, above all, been a question of creating on its land the concrete conditions for political invention? (Levinas 1994a: 194)

Levinas is writing after the November 1977 visit of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat to Israel, an “exceptional transhistorical event”, as he defines it, bearer of a promise of peace in the Near East. This promise and this peace shall take place, as Sadat’s courageous visit attests, in a land and a State whose political invention, “the ultimate culmination of Zionism” as Levinas adds,

4 “Someone may invent by fabulation, [...] or else [...] by producing a new operational possibility (such as printing or nuclear weaponry, and I am purposely associating these two examples, since the politics of invention is always at one and the same time a politics of culture and a politics of war).”

5 “The call of the other is a call to come [*l’autre appelle à venir*], and that happens only in multiple voices.” (Derrida 2001a: 47) “For the other is always another origin of the world and *we are to be invented*. And the being of the we, and being itself. Beyond being.” (45)

will have permitted the Jewish people to leave “a state of political innocence which it owed to its role as victim. That role is not enough for its vocation.” At the end of 2024, the stakes of this conjuncture could not be more sadly actual. We will touch upon them in conclusion, after having reconstructed Derrida’s conception of the political tenor of invention.

The main and second text of *Adieu* is entitled “A Word of Welcome”, and was given on December 7, 1996, at a Parisian conference in homage to Levinas whose title was “Face and Sinai”. As Derrida opens his prolusion with a stress on the idiomatic inflexion that these “common or proper nouns” (*visage* and *Sinai*) assume in Levinas’s discourse, and as he questions which provenance they shall be interpreted from – “From the past of a holy writing or from an idiom to come?” (Derrida 1999: 19) – that is to say, as he puts forward their inventive and potentially counterinstitutional tenor, Derrida articulates these problems with the question that we were starting from: how to *deduce* a politics from an ethics? (20) Is this possible? Is this desirable? Is this necessary? The matter is particularly urgent on two articulated plans, or in fact, it is problematic and potentially inventive at the very articulation of these plans; the trans-theoretical one: how to relate Levinas’s hyperbolic ethics to any ontology, how to relate hospitality (the “noun” of this ethics) to its realisation?; and the historical and empirical one: how to interpret Levinas’s Zionism and the metaphysical hospitality it embodies in view of the possible foundation of “a law and a politics, beyond the familial dwelling, within a society, nation, State, or Nation-State” (20)?

For Derrida, this deduction of the legal, political, and economic realm from the ethical, or the articulation of the political and of its beyond, passes precisely through the interpretation of some idiomatic *loci*. Without any categorical foundation, without a theoretical, logical, or ideological architectonics, it rests on the chance of what we can call ethical-political *chevilles* (pivots) or syncategoremes: face and Sinai, for example. Moreover, this deduction is *necessary*, and in a twofold sense. The ethical *must* exist, and this “obligation” is at the same time factual and ethical. On the one hand, the ethical must exist, it must produce effects, and therefore must give way to institutions; even more so, these institutions, in order to not dissolve, must rely on some force, even on some armed force. On the other hand, the ethical cannot not “exist” (phenomenally): if these were not the case, there would not be any immanence; but then, ethical transcendence is inscribed, as the after-effect of an interpretation, or as a possible (or possible-impossible) virtuality, in the most common or usured of traces (again: such as “face” and “Sinai”). This metonymical necessity is what motivates the *economical* character of deconstruction’s political invention.

Derrida’s argument, while echoing a Kantian articulation of law and duty and of noumenality and phenomenality, also aims at reinscribing the Levinasian thought of the trace and of the “third” in the deconstructive logic of the incalculable singularity of the idiom, a singularity which is always on the way of its calculable generalisation (see Derrida 1998, or 2005a). A political invention being idiomatic then entails its relying on the singular schematism, on the sophisticated exemplarity (or *Typik*) of which we spoke above. As Levinas,

caught in its aporia as Derrida says, must admit, “Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneity, assembling”... (Levinas 1991: 157, quoted in Derrida 1999: 30), and this “*comparison of the incomparable*” (Levinas 1996: 168, quoted in Derrida 1999: 32; the stress is Levinas’s) gives this deduction a calculating and economic form. The (dual) “face to face”, the elementary (ethical) relation to otherness, is contaminated from the beginning by comparison, representation, ontologisation. This “realisation” perverts or betrays ethical purity, but at the same time, insists Derrida, it protects the real from the intransigent purity of the ethical. “The third would thus protect against the vertigo of ethical violence itself.” (Derrida 1999: 33) If then all institutionalisation violates the purity of ethics, it is also a condition of the possibility of its existence and a firewall against the deployment of its purity: absolute hospitality would entail the annihilation of the other, of the other’s other, or of both. If this articulated “threshold” is thus not “at the disposal of a general knowledge or a regulated technique” (35), it nevertheless expresses a technique which entails some incalculability but without exceeding calculation; which entails some traditionalisation, but through the vicissitudes of a singular idiom; that is, it expresses an inventive technique.

### Politicisation of invention

By no chance do these formulations reproduce the deconstructive intertwining of the laws of unconditional and conditional hospitality, since “A Word of Welcome” is a close re-elaboration of Derrida’s 1996-97 *Hospitality* seminar’s first sessions, and hospitality, as per *Totality and Infinity*, is the very noun of ethics. As we said before, the Derridian logic of inventive performatives entails a reconfiguration of locality, of identity, and of their reciprocal determination. The motif of “hospitality” offers precisely a rather vertiginous confirmation of this. In the first place, if ethics is welcoming (*accueil*) of the other, then hospitality is its structure. Ethics as a relation to otherness *takes place* as a relation to the localisation (a dwelling, a foyer) of a “hospitality [which] precedes property” (Derrida 1999: 45) – even and notably in the case of a promised land that, for the Torah, is only lent to an elect people. But in turn, this hospitality must *take place* empirically, through a factual place and a factual identity. The contradictory (auto-immune) logic of the “third” presides over this localisation, as we saw. But then, how to try and opt *against* the immunising taking place of localisation and identity? This happens through an inventive interpretation of an institutionalised idiom, one which is an act of hospitality to hospitality itself through the very *word* “hospitality”: this, says Derrida, is how “Levinas justified the coming [*venue*] of the word ‘hospitality’ and prepared its threshold [*seuil*] while writing [...]” (Derrida 2022: 33, cf. 1999: 46).

Let us resume: radical passivity (ethics) takes place in/as a hospitality which precedes property, which in turn takes place contradictorily as concerns the essence of locality and of identity, and all this takes place in an idiom which must be inventively reinterpreted. Thus “the logic of performative decrees

attempting to invent a new language or a new use for old words [...] opens up hospitality by an act of force that is nothing other than a declaration of peace, the declaration of peace itself.” (Derrida 1999: 47) Hence, political invention. But let us take a step further: how does “hospitality” takes place or displace some positions (in a language, in a culture, in a philosophy)? In which terms or *loci* does it dwell or translate? In Levinas’s case, these are “face” and “Sinai”. One easily perceives the nationalistic bending of this coupling, together with its metaphysical ambition.

Derrida relies on these elements and on Levinas’s own writing to counter this possible and likely bending. He insists on the double connotation of the subject as a host (*Totality and Infinity*) and of ipseity as hostage (*Otherwise than Being*) and on the “here I am” – “The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and for everyone” (Levinas 1991: 114, quoted in Derrida 1999: 55) – as the auto-deictic (constative and performative at the same time)<sup>6</sup> that expresses the trouble of locality and of identity, the substitution of the irreplaceable as a “trace” of the ethical injunction. One is a hostage of the place from which one can offer hospitality (and *a fortiori* a hostage of one’s host), and a hostage of the necessity of substitution, which configures a “debt before any borrowing and before any commitment” (Derrida 1999: 58). This necessity, the violent and traumatizing necessity of the “third”, which Derrida underlines as being anterior or structurally articulated to any welcoming, to any inhabitation of a place or of a name, *and* to the interpretation of any election, is what inscribes the economic-legal-political deduction in the essence of the ethical.

One is a hosting hostage of hospitality, or of the *Faktum* of the “face”. Concurrently, “Sinai”, for Levinas, names the place and time, the trace of the revelation of this ethical conjuncture; of what Derrida, for his part, would call “hostipitality”, as well as he remembers (see the exergue to this article) that it also names a modern conflict, one which is foremost a war of religion. What does it mean, then, to be hosts-hostages of Sinai? There where the metaphorical inversion encounters its limit<sup>7</sup>, this question reveals more or less, more and more *and* less and less, metaphorical.

## Localisations and identifications of invention

Derrida analyzes and tries to displace this limit as he follows Levinas’s engaged texts of *In the Time of the Nations* and *Beyond the Verse*. His analysis starts precisely by giving a certain “privilege” to an expression that entails the coupling

<sup>6</sup> “One can always interpret phenomenological discourse as at once prescription and the neutral description of the fact of prescription.” (Derrida 1999: 53)

<sup>7</sup> According to this topos, one can translate hospitality into Sinai, as well as into face, not in order to relate it to an assured knowledge (of face, or of Sinai), but to ask oneself what face and Sinai must be in order to be able to mean hospitality. This means translating Sinai and face themselves. Yet, translation, which always and immanently encounters the resistance of its own limit as auto-translation, here shows the necessity of being particularly inventive.

of Sinai and hospitality, of the singular (as well as the empirical) and the general (as well as the universal): “A recognition of the Torah before Sinai?”, asks Levinas, the sign of which would be “the degree to which [non-Israel nations’] solidarity is open to the other, to the stranger”<sup>8</sup> (Levinas 1994b: 97, quoted in Derrida 1999: 68–69).

Derrida stresses two related aspects of the metaphysical framework that Levinas’s thought constitutes for these “metapolitical” questions: the radical passivity of hospitality, and the singularity of the stranger’s injunction (hence of the “elected” or injuncted host). If considered rigorously, these aspects should throw all identitarian standpoints, based on ethical or on geographical titles, into an aporetic situation. This should in the first place disquiet, or reopen, Levinas’s answers.

If on the one hand Levinas opens the experience named “Sinai” (the revelation of the Torah) to other nations than Israel, if he makes it hospitable, so to speak, and if he does so based on the very idea of hospitality (openness to the stranger), his text nevertheless allows for the two following deductions.

1) Sinai is the place and time of the political event (of the ontologisation) of what is a transcendent essence, a “universal message”. Moreover, this universal message would communicate universality itself: “human universality, humanitarian hospitality uprooted from a singularity of the event that would then become empirical or at the most allegorical, perhaps only ‘political’ in a very restricted sense” (Derrida 1999: 66). Derrida insists: as Levinas precises, this universal configuration is represented by the triad of fraternity, humanity, and hospitality, but the latter would be “the figural schema that gathers or collects these three concepts together” (68). Since a deconstruction questions all three of these determinations (fraternity, humanity, and a universal *schema-tism* of hospitality), and since for Levinas the message delivered on Sinai (the Torah) means the “Thou shalt not kill” which “the face of the other signifies” (90), then this is a regressive, or at least a firmly institutionalised interpretation of the idiomatic pair of “face and Sinai” – of which we thereby encounter the intimate relation.

2) Even if one were to interpret the event named “Sinai” in a way that would unsettle the logic of universality, the election of Israel still seems to dictate the interpretation and the custody of this event, both as concerns locality and as concerns (ethnic) identity. Stated otherwise, the Torah and Israel would not be dissimilar here to what the *logos* and the *Magna Graecia* were to Heidegger.

Aware as he is of this, Derrida proposes to reinterpret this conjuncture in the following senses:

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8 “Has not the history of the nations already been in a sense that glorification of the Eternal in Israel, a participation in the history of Israel, which can be assessed by the degree to which their national solidarity is open to the other, the stranger? A recognition of the Torah before Sinai?”

a) “A hospitality beyond all revelation”, as he says, not only cannot be a universal: but (“[t]he hypothesis I am venturing here is obviously not Levinas’s”, adds he):

What announces itself here might be called a structural or a priori messianicity. Not an ahistorical messianicity, but one that belongs to a historicity without a particular and empirically determinable incarnation. Without revelation or without the dating of a given revelation. (Derrida 1999: 67)

b) This radical historicity can be announced through such a name as “Sinai” (it cannot not be announced by a singular name, place, trace) but thus “the allegorical anachrony in the name *Sinai* itself allows it to signify, through its own body, a foreign body, indeed, the body of the foreigner or stranger” (Derrida 1999: 69). And thus, to signify

an election whose assignation cannot be restricted to some particular place or moment and thus, perhaps, though one could not by definition ever be certain of this, to some particular people or nation. Let us never forget that election is inseparable from what always seems to contest it: substitution. (70)

Beyond universalism, but also beyond the logic of a unitary uniqueness of election and of the event, the historicity of deconstructive messianism calls for another logic of election, that of the “every time unique” election and event. And once again, this structure is not represented by a scheme, or by a trace which, although it is a sign of substitution, remains privileged in time and space, but by idiomatic occasions which, although their insistence is necessary, remain intrinsically ephemeral and even abusive. These metonymies are the “stilts” of the political invention of deconstruction.

## Invention and the political

Derrida follows this articulation, which he esteems aporetic and that Levinas would have encountered (and welcomed, in a way), between the political and its beyond, between politics and ethics, between the state and the promise of a non-political (in a Schmittian sense) peace. And, if this articulation (which is not a categorical deduction, but which is necessary) reposes on an idiomatic (re)invention, he does not shy away from passing through the Zionist determination of Levinas’s response to the said *encounter*. Nevertheless, this cannot be a passage from political to eschatological Zionism, as Levinas suggests: rather, a passage through or beyond Zionism as beyond any identitarian institution (as through a certain desert, maybe); *not in spite* of the singular historicity of the institution in which an ethics can exist, and a political invention can take place, but precisely by virtue of a non-identitarian, of a non-legitimizing interpretation of its singular name, place and time. For Levinas, Israel is in a way a hostage of the necessity of hosting the stranger (and Sadat), but it is *in Israel* (which names a territory and a people) that this happens. Therefore, he can

claim that other nations' hospitality *means* "a participation in the history of Israel". For Derrida, this aporetic condition *speculates*: Israel becomes the sign of whatever place and people might substitute it according to the very aporetic logic that it is the trace of. To say this otherwise: "Israel" is not a transcendental signifier, not even if it were to name the revelation of the absence of a transcendental signifier.

This is the speculative reason, shall empirical ones not suffice, by which Derrida reiterates perplexity as concerns the plausibility of a political inventiveness in contemporary Israel, and drily rejects a Zionist perspective and the (Levinassian) hypothesis of a

Zionism that would no longer be just one more nationalism (for we now know better than ever that all nationalisms like to think of themselves as universal in an exemplary fashion, that each claims this exemplarity and likes to think of itself as more than just one more nationalism). (Derrida 1999: 117)

But he does so while following very closely Levinas's interpretation of hospitality and political invention. Most of all, through his own interpretation of the logic of the third, Derrida insists on the necessity for an ethics to effectuate its promise (Derrida 1999: 105). All the more so if ethics, hospitality, is "held hostage to the here-now" (110), to the substitutive determination of the irreplaceable – to itself. In Levinas's case, it is the hostage of the Torah, of Sinai, of Jerusalem. "What is promised in Jerusalem [says Levinas] is a humanity of the Torah"; but – since (or although, following Derrida's logic) "the longing for Zion, that Zionism, is not one more nationalism or particularism; [it] is the hope of a science of society, and of a society, which are wholly human" – then "this hope is to be found in Jerusalem, in the earthly Jerusalem, and not outside all places, in pious thoughts." (Levinas 1994a: 51–52)

As we said, Derrida recurs to a "sophistication" of Kantism to think this articulation, to effectuate this effectuation which cannot repose on any "rules or schemas" (Derrida 1999: 114) – hence an *inventive* decision:

the *formal* injunction of the deduction remains irrecusable, and it does not wait any more than the third and justice do. Ethics enjoins a politics and a law: this dependence and the direction of this conditional derivation are as irreversible as they are unconditional. But the political or juridical *content* that is thus assigned remains undetermined, still to be determined beyond knowledge, beyond all presentation, all concepts, all possible intuition, in a singular way; in the speech and the responsibility *taken* by each person, in each situation, and on the basis of an analysis that is each time unique – unique and infinite, unique but *a priori* exposed to substitution (115).

In the case of the political invention that he is after following Levinas, Derrida insists that an invention, without any foreseeable content or perceivable origin, shall be oriented by the dissociation of a structural messianicity from any determinable messianism: a generalisation of "Sinai" beyond Zionism will



then be the pendant of a generalisation of “face” beyond humanism<sup>9</sup>. More generally still, the “reinvention” or the counterinstitutionalisation of such “proper names” as “*Sinai*” and “*visage*” (for example) entails a reinvention of invention itself, or, as Derrida says in saluting Levinas at the end of *Adieu*, of “a thought of translation to be invented, a bit like politics itself.” (Derrida 1999: 123)

If it is impossible to deduce a politics categorically, the consideration of the necessity of the precipitation of ethics in singular traces and proper names nevertheless induces an injunction to interpret names and traces in general according to a deconstructive apprehension of invention. This entails a particular economy. Based on *very economical means* (singular traces), the effects of invention are and must be incalculable: this is what is enjoined in invention itself, despite the unforeseeable character of its effects, for the worse and for the better (hence, a hyperbole of responsibility). As Derrida writes in *Rogues*,

The invention of these maxims resembles the poetic invention of an idiom whose singularity would not yield to any nationalism. [...] This idiom would again be a singular idiom of reason, of the *reasonable* transaction between two antinomic rationalities. [...] The reasonable, as I understand it here, would be a rationality that takes account of the incalculable so as to give an account of it, there where this appears impossible, so as to account for or reckon *with* it that is to say, with the event of *what* or *who* comes. (Derrida 2005b: 158-9)

In French, these economical means could be called “*grenades*”.

## Through war and peace, toward the Nation-state

Let us now shift our focus from invention to politics, and take a step back from the generality that we have described. We saw that Derrida brings Levinas close to Kant through the motif of schematism, in order to think the necessity to deduce a politics from an ethics, as well as to go beyond politics *in* politics. We also saw that, if the said deduction is necessary (Derrida 1999: 115), it also entails a certain violence, and in a very concrete sense. The essence of ethics implies politics, but its existence (through politics in politics) requires its survival in a physical world: it requires an army, a police, border control. “The ‘Thou shalt not kill’ [...] still allows any State (the one of Caesar or the one of David, for example) to feel justified [...] in killing.” (116)

Between Kant and Levinas thus emerges another plan of comparison, this time a diverging one. What is at stake is the relation between war, violence, and peace. For Kant, as Derrida argues, war is a natural state, and peace must be instituted: it is a political entity, and thus bears the trace of war, of its natural and polemic origin. Peace is the trace of war, or, actual peace cannot *exist* (just like the regulative ideas of Soul, World and God). For Levinas the opposite is true: since separation is a metaphysical given, and since transcendence

9 “The proper name ‘Sinai’ is thus just as enigmatic as the name ‘face.’” (Derrida 1999: 119)

cannot be overcome, or, since one cannot but want to kill a face but the Other remains unattainable, then peace is metaphysical and originary: it is not natural, but not political either. Hence, war is a trace of peace, and no existing hostility can efface the fact of otherness (Derrida 1999: 90).

How to try and conciliate these positions? On the one hand, every war would be a sort of peace process, or would be oriented by peace; on the other, every political stance, be it peaceful, would be persecutory and betraying otherness. As we said, for Derrida this aporia must be endured through an inventive interpretation of old but singular institutions in which it cannot but be localised. Hence, through “Sinai” and the “face”, the passage between the metaphysics of hospitality and a political actuality is necessary:

The host [*hôte*] is a hostage insofar as he is a subject put into question, obsessed (and thus besieged), persecuted, in the very place where he takes place, where, as emigrant, exiled, stranger, a guest [*hôte*] from the very beginning, he finds himself elected to or taken up by a residence [*élu à domicile*] before himself electing or taking one up [*élire domicile*]. (Derrida 1999: 56)

But again, no general scheme is at hand:

Where might we find a rule or mediating schema between this pre-originary hospitality or this peace without process and, on the other side, politics, the politics of modern States (whether existing or in the process of being constituted), for example, since this is only an example, the politics underway in the “peace process” between Israel and Palestine? (91–92)

It is worth noting that, in the original formulation of this passage in the *Hospitality* seminar (Derrida 2022: 109), the exposed alternative is that between voting “Peres or Netanyahu”. We might stridently couple this synchronic alternative to that between Netanyahu and Moses. The stridency could not be more acute in light of the current “genocide *in the making*”, if one accepts the minimal definition proposed by Étienne Balibar (2024, cf. 2023) that frees the debate from the burden of an empirical-numeric verification (it seems *reasonable* not to wait for the completion of such an ongoing war action before judging its nature).

In *Adieu*, Derrida’s remarks become explicit as he distances himself from a Zionist perspective. And Zionism, the question of the State, and of statuality as essential to the political, is central to the reflection on violence, on the better and worse, bigger and lesser determinations of which, the counterinstitutionalism of inventiveness is enjoined to negotiate.

Derrida’s position differs doubly from Levinas’s: if he acknowledges the necessity of violence, and of violence as necessary to the existence of a state well beyond the (potential or regulative) distinction between a State of Caesar and a State of David, and thus also beyond Levinas, he also insists that no State, despite all national exceptionalism and regulative idealism, is freed from violence: violence can only be repressed. Stated otherwise: if Levinas’s position

is anti-Kantian *and* anti-Schmittian (peace is not politics, and politics is not up to peace), it is also anti-Kantian but *not* anti-Schmittian as it refuses a liberal principle of the constitution of subjectivity in view of a spiritual statuality (peace is not politics, and an “a-theologico-political” state is not up to peace); better still, as his discourse, despite Derrida’s wish, does not seem to express a “humanitarian” potential<sup>10</sup>.

As he reiterates his perplexity concerning the possibility for modern Israel to fulfill the determinations of “political invention” (Derrida 1999: 81), Derrida in fact implies that a logic of hospitality, perverted indeed by its nevertheless necessary precipitation in secular institutions, shall “call out for another international law, another border politics, another humanitarian politics, indeed a humanitarian commitment that effectively operates beyond the interests of Nation-States” (101). Levinas’s appeal to humanity (that is: “Sinai” and the “face”) shall be bent at least toward a “*humanitarian* universality insofar as it would at least try, despite all the difficulties and ambiguities, to remain, in the form, for example, of a nongovernmental organization, beyond Nation-States and their politics.” (72–3).

## And beyond

If one lets these considerations echo in the context of late 2024, the aporetic and autoimmune logic that Derrida aims at sketching, particularly as it concerns the intertwinement of locality and identity, hospitality and hostility, assimilation, or annihilation, proves disquietingly efficacious.

His mid-90s observations on a peace process which is the prosecution of a war with other means now reverse, on the terrain of this aporia, in those on a context where political maneuvers on all of the sides of a multilateral conflict take the form of even terroristic and/or genocidaires attacks (whatever we may call them, the definition of “crimes against humanity” seems to fit).

As for the autoimmune tonality, the Hamas’ attack of October 7 2023 has been openly revendedicated as a means to revive a conflict and even to induce, as a retorsion, a massive sacrifice of Palestinian civilians to this aim. But on the other hand, the revendedication of a promised land for an elected people, triggered to its uttermost and programmatically dehumanising<sup>11</sup> violence by such attack, takes place in a context where a collective identity (Israel’s normative framework) is as uncertain as a geographic one (Israel’s borders), and where moreover the tensions between the laic and the religious, the military and the

10 In *Adieu* Derrida remarks that, if Levinas never speaks of Schmitt, the latter’s “discourse” would “embody for Levinas the absolute adversary. More so than Heidegger, it seems.” (Derrida 1999: 91, note 95; cf. 23, note 8). For a critical comparison of Levinas’s and Schmitt’s theologico-political conceptions, see Rae (2016).

11 On this point, Judith Butler’s (2012: 23, 38, 48–50) position on the facelessness of Levinas’s Palestinians is known. For a reconstruction (generous to Levinas) of this topos, see Eisenstadt and Katz (2016).

political, the judicial and the executive components and faculties of such collective entity are implicated in a potentially suicidal conflict.

Yet, this national level is not up to the ambitions of a deconstructive approach to political invention. In effect, one might wonder if Derrida has not too often limited himself to insist on an Arab/Israeli conflict or on a Palestinian/Israeli duality, certainly in order to discard it under the overtones, once again, of a political invention that would defy the triumph of nationalism, and even of a “Two states solution” (Derrida 1999: 86).

“Living together” is reducible neither to organic symbiosis nor to the juridico-political contract. Here too there could be no “how” that would precede, as would a knowledge, the decision or responsibility whose rule each one, singularly, chosen without election, chosen to an irreplaceable place, must invent. But I asked myself first, in anguish – and it was the same question: Who can allocate places? (Derrida 2013: 27)

The question of the state *per se* narrows this approach, which shall be deployed on the geopolitical level. What then becomes evident is that, in the name of “Sinai” and the “face”, what is at stake is – and was well before the said Hamas’ attack – a vast reconfiguration. This does not only concern the possession of a land; or a new regional and international order, based on ethnicity, religion or economy (the context encompasses the Abraham Accords – the 2020 Israeli-Arab or Sunnite agreements signed under USA aegis –, the ongoing Israeli-Shiite war – including the controlled Israeli-Iranian conflict, the bombing of Houthis objectives in Yemen, and the invasion of Lebanon against Hezbollah – including the recent fall of the Syrian regime –, but also the Russian-Ukrainian war, involving on the ground NATO and North Korea, and the Chinese threats to Taiwan, precisely while the BRICS envisage a new international currency to counter the hegemony of US dollar); rather, it concerns a reconfiguration of politics as a “world politics”, of politics beyond the Nation-state, or, as we saw, of “politics beyond politics”.

If we are to follow Derrida’s intuition, international politics of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been characterised by a “mundialisation” of reparatory gestures, and even by a mundialisation *as* the generalisation of these gestures of demanded pardon (see “Le siècle et le pardon”, in Derrida 2000). The notion or the *invention* of “crimes against humanity” is the mark of this cycle, begun with the end of World War II and whose first or more evident early episodes were the inception of the Nuremberg process in 1945 and the institution of the State of Israel in 1948. If this reading were not too dialectical, too epochal, one might acknowledge in current-day events the exhaustion of this cycle, which could also be seen as the self-deconstruction of a Christian apprehension of the world as a political concept.

In this framework, since October 10, 2024, the Israeli army has deliberately attacked and damaged UN UNIFIL compounds in Southern Lebanon, a few days after a speech at the General Assembly where Benjamin Netanyahu discredited the main intergovernmental organisation as “an antisemitic swamp”.

If we are to read here a sinking of national and international symbolic democratic institutions and a rise of nationalistic sensibilities (which the outcome of the November 5 USA elections seems to confirm), an ideological or metapolitical conflict does not free deconstruction from the responsibility of a response that exists in the world: according to the Kantian logic that we have deployed, the second-best option of humanitarian rights and the implementation of an international criminal law cannot be defended without an international non-governmental or intergovernmental recourse to armed force (see De Michele 2020). This is some hyperbolically problematic conclusion.

The seeming impossibility, that we started from, to deduce concrete legal measures from an ethics brought us to the necessity of deducing a possible armed response to the infringement of the “Thou shalt not kill”, beyond the Nation-state level. Such is the landscape in which some idiomatic compound shall intervene. These inventions, these metonymies must indeed be economical<sup>12</sup>, if they may bear the possibility of restructuring all this ground, be it through reinventing old institutions, or the faculty of invention itself. One might question if the institution of invention is up to this task, and if the repetition of the institution of the question itself may bring about its own peaceful soubresaut.

## And so on

Let us try and make one last step forward, and identify at least one potentially deconstructive lever, be it a term or an institution, or both at the same time, beyond this general conclusion. Up until 2024, Derrida (2005b: 95 ff., 2005c: 103 ff.; 2015) identified on the one hand “war”, and on the other the UNO statutes, in particular the role of the Security Council, as a ground where the un-hinging of the axioms of national and international politics and of sovereignty was evidently at stake, and potentially eventful. The background for this position was the aftermath of “9/11”, and the 2003 “aggression”, as he defined it, of Iraq by USA: the Bush administration infamously – and *inventively*, we must say – motivated this aggression as a response to international (Qaedist) terrorism. Nevertheless, underlines Derrida, this gesture still entailed a confrontation with the international community. This confrontation manifested on the one hand the USA administration’s need for legitimation, and on the other the insufficiencies of UN proceedings. Furthermore, it manifested that all confrontations of a state and of the international community with terrorism would reveal the completely arbitrary – and properly Machiavellian – ground upon which one would absolve or ignore *state* terrorism.

In Derrida’s perspective – one “without illusions” said he – this instability would at least call for a possible perfectibility; in any case, “this cannot last”, “this has to change”, said he as well. Indeed, things seem to have changed twenty years later, and not in the sense of perfectibility. We can assume that the terms

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12 Cf. Derrida (2007c) on the nuclear as a rhetoric – and strongly economical as to its effects – compound. On weapons and deconstruction, cf. Anidjar (2018).

at play are the same (economic interests and juridical legitimation; the national and the international; declared war and terrorism). Yet, some diagnostics might have to be adjourned: Derrida observed the destabilisation of national sovereignty as operating from two sides: the exterior or the inter-national level; and the interior or the infra-national level, i.e. terrorist or transnational criminal interests (the Afghan case was explicit as to this), amplified and transformed by new technologies and “cyberpolitics”, as he would put it. We can diagnose a shift in this process: not only does the international law appear as fragile as ever under the attacks of national, nationalistic, and national-terroristic interests, but what now appears wholly fragile is the state of law itself, on the symbolic as well as on the procedural plan. In parallel, what is “rogue” about a certain number of emblematic state entities is not their behavior concerning other states they oppose to, or the civil societies they govern – but their very constitution: we witness rogue reconstitution or refoundation projects with a view to the dissolution of the state of law. What is more, these projects are not only connoted by authoritarian and often neo-fascist programs, but also depend on the rise of private and often criminal interests. And, what is even more structurally coherent with Derrida’s observations on invention, these uprisings are based on the capitalisation of technical innovations in the realm of communication. This also entails that contemporary “Western” nationalisms or sovereigntisms are concerned less with a clash among vital strains and spaces, than among economic oligarchies resting on political clientele.

Stated otherwise: private law entities (if not individuals) manifestly enact a primitive accumulation of political power which is articulated to a primitive accumulation that is exquisitely economic, and furthermore evolves in a context that is either (at least borderline) criminal, or characterised by a normative void (which does not mean that in a more or less near future such accumulation, let us say such *colonisation*, will not be explicitly labeled as criminal). Nowadays, and at least for a couple of decades, the exemplary primitive accumulation operating in a normative void is that of data, and the role of Elon Musk in Donald Trump’s campaign and future administration can be the metonymy of it. Some decades ago, the case of Silvio Berlusconi would metonymise the (still too classically sovereign?) former case. If only to stress the necessary relation between (mass) politics and communicational inventions, we might observe that in this respect the “figure” that Trump represents is more akin to that of Mussolini or Hitler as *users* or occupiers of radio and newsreels, than to those of Berlusconi and Musk as *owners* and maybe inventors of television and social media<sup>13</sup>. We shall also remark that, to limit ourselves to the last century (follow-

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13 Trump did, however, open his own platform, Truth Social, after his suspension from Twitter, which has since been bought and transformed into X by Musk (Trump’s account on X was then restored). We shall add that Musk is also the owner of a satellite network on which depend essential military communications worldwide, as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict exposes. Let us add that a number of essential internal communications and services are assured worldwide, at the state level, by private company servers such as Jeff Bezos’s Amazon. This means that modern states externalise domestic and foreign

ing Derrida, we should at least go back to the *Phaedrus*), the progress of information technology corresponds to a progression of sensorial grabbing: from hearing, to vision, to the “five” senses with so-called virtual reality, but also, from reception to production of stimuli (on which informatic design is based).

It is also on this ground that an analysis of the deconstructive political economic inventiveness, if we may call it so, at stake in the current Palestinian scenario shall be undertaken. On the one hand, the October 7 2023 attack and its aftermaths were *meant* to go “viral”, and so to revive a regional hostility toward the political invention (as Levinas would put it) that the state of Israel represents, as well as potentially to trigger an internal conflict (as the Netanyahu government’s management of hostages, among other elements, showed). On the other, Israel’s widely artificial-intelligence implemented military operations do pose enormous problems and inventive challenges to a formalisation of human rights and war ethics. At the same time, they represent a real *experimentation* with techniques, while they deploy the destructive potential of a decades-long capitalisation of data. This is evident in the Gaza Strip (which revives Foucault’s stress of the epistemological value of detention institutions – the one in question being the Gaza territory itself), as in Lebanon (where Israel’s apparatuses triggered the explosion of Hezbollah’s communication – once again – gear).

What counterinstitution, what counterinvention can one lie upon *in* this context? How to *resist* this? It is maybe not – surely not only – on the meta or supra-political level (a Security Council, a General Assembly, even an International Criminal Court), but also on the intra and pre-political one that one shall seek leverage. Perhaps on a (supposedly) apolitical and even aneconomic plane. Let us pick two terms/institutions: work and retribution. What do they mean, if consuming freely means to gratuitously produce<sup>14</sup> – data? What does it mean that a post-democratic political market depends on this most disengaged ground? Is it by chance if, by a consequence of the digitalisation of economic processes, a universal basic income is advocated for at the same time by nationalists and by internationalists, by late and anarcho-liberal transhumanists (such as Musk himself) and by late socialists and political ecologists? And moreover, what of the analogy (but is it just an analogy) between a primitive accumulation and a colonisation? But then, how to think, interpret, or *name* these – eminently pharmacological – *metonymies*, and according to which political, economic, and agonistic project? How to orient these synthetic schematics? Whatever the case, they appear to be apt occasions (chances and substantiations) for the old institutions of the question and of inventiveness to be insisted upon.

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security, which is to say, the condition of possibility of the application of their sovereignty. Once again, the “shared sovereignty” that Derrida was interested in is more and more concerned by nominally infra-statal or non-political entities.

14 If we assume that a primitive accumulation is akin to an illegal occupation, and that a social media user/consumer is a data producer, then social media utilisation widely exploits minor labor; we may interpret accordingly the November 28, 2024, deliberation of the Australian parliament of a social media ban for children under sixteen.

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Đustino De Mikele

## O ekonomskoj politici izuma

### Apstrakt

Ovaj članak se bavi pitanjem izuma u misli Žaka Deride o dekonstrukciji iz dve perspektive. U prvom delu, oslanjajući se na delo "Psiha: izum Drugog", istražuju se njegove ekonomske implikacije; u drugom delu, oslanjajući se na "Svet dobrodošlice" i na suočavanje sa Emanuelom Levinasom, istražuju se njegove političke implikacije. Ključni problem u obe perspektive jeste uloga idiomatske shematike (kao sofisticirane verzije kantovstva, kako Derida kaže) u podsticanju potencijalnog izuma kontra-institucije. U drugom delu, dok ispitujemo Deridine poglede na mogućnost i sredstva izvođenja politike iz etike, susrešćemo se sa savremenim geopolitičkim scenarijem, a posebno sa izraelsko-palestinskim sukobom.

Ključne reči: izum, dekonstrukcija, ekonomija, politika, Derida, Levinas, Izrael, Palestina, shematika, gostoprinstvo