

CONTENTS

*Acknowledgments* · vii

	Prologue	1
CHAPTER 1	The <i>Eros</i> of <i>Stasis</i> : Plato's Melancholic Republic	30
CHAPTER 2	Hamlet, the Melancholic Prince	65
CHAPTER 3	Woyzeck Is the Worst	107
CHAPTER 4	The Melancholic Transformation of Dr. Freud	141
CHAPTER 5	Melancholia under Capitalism: Marx, Schumpeter, Adorno	192
CHAPTER 6	Arendt's Melancholic Revolution	220

*Notes* · 245

*Bibliography* · 265

*Index* · 277

## Prologue

“WHAT THEN IS Melancholia?” So inquired Socrates of the courtesan Aspasia, the lover of Pericles. “Is he mortal?” “No,” replied Aspasia. “What then?” pursued Socrates, reputedly the wisest man of his age. “As in the former instance,” explained Aspasia, “he is neither mortal nor immortal, but in a mean between the two.” Socrates, intrigued now, grew impatient. “What is he, Aspasia?” Her answer: “He is a formidable ghost (*deinos daimon*). . . . But God mingles not with man; . . . [T]he wisdom which understands this is spiritual; all other wisdom, such as that of arts and handicrafts, is mean and vulgar. Now these ghosts or intermediate powers are many and diverse, and one of them is Melancholia.” “And who,” pressed Socrates, “was his father, and who his mother?” “The tale,” responded Aspasia, “will take time;

nevertheless I will tell you. On the birthday of Hades there was a feast of the gods in the underworld, at which the god Zagreus or Overabundance, who is the son of Persephone and Zeus, was one of the guests. When the feast was over, Penia or Poverty, as the manner is on such occasions, came about the doors to beg. Now Zagreus, who was the worse for nectar (there was no wine in those days), went into the cellars of Hades and fell into a heavy sleep, and Poverty, considering her own straitened circumstances, plotted to have a child by him, and accordingly she lay down at his side and conceived Melancholia. . . . And as his parentage is, so also are his fortunes. In the first place he is always poor, and anything but tender and fair; . . . and he is rough and squalid, and has no shoes, nor a house to dwell in; on the bare earth exposed he lies under the open heaven, in the streets, or at the doors of houses, taking his rest; and like his mother he is always in distress.

Like his father too, whom he also partly resembles, he is always plotting against the fair and good; he is bold, enterprising, belligerent, a mighty hunter, always weaving some intrigue or other, keen in the pursuit of wisdom, sorrowful, but not bereft of resources; a philosopher at all times, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist. He is by nature neither mortal nor immortal. But now he springs to life when he gets his way, now he dies—all in the very same day. Because he is his father's son, however, he keeps coming back to life, but then anything he finds his way to always slips away, and for this reason, Melancholia is never completely without resources, nor is he ever rich.

The curious reader may be wondering where they should look for this fragment of dialogue. Let us spare them the effort: it is nowhere to be found. If it sounds familiar, that is because we have constructed it out of some language from Plato's *Symposium*, where it masquerades as Socrates's myth of the birth of Eros, which he credits not to the historical Aspasia but to the fictional Diotima. We make this construction, drawing on the Freudian technique of fabricating a narrative audacious enough to force a confrontation with a forgotten part of the analysand's history, not to try the reader's patience, but to unsettle the history of philosophy just enough to help recover the place of melancholia within it: a place unjustly usurped by love. Having forgotten Freud's insight that the melancholic temperament is an expression of love, that indeed love can take the ambivalent form of perpetual conflict, undying fury, and discontent in the face of injustice, we have instead grown accustomed to thinking of melancholia as, at best, an ethical disposition or, at worst, a merely personal affliction. What has been lost is the understanding, possessed by both Freud and Aspasia, that the true lover is always melancholic, the authentic melancholic always a lover.

That will come as no great revelation to anyone familiar with the Galenic tradition, or the history of medieval and early-modern medicine, or heartache. Our point, however, is not simply the obvious one that there exists an intimate, affective connection between love and melancholy. Our point is that melancholia, being one of the proper names for love, is an interpersonal condition rather than a personal one; and being an interpersonal condition, it exists within the realm of politics. According to Hannah Arendt, one of the "reasons why philosophy has never found a place where politics can take shape" is "the assumption that there is something political in *man* that belongs to his essence." Such an assumption, rooted in philosophy's myopic fixation on *man*, is fatefully misguided. "*Man*," insists Arendt, "is apolitical." Politics, by contrast, "arises between *men*, and so

quite *outside of man*. There is therefore no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies between men and is established as relationships.”<sup>1</sup> Politics is immaterial, a spirit—a *daimon*, to borrow some language from Aspasia. Or perhaps we should say: politics is a ghost, an intermediary spirit shuttling between human actants (“for God mingles not with man,” as the wise Aspasia tells us). But for that very reason, Arendt is wrong to conclude that philosophy has never found a place where politics can take shape. It did once find a place; but then it just as quickly repressed its knowledge of that place. It silenced the historical Aspasia’s tale of Melancholia, progeny of Poverty and Abandon, in favor of the fictional Diotima’s myth of Eros. It replaced the *deinos daimon* of melancholia, the *daimon* of conflict, contestation, and righteous fury, with the doctrine of ideas. Politics was sealed up within a fable of philosophical love.

With that in mind, let us return to our construction. Like all constructions, ours is staged in order to release the spirit of encrypted loss; it thus already takes part in a politics of melancholia. Philosophy became melancholic the moment it turned its back on politics following the death of Socrates—the one death it could neither forget nor forgive.<sup>2</sup> But in melancholically turning its back on the daemonic realm of politics, philosophy also, in the paradoxical way of these things, ended up banishing Melancholia. Socrates was made to speak, long after his own death, of the transcendent love that would drive philosophy to seek the truth that would reform the polis. Meanwhile, the *deinos daimon* Melancholia continued to haunt the outskirts of the city, the lone inhabitant of the lost place of politics, incapable of forgetting the death encrypted in the name of Eros. This was the great injustice, the unforgettable outrage: everything that Socrates was made to say about love in the *Symposium*—that it was bold, enterprising, belligerent; terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist; prone to plotting and intrigue; keen in the pursuit of wisdom, sorrowful but not bereft of resources; dying and springing to life again, continually; a philosopher at all times—could also be said, should also be said, about Melancholia. Melancholia’s place had been usurped; Aspasia had been supplanted; their words and characters had been attributed to others. The thing about a spirit, though, is that it can never die; it will always haunt. And so it is with the *daimon* Melancholia, who, despite being displaced by Eros, has nonetheless managed to maintain a furtive, immaterial existence in certain literary and philosophical texts. Returning to those (mostly canonical) texts, this book seeks to redress the injustice done to the demigod Melancholia by restoring his acolytes to their rightful position as the poets, by turns inventive and destructive, outraged and inspired, of political thought.

We realize, of course, that a critical work on melancholia must seem, at this point, like an exercise in melancholia itself. After all, wasn't the great age of academic melancholia over and done with by the early aughts? Isn't melancholia a bit passé? Isn't W. G. Sebald dead and gone? The ancient disposition of melancholia did indeed enjoy, after long years of confinement, a burst of scholarly interest in the last decade of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first. But as if aware of melancholia's infernal origins, the representative works from this period—*Postcolonial Melancholia*, *The Melancholy of Race*, *The Psychic Life of Power*—all tend to politicize melancholia only insofar as they cast it in a negative light: an obstacle to authentic political engagement, an affliction in need of a remedy.<sup>3</sup> Adding a Foucauldian twist to an uncritical (if also widespread) reading of Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia," these works bequeath to us a vision of melancholia as doubly sinister: not just morbid and pathological, a species of failed mourning that hinders us from working through the traumatic legacies of the past, but a mechanism of governmentality to boot.

Paul Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia* offers a simple case in point. Gilroy's central claim is that white Britons suffer from—and, more to the point, inflict—a melancholia that amounts to an unethical form of collective forgetting, an almost willful refusal to reckon with the shameful burden of the past. At the most basic level, carriers of postcolonial melancholia find themselves unable to work through, and, in working through, accept, the painful reality of the loss of empire. Exhibiting only the most morbid and pathological characteristics of melancholia, they test the reality of multiculturalism—test it in the way that Freud says the melancholic tests the painful reality of the loss of the loved object—and reject it, managing thereby to forget the shame of the past while at the same time refusing to acknowledge the loss of empire or confront its lasting costs. Not only, then, do white Britons refuse to accept what they view as an impoverished present; their refusal prevents everyone from advancing into a more egalitarian future, one freed from the burden of empire's supposedly glorious past.

The drawback of this thesis, as we see it, is that it is too quick to cede the power of melancholia, which comes across as little more than an insidious instrument of reactionary oppression, to the wrong parties. Misconstrued as *ressentiment*, melancholia is left drained of its capacity to challenge, even arrest, existing power formations. Like Anne Cheng, for whom the raced American subject assumes an identity formation indistinguishable from the denigrated object of melancholia—an object disciplined and rejected by turns, an object not fully incorporated into the very

body (politic) that paradoxically cannot do without it for its own identity formation—and Judith Butler, who argues that the lacerating and immobilizing grief of the melancholic interiorizes the violent tactics of social regulation, Gilroy takes what was the conflictual disposition of melancholia and turns it into a form of affective panopticism. No longer recognizable as the spirit of politics, melancholia is hereby transformed into the opposite of itself: a disciplinary instrument through which the subject of power, forced to adopt the thwarted position of the abjected lost object, is denied political participation and full citizenship.

A corrective to this disciplinary version of melancholia was offered by a second tradition—let’s call it the sorrowful-recollective—inspired by Derrida’s revision of melancholia as the ethically retentive counterpart to forgetful mourning.<sup>4</sup> The wellspring of this tradition, David Eng’s and David Kazanjian’s preface to their edited collection, *Loss*, deserves special comment, which we will reserve for later. A more recent example, and one that shows just how fluid and heterogeneous these traditions can be, is Joseph R. Winters’s *Hope Draped in Black*. There is much we admire in Winters’s approach, in particular his fruitful campaign to make “strange bedfellows” of the Black literary tradition and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School.<sup>5</sup> We likewise share Winters’s desire to liberate melancholia from the orthodox Freudianism that arguably ends up constraining the work of Butler and Cheng. And we are fully on board with his critique of the American model of amnesic progress. Where we part company is over the *potenza*—the power and potential—of melancholia itself. In keeping with what we regard as the self-imposed limitations of a merely ethical, as opposed to fully political, melancholia, Winters is too quick to reduce melancholia to a program of remembrance and the recollection of loss, as if Walter Benjamin’s angel of history, whom Winters invokes, were not being irresistibly propelled (albeit backward) into the future. Such an approach, we feel, downplays the poietic dimension of melancholia, its capacity for making as well as for remembering, “registering,” and “unsettling.” If there is hope, it is not only because “expressions of ‘death and disappointment’” can “simultaneously voice longings for a better, more just existence”; it is because our situation is utterly hopeless, and hopelessness is the mother of political poesis.<sup>6</sup> That is why, though we have no wish to deny anyone their historical claim to incomparable sorrow or question the “heightened receptivity to loss” acquired through the intergenerational trauma of “race-inflected violence and suffering,” we resist the idea that the cause of melancholia is temporal rather than lost, or that the melancholic’s contemplative gaze must be directed backward rather

than downward—that its perspective must be historical and not, as we will go on to argue in these pages, drawing on the language of Marxian critique, natural historical.<sup>7</sup> As we understand it, the power of melancholia, like that of thought and judgment, belongs to everyone (the pallor of our canonical representatives notwithstanding). The political melancholic affirms, sorrowfully but also jubilantly, our common condition of living in the midst of the worst.

That common condition has been brilliantly diagnosed, and at times brilliantly countered, by the works of what we will call the affective tradition, works such as Jonathan Flatley's *Affective Mapping*, Rebecca Comay's *Mourning Sickness*, and Jonathan Lear's *Radical Hope*.<sup>8</sup> Indebted as much to Heidegger and Benjamin as to psychoanalysis or poststructuralist ethics, these works make a powerful case for understanding melancholy as both persistent and ubiquitous: nothing less than the *Stimmung* of a modernity ushered in by the French Revolution. But melancholy, however ubiquitous as a mood, is not in and of itself political; or, rather, its affirmative political dimension remains latent if it is treated only as an affective atmosphere or as the basis for a "counter-mood."<sup>9</sup> Where the governmental and recollective traditions leave us with a mostly negatively politicized melancholia recuperable only as the work of mourning, these later works bequeath us a melancholia that manifests as a mood to be managed rather than as a form of thought capable of transforming the outside world. Correspondingly, they figure a melancholic who has attunement but lacks praxis.

Our melancholic is different. A figure standing both for what needs to be done and for what remains unrealizable in the world's political aspirations, our politicized melancholic, far from being indifferent, marginalized, or affectively disciplined, embodies the universal condition of communal life: a discontent that so vexes and irritates a community's members that it becomes the common symptom binding them together. In that respect, the affective dimension of the melancholic disposition remains most faithful to the common cause of a polity. Faithfully, then, this book returns, in true melancholic fashion, to some of the unforgettable offenses on which communities, whether imagined or historical, have been founded: the death of Socrates; the fratricide in *Hamlet*; Woyzeck's killing of Marie in Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*; the murder of Moses in Freud's last text; the violent appropriation of nature by the invisible hand of the market; the intergenerational betrayal of the revolutionary idea that Hannah Arendt detects in the aftermath of the revolutions of the eighteenth century. Such returns are neither nostalgic nor recuperative. Rather, they repeat the melancholic gesture of holding on to the worst—of affirming the common sense that

there is indeed something rotten, not only in the state of Denmark, but universally. Yet even as our melancholic practice remains attuned to histories of wreckage and grief, it follows Hamlet in turning the tactical ruses and surprises of the nocturnal temperament to a different end than self-laceration or, just as important, self-recovery. Political melancholia, as we have come to understand it through our readings of literary and philosophical texts, is mournful but also jubilant, catastrophic but also poetic. It is the name we give to the restive dimension of an ageless affect, an immemorial mood of unbending disconsolation. And while its presence can be detected in the recorded histories of successive political orders, it cannot be said to belong to or arise from any of them. More closely aligned with what Roberto Esposito, reflecting on the commencement of a continuously emergent revolutionary beginning, terms “the origin of the political” than with any conventional concept of politics, melancholia is political in that it organizes the other volatile sentiments, particularly shame, anxiety, and wrath, that human culture carries over from its pre-history.<sup>10</sup> Following in the footsteps of a tradition of melancholic thinkers descended from Aristotle, we argue that those affective registers of melancholia, in affirming the worst, are what enable us to open a space for “the existence of the unreal” that not only makes us courageous and just but that also enjoins us to think something new.<sup>11</sup>

Among modernist proponents of that tradition, Benjamin is surely the most well-known, and with good reason, as we will see in a moment. Yet Benjamin was not alone in recognizing what he called the “motorial” force of melancholia; he had precursors.<sup>12</sup> When Kierkegaard, for example, raised the restlessness of anxiety to the dignity of a philosophical object, he declared melancholia to be the “ailment of our age”—but an “ailment” so dear to him, of such “utmost importance,” that he could never do without it. “The strange ideas of my melancholy,” he wrote, “I do not give up.”<sup>13</sup> It is not the destruction of traditional beliefs that causes this epochal ailment. Rather, what occasions this crisis is the melancholic way of thinking itself: the revelation of another history and another politics brought about by what Theodor Adorno, in his study on Kierkegaard, calls the melancholic’s “specific engagement with historical *realien*.”<sup>14</sup> In making a ruin appear out of the flotsam washed ashore from the tradition of the forgotten, melancholia makes a crisis. The melancholic, as Kierkegaard emphasizes, has “uncommon powers” in dealing with reality, even when he is inwardly shattered by it and his immense capacities are concealed from him under the guise of providence.<sup>15</sup> The melancholic recalls something essential from history—remnants of long forgotten figures and past



struggles—and discovers in them the necessity of another path, a deeper passion. That passion is attuned to an affirmative mode of mourning, of “standing face to face with nothingness,” of wishing that the echo of your mourning and your emptiness would reverberate back to you.<sup>16</sup> As Adorno demonstrates, Kierkegaard’s philosophy originates in melancholia, which becomes something akin to a transcendental affect. From out of a specific struggle with historical realities, melancholia makes possible not just the emergence of new truths, but the different aesthetic and attitude toward life those truths require.<sup>17</sup>

Benjamin’s *Origin of German Tragic Drama* takes this philosophy a step further. For Kierkegaard, melancholy was the “ailment of our age” precisely because it named an interior state, albeit one pensively engaged with historical realities. Benjamin transforms the melancholic disposition into something impersonal, a generalized mood of the world that surpasses any compensatory schemes pursued by the interiorizing “work of mourning” (*Trauerarbeit*). Mourning plays, observes Benjamin, “are not so much plays that cause mourning, as plays through which mournfulness finds satisfaction”; they are “plays for the mournful” (119). This is a historical claim about the experience of the profaned world after the death of tragedy. But it is also a way of acknowledging that mournfulness, now freed from the cell of subjective dejection, has become persistent and pervasive, detectable in all objects and spheres of life. When Benjamin ties “the theory of mourning” to a feeling “which is released from any empirical subject and is intimately bound to the fullness of an object,” when he celebrates the “astounding tenacity of intention” “at the heart of mourning,” “capable of a special intensification” “matched perhaps only by love,” he thus does more than diagnose melancholia as a reaction to a world suddenly emptied of meaning. He describes a world “which is revealed under the gaze of the melancholy man”: a world in which the subject is apprehended by the “solemn” intention “within the object itself.” “Mourning is the state of mind” that is “bound to an a priori object.” Persevering like love, “and that not playfully,” as Benjamin is quick to clarify, the melancholic state of mind is more persistent, more pervasive, and more generalized than it first appears. “Only called a feeling because it does not occupy the highest place,” melancholia is shown by Benjamin to be categorical, an ontology, the a priori condition of life in modernity (139).

What finally makes that melancholic ontology affirmative, and not merely a new version of acedia, is the place of repetition within it. “The never-ending repetition” characteristic of the *Trauerspiel*—its reliance on grave processions and ostentatious displays, on empty ceremony and

pomp—“secures the bleak rule of a melancholic distaste for life,” according to Benjamin (140). That way of describing the staginess of *Trauerspiel* may make it sound as though the genre trafficked in a clichéd version of the melancholic temperament, which is often accused of being fixated, ruminative, spiraling, tedious: repetitive in the worst sense. But what Benjamin in fact describes is how the melancholic passion for stilted ostentation and halting procession reveals an enigmatic dynamism stored up in historical phenomena, precisely by bringing those phenomena to a standstill, objectifying them, and draining them of their vitality. In the deadening “depersonalization” performed by *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin locates the mechanism of a peculiarly melancholic poesis. Offstage, “the deadening of the emotions, and the ebbing away of the waves of life which are the source of these emotions in the body, can increase the distance between the self and the surrounding world to the point of alienation from the body.” When staged as *Trauerspiel*, “the concept of the pathological state, in which the most simple object appears to be a symbol of some enigmatic wisdom because it lacks any natural, creative relationship to us, was set in an incomparably productive context” (140). Yet productive how, one might ask, and of what? One answer to that question comes by way of Howard Caygill’s gloss on Benjamin’s claim that there will eventually come a point “where the universe has been taken over by that despair which is actually its secret *hope*.” “When there is only repetition,” explains Caygill, “then the affirmation of it creates a novelty and thus breaks the immanence of repetition.”<sup>18</sup> Analogously, the melancholic affirmation of repetition, dramatized in “the never-ending repetition” of *Trauerspiel*’s paradoxically frozen processions, breaks the immanence of mere repetition by performing a transmutation of mourning that is truly novel.<sup>19</sup> Repeatedly replaying the alienation of the self in relation “to the surrounding world,” increasing the “symptom of depersonalization . . . to an intense degree of mournfulness,” *Trauerspiel* gives rise to a new, and newly redeemed, form of mourning. The “contemplative paralysis” formalized in the genre’s incessant repetition reveals that mourning is double: that the self-absorbed object of mourning does not coincide with itself; that it is outside of itself, different from itself, a surprise to itself (140).

As Benjamin demonstrates, nowhere is this turn of melancholia toward affirmation clearer than in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “[Hamlet’s] life, the exemplary object of his mourning, points, before its extinction, to the Christian providence in whose bosom his mournful images are transformed into a blessed existence. Only in a princely life such as this is melancholy redeemed, by being confronted with itself” (158). Melancholia

grasped in this fashion, at the point where it encounters and interrupts itself, where it is repeated and affirmed and where it is no longer contained in a form but effects a transformation, “inspires itself to new life” and awakens “within itself the clear light of self-awareness” (158). Even the most despairing and destitute melancholia, once fully affirmed, would become something other than mere despair and destitution. In fact, it may pass over from being affirmative to being, like divine violence or the proletarian general strike, “affirmative”: the insertion into history of a caesura, a pause or paralysis that is also a fundamental interruption.<sup>20</sup> This paralysis, wherein “no work is done, nothing is produced, and nothing is planned,” not even the work of mourning, is the political event of affirmative melancholia.<sup>21</sup> It manifests a new sociality, a melancholic collective attuned to the bleak rule of an empty world, like the mourners in the frozen processions of *Trauerspiel*.

The reader can be forgiven for thinking that this affirmative version of melancholia bears only a passing resemblance to melancholia as it is commonly understood. How did it come to that? How did it happen, to pose the question a different way, that the figure who inspired an awestruck Aristotle to wonder, “Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic?” got driven underground, forced to endure a furtive and disreputable existence on the outskirts of the polis? Should we blame Cassian, who warned his fellow cenobites that “our sixth combat is with what the Greeks call ἀκηδία [acedia], which we may term weariness or distress of heart”? Or should we blame Pinel, who, after describing melancholia in the usual fashion (“The symptoms generally comprehended by the term melancholia are taciturnity, a thoughtful pensive air, gloomy suspicions, and a love of solitude”), declared that “nothing . . . can be more hideous than the figure of a melancholic, brooding over his imaginary misfortunes”?<sup>22</sup> Many commentators would be inclined to point the finger at Freud and at his 1917 essay “Mourning and Melancholia,” in particular. We, however, wish to point a different finger in a slightly different direction, toward an overly deferential reading of Freud’s essay and of its revision, six years later, as part of *The Ego and the Id*.

Freud begins “Mourning and Melancholia” by drawing a contrast—too sharp, in the opinion of later commentators—between the work carried out by “normal” mourning, on the one hand, and “pathological” melancholia, on the other. The former process, avers Freud, holds little mystery. Having first “shown that the loved object no longer exists,” “reality-testing” then “proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object.”<sup>23</sup> Understandably, this process, which gets “carried

out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathetic energy,” can drag on, and it often arouses an opposition on the part of the ego “so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis” (14:244). In the end, though, concludes Freud, experience shows “that when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again,” ready to transfer its libido to another object (14:245). In melancholia, by contrast, no transference of libidinal energy to a new object occurs; instead, that free libido is withdrawn into the ego, where, Freud tells us, “it [is] not employed in any unspecified way, but [serves] to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object” (14:249). The result, according to Freud, is an entrenched ambivalence, on the part of the ego, toward the object—that is to say, toward that portion of itself that identifies with the object. On the one hand, the ego’s “narcissistic identification with the object . . . becomes a substitute for the erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up” (14:249). Or, as Freud puts it a few pages later, “by taking flight into the ego, love escapes extinction” (14:257). At the same time, however, the melancholic continues to harbor feelings of aggression and hostility toward the object that abandoned, injured, or otherwise disappointed the ego. “If the love for the object—a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up—takes refuge in narcissistic identification,” writes Freud, “then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering” (14:251). Inwardly directed, played out again and again (“In melancholia . . . countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with one another” [14:256]), ambivalence ensures that it is not only love for the object that the melancholic preserves but conflict, too. As Freud puts it in a famous passage:

[T]he shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification (14:249).

Having declined the reality principle’s injunction to transfer their libidinal energies to another object, the melancholic gets ambivalence and internalized aggression instead.

That, at least, is one way of reading the situation. We believe, however, that there is more implied by, even embedded in, Freud's diagram of the psyche than ambivalence or a conflict turned inward. What the diagram gives us instead is a model for neutralizing sovereign power, which in turn frees us to pursue a politics bereft of the consolations of mastery. Consider the intersection of identification and the ego ideal. The superego, Freud tells us in *The Ego and the Id*, arises out of the nascent ego's identification with the ego ideal.<sup>24</sup> The gestures of melancholia, meanwhile, repeatedly stage a history in which the feelings associated with what Freud calls "the loss of an ideal kind"—outrage, disappointment, disillusionment, "dissatisfaction with the ego on moral grounds"—get transferred onto the object, which is then criticized, in turn, by the "institution" or "agency" that Freud will eventually label the superego (14:246). In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud presents this as a quasi-political parable in which a "mental constellation of revolt" has "passed over into the crushed state of melancholia" (14:248). But here Freud misapprehends as capitulation what is in fact a peculiar tactic of the melancholic. The superego, we know, needs the ego in the same way a sovereign needs cowering subjects. Like the sovereign, the superego thrives on the cultivation of particular affects: dread, certainly, but also the pleasures associated with failure and resignation. Yet Freud says something else about the melancholic ego. He says that "the complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies . . . from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished" (14:253). This is one key to understanding melancholia as a political disposition: the fact that it drains the psychological complex of the affects, the dread and suffering and perverse pleasure, on which the superego ordinarily feeds. With the ego thus depleted—a situation too easily mischaracterized as impotence or a lack of agency—the superego becomes bonded to the object, becomes, as it were, completely absorbed in the object, like a monarch who, deprived of cowering subjects, spends all day staring at his moldering coronation robes and dented crown. Far, then, from laying out a straightforward political parable—cruel and oppressive superego on one side of the barricade, crushed ego on the other—Freud's diagram in fact schematizes a self-enclosed system collapsing in upon itself, with the superego berating and denigrating an object that is really only a part of the self-same complex: the derivative of an ego ideal lacerating itself for its own loss.

Freud himself provides us with a compelling image of this dynamic. Describing the unconscious nature of melancholia—oftentimes, the melancholic "knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him,"

suggesting “that melancholia is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness”—Freud notes the following:

In mourning we found that the inhibition and loss of interest [in the outside world] are fully accounted for by the work of mourning in which the ego is absorbed. In melancholia the unknown loss will result in a similar internal work and will therefore be responsible for the melancholic inhibition. The difference is that the inhibition of the melancholic seems puzzling to us because we cannot see what it is that is absorbing him so entirely (14:245-246).

That Freud himself should fail to see what it is that absorbs the melancholic so entirely is instructive, if not altogether surprising. For it never seems to occur to Freud, as it never seems to occur to certain critics of melancholia, that there could be a form of melancholia that has nothing to do with, and cannot be understood by, any would-be sovereign figure: a melancholia that, far from being beholden to the superego, circumvents it altogether. For such a melancholia, the superego represents, at best, an obstacle to be overcome—a pretender seeking to claim credit for a disposition that precedes it—on the way to accomplishing a larger goal. The melancholic has no choice, then, but to develop tactics; and here we encounter one of them. Freud confesses that he cannot see what absorbs the melancholic so completely. And yet Freud himself remains completely absorbed in the melancholic’s absorption in the unconscious object. Absorbed by absorption, with no ego to distract him, Freud becomes lost to the realm of the lost object.

Meanwhile, the melancholic is free to direct her pent-up energies elsewhere. “The most remarkable characteristic of melancholia, and the one in most need of explanation,” observes Freud, “is its tendency to change round”—the language already evokes revolution—“into mania” (14:253). “What has happened here,” Freud goes on to conjecture, “is that, as a result of some influence, a large expenditure of psychical energy, long maintained or habitually occurring, has at last become unnecessary, so that it is available for numerous applications and possibilities of discharge”—among which we would like to include, not just political action alone, but that paradoxical combination of discontent and sublime fury which allows us to contemplate the unreal (14:254). Freud then arrives at the following conclusion:

In mania, the ego must have got over the loss of the object (or its mourning over the loss, or perhaps the object itself), and thereupon the whole quota of anticathexis which the painful suffering of melancholia

had drawn to itself from the ego and “bound” will have become available. Moreover, the manic subject plainly demonstrates his liberation from the object which was the cause of his suffering, by seeking like a ravenously hungry man for new object-cathexes (14:255).

As Freud interprets it, mania amounts to something like an extreme resolution of mourning: evidence that the subject has at last “got over” the object. But if mania seems triumphant, it is not because the melancholic has abandoned the object (although he may have transcended loss, which is something else entirely); it is because he has devised a strategy to neutralize the superego. What mania signals is not the final convergence of melancholia with mourning. That would be to misunderstand how melancholia perpetuates and even intensifies the conflict that mourning seeks to resolve. What mania signals is the next, furious phase in the melancholic’s project, made possible by abandoning the superego to the object.

But not, let us reiterate, by abandoning the object. Freud contends that the manic subject, newly liberated from the crushed state of melancholia that inevitably follows the psyche’s failed revolt against reality, seeks like a ravenously hungry man for a new object in which to invest their libidinal energies. That, however, is to assume that melancholia and mania are mutually exclusive states. It is also to ignore the possibility that they exist on a continuum, with mania functioning as a more heightened, and indeed more radicalized, version of melancholia: a melancholia that has overcome being crushed and, newly emboldened, returned to a “mental constellation of revolt.” Recall that Freud characterizes melancholia as a state of sustained ambivalence, an admixture of love and hate for the incorporated (and unrelinquished) object, a confusion of fidelity and conflict. Eager to identify any evidence that “healthy” mourning always wins the day, Freud imagines an uplifting scenario in which the emancipated maniac, having freed himself from the object whose incorporation has caused him so much suffering, seeks after new object-cathexes. But what if the melancholic turns manic not because they have relinquished the object but because they have figured out the true power of cathexis? What if melancholics were demonstrating their liberation not by seeking new object-cathexes in the outside world but by cathecting to the object in just the way that Freud says they do: by investing their free libidinal energies not in the object as such but in the “vehement passions,” the conflict of love and love of conflict, associated with it?<sup>25</sup> When Freud observes that the most remarkable thing about melancholia is its tendency to turn round—to make a revolution—into mania, he bears witness to the



liberated melancholic's recovery of the mental constellation of revolt, now under the furious, inspired guise of mania.

So: the political melancholic has the power to arrest the would-be, superegoic master by absorbing the latter's attentions in the realm of the object. They also have the capacity to liberate themselves from the suffering caused by their incorporation of the object, not by ravenously seeking after new, compensatory object-cathexes (the melancholic is nothing if not faithful), but by cathecting their libidinal energies to the mental constellation of revolt, the undying love and endless conflict, associated with the object. With that reframing of the melancholic temperament in mind, we would now like to raise a more fundamental question: What exactly *is* the "lost" object of melancholia? Freud himself is somewhat vague on the topic, associating it both with the loved object and with an unspecified "what"—an ideal, say, or an aspiration, or some grand plan—that is lost when the object as such is lost. In the specific case of political melancholia, however, the "what" that is lost is politics itself. Here we diverge from Giorgio Agamben, who in his own reading of the lost object of melancholia argues that melancholy "would be not so much the regressive reaction to the loss of the love object as the imaginative capacity to make an unobtainable object appear as if lost."<sup>26</sup> Melancholia is reassuringly deceptive, according to Agamben. If the object in question has never in fact been possessed, melancholia will delude us into believing that it is merely lost; if the object in question could never be possessed only because it never existed, melancholia will delude us into believing that it may be appropriated, imaginatively, as something lost. This, we wish to argue, both is and is not the case with politics, and has been from its origin. We have never known, nor ever had, politics. But neither is politics "lost" in the way that Foucault implies when he argues that the death of Socrates ushered in "a form of veridiction peculiar precisely to philosophical discourse, and the courage of which must be exercised until death as a test of the soul that cannot take place on the political platform."<sup>27</sup> Politics is lost, like the object in melancholia is lost, only insofar as it has never been possessed. And therein lies the true cause of melancholic grief, as well as its power of affirmation. We have had any number of spurious, compensatory objects in the place of politics—governmentality, war, the sovereign exception, postpolitical competition, and political economy all come to mind—but we have only ever known politics as something lost. The political melancholic has been dissatisfied with every one of those substitutes, every one of those compensatory objects soliciting their, and our, libidinal cathexis. The political melancholic is not so naïve, however, as to believe



that politics is merely lost, that it once existed in reality and might thus be recovered. Even the melancholic sense that politics was lost with the death of Socrates is lost to the melancholic, for whom no such consoling fiction will satisfy. Rather, the melancholic counters philosophical veridiction with affirmation: affirmation that politics is lost, and that its loss is the origin of politics. Affirming that all ideals, including the ideal of loss, are lost, the melancholic is then free to open a space for the unreal—which is as much to say that the melancholic enters into open conflict with a reality that continues to demand that they give up their devotion to the lost object of politics and instead seek another, more wholesome and profitable object-cathexis. To this repeated injunction the melancholic says No, just as they have done for millennia. And thus does their love for the object escape extinction.

In fact, this is how the melancholic both affirms that love and, by the same gesture, shows that love to be a power of affirmation. In his preface to *The Description of Misfortune*, Sebald programmatically writes that melancholy “at the level of art . . . is anything but reactive or reactionary. . . . Melancholy, the contemplation of the movement of misfortune, has nothing in common with the wish to die. It is a form of resistance.”<sup>28</sup> Melancholia is to be understood in precisely this fashion, as resistance; but in just that way it is also the affirmation of another politics, one keyed to division, grief, and misfortune. The melancholic, writes Sebald, “goes over again just how things could have happened”; he cannot help but recount, repeatedly, the “description of misfortune.”<sup>29</sup> How can the incessant recounting of misfortune be a political act and create a shift in the meaning of the political? According to the classicist Nicole Loraux, every politics begins “with a call to oblivion.” Amnesty—and amnesia—are deployed to renew the bond of life in the city, but always at the terrible cost of replacing the memory of misfortune (*kakon*). Granted, as Loraux notes, there is a good reason for the members of a polis to put an end to the alliance of “terrible wrath” and “unforgetting grief” (*penthos alaston*), for it “wanders” (*alaomai*) in the community like an accursed ghost that, in Plutarch’s reckoning, “must absolutely be avoided (*aleuasthai*).”<sup>30</sup> And yet, Loraux observes, the exhortations made to the Athenian citizens to remember to forget their *menis*, their wrathful grief, render visible another strength, a much more formidable remembering (*mneme*) and the politics it makes possible:

Wrath in mourning, the principle of which is eternal repetition, willingly expresses itself with an *aei*, and the fascination of this tireless “always” threatens to set it up as a powerful rival to the political *aei*

that establishes the memory of institutions. . . . I renounce my *menis*— is never pronounced. . . . *Menis*: a word to hide the memory whose name is concealed by it. Another memory, much more formidable than *mneme*. A memory that reduces itself completely to nonoblivion. [. . .] And just as it was necessary to forget the strength behind the “ills,” a recurrent utterance shows the renunciation of memory-anger: it is necessary to deny—assuming that it is possible—the denial that has stiffened upon itself.<sup>31</sup>

Here Loraux brings the forbidden-but-not-forgotten memory of *menis* in closest proximity to Nietzsche’s eternal return, and thus to the edge of affirmation. In the never-renounced *menis*, “the eternal repetition” of mourning-wrath, modeled by the Athenian citizen, we encounter a “powerful rival” to the “memory,” rooted in amnesty and amnesia, of political institutions.

The unforgetting melancholic is thus not a transformative figure because she struggles with her melancholic condition. Rather, melancholia is itself the engine of transformation because in it struggle, now recognized as fidelity to a loss or a sorrow that does not forget and thus is not to be overcome, becomes political. Melancholia, liberated from being merely an individual affliction, passes over to a mode of courage, a virtue, as Badiou might call it, that takes time and involves “holding on, in a different duration from that imposed by the law of the world.”<sup>32</sup> This fidelity to a different time and duration can express itself, according to Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” as “courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude”—each of which can be found in the arsenal shared, for example, by Socrates and Hamlet. But it can also manifest itself as hatred, love, unforgetting anger, and grief: in short, as all those vehement passions that have been unwelcome in the city basically since Pericles gave his funeral oration, but which are seized, externalized, and deployed by the melancholic to create another “concept of the political.”

For who could ever engage in a discourse on melancholia without taking a stand, or without a transcendental commitment to the persistence of what Loraux calls “nonoblivion”?<sup>33</sup> The sorrow that cannot forget itself demands an affirmative gesture, an unconditional engagement with the cause of loss, with the promise of a memory that is more originary than any institutionalized politics or philosophy.<sup>34</sup> As Loraux argues, politics and philosophy *presuppose* the fidelity of the melancholic to this inscrutable thing, the “unforgetful.”<sup>35</sup> The melancholic finds, in the sphere of sorrow, an insistence of nonoblivion that demands what Foucault calls the

“courage of truth”: that way of accounting for unforgettable loss which has not yet become Socratic or philosophical questioning. Keyed to pervasive, universal sorrow and the inevitability of conflict, the melancholic in this way reorients “the concept of the political” as one that is at once antagonistic, mournful, and communal. Contrary to Derrida’s double affirmation, the “arche-originary pledge” anterior to any determinate content, his “yes, yes” that situates a “vigil” and opens up the space for politics, albeit without giving a specific position, a politics of melancholia as it is understood here entails an intensely determined attitude toward an intensely determined thing.<sup>36</sup> A politics of melancholia determines—and in determining, affirms—why one is always already subject to a vigil, why one takes a stand, remains vigilant, in relation to the “movement of misfortune” alluded to by Sebald. Hamlet and Woyzeck are mad in a double sense: they are furies, yes, but they are also lovers, given over to Plato’s *mania*. It is this madness that makes their mourning affirmative, and thus melancholic. They are not going to let politics fall into oblivion just because it is lost.

Arguably this amounts to a different understanding of loss and the object—and so, too, of the melancholic disposition—than the one encountered in the restorative version of melancholia exemplified by the preface to the collection *Loss*. For the editors of that collection, David Eng and David Kazanjian, the question “What is lost?” gives way, “invariably,” to another question—“What remains?”—that in turn gives way to a statement: “What is lost is known only by what remains of it.”<sup>37</sup> Understood in those terms, the object becomes whatever can be recovered from what Eng and Kazanjian call “the domain of remains”—a definition that effectively drains melancholia of its radical potential by reducing it to a form of defiant curation (4). Setting aside the obvious Lacanian rejoinder that the lost object may not wish to be recollected any more than the beggar wanted half of Saint Martin’s cloak, we raise a more basic objection: namely that the object of melancholia is “known,” if it can be said to be “known” at all, not by what remains of it but by its absence, galling and overwhelming, from the impoverished domain of world history.<sup>38</sup> The melancholic looks about her and declares, “This is not it; this has never been it.” The question raised by the melancholic is thus not “What is lost?” or (perish the thought) “What remains?” It is, “Should a world that has never been ‘it’ be reassembled at all?”

For that reason, we wish to revise Eng’s and Kazanjian’s otherwise crucial insight that “the work of mourning remains becomes possible through melancholia’s continued engagement with the various and ongoing forms of loss—as Freud writes, ‘of a loved person’ or ‘some abstraction which has taken the place of one. Such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on’”

(5). There is indeed something continuous about the work of melancholia, and it does transpire at the level of Freud's "and so on." But where Eng and Kazanjian take the "melancholic excess" implicit in that "and so on" as necessitating the work of "mourning remains," we understand it as Freud's tacit admission that melancholia concerns the ongoing accumulation—the piling up, as Walter Benjamin might put it—of ruins (5). The one mode is merely recuperative. The other is a process of infinite unmaking, carried out in the name of what can never be forgotten precisely because it has not yet been. The one is a version of renunciation, now reiterated as "the adamant refusal of closure" (3). The other is an expression, manic and furious at times, of a mode so transitive and impersonal that it could never be reduced to anything like a conscious recollection of what remains.

This is not to suggest, however, that the melancholic has nothing to do, no purpose in life. Just because a politics of melancholia entails something other than constructively mourning what remains of a broken world does not then mean that it is not affirmative. It is simply affirmative of the ruination that a program of "mourning remains" takes it upon itself to remedy. Once again, this way of understanding melancholia requires a correspondingly new understanding of the object. Earlier we argued that the melancholic cathects to the loving conflict (and conflictual love) associated with the object more than to the object as such. In fact, it may be—and the actions of a figure like Hamlet bear this out—that the only reason the melancholic retains the lost object at all is so they will have a pretext for continuing the conflict and love which they would otherwise have to relinquish. Freud himself intuited as much. The self-reproaches and complaints of melancholics, he observes, "are really 'plaints' in the old sense of the word": "reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego" (14:248). Strictly speaking, then, the reproaches voiced by the melancholic are not *self*-reproaches (although they might be misinterpreted as such) so much as objective complaints: the externalization, in plaintive speech, of an internalized sense of injustice. The melancholic is the lead plaintiff in what turns out to be a collective action taken against the outside world.

Perhaps, then, when speaking of the melancholic object, we should not speak of an object at all, or at least not in the strict, Freudian sense of a loved object retained through incorporation or a "what" whose remains we mourn. Perhaps we should speak instead of a particular disposition toward the object that the melancholic externalizes, literally objectifies, in the world around them. Perhaps, borrowing some language from Adorno, we should speak, not of the object, which implies something determined

by the subject (including the mourning subject), but of “objectivity.” In Freud’s theory of melancholia, where narcissistically internalized libidinal energy forms an identification between the ego and the abandoned object, one can still hear echoes of the bourgeois belief that there exists an identity of subject and object. It was that identity which Adorno, following the example set by Benjamin, made it his business to disintegrate, precisely by demonstrating that not only the identity between subject and object, but the categories of subject and object themselves, are never immune from the natural forces of decomposition, decay, and dissolution.<sup>39</sup> As the fact that Adorno’s thinking was influenced by Benjamin’s work on the *Trauerspiel* suggests, however, this was an understanding of the relation of subject to object already arrived at by the melancholic. Long before Adorno, the melancholic grasped that the object, when properly understood as objective—that is, as both a source of truth and as something that, existing in the material world, was prone to decay—announced the dissolution of the reality whose dictates, Freud tells us, the melancholic strenuously rejects. Benjamin was of course invariably sympathetic to what we have taken to calling the politically melancholic disposition. But when Adorno, building upon Benjamin’s work in the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, proclaims that “the objectivity of history . . . is natural history”—that historical reality, like the secure identity of the subject, remains open to the same natural decay that befalls any material object; that the eternal decay of all objects is the objective truth disclosed in history—he, too, is speaking in the language, or at least the tonality, of the political melancholic.<sup>40</sup> What Freud could not see, and what generations of commentators have repeatedly dismissed as sullenness, alienation, despondency, or worse, was simply the melancholic’s absorption in natural history. Meanwhile, what Adorno clearly perceived was that such absorption repeated, in objectified form, the melancholic’s own disconsolate and conflictual disposition toward the lost object.

At its most basic, the term *natural history* refers to Adorno’s insight that the second nature created by society’s “natural law of motion” leads to “the negation of any nature that might be conceived as the first.”<sup>41</sup> Nature and history, observes Adorno, writing under the influence of Benjamin’s own, earlier ruminations on the concept of natural history, are present in one another: nature is “present as transience” in any historical formation, while history is present in nature “as something that has evolved and is transient.”<sup>42</sup> Just as the presence of transient nature means that no historical formation can ever resolve itself into a given, inevitable, “natural” state, so too does nature remain subject to historicization, to transformation by

humans—to its own form of transience. And just as all historical formations succumb, in time, to the natural forces of evolution and decay, so too are humans never simply fated to be engulfed by natural forces that exist entirely outside of or apart from their own nature, their own capacity for historicizing action. Insofar as nature is worked on, it is implicated in history; and insofar as nature is implicated in history, it is never merely anomic and abysmal. “The attitude of melancholic contemplation,” as Adorno calls it, doesn’t just remain absorbed in such natural history; it is an outgrowth and an engine of it. This comes across most clearly in a lecture that Adorno delivered on January 12, 1965. There Adorno seeks to clarify why, in his view, “the relationship of nature and history provides us with the primal image of interpretive behavior.”<sup>43</sup> Evoking Benjamin’s *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Adorno reminds us that this primal image of natural historical interpretation has been with us for a very long time, “handed down,” as he puts it, “through intellectual history in the form of allegory.” He then continues:

Beneath this gaze, the profound gaze of allegory, which is perhaps the model for the philosophical gaze as such—because the attitude of melancholic contemplation may well be the attitude on which philosophical inquiry has been founded—nature stands revealed. Nature, I say, reveals itself beneath this gaze as history, just as in all allegory the death’s head owes its central importance to the fact that as a natural object its own expression reveals its historical nature. Conversely . . . beneath this gaze history stands revealed as nature in so far as it turns out to be permanent transience.<sup>44</sup>

Such a melancholy attitude, because it “perceives transience in everything historical,” is not just recollective of the past, according to Adorno; it is also “critical,” given over to the dialectical negation of both nature and history. Thus “we might even say,” picking up on Adorno’s argument,

that the transition from philosophy to criticism represents something like a secularization of melancholy. This is a melancholy that has become active, not a melancholy that makes do, that remains stuck fast in an unhappy consciousness, not at home with itself, but a consciousness that exteriorizes itself as a critique of existing phenomena. Such a melancholy is probably the pre-eminent critical, philosophical stance. In other words, if you read the phenomena of history as the cyphers of their own transience or their own natural deterioration, they will also always be defined by their own negativity.<sup>45</sup>

If melancholia has been misconstrued as dejection rather than absorption—if we have squandered, as it were, our philosophical inheritance—it is largely due to having forgotten this understanding of melancholy and, with it, our capacity to recognize natural historical dissolution as the objectification of our critical consciousness. The shadow of the lost object has fallen, not only across the ego, but across the objectivity of history, which is natural history.

This collective forgetting of a melancholia inseparable from natural history has had effects both immediate and far-reaching. Immediately, it has led politics to submit to the logic of our own historical formation, where capitalism thrives on the assumption of groundlessness and flux—the assumption, that is, of a wild, anarchic nature anterior to law and order and in need of a strong, guiding hand, preferably of the invisible sort. Worse still it has meant that we continue to submit to a much older, and indeed persistent, logic, a logic that might be said to constitute the primal sin of political philosophy. From the moment that Pindar’s sovereign law (*nomos basileus*), conjured to justify violence “with the strongest hand,” joined forces with the Sophists’ fantasy of a natural “right of the strongest,” political philosophy has stumbled over the egregious conflation of might with right, violence (*Bia*) with justice (*dike*), that constitutes the inner workings of both sovereignty and government. (Agamben would go so far as to claim, in fact, that “the hidden paradigm guiding every successive definition of sovereignty” is precisely Pindar’s sovereign *nomos*, which works by melding the principle of superior force with a force of law said to have originated from a natural source.<sup>46</sup>) Precisely because of that initial misstep, however, political philosophy has never stopped dreaming of a noncoercive *nomos* and an immemorial *physis* capable of eluding the grasp of sovereignty and governmentality even while remaining essential to their self-conception. Consider, for example, the idea of *chora* (space) in the *Timaeus*, Plato’s dramatized theorization of cosmogony and natural history.<sup>47</sup> Plato’s reflections, “as in a dream,” on the unsettled and yet indestructible *chora* seem to be driven by a single-minded pursuit of a third, bastard nature capable of breaking open the dichotomy between a changeless sphere of commanding, lawful being (a “source” and a “father,” 50d) and an anomic nature of becoming and semblance apprehended by changeable opinion (*doxa*). Here and elsewhere in his political philosophy, Plato tends to multiply the terms nature (*physis*) and law (*nomos*) to avoid the false alternative between a sovereign *nomos* that becomes one with nature, as in Pindar’s poem, and the Sophistic notion of an anomic, brute nature anterior to *nomos*. For such a notion of lawless nature serves either to justify the violence of the strongest or, in



Hobbes, the intervention of the sovereign into the state of nature. Meanwhile, Plato's chora, this nearly incomprehensible space, formless and yet capable of receiving and giving form, compels us to think a nomic nature, a nature suspended between the hypernomic order of unchanging forms and the anomic sphere of visible nature: a *physionomos*.<sup>48</sup> It is as the Athenian remarks in Plato's *Laws*: such a *physionomos* would replace and displace Pindar's "decree of nature . . . that the stronger should rule and the weaker should obey" (690c). The Platonic pursuit of *physionomos* effectively derails the operative fantasy of the Sophists that a *physis* can be severed from its *nomos*—that underneath law and *logos* roam the unfettered forces of a wild state of nature in need of despotic rule. Taking up Plato's unfinished project, then, the political melancholic remains absorbed not just in natural history but, more specifically, in the pursuit of *physionomos*.

It is with this idea of a *physionomic* natural history in mind that we come around, in good melancholic fashion, to Albrecht Dürer's much scrutinized engraving *Melancholia I*. This engraving, which Dürer dedicated to the Emperor Maximilian I, makes a strange gift for a prince. As Erwin Panofsky points out, the engraving's saturnine figure wears keys, signifying power, and a purse, signifying wealth: meet emblems for the power of the emperor over the Earth.<sup>49</sup> Yet the image sends mixed signals; for it also depicts the power of melancholia to dismantle the emperor's Earthly realm. The saw, nails, and plane, scattered seemingly without sense, suggest that *Melancholia* is aligned more with the undoing than the building of a world, more with derailing current orders than with restoring old ones (let alone mourning them). Nor is *Melancholia* unaware of what it can do. As if cognizant of their own transformative powers, the engraving's saturnine figure and child exhibit a strange sort of resolve, at once frozen and purposeful. Together with the dog and the bat, they form a community of melancholic creatures bound together only by an affect that possesses them, citizens of neither of the orders, worldly or divine, that they take it upon themselves to undo. The night vision of the bat, the ghostly light of the rainbow, and the lurid gleam of the comet seen in the background of Dürer's work catalog the nocturnal weapons of melancholia: nimble in twilight and obscurity, attuned to spectral forces and to the transformative events of natural history, winged and prophetic.

Meanwhile, the saturnine figure's baleful stare and clenched fist (a new motif introduced by Dürer into the iconography of melancholia) hint at the resolve and power latent in the melancholic temperament. There is a fury at the root of that temperament, yet it would be a mistake to reduce that fury to anger or, worse, resentment. The peculiar fury of melancholia,



and the clenched fist used to signify it, associate melancholia with stasis, the ancient term naming a standstill in the workings of the polis, the stalemate that obtains once the norms and rules that ordinarily govern civic life have been dismantled.<sup>50</sup> Even today, the melancholic stands accused of bringing political life to a grinding halt. To this accusation we say, Yes, exactly. Stasis, a standing still in order to stand up (or a standing up that is also a standing still: the term derives from the pregnant moment when someone stands up to challenge someone else), is an insurrectionary gesture: a baleful stare, a clenched fist. Frozen and yet momentous, almost imperceptible and yet striking enough to captivate those who witness it, the stasis inaugurated—inaugurated at every moment, one might say—by the melancholic gesture introduces a genuinely revolutionary time into the regulated time, the dependable tick-tock-ticking, of the polis. This revolutionary, melancholic time is a plodding time, a patient time. Set to the speed of natural historical phenomena, it is revolutionary in the way that Saturn revolves around the Sun.

And in its plodding, revolutionary way, that time carries us back, returns us, both temporally and spatially: temporally, to the early days of the polis; spatially, to the scene of the polis's first encounter with itself. In 458 BC, shortly before the performance of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy, a section behind the orchestra was cut off from the theater located on the Acropolis in Athens: the *skene*. It was in this separate structure, hidden behind the playing area, withdrawn from the view of both the audience and the chorus, that all the inadmissible acts and unimaginable horrors that might haunt the city could now be staged—staged, but not witnessed.<sup>51</sup> In the case of the *Oresteia*, those acts and horrors include not only Agamemnon's murder but also, in the *Libation-Bearers* (the most ghostly of the three tragedies), the taciturn powers of Apollo and Agamemnon's ghost, whose presence can be felt "from the other side of the mound where his dismembered limbs lie entombed."<sup>52</sup> Just as important, the skene conceals from view Electra's and Orestes's plan to kill Clytemnestra, a plan that also involves the secret schemes and machinations of Pylades, the courtier and secret counselor *avant la lettre*. Along with acts of murder, brooding gods, and restless spirits, the skene thus harbors, while also hiding from view, the presence of strife: in the house, in the family, in the souls of the actors, and in the city. The fallout of stasis, its humus, so to speak—its fertile breeding ground and residue—lies dormant in the skene. As a gathering place for a forgotten history, the skene becomes the backstage haunt of strife, the site where its catastrophic past and future is stored as though its melancholic contents retained a glimmer of redemptive power.

The question of stasis—or rather, of what to do with stasis—thus becomes the abiding, if unstated, question at the heart of the *Oresteia*. In *Agamemnon*, for example, Cassandra furiously affirms stasis: “Let the insatiable spirit of strife [stasis] raise a cry of triumph over the family” (1116–7). Meanwhile, the chorus can only lament its ruinous powers, followed by a death wish: “Io, Earth, Earth, if only you had swallowed me up / before I saw this man lying / in the lowly deathbed” (1538–40). It is the presence of stasis, sitting like a crypt not only between the opposing factions but in their midst, in *oikos*, that prompts the silencing discourse at work in the trilogy. Words are chosen carefully or else become a means of deception. Secrets are kept and plots hidden from sight. Either muteness, the blockage of information itself, is on dramatic display in the *Oresteia*, or else the cacophonous sounds of the vengeful furies.

But while emerging from *oikos*, the institution of stasis—its status as a permanent, if muted, feature of civic life—combats *oikonomical* stasis by partitioning it further, making finer critical cuts within its seemingly self-contained economy. As J. Peter Euben notes, Orestes’s political focus is striking, particularly compared to how his mother triumphantly justifies the killing of her husband. Unlike Clytemnestra, who harps on private wrongs, Orestes begins his speech after the murder of his mother with a vow to break the rule of “the twin tyrants of this land” (973). In *Agamemnon*, the aftermath of the Trojan War gets redirected into the *oikos*, with the fall of Troy repeated in the downfall of the House of Atreus. In the more melancholic *Libation-Bearers*, a wrathful Orestes returns home and, having avenged his father, brings the force of downfall out of the *oikos* and into the city. The fall of Troy, which had become the downfall of the House of Atreus, now becomes the downfall of tyrants. Perhaps, then, Agamemnon is on the right track when he claims that, ultimately, “stasis does not originate in the *oikos*; it is not a ‘war within the family,’ but forms part of a device that functions in a manner similar to the state of exception. . . . *Oikos* is politicized and included in the *polis* through stasis.”<sup>53</sup> In that case stasis, traditionally considered the greatest calamity that could befall a city, is to be welcome, for it makes politics, which is coterminous with the overcoming of tyranny (“the twin tyrants of this land”), possible in the first place.

Now if there exists anything like a determinate politics of melancholia, a tactics or program, it will be found here, in the melancholic’s ability to effect stasis. Stasis is, in the first place, temporal, a time of standstill. It is also gestural. Yet in both these ways, stasis—and the frozen gestures of fury in Dürer’s engraving only emphasize the point—is structural, even

diagrammatic. Look again at the dismantled tableau of *Melancholia I*. The melancholic, having picked up on the underlying mood of the polis, then reintroduces that mood in the frozen gestures of stasis. That which he extracts from his historical formation, he then reinserts, this time as an inert diagram, a frozen constellation. Surrounded by the ruins of both the material and cosmic orders, the static figure of Melancholia—seated, perhaps, or forever on the verge of standing up—succeeds in rearranging her historical formation so thoroughly as to redirect the onlooker’s attentions into the workings of natural history. This is a genuinely revolutionary gesture not only in the usual sense of reversing an intolerable situation but in the sense that, by introducing the furious, frozen gesture of stasis, the melancholic allows for the possibility of a new and, strictly speaking, unthinkable discourse. Unlike the other discourses available to us—those of the master, the university, the analyst, and the hysteric—this new discourse, the discourse of the melancholic, cannot be established by a quarter turn but only by a revolutionary reordering: an impossible inversion of object over subject, knowledge over master.<sup>54</sup> A thorough overturning—truly, a re-revolution—of the power latent in the discourse of the hysteric, the discourse of the melancholic introduces the possibility of the impossible and thus provides the political subject with a cause so immemorial, it can only seem new.

In that respect, our understanding of melancholia differs from that found, for example, in Esposito’s work on melancholia and community. Esposito compares melancholia, which he describes as being “made of nothing and impossible to appropriate,” to the putative lack of *das Ding*, the Thing.<sup>55</sup> But here it would do to recall the genealogy of the Thing as psychoanalysis understands it. The Thing first appears in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, where Freud imagines the process by which “a human-being learns to cognize” in relation to “a fellow human-being.” “The perceptual complexes proceeding from this fellow human-being,” conjectures Freud, “will in part be new and non-comparable” to the subject’s own, whereas

other visual perceptions . . . will coincide in the subject with memories of quite similar visual impressions of his own, of his own body. . . . Thus the complex of the fellow human-being falls apart into two components, of which one makes an impression by its constant structure and stays together as a *thing*, while the other can be *understood* by the activity of memory—that is, can be traced back to information from [the subject’s] own body.<sup>56</sup>

Picking up on this idea of a bifurcated fellow human being, split between a visual register we recognize and a “new and non-comparable” component that we judge to be “strange and even hostile on occasion,” Lacan then draws a connection between the constant, structurally inert Thing detectable (but not understandable) in the fellow human being, and the implacable death drive.<sup>57</sup> What Lacan draws out is thus the Thing’s association with destruction: with externalized sadism and a disruption of the pleasure principle. And that association becomes even stronger when we consider that, from the perspective of the subject, the Thing is “new and non-comparable,” a description that calls to mind Adorno’s observation that “‘the new,’ the dialectically produced, actually presents itself in history as the archaic.”<sup>58</sup> The appearance of the new, an appearance precipitated, according to psychoanalysis, by a judgment leveled against the Thing in the neighbor, signals transience and so occupies the same register as the archaic—the register, that is, of something so “strange and even hostile” that it announces the passing away of what is given and familiar.

We thus agree with Esposito—what melancholic wouldn’t?—that community is not a substantive *res*, and certainly not our *res*.<sup>59</sup> We agree, in other words, that community is impossible, precluded from cohering by the Thing.<sup>60</sup> But if the Thing makes community impossible, that is not because it is nothing, not because it is lacking in a groundless, insubstantial way—not because it fails to assemble, as the Heideggerian overtones in Esposito’s use of the term *Thing* would imply—but because it is all too real, in the properly Lacanian sense of being constant and inert, lacking from the place of lack. Esposito assumes that the melancholic is fixated, Hamlet-like—or, rather, pseudo-Hamlet-like—on the *delinquere*, the failure or crime, that cuts across community.<sup>61</sup> But what absorbs the melancholic is not a lacerating fault, exactly, but rather, as Benjamin perceived, a realm of infinite perishing or eternal passing away. The “crime” in this case—the crime that is actually the source of our secret hope—is not that the ghost is dead but that the ghost remains unburied. The Thing, missing from its grave, missing from the place of foundational lack beneath the polis, is always (and therefore never fully) perishing, eternally (and therefore never fully) passing away. The Thing is simply one of the names we give to indestructible transience.

Melancholia, then, as commentators have long perceived, comes down to an absorption in the Thing. But it is not the Thing as a gathering or assembly at the site of groundlessness; nor is it the Thing as a simple fault or lack. It is the Thing made unforgettable and indestructible: unforgettable by having never been “known” in the first place, indestructible by

virtue of its having been encrypted, lodged in a state where it is always perishing, never past. It is the Thing as the lack even of lack, even of the groundlessness that allows for assemblages. It is the Thing as the objectivity of history. In this respect, the melancholic has a particular (non)-relationship with the law. It is not the *nomos* that concerns her, since the *nomos*, to follow Esposito's logic, is predicated on a lack or fault that draws each subject into a guilt history registered by the *delinquere* aspect of community. For the melancholic, there is no foundational crime anterior to or under the law. There is not even what Esposito refers to as the primal murder of community as such. What the melancholic perceives instead is the delinquent nature of law itself, the scandal that brought *nomos* into existence and that continues to inhere within it. That scandal is simply this: the violent separation of *nomos* from *physis*, either under the guise of a *nomos* justified by a spurious conception of natural strength (that the strong should rule the weak) or a *nomos* called upon to subdue, while also claiming for itself, a wild, brutish nature anterior to the law. That violent separation, as the melancholic unconsciously recognizes, is neither right nor just. It therefore must be reversed.

Earlier we imagined the melancholic looking about her at an impoverished world and declaring, "This is not it; this has never been it." Now we need to amend that declaration somewhat, if for no other reason than to distinguish the stance of the melancholic from that of the hysteric. For in fact the melancholic looks about her and declares, "There is nothing but this; the eternally perishing, indestructible Thing is what we have. It is the new cause of a new community, the basis for a thinking of the unreal." The seduction (or perhaps the danger) of mourning has always been that it will endorse the ancient, decisionist logic of *krísis* by putting an end to crisis: by declaring, in essence, that the diseased body is dead, the great wrong righted, the rituals dutifully enacted, the crisis masterfully resolved. Melancholia, by contrast, perpetuates and intensifies crisis. Where mourning installs lack at the center of community, melancholia reorients community around those permanent causes that confound *krísis*: disease, discontent, dissolution. A preponderance of the black bile, as the ancients well knew, keeps any body, including the body politic, in a state of permanent disequilibrium.

The melancholic is typically regarded as unhappy or despairing; but he only despairs of the *nomos*, which, existing on the order of a spurious second nature, cannot be redeemed. The melancholic's hope lies elsewhere, in the *physionomos*. Pitched somewhere between the hyper-nomic realm of unchanging forms and the anomic realm of visible nature,

physionomos names a nomic form of nature—in short, a natural historical nature, a critical nature. Freud was surely correct to note how the melancholic exhibits little interest in maintaining life. But what Freud could not have known, although he clearly intuited as much, is that the life eschewed by the melancholic is the “life” we now identify as the product of the sovereign exception: life as something qualified by sovereign power, animated by sovereign power—in short, biopolitical life.<sup>62</sup> That is a life which the melancholic has no interest in perpetuating. Rather, the “life” that interests the melancholic is the natural historical life realized in the death drive. This is a physionomical life, a life neither qualified by nomos, to which it remains indifferent, nor natural in the sense of being available as the grounding of law. This life, this life that concerns the melancholic, is more akin to the chora theorized in Plato’s *Timaeus*: formless and yet capable of taking form; indestructible because subject to constant destruction; unforgettable because encrypted in the unconscious; revolutionary because caught up in incessant transformation; a realm of creaturely delight not subject to the intervention of nomos into physis. Head bent, the melancholic gazes into this realm, his eyes set, not on despair, but on future happiness.

## INDEX

- abjection, 5, 137  
accountability, 121, 131–32, 134, 257n18  
accumulation, 19, 101, 225; capitalism and, 199–201, 204, 206, 214, 218–19, 261n33, 261nn28–29; of guilt, 129, 206–9; law of, 199–200; primitive, 206, 261nn28–29, 261n33; of wisdom, 244  
Achilles, 38, 57, 230–34, 238  
actants, 3  
action: collective, 19, 38; miracle of, 239.  
*See also by description, e.g.*, political  
action; revolution: and revolutionary action  
Adams, Francis, 253n4  
Adeimantus, 49  
adolescence, 66; and the *homo democraticus*, 41; and puberty rites, 178  
Adorno, Theodor, 7–8, 19–21, 27, 108, 198, 200, 220, 228, 259n5; and the creature Odradek, 209–19, 262n39; *Minima Moralia*, 242; “Reflections on Class Theory,” 195–96; “The Idea of Natural History,” 253n18, 253nn4–5  
adult time, 159  
*Aeneid* (Virgil), 233–34, 238–39  
Aeschylus, 24–25  
affect, 7–8, 23, 97, 120, 151, 168, 177  
*Affective Mapping* (Flatley), 6  
affirmative, the, 10, 246n20  
afterlife, 84–85, 101, 104–5, 137, 225, 235, 241  
Agamben, Giorgio, 15, 22, 25, 46, 194, 257n20; *Stanzas*, 67–68  
*Agamemnon* (Aeschylus), 24–25  
Agathon, 36, 247n14  
agency, 11–12, 31, 69, 78, 131, 142, 184, 190  
aggression/aggressiveness, 11, 44, 51–52, 65, 70, 117, 137; Freud and, 149, 154, 163, 179–81; melancholic act as beastly act of, 31–32; metaphysics of, 258n39; of neighbor/stranger, 179–80  
Akhenaten, 183–84, 187–89  
Alcaeus, 30, 32, 241  
Alcibiades, 32–38  
Alexander the Great, 32, 34, 101  
alienation, 9, 20, 155, 182, 184–85, 188, 199, 202; self-, 171  
allegory, 21, 93, 100–102, 150, 166, 195, 216, 252n42, 253n45; cave, 129  
Althusser, Louis, 260n24  
ambivalence, 2, 10–12, 14, 31, 40, 54, 67, 197; Arendt and, 235, 238, 263n26; Freud and, 148–49, 178, 185–86. *See also* Oedipus complex  
American Revolution, 224, 226, 233–34, 238, 243  
anarchism, 22, 41, 91, 152–53, 165, 168  
Anaxagoras, 61  
*andreia* (courage), 56  
anger, 23, 31, 51–52, 56, 58, 241; as mourning, 232; turned inward, 72; unforgetting, 17  
animality, 127. *See also* biopolitics; humanism  
animals, 37, 51, 95, 120, 128, 174, 209.  
*See also* totemism  
animism, 184  
anticipation, 65–68, 114  
*Antigone* (Sophocles), 62  
anxiety, 7, 46, 52, 225; and anxious stasis, 54–64; capitalism and, 201, 209, 213, 217; Freud and, 149, 151, 160, 184; *Hamlet* and, 66–68, 72, 76–78, 81, 84, 87, 92; lack of lack and, 66–68, 72, 81, 184; *Woyzeck* and, 120, 136. *See also* fear/fears  
aphorism, 245–46  
*Apology of Socrates, The* (Plato), 30, 36, 54–64, 249n64  
*aporia*, 60  
architecture, 66, 172–73, 200–202. *See also* fortress  
archive fever, 255n1  
Arendt, Hannah, 2–3, 6, 57–59, 220–44, 245n10; and Foucault, affinities with, 222; *The Human Condition*, 231, 238; and natality, 220, 238–39, 242–43; *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 228; *The Promise of Politics*, 228, 230, 234; and revolution, 6, 220–44



- aristocracy, 45, 50, 255n1  
Aristophanes, 36, 62, 167  
Aristotle, 7, 10, 33–34, 94, 169, 246n22;  
    *Eudemus*, or *On the Soul* (lost dialogue), 33; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 238  
art, works of, 176, 236  
artifacts, 123  
art of living, techniques in, 175–77  
Aspasia, 1–3  
Athenian Stranger, the, 37–40, 48, 56  
Athens: democracy of, 41, 63; different strata of society in, 57; festival in, 40–41; imperial power of, 223  
atonement, 121, 140, 213  
attachment, 10, 196–98, 210  
Auden, W. H., 229  
Augustine, Saint, 229–30  
autoimmunity, 47, 257nn14–15  
automatons, 111, 150  
autonomist hypothesis, 261n28  
awe, 10, 61–62
- Baas, Bernard, 53  
Badiou, Alain, 17, 41, 80–81; *Ethics*, 252n35  
Balibar, Étienne, 259n4  
bare life, 65, 257n20  
Bataille, Georges, 34  
Bates, Jennifer Ann, 251n30  
*Beast and the Sovereign, The* (Derrida), 128–29, 258n28  
beastliness, 31–32, 55, 125, 128  
beauty, 176; the beautiful city (Callipolis), 45–46, 48, 51; *kalos*, 51; love and, 247n14  
bees, 200–202  
Benjamin, Walter: “Capitalism as Religion,” 198, 206, 213–14, 218, 260n17; “Experience and Poverty,” 243; “Left-Wing Melancholia,” 196–98, 260n8; *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 8–10, 20, 61, 71–72, 89–90, 221, 245n19, 250n15, 252n42; “The Storyteller,” 87–88  
Bennett, Jane, 262n39  
*bêtise*, 122, 126–28  
bewilderment, 150, 179  
*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud), 151–71, 180, 189, 257n26  
*Billy Budd* (Melville), 237  
biology, 201, 261n35. *See also* science  
biopolitics, 65, 80, 108–10, 123–28 *passim*, 134–39 *passim*, 257n20; and biopolitical life, 29; and biopolitical regimes, 125, 212  
biopower, 110–11, 134, 218  
birth, 239. *See also* natality  
Black literary tradition, 5  
bliss, 176–77  
body, the, 9, 80, 82–83, 125–26, 151, 160, 174, 205, 256n11, 260n27; and the machine, 153. *See also* flesh; Foucault, Michel; materialism; subjectivity  
bourgeoisie, 20, 114, 169, 186, 239  
brotherhood (fraternity), 92, 227–28  
Brown, Wendy, 196–98, 260n8  
Büchner, Georg, 108; *Danton’s Death*, 108; *Lenz*, 108–9, 125; *Leonce and Lena*, 108. *See also* *Woyzeck* (Büchner)  
bureaucracies, 107, 242  
Butler, Judith, 5
- Caesars, 101, 173  
calling, 150, 213–14, 217, 219  
Callipolis, 45–46, 48, 51  
calmness/calm reason, 54–55  
Campbell, Timothy, 257n14  
Campe, Rüdiger, 121  
*Capital* (Marx), 199, 200, 202, 207  
capitalism, 192–219, 259n2, 259n5, 260n27, 261n28; and accumulation, 199–201, 204, 206, 214, 218–19, 261n33, 261nn28–29; and Adorno’s creature, Odradek, 209–19, 262n39; fundamental “law” of, 206; and guilt history, 199, 208, 213, 217; haunted nature of, 260n19; M-C-M model of, 215–17; as *nomos*, 200; spirit of, 214, 217. *See also* Deleuze, Gilles; Foucault, Michel; Marx, Karl; *oikos*; Schumpeter, Joseph  
*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (Schumpeter), 206–8, 261nn34–36  
“Capitalism as Religion” (Benjamin), 198, 206, 213–14, 218, 260n17  
care or concern (*Sorge*), 210–11, 213  
“Cares of a Family Man” (Kafka), 209. *See also* Odradek  
Cassandra, 25, 252n41  
Cassian, 10, 246n22  
castration, 73–74, 78, 80–81, 186  
catastrophe, 41, 102, 118, 132, 183, 187–88, 196  
catharsis, 149  
cathexis, 11–16, 19, 31, 193, 197



- cave allegory, 129  
Cavell, Stanley, 251n23, 252n41  
Caygill, Howard, 9  
Celan, Paul, 111, 123–24  
Char, René, 229, 234–36  
Charnes, Linda, 250n19, 251n21, 253n48  
Cheng, Anne, 4–5  
children's play, 152, 156–57  
children's time, 159  
*chora* (space), 22–23, 29  
Christianity, 134, 136; and love of neighbor as self, 179–80; and the Trinity, 215. *See also* Protestant Christianity; *specific topics, e.g.*, salvation  
circumcision, 188–89  
citizenship, 5, 228  
city/cities: anxious stasis and, 54–64; beautiful, 45–46, 48, 51; divided, 40, 247n50, and passim; Eternal, 172, 182, 231–34; five forms of, 50; just, 44–46, 51–52; and the soul/city-soul analogy, 39, 44–45, 50–52, 54. *See also by name*; community/communities  
civic life, 24–25  
civilization, 169–83; progress of, 125–27  
*Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud), 145, 169–83  
civil war, 38–39, 41–45, 47, 49; “civil war with himself,” 54, 56  
Clarus, Dr. J. A./the Clarus report, 107, 120–22, 130–32, 136, 140, 254n19  
classes, social, 193, 222. *See also by description, e.g.*, bourgeoisie; ruling class; working class  
Claudius (character in *Hamlet*), 77–80, 82, 86–87, 94–98, 102–3, 141, 251n24, 252n40  
cleanliness, 174–75  
Clytemnestra, 24–25  
cohabitation, 120. *See also* plurality; subjectivity  
collective action, 19, 38  
Comay, Rebecca, 6, 252n42, 253n46  
comedy: comic relief, 110; the tragic-comic, 49  
commerce, 93  
commodities/commodification, 193–94, 199, 214–19, 259n2, 259nn4–5, 260n27, 262n39; and the commodity fetish, 193–94, 216, 219  
common law, 46  
common purpose, 39  
commonwealth, 51  
communism. *See* Marx, Karl  
community/communities, 6; *delinquere* aspect of, 27–28; melancholia and, 26–28; primal murder of, 28; Woyzeck's vision of, 136. *See also* city/cities  
compassion, 78, 226, 228, 244  
competition: market, 39–40; postpolitical, 15. *See also* rivalry  
concern (*Sorge*), 210–11, 213  
confession, 96, 131, 159  
conflict: of love, 14, 19, 31–32; privatization of, 39; resolution of, 39. *See also specific topics, e.g.*, ambivalence; war  
conscience, 85, 94–97, 113, 116, 222  
constructions, 189  
consumption, 203–4  
contemplation, melancholic, 21, 101, 123, 195, 220  
contempt, 32–34, 46, 147, 168  
contingency, 216, 223  
conversion, 50, 130  
Copernicus, 240  
Copjec, Joan, 148  
cosmos, 108, 133  
counter-transference, 186  
courage: *andreia*, 56; Aristotelian/in-the-making, 257n26; of Freud, 151; moderation vs., 56; and philosophical teaching, 57; Socratic, 60; of truth, 17–18  
courtiers, 24, 83–84, 101–6, 230, 252n35; and the courtier-as event, 85–94, 97, 99, 101, 104, 106, 250n13  
creative destruction, 207–8  
creature, Adorno's (*Odradek*), 209–19, 262n39  
crime: *delinquere* aspect of communities, 27–28; and punishment, 77, 85  
crisis, 7, 50, 62–63, 66, 69, 102, 115, 140, 209, 241; economic, 243; historical, 92, 118; *krisis*, 28, 128; Marx and, 205–6. *See also* critique; governance; modernity; politics; sovereignty; subjectivity  
critical theory, 5. *See also individual theorists*  
Critchley, Simon, and Jamieson Webster, 250n17  
critique, 5–6, 21, 200, 242, 255n1; and double *raison*, 121, 127–29, 132; transformative act of, 196  
Croesus, 32–33

- daily life, 105, 152, 221  
*daimon*, 35–36, 62–63; Melancholia as, 1–4; politics as, 3  
darkness, 227, 242  
*Dasein*, 210–11, 214  
death: fear of, 41; of God, 126; practice of (*melete thanatou*), 64; second (*Hamlet*), 73–74; and space between two deaths (Lacan), 217; and unburials, 72.  
*See also* death drive; immortality; mourning  
death drive, 27, 29, 236; capitalism and, 216–17; Freud and, 154, 162–73, 180–83, 185–86, 258n27; *Hamlet* and, 86–89, 99, 255n1; the many faces of, 167; as natural historical, 181–82; nonsovereign, 182; Plato and, 32–34, 46–47, 59; sovereign, 162–65, 171  
debt/indebtedness, 98, 152, 199, 206; guilt and, 189, 212–14  
decisionism, 28  
decomposition, 20, 61, 93–94, 134, 207  
Deleuze, Gilles, 50, 107, 127, 245n19  
delusion, 175, 189  
democracy, 50, 242; Athenian, 41, 63; and power-sharing, 39; Western, 228.  
*See also* liberalism; modernity; subjectivity; time/temporality  
depersonalization, 9, 257n21  
depression, 142  
Derrida, Jacques, 5, 18, 145, 192, 245n4, 255n1, 257n15, 259n39 (chap. 4), 259n1 (chap. 5); *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 128–29, 258n28; *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, 256n5, 256n12; “To Speculate—on ‘Freud’,” 257n26  
*The Description of Misfortune* (Sebalde), 16, 18  
desert psychology, 220  
desire/desires: infinite, 43; spirited (*thumos*) and appetitive (*epithumia*) parts of the soul, 40. *See also* libido  
Desmoulins, Camille, 242–43  
despotism, 23, 34, 41, 157–58, 168, 231–32  
destruction: and civilization, 181; creative, 207–8; historical (*Destruktion*), 237–38; and indestructibility, 172, 194; and self-destruction, 39, 45–47; serial, 187–90; work of, 184  
determinism, 109  
deus ex machina, 173  
diagrams, 12, 25–26, 65, 67, 173, 208–9, 212, 255n1; Woyzeck-diagram, 107–8  
dialectical pessimism, 175–76  
dialectics, 201. *See also* Frankfurt School; *individual names*, e.g., Hegel, G. W. F.; Kant, Immanuel; Marx, Karl; Plato  
dignity, human, 244  
*dikaiosune* (justice), 43–44  
Diogenes Laertius, 32  
Diogenes of Sinope, 32, 34, 117  
Dionysius, 33  
Diotima, 2–3, 35, 247n14  
*dispositifs*, 65, 257n21  
diversity, 171  
Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, 240  
double nature, 117–18, 121  
double *raison*, 121, 127–29, 132  
*doxa* (changeable opinion), 22, 56–60  
dreams/dreaming: of Irma’s injection, 135–36, 141–51, 256n5, 257n13. *See also* *Interpretation of Dreams*, *The* (Freud)  
dualism, 169  
Dürer, Albrecht, 23–26, 65–68, 85; *Melancholia I* (engraving), 23, 26. *See also* fortress  
economics: modern, 212, 214; scientific aspirations of, 261n35. *See also* *individual names*, e.g., Schumpeter, Joseph; *specific topics*, e.g., labor *Ego and the Id*, *The* (Freud), 10, 12 *Ego in Freud’s Theory*, *The* (Lacan), 256n5, 256n12, 257n18, and passim  
Egypt, 183, 187–88  
Electra, 24  
Elsinore castle, 69–85 passim, 91–96, 99, 101–2, 105, 250n17, 252n35, 252n40, 255n1  
emotions, 9, 69, 116  
empathy, 33, 120  
emptiness, 8, 159, 250n13  
Eng, David, 5, 18–19  
enslavement. *See* slavery  
entrepreneurship, 207–8  
episteme, 37, 60; epistemic territories, 59–60  
*epithumia*, 40  
equanimity, 55  
equilibrium, 146–47, 153, 158, 189  
equity, 98

- eros: cursing of, 30–31; and erotic philosophy, 32, 35–37, 56–57, 247n14; and erotic truths, 56–57; of stasis, 30–64; tyrannical, 32, 34, 49, 52
- error, 127, 149
- Esposito, Roberto, 7, 26–28, 44, 115, 136, 231; *Bíos*, 251n29, 256n11, 257n14; *Communitas*, 257n14; “Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,” 257n14; *The Origin of the Political*, 245n10; *Terms of the Political*, 257n21; *Third Person*, 255n51, 257n21
- Eternal City, 172, 182, 231–34
- Ethics of Psychoanalysis, The* (Lacan), 180, 184, 249n5, and passim
- etymology, 205
- Euben, J. Peter, 25, 40–41
- everyday life, 105, 152, 221
- exception, sovereign, 256n11
- exile, 66, 102, 184, 222, 255n1; and return, 93
- factions/factionalism, 25, 38–40, 45, 47, 52, 152
- Fagan, Patricia, 249n64
- failure: *delinquere* aspect of communities, 27–28; pleasures associated with, 12
- fairy tales, 132–34
- Fanon, Franz, 240–41
- father, the: house-father, 210–19; indebtedness to, 189, 212–14; as like deus ex machina, 173; and Oedipus complex, 78–80, 84–85, 105; primal, 74–75, 178, 185–86, 190–91, 258n39; Roman paterfamilias, 212. *See also by name/description, e.g.*, ghost: of Hamlet’s father
- fear/fears, 50, 52, 72–74, 109–14, 146–47, 190, 207, 211, 239; of death, 30, 41; of revolt, 178; of war, 39. *See also* anxiety
- feast days, 213–15
- Ferdinand I, 65
- fermentation, 201–2, 206
- festival, Athenian, 40–41
- fetishism, 28, 35, 68, 146, 154–58
- fidelity: and the essence of melancholia, 193; paradox of, 259n1
- filth, 174–75
- Fitzmaurice, Andrew, 249n10, 252n40
- Flatley, Jonathan, 6
- flesh, 256n11; Freud and, 144, 150–51, 185, 190, 256n5, 256n11; *Hamlet* and, 79–87, 91, 93, 251n29; Odradek and, 262n39; *Woyzeck* and, 113, 115–17, 134–38. *See also* body, the; materialism; sovereignty
- Fliess, Wilhelm, 167, 185–86
- forms of life, 123, 139, 201–5, 254n33
- fortress, 65–72, 85, 103, 145, 147. *See also* Elsinore castle
- Foucault, Michel, 15, 17–18, 34, 107–11, 115, 132, 139, 241; and Arendt, 222; *The Courage of Truth*, 247n6; “Lives of Infamous Men,” 221–22, 229; “Truth and Juridical Forms,” 60–61. *See also specific topics, e.g.*, biopolitics
- Frankfurt School, 5. *See also specific members*
- fraternity, 92, 227–28
- fratricide, 6
- freedom, 243; and poverty, 241; spiritual, 254n23
- free will, 56, 109, 117
- French Revolution, 6, 108, 224, 226, 240–41
- Freud, Anna, 190
- Freud, Sigmund, 141–91; *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 151–71, 180, 189, 257n26; *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 145, 169–83; courage of, 151; and the dream of Irma’s injection, 135–36, 141–51, 256n5, 257n13; *The Ego and the Id*, 10, 12; and *The Ego in Freud’s Theory* (Lacan), 256n5, 256n12, 257n18, and passim; exile and terminal illness of, 184–85, 191; *The Future of an Illusion*, 169; *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 146, 250n20, 251n26, 256–57nn12–13; *Moses and Monotheism*, 141, 183–91, 258n35, 259n39; “Mourning and Melancholia,” 4, 10, 12, 31, 192; and political philosophy, 255n1; *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, 26; *Totem and Taboo*, 185, 190–91. *See also* psychoanalysis; *specific topics/concepts, e.g.*, death drive
- Freudianism, 5, 255n1
- Frieden, Ken, 256n9
- friendship, 39
- futility, 225
- Galen, 2
- games, children’s, 156–57
- Gaus, Günter, 223
- genital love, 178

- Gerhardt, Volker, 39  
German mourning-play. *See Trauerspiel*  
Gertrude (character in *Hamlet*), 79–87,  
97–99, 251n30; as flesh, 79–85  
ghost/ghosts, 1, 3, 16, 24, 27, 63, 131, 150,  
183–86, 199–200; of Hamlet's father,  
70–79, 84–85, 88–89, 91, 96–97,  
250n19, 251n21, 251n23, 251n27;  
melancholic, 73; nonoblivion as, 232;  
unlaid, 183–84. *See also* haunting  
Gilroy, Paul, 4–5  
Glaucon, 40–42, 44, 48–49  
God, death of 126  
gods, 1, 24, 33–34, 37, 39, 51, 53, 59–61,  
148, 168; humans as prosthetic, 177  
good/goodness, 227; the Good, 67.  
*See also* virtue/virtues  
good life, 66, 110  
*Gorgias* (Plato), 43  
governance, 109, 153. *See also* Badiou,  
Alain; biopolitics; Foucault, Michel;  
politics; sovereignty  
governmentality, 4, 15, 22, 110, 113, 152,  
242, 246n48, 251n24, 252n35  
grace, 214  
Grady, Hugh, 250n13, 252n42  
grandmother, 120, 133–34  
Gray, Richard, 137  
Great Fuckler, the, 95  
Great War, 152  
Greenblatt, Stephen, 251n27  
grief, 5, 7, 15–17, 31, 48, 232. *See also*  
*mênis*; mourning  
Grimm Brothers, 133  
guardian class, 44, 49, 56  
Guattari, Félix, 50  
guilt: accumulation of, 129, 206–9;  
capitalism and, 199, 213–14; economy  
of, 184, 213–14; and indebtedness,  
213–14; and reparation, 184  
guilt history, 28, 127, 129, 138–39, 182,  
188–91, 258n35; capitalism and, 199,  
208, 213, 217; concept of, 254n32  
habitual environment, 50–51  
Hamacher, Werner, 246n20, 254n32,  
260n17, 262n39  
*Hamlet* (Shakespeare), 6–7, 9, 17–19, 27,  
38, 65–106, 140, 141, 194, 198, 220,  
225, 233, 249n10, 250n13, 250n17,  
251n21, 252n40, 252n42, 253n46; and  
the courtier-as-event, 85–94, 97, 99,  
101, 104, 106, 250n13; ends of, 102–6;  
and fortress Elsinore, 69–72 (*see also*  
Elsinore castle); and Gertrude as flesh,  
79–85 (*see also* Gertrude); and the  
ghost of Hamlet's father, 70–79, 84–85,  
88–89, 91, 96–97, 250n19, 251n21,  
251n23, 251n27; “Mousetrap” in, 93–96,  
105; and natural history, 92–102; and  
political melancholia, 72, 77, 94, 104,  
252n40. *See also specific characters, e.g.,*  
Ophelia; *specific topics, e.g.,* proverbs  
haphazardness, melancholy, 227  
happiness: bliss, 176–77; and the death  
drive, 180, 182; and filth/cleanliness,  
174–75; pursuit of, 169, 175; as repetitive,  
182; road to, 180  
harmony, 51, 54, 150  
hatred, 17, 39  
haunting, 73–75, 104. *See also* ghost/ghosts  
Hector, 231–32  
Hegel, G. W. F., 60, 122, 211  
Heidegger, Martin, 6, 27, 101, 209–11, 237–38  
helplessness, 32, 173  
Heraclitus, 52, 231  
Herodotus, 33  
heroes/heroism: mythic, 63; tragic, 53,  
62, 74  
Hesiod. *See Theogony* (Hesiod)  
Hippocrates, 43  
Hippocratic Oath, 116  
historical destruction (*Destruktion*),  
237–38  
historical truth, 123, 189  
historicity, 90, 211, 261n28  
historiography, 186, 242  
history: of the Earth, 118; objectivity of,  
20, 22, 28, 72. *See also* natural history;  
prehistory  
Hitler, Adolf, 185  
Hobbes, Thomas, 22–23  
Höcker, Arne, 121, 131  
Homer, 47–49, 53–54, 229, 231, 233–34,  
238; and Homeric origin of politics,  
263n26; *Iliad*, 47, 232, 248n36  
*homo democraticus*, 41  
*homo oeconomicus*, 199  
honor, 42, 109; *timē*, 232  
hope, 5–6, 9, 27–28, 111, 114, 133–34, 194,  
209–10, 217, 220  
*Hope Draped in Black* (Winters), 5

- household, 40; and house-father, 210–19;  
*oikonomia*, 138, 152, 158, 169, 211, 214  
Hullot-Kentor, Robert, 253n4  
*Human Condition, The* (Arendt), 231, 238  
humanism, 95–96, 111, 260n26. *See also*  
biopolitics; law, the; politics; subjectivity  
human nature, 126–27, 227  
human rights, 244. *See also* subjectivity  
humor, 17. *See also* comedy  
Hungarian Revolution, 224  
hysteria, 141–44
- idealism, 122, 211. *See also individual*  
*philosophers*  
ideal kind, loss of, 12, 183, 188  
identity: formation of, 4–5; national, 132  
idiots, 120, 133–34  
*Iliad* (Homer), 47, 232, 248n36  
immanence, 45, 93, 162, 183, 188, 260n24;  
of repetition, 9; surplus of, 253n8  
immortality: death of, 228, 238; death of  
the death of, 238  
immunitarianism, 65, 71, 81–83, 85–86,  
93, 118, 146, 162, 170, 205; and the  
anti-immunitarian, 68  
immunity, 151, 257n14; and autoimmunity,  
47, 257nn14–15; and counter-immunity,  
146  
immunization, 37, 68, 81, 106, 115, 145–47,  
149, 163, 257n14  
imperialism, 187  
impersonal, the, 8, 19, 42–43, 50, 113, 131,  
202, 257n21; and impersonals, 100, 186  
incest, 178, 215  
incorporation, 4, 14–15, 19, 31–32, 46, 55,  
98–99, 119, 185, 201–2, 233  
indestructibility, 172, 194  
indeterminacy, 127  
individuality, 119, 121, 151  
inequality, 44, 137  
infinity, 64  
inflation, 152  
inheritance, 234–36  
inhumans/the inhuman, 35, 37–38, 49, 55,  
111, 118, 131, 195, 243–44  
injustice, 39; committing acts of, and  
sickness of soul, 43; internalized, 19;  
primal memory of, 179  
insecurity, 69, 168  
interconnection/interconnectedness, 67  
interiority, 78
- Interpretation of Dreams, The* (Freud),  
146, 250n20, 251n26, 256–57nn12–13  
investiture, 91  
invisibility, 227–28  
Irma's injection, dream of, 135–36, 141–51,  
256n5, 257n13  
irony, 49, 51, 78, 83–84, 92, 102–3, 114,  
152, 157, 162, 179  
isolation, 68, 96, 175, 214, 224, 231,  
260n27
- jealousy, 57, 143  
Jefferson, Thomas, 221, 236, 239–40  
Jesus. *See* Christianity  
Johnstone, Bruce, 61–62  
jouissance, 74, 77, 81, 93, 95, 132, 186  
joy, 126, 235  
Judaism, 227. *See also Moses and*  
*Monotheism* (Freud)  
judging, 229, 247n14  
Judgment Day, 112–13, 215  
Jung, Carl, 167, 249n62  
juridical power, 109  
justice: and civilization, 178; *dikaïosune*,  
43–44; and the just city, 44–46, 51–52;  
labor of, 57; opposite of, 39; of the  
stronger, 43, 223–24. *See also* Arendt,  
Hannah; law, the
- Kafka, Franz: “Cares of a Family Man,”  
209–19, 262n39; *The Castle*, 156  
Kahn, Charles, 52, 252n38  
*kalos* (beautiful), 51  
Kant, Immanuel, 122, 220, 222, 224–27,  
249n10, 259n4; “The Contest of  
Faculties,” 157  
Kazanjan, David, 5, 18–19  
Khan, Azeen, 255n1, 258n27  
Kierkegaard, Søren, 7–8, 245n19  
kindliness, 227  
Kirkland, Sean, 61–62  
knowledge, 127; Hamlet and, 250n17; and  
power, 61, 108; and self-knowledge,  
215; and truth, 36  
*krísis*, 28, 128
- labor: abstract, 199, 259n4, 260n27; free  
wage, 195; impersonalization of, 202;  
living, 198–99, 203–6, 261n28; past,  
203–4, 261n28. *See also* Arendt, Han-  
nah; Marx, Karl

- Lacan, Jacques, 18, 27, 36–37, 60, 64, 135–36, 148, 166, 187, 212, 217, 247n57, 249n62, 254n35, 256n5; *Anxiety*, 249n4, and passim; “Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*,” 71–72, 75–76, 95, 105, 250n20; *The Ego in Freud’s Theory*, 256n5, 256n12, 257n18, and passim; *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality*, 258n38, and passim; *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 180, 184, 249n5, and passim; and *How to Read Lacan* (Žižek), 246n44; *Transference*, 247n14
- lack: economy of, 74, 80–81, 217; erotic embrace of, 35; lack of, 66, 68, 72, 81, 184, 193, 198, 249n4; logic of, 72
- language, 95, 120; Arendt on, 237; performative, 83, 92; and second nature, 129
- Laplanche, Jean, 258n27
- Larsen, Svend Erik, 137
- law, the: common, 46; and juridical power, 109; and lawlessness, 22–23, 51, 53, 70; and lawmaking violence, 168; sovereign, 22–23. *See also* Agamben, Giorgio; Badiou, Alain; exception, sovereign; natural law; *nomos*; politics; rules; Schmitt, Carl
- Laws* (Plato), 23, 38–40, 48, 56
- Lear, Jonathan: *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*, 257–58nn26–27, 258n35, 258n39; *Radical Hope*, 6
- Left, the, 197–98
- left-wing melancholia, 194, 196, 260n8
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 226–27
- Leiden* (true suffering), 244
- Lenz (Büchner), 108–9, 125
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, 222, 229
- Letter VII* (Plato), 46, 54
- Libation-Bearers* (Aeschylus), 24–25
- liberalism, 69, 81, 249n10. *See also* democracy; politics; sovereignty
- liberty, progress of, 244
- libido, 10–11, 14–15, 20, 68, 167, 174, 181, 192, 197
- life, 257n20; biopolitical, 29; civilized, 174, 179–80 (*see also* civilization); daily/everyday, 105, 152, 221; forms of (*see* forms of life); good, 66, 110; mental/of the mind, 172, 177–79; and natural historical techniques of living, 171–72; and techniques in the art of living, 175–77. *See also by description, e.g.*, civic life
- light, 128, 227
- Linné, Carl von, 122
- literature: fairy tales, 132–34; the melancholic institution of, 229–40. *See also by author*
- liturgical time, 136
- living, techniques in the art of, 175–77
- logos*, 23, 36, 49, 54–55
- Loroux, Nicole, 16–17, 40, 45, 52, 232; *The Divided City*, 40, 247n50, and passim
- loss: heightened receptivity to, 5; of the ideal kind, 12, 183, 188; and the object/lost object, 5, 13–22 passim, 91, 192–95, 206, 223, 225; and politics, 16. *See also* grief; mourning
- Loss* (Eng and Kazanjian), 5, 18–19
- lost object, 5, 13–22 passim, 91, 192–95, 206, 223, 225; and the essence of melancholia, 193
- love: and beauty, 247n14; and being in love, 38; conflict of, 14, 19, 31–32; the erotic philosopher and, 247n14; genital, 178; and melancholy, 2; misery of, 38; for neighbor as self, 179–80; profaning power of, 35; the real of, 36
- lovers, 18
- Lukács, Georg, 254n37, 259n2
- Lupton, Julia Reinhard, 90–91, 251n29
- lust, 30, 79, 130
- Luther, Martin, 228
- Lutherans, 200
- Luxemburg, Rosa, 222
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 250
- Madison, James, 226
- madness, 18, 35, 37, 49–56 passim; *Hamlet* and, 76, 82–83, 90–94 passim, 99; of war, 152; *Woyzeck* and, 115, 118, 120, 132
- man, philosophy’s fixation on, 2–3
- mania, 13–15, 18, 51–52, 54–55, 197
- martial law, 70, 74
- Marx, Karl, 198–207, 259n4, 260n27, 261n28; *Capital*, 199, 200, 202, 207; “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” 239
- Marxism, 214



- masochism, 31, 152  
mass political movements, 236  
materialism, 195, 201. *See also* Bennett, Jane; Marx, Karl; science; things  
M-C-M model, 215–17  
Melancholia (daimon/demigod), 1–4  
*Melancholia I* (engraving by Dürer), 23, 26  
*Melancholy of Race, The* (Cheng), 4–5  
Melville, Herman, 221, 240; *Billy Budd*, 237  
memory: in *Hamlet*, 25n24; of misfortune, 16. *See also* unforgetting/the unforgettable  
*mênis* (wrathful grief), 16–17, 232, 234, 245n10  
mental events, 152  
mental life, 172, 177–79  
*Meridian, The* (Celan), 111, 123–24  
messiah, 134  
metabolism, 202–5. *See also* fermentation  
metaphor: and metaphoricity, 99; natural, 216  
metaphysics, 122. *See also* Deleuze, Gilles; Kant, Immanuel; ontology; Plato “metaphysics of aggression,” 258n39  
Metcalf, Robert, 63, 248nn50–51  
microbiology, 201  
Midas, King, 32–33  
middle class. *See* bourgeoisie  
mimesis, 48–49, 54  
mind: mental events, 152; mental life, 172, 177–79  
*Minima Moralia* (Adorno), 242  
mirroring, 90, 95, 166, 173, 200, 250n17, 259n4  
misfortune, 16, 18  
moderation, 56  
modernism, 7  
modernity, 6, 8, 212. *See also* politics; sovereignty  
monarchy, 12, 250n13  
monasticism, 214  
monotheism. *See* Christianity; Freud, Sigmund: *Moses and Monotheism*; Judaism  
monsters, 37, 55  
Montaigne, Michel de, 250  
Montesquieu, 212  
morality, 109, 113, 186; and moral awakening, 140. *See also* Arendt, Hannah  
Moretti, Franco, 250  
*Moses and Monotheism* (Freud), 141, 183–91, 258n35, 259n39  
mourning: anger as, 232; and paradox of fidelity, 259n1; work of, 6, 8, 10–13, 18–19, 245n4. *See also* grief; loss; “Mourning and Melancholia” (Freud)  
“Mourning and Melancholia” (Freud), 4, 10, 12, 31, 192;  
mourning-play, German. *See* *Trauerspiel*  
“Mousetrap” in *Hamlet*, 93–96, 105  
multiculturalism, 4–5  
multitude, the, 242. *See also* biopolitics  
Muses, 47–49, 54, 248n36  
mystery plays, 134  
naming, 122, 237  
Napoleonic era, 113  
Napoleonic Wars, 107  
narcissism, 11, 20, 122, 171, 196–97  
natality, 220, 238–39, 242–43  
national identity, 132  
natural history, 6, 20–24, 26, 29, 47, 69, 246n48; Adorno and, 19–21, 253n18, 253nn4–5; Arendt and, 221, 225, 233, 239–44 passim; capitalism and, 198, 200–205, 208–10, 216–18, 262n39; Freud and, 156–57, 161–74 passim, 177, 181–82, 187, 258n35; *Hamlet* and, 69, 72, 92–104, 106, 252n40; and *physionomos*, 200, 210; and techniques of living, 171–72; *Woyzeck* and, 114–18 passim, 122–30 passim, 136–40 passim, 253n4, 254n23  
naturalism, 145  
natural law, 246n48, 261n28; “natural law of motion,” 20  
natural philosophers, 169  
natural sciences, 204  
Nazism, 185  
necessity, rule of, 220, 230, 232  
Negri, Antonio, 126, 261n28  
neighbor, love for, 179–80  
neurosis: and natural historical techniques of living, 171–72; traumatic, 151–53, 160; war, 152–53. *See also* Oedipus complex  
Niceratus, 40  
*Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle), 238  
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 17, 33–34, 55, 88, 126, 138, 228, 260n17  
Noble Savage, 177

- nomos*, 22–23, 28–29, 46, 91, 93, 137, 206, 218; capitalism as, 200. *See also* law, the; *physionomos*
- nonoblivion, 17–18, 232
- nonsovereignty, 182, 186, 189–90
- norms/normativity, 24, 43, 90, 107, 146, 256n11. *See also* judging; law, the; politics; rules; sovereignty
- nothingness, 8, 211, 227, 254n30
- oath, language of, 76
- object, the, 19–20; capitalism and, 192; lost (*see* lost object); and subject-object opposition, 210
- objectivity, 20, 22, 28, 72
- oceanic feeling, 169–73, 176–77
- Odradek, 209–19, 262n39
- Oedipus at Colonus* (Sophocles), 234–35
- Oedipus complex, 78–80, 84–85, 105
- Oedipus Rex* (Sophocles), 61
- oikonomia*, 138, 152, 158, 169, 211, 214
- oikos*, 25, 138, 152, 231–32. *See also* law, the; politics; sovereignty
- Old Testament, 148. *See also* *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud)
- oligarchy, 40, 50
- ontology, 8, 211, 254n30
- Ophelia (character in *Hamlet*), 72, 76, 81–82, 98–99
- opinion, changeable (*doxa*), 22, 56–60
- oppression, 4, 195
- optimism, 33, 151
- order: and cleanliness, 174–75; and double nature, 117–18, 121; human, 128; *physionomos* as, 246n48; planetary, 118, 240
- Orsteia* trilogy (Aeschylus), 24–25
- organicism, 145
- orientation, 57, 108
- Origin of German Tragic Drama, The* (Benjamin), 8–10, 20, 61, 71–72, 89–90, 221, 245n19, 250n15, 252–53nn44–45
- Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt), 228
- Orwin, Clifford, 57
- Other, the, 74, 77, 148–49, 151, 166
- paganism, 184. *See also* gods
- Panofsky, Erwin, 23
- panopticism, 5, 113
- paradox, 3–5, 9, 13, 30–31; of fidelity, 259n1. *See also specific works, authors, or topics*
- “Paradoxes of Lament” (Comay), 252n42, 253n46
- paranoia, 117, 132, 198
- parricide. *See* Oedipus complex
- Parry, Adam, 51
- Parry, Richard, 52
- passions, 14, 17, 40–41, 82, 197, 220, 241, 255n1
- pathology, 4, 9–10, 50–52, 116–17, 142, 146–48, 256n12
- patriarchy, 209–10
- patterns, 118
- Peace of Nicias, 40
- Peloponnesian War, The* (Thucydides), 41–42
- penia*. *See under* poverty: *penia*
- penialogy*, 241
- penis. *See* phallus
- penology*, 241
- Pentecost, 136
- performativity, 83, 92, 246n20
- Pericles, 1, 17, 38; and Aspasia, 1–3
- persecution/the persecuted, 222, 227
- pessimism, 174–75, 177
- Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, 155
- Pethes, Nicolas, 121
- Phaedo* (Plato), 30, 53, 61, 64
- Phaedrus* (Plato), 54–55
- phallus, 72, 75–81, 91
- Philebus* (Plato), 53
- philosopher-kings, 117. *See also* Plato; *Republic*
- philosophy, 49; calm reason of, 54–55; corrupting power of, 63; courageous teaching of, 57; erotic, 32, 35–37, 56–57, 247n14; fixation on man of, 2–3; natural, 169; and poetry, 49; and politics, 2–3, 223–24 (*see also* political philosophy). *See also by name/individual philosophers*
- physionomos*, 23, 28–29, 246n48; capitalism and, 199–206, 210, 218; and fermentation, 201–2, 206; Freud and, 158, 162, 169; *Hamlet* and, 93, 98–99; as order, 246n48; *Woyzeck* and, 128–29
- piety, 55, 59
- Pindar, 22–23
- Piraeus, 40
- planetary order, 118, 240
- Plato, 30–64, 223–24, 249n64; *Apology*, 30, 36, 54–64, 249n64; *Gorgias*, 43;



- Laws*, 23, 38–40, 48, 56; *Letter VII*, 46, 54; *Phaedo*, 30, 53, 61, 64; *Phaedrus*, 54–55; *Philebus*, 53; political philosophy of, 22, 39, 50; *Republic*, 30–64; *Statesman*, 37, 56; *Symposium*, 2–3, 32–37, 247n14; *Timaeus*, 22, 29, 30
- Platonism, 40
- play, 49; children's, 152, 156–57; pure, 90; serious, 48–49
- pleasure: and failure, 12; and pain, 54; and unpleasure, 158–59, 162, 170. *See also* jouissance
- pleasure principle, 27, 148, 156–61; economy of, 152, 159. *See also Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud)
- pleasure-reality principle, 156, 158, 160
- plurality, 228
- Plutarch, 16, 32–33
- Polemarchus, 40
- polemos*, 231–34, 245n10
- political action, 13, 16, 39, 61, 223
- political domination, 52
- political life, 24, 41, 55, 59, 228, 252n40
- political melancholia, 5–7, 15–17, 20, 23, 193–98, 221, 235, 239; Hamlet and, 72, 77, 94, 104, 252n40
- political movements, 236
- political philosophy, 22, 39–40, 44, 50, 56, 108, 223–24, 227, 255n1. *See also individual names/works, e.g.,* Arendt, Hannah; Freud, Sigmund; *Republic* (Plato)
- political power, 43, 60–61, 241
- political regimes, 45, 50
- political theory, 40–41, 169, 223, 228
- political wisdom, 41
- politics: as *daimon*, 3; as division, 40; end of, 45; Homeric origin of, 263n26; loss and, 16; micro-politics, 259nn4–5, 260–61nn27–28, 260nn24–25; and philosophy, 2–3, 223–24 (*see also* political philosophy); the real of, 111, 240; violence and, 231; worst enemy of, 232. *See also entries beginning with* political; *specific theorists; specific topics and descriptions, e.g.,* stasis: stasis-politics
- Polonius (character in *Hamlet*), 72, 78, 81–85, 88–89, 93–94, 98, 252n40
- poor, the. *See* poverty
- Postcolonial Melancholia* (Gilroy), 4
- poststructuralism, 6, 197
- poverty, 120, 240–44; *penia*, 1, 32, 35, 49, 241
- power: abuse of, 82; anarchic state, 153; beastly rituals of, 125; and biopower, 110–11, 134, 218; corrupting, of philosophy, 63; *dispositifs* (apparatuses) of, 65; juridical, 109; knowledge and, 61, 108; political, 43, 60–61, 241; and powerlessness, 34–35, 61, 211; and power relations, 260n27; and power rule, 111; and power-sharing, democratic procedures of, 39; shamelessness of, 82. *See also* sovereign power
- prehistory, 7, 74, 124–25, 178, 195, 230, 233–34, 245n10
- present, the, 63, 102, 140, 196–98, 200, 229. *See also* ontology; time/temporality
- pride, 211
- primal father. *See under* father, the: primal
- primitive accumulation, 206, 261nn28–29, 261n33
- privilege, 228
- production: commodity, 260n27; means of, 204, 207. *See also* biopower; Marx, Karl; war
- profit, 205–6, 214
- progress: of civilization, 125–27; and empty time, 196
- Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Freud), 26
- Promise of Politics, The* (Arendt), 228, 230, 234
- Protagoras, 57
- Protestant Christianity, 200, 214, 228
- proverbs, 87–89, 100, 131–32, 252n37
- providence, 7, 9
- Psychic Life of Power, The* (Butler), 5
- psychoanalysis: foundational dream of, 144; and psychoanalytic criticism, 78. *See also individual names, e.g.,* Freud, Sigmund; Jung, Carl; Lacan, Jacques
- psychosis, 11, 130
- puberty rites, 178
- public life, 52, 228
- public realm, 227
- punishment, 115; crime and, 77, 85
- Pylades, 24
- race, 4–5
- Radical Hope* (Lear), 6

- Read, Jason, 259nn4-5, 260nn24-25, 260-61nn27-28
- real, the. *See under specific topics, e.g.,* love; politics
- reality: testing of (Freud), 192; virtual, 193
- reality principle, 11, 153, 155-56, 158-60; and the pleasure-reality principle, 156, 158, 160
- reason: calm, of philosophy, 54-55; Reason, 145-47
- rebellion, 168, 179
- rebirth, 238
- reconciliation, 218
- Reddick, John, 253n17, 254n30
- refugees, 218, 222, 227
- regimes: biopolitical, 125, 212; political, 45, 50
- reification, 257n21, 259n2
- relationality, 210
- remorse, 140
- repetition: compulsive, 131, 154, 158, 160-61, 172, 237; immanence of, 9
- representation, 80, 90-92, 121
- repression, 125, 142, 146-47, 157-58, 165, 189, 251n26
- reproduction, 80, 199, 208, 215-17, 251n21
- Republic* (Plato), 30-64
- republican tradition, 252n40
- Resistance, the, 234-36
- respectability, acquisition of, 84
- ressentiment, 4, 23
- return, rule of, 172
- revelation, 140
- revolution, 7, 13-15, 26, 29, 45, 89, 92; Arendt and, 6, 220-44; capitalism and, 213, 218; Freud and, 157, 182, 186; natural history and, 240-44; poetic, 237; poverty and, 240-44; and revolutionary action, 224-25, 234-35, 238; and revolutionary movements, 115, 242; unfinished work of, 220; and the worst, 221-29; *Woyzeck* (Büchner) and, 108, 111-15, 119, 123-24, 126, 135, 140. *See also by name/description, e.g.,* American Revolution; French Revolution; Kant, Immanuel; Marx, Karl
- revolutionary time, 24, 112
- Richards, David G., 253n11
- rights, 98, 228, 244. *See also* subjectivity
- rivalry, 77, 116, 231-32. *See also* Oedipus complex
- Robespierre, Maximilien, 238, 242, 244
- Rolland, Romain, 169-70, 173
- Rome, 263n26; as Eternal City, 172, 182, 231-34; origin of political existence of, 230-31; as second Troy, 231, 238
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (characters in *Hamlet*), 72, 81, 86-87, 97, 102-3
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 155, 244
- Rowland Smith, Robert, 258n27
- Royal Remains, The* (Santner), 251n29, 252n34, 252n38, 253n8, 253n15, 256n5, 256n11, 257n26, 262n39
- rules, 24, 164, 252n35. *See also* law, the
- ruling class, 46, 259n4; aristocracy, 45, 50, 255n1; oligarchy, 40, 50
- "Rumpelstiltskin," 134
- Rust, Jennifer, 90-91
- sacredness/the sacred, 65
- sacrifice, 65-70 passim, 77, 108, 148-49, 168, 176
- sadism, 11, 27, 31, 110, 167, 180-81
- sadness, 126, 168. *See also* grief; mourning
- Saint-Just, Louis de, 244
- salvation, 113, 140, 214
- Santner, Eric: *The Royal Remains*, 251n29, 252n34, 252n38, 253n8, 253n15, 256n5, 256n11, 257n26, 262n39; *The Weight of All Flesh*, 262n39
- Saturn/the saturnine, 23-24, 243
- satyrs, 33, 35, 37
- Saxonhouse, Arlene, 51 and passim
- scenes, 31-32, 66-67, 123, 129, 133-35, 138, 142, 226, 252n42
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph, 211
- Schiller, Johann Christoph Friedrich von, 145
- Schmitt, Carl, 89-93, 252n38
- Schreber case (Freud), 132, 136
- Schumpeter, Joseph, 206-9; *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 206-8, 261nn34-36; and creative destruction, 207-8
- science: economics and, 261n35; natural sciences, 204; revolution in, 109, 119
- Sebald, Winfried Georg, 4; *The Description of Misfortune*, 16, 18

- second nature, 20, 28, 129, 192, 254n37, 259n2
- self: care of (*epimeleia heautou*), 64; healthy, 146–47; true, 146–47
- self-awareness, 10
- self-censorship, 147
- self-destruction, 39, 45–47
- self-discourse, involuntary, 236–37
- self-dissolution, 42, 46, 49
- selfhood, 166
- self-knowledge, 215
- self-sufficiency, 261n28
- sense-making, 129
- serfdom, 214
- serious play, 48–49
- Seventh Letter* (Plato). See *Letter VII* (Plato)
- sexual functions, 174
- sexual instincts, 164
- sexuality, 135, 143, 166, 171–72, 178
- shame: the honorable form of (*aidos*), 42; and shamelessness, 30, 59, 63, 79–82, 91, 93, 105, 125, 129, 221; shaming-reproach, 63; and sovereign power, 124–25
- Silenus, 32–35, 38, 64
- singularities, 87, 240
- slavery, 42, 45, 214
- sniffing, 174
- social, the, 136, 145, 150, 216–17
- social classes. See *classes*, social
- social contract, 185
- social disease, 145
- Socrates, 32–38; and Agathon, 36, 247n14; and Alcibiades, 32–38; and Phaedrus, 54–55; Plato's *Apology* of, 30, 36, 54–64, 249n64; in Plato's *Philebus*, 53; and Thrasymachus, 41–44; and the *Trauerspiel*, 61; trial and death of, 30, 40, 55, 140, 222–23, 227
- solipsism, 155
- solitude, 10
- Solon, 32–34, 50
- sophism, 2–3, 22–23, 49, 57, 60–61
- Sophocles: *Antigone*, 62; *Oedipus at Colonus*, 234–35; *Oedipus Rex*, 61
- Sorge* (care or concern), 210–11, 213
- sorrow, universal, 18. See also *grief*; *mourning*; *sadness*
- soul/souls, 63–64; city and/city-soul analogy, 39, 44–45, 50–52, 54; death of, 64; *Eudemus*, or *On the Soul* (Aristotle, lost dialogue), 33; five forms of, 50; immortality of (see *immortality*); individual, five forms of, 50; sickness of, 43; soul-practice (Plato), 50; spirited (*thumos*) and appetitive (*epithumia*) parts of, 40
- sovereign exception, 256n11
- sovereign ipseity, 115, 258n28
- sovereign law, 22–23
- sovereign power, 12, 29, 86, 111, 115–16, 124–28 passim, 218, 246n48, 257n20
- sovereignty, 22, 34, 66, 109–10, 124, 237, 252n35
- space/spatiality, 24, 47, 63, 115, 156, 239; *chora*, 22–23, 29
- speech acts, 76, 121, 246n20
- Spinoza, Baruch, 122
- spiritual poverty, 242
- Stanzas* (Agamben), 67–68
- stasis: ancient meaning of, 247n50; anxious, 54–64; contagious dynamic of, 47; the end of, 45; eros of, 30–64; persistent latency of, 40; *stasis kinete*, 52; stasis-politics, 48; and Ur-stasis, 47–49. See also *civil war*
- Stoffwechsel*, 203. See also *metabolism*
- stranger (neighbor), 180
- Stranger, the (Athenian), 37–40, 48, 56
- strategy of melancholia, 194
- Strauss, Leo, 30–31
- stupidity, 30, 113–14, 127, 182; *bêtise*, 122, 126–28
- subjectivity, 119, 140, 249n10, 259n5, 260–61nn27–28. See also *Foucault*, Michel; *Kant*, Immanuel; *modernity*; *politics*
- subject-object opposition, 210
- substitution, 11, 84–85, 87, 91, 159, 194, 227–28; economy of, 80, 84
- succession, 70, 77, 80–82, 130
- suffering, 175–76; true (*Leiden*), 244
- suicide, 46, 111–12, 140
- superego, 12–15, 86–87, 178, 182–86 passim, 189–90, 223
- techniques in the art of living, 175–77
- technology, 65, 177, 201, 261n28
- teleology, 165
- temporality. See *time/temporality*

- territory. *See* space/spatiality
- terror, monotheistic, 184, 186
- theater, 49; power of, 71
- theatocracy, 48
- Theogony* (Hesiod), 37–38, 55, 249n64
- things: end of, and new beginnings, 203–4;  
the Thing, 26–28, 217; thingliness,  
205
- Third Person* (Esposito), 255n51, 257n21
- thought-events, 50–51
- Thrasymachus, 41–44
- Thucydides, 50–51; *The Peloponnesian War*, 41–42
- Timaeus* (Plato), 22, 29, 30
- timē* (honor), 232
- time/temporality, 24, 47, 63, 115, 156,  
239; adult, 159; childrens, 159; liturgical,  
136; revolutionary, 24; and timelessness,  
157
- timocracy, 45, 50
- Tocqueville, Alexis de, 221
- tools, 23, 203–4
- totalitarianism, 228
- Totem and Taboo* (Freud), 185, 190–91
- totemism, 155. *See also* *Totem and Taboo*  
(Freud)
- tragedy, ancient Greek. *See* Aeschylus;  
Sophocles
- tragedy, Shakespearean. *See* *Hamlet*
- tragic-comic, the, 49
- tragic drama, German. *See* *Origin of  
German Tragic Drama, The*  
(Benjamin)
- tragic heroism, 53, 62, 74
- transference, 98, 146–47, 158–59, 186; and  
counter-transference, 186
- Transference* (Lacan), 247n14
- transmissibility, 132, 238
- Trauerspiel* (mourning-play), 8–10, 20,  
61, 71–72, 89–90, 221, 245n19, 250n15,  
252n42
- traumatic neurosis, 151–53, 160
- Trinity, 215
- Trojan War, 25, 230–33
- Tronti, Mario, 261n28
- Troy: Rome as second, 231, 238; sacking  
of, 238. *See also* Trojan War
- trust, 228
- truth/truths: courage of, 17–18; erotic,  
56–57; eternal, 61; historical, 123, 189;  
knowledge and, 36; melancholia and,  
8; new, emergence of, 8
- Typhon (monster), 37, 55
- tyranny, 32–38, 50. *See also* *under* eros:  
tyrannical
- unconscious, the, 12–13, 29, 157–58, 160–61,  
170
- unforgetting/the unforgettable, 3, 6,  
16–18, 27–29, 40, 157–58, 192, 221,  
246n48; the “unforgetful,” 17, 232–33;  
unforgetting grief (*penthos alaston*),  
16–17
- unhappiness, 21, 28, 53, 176, 178–80, 196,  
226
- unity, internal and external, 39, 51
- unpleasure, 158–59, 162, 170
- Unruhe* (unrest), 200, 262n39
- Ursprung*, 245n10
- Ur-stasis, 47–49
- use-value, 203–4, 215, 259n5
- utopia, 66
- value, 216; use-value, 203–4, 215, 259n5
- violence: divine, 10; lawmaking, 168; poli-  
tics and, 231; race-inflected, 5; threat  
of, 67. *See also* *specific topics, e.g.*,  
Oedipus complex; war
- Virgil, 221, 231; *Aeneid*, 233–34, 238–39
- Virno, Paolo, 261n28
- virtue/virtues, 17, 103, 109, 113, 168. *See also*  
good/goodness
- vocation, 67, 130. *See also* calling
- wages, 199; and free wage labor, 195
- war, 152–53. *See also* *by name/description*,  
*e.g.*, French Revolution; Trojan war;  
civil war; revolution
- wealth, 23, 241–42. *See also* capitalism;  
ruling class
- Weber, Max, 198, 200, 214, 219
- Weber, Samuel, 257n15, 258n29
- will. *See* agency; free will
- Winters, Joseph R., 5
- wisdom, 57–60; accumulation of, 244;  
collective, 58, 132; political, 41; reputed,  
57; Socratic, 60; worthless, 59–60
- wish fulfillment, 175
- working class, 199, 260–61nn27–28.  
*See also* *Woyzeck* (Büchner)

- worldlessness, 227  
World War I, 152  
World War II, 234  
worship, 168, 213–14  
*Woyzeck* (Büchner), 6, 18, 107–40, 198; the Barber, 121–22, 139; the Barker and the Announcer, 123–29; the Captain, 111–17; the Doctor, 117–23; “on and on,” 129–34; *Woyzeck and Marie*, 134–40  
Woyzeck-diagram, 107–8  
wrathful grief (*mênis*). See *mênis Wretched of the Earth, The* (Fanon), 240–41  
Yorick (character in *Hamlet*), 101–2, 104; unburial of, 72  
zero degree, 93  
Žižek, Slavoj, 246n44, 251n21, 256n7  
Zupančič, Alenka, 250n18, 254n35