

## Notes on Critique, Death, and Divine Authority

Aaron Eldridge

*“Our age is properly the age of critique, and to critique everything must submit”*

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

*“And that is why the potter, just like you to whom I am speaking, creates the vase with his hand around this emptiness, creates it, just like the mythical creator, ex nihilo, starting with a hole.”*

Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*

It is tracing the elision of the vantage of death, the Divine vantage, under the gaze of critique that concerns these notes. If critique, in its totalizing ambit, is that which seeks to resolve, rehabilitate, and repair its object while it separates itself from its object, then critique must invariably meet the problem of its own limit. Hence critique must always be primordially self-critique. Critique takes the form of a decision, one that inaugurates an order of separation oriented around an anxiety of the limit. This threshold is both temporal—past from present, for the sake of a ‘critical’ future—and spatial—‘here’ from ‘there’. In this sense, critique is linked indelibly to crisis; that is, to an exceptional time which demands an exceptional resolution. *Krisis*, in its Greek etymology, marks a turning point, one that inaugurates an order of separation between death and life itself. The proximity of death and life is a problem of the limit, of interiority and exteriority, one that threatens discontinuity. Critique resolves its anxiety around the problem of discontinuity only by eliding it from its perspective; in this way, it guarantees continuity of world (bare life), its time (chronological time), and its place (infinite space).

The question at hand, then, is in what way death is constituted as an object, and hence as a crisis, of critique. How is death separated from the space of the critic, made an object—and thus, a crisis—that is re-solved? For death offers the vanishing point of critique. It is that which transgresses every authoritative act, every attempt to begin from the position of a sovereign here and now. If, indeed, ‘here’ cannot be constituted by a separation of this life from non-life, nor by the eschatological time of ending as a future happening but a constitutive temporality of the ‘now’, then death is precisely that which can never be decided upon in an act of critique. Consequently, under the auspices of critique, death can only appear in the form of an exclusion. It must be separated off from life in order to be re-solved and thus reproduce perpetually its status as crisis. But more than this, death (dis)appears not as one among many crises that critique might take up to resolve, but as the first crisis; it is the very point at which critique may emerge in a (trembling) coherence. In other words, it may be said that without a sovereign decision on death there could be no possibility of critique.

And it is only here, at the point of disarticulation, that the question of Divine authority may be brought into relief. The question of this authority is not, as is often supposed, a question of force vis-à-vis freedom and autonomy, nor a question of creation and its origin. Instead, Divine authority here is thought in constellation with the *nihil*, the time of ending, a time that threatens to undo the chronological time of the now. Like death, critique finds Divine authority as an obstacle to its execution—inasmuch as both must be separated and decided upon. As both Divine authority and death signal the heteronomy of a vantage that does not make itself available to the critical gaze, and indeed transgresses it, death and the Divine both challenge the possibility of critique as such. The elision of Divine authority is only possible in the separation and exclusion of death from the living and immortal space of the critic.

What is denoted by critique, then, is not simply the genealogy of a grammar, wending through the history of Enlightenment Europe, much less an ahistorical practice. Instead, it is the sensibilities, affective dispositions, and structural articulations that subtend an act of criticism, the means by which a space of sovereign critique is forged. The famous definition of the sovereign, popularized by Foucault's writings on biopolitics, as the one who "lets live and makes die", stages in a very visceral sense a decision on death. But this is no less the case with the reversed formulation that is offered by the biopolitical power injunction that is said to supplant the sovereign—to "make live and let die". In both instances, marked by the conjunction splitting either syntagm, death is separated off from life and made to be distinct, as the constituting and constitutive site of critical force. And this is not, necessarily, a question on the monopoly of power, i.e., the means and possibilities of exercising forms of coercion. Rather, the logic of the exception of sovereign authority is here grounded in a critical decision on death. The site of this exclusion marks the spatial and temporal structure that enables the possibility of such a monopoly in the first instance: the impossibility of death and life's imbrication. Or, in temporal terms, the time of dying with the immortal time of the decision.

Many works have traced the question of the sovereign's doubled body,<sup>i</sup> and how this body itself, as the material assembly of an impossible imbrication, carries a tension-laden split between the sovereign's mortal and immortal iterations. It marks a divide that will be decisive for critique: one between Divine and human realms, 'here' and 'there', this life and future-life. As far as this problematic has been taken up under the heading of a 'political-theology' in the dominant Schmittian reading<sup>ii</sup>, the doubled body of the sovereign is seen to be smuggling the theological by way of the secular and hence to be a continuation of transcendent authority in an immanent form. The problem of periodization aside,<sup>iii</sup> this argument's frame does little to further the problem posed by death, i.e., that the critical and sovereign decision on death marks the emergence of the logic of sovereignty. Moreover, within Schmitt's frame, Divine authority is collapsed into the figure of the sovereign as the one who, as it is often supposed, comes to

*represent* the transcendent (Divine) in the immanent (the world). Not only does such a division presuppose a certain kind of representational logic that remains assumed, but it does little to countenance the obstacle that Divine authority offers to formulations of sovereignty vis-à-vis destruction.

One need only turn to Hobbes' *Leviathan* to understand how together the problem of Divine authority and death are an obstacle whose overcoming resolves and conditions the possibility of sovereignty. The text, written at the time of the English Civil War, establishes the existential and political ground of sovereignty through several key divisions. As to the first, Hobbes clearly articulates the existential and temporal status of the Kingdom of God versus the kingdom of the sovereign. The two, the territorial kingdom of the sovereign and the Kingdom to come, are exclusive of one another and must remain so. At the same time, the former is made possible only by the non-presence of the latter; the territorial sovereign remains a stop-gap that is destined to end in the future coming of the Kingdom. The second division occurs in the text when Hobbes poses the possibility of an idealized Papal commonwealth. For him, such an organization could only emerge with all Christians and all Christian churches being united into one territory. Since a Christian sovereign territory proper—one that would hold singular Voice, Will, and Reason—is impossible, and a myriad of churches proliferate, the territorial sovereign of this world must hold ultimate authority over the given church of his territory.

Hence in the organization of *Leviathan* one finds, rather than a binary relation between Church and state (as is often supposed under the heading of secularism), a ternary: the Divine Kingdom as the future-ending of sovereignty, the current Papal and Protestant churches, and the present institution of the sovereign. In this sense, both church authority and the sovereign remain provisional and hold a strange relationship to this eschatological Kingdom, tethered to it and yet bereft of its force. Moreover, the authority of the Divine Kingdom is one that can only be in a relation of antagonism with the sovereign—as the Divine Kingdom heralds the sovereign's destruction. And yet the eschatological authority of the Kingdom is precisely that which, in its separation and hence resolution into a future happening<sup>iv</sup>—that is, into an ending that occurs at the terminus of linear time—enables the exercise of sovereign authority. Sovereign authority resolves by constantly deferring its own end.

Sovereign authority is consummated, in a decisive and distinctly Western Christian manner, as a hermeneutic monopoly on the interpretation of scripture. Authority, whether of the sovereign or of a Christian church, in being welded to the interpretation of Christian scripture, marked a major structural change in the institutional life of post-Reformation Europe.<sup>v</sup> But, as the head of the institutional church in a specific territory, the sovereign must be the one who maintains the sole privilege of interpreting scripture. This point has been noted in Niklaus

Largier's compelling reading of the Reformation<sup>vi</sup>, where the question of secularism is not one of faith versus reason; instead, correct reading practices of scripture are to be maintained by the very secular order of sovereign law—freedom and faith are part of the inner life of a Christian, while hermeneutics and the law belong to the outer realm. This division, as part of Luther's reformist drive to curb "wild" hermeneutic reading practices which invoked radical forms of eschatology and community, bifurcates the human into an interior and exterior subject. The secular here is not that which is isolated from the religious but that which marks the limit of an interpretation of scripture. The sovereign decision makes a *crisis* of eschatology, as that which must be bracketed off, re-solved, through a hermeneutical practice. The anxiety around Divine authority in *Leviathan*—here as eschatological ending—is of the order of the sign.

Consequently, much of the later sections of *Leviathan* are concerned with the status of the sign in terms of representation in Christian tradition. While the text is resolute in its refutation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, issue is not taken with regard to the singular authority of the priest to enact the change of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. Instead, it is in the status of the bread and wine in relation to the words of scripture, that is, of the possibility of signification. The specificity of Christ's words, as belonging to a unique historical "moment", disqualify them from the institutional and liturgical life to which they had subsequently been appended: the "Word of God revealed in the Scriptures", Hobbes argues, does not signify the extension of Christ's words to "all the seeming morsells of bread that have ever since been". Hence, "if that text does not signifie that, (for there is no other that can be alleged for it)", then, "because it is a worship of humane institution, it is Idolatry" (451). Hobbes takes issue not with the thaumaturgic mechanics of transubstantiation, nor with the authority of the words at the Eucharist as such, but with the scriptural interpretation of Christ's now historicized words as denoting real presence.

Like the status of the scriptural words of institution, the question of the image becomes critical for the text's polemic against Catholicism. Hobbes understands the Roman Church to be perpetuating pagan idolatries through its worship of saints' images and their procession in public. For Hobbes, the image is always in danger of becoming idolatrous since the imaginal is (as the author notes by citing the original Greek word, *eidos*) sensuous. By this definition the image can only ever relate to that which is visible; consequently, that which is invisible is unimaginable. Hobbes thus concludes that "there can be no image of God" (448). However, several paragraphs onward in his text, and in seeming contradiction to this initial definition of the image as the resemblance of something visible, Hobbes adds: "in the larger use of the word Image, is contained also, any Representation of one thing by another. So an earthly Sovereign may be called the Image of God" (448). The sovereign definitively cannot be a strict resemblance of the invisible God, and yet he must present a simulacrum of the Divine presence as evinced by the

right to interpret scripture. This tensional split which subtends the division of the eschatological kingdom and the kingdom of the sovereign is at its most intense in the status of the representational image; the possibility of maintaining the antinomy set forth in the image of sovereignty is predicated on the sovereign excising its own ending from the execution of its authority.

In *Leviathan*, then, the ambition of the hermeneut does not encompass only scripture, but the world: bodies, images, texts, become readable according to the model of scriptural interpretation. They become textualized “expressions” of a presence that must remain sundered from its representational medium, a medium which remains the “faculty of mans [*sic*] nature” (448). The quality of sovereign representation is such that it is produced by an eschewed ellipsis between presence and non-presence. The time and place of the Divine is to be found as an anxiety here, not as the presence ‘behind’ the sovereign, but in the interstice between presence and non-presence, the *hic et nunc* of the sovereign and the future of the eschatological kingdom. A point of disarticulation where the possibility of representation enters into abeyance. The civil war and threatening destruction in England that elicited *Leviathan*, the reader will recall, is the *summum malum* against which the text is oriented. The possibility of a sovereign decision relies on the excision of Divine authority in its form as a heteronomous ending—the core that can never be compassed by the hermeneutical ambition, and that founds the limits of signification.

The problems of Divine authority and death, displaced in Hobbes as a question of sovereignty, are in Leibniz’s writings formalized into a question of reason. Like Hobbes, the problem of scriptural authority and the authority of interpretation is at play in Leibniz’s problematic. But whereas Hobbes grounds the interpretation in the personage of a territorial sovereign, Leibniz makes recourse to reason. Reason is defined at one point in his *Theodicy* as “the inviolable linking together of truths” (91). Hence, unlike revelatory experience, Reason is not an experiential content, having “to do with truths independent of the sense” (73). It is the guarantee of continuity as such, the impossibility of lacunae. Moreover, just as Hobbes contended that the revelatory authority of scripture and natural reason spring from different sources, and hence bifurcates the human, Leibniz brings the two into an ordered relationship that maintains this distinction:

For, after all, one truth cannot contradict another, and the light of reason is no less a gift of God than that of revelation. Also it is a matter of no difficulty among theologians who are expert in their profession, that the motives of credibility justify, once for all, the authority of Holy Scripture before the tribunal of reason, so that reason in consequence gives way before it, as before a new light, and sacrifices thereto all its probabilities. (“Theodicy” 92)

Leibniz's claim is not simply that an abstracted reason would be that to which parochialized scripture is submitted, that is, the "motives of credibility" which allow for a reasoned argument against objections to the experiences of scriptural revelation.<sup>vii</sup> Instead, the heart of the claim rests in the linkage between reason and sovereignty via interpretative force. Just as the sovereign is the image of interpretive force, reason becomes the metaphysical ground of continuity as such.

A machinic quality to the hermeneutical decision is evinced in the writings of Leibniz; there is a qualitative leap from the interpretive monopoly of the sovereign to a now independent and systematic reason. This radicalization of continuity-thinking is such that, like the sovereign guarantee, the spatial and temporal arrangement of the system enables the possibility of a totalized and hence disclosed world. Whereas the ending of the sovereign state in the coming of the Divine kingdom continually haunted the possibility of sovereign interpretation, here even the prognosticated future-end is elided into a entelechial progression toward perfection.

This total systematicity is evinced in the connection between the writing of two of Leibniz's most important works, *The Monadology* and *Theodicy*. As to the former, the radical systematicity of world extends—in keeping with Neoplatonism—into Divine hierarchies. God, as "the most perfect of monarchs" ("The Monadology" 85), figures in Leibniz's text as the entelechial anchor of the world order; the infinite limit-concept of disclosure. Thus, while monads—the individual and minimal substances of world—act according to a division of potentiality and actuality, God infinitely compasses all possibilities and actualities. The positing of God as a logical extension of the world has a double consequence: this present world must be the most perfect one possible and "every organized body of a living thing is a kind of divine machine or natural automaton" ("The Monadology" 64). Every part of the biological machine participates in its own perfect end, which is ultimately aimed at Divinity as the apotheosis of entelechy itself. Here it serves simply to remind the reader of Leibniz's axiom: *natura non facit saltus*, nature makes no leaps!<sup>viii</sup>

It is only from the perspective of the machine that Leibniz can write his *Theodicy*. The title of the piece being a gallicized combination of the Greek terms (*theos*, God, and *dikē*, justice), the pretense of *Theodicy* is nothing less than the justification of Divine creation. The tribunal of reason is not only that to which revelation is subjected, but God as perpetual *actus* is made the object of this sovereign tribunal. The fact that God is pure act bears on the possibility of theodicy, as God is here nothing but a positive actuality of the created world. The logical unfolding of the Divine action leaves no possibility for the preponderance of destruction, of a Divine authority that transgresses the means of perspective, of continuity, itself. Instead, the machine acts as a guarantee of perspective and gives voice, by way of continuous act, to the heteronomy of Divine occlusion.

Hence any theodictic justification, which ostensibly occurs due to the problem of evil, proves itself tautologically unnecessary. As creation has radical and formal continuity—i.e., form is not a discontinuity but can always be broken into parts—death can only ever be secondary to the world of substance. To quote the editor of *Theodicy*, Austin Farrer, for Leibniz “no animal dies and no animal is generated. Death is the reduction and generation the enrichment of some existing monad’s body; and, by being that, is the enrichment or the reduction of the monad’s mental life” (“Theodicy” 24). Death cannot affect substance, but only its quality, i.e., death *qua* discontinuity is impossible. It is not surprising, then, that for Leibniz time is not substantive but merely a relation of substance (much like for Hegel time is a negative relation of space). Here there is an impossibility of eschatological time, a time of ending that would undo chronological time, as such.

In Leibniz’s rebuke of Pierre Bayle—who challenged reason’s capacity to solve the problem of evil and insisted on its preponderance—Leibniz writes, “that the number of the damned exceeds that of the saved...neither precludes the existence of incomparably more good than evil, both moral and physical, in rational creatures in general, nor prevents the city of God, which contains all creatures, from being the most perfect state” (“Theodicy” 288). The author here may be rightly seen as exemplifying a proto-utilitarian form of thinking, found not especially in his emphasis on maximization of the good nor in his notion of the best of possible worlds, but rather in the possibility of *equating* good and evil as such. There is from the outset a determination of the commensurability of the world as the continuity of actualities:

For an evil will is in its department what the evil principle of the Manichaeans would be in the universe; and reason, which is an *image of the Divinity*, provides for evil souls great means of causing much evil. One single Caligula, one Nero, has caused more evil than an earthquake. (“Theodicy” 138, my emphasis).

Evil is quantified. The evil of Caligula may be measured against the evil of the earthquake—or, for that matter, against the good of a benevolent sovereign—specifically in a *continuous system of linear effects*. It is not simply around the problem of contingency versus necessity that Leibniz’s arguments turns, as is often supposed, but in the continuity of the system of actualities which already may be assured of their tendency toward perfection.<sup>ix</sup>

The problem of Divine authority, and likewise of evil, are displaced by way of a systemic disclosure in which the freedom of God’s creative action is tested and at once absolved. By turning the problem of evil into merely the possibility that God would chose ‘evil’, Leibniz enters destruction into the calculus of reason/continuity. Hence, in Leibniz’s use of the principles of

sufficient reason (i.e., that everything has a cause) and his “best of all possible worlds” thesis, evil is absolved from the outset. The hermeneutical machine produced in Leibniz’s writings displaces any notion of Divine authority found in discontinuity for one of that supports continuous creation. God as perpetual *actus* produces a perspective from which death may be separated and rendered inert. In the same manner that the sovereign stands in antinomic relation to Divine authority as a simulacrum that is constituted by its own shadow, Leibniz’s “image of Reason” is likewise at once buttressed and haunted by that which it has displaced—the transgressive possibility of Divinity against which *Theodicy* is written.

It is within this continuity of being, accomplished in a sovereign image of reason, that Kant’s writings on critique may be understood. One should not forget that the civil peace which Hobbes sought to establish is, in Kant, linked explicitly to individualized conceptions of moral duty and critique. The possibility of the use of free reason (critique) is itself guaranteed by the place of the sovereign. In Kant’s well-known and brief piece “What Is Enlightenment?”, it is only the sovereign ruler who may utter the words that both instantiate and circumscribe critique (“argue as much as you want and about what you want, but obey!”). Critique, as partaking in an enlightened affect and in keeping with the moral duty which Kant deems absolute, is definitionally self-critiquing and hence self-limiting. While the epistemological possibility of critique is a quality of the mind, the *place* of critique is guaranteed by the sovereign; the public/private divide that inundates Kant’s writings is inscribed here as a division between the transcendental ego of the subject and the territorial place of a sovereign.

It would be incorrect, then, to take Kant’s understanding of critique to be that of an individual exercising freedom against the established order. Instead, critique is an appeal to the tribunal of reason, one that is made ontologically possible only *outside*, as it were, the confines of the person. Just as in Leibniz, where the image of Reason is that which supports the possibility of a theodictic machine, Kant’s tribunal is not a personalized sovereign judge but reason itself. The position of critique, by making recourse to reason, is thus always that which posits delimitation and yet maintains itself across every limit. While the epistemological possibility of critique can only ever begin with a restriction on the possibility of knowledge itself—just as the critical subject of the sovereign must begin from a position of self-restraint—the ontological space of that possibility, the sovereignty of the decision on that position, is necessarily eschewed. The sovereign body of the ruler is hence not that which adjudicates the tribunal as judge, but is rather the guarantor of its transcendental emergence as critique. The sovereign, which was the image/non-image of the Divine in Hobbes, now marks the vanishing point of reason itself.

The division of the world of appearances (the phenomenal world) and the reasoned world of the good (the noumenal/moral world) continues the division of the kingdom of this world of the



Divine Kingdom in *Leviathan*, but now as an onto-epistemological rather than existential-political frame.<sup>x</sup> Indeed, the relationship between these two binaries is explicitly referenced in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, by the fact that the relationship between the two worlds is not “exhibited” but must be assumed: “thus God and a future life are two postulates which, according to the principles of pure reason, are inseparable from the obligation which that same reason imposes on us” (A810/B838). But whereas the eschatological kingdom of Hobbes always impinged on the possibility of sovereignty in this world, here the “future life” is a postulate of pure reason; the problem of finitude is displaced and transformed into an epistemological problem of limitation and knowledge.

In Kant’s resolution of the problem of the moral law, from heteronomy to autonomy, one may glimpse the emergence of critique: “we shall not look upon actions as obligatory because they are the commands of God, but shall regard them as divine commands because we have an inward obligation to them” (644). The problem of authority in sovereignty, although it has already been shown to remain indebted to the externalized place of the sovereign as the guarantor of civil peace, the ontological possibility of critique is found in the transcendental ego itself. In that sense, the relationship of obligation is intensified from Hobbes’ own formulation of the problem, for whom obligation to the sovereign was external and did not carry moral weight as such. For Kant, the externality of the sovereign proper is reduced to a formal relationship but the necessity of the moral obligation, now internal to the ego, is absolute. The transcendental ego becomes the true seat of the sovereign, of which civil peace is only the existential supplement to its individuated execution. The sovereign decision resides at the level of the ego.

In much the same way that Leibniz’s distillation of God and evil into a problem of freedom and causality serves to displace the heteronomy of Divine authority in destruction, Kant’s transmutation of God into a problem of the moral law accomplishes an elision of discontinuous heteronomy. The moral law, once internalized and seated in the transcendental ego, is hence divorced from a structural outside. The Divine, its “future life” free of death, is a postulate of pure reason, inferred from the moral law of the transcendental ego. God and death mark an epistemological limit rather than an ontological one.

Under this new regime of critique, the crises of Divine authority and death are paralleled, and it is Kant’s analytic of the sublime—rather than his thoughts on morality or religion proper—that bespeaks this hidden linkage. In the section of *Critique of Judgement* titled “Of Nature Regarded as Might”, Kant draws on two binaries: on the one hand, the human being and nature, and on the other, the human being and the Divine. As to the relation between man and nature, Kant writes, “the irritability of [nature’s] might, while making us recognize our own (physical) impotence, considered as beings of nature, discloses to us a faculty of judging independently of

and a superiority over nature” (101). The division of the noumenal and phenomenal is no longer a mere epistemological concern but belies a split in the human being itself: the human-biological organism and the transcendental ego as judge. This split, then, from provoking an abasement of the human, rarifies the ego-critic. The encounter with an epistemological limitation is, for Kant, the moment of that limitation’s overcoming by spurring a critical judgment.

As to the relation between the human being and the Divine, Kant anticipates his reader’s ascription of awe toward the Godhead as one analogous to natural might: “we are wont to represent God in the tempest, the storm, the earthquake, and the like” (102). Arguing that this fearful disposition toward Divine might is only superstition and not true religion (and one here cannot help but recall Hobbes linking idolatry with the sensuous, the faculty of nature), Kant writes, “only by supposing this idea [of sublimity] in ourselves and in reference to it are we capable of attaining to the idea of the sublimity of that Being which produces respect in us, not merely by the might that it displays in nature, but rather by means of the faculty which resides in us of *judging it fearlessly* and of regarding our destination as sublime in respect to it” (104, my emphasis). It is in this way that one may “fear God without being afraid of him” (103). The Divine here is not only a limitation overcome through fearless judgment (as in natural might) but discloses the human possession of Divine sublimity and immortality. Kant’s entire project, which brackets the Divine as a postulate of pure reason and the moral order of the ego, hinges on the disarticulation of the Divine from the terror of the Earthquake.

Kant’s writings on the sublime were anticipated by the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, a disaster that killed tens of thousands and to which the philosopher devoted a number of early treatises. Unlike other writers of the European Enlightenment, for whom the earthquake presented a theodictic problem, Kant expressly eschewed writing on the death and destruction wrought by the earthquake to focus on finding a scientific explanation of its occurrence. Kant’s prominent and singular mention of the earthquake in *Critique of Judgement* emerges only at the moment where the Divine image is explicitly separated from death. This separation guarantees the image of the earthquake in the field of representation; the continuity of the critical gaze in the cause of the earthquake and the assurance of fear without fear before it (or perhaps, mortality without dying) make possible the autonomous execution of critique.

Haunted by this calamity, Kant’s ability to critique rests on an elision of the disaster; the signature remains of a heteronomy of destruction that is, at the same time, refused through the distanced stance of the tribunal. In the same heroic fashion that a soldier faces the sublimity of war and Kant the earthquake of Lisbon, one engaged in critique faces Divine authority. In the same way that death in its destruction forms the shadowy backdrop of a reasoned engagement with the earthquake, Divine authority—not as simple awe but as the site of death as a

transgressive crisis—must be displaced into a sublime appreciation of Divine might. The earthquake can no longer be registered within the order of the sign, inscrutable or otherwise, of a transgressive third term.

### *Works Cited*

- De Certeau, Michel. *The Mystic Fable, Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Hobbes: Leviathan: Revised Student Edition*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kant, I., et al. *Critique of Pure Reason, Second Edition*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007.
- Kant, Immanuel. *An Answer to the Question: "What Is Enlightenment?"* Penguin UK, 2013.
- . *Critique of Judgement*. Simon and Schuster, 2008.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst Hartwig. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. MIT Press, 1988.
- . *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Columbia Univ Press, 2004.
- Largier, Niklaus. "Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience." *Representations*, vol. 105, no. 1, 2009, pp. 37–60. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1525/rep.2009.105.1.37.
- Leibniz, G. W. *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*. Edited by Austin Farrer, Translated by E.M. Huggard, Open Court.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von. *Leibniz: New Essays on Human Understanding*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*. Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1898.
- Mahmood, Saba, and Talal Asad, editors. *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*. Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California : Distributed by University of California Press, 2009.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. MIT Press, 1985.

---

<sup>i</sup> For the most groundbreaking example, I have in mind Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*

<sup>ii</sup> See, Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*.

<sup>iii</sup> Schmitt's historical mode is one that must mark secularization always as a historical moment in an ongoing process. Hence it must always reinscribe the historical problem of the secular as freed from religion while maintaining a hidden linkage between the two.

---

<sup>iv</sup> As Koselleck argues in both *Critique and Crisis* and *Futures Past*, the structure of eschatological time as a future event is shared by both the prognosticating temporality of progressive and revolutionary politics, as well as the sovereign authority of the absolutist state.

<sup>v</sup> The split that marks the Reformation, as understood by Michel De Certeau in *The Mystic Fable*, is one where the authority of the Christian tradition is split, cast onto scripture (Protestantism) and eucharist (Roman Catholic) while eliding the mystic scene of theophany. While Hobbes' grounding of legitimate sovereignty in scriptural authority leans toward the Protestant side of this split, what is notable is that the question of authority is shaped by the contours of this division.

<sup>vi</sup> See, Niklaus Largier, "Mysticism, Modernity, and the Invention of Aesthetic Experience."

<sup>vii</sup> This is precisely how Max Weber understands this distinction in his categorization of formal versus substantive rationality.

<sup>viii</sup> In Leibniz's actual text, "la nature ne fait jamais des sauts" ("New Essays IV" 16).

<sup>ix</sup> Perfection, for Leibniz, being "simply the total amount of positive reality [a thing] contains" ("The Monadology 46).

<sup>x</sup> As Heidegger argues in *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics*, the epistemological question of limitation can be understood as a displacement of the ontological problem of finitude. That is, as Heidegger shows, the problem of knowledge is in fact the impasse of death. Whereas Kant famously argues for the bracketing of the "theological" from the space of phenomenal world as one can never guarantee the Divine, death itself may be understood as likewise elided. Bracketed off from the space of the surety of the ego. Within Kant's epistemological-juridical frame, one can never know whether one truly dies.