The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages

On the Unwritten History of Theory

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Contents

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The Sense of an Epoch

Periodization, Sovereignty, and the Limits of Secularization

KATHLEEN DAVIS

This moment of suspense, this épokhè, this founding or revolutionary moment of law is, in law, an instance of non-law. But it is also the whole history of law.—Jacques Derrida

"Where is the now?" The challenge of this question lies less in its riddle than in its suggestion that we must not answer. Were we to supply a location for "the now," for a present already made strangely singular yet ubiquitous by the definite article, we would privilege a specific position—whether cultural, geographic, economic, political, or technological—as *the* perspective from which a "present" is made apprehensible. We would thus be proposing a particular content, and by extension a set of potential meanings, for the apparently global time of "the now." In short, we would periodize. Through its trick of catachresis, this question redirects us to the "where" of our own speaking position as the premise that makes it possible to say "now," and to the periodizing structure shared by this subject position and any conception of a global moment or politics. At its most extreme, this question references the global violence we witness today and reminds us that every faction engaged in this economic, religious, or ethnic strife must attach not only to a legitimating history but to a theory of history, not only to a particular claim upon "the now" but to a conception of how "the now" can be thought.

I take the question "Where is the now?" from Dipesh Chakrabarty, who raises it as a challenge to scholarship that presupposes a "certain figure of the now" in its approach to current political dilemmas, insisting that "how we periodize our present is connected to the question of how we imagine

the political," and that the insufficiently examined historicity of fundamental concepts—such as religion, secularism, democracy, and politics—renders the logic of many events across the world unrecognizable to dominant strains of critical theory.[1] The history of these fundamental concepts is also the history of medieval/modern periodization, consideration of which is essential to any rethinking of critical theory and its limits.

This essay focuses upon the problem of "secularization," which as a term suggests the transference or transformation of something from a "nonsecular" to a "secular" status, whether that something is a plot of land, a priest, a government, or an attitude. As an ecclesiastical term since early Christianity, it has referred to the movement from monastic life to that of secular clergy, and as a legal term in European history after the Reformation it refers to the expropriation of ecclesiastical rights and property. In a less concise and far more controversial sense, secularization has been understood as a periodizing term that attempts to narrate the modernization of Europe as it gradually overcame a hierarchized and metaphysically shackled past through a series of political struggles, religious wars, and philosophical upheavals. This is the familiar Enlightenment "triumphalist" narrative of secularization—for which the privatization of religion, along with the freeing of the European imagination from the stranglehold of Providence, came to mark the conditions of possibility of the emergence of the political qualities designated "modern," particularly the nation-state and its self-conscious citizen. The temporality of secularization in this sense is qualitative, and its underside is the history of colonialism, empire, and slavery. This triumphalist narrative is fast losing credibility as current controversies over secularization, coincident with the "resurgence of religion" in many parts of the world, including the United States, have exposed the historicity of its qualitative story.[2]

My interest here is in the role of medieval/modern periodization in the constitution of the fundamental categories in question, and how taking this periodization into account can make a difference in understanding the contours and implications of the debate.[3] The belief in a break between a medieval and a modern (or an early modern) period ever more intensively assumes world-historical implications for categories such as the sovereign state and secular politics—that is, categories with both ideological and territorial stakes. For exactly this reason, the "Middle Ages," like "modernity" before it, has been vaulted from a European category to a global

category of time.[4] This globalized Middle Ages operates in two conflicting ways. On the one hand, literary and political history—whether of Europe, Asia, India, or Africa—is increasingly organized along a conventional medieval/(early) modern divide. According to this scenario, the world moves in unison, in tempo with a once European story written at the height of, and in tandem with, colonialism, nationalism, imperialism, and Orientalism.[5] On the other hand, the "Middle Ages" is a mobile category, applicable at any time to any society that has not "yet" achieved modernity or, worse, has become retrograde. In this mode, it provides a template for what Johannes Fabian has aptly termed the "denial of coevalness."[6]

Our coming to terms with medieval/modern periodization, to put this more forcefully, is prerequisite to addressing the disavowal by "secular" politics of its founding paradox—a disavowal that, despite all good faith efforts (toward justice or freedom, for example) has enabled and continues to enable the sanctification of particular vested interests. The theory of history sustaining medieval/modern periodization, I suggest, bears a direct relation to this global violence, particularly with respect to the centrality of "religion" to "politics" in current bids for sovereignty. As a way of exploring within "secularization" the links between concepts of historical time and claims to sovereignty, I focus particularly on the relations between the thinking of Carl Schmitt on sovereignty and that of Reinhart Koselleck on historical time.[7] The obvious pertinence of Schmitt's theory of sovereignty to recent political events helps to explain why it has long resonated with political advocates on both the left and the right and continues, as Étienne Balibar notes, to "haunt the defenses as well as the critiques of national state sovereignty."[8] Koselleck's essays on the semantics of historical time in *Futures Past*, which center upon issues of secularization and have been crucial to arguments regarding the discrete identity of "modernity," do not overtly address problems of sovereignty. Yet as I show by considering their relation to arguments by Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Karl Löwith, and Hans Blumenberg, these essays take up central issues in discussions regarding sovereignty, periodization, and "world order." Indeed, Koselleck's project of identifying historical-political conceptions in the "given present" is at its core a question of "the now" as I address it above.

PERIODIZATION AND RULE BY EXCEPTIONS

Periodization, above all, concerns the relation between the history of fundamental political concepts and its enabling theory, between a conception of "the now" and the conditions of its being thought. The word "periodicity," coined in the nineteenth century as a scientific term to describe recurring intervals (for instance, one might monitor or set periodicity in an experiment),[9] has moved into literary studies by analogy to "historicity," thus raising for "periods" and "periodization" the problematic issue of the *event*. An *event* occurs, unique and for the first time, yet it is recognizable and has meaning only within existing systems that anticipate it, predisposing or delimiting—although incapable of fully determining—the potential of its arrival. This paradox of the *event* describes the nature of the tie between periodization and periodicity, between the political history of "periods" such as medieval or modern and the potential of "the now," which this history anticipates and upon which it exercises a powerful tug. Periodization, even when it applies to a distant past, is always a critical intervention in "the now," always a bid to set conditions for the present experiment.[10] In an important sense, we cannot periodize the past, although interventions in "the now" always draw upon available schemes of intelligibility, including already consolidated "pasts" made accessible by the politics and historiography attending former periodizations.

The qualitative or overtly ideological narrative of Europe's secularization disavows the implication of the *épokhè* at the foundation of law. Operating in the void of the suspense of the law, the *constitution* of law, in the sense of a radical founding or revolutionary moment, has by definition no basis of justification in already constituted norms, resulting in a fundamental paradox that, as my epigraph from Derrida suggests, involves the sense of an epoch. This suspense of the law is akin to what Carl Schmitt has described as the "exception": a singular event that, like a miracle, entirely exceeds the existing order and thus suspends it. Sovereignty, the force that must "decide" upon the state of exception (*Ausnahmezustand*) and that is relevant only in relation to it, is analogous to the "divine" in the sense that its decision must come ex nihilo (although even for Schmitt the purity of this decision cannot be absolute).[11] The legal order of a state, Schmitt argues, can never be fully self-enclosed; there is always the possibility that a "state of exception" might exceed the expectations of all

juridical norms. The exception "can *at best* be characterized as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state, or the like," but by definition it cannot actually be predefined or "made to conform to a preformed law."[12] Constitutional development tended toward honing legal order into a pure mechanistic system for which all circumstances are calculable, thus eliminating, in Schmitt's eyes, the state's capacity to confront that which is incalculable according to its laws.

In order to protect its autonomy, Schmitt argues, a state requires a sovereign, whose position it is to decide that an exception has occurred and to suspend the existing legal order for the preservation of the state. Schmitt makes it clear that he is dealing with a limit concept. Paradoxically, if a state is to be sovereign in the sense of being "autonomous" (*auto*, "self"; *nomos*, "law"), it must at its core be *antinomic*: it requires a sovereign who is both inside and outside the law, and whose decision, like creation ex nihilo, simultaneously defines and breaches the limit of that law. Rigorously true to the concept of sovereignty as underived power, the decision is "independent of argumentative substantiation. . . . Looked at normatively, the decision emanates from nothingness."[13] The foundation of this sovereignty, then, is not locatable. One goal of this essay is to show how medieval/modern periodization frequently serves as a substitute for this absent foundation of sovereignty and thereby installs certain ostensible characteristics of the "modern" in the place of the sovereign. In this sense, periodization functions as sovereign *decision*.

The term "secularization" as Schmitt uses it differs subtly but importantly from the qualitative narrative of secularization that I describe above. Indeed, he critiques such a narrative, and it is within the meaning of "secularization" that battles over sovereignty and periodization are fought. Rather than being a story of Europe's extrication from theological constraints and a consequent rise of modern political freedom and democracy, secularization for Schmitt, as well as for many of his contemporary theorists of sovereignty and history, means the transference of theological forms to the politics of an ostensibly "secular" state, in which "theology" thus becomes immanent. This change is generally understood to occur in the seventeenth century, or in the course of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, but the "Middle Ages" invariably serves as the presecular exemplar for both the proponents and the detractors of this "secularization theory."

We find a sense of secularization with affinities to Schmitt's in the work of Walter Benjamin, who had also dealt with the "divine" suspension of all existing law in his "Critique of Violence," but who differently conceives the relation between sovereign decision and theological form.[14] Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, which acknowledges its heavy debt to Schmitt's *Political Theology*, also addresses the alignment of sovereignty and history with respect to epochality. The "true object" of the German *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin explains, is "historical life as represented by its epoch," and "the sovereign, the principal exponent of history, almost serves as its incarnation."[15] In this, Benjamin suggests, drama coincides with politics: "The Sovereign represents history. He holds the course of history in his hand like a scepter. This view is by no means peculiar to the dramatists. It is based on certain constitutional notions."[16]

Rather than validating this sovereign representation, however, Benjamin calls it into question by linking it to the problems of literary representation and interpretation, thereby intersecting several aspects of Schmitt's invocation of "drama" and political representation:

> Confronted with a literature which sought, in a sense, to reduce both its contemporaries and posterity to silence through the extravagance of its technique, the unfailing richness of its creations, and the vehemence of its claims to value, one should emphasize the necessity of that sovereign attitude which the representation of the idea of a form demands. Even then the danger of allowing oneself to plunge from the heights of knowledge into the profoundest depths of the baroque state of mind, is not a negligible one. That characteristic feeling of dizziness which is induced by the spectacle of the spiritual contradictions of this epoch is a recurrent feature in the improvised attempts to capture its meaning.[17]

By emphasizing the "*necessity* of that sovereign attitude which the representation of the idea of a form demands" (my emphasis), Benjamin returns us to the paradox of the sovereign decision, which must be made—and can only be made—in the face of its own undecidability: technically, representation is impossible. Whereas Schmitt negotiates this paradox by predisposing sovereign decision to the interests of the state, Benjamin, as Samuel Weber argues, concentrates on the disarticulation of sovereignty. On the one hand, Benjamin recognizes that the necessity of sovereign decision "demands completion of the image of the sovereign, as tyrant." On the other hand, the sovereign "who is responsible for making the decision to proclaim the state of emergency reveals, at the first opportunity, that he is almost incapable of making a decision."[18] Rather than representing the solidity of an epoch, the sovereign instead represents its impossibility in the form of his own madness: "there is this one thing to be said in favour of the Caesar as he loses himself in the ecstasy of power: he falls victim to the disproportion between the unlimited hierarchical dignity, with which he is divinely invested and the humble estate of his humanity."[19] Benjamin's depiction of this mad Caesar perhaps gives reply to the image of a rational, secular modern state and the world order over which it would lay claim.

LÖWITH'S SECULARIZATION THESIS

Some of the postwar challenges to this logic of world order embraced and expanded the sense of "secularization" proffered by thinkers such as Schmitt and Benjamin. In so doing, they focused upon the relation between bids for political sovereignty and the periodization of history. Most influential was the "secularization theory" popularized by Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History*, which argued, far more generally than did Schmitt and with a critical sensibility toward his theory of sovereignty, that modern historical concepts such as progress are secularized versions of Christian ideas, particularly eschatology: for Auguste Comte and G. W. F. Hegel, history had its end at its beginning, and for Karl Marx the proletariat was a chosen people with a redemptive mission.[20] An expatriate German with Jewish lineage writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, Löwith admired the historians he studied—from Marx, Hegel, and Comte to Joachim of Fiore (1131–1202), Augustine, and Orosius—but he found their belief in a trajectory of fulfillment a critical failure: "The world is still as it was in the time of Alaric; only our means of oppression and destruction (as well as of reconstruction) are considerably improved."[21] For Löwith, there is nothing legitimate about historical "periods"; to the contrary, they are means of legitimizing political ends. Löwith's work is important for its insistence that conceptions of historical time must be understood as political strategy—and, in the case of periodized, progressive history, as a means of aggression.

With a keen sense of the political stakes of periodization, Löwith argues that peace requires a revised sense of periodicity, and his claims focus

upon the relation between political legitimacy and the quality of historical time. Periodization operates doubly in Löwith's argument. First, and crucially, he insists that the popularly accepted periodization of historical thought—that is, the dismissal of "prescientific" history as nonhistorical—is incorrect. He controverts, in other words, the standard conception of the philosophy of history as "modern." Löwith writes:

> Arguing that the philosophy of history from Augustine to Bossuet does not present a theory of "real" history in its finitude, wealth, and mobility but only a doctrine of history on the basis of revelation and faith, [modern philosophers] drew the conclusion that the theological interpretation of history—or fourteen hundred years of Western thought—is a negligible affair. Against this common opinion that proper historical thinking begins only in modern times, with the eighteenth century, the following outline aims to show that philosophy of history originates with the Hebrew and Christian faith in a fulfillment and that it ends with the secularization of its eschatological pattern.[22]

With this, Löwith undercuts the foundational claim of "modern" sovereignty by exposing its disavowal of the history upon which it constitutes itself. Having dismissed the validity of such a "modern" break in the conception of history, Löwith turns, secondly, to the destructive capacity of "secularized" eschatology, which he sees as having its theoretical basis in the Christian concept of a break with and the supersession of the old law, later materialized through political institutionalization. In this sense, the "secularization," as well as the periodization, of time and politics occurs first with Christianity's "incarnation" of spiritual principles and breaks from the classical pattern of recurrence (which, following Nietzsche, he favors). Löwith's sense of "secularization," then, like Schmitt's, is a story not of Europe's gradual extrication from religion, but rather of the sublimation of theology in the "world": *Heilgeschehen* merged with *Weltgeschichte*—a pattern that, unlike Schmitt, he found disastrous.[23]

Criticism of Löwith based upon whether or not his "secularization" theory is correct entirely misses his point that periodized, telic history is the conceptual basis and the legitimizing tool of world-scale aggression. It is for this reason that he regrets the New Testament teaching that Christ's birth "shattered once and for all the whole frame of history," a temporal break from which a secular and incarnate, rather than spiritual, world destiny was imagined with increasing intensity from the time of Augustine.[24] In this respect, despite their differing philosophies, Löwith shares with Schmitt, as well as with their contemporary Erich Auerbach, a central concern with the political weight of the incarnation and its representative power in law and politics.[25] In his treatise *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* (1923), Schmitt finds in the Roman Catholic Church the authorizing logic of political representation: based upon the historical reality of the incarnation, "the Church is a concrete personal representation of a concrete personality," the model of a "juridical person" with the power to represent the *civitas humana*.[26] It is precisely the loss of such personal representation and its legitimating authority (with the dissolution of the monarchy in the nineteenth century) that for Schmitt inaugurates political crisis, and although Löwith wishes for a different outcome, he works from the same premise regarding the secular politics of the incarnation, which is precisely what sacred/secular periodization would both disavow and extend.

Löwith saw the eighteenth century's self-styled rejection of tradition as a second wave of secularization that redoubled the worldly imposition of the Christian paradigm: "The secular messianism of Western nations is in every case associated with the consciousness of a national, social, or racial vocation which has its roots in the religious belief of being called by God to a particular task of universal significance."[27] Whereas for Schmitt the (mainly Protestant) retreat to private religion amounted to "abandoning the world" to a crude materialism, for Löwith the "secularization," especially the politicization, of spiritual ideas makes nonsense of religion: "A Holy Roman Empire is a contradiction in terms."[28] Both, however, address the "theological" at the core of political legitimacy, Schmitt to urge the necessity of a sovereign who would cut across incalculability with a *decision* upon the exception, and Löwith (like Benjamin) to plead for sustaining the "incalculability" of history and politics.[29] Indeed, Löwith insists upon the very contingency and incalculability that Schmitt had theorized with the "exception," and argues against the preemption of incalculable "decision" by the interests of a state and a homogeneous "people," the identification of which Schmitt had aligned with the sovereign decision.[30] Recognizing that periodization operates both as a decision that constitutes a "people" and as the temporal platform for such precalculation, Löwith deliberately undermines "modern" claims about the meaning of history (secularization) and the concept of sovereignty resting on that meaning.

Response to this revised sense of "secularization" came in the form of Hans Blumenberg's strident *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966), which limns the stakes in its title.[31] Up to this point, the discussion of "secularization" had primarily focused upon political legitimacy and sovereignty. By recasting the issue as one of the "modern age" (*Neuzeit*), Blumenberg made explicit that this question of "legitimacy" turns upon historical time itself, and he determined to counter the threat to periodization. A refutation of "secularization theory" at large, Blumenberg's book specifically targeted Löwith and Schmitt but also criticized any related theories, such as Max Weber's on Puritanism and capitalism. Writing in the 1960s, Blumenberg is ready to offload what he sees as guilt-ridden concern for the politics of supersession and to reclaim possession of history in the name of a self-substantiating modernity. Keeping Schmitt's language of sovereignty but shifting the question of legitimacy to periodization, he likens "the secularization theorem" to a parting curse by theology as it declares the new, rightful heir its usurping bastard. The "secularization theorem," Blumenberg writes,

> is (in its position in history) something in the nature of a final *theologumenon* [theological dictum] intended to lay on the heirs of theology a guilty conscience about their entrance into the succession. . . . Not only does the secularization thesis explain the modern age; it explains it as the wrong turning for which the thesis itself is able to prescribe the corrective. It would be the exact reverse of the claim that the young Hegel had described as the task of the critique of religion in his time: "Despite earlier attempts, it has been reserved for our times especially to claim as man's property, at least in theory, the treasures that have been squandered on heaven; but what age will have the strength to insist on this right and to take actual possession?"[32]

The *right*, not the fact, of possession is the issue, and for Blumenberg its resolution utterly depends upon the legitimacy of periodization. In order to defend the status of this right as literally a matter of property (and, by extension, of propriety), he insists that the term "secularization" in the philosophy of history metaphorizes its juridical meaning as the illegitimate seizure of Church property, even though he grants that the philosophical history of the concept does not support this reading. By way of a double negative and an appeal against rhetoric, he argues that this essentially improper, metaphorical "alienation of a historical substance from its origin" cancels out, or delegitimates, any illegitimacy thus attributed to the succession of the modern age.[33] Blumenberg's insistence upon the radical sense of "legitimacy" (from *lex/leges*, "law") in his title registers the stakes of periodization accurately enough, and the title of this volume, *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages*, responds in kind by exposing the machinations necessary to conjure the clean cut of a proper noun and literal propriety, and thus ironically overturns Blumenberg's property claim.

By way of a reply to Schmitt, Blumenberg negotiates the problem of a pure self-founding by describing *Neuzeit* as an "emergency self-consolidation"—an epochal "postmedieval self-assertion" in the face of necessity (such as the religious wars). This necessity, which, like Schmitt's *Ausnahmezustand* requires suspension of the norm, gives *Neuzeit* a historical grounding without historical continuity, thus granting it legitimate epochal status. In this way, Blumenberg explains modernity's self-assertion in terms of a sovereign *decision* analogous to Schmitt's definition of sovereignty ("Sovereign is he who decides on the exception"): "The concept of the legitimacy of the modern age is not derived from the accomplishments of reason but rather from the necessity of those accomplishments. Theological voluntarism and human rationalism are historical correlates; thus the legitimacy of the modern age is not shown as a result of its 'newness'—the claim to be a modern age does not as such justify it."[34] Justification comes instead from the historical necessity that calls it into being. Whereas for Schmitt it is the sovereign who decides upon the state of exception and thus suspends the law, Blumenberg collapses the sovereign and the exception, and consigns *decision* to history, which periodizes itself. And although it is understood by all parties that "world order" is the topic under discussion, the question "Whose history?" (a correlate, we could say, of "Who decides?") does not arise. In this way, the paradox of a self-constituting modernity is folded into the cut of periodization itself, and the "modern" can emerge as unproblematically sovereign.

For a more extensive example of this periodizing logic and its role in recent theories of time and modernity, I turn to a work that grapples—under the influence of Schmitt's *Political Theology* and in the context of this debate over periodization—with the issues of secularization, sovereignty, and temporality: that is, to Reinhart Koselleck's semantics of historical time.[35]

Koselleck's collected essays on historical semantics have (increasingly since the publication of their English translation as *Futures Past*) become a touchstone both for critics who are invested in theories of temporality and modernity and for those who want to lean on a respectable theory of periodization in order to skirt or to epitomize the Middle Ages (often the same people, of course). Koselleck's work is undoubtedly of profound methodological importance for studies in temporality, but this importance is all the more reason to consider his reliance upon periodization and the relationship of this reliance to controversies regarding the history and theory of sovereignty. Koselleck's analyses of European historiography distill decades of debate over secularization and periodization on both sides of the Atlantic, and in large measure they sanitize its politics. Directly and indirectly, his essays have made it easy for theorists to bypass the political intricacies of periodization and to support reductive versions of temporality that frequently undermine the very arguments being made. His *Futures Past* is thus both an example of and a factor in critical theory's difficulty with addressing, and sometimes even recognizing, events that defy preconceived concepts of religion, secularism, democracy, and politics.

For my purposes here, the germane issue is not empirical correctness or error, but the elision between a theory of history and the historical change it purports to examine. In Koselleck's case, I believe that—not least because of the critical matrix in which he worked—this slippage exposes the logic of medieval/modern periodization, its historical and conceptual relation to sovereignty, and its implications for the relation of religion and politics "now." Koselleck's characterization of medieval concepts of time is so reductive and misleading that to call it wrong seems inadequate; indeed, as I will show, it *is* inadequate, since these characterizations operate on the basis of such sweeping assumptions that they easily rationalize and absorb contradictory empirical evidence. In part, I argue here that by

shifting the target of critique from political legitimacy to conceptions of historical time, Koselleck—like many of his contemporaries—not only substitutes a medieval/modern break for the absent foundation of sovereignty, but also supplies this substitution with a narrative form.

Koselleck was deeply influenced by his personal and academic relationship with Schmitt, and the effects of *Political Theology* as well as other works by Schmitt appear throughout *Futures Past* in subtle form.[36] By contrast, Koselleck's earlier *Critique and Crisis* (1959) explicitly engages Schmitt's theory and its political fate as it attempts to explain the rise of National Socialism and the cold war in terms of European philosophies of history. Political crisis, for Koselleck, "presses for a decision," in association with "the philosophies of history that correspond to the crisis and in whose name we seek to anticipate the decision, to influence it, steer it, or, as catastrophically, to prevent it."[37] "Critique," therefore, bears the heavy responsibility of decoding European history in order to avoid its repetition. The eighteenth century serves as both example and the "common root" of this history, in that "it failed to note any connection between the critique it practiced and the looming crisis," and thus unwarily hastened toward "an unexpected decision."[38] Koselleck's early work, then, is driven by an attempt to take responsibility for European violence and to cultivate a more politically and historically aware brand of criticism.

In its effort to understand how Europe's utopian hopes went wrong, *Critique and Crisis* is also indebted to the "secularization theory" popularized by Löwith, whose argument and the response to it by Blumenberg were integral to the politics of time inhabiting "secularization" by the time Koselleck wrote *Futures Past*. Likewise integral to this argument was the degree to which periodization had become the linchpin of the controversy. Blumenberg had criticized Koselleck's *Critique and Crisis* for its confirmation of "the process of secularization that transposed eschatology into a progressive history," and while Koselleck does not explicitly acknowledge the "secularization" debate in his essays in *Futures Past*, he takes up its central issue as articulated by Blumenberg: the qualitative difference of modernity [*Neuzeit*] from a "Middle Ages" oriented to eschatology.[39]

Koselleck focuses his argument on changing historical conceptions of time, and stipulates from the outset of *Futures Past* that "historical time, if the concept has a specific meaning, is bound up with social and political actions," each with its own temporal rhythm.[40] Agreeing with Johann

Gottfried von Herder that at any one time in the universe there are innumerably many times, he posits that each epoch evinces its own understanding of the interlinkings among events and that, indeed, such historical understanding is precisely what determines an epoch. In contrast to his earlier work, he identifies a change in the comprehension of temporality as exactly what constitutes the dissolution of one epoch and the emergence of another. In order to study this change he takes as his central question, "How, in a given present, are the temporal dimensions of past and future related?"[41] The title *Futures Past* (*Vergangene Zukunft*) thus refers in part to a bygone way of experiencing a relationship with the future, particularly that of a "medieval" past sealed off from the future through its own closed and now past sense of the future.[42] Some of Koselleck's essays explore temporalities of "modernity" in rich ways—such as negotiating the gap between experience and expectation, or encountering a once imagined future—but they never come untethered from the foundational exclusion of "medieval" time.

Koselleck's goal of identifying such historical-political conceptions of time in any "given present" engages directly with the definition of epochality that Schmitt had already set out in *Political Theology*: "The metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be appropriate as a form of its political organization. The determination of such an identity is the sociology of the concept of sovereignty."[43] Schmitt never hesitates to explain this "identity" as one that results from conquest and territorialization of both land and ideas, principally as determined by Europe's mapping of the world.[44] Koselleck's "given present"—at its core a political question of "the now" as I discuss it above (that is, "a certain figure of the now" that masks the historicity of its fundamental concepts)—must be understood in these terms. His theory of periodization may be persuasive when viewed from within the self-defining "modern European" political discourse in which he is situated, and indeed it has accrued many advocates. But it cannot be separated from the contemporaneous and interrelated discourses of "world order" such as anthropology and Orientalism, which defined Europe's Others in precisely the terms Koselleck applies to the Middle Ages. In effect, his characterization of the Middle Ages extends and strengthens these discourses.[45]

World order is a central issue for *Futures Past*. These essays developed

out of Koselleck's work on the multivolume dictionary of historical concepts, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, which he coedited throughout the 1960s and 1970s with Werner Conze and the medieval historian Otto Brunner.[46] Brunner is best known for his *Land and Lordship* (1939), an important text in the movement of the 1930s and 1940s against the dominant state-oriented models of medieval German history. *Land and Lordship* reconceptualized late medieval Austrian constitutional history and advanced a model of a Germanic *Volk* state meant to shatter liberal-bourgeois versions of medieval antecedents to the modern national state and to shore up the political theory of the Third Reich. In Brunner's own terms, his critique evinced "present-day relatedness" (*Gegenwartsbezogenheit*) in that it secured "the historical foundation of the Third Reich's law and constitution, not those of the 'bourgeois *Rechtsstaat*' and its basis in absolutism."[47] After the war Brunner redirected his theory from German to European civilization—the origin, he believed, of what would inevitably become a global culture rooted in the social structure of premodern Europe (stretching from tribal roots up to 1800)—and he continued to pursue the relatedness of that structure to Western civilization as a world order.[48] Indeed, this is the task of the dictionary of historical concepts, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, which in Koselleck's terms aimed to examine "the dissolution of the old world and the emergence of the new in terms of the historicoconceptual comprehension of this process."[49] Koselleck's historical semantics, then, grew out of an intense need to revise and to reconcile the account of history with a workable but singular vision of "the now," understood in terms of temporality itself, and legitimated through a narrative of periodization.

Throughout his essays Koselleck focuses on the years 1500 to 1800 ("early modernity" or *frühe Neuzeit*) as "the period in which modernity is formed" and argues that during this time the possibility opened—gradually and sporadically—for history to become "temporalized."[50] All of the essays are variations on this central tenet, explicitly stated and glossed in the opening essay, "Modernity and the Planes of Historicity," which I use as my base text, so to speak, for exploring Koselleck's theory of temporalization and for working through its implications for the relation between periodization and sovereignty. I read, as does Koselleck, within the double frame he provides for his opening scene.

The scene is that of Albrecht Altdorfer's famous *Alexanderschlacht*

("The Battle of Alexander and Darius on the Issus"), a painting commissioned in 1528 by Duke William IV of Bavaria for his newly built summer home. It is epochal in every sense:

> Upon an area of one and a half square meters, Altdorfer reveals to us the cosmic panorama of a decisive battle of world-historical significance, the Battle of Issus, which in 333 B.C. opened the epoch of Hellenism, as we say today. With a mastery previously unknown, Altdorfer was able to depict thousand upon thousand of individual warriors as complete armies; he shows us the clash of armored squadrons of horse and foot soldiers armed with spears; the victorious line of attack of the Macedonians, with Alexander far out at the head; the confusion and disintegration which overtook the Persians; and the expectant bearing of the Greek battle-reserves, which will then complete the victory.[51]

Standing at the opening of Koselleck's transitional early modern period, William IV's "Christian-Humanism" and Altdorfer's unprecedented mastery align with the initiating moment of Hellenism, thus confirming humanism's self-proclaimed association with classical antiquity, and, more importantly, linking this aesthetic moment to military conquest, empire, and the trajectory of world history. Despite the initiatory status he grants it, however, Koselleck views this scene and its ducal setting as irrevocably tied to the past, a point he explains through discussion of anachronism. He first notes the deliberate and artful use of anachronism by Altdorfer, who had researched the battle and inscribed upon each army's banner the number of its combatants, including the number of dead, even though in the painting these future dead remain among the living. But Koselleck posits a second element of anachronism as more apparent "to us" *as* anachronism, by which he means Altdorfer's invocation of contemporary figures and battles, such as the Emperor Maximilian or the defeated Turks at the siege of Vienna, whom Altdorfer's Persians resemble "from their feet to their turbans," to the effect that the painting is both historical in the minutest detail *and* contemporary in its typologically charged political nuance.[52]

To Koselleck, however, this anachronism attests not to a deft handling of historical time, but to an absence for Altdorfer of a temporal dimension: for him, fourth-century Persians look like sixteenth-century Turks not because he does not know the difference, but because the difference does not matter.[53] The *Alexanderschlacht*, in other words, exemplifies a premodern, *untemporalized* sense of time and a lack of historical consciousness. In contrast to Friedrich Schlegel, who at the end of Koselleck's early modern period admired the *Alexanderschlacht* from a critical-historical distance "as the greatest feat of the age of chivalry," Altdorfer's historical overlays evince an eschatological vision of history, evidence that the sixteenth century (and by degrees also the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) remained locked in a static, constant temporality that proleptically saturates the future as always a repetition of the same: "*Sub specie aeternitatis* nothing novel can emerge."[54] In such a system, there can be no *event* as such: anticipation and arrival are together sucked into the black hole of sacred history, which is not temporalized because its time is essentially undifferentiated. Koselleck thus emphatically reasserts the periodization of the philosophy of history that Löwith had critiqued.

Despite Koselleck's intense focus on Christian ideas, his version of premodern untemporalized history never acknowledges the earlier periodization instantiated by the incarnation—that is, the temporal logic whereby Christianity subsumed and superseded Jewish history—as it had been explicated, for instance, by Löwith. Koselleck's analysis thereby confirms that even when it is most introspective, the "purported 'secularization' of modernity," as Kathleen Biddick argues, "has never overtaken this core Christian conception of supersession."[55] Koselleck once has occasion to reference this history as he argues for the subsumption of Altdorfer's historical consciousness by an impending End: "Altdorfer, who had assisted in the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg . . . knew the signs."[56] The choice of Altdorfer's politically charged *Alexanderschlacht* thus encrypts the problem of supersession and the temporal rupture of the incarnation, even as it bonds the painting's vision of the future to a medieval, fully closed, and untemporalized past.

Koselleck's method of reading the *Alexanderschlacht* also allows him to absorb medieval and early modern state politics into the "plane of historicity" he theorizes. Prior to modernity, he argues, "this always-already guaranteed futurity of the past effected the closure and bounding of the sphere of action available to the state. . . . [T]he state remains trapped within a temporal structure that can be understood as static movement."[57] Because Koselleck's analysis of periodization is tied to the issue of religion, the Reformation opens both his early modern period and the possibility of politics. It initiates the possibility of breaking from "medieval" stasis for

two related reasons that are now familiar from many accounts of a period break. First, as a movement of religious renewal it "carried with it all the signs of the End of the World," yet the End did not happen, but was increasingly deferred, weakening the grip of the Church over the future. Second, the bloodbaths of religious war prompted the Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555), which set aside the requirement of religious unity and thus "concealed within itself a new principle, that of 'politics,'" a principle further advanced by the Peace of Westphalia.[58] Politics thus begins to break the cyclic grip of prophecy, for which it substituted rational foresight and planning.

In his own postwar analysis of transitions in world order, Schmitt had already discussed the historicity of stasis and action, prophecy and politics, and, like Löwith, he refutes medieval/modern periodization upon the basis of conceptions of history. Insisting upon the powerful sense of history inherent to Christian politics since the time of Paul, Schmitt invokes the concept of *katechon*, the "restrainer" (or *anomos*, "lawless one"), named by Paul in the Second Letter to the Thessalonians, which had long been interpreted as the Roman Empire's function of staving off the coming of the Antichrist.[59] I address this idea and the limits of Schmitt's argument elsewhere, but the salient point here is that Schmitt refuses the eschatological, atemporal paralysis that Koselleck attributes to the Middle Ages.[60] He argues instead that the concept of *katechon* signaled a time full with a "secular" meaningfulness of history:

> I do not believe that any historical concept other than *katechon* would have been possible for the original Christian faith. The belief that a restrainer holds back the end of the world provides the only bridge between the notion of an eschatological paralysis of all human events and a tremendous historical monolith like that of the Christian empire of the Germanic kings. . . . [T]his took the form of a lucid Christian faith in potent historical power. Anyone unable to distinguish between the maxims of Haimo of Halberstadt or Adso and the obscure oracles of Pseudo-Methodius or the Tiburtinian sibyls would be able to comprehend the empire of the Christian Middle Ages only in terms of distorting generalizations and parallels, but not in terms of its concrete historical authenticity.[61]

As if in ironic response to Schmitt's warning that the inability to distinguish between medieval prophetic and historicist genres would result in "distorting generalizations," Koselleck insists upon a binarized and linear sorting that moves from stasis to action, prophecy to politics, religious to secular. For Koselleck this linear transition does not culminate with the Enlightenment (which only shimmered at the edge of the period), since "the reoccupation of a prophesied future by a predicted future had not yet fundamentally ruptured the plane of Christian expectations. This is what harnesses the republic of rulers to the Middle Ages, even if it no longer conceives of itself as Christian."[62] It is the French Revolution, unsurprisingly, that inverts the horizon of expectations, as the coup d'état that closed the old era and opened the temporalization of historical time.

Medievalists have long since tired of such attributions of stasis, closure, and homogeneity, so distortive that they nearly defy response. But response on an empirical basis would in any case be beside the point, for the problem that engages Koselleck as well as his predecessors and successors on this topic is not at all empirical, despite frequent recourse to empirical evidence. It is a philosophical struggle concerning the radical newness—or the possibility of the radical newness—of *Neuzeit*, and its arguments, as well as its relevance for us today, turn on the structure of sovereignty and its relation to theology.

This relation and its dissociation from empiricism coalesce in Koselleck's conclusion, which returns us to the *Alexanderschlacht*, now hanging in Napoleon's bathroom. Through a chiasmic exemplar that sets a "premodern" Napoleon on the later side of the 1800 marker, and a "modern" Denis Diderot on the earlier, it teaches us that the temporalizing cut of modernity can easily absorb forerunners and backsliders into its logic, as any master category will. Diderot, well prior to the Revolution but from a "point of departure [that] is modern," had augured the advent of Napoleon, not with a commonplace premonition of the Revolution, but more presciently, with a prediction of its aftermath and the authorial void into which Napoleon would step. Beyond that, Diderot could only say, "What will succeed this revolution? No one knows." (Quelle sera la suite de cette revolution? On l'ignore). Steeped though his reasoning was in "classical literature on civil war, ancient theories of despotism and historical cycles, and the critique of enlightened absolutism," Diderot's thought of an undetermined future made his viewpoint "modern." Napoleon, however, envisioning himself as a parallel to the great Alexander, pondered the *Alexanderschlacht* in his private chambers, drawn, at least sometimes, to "premodern" thoughts: "The power of tradition was so strong that the

long-lost, salvational-historical task of the Holy Roman Empire shimmered through the supposedly new beginning of the 1789 Revolution."[63]

So we end where we began, with a ruler pondering his own figuration in the scene of the *Alexanderschlacht*'s cosmic, typological sweep. Nothing, yet everything, has changed. How has this happened? Koselleck has explained the emergence of modern politics by narrating the elimination of religion and religious expectations from the realm of political decision.[64] In this he accords with Schmitt's historical account that together deism and the idea of the constitutional state had "banished the miracle from the world," by which he refers not to "private religion," but to religion's authorization of political legitimacy. Until the nineteenth century, Schmitt argued, the conception of God and the conception of the sovereign were aligned (rightly in his opinion) vis-à-vis transcendence of the world and of the state.[65] But unlike Schmitt, Koselleck has all along been narrating a double break: a historical break with a religious mode of ruling the state, and a qualitative break within the conceptualization of temporality itself. In his account, the elimination of religion and religious expectations yields not only politics, but meaningful historical time, and at the critical juncture they fuse. His example is Maximilien Robespierre, who looks into an accelerating, open future and sees "a task of men leading to an epoch of freedom and happiness."[66] Politics and meaningful time unite in this "human" task.

Koselleck's argument, however, is far from utopian. Like Löwith, he sees conceptions of historical time as tied to political calculation, and considers the "modern" orientation toward an open future as susceptible to utopian goals that become prescriptive and thus rob this future of its actuality. But his periodization and linearity can figure such recuperation only as backsliding or—to put it in terms of the "theology" he would disavow—apostasy. In his analysis of sovereignty, Schmitt had stayed focused on the problem of the *exception*. His tenacious insistence that the exception must be thought by analogy to the theological because by definition it requires a sovereign decision unfounded in norms, and his insistence that this analogy underlies a materialist, not a spiritualist, philosophy of history, offer strong grounds for questioning versions of political sovereignty founded upon the qualitative exclusion of a "past" and claims to occupy the space of "secular" world order. By contrast, Koselleck's definition of politics as the evacuation of theology from political decision would seem to leave the basis of decision unexplored. But this is not the case. His

merger of political decision with the temporalization of time indicates that its explanatory basis, as we saw in Blumenberg, is "modernity" itself. In just this way, modernity becomes a sovereign period, and its periodization the basis of sovereignty.

This configuration relates directly to the centrality of "religion" to "politics" in bids for "world order" today. It is important to emphasize that Koselleck's historical semantics grew out of an intense effort to describe "the dissolution of the old world and the emergence of the new"—in effect to revise and to reconcile the account of history with a workable vision of "the now." He attempts, we could say, to find a discrete identity for the present that nonetheless, in Fredric Jameson's terms, affirms "its integration into a context from which it can be posited as breaking."[67]

This question of historical time and modernity has exercised philosophers of history throughout the twentieth century, and as Jameson's work attests, it continues as a core issue for theories of modernity. Jameson's argument in his book *A Singular Modernity* is doubtless one of the more prominent examples in its assessment of the structure of periodization. Working from Martin Heidegger's double temporality, one an internal temporality of representation and the other an external temporality "in which a theological or medieval conception of the certainty of salvation overlaps the emergence of the new system for one last moment and coexists with it long enough to allow the function of certainty to pass from the outgoing structure into the new one, in some wholly different form," Jameson observes that this double structure allows the emergence of the event to be told in narrative form. It is in this context that he offers his pithy description of the structure of periodization: "any theory of modernity must both affirm its absolute novelty as a break and at one and the same time its integration into a context from which it can be posited as breaking."[68] Medievalists have often noted a similar double structure at work in periodization—the Middle Ages serves as both the revered origin of nation or culture and the despised space of barbarism, the stranger, the Other.[69] What Jameson's analysis of modernity as narrative misses, however, is the connection of this periodizing structure to political sovereignty. To be sure, Jameson acknowledges the untenable reductiveness of the periodizing operation, yet proffering this operation as a function of narrative choice elides the constitutive work of sovereign "decision" as the history of periodization.

The omission is even more visible in Peter Osborne's book *The Politics of Time*, which situates itself in relation to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, of course, but also relies heavily upon Koselleck as it analyzes the "purely anticipatory, timeless end" that "temporalizes historical time (historicizes temporality) in the same way that the anticipation of death temporalizes time in general." (According to this argument, as the indebtedness to Koselleck suggests, there could be no such sense of temporalized historical time in the "Middle Ages." It must also be noted, although I cannot address it here, that Heidegger's contemplation of time followed upon his *Habilitationsshrift* on scholastic medieval theology.[70]) Arguing against Löwith, and insisting upon the importance of a period break, Osborne states that refuting the secularization theory is crucial to a philosophy of "secular modernity," one that would posit an ontological structure of historical time without relegitimating theology on post-Hegelian grounds:

> In particular, to what extent can [this ontological status] be understood independently of the *theological* connotations with which it is inevitably associated in the context of the Judaic-Christian tradition? After all, is not the idea of a timeless exteriority, productive of history yet in principle outside its grasp, even more unequivocally theological than the immanent end of Hegel's "true theodicity", which we would have it displace? Does the philosophy of history not reveal itself here, once again, as an inherently theological genre, even in the new, apparently secular garb of a post-Hegelian philosophy of historical time?[71]

It would be possible to find in such an argument an idea of the "secular" without the "secularization" described by Löwith—if it were not for its reinscription of Christian Europe's basic logic of sovereignty: that is, to eliminate "theology" on the basis of medieval/modern *periodization*, and thence to yield a reified "modernity." To do so is already to eliminate, as I have argued above, the "incalculable" in history and politics.

HISTORY INTERRUPTED: BENJAMIN AFTER SCHMITT

Periodization must be thought with respect to sovereignty, both in the sense of the sovereign subject and in the sense of political rule. By this I do not mean simply that periodization is totalizing and therefore hegemonic, in a general sense that has often been recognized, but rather that in a very precise sense periodization is inextricable from sovereignty structurally and historically. Indeed, recent theoretical work on sovereignty would seem to make this relation self-evident, as this theory increasingly gravitates to the problem of "political theology" and to Carl Schmitt's dictum that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts." Like the work of his contemporary, Walter Benjamin, Schmitt's *Political Theology* probes the fundamental bond between "theology" and "politics," unsettling simple definitions and wishful dichotomies through an interrogation that never strays far from the question of periodization. The intersections between the works of these two men despite their opposed positions in Third Reich politics, their intense engagement with the crisis of their own moment, and the obvious attraction of their work today suggests that we should contemplate the pertinence of their critical matrix and its fascination with historical time to current crises of "the now." The focus on sovereignty in each case, particularly with respect to theology and to executive power, turns upon the recurrent problem of constituting law, or, as Derrida puts it, the *épokhè*, the instance of non-law that is also the whole history of law.

Despite the later antipathy between the two men, Schmitt's and Benjamin's early investigations of theology and law were complementary—they tracked the same philosophical problems, crucial to their moment, though sometimes with differing vocabularies. In their mutual concern with the total suspense of the law, both considered what today we would call the "performative," the ability of language to do what it says. For Schmitt, the suspense of the *exception* opens the space of the sovereign decision, which "becomes instantly independent of argumentative substantiation and receives an autonomous value."[72] This decision is constitutive, that is, fully performative, even though it may be false; indeed, such falsity proves the purity of the decision in its invulnerability to challenge. Schmitt understands the structure of the decision perfectly well: its occasion is utterly singular, an "independently determining moment," and it cannot respond to the multiple interests of the population that it will affect; for precisely this reason it requires a single individual, the sovereign. It depends, like any speech, upon former institutions and could thus miscarry, although Schmitt's sovereign acts under Hobbes's principle "autoritas, non veritas facit legem," and thus maximizes the chance of success. The theological analogy enters here on two counts: the *exception*,

like a miracle, exceeds all norms, and the *decision*, like an act of God but also a means to an end, performs law. Periodization can, and historically does, operate in just this way, as a simultaneous abeyance and instantiation of law. Its history, as Koselleck rightly notices, is the history of the law, and thus leaves a trail of constitutive violence.

In Benjamin's terms such decision is not "divine" but "legal" violence, and justice will not be served. For Benjamin "divine violence" is law-annihilating, a pure means that does not advance to an end, never moves to the imposition of a decision. His example is the "general strike," which like an extended miracle nullifies law "in the determination to resume only a wholly transformed work, no longer enforced by the state, an upheaval that this kind of strike not so much causes as consummates."[73] In this consummation it, too, performs. The idea of such abeyance enables Benjamin in his later work to imagine a form of history that destroys the continuity of historicism (an economy of violence dissembling as progress) through *interruption*, which annihilates from within itself the idea of progress, and from the perspective of "now-time" (*Jetztzeit*) it constellates historical events without continuity.[74] Like the general strike, it is a "cessation of happening" combined with "recurrence," and its goal is redemptive. By imagining a form of history that keeps the miracle but shuns decision, Benjamin offers, as is often noted, a radically alternative method of thinking events in time. A brief, concluding anecdote might illustrate the difference this perspective offers with regard to periodization.

In his *Imagined Communities*, a book that medievalists have long berated for its uninformed caricature of "the Middle Ages" and its theory of the nation based on temporal exclusion, Benedict Anderson cites Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* to support his origin story: "What has come to take the place of the mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time is, to borrow again from Benjamin, an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar."[75] But Anderson misquotes Benjamin, and his error shuts down precisely the possibility of opening history and imagining redemption without exclusion, toward which Benjamin strives. Here is what Benjamin says in Thesis fifteen, following his statement in Thesis fourteen that "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now":

"The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a historical time-lapse camera. And, basically it is the same day that keeps recurring in the guise of holidays, which are days of remembrance. Thus the calendars do not measure time as clocks do; they are monuments of historical consciousness."[76] Anderson's misreading of Benjamin denies both forms of temporality to the Middle Ages, the times of clock and calendar, and collapses the distinction between the two into precisely the homogenized indistinction of the present that Benjamin argues is *not* the structure of history and the "now." The difference between clock and calendar, between the ticks of chronology and an act of present remembrance, between origin stories that exclude and an openness to the *event*, is the difference between the sovereign cut of periodization and the abeyance of that sovereign closure. It is the difference, too, between a Middle Ages that serves historicism, and a "Middle Ages" that explodes the historical continuum. At its most radical, it is the difference in the sense of an epoch.

NOTES

1 Chakrabarty, "Where Is the Now?" 459.

2 With the escalation of bloody political struggles over "secular" or "religious" government around the world, scholarship on these categories continues to expand with little consensus, and I make no attempt here to engage the full compass of this debate. For different viewpoints, see for instance Anidjar, "Secularism"; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*; Bhargava, *Secularism and Its Critics*; Neeham and Sunder Rajan, *Crisis of Secularism in India*; Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*; and Vries and Sullivan, *Political Theologies*.

3 I consider "secularization" together with the history of the concept of "feudalism" in Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*.

4 For important discussions by medievalists regarding the implications of periodization for world politics, see Wallace, *Premodern Places*, as well as his "Carving Up Time and the World"; Biddick, *Shock of Medievalism* and *Typological Imaginary*; Lampert, "Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-) Middle Ages"; and, generally, the essays collected in Cohen, *Postcolonial Middle Ages*, and Ingham and Warren, *Postcolonial Moves*.

5 We find, for example, both introductory textbooks and postcolonial novels adopting this organization. See, for example, Damrosch, *Longman Anthology of*

World Literature, which divides all world literature into two volumes and six subcategories. Volume 1 covers the Ancient World, the Medieval Era (fourth through the fourteenth centuries), and the Early Modern Period; Volume 2 covers the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, the Nineteenth Century, and the Twentieth Century. For the interrelation of medievalism and Orientalism, see Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism*.

6 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 31.

7 A special issue of *Cultural Critique* addressing (among other things) Schmitt's work unfortunately appeared too late for consideration here. See Hohendahl, "Radical Conservative Thought in Transition."

8 Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?* 135. For Schmitt's popularity with the left early in his career, and his similarities to the Frankfurt School, see Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt and the Frankfurt School"; for opposing views, see the response in the same volume by Preuss, "The Critique of German Liberalism," and Jay's more polemical "Reconciling the Irreconcilable?" Schmitt's connections with the Frankfurt School and with Leo Strauss remain topics of intense debate. Schmitt's connections to Strauss are both personal and theoretical; most obviously, Strauss provided "notes" to Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (first published as *Der Begriff des Politischen* in 1932), which are appended to the English edition. For Schmitt's personal assistance to Strauss and their correspondence, see Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss*. For various views of the relatedness of their theories, see ibid.; Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss*; and McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism*.

9 The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following example from 1820: "The number of periods performed depends . . . [on] the thickness of the plate, and whatever other cause or limit of periodicity may happen to prevail" (J. F. W. Herschel, *Philos. Trans.* [Royal Soc.] 110 65). Matthew Kohl, a researcher for the OED, informs me that this reference has now been antedated by an 1818 use in the *New England Journal of Medicine and Surgery, and Collateral Branches of Science*: "From attentive observation to the complaint under consideration, for some years past, we are convinced that tic douloureux is very frequently an arthritic affection, en masque. The violence and periodicity of its attacks, as well as many other of its phenomena, corroborate this opinion." My thanks to Mr. Kohl for providing this information.

10 See Fredric Jameson's comments on this subject in *Postmodernism*, 400, as well as his discussion of the structure of periodization in *A Singular Modernity*.

11 Schmitt, *Political Theology* (first published as *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* in 1922).

12 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 6 (emphasis added).

13 Ibid., 31–32.

14 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" (first published as "Zur Kritik der Gewalt" in 1955). Benjamin's example of such suspension is the general strike, which is "beyond all legal systems, and therefore beyond violence," and which he contrasts to legal violence (292–300). For a thorough analysis of "Critique of Violence," see Butler, "Critique, Coercion, and Sacred Life." The most famous response to Benjamin's "Critique" is Derrida's "Force of Law."

15 Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 62 (translation modified; first published as *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* in 1963).

16 Ibid., 65.

17 Ibid., 56.

18 Ibid., 69, 71. See also Samuel Weber, "Taking Exception to Decision."

19 Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 70. One might note here a similarity to Ernst Kantorowicz's discussion of "the king's two bodies," which resonates with arguments by Schmitt, as in Schmitt's discussion of the priesthood being made into an office: "The fact that the office is made independent of charisma signifies that the priest upholds a position that appears to be completely apart from his concrete personality. Nevertheless, he is not the functionary and commissar of republican thinking. In contradistinction to the modern official, his position is not impersonal, because his office is part of an unbroken chain linked with the personal mandate and concrete person of Christ" (Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, 14 [first published as *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form* in 1923]). Kantorowicz, who had fled Germany during the war, acknowledged but also distanced the connections of his book to "some of the idols of modern political religions," which, he asserts, were not its inspiration. Nonetheless, he wrote: "Such as it now stands, this study may be taken among other things as an attempt to understand and, if possible, demonstrate how, by what means and methods, certain axioms of a political theology which *mutatis mutandis* was to remain valid until the twentieth century, began to be developed during the later Middle Ages" (*The King's Two Bodies*, xviii).

20 Löwith, *Meaning in History*. Löwith had been a pupil of Heidegger and was himself a teacher of Reinhart Koselleck, whom I discuss later.

21 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 191. Löwith also discusses Giambattista Vico, whom he treats, of course, as an exception to this pattern.

22 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 1–2.

23 Löwith had bitterly critiqued Schmitt's theory of the "decision" in an earlier essay, "The Occasional Decisionism of Carl Schmitt" (first published as "Der Okkasionnelle Dezisionismus von Carl Schmitt" in 1935). For discussions of Löwith and the relation of his work to "secularization" and to Schmitt, see Wolin's introduction to his *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism* and Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*; for discussion of Löwith in relation to Benjamin, see Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints*, 30–32.

24 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 193.

25 Auerbach, it is worth noting, shared with Schmitt a background in German legal training. Schmitt received his doctorate in jurisprudence from the University of Strassburg in 1910; Auerbach received his from the University of Heidelberg in 1913.

26 Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, 18–19. For discussion of Schmitt's theory of political representation and its implications, see Samuel Weber, " 'The Principle of Representation.' "

27 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 225n2. Löwith further discusses the destructive, imperial trajectory of secularized messianism on 202–3.

28 Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 190.

29 For Löwith's discussion of "incalculability," see ibid., 199–200.

30 Schmitt's alignment of sovereign decision with the friend/enemy distinction, which I do not have space to elaborate here, is the topic of his *The Concept of the Political*.

31 Blumenberg chose the term "legitimacy" to counter the "illegitimacy" attributed to secularization, particularly since "the 'Final Resolution of the Reichstag's Special Commission' [*Reichsdeputationshauptschluss*] of 1803 established the term 'as a concept of the usurpation of ecclesiastical rights, as a concept of the illegitimate emancipation of property from ecclesiastical care and custody' " (*Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 20).

32 Ibid., 119.

33 Ibid., 18–21. Blumenberg sometimes tries to validate his periodizing claims with the familiar narrative of a modern age (*Neuzeit*) that self-legitimates by proclaiming the "legitimacy" of knowledge, in contrast to the "medieval" rejection of *curiositas*. (The claim for such an overarching "medieval" rejection of curiosity and knowledge is, of course, not only reductive but ludicrous.) For him the modern age constitutes not a "transformation" of medieval, theological forms, but a "reoccupation" of their place by a "new consciousness of nature and the world" and "the legitimacy of the new, free endowment of meaning." Unsurprisingly, Petrarch furnishes the liminal, exemplary case, and Petrarch's gaze from the heights of Mont Ventoux explicitly literalizes the *spatio*-temporal stakes of periodization: "The description of the ascent of Mont Ventoux exemplifies graphically what is meant by the 'reality' of history as the reoccupation of formal systems of positions" (342). This description comes at the end of a chapter on medieval scholasticism (325–42), which according to Blumenberg had the opportunity with Siger of Brabant to accept a "consciousness of reality" but rejected it in favor of Augustine's condemnation of *curiositas*.

34 Ibid., 99.

35 Koselleck, *Futures Past*. All page references are to the 1985 edition except where noted.

36 See Keith Tribe's "Translator's Introduction" to the 1985 edition of Koselleck, *Futures Past* (ix). Koselleck was also heavily influenced by his relationships with Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss, and to a lesser degree (personally) by Heidegger, all of whom were colleagues at some point in his career. He was also a student of Löwith.

37 Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 5 (first published as *Kritik und Krise, Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bügerlichen Welt* in 1959).

38 Ibid., 9.

39 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 32.

40 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, xxii.

41 Ibid., xxii–xxiii.

42 Koselleck's translator Keith Tribe comments in his "Notes on Translation and Terminology" in the 1985 edition of *Futures Past* that *Vergangene Zukunft* might be better translated as "The Bygone Future" (xix). In a note to the book's first essay, "Modernity and the Planes of Historicity," Koselleck refers to the use made of *vergangene Zukunft* in Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 289n1).

43 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 46.

44 In discussing the title of Schmitt's postwar book *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, Balibar provides a useful explanation of Schmitt's idea of world order as a form of incarnation accomplished through territorialization:

> In its *abstract* aspect, this refers to the principle of territorialization of the life of men and of right, incarnated in "original juridical acts" Schmitt calls *Landnahmen*: occupation of land, founding of cities and colonies, conquests and alliances, and the like. In its *concrete* aspect it refers to a certain centrality of Europe, from the sixteenth until the twentieth century, in the determination of the regions and borders that "map" the world. Passing over a number of complex transitions, we can say that territorialization allows the secularization of the state-form characteristic of modernity by subordinating religion (*cujus regio ejus religio*, the principle of the Treaty of Westphalia) and organizing the "domestication of war." (Balibar, *We the People of Europe?* 138)

45 For discussion of the interrelations of anthropology and Orientalism with Europe's narrative of secularization and the discourse of "world religions," see Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*.

46 In his revised introduction to the 2004 edition of *Futures Past*, Keith Tribe works to distance Brunner's involvement in the dictionary project, in part perhaps because of his strong past association with the National Socialist party (an association he treats delicately), and in part perhaps to claim the achievement primarily for Koselleck (xi–xiv). In this revised introduction, Tribe also discusses more extensively Koselleck's debts to Gadamer, Schmitt, Jauss, and Heidegger, and fends off suggestions (which followed the translation's initial publication) that Koselleck was influenced by the "Cambridge School" of history, to which he has some similarities.

47 Brunner, cited by Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton in the translators' introduction to Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, xx. (*Land and Lordship* was first published as *Land und Herrschaft. Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Österriechs im Mittelalter* in 1939.) Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton's translation is based on the fourth edition (1959), Brunner's final revision. In earlier editions of *Land und Herrschaft*, Brunner argued that the basic German structure of political association (*Volksstaat*) endured despite the interruption of the un-German,

French-derived bourgeois *Rechsstatt* (xxi); however, he excised this discussion in the fourth edition. An indirect link between German *Landesgeschichte* and the *Annales* school is often noted. Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton cite the suggestion that the French movement may have derived from "the experience of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre at the University of Strasbourg after 1918, when the French took over a German university with a seminar and library of *Landesgeschichte* that had no equivalent elsewhere in France." In 1972, Fernand Braudel suggested: "Is it by chance that Henri Berr, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and myself all came from eastern France? That the *Annales* began at Strasbourg, next door to Germany and to German historical thought?" (cited in Kaminsky's and Van Horn Melton's translators' introduction to Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, xxv–xxvi).

48 Brunner's probing for historical roots and for a narrative of transition between "Old Europe" (*Alteuropa*, as he called it, following Burckhardt) and a new world order must be understood, as his translators Kaminsky and Van Horn Melton argue, within a historic and historiographical framework that includes not only the scholarship of "Marc Bloch, [and] the philosophy of Martin Heidegger but also of Georg Lukács, the social science of Carl Schmitt but also of Max Horkheimer" (translators' introduction to Brunner, *Land and Lordship*, xxvii).

49 Koselleck quoted in translator's introduction to Koselleck, *Futures Past*, xi.

50 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 4–5.

51 Ibid., 3.

52 Ibid., 4.

53 Ibid., 4–5.

54 Schlegel quoted in Ibid., 4 and 16.

55 Biddick, *Typological Imaginary*, 1. Biddick also attends to the role of Altdorfer's architectural etchings in the encryptment of "Jews within the tomb of the typological imaginary at the same time that it fabricates a writing surface constitutive of a new graphic regime of 'scientific' representation" (65). The typology of Altdorfer's etchings could be productively read against that of the *Alexanderschlacht*.

56 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 6.

57 Ibid., 17.

58 Ibid., 6–8.

59 The difference between this potent historical sensibility and an eschatological emptying out of history is one topic of Agamben's *The Time That Remains*. Working with the texts of Schmitt and, particularly, Benjamin and Paul, Agamben relabels this time "the time of the now," which is to say "messianic" time, a contraction of past and present never reducible to unitary chronology and associated, structurally and juridically, with Schmitt's "exception." See Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, especially 59–87 and 104–12.

60 See Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, chapter 4.

61 Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, 60.

62 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 16.

63 Ibid., 19–20.

64 Ibid., 11.

65 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36, 49.

66 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 7.

67 Jameson, *Singular Modernity*, 57.

68 Ibid., 56–57.

69 See, for instance, Spiegel, *Past as Text*; Davis, "National Writing in the Ninth Century"; and Lampert, "Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-) Middle Ages," 393. See also Robert Stein cited in Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, 158.

70 For more on Heidegger and time, see the editors' introduction and Ethan Knapp's essay in the present volume. For discussion of this topic and of the reliance of other German philosophers upon study of the Middle Ages, see Holsinger's introduction to his *Premodern Condition*, 6–7.

71 Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 113–14.

72 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 31.

73 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 291–92.

74 See Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, 442n24.

75 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

76 Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, in *Illuminations*, 261–62.