



FIGURE 1. Kota Ezawa, *National Anthem (San Francisco 49ers)* (2019).
Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery, San Francisco.

Daseinstufe

Liquidity as a (Distinct) Stage of Being

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Introduction

Sometimes the doors of our captivity suddenly open, and a mysterious path appears. It leads inward, to many forms of stillness, but also to new encounters and to a new present.

—Carl Schmitt, *Ex captivitate salus*

All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober sense his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

—*The Communist Manifesto*

Liquidity is abstraction.¹ Liquidity is, in its “speculative” financial form, materiality. The materiality of money, specifically. In economic terms, *liquidity* is the name given to the process by which an asset, any asset, is converted into money. (This liquidity is in no way commensurate with what the Marx of *Capital* would have determined as its use—utility—value. The asset bears little direct relation to how the asset may be used. Or even if it is at all usable. And as Robert Meister argues in his distinction between “speculative bubbles,” one of which resulted in the crash of 2008² [the infamous “housing bubble”],³ and “real accumulation,” the latter “takes the form of the production and accumulation of financial instruments that retain their liquidity—ready convertibility into money—without *being* money.”⁴) In order to apprehend liquid-

ity (a concept central to Meister's argument), it is necessary not only to think "money" as an abstract form but also to grasp liquidity as an abstraction not once but twice over. That is, liquidity is that asset that can be converted into money "without being money." Liquidity is the asset that can be converted into another asset without its ever passing through the stage of materiality—in effect, signaling materiality and then bypassing it entirely so that the asset does not ever assume the form of "money."

Understood as such, liquidity is the abstraction that keeps on giving in that it prompts, through the aporia (materiality; money) that is strategic omission, the opening up to—or maybe even the need for—a further thinking of abstraction. There is, however, a conceptual use to limiting liquidity as an abstraction to the first power only (that is, money as money). This restriction enables us to think the asset as an antireified manifestation of capital. The ways in which the asset works mean that in order to understand it we cannot obfuscate the materiality of labor, nor can we overlook the array of forces (labor, machinery, time, social effect) that make the object—the asset, in this case—possible. The asset, as such, invites the opportunity to see "clear through" the workings of capital. Read as a mode of finance capital, liquidity is the potential "solidification"—materiality, money—of the asset that in no way derives its value from what it may or may not do. If we think capital/ism through liquidity, a certain economic transparency becomes possible, a transparency that must take into account the

ways in which financial assets are bound, by the logic of capital, to produce inequality. In order to accumulate wealth, capital must at some point (the earlier the better) convert itself into assets rather than capital as such. Because of this conversion, it becomes possible for "money" to produce, well, more "money," without, that is, having to engage in wage labor. In classic Marxist terms, it is only the financier class (the "moneyed bourgeoisie," as it were) that has the kind of material resources to acquire assets, an economic advantage that serves only to expand the divide between classes. Wealth, then, as repeated access to assets, which in its turn works to increase the value of the assets and, of course, to increase the wealth of those who have it.

Reductively phrased, the logic of capital is such that difference—rooted in class, needless to say—is a constituent feature of liquidity, produced by liquidity, and so, as what it is that liquidity makes visible, it must perforce be subjected to scrutiny beyond the first power. Every abstraction of liquidity, every theorizing of liquidity is itself generative. It demands, in advance of itself, further thinking—a theory that emerges out of the first theory that demands (yet) another theory. Liquidity trades, in this way, not so much on its own insufficiency (although we are entirely free to state the matter as such). Rather, the abstraction that liquidity generates is the key to "releasing" our thinking of liquidity from the "captivity," in Carl Schmitt's sense, of a single theory. There can be, as such, no definitive theory of liquidity, because every

LIQUIDITY IS THE ABSTRACTION THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

abstraction begets its own abstraction. Or, to render the matter in the terms of finance capital, every asset *A* is capable, in strict order or randomly, of producing assets *B*, *C*, and *L*, ad infinitum.

Liquidity as clarity, then, as an impossibly absolute clarity, because the inherent promise of the asset to end all speculation in assets is something on the order of “fictitious wealth,” which is nothing but the illusion of acquiring the asset to end all assets. As such, then, derived from capital / *Das Kapital*, the sustaining principle of liquidity: the fluidity of liquidity, to cast liquidity as a familiar form of matter (water), marks, in several registers, the infinite capacity for movement—the phenomenon that, in a globalized, interlocked economy, makes it relatively easy to transfer money from one nation-state to another, depending on what kind of privacy protection is on offer,⁵ what kinds of tax breaks are available, and what kind of financial security can be obtained.⁶ The possibility of transformation after transformation but also, in crucial and sometimes unexpected moments, the force of liquidity is such that it resists movement—in order to collect itself, to take stock of itself, to, we might even suggest, know and name itself—and consolidates itself in order to properly understand itself. (To

pose this in the discourse of assets: to determine the value of the asset. To consider “cashing in” on the asset.) It gives itself over to theorizing the moment that is; it wants to subject itself to a forensic study of itself. How did it come to be the way that it is, the way that it currently is and might not be for much longer? The moment in which liquidity solidifies itself is the occasion of its seeking to determine its own profile. In that moment, movement is not so much frozen as arrested, held in place, held in place possibly against itself, held in place in order to arrest its relentless energies, held in place in an attempt—a vain one, of course—to counter its elusiveness, to prevent the terms of its abstraction being surrendered to its next, its inevitable next, articulation, the form that is already moving toward, ready to assume, for however long that form can be maintained, for however long that asset can contain or accommodate it. (The asset as nothing other than the economic form that the desire for infinite accumulation takes.) That is the moment, in medias res, in which we can best think liquidity without, we well know—we know a priori—ever being able to grasp it in its entirety.

There is, to borrow a term from Martin Heidegger, no *Herrschaft* of liquidity. That is, there is—as Jacques Derrida puts it in his reading of Heidegger—no “sovereignty” or “mastery” or “lordship” over liquidity.⁷ What is necessary in any apprehension of liquidity is the readiness to proffer the proposition, not in order to achieve a definitive rendering (such a threshold does not exist, so it is impossible from the very beginning) but in order to posit a set of

precepts—first principles, let us name them, first principles of the provisional variety—with which to think liquidity in its moment. Not to presume that such a thinking constitutes a “first” encounter, by any means, but to propose a thinking that refuses *Machstellung* (power, or to operate from a position of force), which is nothing other than the imposition of the sovereignty of force (sovereign violence) upon liquidity. *Machstellung*, sovereignty, force, all work only to impede how it is we think liquidity; they all endeavor to establish certainty when fluidity should be the default starting position. Fluidity might operate as not only a better starting point but also as the a priori condition of engagement. To balk at sovereignty, however, is not to refuse a truth as such. It is, rather, to recognize in liquidity a resilience, a truth to itself, that is open to question and rethinking but that will not, will never, accede to its own liquidation even as it understands its own autoimmunity.

A difficult proposition as a first principle: integrity of being and autoimmunity, one of which is dedicated to putting the other at risk. But is that not the very nature of all that is fluid, all that moves: to expose the self—the object, the human being, the animal, flora—to risk, to injury, to harm, to debilitation, and yes, it must be acknowledged explicitly, to the possibility of obliteration and extinction? Autoimmunity and the clarity of truth: the precarity of truth in the face of autoimmunity; autoimmunity as the mechanism for the most distilled articulation of truth. Without autoimmunity, no truth. Can we propose such an equation, this one: autoimmunity = truth? And

while we are so enraptured by autoimmunity, does it not behoove us to ask if autoimmunity is itself auto-immune? And, if it is, to what? What is it that makes autoimmunity autoimmune? What makes it vulnerable to its own liquidation? Is it too, like everything else, vulnerable to the logic of what Heidegger and Derrida call, each in their own way, *dekonstruktion* or deconstruction? (Such a deconstructive predisposition leads us, of course, to the deconstruction of what is itself being deconstructed.)

Let us, for the sake of argument, delineate a preliminary step in this direction by positing the autoimmunity of autoimmunity as—in the spirit of Schmitt, Jean Bodin, and Thomas Hobbes—the most inter-necine, the most intimate, the most violent, the most destructive, the most atomized, and therefore the most devastating kind of philosophico-political civil war.

It will be, we can speculate, a civil war the like of which we have never seen, have never imagined, because it pits self against itself—it demands that the self think its constitutive, elemental selfness. Being. *Sein*. (In doing so we run the “risk” of confronting Heidegger’s “Being-meaning”—*Seinssin*—which would require us, of course, to establish the “implementation meaning”: *Vollzugssin*. Only through the latter can we achieve the former.) What could be more terrifying than that—civil strife internalized to degree zero—because it surely encompasses, whether we acknowledge it or not, a direct encounter with suicide; and, as such, death; and, as such, a pact with endless selves. The death of the self writ large. The death of the self, there can be no more writing after the civil

war named autoimmunity. (And death is that movement toward what constitutes the core of *being* itself. All being, as Heidegger was fond of reminding us, is being toward death. We are all thinking toward our—not to put too fine a point on it—own liquidation, our own end, no matter how it is we move in that direction. Dust art thou O Man, and through liquidation unto dust shalt thou be returned. Or in Socratic terms: learning to live autoimmunely in order to know how to die, autoimmunely.) A death *sui generis*, a death to end not only all death but life itself. Because, in the bleak scenario that Schmitt sketches of civil war (and, for our part, we have no reason to doubt him, given the history of internecine violence—from Cain and Abel to the American Civil War to the murderous acts that laid waste to Rwanda, Burundi, and much of the Balkans—and that is only to account for “ancient” and “recent” history), such a war is “fought within a common political entity that encompasses the opponent within one and the same legal order, and because both sides of the struggle simultaneously assert and deny this common political enemy in absolute terms.”⁸ It is impossible to propose civil strife in absolute terms as it regards autoimmunity except as the movement toward self-determined, self-orchestrated, self-engineered (we could go on, perhaps infinitely) “absolute” self-destruction of the most unprecedented and “absolute” variety.

Movement

How do we move toward such a critique of autoimmunity, one where, as Schmitt enjoins us, our “intel-

lectual curiosity does not suddenly fail”?⁹ What kind of thinking is required? What moves are we to make? What is the first such move we should risk? Surely it is “absolute” risk? Surely it can be nothing other than that.

It is precisely because movement is the natural condition of liquidity, in its shape, in its shapelessness, in its ability to rapidly change shape, that the time of transparency—that moment when things can be seen, when a shape holds, however briefly; that “stillness” (the body at rest, as I have argued elsewhere in relation to the athletic body)¹⁰—assumes such a critical aspect. It is the moment to think *from* as much as it is always the moment to think, to hope, *for*, the moment, that single instant of “absolute” clarity. (Not quite an epiphany as such, not quite a moment of blinding insight, but proximate to both because of its ability to halt us in our tracks so that we can think, as fully as possible, the moment. At the very least, we put ourselves in a position to achieve *Verstand*—a critical level of “understanding.”) But it remains a moment, this “stillness,” which we must apprehend only with uncertainty and, yes, apprehension, as a proposition that is itself always open to its own first principle, autocritique.

However, no matter its capacity for the infinitely generative, what liquidity—as, say, asset *E*—enables is the possibility of appropriating the moment of the asset in order to posit the transparency of being as a singular condition, one that—by itself, as a stand-alone asset—makes it possible to see things, for however extended or truncated a moment, as they truly

are. (That moment or modality, even, in which the asset “reveals” itself to us.) As an abstraction, liquidity can be figured as the distillation of history—economic or otherwise (capital as industrial wealth or financial capital)—into truth.

Such an understanding of liquidity is sustainable if we follow the authors of *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels, of course, propose dissolution—“All that is solid melts into air”—as the necessary precondition for truth; and for direct and deliberate self-confrontation: “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”¹¹ Skipping the interstitial scientific state, liquid/liquidity, and proceeding directly from the “solid” state of matter to its gaseous form (“air”), Marx and Engels argue that such “dissolution” compels a confrontation with truth, the “real conditions of life,” which is also the necessary precondition for class consciousness—that (imposed) modality where human beings form a “relation with their kind.” Materiality unvarnished, truth made immanent, and as a consequence, “class antagonisms”—as they say in the *Manifesto*—revealed as human beings are left with no choice but to name the specificity of their “relations” with other human beings. That is, the truth of the “air” is that it can be designated as, politically speaking, the very oxygen that gives birth to class consciousness—the direction in which Marx and Engels hope history will move. After all, in the *Manifesto* all “relations” for Marx and Engels turn on the rap-

EVERY ABSTRACTION OF LIQUIDITY, EVERY THEORIZING OF LIQUIDITY IS ITSELF GENERATIVE

idly unfolding “antagonisms” that mark economic interactions—the coming strife, the revolution that is imminent—between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This is declared in the first line of the *Manifesto*: “A spectre is haunting Europe.”¹² Like Marx and Engels, who predict the triumph of the working class, the “fall of [the bourgeoisie] and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable,”¹³ Schmitt too writes in the direction of new political possibilities—the “new present” that he envisages as emerging out of “new encounters.” Schmitt works, as we are well aware, from a very different ideological position than that of the authors of *The Communist Manifesto*. He writes the collection of essays that is *Ex captivitate salus* in an attempt to obfuscate—although he strenuously denies this—his support for National Socialism. Schmitt writes his essays as an attempt to rehabilitate his standing as a legal scholar, as a juridical thinker of civil war who is a modern heir of Thomas Hobbes and Jean Bodin, scholars who have been cast out by the prevailing intellectual order, philosophers of “civil war,” a condition that Schmitt understands himself as witness to, as defining of his postwar ex-

perience. Brothers in (civil war) arms, if you will, no matter that Bodin and Hobbes might not recognize Schmitt in the ways he desires.

Daseinstufe

It would take an immense leap of faith to assent to Schmitt's plea for "historical understanding." (It would be something of an entirely different order than Hegel's *Verstand*, to say the least.) But, no matter; or, lesser matter. Salient, for the purposes of our argument here, is Schmitt's writing, from a prison staffed by Americans after the end of World War II, toward a new mode of being: *dasein stufe*, which might be understood as, in a felicitous translation, "new level of experience," but which Schmitt offers—and it is one word, not two, for him—as a "new mode of being." If Marx and Engels draw us, understandably, in the direction of dissolution, Schmitt makes the case not for the transformation of matter but for its retention. Not for movement, the ceaseless churning of history, but for "stillness."

Writing from his Berlin prison cell (and because of this specific carceral location it is politically impossible not to be haunted by the specter of Antonio Gramsci, buried in that cemetery named "Acatolica," one mode of Roman Catholicism jaggedly abutting another; Opus Dei in conflict with the liberation theology of the 1960s, if you will), with his movement severely restricted, with writing, his very lifeblood, proscribed (Schmitt was able to write only because a Boston medical doctor, for reasons unknown, allowed him to do so), it is possible to name Schmitt's

advocacy for "stillness" as what I am naming the solidification of liquidity. The prison cell as crucible, as that mode of being where self-confrontation presents itself as the most unrelenting and inescapable mode of being. It is out of this experience that, contrary to all expectation, a "mysterious path appears." Politics, as such: the commitment to a project, to a process, without any guarantee of the desired outcome. (We remember Stuart Hall's phrase for this in his critique of Gramsci: "Marxism without guarantees.")¹⁴ "Stillness" as the crystallization of truth; "stillness" as that *daseinstufe* where "new encounters"—with the self, with the world, a new writing of the other becomes possible—offer themselves as the making transparent of truth. Under these conditions, the "real relations" are unavoidable, "relations" that Schmitt seems eminently capable of avoiding. Liquidity, then, as the condition for thinking truth. For "seeing" the truth in its transparency; "seeing" the truth as unadorned, unvarnished, manifestly clear in its presence, in how it presents itself.

Liquidity, then, not as the transformation of matter, although it is obviously that too, but as that moment when truth is "stilled" into clarity, when clarity is achieved because movement—transformation, exertion, fluidity, and with it grace, the graceful movement of bodies, the unveiling of new possibilities, new joys, undreamed of pleasures, all given up, sacrificed, the sanctity of water—is stilled. In the prison cell, the self dissolves in that its presence is made ethereal, speculative, for the world outside; a matter, a life, a mode of being, to be speculated on. As

such, the prisoner's life always retains something approaching "unreal," we might say. The body, and the mind, we can assert with little fear of contradiction, are "liberated" into possibility. The body is free/freed to take on other forms (literal: to acquire tattoos; and spiritual: to undergo a religious conversion—Malcolm X, for example), the mind released from the "captivity" of conformity. As such, the mind is released to think other thoughts—thoughts heretofore verboten, whether they be philosophical, sexual, or political. With the body under threat of liquidation, of being expunged from history, it finds itself, against expectation, free—freed—to think its way out of, against, captivity while being under those very conditions—being held in captivity.

Schmitt, then, could not have named his work more aptly: *Ex captivitate salus*, "deliverance from captivity." Captivity, then, as, in its affirmative sense, an autoimmune condition, a condition that Marx and Engels register through Shakespearean allusion at the end of the first chapter of *The Communist Manifesto*. In the spirit of one of the final scenes in *Hamlet*, Marx and Engels pronounce the "victory of the proletariat inevitable" because "[w]hat the bourgeoisie produces, above all, are its own grave diggers."¹⁵ How are we not to turn immediately to that scene in act 5 when, with political turmoil all around, the gravediggers are preparing Ophelia's final resting place? Is this how the bourgeoisie will meet its ignominious end? Will they be driven to suicide too? The very mechanisms of bourgeois control, the unequal distribution of wealth, the exploitation of labor, divid-

THERE CAN BE, AS SUCH, NO DEFINITIVE THEORY OF LIQUIDITY, BECAUSE EVERY ABSTRACTION BEGETS ITS OWN ABSTRACTION

ing the workers against themselves, and so on—are these ultimately what will procure a class consciousness resilient enough to openly declare war against the bourgeoisie? Contained within the bourgeoisie's technologies of control are the seeds of its own demise.

The monotheological—especially in its Christian, intensely Catholic articulation—is a clear presence in Schmitt's logic, in his determination to write—and "right"—his place in history. (It is difficult not to hear the call for divine protection in Schmitt's title: "Deliver us Lord from every evil. / For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory." "Deliverance" itself is followed hard by the promise of ascent into the "kingdom.") In making his case for the value, for virtue, to mix ideological registers, in his postwar writing, Schmitt's argument finds a prison mate—an unlikely ally, finding Schmitt a disturbing, reverberating echo—in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."

At the end of King's missive, having called the

AS AN ABSTRACTION, LIQUIDITY CAN BE FIGURED AS THE DISTILLATION OF HISTORY—ECONOMIC OR OTHERWISE—INTO TRUTH

white clergy to account for its inaction (what he calls the “appalling silence of the good people”¹⁶—thereby, of course, drawing their very “goodness” into question; and as such, critiquing the brand of Christianity that they practice), having asserted the morality of nonviolence (“it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends”) and having excoriated and shamed those who subscribe to the law as a bearer of truth (“justice too long delayed is justice denied”; “We should never forget that everything Adolph Hitler did in Germany was ‘legal’ and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did was ‘illegal’”), the African American theologian explains his position, explicates his contemplation, as the consequence of, to phrase the matter provocatively, a Schmittian “stillness.”

The prison cell is conducive to thinking. The prison cell as the repository of thought. The prison cell oppresses the inmate into thinking. (Let us for a moment here recall Gramsci: not for nothing do we

come to Gramsci via *The Prison Notebooks*. There is no other way to come to thinking than a carceral trajectory, in Gramsci’s case. Or Erich Auerbach, trapped in “Constantinople” during World War II without access to the kinds of books he is accustomed to have to hand, writes *Mimesis*, against all odds, against his own expectation—a text, that, despite the stringent conditions under which Auerbach wrote it, has long since become a classic in comparative literature.) This is an intellectual lineage to which King is party. King writes in a vein that invokes these other authors but not without putting his own stamp on it. He proceeds Socratically, bringing the full force of the interrogative to bear: “What else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?”¹⁷ King faces himself, braces himself for self-inquiry, opens himself to the silent stillness of incarceration. Other than in, say, a monastery or during some form of religious or spiritual retreat, it is difficult to imagine a more historically “opportune” moment for making the self attend to itself. Care of the self, in the sense that Heidegger understands it in *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*): care of the self as *Mitdasein*; to care for the self is to attend to the other, “being-with”; and “being-with” is the condition that secures the “They,” a plurality that Heidegger recognizes as deriving from and concomitant with “being-with” but that he is also intensely wary of because the “They” (can) so easily obstruct being’s ability to achieve an “authentic Self.”¹⁸ To care for the (Heideggerian) self is to pay such attention to the self that,

in and as a result of this process, the “worldliness of the world,” and *being* itself, reveals itself to us. To care for the self is always to be-with—in the presence of—the other. In a specifically Christological way, by calling on the self to think itself (which is, in any case, always already a negation of the Cartesian “I” or “ego”; Heidegger proposes, in its stead, the *Man-selbst*—the “They-self”), King makes the presence of—the condition of—the other paramount to how the imprisoned self addresses the other. In fact, we might venture to say that King’s letter is how care of the self reveals the historical extent to which care of the self is conditional on the other, which is also what raises the possibility—always present, anyway—of “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*—to be understood not as “randomness” per se, although this element is certainly present, but as the a priori limitation of choice or possibility); and as such, it intensifies the “velocity” of the “thrownness.”

Depth and Solitude

Alone in a “narrow jail cell,” the “mysterious” Schmittian path “leads inward, to many forms of stillness.”¹⁹ In a life lived within a restricted carceral space that limits physical movement and keeps human contact to a minimum, all externality might be said to dissolve: “All that is solid melts.” “Melts,” disappears into the “air” and then solidifies itself into prison walls, a world contained, a world that wants to keep the incarcerated to themselves as much as possible; the Word, the Word of Saint John, one wonders, cannot be contained: in the beginning was the Word. It

is the Word itself that makes possible all words. It is only through words that we can testify to the (embodiedness, the immanence of the) Word: “We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.”²⁰

In a “narrow jail cell,” the material form of life, for King at least, assumes an unmistakable immateriality. Apart from the practice of “writing,” itself a form of abstraction that takes on material form prosthetically (if we follow Derrida’s argument that writing comes before speaking) through the “hand,” everything about King’s carceral existence depends on the self turning inside itself. The self turns inside to itself, turns itself inside out (as if King finds himself fully within the idiomatic); and in doing so, does it make inevitable a confrontation with the unarguable truth of its being? (*Seinsinn* deriving entirely from *Vollzugsinn*.) Moreover, in order to live while accessing such a mode of being, the self must discipline itself, its body and its mind, so that it can survive its imprisonment. (King exhibiting the martial—Spartan—discipline of the dedicated political prisoner who tends to mind, body, and soul, evoking a figure such as Nelson Mandela, renowned for his discipline during the twenty-seven years in an apartheid jail cell.) And “disciplined” here functions in at least two senses that are hardly complementary: (1) discipline in its Benthamite articulation (so that we have, we should note, transitioned from Heidegger’s care of the self to the historicity of Michel Foucault’s), where the architecture of

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the prison is designed to punish transgression, in no small measure by constantly reminding the incarcerated body that it is subject to eternal surveillance (the panopticon); all discipline, then, as deriving from on high, hierarchically (and not in the sense of the hierarchy that King observes). And (2) discipline obtains, in Marx's terms, from the "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," living the truth of having to make history under conditions not of one's own choosing.

To write under such conditions is hardly optimal, it is precisely the experience of being incarcerated, unjustly, that compels King to turn contemplation ("thinking long thoughts"), spiritual reflection and meditation ("praying long prayers") into the work, the work of political address ("writing long letters"). Incarceration (alone) makes it possible, or perhaps even imperative, for King to produce his "Letter" out of his ruminations and his prayers. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" is, tautologically phrased, owed to the experience of being imprisoned. King is compelled to write in order that he might record, for the public record, for posterity, that civil rights is a *iusta causa*—"just cause," to invoke a term that Schmitt rendered unimaginably reactionary in *Nomos of the*

Earth. (Militarized, we might say.) Of course it is a "just cause," but to write it so that all who read it understand the ethics and the principles of "nonviolent" provocation—the "tension" that nonviolence "creates"—from within a prison cell cannot but reveal the depth of commitment of those who are willing to break the law, endure unjust imprisonment, refuse to respond to physical violence and threats. Such an act of making the self vulnerable, King reminds us, is of a piece with the "sacrificial spirit of the early church."²¹ Out of "tension," peace; out of "tension," justice. Out of "creative tension"—not simply the "creation of tension"—it is possible for justice, equality, and freedom to emerge.

In the terms proposed here for thinking liquidity, we might say in our attempt to delineate this process, presuming that it is, of course, that it follows some chronology (and on that score we make no promises), we find ourselves bound to abstraction, more abstraction, and immateriality. Let us go one step further and suggest that liquidity, or that which falls under the heading *dasein stufe*, is that form of abstraction that demands its own materialization. Liquidity, then, as nothing less than the movement of the self toward a

material manifestation. The making manifest of the self in the world. Or that act through which the self makes itself—its desires, its deepest sense of self (King: “There can be no deep disappointment where there is no deep love”), its political imaginary (King: “Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber”; or, in the titular Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*), its understanding of accountability (“The time is always ripe to do right”) to the other—and what it stands for clear to the world.²² Through liquidity, the self presents itself as who it understands itself to be to the world. It stands, as it were, bared—*bared to the soul* is the phrase that King seems to inspire in us (“our better angels,” as Abraham Lincoln so famously intoned in his first inaugural address, a political sentiment to which Barack Obama hewed during his presidency)—before the world. And as such, vulnerable.

Silent Stillness, circa 2016

As we agreed earlier, all iterations of vulnerability are unthinkable without the recognition of autoimmunity. Let me acknowledge the image that I have repeatedly conjured in this essay, that image that, I can assure you, haunts this writing; in truth, it may even have birthed it. But more than even that, we can say. After all, this is the image—now having assumed the status of political iconography, of the kneeling athlete—that has haunted the American political scene since August 14 and 20, 2016. On those two days, Colin Kaepernick, then the quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers, first knelt in silent protest during the

playing of the national anthem.²³ Those first acts of silent stillness occurred during preseason games. They went unremarked. Ignored, a matter of no political consequence. It was only on August 26 that Kaepernick’s actions gained attention. It was on August 26 that he was, as it were, seen—first seen. Out of his silence, the dissolution of the national political compact. Out of his stillness, an irruption. An irruption into language and with it a rending of the national discourse. Kaepernick, declarative:

People are dying in vain because this country isn’t holding their end of the bargain up, as far as giving freedom and justice, liberty to everybody. That’s something that’s not happening. I’ve seen videos, I’ve seen circumstances where men and women that have been in the military have come back and been treated unjustly by the country they have fought for, and have been murdered by the country they fought for, on our land. That’s not right.²⁴

Silence and Poetry

“That’s not right”: the denial, the circumscription, the liquidation of rights and lives by, in the main, white police officers. A call for equality, a demand that both sides “hold up their end of the bargain.” Conceived by Kaepernick, we know not whether in anger or repose, or possibly both, or possibly something entirely different, an unmistakable fluidity of language, image, one form of the technological superseding, blending with, something else. The language of modernity (Enlightenment rationality—“freedom, justice,

liberty to everybody”), the language of trauma, national trauma (the returning black soldier subjected to “unjust” treatment), all the while not acknowledging the violence done in the name of the nation. Wilfred Owen, that most gifted of the young poets who perished in the Great War: “Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.” A rough translation: “It is good and noble to die for one’s country.” And then there is Yeats’s epitaph, from “Under Ben Bulbin”: “Cast a cold eye on life, on death / Horseman, pass by.” Making it imperative to speak not only of the “murdered” in one’s ranks but of those whom they, surely, “murdered.” The dissolution of bodies, here and there. Inescapable. Infinite accountability. Enough blame, as they say, to go around. The postlapsarian come fully to life. Those who would be “murdered” on American streets for being black are as likely to lay waste to the other on shores as distant as Afghanistan (America’s “longest war,” as we are so often reminded, with no end in sight), Iraq, Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, the list is long), Iran (Mossadegh, 1953), and Africa (the Congo, Angola; once more, there are names to be added).

But there is also an echo from another time, from a different athlete, who would not commit atrocity against the other. Muhammad Ali, who proclaimed, “I ain’t got no quarrel with them Viet Cong, they never called me nigger.” The black American body, itself enmeshed in America’s violence. The black American body, haunted (a haunting Ali sought to stave off by refusing conscription) and not always sufficiently reflective about its capacity—its culpability—to commit

violence against the other. Black Americans, party to, recruited into, the US project to liquidate the other in the very face of the black American body’s absolute and routine domestic vulnerability. A lesson that began, we could argue, with the failed promise of the War of Independence (Crispus Attucks), repeated in the Civil War, and once more in the two world wars.

Here, as such, we must inveigh, but not too readily, against silence. There is another aspect to it. All this emerging from the silent stillness that is Colin Kaepernick’s act of withdrawal that is also a manifestation. To be at rest in the world. To live in the world precariously. To move in the world in such a way, sometimes more fluidly than others, that every fiber of the self is revealed. Something on the order of a nakedness: that movement which hides nothing. Every muscle, every bone, every joint, in all its tenuousness and strength, eminently visible. Something like what one witnesses in, say, Kara Walker’s art, Toni Morrison’s fiction, Billie Holiday’s plaintive voice, Miles Davis’s trumpet, John Coltrane’s saxophone, and Thelonious Monk’s piano. In one way or another, these artists, sometimes jarringly, sometimes as if we were being made privy to a sublime beauty in its crucible form, courtesy of what might be understood as the most revealing instance of art—the body laid bare, only its fundamental elements, bone and movement, revealed. To be made to see the black body (and *Geist*, Spirit) as crucible, to be made to confront it in its unrelenting sparseness.

Analogically, however, it does not fully capture Kaepernick’s kneeling. In full view of the polis, his

“reduction” to vulnerability, to an intensely political openness, is on display, emerging out of his commitment to making the survival of the other possible. On this delineation of liquidity Schmitt is insightful, in no small measure because of his fidelity to silence that he understands to constitute, to be at, the core of all being. Schmitt offers this as the “silent, tried-and-tested tradition of withdrawal to a private interiority subsisted.”²⁵

Schmitt is suspicious of noise, of loudness, of what he names amplification. He was surely no fan of the “Louisville Lip,” Muhammad Ali, we are free to assume. That way, Schmitt suggests, lies dissembling, and worse. With Kaepernick, there is refusal to allow him a “subsisting private interiority.” That has been, as it were, drained away and rendered as the “pure” political body: the body in its silent, still essence. The body that precisely because of the ways in which its “private interiority” has been turned out and made to speak itself—as silence, yes, but that too is a language—is its own language, one that must be addressed. What does it mean to address silence? To address the body that, through its silent stillness, speaks volubly and yet, before our eyes, utters not a word? How does one respond to the “reducing body”? How is silence to be addressed? How does it address itself to me? With a reciprocal, unequal silence? How do we extricate, give language to, that which manifests itself, as a political strategy, however inadvertently, as silence? As the refusal to move, to stand before the (viewing) nation when the national anthem is sung? Kaepernick’s silence, we might sug-

THE OUTCOME OF “TAKING A KNEE” PROVED, FOR KAEPERNICK, AN ACT TANTAMOUNT TO SELF-DISSOLUTION

gest, belongs to that order of resilient, obdurate, obstinate refusal that has long sustained black life in the United States. Kaepernick, to render the matter poetically, might have found a sympathetic, supportive, endorsing reverberation in an old gospel staple: from who knows when to the civil rights movement, right up to this very day, “we shall not, we shall not be moved. . . . Just like a tree, standing by the water’s side, we shall not be moved.” Protest movements the world over have drawn sustenance, hope, and a salvific balm in “We Shall Not Be Moved.”

The Im-possibility of a “New Present”

“Speaking” silently under these incompletely explicated terms, it is unclear, as it always will be, whether a “new present” is emerging. There is every reason to be skeptical of such a prospect, especially in this moment that I write—exactly two months after George Floyd’s murder, a moment in which Kaepernick has found new resonance, has once more—four years since his last game in the NFL—become a lightning rod for the nation’s “troubles,” as they used to say

about the war in Northern Ireland. However, what is beyond dispute is that out of Kaepernick's protest, he has situated himself in the lineage, in the spirit, of Martin Luther King Jr. Kaepernick is the author, like King was, of national discord, of disruption. Kaepernick first kneels, silent, still, unmoving in precisely that moment when the "meaningful" physical gesture is deemed nonnegotiable. *Pro patria mori*: the athlete, the spectators, the officials, the cleaning crew, the vendors, all putting their hands over their hearts, while standing, saluting, repeating, silently or not, a pledge, of loyalty, of national allegiance.

This is a different stillness from that of, say, a John Carlos or a Tommy Smith. This is not the Black Power salute. (A defiant gesture brought to life again in 2020 when the only black driver in Formula One, Lewis Hamilton, raised his fist after winning the Styrian Grand Prix in Austria in July 2020. Hamilton, a black Briton, deliberately spoken and thoughtful, made clear that it was Smith and Carlos from whom he was borrowing, it was their spirit he sought to bring to political life, again, once more.)²⁶

It might indeed "stand" as its exact opposite. From the intense physical militancy of Mexico City, 1968, here Kaepernick's black body "dissolves" itself into a first forgettable and then transfixing stillness. The body grounded. The body balanced on a single knee. Staring straight ahead. Seeking, it could be argued, not acknowledgment but recognition: to "see" the violence done, to "see" what white America wants to keep out of political memory; to pay attention to the ongoing acts of brutality. To "see" the vio-

lence done, being done, to black being. Kaepernick's is the body that does not want its (own) name spoken. No, what his body is kneeling toward, the reason it has "dissolved" or contracted itself into a resolute stillness, is precisely because it instantiates itself as a political lack. Kneeling is a call for recognition beyond the self. We are free to call it responsibility, but only if such a rendering of responsibility is politically capacious and historically astute enough to understand Kaepernick's body as, shall we say, liquid. His kneeling speaks a desire to meld with, to melt into, a larger corporate structure—*Man-selbst* itself, as Heidegger might have it; or the *conditio humana* writ black, in Hannah Arendt's amended terms. To which must be added the proviso that such a corporation must be figured as the vulnerable black body, the violence-against black body, the black body subject to the malicious intent of the state repressive apparatus (as, once again, the spring and summer of 2020 made immanent: Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery . . .).

Kaepernick's is a body that wants to rarefy itself into a kind of Marxist "air" in order that it might become constitutive and not representative. "All that is solid melts into" the black body politic, the vulnerable body politic, those bodies that lack, to invoke Gilles Deleuze, political "organs." The "organs" of politics that will ensure the integrity of the body. That will keep the body whole, that will allow for the possibility of "keeping body and soul together," as we are wont to say.

By all accounts, given his work in the black com-

WE ARE TASKED WITH EXCAVATING THE FOUNDATION OF THE POLIS WITH THE EXPRESS INTENT OF EXPOSING WHAT IS “ROTTEN IN THE STATE”

munity (after 2016, let us say), the hauntological Kaepernick is doing an admirable job of tending to his soul. However, what of his body? Above all else, what confronts us yet again, yet once more, yet once more for the first time, is the inescapability of autoimmunity. At the moment of his kneeling, so different and yet not, we should remember that in gridiron—that brand of “football” where the ball is not intended to be hit with the foot (except by the “punter”)—the notion of “taking a knee” is a legitimate and time-honored practice. To “take a knee” is, not unlike Kaepernick’s act of dissolution, to enact passivity in a game redolent with violence—a game where the intensity of the contest is regularly measured by how hard players “hit” each other. However, to “take a knee” in the cause of rights and not simply to prevent undue contact (players on opposing teams often, in highly choreographed fashion, suspending, by mutual agreement, the violence that bonds and distinguishes them, “take a knee” when the game has been settled; when victory and defeat have been decided) is to make apparent the untranslatability of this act. To plead passivity, *fait accompli*, is acceptable; to assume the pose of silent stillness is

to bring the nation—according to how some, vocal and opposed long before Donald Trump became its public face, would have us understand it—into disrepute. It is to “disrespect our flag” and “our men and women in uniform.” (As though First Amendment rights are checked at the door when it comes to the US military and the Stars and Stripes. Black players, even the most radically opposed of them, have shown themselves vulnerable to—and defensive about—this charge.) Those selfsame military personnel, we remember, whose vulnerabilities Kaepernick sought to highlight. In addition, of course, to police brutality.

The outcome of “taking a knee” proved, for Kaepernick, an act tantamount to self-dissolution. (Before it produced, when its “truth” became self-evident, his rehabilitation as the athlete who speaks truth to power.)²⁷ If not at the level of political principle, then certainly at the level of capital. Kaepernick, we can safely assert, no longer possesses any liquidity. (At the time of writing, July 2020, he remains unsigned, his rehabilitation notwithstanding.) Kaepernick can no longer be monetized; at least not to the extent that he was during his playing days. His asset

value is not only zero, it is detectable only on the level of the subterranean.

As that “bible of men’s fashion,” *GQ*, declared in its December 2017 issue, there are ninety slots in the NFL for quarterbacks. Sixty of those positions are being filled by players infinitely less talented than one Colin Kaepernick. This is the ruthless, unrelenting logic of capital. When the asset cannot be monetized (win games, draw paying spectators), when it cannot produce value (again, wins, generating revenue), it is—it will be ruthlessly—liquidated. In the NFL, where guaranteed contracts offer almost no guarantees (that is why players and their agents frontload their contracts: get the money, take the money, run; a single play later you might not be around to collect), liquidation is always at hand. The only way to ensure survival is to increase liquidity: make yourself more valuable.

In this case, it means very simply: know when to take a knee. Or, phrased as a negation, be absolutely sure to know when not to take a knee. One type of dissolution is not the same as the other. They have no equivalency. An equivalency that assumes another form, consolidation, also turns on the denial of capital to the professionally liquidated figure. Its name resonates in the American political: collusion. The coming together of various interested parties in order to deny the liquidated figure access to capital in the form of a job in the NFL. Kaepernick, then, is twice revealed as a threat. The first time obviously, in the full light of, shall we say, an NFL day: he is released by the 49ers. Then he is made professionally invisible through NFL owners’ agreeing, among themselves,

to ensure that none of them will sign him. NFL owners can, as it were, look straight past Kaepernick. They see right through his professional capabilities. Capital will not, in this logic, be made subject—or vulnerable—to the black athletic body that “dissolves” itself before a national audience. Kaepernick, in his dissolution, makes visible the racially directed violence of US society against black bodies. Through his silent stillness, his absolute transparency, Kaepernick uses his body’s principled inactivity to draw attention to the violent activity of US policing. It is not, as such, what Kaepernick does or does not do—or says or does not say—but what he renders visible. That which NFL owners, the US state, individual states, individual cities and counties want to remain invisible. And if it “must” be made visible, or if it, against their best efforts to prevent any such revelations, becomes visible—Freddy Gray, Michael Brown . . . —then it must be disarticulated from the environs of the NFL. Until it becomes too much of a threat to capital, to the NFL’s capital and its capacity for increasing its value as an asset.

What Kaepernick did, of course, was refuse the terms of that contract. He made the racist violence of the US political apparent for everyone to “see.” That is, he made it an object for political consideration. His silence marked the liquidation of any further silence around the issue. In making racist violence visible, he made it impossible for it not to come into language in precisely that place where disarticulation—silence, disjuncture, the keeping separate of sport and politics, as if—had long been the governing mode. Black

athletes could play; they could earn good salaries; they could speak in an array of the forums, the post-match press conferences, the pregame interviews; they could hold forth on talk radio. What they were not permitted to do, it turns out, was to be still, was to be silent. Was to exhibit silent stillness. That is because silent stillness threatens capital. It makes the NFL what it is: a form of capital maximization that does not want its assets to convert their visibility into silent stillness. Capital wants to obscure its own implication in and its reliance upon ceaseless activity. To this end it can accommodate endless talk, inane chatter, biopolitical threat to the athletic body, because all of these modes of being in the NFL work to make the US political (structure), for millions and millions of Americans, irrelevant to the routine violence that can liquidate other black bodies. Liquidate them with impunity and no prospect of accountability.

What is more, each of these liquidities can be measured in the currency that is, of course, capital. Capital: the one mode of being that cannot be overcome. Or it can always manifest itself as something other than itself while remaining absolutely felicitous to itself. That may be the highest order of *daseinstufe*.

King's Letter

In this regard, King overlooks a conjuncture, a philosophical tension, in his "Birmingham Letter." His proclamation lacks, as we shall see momentarily, the conjuncture that reveals a contradiction (of sorts) that in its turn makes evident a logic that can elevate the

statement to the status of moral intervention. What such a thinking would inscribe, more than it already does, is the kind of rupture that rends the public discourse and claims for the civil rights movement, at once and by turns, an unimpeachable moral authority that is born out of political necessity; this action, resistance to the US political, derives, without question, from those ways in which US law fails itself.

However, let us remember, this is a missive sent under carceral conditions, hardly ideal for articulating all the possible philosophical threads that present themselves during those "long hours of thought." In Derrida's terms, this is the condition of erasure: for everything we say, we leave several things unsaid. Reductively phrased, there is always more work to be done, philosophically, politically, structurally, and otherwise. Importantly, if one understands the effect of liquidity, that it both reveals what is there and, in doing so, draws, inevitably, necessarily, attention to what is not, then thinking politically assumes a genealogical aspect: that the work of making apparent—"liquid"—the abstraction, the full, the fuller truth of King's "Letter," falls to us.

What I am arguing for in my reading of two consecutive sentences in King's "Letter" is nothing but the insertion of a negation. However, what is common with negation (a modern tradition that runs at least from Hegel to Jean-Luc Nancy; in fact, to Nancy's work on Hegelian negation) is that thinking it enables us to understand negation as creating the indestructible ground that is political justification. Or through negation it becomes possible to simply trace the first

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iterations of justice to how just opposition is framed, philosophically, and also practiced as a political strategy: “We who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive.”²⁸ Strangely, I am reminded in this regard of that moment in Derrida’s *The Beast and the Sovereign* when he takes Giorgio Agamben to task. One cannot, Derrida correctly asserts, both “correct and complete Foucault” as Agamben seeks to do in *Homo Sacer*. It is either one or the other.²⁹

King’s gesture is not in the least hubristic; there is no (Agambenian) overreaching. Rather, what King fails to do is to resolve, if that is the correct word, the matter of attribution, to assign political responsibility where it belongs. And in doing so, to frame the “creation of tension” as a consequence of what is and because of what is, to represent the principle of nonviolence as an act of political—and moral—responsibility. The tension in US society precedes the

civil rights movement. The extant social tension is the consequence of racism. Of inequality, of Jim Crow laws. Of state-sponsored violence against black bodies. Of judicial indifference to violence against black bodies. In this regard, we might say that what King should have done was invert the order of his phrasing. It is the “hidden tension that is already alive” that made imperative—historically necessary—a campaign that “engage[d] in nonviolent direct action.” The campaign for civil rights was a direct response to the deep-seated structural effects of US racism. The civil rights movement sought to provide a political language, a moral register that could exacerbate the “tension” in order to transform US society. And as King says, the campaign for civil rights was by no means a project delimited by disenfranchisement.

Girding that famous pronouncement, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” is the politics of common cause. What we know or sometimes refer to as common good. “Injustice” leaves no one unaffected. It is mobile, its effects are global. King seizes on this thread by depicting an American polis—implicitly and explicitly universalizing his project—overdetermined by an insurmountable interdependence. King’s rendering is more poetic. And as such, perhaps more edifying and uplifting: “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”³⁰ There is no constitutive outside. No one stands outside the dilemma of race; all are contaminated by America’s “original sin.” No one is exempt from responsibility for what

is; no one is immunized against the effects of “injustice,” inequality, compromised rights, or outright disenfranchisement.

The work that King’s “Letter” bequeaths us is to “correct” the failure of his attribution. And in so doing, to make that missive from a Birmingham jail a fluid document, one that, when the matter of attribution has been resolved, when those responsible have been called to account, is more usable for us, and King’s address achieves a new—and historic—clarity. The effect of that clarity, of course, is to make us responsible for the “tensions” that mark—that mar—our moment; or to have us understand King’s “Letter” as imbued with the spirit rather than the specific “letter” of resistance and, as such, as a potential call to us to, where necessary, either “create tension” or, as is more likely, name the tension as it already exists—as it is “already alive.” And this is King’s most important charge, to “bring to the surface the hidden tension.” A sobering reminder, King’s is, that ours is the work of historical forensics. Or ours is the work of anthropology and archeology. We are tasked with excavating the foundation of the polis with the express intent—handed down by King and the civil rights movement—of exposing what is, as Shakespeare puts it in *Hamlet* (act 1, scene 4), “rotten in the state.” In relation to justice, the United States is, like every other state, an *état voyou*.

As much as the ghost of communism is busily afoot in nineteenth-century Europe (again, “A spectre is haunting Europe” is the opening line of *The Communist Manifesto*), so King’s carceral missive must be un-

derstood as an address whose call we cannot ignore. Failing to heed the call is tantamount to condemning the self to the status of King’s “good people” (a—racial—description given horrific new life in August 2017 by Trump in response to the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia: “You also had people that were very fine people on both sides”).³¹ A poisoned moral chalice, as we well know, for no condemnation could be more damning than to be named among those who are guilty of “appalling silence.”

To muse, then, post-*ipso facto* (except, of course, we know that the “King moment” as such remains very much our moment), on the question of the proper response to silence. The answer, it turns out, may be remarkably simple. What matters is not the form or even the language of what is proffered in response to silence, important as these modalities of address are. Of singular consequence is that out of reduction, out of being threatened with the prospect of liquidation, a response is ventured. Breaking the silence in such a way that is true to the politics of the experience of facing what it means to be rendered invisible. How, under these circumstances, are we too not liquidity in its most gruesome articulation? As an always potentially bloody liquidation?

That is the specter that Kaepernick and King, each in his own way, each in his own register, each through his own articulation of liquidity, remind us of; that each on his own terms—and to different degrees, of course—confronts and, as a consequence, makes us confront. Liquidity as a constitutive vulnerability. Liquidity, rendered not transparent at all, possessed of

a fatal color—red—a liquid draining away, liquidity as the reality of black life and, yes, death.

All being is being toward death. Heidegger. To recognize all being as being toward death and then to struggle against that by insisting, as Derrida does, on the signal importance of asserting what it means to live while being toward death. Life-in-being toward death. Kaepernick, King, that is what they urge us toward. To make life possible. Again. And then, once again. ■

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Notes

- 1 There are four guiding figures in this essay: Karl Marx, Carl Schmitt, Colin Kaepernick, and Martin Luther King Jr., who is, arguably, the most pivotal to the argument.
- 2 See Meister, “Reinventing Marx.”
- 3 An “economic bubble” that burst, as we know, and, in so doing, affected minority communities—especially African Americans—disproportionately. The 2008 global financial crisis, or the Great Recession, affected African Americans because of the ways in which “subprime mortgages” targeted this community. The huge economic bailouts that followed—financial institutions such as IG benefitted immensely—were designed to prop up these failing institutions, leaving the homeowners to carry their own can, as it were. Relief was not forthcoming for those who had staked their future on home ownership through government bodies such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

4 Meister, “Reinventing Marx.”

5 See the “Panama Papers,” “Papeles de Panamá,” which revealed the gross amounts of offshore accounts owned by those who were, among other things, hiding assets and avoiding taxes; in some cases this practice dates back to the 1970s.

6 We are coming to know this phenomenon—politically, that is—as stateless capital. In light of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election and the ways in which political observers in the United Kingdom consider Russian agents to have meddled in the 2019 elections, the presumption is that there is, increasingly, a link between the raiding of state institutions (Russia and West Africa are presumed to be especially transgressive in this regard) by bad (“state/nonstate”) actors, their control of and access to vast quantities of stateless capital, and their ability to use that capital to nefarious ends. See Tom Burgis, *Kleptopia*. There is, it should be noted, a veritable cottage industry that has sprung up in relation to kleptocracy and/in Putin’s Russia.

7 Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*; Derrida, *Beast and the Sovereign*, 318.

8 Schmitt, *Ex captivitate salus*, 47.

9 Schmitt, *Ex captivitate salus*, 22.

10 See Farred, *In Motion, at Rest*.

11 Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, 8.

12 Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, 1.

13 Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, 17.

14 Hall, “Problem of Ideology.”

15 Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, 17.

16 King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

17 King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

18 Heidegger, *Being and Time*. In her critique of Heidegger, Hannah Arendt argues that anyone who cannot abide the everyday world of the “They” loses touch with humanity—what she

names the *conditio humana*. In her work *Human Condition*, Arendt proposes love—“Love”—as the (human) force that binds the *Man-selbst* with every other self.

19 Schmitt, *Ex captivitate salus*, 70.

20 1 John 1:1, *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 4th ed., rev. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

21 King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

22 King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

23 An action that finds itself now, several times over, vindicated since the May 24, 2020, murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by a police officer, by Derek Chauvin (while three of his colleagues stood looking on), which gave an international resonance and national intensity to protests, often begotten in the spirit of Black Lives Matter, across the length and breadth of the United States.

24 “Colin Kaepernick Addresses the Media.”

25 Schmitt, *Ex captivitate salus*, 20.

26 Richards, “Black Power Salute.”

27 See Melas, “NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.” Goodell apologized to the players for the league’s opposition to their right to protest. He apologized but never once mentioned Kaepernick. And what is more, Goodell only took this step the day after twelve prominent NFL players, including the reigning MVP and Super Bowl winner, Patrick Mahomes, made clear their opposition to police brutality and criticized the NFL for its stance.

28 King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

29 See Derrida, *Beast and the Sovereign*, esp. “Twelfth Session,” 315–19.

30 King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

31 Drobnic Holan, “Donald Trump’s ‘Very Fine People on Both Sides’ Remarks.”

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