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## The Last God: María Zambrano's Life Without Texture

### I. Introduction.

María Zambrano (1904-1991) studied with José Ortega y Gasset at the University of Madrid in the 1920s, and was intimately connected to the intellectual events surrounding the Second Spanish Republic. She was at the time something like a radical liberal, in the complicated Spanish tradition, a deep thinker whose early work already contains hints of the poetic and the religious veins that would mark her later work. She was forced into exile during the Spanish Civil War, and initiated a pilgrimage through various countries in Latin America (Cuba, Mexico), then Europe (Italy and France), until her return to Spain in the 1980s. During those long years of defeat, poverty, and intense commitment to the tasks of thinking as she saw them she produced an idiosyncratic oeuvre that is perhaps one of the most important instances of Spanish thought or Spanish philosophy. Her efforts to be commensurate to the extraordinary circumstances of her life, and of her position as an intellectual, have received renewed attention through the celebrations that marked the one-hundredth year of her birth in 2004.

This essay is an attempt to read María Zambrano's major 1955 book, El hombre y lo divino, as a subdued and almost ghostly but significant critical engagement with the thought of Martin Heidegger, or rather, with the political implications of Heidegger's work.<sup>1</sup> I am particularly interested in examining two of the conceptual structures that Zambrano offers in El hombre y lo divino. The first one she calls "relación abismada," which I will translate, clumsily enough, as "de-grounded relation," and the second, "vida sin textura," or "life without texture."

Those notions should be traced against the background of Zambrano's definition of democracy in her 1958 book Persona y democracia. La historia sacrificial (for Zambrano any democratic regime must tend towards the abandonment or refusal of the sacrificial structuration of history); but also against the background of what El hombre y lo divino establishes as the epochal or historical dissolution of the identity between being and thinking.

For Zambrano a democratic politics is bound to the precise determination of the abandonment of "sacrificial history." If the abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history defines democratic politics, by the same token the practice of democracy defines an antisacrificial perspective on action. A democratic politics, regardless of what politics could be in itself, is always bent on the suppression of the divide between what Zambrano called "idols" on the one hand, and "victims," on the other (Persona 42). Beyond the search for power or the search for recognition, if politics is understood as the practice of abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history, then politics appears as specifically democratic politics. This is what Zambrano proposes. But there can be no abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history as insofar as there is no abandonment of the understanding of the political as subjective militancy. If subjective militancy is at the same time a condition and a result of ontology, to go beyond ontology, and that means, beyond the subjectivity of the subject as the current horizon of political thinking, is also a condition and a result of an ethical position where every possibility of a non-sacrificial politics is sheltered.

In the identity of thinking and being—doubtless an old notion of philosophy, one of its very first words in the poem of Parmenides—the very principle of sovereign subjectivity that has marked modernity itself is ciphered. There is in effect no sovereignty without subjectivity, in the same way that there is no subjectivity without sovereignty. To paraphrase Juan Donoso Cortés or Carl Schmitt, every relevant concept of political thought in modernity is anchored in

transcendental subjectivity, which turns subjectivity into the matrix of everything that is thinkable on the basis of the identification between subject and substance. Zambrano, in her sustained meditation on the necessary de-identification of thinking and being, is already pointing towards an alternative, non-modern conception of the political. Only from that alternative conceptualization it is possible to formulate a project for political life based on the abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history.

But to abandon the sacrificial structuration of history is also to abandon every attempt at a politics of sovereignty, every attempt at establishing the political on the basis and ground of an experience or practice of sovereignty. María Zambrano as a thinker of the political thinks the possibility of politics beyond subjectivity and beyond sovereignty. The concepts of de-grounded relationship and life without texture are essential to this endeavor.

## II. The non-primacy of politics in democratic politics.

In terms of the political as the practice of sovereignty, could any possible primacy of politics over history (including economic history) be considered absolute or relative? If relative, then politics would still be subordinate to history in the last instance. If absolute, then politics would be the norm of action. But an absolutely primary politics, that is, an absolutely sovereign politics, would have to rely on the total immanence of its own conditions, and would in fact be normless: that is, it would provide something like a normless norm for action. A politics without a norm, that is, a politics that would itself be the normative standard, without recourse to alterity or to a heterogeneous grounding, can only be a politics of force, and it would have become an ontology (as in the Nietzschean case, where the will to power is the ontological principle of Nietzsche's "grand politics").

Or is it possible that a norm for politics can be found outside history itself, and thus also outside force? That norm would not be an ontology, but it would register at some infraontological level, at the level of desire perhaps, a normative affect regulating something like the Benjaminian hatred of mythic violence, what Derrida refers to as justice, or Alain Badiou's communist invariant. If something like that transhistorical or transpolitical norm were to exist, if politics can emerge through it as heteronormative, that is, always dependent upon an affect that would be exterior to itself, then it would be necessary to conclude that politics is always a partisan politics precisely to the very extent that it won't let itself be reduced to force or to an ontology of force. Can politics be thought without partisanship? Is partisanship an unconditional, irreducible determinant of any theory of the political?

Zambrano, as mentioned, states that a democratic politics is bound to the abandonment of "sacrificial history." If the abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history defines democratic politics, the practice of democracy defines an antisacrificial perspective on action. A democratic politics is always bent on the suppression of the divide between "idols" on the one hand, and "victims," on the other; it is based on the refusal of the fact that the existence of idols must always feed off the existence of victims. Only democracy, Zambrano says, among all the political systems, can shelter the possibility of marching towards an abandonment of sacrificial history. I am taking it for granted that there is no possibility of social justice without an abandonment of sacrificial history. The abandonment of sacrifice and social justice are then the goals of democracy. This cuts across other divisions of the political field, such as the Schmittian friend/enemy division, or the division of the social between the part of the whole and the part of no-part proposed by Jacques Rancière (12-13).

If politics is exhaustively contained in the friend/enemy division, then politics is defined by power: politics seeks power—its acquisition or its continued possession—as the power of

one group over other groups, and it is therefore always already partisan politics. If politics marks the fundamental act of appearance of a claim to existence by the part of no-part, that is, of those who are negated by the ideological articulation of social totality, then politics is defined by recognition: the part of no-part wants to be recognized as such by the social totality, or it wants to be recognized as the social totality (the proletariat as universal class, or the people as general will). If politics is understood as the practice of abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history, then politics appears as specifically democratic politics. Through each of those determinations there emerges the thought that the only possible non-partisan understanding of the political is precisely the understanding of the political as always already partisan.

How can we link those three definitions of the political? We can imagine a complex interaction between demands for power, demands for recognition, and demands for the end of sacrifice in any concrete situation. At their limit, however, the three definitions are incompatible. The demand for power must subordinate one group to another group, since its limit is the existence of the enemy, and the enemy must be kept in check, which reveals this practice of the political as profoundly sacrificial, and thus antidemocratic; the demand for a democratic end of sacrificial history must give up power, insofar as it can only absorb the radical power of the non-application of power; and the demand for recognition is never just either a demand for power or a demand for democracy and social justice. So the three definitions exceed each other, and, in their mutual excess, they organize something like an aporia of the political. Politics would finally be the infinite negotiation between those three demands: for power, for recognition, and for an end to social sacrifice.

But, if so, then only democracy can organize, even if aporetically, the simultaneous pursuit of the three demands, as no other system can countenance the end of the sacrificial

structuration of history. Democracy can, however, authorize unconditional demands for power and recognition—not any demands for power and recognition, of course, just some: the absolute power of the people, for instance; or the total recognition of the proletariat as class, which is the political abolition of class; or the total recognition of gender, which is the political abolition of gender. Only in the horizon of democracy is it possible to think of the total subsumption of power, recognition, and the end of sacrifice. But this would be the end of the political, and thus necessarily also the end of democracy, and the end of the end of sacrifice: hence the aporetic character of democratic politics, and, a fortiori, of any politics. As aporetic, the political instance appears as always already heteronormative, never sovereign, not self-contained. Zambrano will make it depend on an experience of the “pure sacred,” of the fondo oscuro, of a contact with a last god that is to be understood as the very void of any compact fullness.

### III. Zambrano and Heidegger on forgetting.

Zambrano thinks of subalternity as a possibility of an understanding of the political beyond transcendental subjectivity, beyond sovereignty, beyond the conditions under which we have thought of the political in modernity and throughout modernity. Zambrano’s notion of democratic politics as the abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history shows that such an understanding forces us to determine the heteronormativity of the political in favor of a partisan stance, that is, in favor of an always already previous ethical engagement. I would now like to move towards the exposition of the two conceptual structures that I mentioned at the beginning as particularly relevant to understand Zambrano’s contribution to political thinking, namely, “de-grounded relation” and “life without texture,” as presented in El hombre y lo

divino. The latter book can be comprehensively understood as wanting to narrate, impossibly, a history of forgetting, or rather, the history of a forgetting.

In twentieth-century philosophy the thematization of forgetting is intimately linked to Heidegger's Being and Time (1927). But for Heidegger what is at stake in the history of philosophy is the history of the forgetting of being. Zambrano, roughly thirty years later, does not concern herself with the forgetting of being. What she is interested in is the forgetting of God, and with it the forgetting of the dimension of the sacred, the forgetting of the dimension of the divine as such. For Zambrano, as for Levinas, God is beyond being. God, the sacred, the divine—such is for Zambrano the constellation of an epochal forgetting, the register of a radical insufficiency in the philosophical and spiritual experience of her historical time. Zambrano writes her book, or finishes it, during the years she spent in Rome. The repeated mention in her book of a white Pythagorean chapel, then recently excavated by archaeologists in a neighborhood close to her place of residence, is far from being incidental—just as her references to the Roman Empire's universalism are also not incidental. Zambrano wonders if the “fortunes of the [Pythagorean] white chapel” are ready to declare, in 1955, their “oculto sentido,” or “hidden sense” (116-17). Would it be a counterimperial sense? What is the secret that Rome preserves, on the side of the vanquished? And why thematize the forgetting of God in order to think, not even democracy, but the possibility of a radically anti-sovereign, anti-sacrificial politics? Hasn't God been precisely the ultimate guarantor of onto-theo-logy? Hence the very ground of sovereignty? Is there something like a god without sovereignty?

How does one deal with forgetting? To the very extent that the forgetting is such, that is, that it is a true forgetting, it is inaccessible to the memory of the thinker. At most one could rescue traces, if there remains a memory of the forgetting itself, rather than a memory of its object. From that perspective, is one to think theologically or to think philosophically the

forgetting of the divine, not as forgetting of the divine but as forgetting as such? What could be the point of a treatise on the forgetting of the divine historically and politically? In 1955, in Rome, at the heart of Latin, Christian, Catholic Europe? To think about the forgetting of the divine is a task different from the task Heidegger had indicated as essential: to think through the forgetting of being.

In his 1942-43 lectures on Parmenides Heidegger came to link the thought of the forgetting of being with the destruction of an imperial thinking of the political, which for him exhausted the European thinking of the political, and which he associated with the curialization of the Greek legacy through the Latin translation of the fundamental concepts of the first beginning of philosophy in Greece (Parmenides 43;46). Western politics are for Heidegger pre-determined by the ecclesiastical internalization of the Roman concept of imperial hegemony. For Heidegger, in 1942-43, as the battle of Stalingrad is coming to an end, and with it the might of the Werhrmacht and of Nazi power, the by now for him tragic enterprise of thinking about the forgetting of being has become the enterprise of thinking through a non-imperial configuration of the political. Zambrano, a few years later, may be attempting something similar from the thought of the forgetting of God. For that non-imperial possibility, which for Zambrano has a name that remained alien to Heideggerian thought, namely, democracy, the fundamental category is the category of de-grounded relation: for Zambrano, the forgetting of God can only be thought starting from the historical understanding of a de-grounded relation to the divine.

El hombre y lo divino contains some hidden references to Heidegger's 1947 Letter on Humanism. As is well known, Letter on Humanism attempts an account of the present—not just any present, since the essay was written in 1946—through “a thinking that abandons subjectivity” (207). This might sound faintly ridiculous today, when everywhere subjectivity



rules as the unthought in our presuppositions. In contemporary political thinking subjectivity rules explicitly as the posited horizon of any possible thinking of the political, and it is no exaggeration to say that, against Heidegger, most contemporary thinking thinks of subjectivity as the true house of Being, as the home where contemporary humanity might find refuge against the onset of homelessness, understood as that which is “coming to be the destiny of the world” (219). But subjectivity is for Heidegger homelessness itself. Take, for instance, nationalism, still fundamentally important in 1946: “Every nationalism is metaphysically an anthropologism, and as such subjectivism. Nationalism is not overcome through mere internationalism; it is rather expanded and elevated thereby into a system. Nationalism is as little brought and raised to humanitas by internationalism as individualism is by an ahistorical collectivism. The latter is the subjectivity of man in totality. It completes subjectivity’s unconditioned self-assertion, which refuses to yield” (221). Man, the human, conceived from subjectivity, remains caught up in “essential homelessness” (221). Is that true also for Zambrano? It certainly is true. But Zambrano takes her path in divergence from Heidegger’s.

In The Question Concerning Technology (1954), a text therefore strictly contemporary of El hombre y lo divino, Heidegger quotes Friedrich Nietzsche on the political importance of philosophy: “The time is coming when the struggle for dominion over the earth will be carried on. It will be carried on in the name of fundamental philosophical doctrines” (Nietzsche, qtd. by Heidegger, Question 101). And Heidegger adds: “‘Fundamental philosophical doctrines’ does not mean the doctrines of scholars but the language of the truth of what is as such, which truth metaphysics itself is in the form of the metaphysics of the unconditional subjectness of the will to power” (Question 101). Both the Nietzschean will to power and the Hegelian-Marxist kind of transcendental subjectivity (“The essence of materialism [consists] . . . in a metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor. The modern

metaphysical essence of labor is anticipated in Hegel . . . as the self-establishing process of unconditioned production, which is the objectification of the actual through man experienced as subjectivity" [Letter 220]) are what Heidegger has in mind as fundamental doctrines when he says "the danger into which Europe as it has hitherto existed is ever more clearly forced consists presumably in the fact above all that its thinking—once its glory—is falling behind in the essential course of a dawning world destiny which nevertheless in the basic traits of its essential provenance remains European by definition" (220-21).

What is this dawning world destiny in 1946? As Nazi Germany has been destroyed, what is present as world-historical can only be conceived in terms of either communism or Americanism. Heidegger's recollective thinking of the history of Being aims at something else, but it must be reached in what he calls a "productive dialogue" with both communism and Americanism, understood as world-historical options that are themselves produced by the history of metaphysics: "Whoever takes 'communism' only as a 'party' or a 'Weltanschauung' is thinking too shallowly, just as those who by the term 'Americanism' mean, and mean derogatorily, nothing more than a particular lifestyle" (220), as "an elemental experience of what is world-historical speaks out in" them (220). The lag in European thinking, the lag of European thinking with itself, as it makes Europe unable to confront the pincer of Americanism and Sovietism, asks for Europe to assume the guilt of a world conflagration. Europe cannot think its own epoch, and it is because of that that Europe seems to be moving towards an hecatomb that will be presumably larger than the one that was still smoldering in South Germany around 1947. In 1947 Heidegger is still anticipating disaster, never mind his claim that there is a saving power in thinking, in his thinking, that might perhaps avert its consummation.

Is Zambrano, during her Rome years, searching for the establishment of an option for thinking that would be simultaneously anti-Nietzschean, antimaterialist, and endowed with

saving power? Yes, without a doubt. Zambrano is, in a sense, repeating the Heideggerian project. Her thematization of the God—of God, of the sacred, of the divine—attempts to offer such an alternative to European thinking. There is a specific will in Zambrano to think an other beginning, and that will is consubstantial to the establishment of a historico-political project for Europe. To think of Europe, from Rome, even from the white Pythagorean chapel, and from her condition as a Spanish Republican exile, from her condition as a political victim of a world conflagration, to think of Europe from mourning, and from the mourning for the forgetting of the god, is certainly to think of the future of the world in its de-grounded relation with the unknown god, with the last god: with a god, presumably, no longer onto-theo-logical. Onto-theo-logy is for Zambrano, as it was for Heidegger, the very name of the forgetting of the god.

#### IV. Authentic historicity and the repetition of a (non-)heritage.

In paragraph 74 of Being and Time, which finally brings the work's entire ontological analytic to rest on the notion of authentic historicity, Heidegger had notoriously sustained that "the resoluteness in which Da-sein comes back to itself discloses the actual factical possibilities of authentic existing in terms of the heritage which that resoluteness takes over as thrown. Resolute coming back to thrownness involves handing oneself over to traditional possibilities, although not necessarily as traditional ones. If everything good is a matter of heritage and if the character of goodness lies in making authentic existence possible, then handing down a heritage is always constituted in resoluteness" (Being and Time 351). That heritage is very specifically the German heritage, precisely to the extent that, for Heidegger, the Germanic constitutes the periphery of Imperial Rome and therefore preserves the possibility of an other beginning—other than the thinking of a corrupt legacy. The thought of that communitarian heritage or legacy, which later work will make it possible to understand as an anti-Roman legacy, is perhaps the

most explicitly political contribution of Being and Time. But the hypostasis of this legacy as the instrument of a new politics ruins the possibility of a genuinely alternative understanding of the political in Zambrano's sense.

The simplicity of historical destiny, assumed in resolution, in the anticipation of death, and in the repetition of a legacy, where the establishment of the possibility of an authentic historico-political community lies for Heidegger, ignores the terrible facticity of what we would have to call dis-heritage, disinheritance, or un-legacy. Regarding a historical legacy, the denial of legacy constitutes the outside. In the forgetting of the facticity of un-legacy the Heideggerian critique of subjectivity cannot avoid falling into the repetition of a subjectivizing communitarianism, since it is based on the response to the interpellation of a historical memory. The repetition of a legacy, whether intact or corrupted, excludes un-legacy, unlearns it, hides it. The dis-inherited is the one who cannot repeat a legacy, and falls into forgetting. The abandonment of subjectivity, the accomplishment of a thinking that abandons subjectivity, is not possible in the wake of the resolute acceptance of a historical legacy—rather, it fundamentally presupposes a thought of un-legacy, a thought of disinheritance, of dis-heritage, a thinking of the forgetting of that which will not be remembered.

But there is a different possibility: what if repetition could repeat the dis-heritage as such? If repetition, in the name of historico-political action, could repeat the nameless as such? Isn't this the only possible form of thinking about a forgetting? This open search for the nameless and the unnameable is the most relevant and poignant tension in Zambrano's text. In El hombre y lo divino Zambrano turns the conditions that regulate the difference between theology and philosophy around to the extent that, if philosophy were to remain as ontological knowledge, knowledge of being as such, the knowledge Zambrano seeks is not any kind of positive knowledge of a being, even if that being were to be the being of beings, or the

maximum being. Rather, the science of the divine and the sacred, the science of God or of the last god, is in Zambrano a science of non-being, and thus not a theological science, rather an a-theology whose emphasis on the ontological excess, in what is beyond philosophical vision, reaches the rank of political a-theology.

Is El hombre y lo divino a political a-theology? Does it at least give us a formal indication of a possible political a-theology? Zambrano's word is always at the margins or in excess of any attempt to name representationally or calculatively regional being. It moves in a region that could be considered arregional, since it is beyond any ontological horizon: the arregional region of the god, of the last god. Zambrano's text on the forgetting of the god, on the dis-heritage, un-legacy of the thought of the god in our times, can offer the possibility of both a political and an a-theological thinking beyond subjectivity. Perhaps that unknown possibility of thinking finds its source in what Zambrano calls "the historical reserve that the vanquished always already form," and as such the site of "whatever is imperceptible in whole epochs, what was defeated, what never made it to reason or what went beyond reason, the seed of future reason" (Hombre 115). That unknown possibility is then the possibility of subalternity, of subaltern thought.

The notion of de-grounded relation appears in Zambrano's text at the beginning of the chapter called "God is dead," which is of course a sustained reflection on Nietzsche's doctrine. For Zambrano, "contemporary man" embodies, as contemporary, "all the condensed religious history of humanity, . . . all the conflicts that have occurred in the decisive moments of history" (127). Thus, "God is dead" is not the announcement of a liberation, is not the announcement of the beginning of an other history, but rather marks for Zambrano precisely the moment of the de-grounding or "abismamiento" of the history of the present: the moment when the forgetting of the god becomes official, to put it that way, and is forgotten as forgetting. Zambrano says: "One could divide things in life into two categories: those that disappear when we disavow them

and those of a mysterious reality that, even disavowed, leave our relation to them intact. The latter is the case with that which is hidden in what is today the almost unutterable word, God” (126). She goes on: “The more the object remains outside our horizon, the larger and deeper our relation to it, until it invades the entire area of our life, until it stops being a relation in the strict sense of the term . . . . When one of the two [terms of a relation] . . . disappears, the relation becomes de-grounded. And then it simply happens that the other term, the one that cannot disappear—in this case, us, our human life—is thrown into an indefinable situation, is, in turn, de-grounded” (126).

Contemporary man lives in a de-grounded relation—god has disappeared, is dead, or has been disavowed, but in such a way that our relationship to it has come, through its very forgetting, to occupy the entire area of our life. To live in a de-grounded relation means to live in the forgetting of forgetting, in de-grounded memory. If we embody every conflict in history, the entire history of religious humanity, that is, the entire history of the relation of the human to the divine, and if we do it abysmally, de-groundedly, our heritage is dis-inheritance itself, but to the precise extent that there is no dis-inheritance without a legacy. Dis-inheritance, the lot of the subaltern, of the defeated, de-grounds the heritage. Dis-inheritance is the abyss of our time—something the Spanish Republican exiles were in a much better position to understand than Heidegger ever could.

But, if dis-inheritance de-grounds the heritage, how are we to extract political relevance from this strange Zambranian figure, which amounts to a radical rereading of the concept of authentic historicity in Being and Time? What concept of the political can attend to the impossible memory of un-legacy?

V. Nothingness beyond being, and the last god.

I set out to do two things: the first one was to elucidate Zambrano's understanding of democratic politics as the pull towards the abandonment of the sacrificial structuration of history. On this issue, it seemed important to proceed to establish how Zambrano's El hombre y lo divino radicalizes the Heideggerian project for "a thought that abandons subjectivity" and, through a silent critique of Being and Time's notion of authentic historicity based on the notion of relación abismada or "de-grounded relation," sets the ground for the democratic repetition of subalternity, for the endless repetition of a legacy of un-legacy upon which the very possibility of the abandonment of sacrifice rests. This is in itself a major accomplishment, perhaps still unequalled in post-Heideggerian political philosophy.

But the second thing was to articulate Zambrano's conception of the political beyond subjectivity and sovereignty and beyond the identification of subjectivity and sovereignty that has produced political modernity as such. The identity of thinking and being, an old Parmenidean word that marks perhaps the beginning of historical metaphysics, forms at the end of metaphysics the thought of transcendental subjectivity in both Hegelian and Husserlian philosophy. But transcendental subjectivity also marks the triumph of the totalitarian state-form in the twentieth century. Zambrano, who fought for the Spanish Republic, who became an expatriate and an exile for many years at deep personal cost, produces in the notion of vida sin textura, "life without texture," the very possibility of a radically democratic, antisacrificial conception of the political against subjective militancy.

Subjective militancy is onto-theo-logical militancy. There are two primary ways of it in modernity. In the first way, the militant—formal subject of a practice of the will—seeks the exhaustive exploitation of being, the thorough appropriation of being to militant practice. The subject, as a singular absolute, works on the remainder of its autistic immanence, thinks of the world as the infinitely reducible, and affirms its own apotheosis in the closure of world into

subject and subject into world. This is the figure of the liberal subject, which is also the communist subject: a progressive subject, a subject beyond the shadow of its own impossibility.

In the second way of onto-theo-logical militancy, the militant emphasizes distance, dwells on the loss through which the subject finds its bliss through open, painful deconstitution. The subject is here pierced by its own insufficiency, and must affirm a blind transcendence from that which, upon giving itself, is lost: from that which gives itself as loss. This is the reactionary subject, which is also the subject of personal identity.

In both cases, through both ways, the onto-theo-logical ground of militancy is ground because the world appears as an entity regarding which one must either insist or resist. Through the first militancy, insistence is a will for saturation: the world will reach proper totality, will be the One-All as it coalesces with a subject only upon which a world is possible. In the second militancy, the world is always already One-All, and the subject experiences it as it experiences its own expulsion towards nothingness. The world is experienced as possible through its very withdrawal, appears as an always vanishing horizon, and it is through this very vanishing that the subject can exercise its own overwhelming presence: the subject is nothing but a resistance against nothing, hence the subject is all.

So what possibilities remain beyond onto-theo-logical, subjective militancy? Beyond progressivism and reactionary-ism? This was, in a way, Heidegger's political question, and it was also, from a very different perspective, Zambrano's question. In [Heidegger y su tiempo](#) Felipe Martínez Marzoa speaks about a distance from distance, a double distance, which would be the minimal distance provided by the very fact of understanding the game of appropriating presence and appropriating absence. But, Martínez Marzoa says, there is no "minimization" in that notion of minimal distance. Double distance—a distance from reactionary militancy, and a distance from progressive militancy, a distance from the insistence of subject/world and the



resistance to its loss—is rather “enormous, immeasurable” (Martínez Marzoa 45; 46). This double distance cannot form a new subject of the political, but it is the site for the appearance of that which dwells in the unthought of modern subjectivity. It is the promise of another constitution of the political.

Zambrano’s concept of life without texture seeks the dissolution of every subjective insistence and of every subjective resistance. It seeks a possibility of experience beyond the autistic experience of onto-theo-logical militancy. Zambrano says: “[The action of nothingness] is a living action. One could call it life without texture, without consistency. Life with texture is already being, even though in life there is always more than texture, and so in man life is in excess of what it is in those for whom life is only texture. In man, life shows that it is more than being, being, that is, in the way of things, of objects. That is why in man, as being grows, so grows nothingness. And then nothingness works as a possibility. Nothingness hace nacer, brings into the world [I must point out the untranslatability of hace nacer here, since nothing could be more wrong than the obvious translation, “brings into being”]” (169).

What about this nothingness? For Zambrano, nothingness is precisely “what can not be thought as a function of being” (165). It is the dissolution of the thinking/being identity. Nothingness propitiates nihilism only for philosophical consciousness, and more properly for philosophy understood as a philosophy of consciousness, as a philosophy of subjectivity. But, in Zambrano, nothingness does not announce nihilism. On the contrary, “la nada hace nacer,” nothingness brings into the world, and what it brings is the “fondo sagrado” or sacred ground: “The sacred ground from which man went on slowly awakening as if from the initial dream reappears now in the nothingness” (173). Nothingness is for Zambrano the excess of subjectivity, the absolute resistance to—as double resistance, as double distance—subjectivity, “a resistance that is not being, since the thinking subject knows nothing about any being that is

not itself" (174). And that which is not being is nothing, "mas es todo; es el fondo innominado que no es idea" ["but it is everything; it is the nameless ground that is not idea"] (174). To think through to this nameless ground, nothingness, since not-being, not-idea, is for Zambrano to think "the last appearance of the sacred" (162), the last god. This is for Zambrano the philosophical task of the present, understood as a "conversion" (164), insofar as it requires a renunciation. In fact, it requires a renunciation to the renunciation of the excess of being, it requires to give up having given up non-being, hell, or nothingness. Only in that renunciation to renunciation, in that double renunciation and double distance the totality of thought opens up. Zambrano speaks of a "desmoronamiento," a "falling apart of what is texture, of what is being in human life" (169) as an essential condition of that possibility of experience. This falling apart, this emptying out of being will open the space for the harsh but redeeming unthought. Here is a translation of Zambrano's words: "Nothingness is like the shadow of an All that can not come into understanding, the void of such a compact fullness that it becomes its equivalent, the mute, unarticulated negation of all revelation. It is the pure sacred without any indication that it will allow itself to be unconcealed" (175).

How is the possibility of thinking the pure sacred, then, political, or how does it announce a new constitution of the political? The thinking of untextured life connects with the thinking of subaltern un-legacy. Something other than life shows up in untextured life, as life is not the limit of the thinkable. Beyond life there is a pure sacredness that remains close to the nakedness of nothing. The task today is to think or to undergo the experience of the pure sacred, to pass the test of the last god, that god that always already occupies the "entire area" of our life through our forgetting, and through our forgetting of forgetting. In life without texture, life without being, life without bios, accessible only through the experience of de-grounding, in itself a consequence of the revelation of the death of God, the possibility and

hence the necessity of an encounter with the last god—as the void of compact fullness—opens up. It is a remembering, but it is a remembering of what remains un-legated, and thus not the object of communitarian property. To remember life beyond life, against biopolitical subjectivation—that is the historical reserve of the vanquished as vanquished, and hence the promise of an altogether different politics, of another beginning: the other side of sacrificial politics. Zambrano gives us, against the sovereignty of onto-theo-logical subjectivity, an antisovereign political a-theology. Is that the last or present sense of the Pythagorean white chapel at the heart of a thoroughly declined empire? Its promise for the abandonment of sacrificial history must still be thought out. For sacrificial history is always a history of the legacy, and of the life that is legated.

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<sup>1</sup> There has been some attention paid to Zambrano's largely silent engagement with Heidegger's work. Certainly Jesús Moreno Sanz, perhaps the best Zambrano scholar, has insisted on the fact that Zambrano's work is in a constant dialogue with Nietzsche and Heidegger (25; 27-28). In any case, important recent contributions to an elucidation of this crucial Auseinandersetzung by Sergio Sevilla, Oscar Adán, and Massimo Cacciari have cleared paths we must now follow through.