




JANUS'S GAZE

Essays on Carl Schmitt



Translated by
Amanda
Minervini

Edited and with
an introduction by
Adam Sitze

CARLO GALLI

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

CARL SCHMITT: AN IMPROPER NAME

Adam Sitze

1

The proper name, it must be said, has a curious place and function in the discourse of the history of political thought. On the terms of this discourse, a name like “Aristotle” does not designate a specific mortal being who lived and died in a particular place and at a particular time. Quite the opposite: it designates something in this mortal being—his thought—that exceeds his mortal being, and thus too his particular place and time. Even so, “Aristotle” doesn’t refer equally to all of Aristotle’s thought: political theorists typically use this name to designate the positions in *The Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, not those in *Quaestiones Mechanicae* or *The Souls of Animals*. The name also can be used to refer to works not written by Aristotle at all. Converted into an adjective, “Aristotelian” refers to transmissible attributes that have come to be associated with Aristotle’s thought—idiosyncratic conceptual habits or techniques that are common enough to be found reiterated in the works of others, and that with sufficient iteration can come to constitute a school (the “Lyceum”) or tradition (“Aristotelianism”). This adjectivalization can go to such an extreme that some thinkers can come to be categorized more with reference to Aristotle’s name than by their own (Aquinas, for some, always will be first and foremost a particular sort of “Aristotelian”). These descriptions, paradoxically, can even come to displace the

objects they ostensibly only nickname. Certain passages in Aristotle's *Politics*, for example, have been said to be "un-Aristotelian." Still other works, meanwhile, which may not have been authored by Aristotle at all (such as *The Constitution of Athens*), have been attributed to Aristotle and reproduced under his name in his collected works. As a classifying device within the discourse of the history of political thought, in other words, the proper name would seem to operate not with the simplicity of Aristotelian taxonomy, but with the perplexity of Cantorian set theory.

All the more strange, therefore, that historians of political thought should make the proper name so central to their pedagogy. It's not uncommon to find entire anthologies and syllabuses organized exclusively with reference to proper names, as if knowing how to think were synonymous with knowing how to properly name thinking. In theory, it's not difficult to defend this practice: the proper use of the proper name in the history of political thought, it would seem, is to allow students to acquire an awareness of the sense in which their own thoughts are but "residues and abbreviations" of thinkers who thought before them. But in practice, this theory does not so much spur the genesis of thought as produce the most excruciating chronicles ("Plato begat Aristotle, Aristotle begat Cicero, Cicero begat St. Augustine . . ."), which seem designed to filibuster young thinkers into conceding that there is indeed nothing new under the sun. By turning thinking into something tedious, wearying, and even melancholic, this mode of transmitting thought achieves nothing so much as the complete deeroticization of thought: its unstated institutional function is to anesthetize curiosity, to tame an otherwise polymorphous *libido sciendi*. Defended as a mnemonic device for sustaining pious fidelity to lost objects, the proper name instead gives one permission for misreading and forgetfulness, allowing the student to forget everything in a given text except the one or two concepts that consensus and opinion, not to mention Wikipedia, attribute to a thinker prior to any reading, and thus qualify as memorable whether or not any reading ends up happening at all. Or else it becomes the opposite: an instrument for the obsessive and pointless accumulation of memory, for the excessive recollections of historicism, which unthinkingly seek to reduce the infinity of thought to the circumstances of a finite time and place. In either case, political thought that organizes itself with reference to the proper name—which is, let's be clear, almost always a patronym—comes to possess a testamentary function,

and thence to arrange itself implicitly around forms derived from inheritance law. Scholarly disputes in the history of political thought thus come to resemble paternity suits in courts of law: “Plato, not Aristotle, is Aquinas’s true father.” A subtle but decisive irony: it would appear that the history of political thought depends for its intelligibility on forms that are not primarily political at all, but that are, more precisely and directly, jurisprudential—juridical forms that are authored by no one in particular, but that nevertheless govern the historiography by which that history arranges its authors; and that historians of political thought, more often than not, unthinkingly accept as unhistorical and apolitical necessities. Thought thus taught wilts on the vine that should allow it to flower, suffocated by its self-proclaimed stewards. As it functions within the discourse of the history of political thought, the proper name does not teach one how to think, only to categorize and to cite. It does not explain anything, as someone once said; it must itself be explained.

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The political thought of Carl Schmitt presents a limit case of this peculiar dynamic. Especially in the Anglophone academy, where the reception of Schmitt lags behind that in other languages, to speak of Schmitt’s thought is more often than not to produce an occasion for rhetoric centered directly on the sense and meaning of the proper name “Carl Schmitt” itself. One of the main points of reading Schmitt, or so it would seem, is to attach praise or blame to this name, to defend this good name from its accusers or to make a case against that same name. So powerfully entrenched is this premise today that even to name it as a premise—even to treat this approach to the reading of Schmitt as a debatable proposition, and not as a natural, self-evident, or inevitable necessity—would seem to miss the point of reading Schmitt in the first place.

And yet, far from being the necessary condition for a reading of Schmitt on Schmitt’s own terms, Schmitt’s proper name in fact inhibits the possibility of that reading. Consider, in this light, what is probably the very first attempt at a comprehensive introduction to Carl Schmitt in the Anglophone world. Titled “Observations on the Personality and Work of Professor Carl Schmitt,” this four-page memo was composed in November 1945 by the jurist and political scientist Karl Loewenstein

(1891–1973), a student of Max Weber who claimed “thirty years of experience with Schmitt,” and who wrote in his capacity as a consultant for the Legal Division of the United States Office of Military Government for Germany (the administrative body responsible for Schmitt’s postwar detention).¹ Interpreted on strictly bureaucratic terms, Loewenstein’s memo was a response to a request jointly submitted by Schmitt’s wife and jurist Hans Schneider for the recovery of Schmitt’s library, which Loewenstein had helped Allied forces sequester a month earlier on the grounds that it was an “invaluable . . . source of information on pre-Nazi and Nazi law and political science” (“about the most complete,” Loewenstein noted, “I can imagine”).² For the purposes of this discussion, Loewenstein’s text is instructive for the way the category named in its title, “the Personality and Work of Professor Carl Schmitt,” contains a symptomatic conflation—“personality and work”—that, in turn, explicates the horizon that implicitly governs the interpretation of Schmitt even today.

Loewenstein’s memo opened by praising Schmitt in the most unconditional terms.

I do not hesitate to qualify Carl Schmitt as the foremost German political scientist and one of the most eminent political writers of our time, comparable in influence on world opinion perhaps only to Harold Laski, though in the reversed sense in that Laski is the literary protagonist of democracy while Carl Schmitt, on the other hand, has become the leading authority on authoritarian government and totalitarianism. Broadly speaking he is a man of near-genius rating. He possess[es] . . . a vast and by no means sterile erudition, drawing from an immense store of factual information such constructive conclusions as have greatly contributed to the shaping of the things to come in the past. He is one of those rare scholars who combine learning with imagination; book knowledge with a realistic sense of what is possible in politics; scientific training with political versatility. Without doubt Carl Schmitt is the most prominent personality in the field of public law and political science Germany has produced since Georg Jellinek.³

Loewenstein’s praise then took a very different turn. “To his and the German people’s misfortune,” Loewenstein then asserted, “Carl Schmitt

abused his gifts for evil purposes.”⁴ To support this accusation, Loewenstein proceeded to produce an abbreviated biography of Schmitt’s work and conduct under Weimar, ranging from his academic career (his appointment at the Handelshochschule in Munich and his rejection by the Law Faculty at the University of Munich) to his first marriage and divorce (Schmitt’s application for which was rejected by the Catholic Church, an event which, in Loewenstein’s view, turned Schmitt against the Church) and to his sudden turn to anti-Semitism after 1933. Schmitt, Loewenstein claimed, was

the first and certainly the most influential of all German writers who enthusiastically joined the Hitler Government after it had won the elections of March 5, 1933. . . . His writings revealed him at once as an ardent supporter of Hitler’s dictatorship which seemed to him the fulfillment and climax of his intellectual desires and for which he had prepared himself and his public by his scientific research and writings. Suddenly he became an enthusiastic anti-semiter. . . . In April 1933 he published in the leading newspaper of Munich a vicious attack against what he considered the evil influence of the Jews on law and politics directed specifically against his benefactors [Stier Somlo and Hans Kelsen, two Jewish professors who helped Schmitt obtain his professorship at the University of Cologne]. Likewise he helped the Hitler Government in the drafting of its early anti-democratic laws.⁵

After drawing several direct connections between Schmitt’s writings and Nazi policies, Loewenstein then praised Schmitt once again, this time for his international influence in France, Spain, and Latin America. “In due course,” Loewenstein wrote, Schmitt “became the recognized authority on German law and political philosophy. . . . He is probably the most quoted German legal author of this generation, with the possible exception of Hans Kelsen. . . . Hardly any contemporary writer can claim for himself to have influenced his time to such an extent as Carl Schmitt.”⁶ But precisely because Schmitt was so influential, Loewenstein continued, it was essential not to neglect his prosecution. Schmitt’s arrest, Loewenstein argued, “will be considered—and is so considered—by responsible Germans as an act of justice on the part of Military Government. His release, if such is contemplated, would con-

stitute a blow to incipient democracy in Germany and to public opinion abroad. Particularly in such countries where Carl Schmitt is considered the standard authority of totalitarianism, his immunity from punishment will be rated as a victory of Nazism over Military Government.”⁷

We should not overlook the surprising rhetorical form that begins to take shape here. For Loewenstein, praise of Schmitt was not at all the opposite of blame of Schmitt. It was its counterpart and double, if not also its very condition of possibility. In Loewenstein’s view, the fact that Schmitt enjoyed such a strong international reputation was also a reason that Schmitt could not but be tried as a war criminal. Because Schmitt was so visibly and publicly acclaimed as an authority on constitutional law, Loewenstein reasoned, Schmitt not only must be prosecuted but also must be *seen* to be prosecuted. Surprisingly, however, something like the converse held true as well. Loewenstein’s recommendation that Schmitt be prosecuted as a war criminal—a much harsher fate, needless to say, than denazification alone—nevertheless concluded by sounding a note that also could amount to a *defense* against that selfsame prosecution. Schmitt, Loewenstein argued, was such a craven opportunist, such a careerist, so devoid of substance or character, so thoroughly governed by his personal interests, etc., that he could be expected to function perfectly well as a democrat were he allowed to return to teaching under conditions of democracy. “It may be added in conclusion that Carl Schmitt if permitted to write and publish and teach would be perfectly capable of becoming as successful and ardent a democrat as he was a defender of totalitarianism. His political versatility is surpassed only by his ability to adjust his vast learning to that doctrine which seems most convenient of his personal interests.”⁸

The true crux of Schmitt interpretation, Roberto Racinaro once observed, is the problem of Schmitt’s occasionalism.⁹ For Loewenstein, Schmitt’s occasionalism was to be interpreted on grounds that were at once personalist and instrumental: Schmitt the person was such a tool that he would turn his work into a tool for use by whatever regime happened to be in power, up to and including the worst of the worst. But note well: at the same time that Loewenstein’s interpretation of Schmitt’s person and work served as grounds to accuse Schmitt as a war criminal, it also served as grounds for Schmitt not to be permanently banned from teaching.¹⁰ On the terms of Loewenstein’s memo,

the strongest charges against Schmitt doubled as the best reasons to mitigate Schmitt's punishment: the accusation that Schmitt was a tool who allowed his work to be used as an instrument of totalitarianism was perfectly commensurable with a defense of Schmitt on the grounds that, precisely as a tool, his work equally might be useful for democracy.

Praise and blame, accusation and apology—Loewenstein's brief not only mobilized these antitheses as the definitive coordinates for the first Anglophone attempt at a comprehensive reading of Schmitt; it also revealed the sense in which each of these terms could pivot into its opposite. Holding these couplets in place—crucially—was the judicial form of Loewenstein's brief, which obliged Loewenstein to interpret the proper name "Carl Schmitt" as a "case" not only in an epistemological sense (an object of study) but also in a strictly juridical sense (as an object of legal action). Determined in this way, the question of interpreting Schmitt's work becomes indistinct from the question of passing judgment on Schmitt's person. For Loewenstein—as for many contemporary readers of Schmitt—the answer to both questions is clear: because Schmitt's work was complicit in or even justified an unprecedented crime, that work has the character of a criminal wrongdoing, a deed that can and even must be attributed to Schmitt's person.

Prior to this answer, however, is a series of unasked questions: what does it mean to displace the work of reading Schmitt with the very different work of imputation—of attributing a doer to a deed for the purposes of specifically legal judgment?¹¹ When the work of reading is preinterpreted in this way, what alternate possibilities for reading might we unwittingly abandon? On what other modes of reading might imputative reading foreclose? Once reading becomes juridified as imputation, needless to say, the possibilities for reading narrow considerably. On these terms, before one can read Schmitt's work, one must first decipher his person (to try to figure out whether he was a true anti-Semite, an evil genius, a Machiavellian opportunist, or simply a victim of his circumstances). But before one can decipher Schmitt's person, it's first necessary to interpret his work as evidence (cross-examining it for signs of guilt or innocence, good or bad intentions). Reading so construed silently assumes the form of a trial whose possible outcomes are at once highly constrained (a verdict of either guilt or innocence) and indefinitely postponed, such that scholarly commentary itself comes to assume the

form of a series of endlessly repeated appeals of prior verdicts. Juridified as imputation, reading never fully comes to a close; more to the point, it never actually begins in the first place.

3

However neglected and even maligned by Schmitt scholars it may be,¹² Loewenstein's memo nevertheless remains paradigmatic for the Anglophone reception of Schmitt: it outlines, with uncanny precision, the deadlocks that continue to determine Schmitt commentary in English today. Even and especially where contemporary readers of Schmitt oppose Loewenstein's damning conclusions, they do not seem to oppose the terms on which Loewenstein read Schmitt. Then as now, the question of what it means to read Schmitt seems to be tantamount to the question of whether or not judgments on Schmitt's "personality and work" should be inclined more toward praise than blame, more toward accusation than defense.¹³ The intensity of debates over this question, however, belies the underlying consensus that enables their seemingly interminable persistence. All parties to the dispute seem to agree with Loewenstein that the terms of epideictic and forensic rhetoric provide the best or perhaps even the only coordinates for the interpretation of Schmitt.¹⁴ This consensus extends, above all, to include those who attempt to avoid debates over Schmitt by trying to discover a sort of liberal-technicist "golden mean" or "middle of the road" between praise and blame, accusation and defense, as if one escapes the hermeneutic difficulty of reading Schmitt by proposing that his work can be used as some sort of a neutral "tool" by each after her own fashion.¹⁵ To the extent that the Anglophone reception of Schmitt accepts these terms as the indispensable coordinates for any valid interpretation of Schmitt, it unwittingly obeys the precedent established by Loewenstein's memo, and renders itself vulnerable both to that memo's vicissitudes and to its limits.

Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the symptomatic way citations of the proper name "Carl Schmitt" operate in Anglophone Schmitt commentary today. Beginning with Loewenstein, "Carl Schmitt" would be translated into English as a name for political thought that is as essential as it is unseemly, as imperative as it is unacceptable, as inescapable as it is immoral. In Schmitt's work and person, in other words, the

category of the proper name (understood as a classificatory operation internal to the discourse of political thought) would seem to become indistinct from the category of the improper name (understood as a name we experience as indecent or even intolerable). The unconscious dynamic set into motion by this indistinction hardly needs spelling out: operating both as a proper name and as an improper name, “Carl Schmitt” proves to be the source of an almost inexhaustible ambivalence—a hate that binds, that fascinates and paralyzes, that critics of Schmitt above all love to sustain.¹⁶ Under the sway of this ambivalence, the strongest polemics against Schmitt also turn out to be the weakest critiques of Schmitt, since the very form of these polemics silently ratifies the content of certain works by Schmitt—most notably *The Concept of the Political*, in which Schmitt proposes antagonism as the substance of the political relation.¹⁷ As a rule: the more polemical one’s political relation to Schmitt, the more one confirms Schmitt’s thesis on the concept of the political, and the more one realizes one can’t live either with Schmitt or without him. Needless to say, the more that the improper name “Carl Schmitt” becomes normalized as a category within the Anglophone academe—moving from critical theory and political theory to international relations and geography—the more this deadlock of ambivalence is destined to intensify.¹⁸ But the more this ambivalence intensifies, the more interminable becomes the reading of Carl Schmitt, and the more that interminability, in turn, becomes institutionalized as a normal state of affairs.

What’s most interesting about this normalization and institutionalization, however, is how rarely its necessary condition is posed as a problem for thought. No Schmittian turn is possible, much less valid, without some prior understanding of what it means to read Schmitt on Schmitt’s own terms, and as such to know what one is talking about when one proposes to categorize this or that argument, this or that concept, as “Schmittian.” But even in the journals that now seem to be devoted almost exclusively to the Schmitt defense industry, to say nothing of those who polemicize against Schmitt, there seems to be little to no interest in the question that alone would generate this knowledge. Why?

The task of reading Schmitt within the horizon of his own self-understanding is more difficult than it appears. Read alongside one another, Schmitt’s terms and concepts seem to form nothing but an incoherent maze, a jumble of shifting terms that veer from the archaic

to the pragmatic, from the systematic to the oracular. What indeed is the relation between the idiosyncratic theory of “irruption” Schmitt sets forth in his 1956 *Hamlet or Hecuba* and the obnoxious defense of Raoul Malan he lays out in his 1963 *Theory of the Partisan*? Between the crisp decisionist thesis he formulates in his 1922 *Political Theology* and the critique of decisionism he offers in his 1934 *Three Types of Juristic Thought*? Between the systematic analysis of “constituting power” he outlines in his 1927 *Constitutional Theory* and the rambling rant he addresses to his daughter in his 1942 *Land and Sea*?

Given this jarring conceptual excess, many Schmitt scholars simply have abandoned altogether the ordinary but essential hermeneutic task of inquiring into the common horizon and specific unity of the Schmittian oeuvre. In the absence of this inquiry, the reading of Schmitt has taken place largely by way of synecdoche, where a handful of faddish but partial concepts (decision and exception, friend and enemy, *nomos*, etc.) stand in as names designating the essence of the cryptic and forbidding heterogeneity of the Schmittian oeuvre, and where Schmitt’s own person becomes a synonym for a series of mutually exclusive political categorizations.¹⁹ It is not uncommon these days for readers of Schmitt to interpret *Concept of the Political* in perfect isolation from *Theory of the Partisan* and *Nomos of the Earth*, to criticize the overt anti-Semitism of *Three Studies on Juristic Thought* and *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes* while withholding comment on the analytic taxonomies of *Constitutional Theory*, to reread *Political Theology* without reference to Roman Catholicism and *Political Form*, and so on.

To be sure, this haphazard approach to Schmitt rhymes perfectly with some of the most unshakeable habits of the contemporary humanities. A certain compulsory eclecticism—the analogue in scholarly interpretation to the eclecticism that is the “degree zero” of postmodern culture—sometimes seems to be the dominant, even default, school of hermeneutics today.²⁰ Applied to Schmitt, however, this approach results in a compartmentalization of the Schmittian oeuvre that is lacking in both sense and purpose. Picture a group of Freud scholars each writing separately about distinct problems in psychoanalysis (one on sadism and masochism, a second on the death drive and the pleasure principle, a third on repression and sublimation) but all without a single mention of the unconscious; or a set of Marxist thinkers taking on distinct questions within historical materialism (commodity fetish-

ism, use value and exchange value, base and superstructure) yet without also referring to labor. Strange though it may sound, an arrangement of this sort seems to pertain in Anglophone Schmitt scholarship today. While many intelligent studies have appeared in recent years on various elements in Schmitt's thought (such as the exception and decisionism, secularization and political theology, the distinction of *hostis* and *inimicus*, the *nomos* and the *katechon*, and above all Schmitt's Nazism, his anti-Semitism, and his relation to the Weimar Republic), very few, if any, have attempted to put a name to the common hermeneutic horizon from which all of these elements gain their singular sense and force. In Althusser's terms, commentary on Schmitt has largely limited itself to the thematics of Schmitt's various texts, without pausing to pose the question of its problematic—which is to say, the question of the implicit questions to which the modalities of Schmittian thought are the explicit answer.²¹

In the absence of an inquiry of this sort, our reading of Schmitt encounters a host of interpretive aporias. Certain of Schmitt's writings call the conflation of war and crime into question;²² and yet the accusation that Schmitt is a "war criminal" in many ways remains one of the dominant hermeneutic horizons governing the reading of Schmitt, both for those who seek to criticize him and for those who seek to defend him. Other of Schmitt's writings oppose the listless pluralism of modern liberalism;²³ and yet certain readers of Schmitt seem quite content to interpret Schmitt's oeuvre according to the eclecticism that is the hermeneutic equivalent of liberal pluralism. Schmitt's writings certainly contain polemics against the idea that technics could constitute a neutral standpoint outside of the conflicts of the political; and yet readers of Schmitt regularly seek to escape the polemics around Schmitt by claiming not to take sides in those polemics, only "to use" Schmitt's work as a "tool" or "lens." Certain elements in Schmitt's work point toward a general problematization of the concept of the "person";²⁴ this has not stopped the most fervent disciples of Schmitt from defending Schmitt on the basis of a clear and distinct understanding of the "person." Still other of Schmitt's writings begin to question the very idea of the proper name, not once but several times over;²⁵ and yet commentators on Schmitt for the most part seem to be self-confident about the obviousness and self-evidence of Schmitt's own proper name. Citations of Carl Schmitt today certainly are increasing; the same can't be said for self-consciousness about what it means to read Schmitt's texts on their own terms.

Carlo Galli's approach to the reading of Schmitt prepares the reader not only to enter these hermeneutic circles but also to exit them in the right way. Galli is best known for his monumental 936-page *Genealogia della politica: Carl Schmitt e la crisi del pensiero politico moderno* (Genealogy of politics: Carl Schmitt and the crisis of modern political thought). Written with a hermeneutic rigor and sustained analytic attention that reminded one reader of "the august tradition of the great philological monographs of the classics," Galli's *Genealogia* is quadruply systematic.²⁶ It is, to begin, a "historico-critical . . . reconstruction of the internal logic of Schmittian argumentation" that accounts for all of Schmitt's writings, in the mode of a symptomal reading, and that has as its aim a claim on the essence and basis of Schmittian thought from within its own immanent horizon.²⁷ Because no such reading could avoid paying attention to the crises to which Schmittian criticism is internal, Galli also engages in an "external contextualization" of Schmittian logic, discerning in the contradictoriness of Schmitt's texts the traces of select and pivotal events.²⁸ This contextualization is not, however, historicist; it does not seek to undercut the autonomy of Schmittian thought with reference to its determinants in its immediate cultural and political context. Galli argues that the fundamental crisis to which Schmittian thought is internal is not limited in place and time to the Weimar Republic or to Nazi Germany; it is instead an epochal crisis, the crisis of modern mediation as such. To support this claim, Galli situates Schmitt in the history of modern political philosophy, explaining how Schmitt inherits a crisis in philosophical mediation that begins with Hegel and Marx, reaches its turning point in Kierkegaard and Weber, and dissolves in Nietzsche.²⁹ In the process, Galli engages in a systematic overview of the secondary literature on Schmitt in German, Italian, Spanish, French, and English. The critical apparatus that results from this labor (Galli's footnotes alone take up nearly three hundred pages) does not, however, merely communicate bibliographic information; it adds up to a second book, an extension of Galli's earliest work on Schmitt, his 1979 "symptomal reading" of Schmitt commentary in Italy to Schmitt commentary worldwide.³⁰ Galli's *Genealogia* is, in short, a "gloss" in the best and strictest Bolognese sense of the word.³¹

The central claim of Galli's *Genealogia* is that Schmitt's accomplish-

ment was to have opened himself to, in order to radicalize, the crises that together constitute the origin of the modern epoch (where “origin” is understood as *Entstehung* or *archē*).³² Schmitt is consequently, on Galli’s reading, a specifically genealogical critic of modernity: Schmitt’s single-minded focus, according to Galli, was to grasp the origin of the strangely double-sided energy he perceived in the institutions and practices of modern politics. Schmitt’s discovery, Galli argues, was that this energy derived from “an originary crisis—or, better still, an originary contradiction—which is not a simple contradiction, but, rather, the exhibition of two sides, two extremes,” such that “the origin of politics is not, in either of its two sides, an objective foundation for politics, but rather its foundering or unfounding (*sfondamento*).”³³ The “political” is Schmitt’s name for this originary crisis, this free-floating energy that undermines the very institutions and practices it simultaneously founds, that deforms the same political forms it produces, and that disorders the very systems of thought to which it gives rise. By fixing his gaze on this origin, Schmitt realized that modern political thought (and consequently too the liberal democratic institutions and practices whose modes of self-justification it grounds and sustains) is divided against itself in a nondialectical manner. At the same time that it emerges from and even implicitly feeds on a crisis it is incapable of resolving, modern political thought also accounts for this incapacity by suppressing the symptoms of the crisis, compensating for its own incoherence with ever more moralistic reaffirmations of the unquestionable necessity of its own explicit goals. The core problematic of Schmittian thought, Galli will consequently argue, cannot then be reduced to any one of the themes of Schmitt’s various texts (the distinction between exception and norm, theology and politics, decision and discussion, friend and enemy, constituting power and constituted power, land and sea, limited and unlimited warfare, European center and colonial frontier, and so on). It is Schmitt’s discovery that all of the forms of modern politics share a common trait, a birthmark that, in turn, attests to their common origin; despite the many and various differences between modern political thinkers—indeed as the silent but generative core of those differences—the epochal unity of modern political thought derives from its distinctive doubleness, its simultaneous impossibility and necessity, or, in short, its “tragicity.”³⁴

Developing claims he already had announced in 1979,³⁵ Galli argues