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# GRACIAS A RUSMIR

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**ABSTRACT**

This short text is both the reminder and the acknowledgement of my deep gratitude towards the friendship that Rusmir Mahmutćehajić granted me over about twenty five years. My friend did not only keep an indefectible friendship towards me but, doing, so taught me what friendship means through the personal relation it lives through. Due to the circumstances of our first meeting, the grievance time after genocide when reconciliation was the only way of hope, this friendship had already risen out of a political frame and challenged by politics. It opened thus both the question of the essence of politics and its factual economy and the necessity of friendship both as a resistance to politisation and yet the impossible beyond that provides politics its horizon and limitation.

Keywords: Friendship, politics, slaughter, violence, sacrifice, evil, State, resistance, philosophy, art, architecture, reconstruction

**SAŽETAK**

Ovaj kratki tekst je i podsjetnik i priznanje moje duboke zahvalnosti prijateljstvu koje mi je Rusmir Mahmutćehajić udijelio tokom dvadeset pet godina. Moj prijatelj ne samo da je zadržao jedno nepogrešivo prijateljstvo prema meni, već me je tako naučio šta prijateljstvo znači kroz lični odnos kroz koji živi. Zbog okolnosti našeg prvog susreta, vremena žaljenja nakon genocida, kada je pomirenje bilo jedini način nade, ovo prijateljstvo je već izašlo iz političkog okvira i dovedeno u pitanje politikom. Time je otvorilo i pitanje suštine politike i njene faktičke ekonomije i neophodnosti prijateljstva i kao otpora politizaciji, a ipak nemoguće iza toga daje politici njen horizont i ograničenost.

Ključne riječi: prijateljstvo, politika, klanje, nasilje, žrtva, zlo, država, otpor, filozofija, umjetnost, arhitektura, rekonstrukcija

Perhaps I would prefer not to have agreed to write a text that commits me to one of my dearest friends. A friend whom I refer to first of all by his personal name, a name I don't know how he got it, but which always evokes a long memory for me. A memory that is not only that which I share, without sharing it, with him, since it belongs to me alone, so much so that I can, if the occasion and the desire arise, present it to him to enjoy together the common presence that the memory gives rise to. It is a strange memory that opens up an unpremeditated and risky common presence and constitutes this present sharing where the imagined past gathers together in a common emotion what was lost in the memory of an individual left to its own devices. It is therefore a gift, or rather a story of gift. Not a confession, nor a biographical memory, but what recognition tells. The gift of the debt that prescribes descending through memory to what we have come from where we have been given to receive. Acknowledgement, then, of a debt owed to the friend who gives an unexpected friendship that is never denied, even though it promises nothing, since it is the most fragile of bonds, on the verge of breaking, but without being denied or impoverished. There are so many forgotten friendships that slowly fade away, and so many bitter ones. There are those who remain in the calm tranquillity of a mutual recognition where the gift does not come from an expectation or a demand, but which flow like the great rivers whose well-marked course gives them the impassive air of eternity. But memory follows its own course, flowing back with all the strangeness of a history whose truth we will never know

For me, this friendship is inseparable from Sarajevo. I came to Sarajevo for the first time in winter 2001 for two conferences devoted to the mevlevî Isa Bey Tekke convent. It was on that occasion that I met Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, whose friendship was to prove so precious to me. So it was in Sarajevo, after the war, that we met. Friendship is inseparable from the place and time in which it was formed. It makes visible the complex intertwining of place and space in which it takes root and which it in turn shapes. I had been following the war announced in the media for all those years, and Bosnia-Herzegovina had become for me a central place around which my thoughts and, even more, my concerns were organised. My concern, because during this war a genocide was taking place in Rwanda in which my native country, France, was seriously involved, just as it was involved in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I was also concerned because, from the beginning of my university studies, the genocide perpetrated against the

Jews and the Gypsies was for me the central fact ordering the destiny of civilisation, of Europe, of what we call the West in contrast with the East, plunging me into a perpetual anxiety that determined the direction of my studies. The war years renewed this concern, which increasingly took the form of questioning and research. Sarajevo brought all these questions together for me in two ways, firstly as a place and then as a reason for reflection. I was invited to Sarajevo for this conference, which was not about the war, thanks to a Turkish colleague of mine, a professor at Marmara University in Istanbul, whom I had met in Tehran, where we had taken part in a conference on Mollâ Sadrâ, the great Iranian philosopher of the Safavid era. In short, I came to Sarajevo for the first time because of my work on Sufism through a professor who was a stranger to my concerns. I had to make a diversion to get to the place where my question was to be answered. The subject of the conference was a convent of the Mevlevi brotherhood that had nothing to do with the war, since it had been destroyed during Tito's regime, and yet was so, both because it had been destroyed, and because it had been destroyed because it represented the past that the future had the task of abolishing without remnant, and because it represented Islam and the East in the heart of Balkan Europe. Its destruction therefore anticipated the announced destruction of the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was supposed to put an end to the presence of Islam in Europe. This lecture was therefore at once unrelated to the war that had just taken place, and therefore as if suspended outside the time of everyday preoccupation, and yet in an essential relationship to the war, all the more essential because it was kept secret by its apparent theme. Symptomatically, and without really realising it, I gave two lectures based on the thought of the Sufi master Jalâl al-dîn Rûmî (d. 1273), dealing respectively with evil and technology, the two subjects boiling down to the question of the intimate connection between modernity and the emergence of evil as a question, which Heidegger had not ceased to address from 1934 onwards. Now, modern war, always genocidal because it is always mass and gigantic, brought together precisely these two themes of evil and modernity, as Joseph Conrad had revealed in his book In the Heart of Darkness, on which my former philosophy professor, P. Lacoue-Labarthe, based his thinking on Europe. It was probably the fact that I linked these two themes in my lectures that drew Rusmir's attention to me. He was already engaged, following his political commitments, in both his intellectual work of radical and detailed criticism of modernity and his passionate work in favour of the reconstruction of the traditional heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This

is what later led me to take part in the «International Summer School on Religion and Public Life», which he set up with Adam Seligman, that other friend whom I knew through Rusmir, particularly in his home town of Stolac, which had been martyred during the war and most of whose heritage had been destroyed, including his own house. I didn't know it yet, but I would have to find out.

One travels from one place to another in the same way as one travels with an interest in what one is about to leave behind. The journey obeys the logic of the history that began to sediment at the dawn of the nineteenth century, the century that ushered in the dialectisation of human life, which would from then on be called existence, and which, in the course of dialectical time, travelled through places only to annihilate them and collect their memory in museums. The conservation of the past, the modern obsession with the configuration of the past into traditions that obey the scientific recuperation of the lives of men, which from then on we call civilisation and history, the transformation of the lives of men into vestiges, works, cultures, civilisations available to be placed in cultural museums, as if human beings had lived in order to produce cultural goods that future generations would have the task of preserving in dedicated places that could be visited, countless anthropological museums, national proud ties and scientific values, is only possible through the systematic destruction of human beings and the ways of life that give rise to them, on the capitalist model of the exploitation to death of the producer. However, we don't always travel according to the model of modern predation and devastation.

I arrived in Sarajevo animated and dazed by the emotion that these years of war had produced in me through the news that condemns us both to be spectators and to be reduced to the powerlessness of the individual in the face of the omnipotence of states and their sovereign decisions as well as the automatism of the unleashing of the desire for total destruction that seizes men at the heart of their essential way of being. I had already grown attached to Sarajevo even before I went there. I lived there without having visited it, and I still do. I lived there because it haunted me. I inhabited its trace in me, its spectral quality, the time lag in which it had settled inside me. Perhaps I could only inhabit it on condition of this shift, this diversions on the fringes of capitalising time, opening up to another temporality, one that could be said to be properly ecstatic and therefore only opening up by radically disorientating, by inviting the eccentric. So I only got there by agreeing in advance never to leave, a journey without an odyssey, by agreeing to inhabit this strange

place without crossing it, without knowing it, without coming to terms with it, without returning to it, without locating it. A place we don't have because we can't locate it in any cosmos. Sarajevo was marked by war. War leaves visible impacts everywhere, holes, hollows and sections of wall standing like tree carcasses or mineralised smoke. Sarajevo clearly showed the unity of place and space, the Zeit-Raum, which people inhabit by dint of living. Sarajevo was not a place additionally affected by war, but a place of which war was a part, and which shaped the place through its own temporality. The configuration of space there was the result of time, not the means of construction, so that Sarajevo revealed the essential unity of time and space, whereas the function of modern construction is to make both space and time disappear. There are traces everywhere, and the traces are ghostly. They are both left by the past, referring to what has disappeared, and at the same time sent to the future that they open up. They are without the present and, in truth, manifest above all the absence, the disappearance of men withdrawn from the present. This singular indentation in foreseeable time opened up the place where friendship grew. In other words, Sarajevo is that strange and singular unity of time and space that emerged through friendship. It broke in advance with the division of irreversible time and extended space that disposes things to the modern mastery of technology, i.e. to metaphysics. Space is extended by temporality, which dilates it by making it flow, so that it is in this unity that people are engaged in their history. Our friendship was engaged in a dialogue whose background was history and which pushed our thinking forward, albeit in divergent directions.

I didn't know Rusmir when I arrived in Sarajevo, but I got to know him over the following years and shared his concerns. I wanted to take part in his project, even though I only knew part of him. I kept myself carefully away from any political concerns, immersed in the world of my research into Sufism, which required such distance and standing on the fringes of reflection. I also kept well away from philosophy, which, for me, could not abstract itself from its responsibility for European destiny and the devastation implied by its systemic impulse. Politics seemed to me to be the fulfilment of this impulse, which could only be achieved by totalising the worlds of men into that universe governed by the laws of reason that Europe had, with all the violence of its relentlessness, imposed on men. At the heart of my withdrawal was a philosophical, and therefore political, concern that I had decided to ignore. Our friendship grew as I took part in the activities to which Rusmir regularly invited me. In short, for years he drew me towards

what I had been neglecting, so much so that I returned to philosophy - all the more so as I was forced to leave my university to take refuge in Istanbul to teach philosophy - and politics, not as a commitment, but as a question, gradually became central to my interrogations. By inviting me to speak at the conferences he regularly organised, he led me to write more and more about questions relating to politics as such, so that I became increasingly involved in thinking about the essential unity of politics and philosophy, and about modernity, whose essential character is to reveal this unity.

We don't have the same perspectives or the same viatique to explore this complex element together. I don't share his presuppositions and references for developing this reflection on what I would be tempted to call modernity. We don't have the same past either. I admired his political commitment, his courage, his determination and his rigour, which enabled him never to deviate from the principles to which he was attached. However, we were more united by the future, by the traces that dot the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which open up a future for those who are committed to it, other than the fatality of repeating the past. We only escape the past by the traces it leaves behind and neglects as it becomes history. I will never cease to admire this commitment, of which I would never have been capable. But our friendship developed in the future and not in the memory of the past, in dialogue and not in confidence. We have walked together along different, sometimes opposing paths, always exchanging views, or rather exposing our differences, but united by the future for which we share the same imperative. Above all, we need to restore what can be restored to open up that future. Restoration means rebuilding the architectural heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in other words rebuilding this world that men have tried to erase through massacre and annihilation. Restoring this world, which many in Europe are calling for to be destroyed, is the preliminary resistance manifested in the buildings which, through and in their structure and erection, show the solidity and constancy of the world in which it is possible to live. There can only be a future if this world is rebuilt and once again houses the essential preoccupation of mankind, that is to say, if its architecture unfolds the surface of the earth where men can exist as men. Rusmir has therefore never, quite rightly, separated the relentless and patient work, despite the many obstacles, of rebuilding the architecture of this world that so many wanted to destroy, from the fundamental thought that he has been developing from book to book for years on the basis of what he calls tradition. In this way, he is working to enrich the tradition he claims as his own by deepening

what we have inherited from it in order to rebuild this world, which is always in danger of being swept away in its demise. I have never ceased to express my deepest reservations about this highly suspect notion of tradition and the conceptual apparatus that feeds and supports it. Our differences are fundamental, and yet this is where our friendship is forged. Rusmir's thinking, which he sees as committed to what he calls tradition, is based on the conviction that there are truths whose veracity rests on their eternity, and which belong to what might be called a wisdom that needs to be deepened in order to be preserved. For my part, because thought finds its foundation where art has its origin, thought unfolds in the imagination that forms the world by presenting ever-new truths that unravel by betraying their illusory nature. However, I have never ceased, from my own perspective and with my own means, to join in this journey by taking part in the resistance to the destruction of this world that is disappearing in spite of everything.

So many dear friends stood around Rusmir, committed to the same path of resistance and reconstruction, some of whom died prematurely, like Ivo Banac in 2020, or were taken by other paths like my friend Kurt Richardson, with whom we had begun the cycle of workshops on Lady Mary in Mostar with Rusmir. We have all met regularly every year for more than twenty years, most often in Bosnia-Herzegovina but also elsewhere at conferences and in places where the International Summer School on Religion and Public Life and the camp organised for the reconstruction of Stolac were held. The camp led to the spectacular reconstruction of a large number of Ottoman-era monuments and houses destroyed by Croatian forces, making Stolac a model of how to rebuild a legacy after devastation. Exemplary because it is a double reconstruction that does not simply, in a modern gesture, preserve the past in a museum to underline its obsolescence and magnify its overcoming, which by destroying the past shows its magnanimity by preserving its corpse. This modern gesture was initiated a long time ago when, in Jerusalem, the ruins of the Second Temple were preserved by the Christianised Roman Empire in order to glorify the Christian overcoming of Judaism by exposing it in ruins. It was a double reconstruction, since it involved both rebuilding the destroyed buildings and carrying it out with the hands of many young people from various parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rest of the world, belonging to different religious denominations under enemy winds. The aim of this twofold reconstruction was therefore to build on the past by re-establishing its legacy, and not simply to preserve the past. Thanks to Rusmir, I was regularly invited to take part in his countless

activities. We travelled together to Croatia and Albania as part of the summer school, which I tried to attend as best I could. It was during an excursion to a village in Bosnia-Herzegovina following a conference in Sarajevo that I first got to know Anne-Marie Schimmel, extraordinary for her faultless memory, her knowledge of a host of Eastern languages and her exemplary erudition. We also took part in a number of meetings together in Israel as part of the Shalom Hartman Institute. The aim of all these activities was to work towards peace and reconciliation, both through the act - an architectural act in which architecture is structurally the archive of the whole past, its beauty and its pain - and through words, since conferences were organised as well as workshops for reflection, including in Stolac during the reconstruction.

For my part, thanks to Rusmir who provided me with the opportunity, I became involved, for personal reasons, not in a reflection on the future but rather in a reflection on evil and on the intimate relationship between evil and politics that is manifested in the ever-increasing extension of mass exterminations and systematic torture that accompanies political modernity, i.e. the modern politicisation of peoples transformed into masses by the war of total extermination. In other words, although I have committed myself to acting for peace in this context and in others, linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I have never believed that our discussions would serve as a basis for political action, all the more so because, for me, politics is structurally inseparable from war, extermination and, ultimately, cruelty, an enjoyment that men can never renounce and which gives politics its foundation. In other words, any politics that presented itself as a system of peace would condemn itself to self-destruction, both because it would be based on the denial of its essence and on the rejection of the fundamental human need to enjoy the pain of others. On the other hand, these conferences and their publication in the form of articles in *Forum Bosnae*, thanks to Rusmir, were a valuable experience for pursuing a line of thought that is ongoing and inexhaustible. For me, the architectural gesture of reconstruction is undoubtedly the only gesture that has a practical scope, both because it is not, in this form, political and because it is above all artistic - I prefer to avoid the word aesthetic, which is always also linked to politics. Rebuilding houses, all kinds of dwellings, mosques, hamams, markets, clocks and so on, is not political because it's about opening up the place in which people can be people. Art, and architecture in particular, which delimits the space in which people preserve and preserve the immunity of intimacy, in other words exhibits the inscription of the secret and thus founds the sign, is more original

than any politics. Politics is itself the invention of philosophy, and Plato's philosophy in particular, despite its internal reservations, and is based on the determination of truth from and for the fundamental unity of thought and being. Truth is interpreted as essence, i.e. as the substantial unity of being and appearance. Philosophical thought through politics aims to make effective the philosophical project of placing things in the truth of their essence by revealing them in the space delimited by political technique. It promises the total unveiling of essence as soon as it formulates the truth of things within the framework of an ontology. Being is the promise of total knowledge to come, and is the foundation of the modern technological project of total rational mastery of all things when they are interpreted on the basis of the concept of being.

In all cases, the interpretation of essence originates in art, since, as Hegel has shown, essence is itself interpreted from the outset, and significantly in Plato's concept of *eidos/idea*, as Gestalt, figure, form capable of typifying things in mass production, the relationship between model and things later becoming the basis of the mechanisation of mass production. Sculpture is thus the prototype of both art and thought, and by becoming the prototype of thought in Plato, it holds out the promise of a full unveiling of what is hidden. In Plato himself, art is subject to a dual orientation. Either it submits to the law of essences and has the mission of aesthetically presenting the being of things, and becomes symbolic (*sinnbildlich*) and propagandistic, serving the general unveiling of essences both speculatively and practically in politics. Or it is excluded from politics, outside the field defined by the essence of politics, indifferent to truth, i.e. to essence, non-symbolic, and stands on the margins of politics in a secret reserve that is precisely what designates its essantial orientation. Its purpose, then, is not to reveal the truth but to designate, by preserving it in a veil, the secret that constitutes, because it is kept secret, as in Sophocles' play Oedipus in Columns, the possibility for men to live as men. This secret, which is what men are oriented towards, is precisely the strangeness of men to themselves through which men configure a world, that is, build the world in which they are at home by being foreign to it, freed from all identity, from the essence that metaphysics through politics assigns to them with all the violence (Gewalt) and cruelty that the authority of the principle brings to bear on them.

The project of reconstruction, based on art, thus finds itself taking on all the political calculations that are always catastrophic in the sense that they always turn against themselves and can only be achieved by dosing, through denial, the force of self-destruction that

constitutes the essence of all power and cruelty. So there is another promise here, which does not mean that it cannot be turned on its head and turned into a logic of identity, metaphysics, symbolism - in short, a reactionary logic. It therefore requires constant vigilance, an internal irony that diverts the cruel power of self-destruction, which is always achieved politically through the designation of an external enemy and its extermination, into a self-critical irony turned against oneself in order to maintain the enigmatic character of existence. For there to be secrecy, for existence to unfold from its secrecy, there must be an art of secrecy. This art of secrecy is the irony at work in thought and art, which makes it impossible to identify with oneself by fabricating an ideal, i.e. essential self, a statue of oneself of which one is proud, a sentiment that Hegel summons up for nation-building. The art of reconstruction does not aim to sanctify the habitat of the past, nor to make us reside in that past which is already finished, and cruelly annihilated, but to open up the foreign space of the future, unexpected, incalculable from the strict and rigorous measure that the art of building grants in order to find its strangeness there. This strangeness is monstrous in its capacity to turn against itself, animated by an irrepressible resentment against the destiny that forces us to be, unlike any other living being, those who cannot identify themselves and who mark it by these proper names that are proper to us only insofar as they are given to us by others, that belong to us only insofar as they are arbitrary, and that are foreign to us while allowing us to be familiar to each other to the point of the distant intimacy of friendship. In revolt against our singular destiny as human beings, against fate or temporality, and not against life as Nietzsche dangerously interpreted it, human beings are quick to seek consolation in the self-identification cultivated by politics, which promises happiness by healing the pain of the power of self-destruction that it draws from in the violence of domination. Rusmir is the name of this friend whose friendship is based on this intimate distance, this distant closeness that strangeness provides.

That, then, is the difficulty of the undertaking to which Rusmir has committed himself and to which I have subscribed and wanted to make my own modest contribution, as someone who has not experienced war and its irreparable pain, through words and critical irony. Taking part in these conferences in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Sarajevo and Mostar, and in the Stolac reconstruction project, was therefore an exceptional experience from every point of view, both emotionally and intellectually, because it gave me the opportunity to develop a line of thought that would have remained unresolved without being supported

by the need, year after year, publication after publication, to take part in this shared reflection. On the other hand, the International Summer School on Religion and Public Life left me with a bitter taste of unfinished business, firstly because it ended in a painful separation between its founders, and therefore a dilemma for me between two friendships, and secondly because it led us to take part in workshops in Israel, where the criminal nature of its policies was finally revealed. This experience was a painful test of our friendships and a decisive confirmation. A State never abandons its conquests spontaneously, and in order to keep them it ends up calling for peace and making its strength a recognised right. He is like the thief mentioned by Socrates in the first book of Plato's Politeia: he violates the law by seizing property by force and asks for the assistance of the law to keep it. Israel, like any state, resorts to the institution of law to preserve and, if possible, extend its conquests, which remain contested. In addition to the law, it has a myriad of lucrative organisations at its disposal to explore the possibilities of this extension and to maintain a discussion promoting peace.

I became involved in this discussion through my participation in the projects developed by Rusmir. I sensed that it was fundamentally different, since in one case it was a question of a reconciliation proposed and undertaken by those who had managed to save themselves from total annihilation through resistance, while in the other case it was a question of finding theoretical justifications for the war of conquest, domination and the extension of the injustice done to the defeated populations. I felt, however, that it was always appropriate to reach out and test the will for peace and reconciliation of those who claim to be committed to it. In other words, for me it was a question of testing politics to see if we can find the means to limit power, or rather to find out if power can resist being politicised, which is only possible by converting the power to exist into the violence of being. The experience I had at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem in this context was rich in lessons thanks to the intellectual quality of the participants, which is no mean feat. It was extremely rare for Palestinians to be asked to take part and it was clear that Muslims were being brought in from abroad to help find arguments to justify the political domination of the Palestinians theologically. However, it only confirmed what I had suspected. One day, during one of our annual meetings, I discovered that Israeli soldiers in uniform were secretly recording all our discussions using a camera hidden in a small room behind our meeting room. Our exchanges were therefore being used to further some policy without our knowledge, which was more of a confirmation than a surprise. I was also included on the

'Board', only to be excluded and banned from the institute. I protested by sending a message to all my colleagues, but I was also relieved to no longer be taking part in what was therefore a manipulation. This was the second time that I had suffered the same disappointment when taking part in this kind of undertaking to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians, which put an end once and for all to any involvement on my part in any undertaking of this kind, especially as the contribution we can make is derisory and can only be justified to ourselves. All this certainly confirmed for me the nature of all politics and the extension of political modes of manipulation, but also the extent to which the corruption of minds, particularly of the intellectuals it implies, by playing on their inherent vanity, ended up annihilating any possibility of friendship. I found myself alone, apart from a few expressions of bored sympathy, and a few years later I had to read, from someone I thought was my best friend, the word that has become for me the most detestable in the English language: 'You embarrassed us', justifying the friend failing the friend. Certainly, in the words attributed to Aristotle that Derrida recalls in Politiques de l'amitié: 'O my friends! There is no friend», friendship necessarily includes betrayal, the breach of friendship in the tacit oath it keeps at the heart of its secret. But it is precisely the watchfulness of secrecy that makes it possible to turn the tables, and at the same time to open up the destiny of infinite rapprochement. Such a rapprochement is only possible since the disappearance of the friend, not the fact that there is no friend on the basis of the Aristotelian ontology that rests on the contradiction between being and not being, but his absence. Absence is the mourning of the friend, which alone indicates absence, secrecy, the impossibility of including the friend in a calculation, and keeps him in the incalculable reserve of destiny. To be absent is not to not be. The friend is the one who is kept missing in his essential absence, from which all destiny is delivered to the eventual. Politics calculates and plans. It does not allow friendship to subsist as such, but aims to integrate it, as Aristotle indicates, into its functioning, so that in the end it can only preserve it by dialectically overcoming it in the fraternity that Saint Augustine precisely gives rise to from the death of the friend in his Confessions. Politics, then, does not leave friendship unscathed, and friendship is undoubtedly the first victim, the decisive sacrifice that presides over the establishment of the political community of brothers, the genesis of which Freud describes so well in *Totem and Taboo* and then in *The man Moses and Monotheism*. But doesn't the death of a friend leave room for mourning, where art and friendship are kept secret. Only mourning keeps its own secret.

My friend Adam Seligman concludes the text he was kind enough to share with me with these words: «Our children are already paying for our failures». This is confession in the sense of Augustine, an admission of guilt which, like all confessions, is unwittingly fraught with theological and political calculations behind the respectable appearance of self-flagellation. All in all, as Derrida would say, we drew up plans for political action, we meditated, planned and organised practical methods that should have made it possible to modify politics, precisely through its theological angle, the fundamental religious structure of any political community that we tried to bring into play, and we failed in our calculation. We tried to plan the political reconstruction of a community by attempting to rebuild the community's original bonds based on trust so as to pass on a peaceful world to our children. They can hold us responsible for our failures, they are entitled to hold us responsible and to hold us to account. In short, we are indebted to the future; we have not passed on the right heritage, we have not properly purified it of the violence that we have passed on by passing on our membership of the community. This is an admission not of the failure of good intentions but of the naivety, not to say the lie, that underlies all politics. Politics always promises, has always promised, to build a peaceful politics, a community reconciled with itself. This is the very project of metaphysics, the advent of which Hegel claimed to have reported through the Absolute Spirit, which achieves the reconciliation of consciousness with itself and realises the moral project of the moralised state society. Perhaps the bankruptcy or failure comes not from not having succeeded politically in transmitting a situation better than that of our time, but from having agreed to commit oneself to a policy and having had to witness its failure. On the one hand, we find ourselves like those who have been swindled, who cannot escape the shame of having participated, through their greed and vanity, in their own illusion, and of having allowed themselves to be taken by wanting to take, that is to say of having allowed themselves to be dominated by political power at the very moment when we thought we had mastered the political order by developing a project.

But politics can only turn wrong precisely because its essence lies in the twist and turn of the power that works in religion by giving it its power. Politics consists in turning one situation around and metamorphosing it into another. The prototype of this is to be found at the beginning of Plato's *Timaeus*, when the demiurge convinces the proliferating power of life, what he calls *anagkè*, which is the power to intensify to the point of turning against itself by annihilating itself

through too much life, to return within the limit set by ideas and transform itself into a self-devouring world. Politics can only develop from the metamorphic power of inversion, of reversal, which enables it to convert the essential self-annihilation of power into a restricted, sacrificial economy of evil, through which politics can be the measured implementation of evil which, through its internal power of inversion, turns into good. Politics is the gigantic fiduciary machine, founded on faith in the metamorphosing power of sacrifice, which has become universal through the colonisation of the whole world, which has become cosmo-political, and which plays on the backlash of power to achieve the control of human beings through the ritualised mastery of evil through its institutions. This is why any state can, by political means, whitewash injustice and make all conquest and domination legal and legitimate. But insofar as politics is based on the game of turn and counter-turn, it can always turn against itself, and everything can always go wrong. There is no guarantee that a policy will succeed. What's more, we can always expect that, in the end, the current success will turn catastrophically against itself. There is no possible dosage of evil, as we would like to believe through the magic word of democracy, which would finally be the political regime that delivers us from evil, as in the Credo in unum Deum. Totalitarian regimes belong to the essence of democracy, and Plato was at pains to show that tyranny is not what precedes democracy but the most serious terminal disease of politics that affects democracy itself. This is the lesson that we did not want to learn from Nazism and Communism, and which is recurring today in the populisms of both the right and the left, for although they have been more or less defeated by confrontation, their essence is indestructible insofar as it is constitutive of democracy itself through a series of determinations that belong to politics. Starting with the figure of the leader, whose structure belongs to mythology and which only the biblical counter-figure of Moses can dismantle, as Freud tries to show in his latest book. This figure thus obeys the double-turn that Plato constructed in his Politeia, the saviour of an incalculable future turning into the protector of the mythologised past, the friend, in short, turning into the oppressor.

On the other hand, we always think of failure negatively, firstly because we believe, on the basis of Aristotle's ontology for which truth is the affirmation of the being of a thing, that negation is negative, that is to say both the failure of truth and of morality, since Christianity developed as the unity of Being and God which must be actualised in its messianic arch-political project. But failure, like the mourning into which the friend plunges us through his friendship, is an original step

backwards. It is the very mode by which we stand at the origin of a beginning, by which we are immediately committed to destiny, for failure is the original mode of power, and power only unfolds as destiny. Failure is the withdrawal of the future into the fold of its disappearance. Its essence is power's constitutive self-destruction. In his work *Politikos*, Plato presents the astonishing myth of the double turn of the world, in which the world unwinds its time to the point of exhausting its forces and turns in on itself by turning in the other direction to gather its forces and reopen its future. The turning back is the return to the point of departure where the maximum power acquired by its disappearance is concentrated, from where the future is projected anew. Its disappearance is also the disappearance of politics, which unfolds through the self-devouring of the world, the calculated economy of violence. It is from absence that the future unfolds, for absence is not nothingness but pure power, provided we stick to it. Perhaps the best inheritance is precisely not the goods that can be passed on, but rather the disappearance of the legatee himself, who establishes his heir not as the heir of goods but as the heir of absence, through which freedom is configured according to good and evil: either to sink into the pain of loss, which leads one to want to reconstitute the past as it was, or to endure absence by unfolding one's future in its essential newness. This heritage is that of friendship, not that of the father who expects the son to obey his law by agreeing with him through the politics of brotherhood. This is also why the essence of the word that describes and accomplishes, that knows and commands, is prayer, which is neither command nor knowledge, neither practical nor theoretical, but which is the spoken or mute word that addresses the absent from its own powerlessness, that is, its own failure. It is thus the original recognition of the failure from which only that which is presumed to be all-powerful can be appealed to. The discourse that knows and commands, the discourse of politics, and particularly of modern politics, which is pure action based on scientific research, i.e. technology, always conceals the essential word that shelters all words, the prayer that is the ode to the absent, that opens up the essential orientation of existence by establishing itself in the absence that is its original foundation.

The word that covers up prayer and delivers it to oblivion has always been deployed as a political word from as far back as philosophy invented politics, metaphysics, to be the exclusive territory of thought. Politics, determined to succeed through the constraint of control, always ends up going wrong and collapsing into its essential failure, into the abyss over which metaphysical speech unfolds into action

and knowledge. It cannot escape the alternative of evil and good, of mythologising nostalgia, of metaphysics, and of the possibility of destiny, for these two determinations are simultaneous, as Ibn ʿArabi suggests in his *ʿAnqâʾ al-mughrib*, that the sun rises in the east to set in the west and rises in the west to set in the east. This counter-turn, or backlash, is constitutive of existence, and condemns all politics to always sink into the catastrophe it inherits and nurtures. The only deplorable failure, perhaps, if it is to be deplored, is that of friendship, which could be a mode of relationship opening up on the margins of politics, as Kant indicated in his Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, or perhaps opening up the possibility of another politics in the footsteps of a certain Heidegger, Hannah Arendt and Derrida, all the while keeping an eye on the politicisation of friendship, still in the metaphysics of Aristotle, and its transformation into the fraternity of political comrades of all kinds, from Christian fraternity to the Heideggerian fraternity of comrades in war to militant comrades in communist and fascist internationals. The future cannot be built, because it cannot be planned, unless we always reproduce the same reversal of human beings into a political community founded on cruelty. The future is founded, and the foundation is underground and silent. The reconstruction of Stolac, slow and silent, far from all political centres, is designed and managed to be a foundation for the future, and Rusmir is its vigilant guardian.