

has no future, however, because it merely takes things that already are and expedites them “further on their previous path.”¹²

The problem with these enjoyable things is that they conceal Being, that is, “what is genuinely to come and thus resides completely outside of the distinction between good and evil and withdraws itself from all calculation.”¹³ In order to find the value of emergency outside this distinction, that is, metaphysics, it is first necessary to “experience” the “emergency of the absence of a sense of emergency.”¹⁴ For Heidegger this experience is the condition “where self-certainty has become unsurpassable, where everything is held to be calculable, and especially where it has been decided, with no previous questioning, who we are and what we are supposed to do.”¹⁵ But who decides who we are and what we are supposed to do?

Even though there are various “sovereign” powers responsible for our economic condition (the IMF, WB, ECB), our military condition (NATO), our environmental condition (UN-ICCP), and also our behavioral state (biogenetic engineering), the emergency today rests in our ability not only to individuate them but also to awaken the absence of emergency they create. In order to awaken this absence one must distinguish between “those who rescue us from emergency” and the “rescuers into emergency,”¹⁶ as Heidegger pointed out in his recently published *Black Notebooks*.

This distinction is going to be very useful to keep in mind as we read the excellent essays by Gianni Vattimo, Adrian Parr, Noreen Khawaja, Arne De Boever, Frédéric Neyrat, Bonnie Honig, Diego Rossello, Silvia Mazzini, Richard Polt, and Dorthe Jørgensen. These contributors “rescue us into emergencies,” not simply because there are environmental (Parr), political (Honig, Rossello, Mazzini) economic (De Boever, Neyrat), and philosophical (Vattimo, Khawaja, Jørgensen, Polt) “emergencies” that we must confront but also because confronting them will help us bring about, as Benjamin once said, “a real state of emergency.”¹⁷

ICREA/Pompeu Fabra University

NOTES

1. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
2. As Richard Polt explained in his study on Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy (The Emergency of Being)* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006], the “theme of *Not*—urgency, emergency, exigency, pressing need—is central to Heidegger’s thinking in the 1930s. Two slogans run throughout the texts of this period: all necessity emerges from emergency, and we are living in the age of the emergency of the lack

- of urgency. These slogans say that we have lost touch with the tensions that animate history and expose us to the emergency of be-ing” (152). “The origin of the idea is Heidegger’s analysis of his time as one of profound boredom [in] *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*” (213).
3. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
 4. Tracy B. Strong, foreword to Schmitt, *Political Theology*, xiii, xiv.
 5. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5.
 6. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 257.
 7. Giorgio Agamben, *Stato di eccezione* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003).
 8. Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2003), 125.
 9. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 87.
 10. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 99.
 11. This quote is from Polt’s *The Emergency of Being*, where, as we can see, he opted for “emergency” rather than “distress” or “plight” (219).
 12. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 89. I have changed “plight” to “emergency” in this passage.
 13. *Ibid.*
 14. *Ibid.*, 185.
 15. *Ibid.*, 99.
 16. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen X*, §12, *Gesamtausgabe* vol. 95 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014), 281. As Polt reported in *The Emergency of Being* (152, 213) the *Überlegungen* are a series of notebooks written before, during, and after *Contributions to Philosophy*; they are part of a larger series known as Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks*.
 17. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257.