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Rabble, Police, and Contingency: On the Legacy of Hegel's Objective Spirit

1. Introduction

Giorgio Agamben said in his 2005 lecture "Movement" that, when we take a look at our tradition of political thought, two simple observations are to be made. Firstly Agamben is surprised about how the word "movement" was actually "never defined". Even though this concept is hugely important in our political thought and action, in our thinking practices, Agamben explicates, we seem to have the following principle: "when the movement is there, act as if it was not there; when it's not, act as if it was". The second fact about the concept of movement that surprised Agamben, and in his own words this fact was "embarrassing", was that it seems that the only person who tried to define this term was Carl Schmitt, "a Nazi jurist", as Agamben says.¹

The reason why I begin with this quote is that from his two observations he goes on to discuss Schmitt's definition of movement, in *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* in particular.² According to Agamben, Schmitt's basic formula is simple. The political unity – for Schmitt the unity of the Nazi Germany – and its constitution results from the articulation and distinction of three elements: state, movement and people. In this constellation, the state is the static side, consisting of the apparatus of the offices. What is essential however is the functioning and relation of the two other elements, people and movement. Schmitt writes that the people are "the apolitical side", an element "growing under the protection and in the shade of the political decisions", whereas the movement is "the dynamic political element".³ It goes without saying that for Schmitt this movement is identified with the Party and its direction is none other than a personification of the movement.

¹ G. Agamben, *Movement*, Seminar (March 8, 2005) "War and Democracy", transcribed and translated by A. Bove, available online: <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpagamben3.htm>.

² C. Schmitt, *State, movement. people: the triadic structure of the political unity; The question of legality*, translated by S. Draghici, Corvallis 2001.

³ Ibid., 12.