ROGUES

Two Essays on Reason

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Stanford
University
Press

Stanford
California
2005
creigns, be they heads of state or military leaders, and even the institution of the death penalty, the last defining attribute of state sovereignty.

And yet, in the second place, it would be imprudent and hasty, in truth hardly reasonable, to oppose unconditionally, that is, head-on, a sovereignty that is itself unconditional and indivisible. One cannot combat, head-on, all sovereignty, sovereignty in general, without threatening at the same time, beyond the nation-state figure of sovereignty, the classical principles of freedom and self-determination. Like the classical tradition of law (and the force that it presupposes), these classical principles remain inseparable from a sovereignty at once indivisible and yet able to be shared. Nation-state sovereignty can even itself, in certain conditions, become an indispensable bulwark against certain international powers, certain ideologo-cal, religious, or capitalist, indeed linguistic, hegemonies that, under the cover of liberalism or universalism, would still represent, in a world that would be little more than a marketplace, a rationalization in the service of particular interests. Yet again, in a context that is each time singular, where the respectful attention paid to singularity is not relativist but universalizable and rational, responsibility would consist in orienting oneself without any determinative knowledge of the rule. To be responsible, to keep within reason, would be to invent maxims of transaction for deciding between two just as rational and universal but contradictory exigencies of reason as well as its enlightenment.

The invention of these maxims resembles the poetic invention of an idiom whose singularity would not yield to any nationalism, not even a European nationalism—even if, as I would like to believe, within today's geopolitical landscape, a new thinking and a previously unen countered destination of Europe, along with another responsibility for Europe, are being called on to give a new chance to this idiom. Beyond all Eurocentrism. This idiom would again be a singular idiom of reason, of the reasonable transaction between two antinomic rationalities. At the utmost point of its extreme difficulty, indeed of its im-possibility, what I call here—in these sentences and not others—the reasonable would be that which, in bearing within it pre-ference itself, will always be preferable—and thus irreducible—to the rational it exceeds. In such sentences as these the rational would certainly have to do with the just and sometimes with the justness or exactitude of juridical and calculative reason. But the reasonable would do yet more and something else; it would take into account
the accounting of juridical justness or exactitude, to be sure, but it would also strive, across transactions and aporias, for justice. The reasonable, as I understand it here, would be a rationality that takes account of the incalculable so as to give an account of it, there where this appears impossible, so as to account for or reckon with it, that is to say, with the event of what or who comes.

It remains to be known, so as to save the honor of reason, how to translate. For example, the word reasonable. And how to pay one’s respects to, how to salute or greet [saluer], beyond its latinity, and in more than one language, the fragile difference between the rational and the reasonable.

Reason reasons, to be sure, it is right [elle a raison], and it gives itself reason [se donner raison], to do so, so as to protect or keep itself [se garder], so as to keep within reason [raison garder]. It is in this that it is and thus wants to be itself; that is its sovereign ipseity.

But to make its ipseity see reason, it must be reasoned with.
A reason must let itself be reasoned with.