The other as past and present: beyond the logic of 'temporal othering' in IR theory

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Abstract. The article ventures a critique of the logic of 'temporal othering' in contemporary International Relations (IR) theory. Originally articulated in the field of European integration, this logic presupposes a possibility for a political community to constitute its identity without any spatial delimitation by means of casting as Other its own past, whose repetition in the future it seeks to avoid. While the image of contemporary Europe as 'othering' its own past has been subjected to empirical criticism, this article makes a conceptual argument for the indissociability of temporal and spatial aspects in any act of othering. Drawing on Alexandre Kojève's reading of Hegel, I argue that any historical action is necessarily spatiotemporal, combining the abstraction of temporal negation with the concrete actuality of a negated spatial being. Alternatives to the logic of sovereign territoriality are therefore not to be sought in the temporal aspect of othering, but rather by pursuing the possibility of self-constitution in the absence of any negating action whatsoever. The article concludes with an outline of such an alternative ethos, developed on the basis of Giorgio Agamben's reconstruction of the Hegelian-Kojèvian problematic of the end of history and his theory of the subject.

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Introduction

The problematic of European integration has come to occupy a privileged position in the discussion of self-other relations in IR theory. The experience of the 'European project' is held to demonstrate the possibility for political identity to be constituted in the absence of any spatial delimitation of otherness. Instead, the Other of today's Europe is found in its own past, that is, the Europe of sovereign nation-states, founded on the principle of territorial exclusivity. Casting one's own past of fragmentation and conflict as the Other, from which it must delimit itself, contemporary Europe defines itself as an open and non-exclusive 'peace project' of self-transcendence that no longer requires a concrete figure of the territorial Other

to constitute a positive entity. Thus, while the project of European integration remains territorially limited, it nonetheless allegedly succeeds in suspending the operation of the logic of sovereign territoriality by reconstructing the figure of the Other, logically necessary for self-identification, in a reflexive manner that converts the antagonistic process of othering into a drive for self-transcendence.

This is certainly a staggering claim, particularly in the context of IR theory, characterised by the perpetual replay of the idealist-realist 'debate',[1] in which the proclamation of the possibility of a global community that has dispensed with a need to delimit itself from an Other met with stern reminders of the ineradicable logic of international anarchy, which renders any community 'without others' manifestly impossible. Thus, the significance of the argument about Europe's self-constitution through othering its own past clearly goes beyond the concrete historical case of the European politics of the post-World War II period. In fact, this argument is a powerful intervention into the fundamental ontological presuppositions of any discourse about International Relations, since it asserts nothing less than the possibility of suspending the operation of what David Campbell, following Derrida, has termed 'ontopology'.

Ontopology refers to the articulation of being in terms of its spatial situation, the 'stable and presentable determination of a locality, the *topos* of territory, native soil, city, body in general'.[2] In this logic, which conditions the possibility of the very idea of the 'international', it is only the *topological* distinctness of an entity that endows it with *ontological* consistency: 'to be' is to be a spatially delimited entity alongside other such entities. In contrast, the claim for Europe's temporal othering posits the possibility for the entity to convert the spatial delimitation of its being into its own temporal becoming. The logic of anarchy, in which the ever-present possibility of conflict arises out of the pluralism of spatially differentiated political entities, may therefore be suspended in a reflexive project of self-differentiation in time.

In this article we shall argue that this logic of self-transcendence through temporal differentiation fails to achieve its goals due to its necessary entanglement with its apparent opposite, that is, ontopology or spatial othering.[3] In the following

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[1] See Cameron Thies, 'Progress, History and Identity in International Relations Theory: The Case of the Idealist-Realist Debate', *European Journal of International Relations*, 8 (2002), pp. 147–85; Stefano Guzzini, 'The Enduring Dilemmas of Realism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 10 (2004), pp. 533–68; R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[2] Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 82; David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Justice and Identity in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 80–1. See also Alexander Murphy, 'The Sovereign State System as a Political-Territorial Ideal: Historical and Contemporary Considerations', in Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (eds), *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 81–120.

[3] Spatial othering is a more general term than 'territorial' or 'geopolitical' othering, which pertains specifically to the political context of Western modernity, in which political space is structured in terms of territorial exclusivity. Territorial othering on the basis of the principle of state sovereignty is an historically specific ontic manifestation of the ontological principle of spatial othering, which can also take other forms, from the hierarchical ordering of space in imperial systems to the 'ghettoization' of urban space in a contemporary megapolis. Thus, the argument in this article does not imply any claims about the immutability of the specifically territorial mode of othering, whose significance might well eventually decrease, but rather asserts the indissociability of spatial and temporal aspects of othering, which renders impossible any attempt to view them as alternative modes of the self-other interaction.

section we shall briefly analyse the key points of the argument on 'temporal othering', as presented both by the scholars of European integration and by the more globally-oriented IR theorists, and discuss the more critical assessments of this thesis that point to the *empirical* intertwining of the logics of spatial and temporal othering in contemporary European politics. In the third section we shall argue, with reference to Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of Hegel, that *every* gesture of othering is necessarily *both* spatial and temporal, which renders futile any attempt to transcend the antagonistic potential of othering by its reinscription in an exclusively temporal register. In this manner we shall demonstrate that the interdependence of spatial and temporal othering is not merely a contingent *empirical* fact but rather a *transcendental* condition of every historical action that constitutes a political subject and can therefore only expire along with history itself. While the more familiar Hegelo-Kojèvian conception posits the end of history as entailing the disappearance of both politics and ethics in the ritualised reign of 'snobbery', we shall propose an alternative understanding of a 'post-historical' ethico-political orientation, drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben. Similarly to the discourse of temporal othering, Agamben poses the question of otherness with respect to oneself, but does not do so in the manner of self-transcendence and the negation of one's past in a future-oriented project but rather approaches one's own *present* as irreparably exhausted or 'bankrupt', which introduces alterity to the very core of one's self-constitution. The article concludes with an outline of the implications of this ethics of subjectivity for the study of European and global politics.

Temporal othering and self-transcendence

The other as one's past

The studies of European integration frequently approach the EU as a new form of political community that has dispensed with the principle of self-definition through the delimitation of the Other, paving the way for the transcendence of the 'realist' logic of pluralistic antagonism.[4] Of course, as long as the project of European integration does not embrace the entire globe, Europe remains a spatially delimited entity alongside others. Nonetheless, it allegedly succeeds in converting the ontopological delimitation of alterity into a more reflexive project of critical re-engagement with its own history. According to Ole Wæver's influential diagnosis,[5] the contemporary Other of Europe is nothing other than '*its own past* which should not be allowed to become its future'. It is against the threat of a relapse of the European polity into antagonistic 'fragmentation' that characterised the 'Westphalian' Europe of sovereign nation-states that the project of integration was able to identify itself as a 'peace project'.[6]

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[4] See John Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 191–5; Georg Sörensen, 'Sovereignty: Change and Continuity in a Fundamental Institution', *Political Studies*, 47 (1999), pp. 590–604.

[5] Ole Wæver, 'Insecurity, Security and Asecurity in the West European Non-war Community', in Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 90.

[6] Ibid., p. 100.

In a similar manner, Thomas Diez has argued that a temporal rather than spatial 'othering' has been the prime modality of self-constitution in the post-World War II Europe. Unlike spatial othering, temporal othering is a self-reflexive project of re-engaging with one's own history, which does not require a concrete locus of alterity to attain one's identity. For Diez, 'otherings between geographically defined political entities tend to be more exclusive and antagonistic against out-groups than otherings with a predominantly temporal dimension.'[7] This is the case because temporal othering makes it impossible to un-problematically externalise otherness to a concrete spatial locus, in which one's ontological insecurity could then be vested. As it is the revival of one's own past that is the main existential threat, the Self is no longer locked into a debilitating conflict with territorial Others but rather embarks on the project of self-transcendence, purging the traces of its past from its present and thus not letting it become its future. Yet, what is this past that is presently 'othered' by Europe? It is of course nothing other than the history of 'spatial othering', of the division of Europe into a plurality of sovereign states, separated by territorial boundaries and containing particularistic political communities, whose sovereign equality precluded the possibility of the existence of any overarching political identity above them. Thus, what is temporally othered is not simply some particular feature of European history but the spatial or ontopological mode of othering as such.

This elegant resolution of the problem of othering through othering the problem itself is not restricted to its original site of European integration but is increasingly applied on the global level, where any discourse on the transcendence of the international faces a conceptual problem of accounting for the existence of a global Self in the absence of any determinate Other. In a widely influential argument on the inevitability of the world state, Alexander Wendt makes explicit recourse to the logic of temporal othering to resolve the apparent contradiction in his thesis. Taking his point of departure from the Hegelian argument on the constitution of subjectivity through the struggle for recognition, he paradoxically concludes that the world state, which is *ipso facto* deprived of the Other whose recognition it may seek, is not merely possible but also inevitable. Wendt's solution to this problem is that 'a world state could compensate for the absence of spatial differentiation through a temporal differentiation between its present and its past. The past here is anarchy, with all its unpleasantness. In Hegelian terms, we could say that 'history' becomes the Other in terms of which the global Self is defined.'[8] Recognising the problem of positing as the *subject* of recognition something as abstract as 'history', Wendt nonetheless argues for the possibility to constitute one's identity through an act of temporal self-differentiation, whereby the sheer difference between one's past and present functions as the equivalent of the concrete alterity, constituted in the sovereign acts of 'territorial othering'.

In a similar argument that asserts the possibility, yet not the inevitability of a 'global identity', Heikki Patomäki also posits temporal othering as one of the pathways towards the resolution of the problem of the constitution of identity in the absence of an Other:

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[7] Thomas Diez, 'Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics', *Review of International Studies*, 17 (2004), p. 320.

[8] Alexander Wendt, 'Why a World State is Inevitable', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9 (2004), p. 527.

Otherness can also be located either in our own past or, alternatively, in our contemporary being, when seen from a point of view of a possible future position in world history. In other words, what we are can be defined in terms of critical distance from what we once used to be. And what we may become – and would like to become – can be defined in terms of critical distance from what we are now.[9]

Relying on the examples of the post-World War II Germany, whose identity was constituted through a radical distancing from the immediate past of Nazism, and the post-apartheid South Africa, with its public *fora* for 'truth and reconciliation', Patomäki argues that collective self-criticism serves to produce the 'temporal self-differentiation' that would enable a global community to articulate its identity in relation to itself *qua* Other in these auto-critical exercises. While definitely insufficient for the articulation of a global political identity, temporal othering is nonetheless deemed a necessary aspect of this process, since it enables 'moral learning' through self-criticism.

Empirical criticism of temporal othering

Despite its elegant simplicity, the logic of temporal othering has also been subjected to criticism, particularly with reference to the concrete site of its original articulation. Contemporary developments in European politics permit us to pose the question of whether 'Europe's past' really is past? To what extent has the EU (EU) actually abandoned the constitutive principle of modern sovereign statehood so that the latter is able to function as its 'temporal Other'? Despite his enthusiasm over temporal othering, Diez admits that this modality of othering is presently 'losing in importance' due to the resurgence of territorial or geopolitical othering of, for example, Islam, the US, Turkey, Russia, etc.[10] Yet, this empirical comeback of Europe's past in its present policies does not appear to weaken Diez's belief that a project of temporal othering, devoid of every territorial or geopolitical dimension, is possible in principle.

A less optimistic interpretation is ventured by Christopher Browning in his discussion of the 'external/internal security paradox' that characterises European foreign policy. According to Browning, there is a tension between the EU's goal of 'internal security', essentially a 'modernist' (supra-) statist project that rests on the strict and exclusive delimitation of the domain of sovereignty, and the more open and outward-oriented project of 'external security', which for our purposes corresponds to the constitution of a non-exclusive polity through reflexive temporal differentiation.[11] In his case study of EU-Russian relations with reference to the problem of the Kaliningrad region after the 2004 EU enlargement, Browning demonstrates the paradoxical nature of European foreign policy: since both internal and external security remain indispensable imperatives, any concrete policy towards Russia or any other 'Other' will inevitably be infused with its apparent opposite, which undermines its overall logic from within. In this interpretation,

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[9] Heikki Patomäki, 'Is a Global Identity Possible? The Relevance of Big History to Self-Other Relations', paper presented at 6th Pan-European International Relations Conference, Turin (12–15 September 2007), p. 12.

[10] Diez, 'Europe's Others', p. 328.

[11] Christopher Browning, 'The Internal/External Security Paradox and the Reconstruction of Boundaries in the Baltic: The Case of Kaliningrad', *Alternatives*, 28 (2003), pp. 545–81.

temporal differentiation does not *follow* territorial delimitation as a less violent or more reflexive mode of the constitution of political community, but rather *coexists* with it in a tense and contradictory relationship.

On a more general theoretical level the same observation has been made by Bahar Rumelili, who argues for a necessarily multidimensional structure of the self-other interaction, in which spatial and temporal othering may (and usually do) coexist. Rumelili is critical of the assessments of the EU as a 'postmodern polity' that has done away with spatial othering:

> To argue that a community is solely based on temporal-internal differentiation requires the presumption be made that the community is unequivocally bounded, so that there is not the need to reinscribe the boundary between the self and external others. Not only does the contested nature of 'Europe' as a geographical construct make any definition of EU's boundaries inevitably equivocal, the absence of any spatial/external differentiation can ultimately only be based on a shared essentialist notion of European identity, which would contradict the normative bases of postmodern identity.'[12]

Rumelili's empirical analysis demonstrates a plurality of modes of Europe's relation with its neighbours, involving various types of collective identity and provoking different responses by 'Europe's Others' that points to the need to critically reassess the relationship between spatial and temporal othering that can no longer be conceived in terms of progressive linear succession.

Indeed, Pertti Joenniemi has provocatively suggested that this relationship may presently be conceived as the exact opposite of the succession of territorial othering by temporal othering, originally proposed by Wæver. As a 'peace project' aimed at preventing the recurrence of past catastrophes, post-war Europe established a markedly negative relation to its own immediate past: 'Such a temporally based differentiation, with the (negative) past turned into a determinant of the under-standing of the present, has then been expected to provide an opening towards less antagonistic and violent articulations of identity. The EU has, in this context of such a Grand Narrative, amounted to a peace project based on trading Europe's past identity for something quite different.'[13] However, the very *success* of this project of self-transcendence, that is, the relegation of sovereignty and geopolitics into the past, entails the emergence of a more consolidated and substantial self-perception of Europe, which paradoxically leads to the need for its delimitation from Others and the resurgence of the ontopological rationality that it has so successfully abandoned: 'the temporal revision of the EU's self-understanding brings about an increasingly sharp distinction between the inside and the outside.'[14]

Thus, the resurgence of spatial othering, addressed by Diez and Browning, is held by Joenniemi to be a direct result of the success of the prior operation of temporal othering. Having achieved an unprecedented level of peace and prosperity through a project of self-transcendence, contemporary Europe is able both to assume higher moral ground against other states that presumably remain stuck in the past that Europe has escaped and to legitimise its territorial othering of these representatives of its own past that threaten Europe in the same manner that its

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[12] Bahar Rumelili, 'Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU's Mode of Differentiation', *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004), p. 46.

[13] Pertti Joenniemi, 'Re-Negotiating Europe's Identity: The European Neighbourhood Policy as a Form of Differentiation', *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 23:3 (2008), p. 85.

[14] Ibid., p. 89.

own past previously did. This confluence of moral claims and security imperatives defines the current field of European politics: 'The need for critical reflection, efforts of transition and policies aiming at averting Europe's notorious past is no longer there. [The EU] has reached its ideal self, thereby turning into exemplary moral space.'[15] The paradox of temporal othering is that it is precisely the attainment of the 'ideal self' through the project of self-transcendence that results in the resurgence of the very same practices of 'unequivocal bounding' that were meant to be transcended. It is *as* an 'ideal self' that no longer needs to confront the shadows of its violent past that contemporary Europe resumes exclusionary practices in relation to ever-more strictly defined 'outsiders'.

The analyses of Diez, Rumelili, Browning and Joenniemi all point to the coexistence of temporal and spatial modes of othering in contemporary European politics. While the first three authors tend to view this coexistence as an ambiguity or contradiction, Joenniemi argues for the dependence of the resurgence of spatial othering on the success of temporal othering. In all cases, however, the initial enthusiasm about the temporal othering of spatial othering, the relegation of history itself into history, is countered by the empirical demonstration of the continued relevance or even resurgence of the diametrically opposite logic of self-constitution. However, none of these authors proceed from the empirical evidence about the coexistence of temporal and spatial othering to the conceptual argument for their *indissociability*. Yet, as long as the intertwining of temporal and spatial aspects of othering is posited as a mere empirical contingency, critical discourse remains stuck in an attempt to dissociate the two and thus abandon ontopology in favour of reflexive self-transcendence. In order to demonstrate that this attempt is doomed from the outset, it is necessary to relocate the discussion of othering to the ontological terrain and pose the question of the way time and space enter into the very structure of the act of othering. Such an ontological reconstruction of the problematic of othering will demonstrate that the reason why temporal othering has been plagued by the persistence of its opposite is that it does not constitute an alternative to spatial othering or even a phenomenon somehow distinct from it. Spatial and temporal othering are two aspects of the very same process of self-constitution via negating action. In the following section we shall demonstrate this indissociability in a reading of Alexandre Kojève's existential interpretation of Hegel's dialectic as a struggle for recognition, which elucidates the logic of othering in terms of negating action.

Spatiotemporal othering: history and the work of the negative

Temporality and negating action

Alexandre Kojève's reading of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic is a useful point of departure for the inquiry into the logic of othering due to its recasting of the historical process in terms of the struggle for recognition, a key concept in any discussion of self-other relations. In this struggle, which is coextensive with human

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[15] Ibid., p. 90.

history, self-consciousness or 'absolute wisdom' is attained through *negating action* that first takes the form of fighting in the case of the Master and subsequently is realised as the work of the Slave, which negates 'given being' by transforming it into the products of the Master's enjoyment. In Kojève's reading, it is the Slave's action that transforms the natural world into the human, 'historical' world, 'realizes and perfects' the historical progress that is initially set into motion by the fear of death that establishes a Master-Slave relation.[16] Unlike the Master, who remains a static, fixed and stable figure throughout the historical process that he initiates, the Slave's being is entirely contained in transcendence and becoming, since in his transformation of 'given being' through work he also perpetually transforms himself. While the recognition received by the Master in the originary encounter is asymmetric and incomplete, throwing doubt on his humanity, the Slave realises his humanity completely through negating the world around him and his own identity (*qua* Slave) in this world.

Of course, negating action is not endless, since it prepares the Slave for the final confrontation with the Master that fulfils the dialectic and thus completes the historical process. It is only at the end of history that the Slave can cease to 'negate the given' and therefore cease to be 'man, properly so called', becoming either an animal once again or, in Kojève's later argument, a 'snob', a being whose actions are purely ritualistic and carry no meaning whatsoever.[17] Prior to the end of history, however, every human action is negating and thus inevitably 'others' the object of its negation.

It is important to note that this thesis is not reducible to a banal observation that any action whatsoever is transformative and thus involves both spatial and temporal differentiation. Kojève does not simply make a trivial logical claim that with every movement in space and every instance in time the human being becomes different from what it was. What is at stake in his argument is not difference and differentiation as logical categories but rather otherness and negation as existential categories. In the Hegelo-Kojèvian logic the Slave's negating action does not merely transform the existing world, which belongs to the Master, but rather ultimately *destroys* it in its totality and only in this manner leads to the eventual liberation of the Slave.[18] The Slave's action does not merely involve the self-evident differentiation of the world from itself in space and time but rather its destructive negation, 'which will destroy the World that does not correspond to the idea [of liberation] and will create by this very destruction the World in conformity with the ideal'.[19] Furthermore, this destructive negation is not merely one possible *ontic* form that differentiation might take but is rather inscribed in the ontology of human existence as a necessary attribute of the historical process. Historical action does not simply introduce difference into given being, but actively negates it, articulating the existing world as its Other.

Let us now consider the temporality of this action in more detail. In *A Note of Eternity, Time and the Concept*, Kojève defines historical action as characterised by 'the primacy of the future', that is, of a certain *project* of desire that negates the

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[16] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the* Phenomenology of Spirit (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 23.
[17] Ibid., p. 160.
[18] Ibid., p. 29.
[19] Ibid., p. 98.

existing reality (thus transforming it into the *past*) and in this manner actualises itself in the *present*.

Indeed, we say that a moment is 'historical' when an action that is performed in it is performed in terms of the idea that the agent has of the future (that is, in terms of a *Project*): one decides on a *future* war, and so on; therefore, one acts in terms of the *future*. But if the moment is to be truly 'historical' there must be change; in other words, the decision must be *negative* with respect to the given: in deciding for the future war, one decides *against* the prevailing peace. And, through the decision for the future war, the peace is transformed into the past. Now, the *present* historical act, launched by the idea of the future (by the Project), is *determined* by this past that it creates.[20]

Every historical action must be oriented towards the fulfilment of some future-oriented project through the negation of the present reality into the past: 'Time in which the Future takes primacy can be realized, can *exist*, only provided that it negates or annihilates. [...] Time *is* nothing but this *nihilation* of the World.'[21] By working, the Slave does nothing other than prepare its own liberation (in the *future*) by negating his *present* Slavery and thus turning it into his *past:* '[a]ll of History is nothing but the progressive negation of Slavery by the Slave.'[22] This means that the Slave 'others' himself in a project of self-transcendence that introduces a temporal differentiation between his Slavery that is negated into the past and his 'ideal Self' of the free citizen of the post-historical 'universal homogeneous state'.

This description of historical action immediately resonates with the logic of temporal othering. Time, understood in the sense of 'nihilation', is simply another name for othering and not its particular mode. *All othering is temporal*. Returning to the example of contemporary Europe, we can now easily re-describe its project of self-transcendence in Kojèvian terms: after World War II Europe embarked on a (future-oriented) project of integration by negating its present-being (of anarchic fragmentation, sovereign territoriality, etc.) into the past, locating itself in the interstice between the othered past and the not-as-yet attained present. Yet, there is no longer anything original, let alone unique, about this action: *all* negating action involves the instance of 'temporal self-differentiation', which entails that in any properly historical action we do nothing other than other our present into the past. Rather than break with the logic of historical action, contemporary Europe rather serves as its paradigm.

The spatial aspect of temporal othering

If all historical action involves temporal othering, might not the post-war European experience still be considered singular because it involves *only* temporal othering, refraining from any spatial delimitation of the Other? The authors discussed above demonstrate that such a claim is problematic empirically, but from the Kojèvian perspective it is also outright impossible conceptually, which leads us to our second thesis: *all othering is spatial*. We have already seen that Kojève

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[20] Ibid., p. 136, note 24. Emphasis in original.
[21] Ibid., p. 136. Emphasis in original.
[22] Ibid., p. 225.

defines time itself as a process of nihilation. Yet, in order to *exist* empirically, time must necessarily be a nihilation of something else:

This other thing is first of all space. Therefore: no Time without Space; Time is something that is in Space. Time is the *negation* of Space (of diversity); but if it is something and not nothingness, it is because it is the negation of *Space*. Now, only that, which really exists – that is, which resists, can be negated. [...] Time annihilates this World by causing it at every instant to sink into the nothingness of the past.[23]

Time only exists in empirical reality as a negation of Space and is defined, as determinate negation, by the very characteristics of that Space (identity, nature, etc.) that it negates; otherwise it would be pure nothingness.

Thus, any historical action must negate a section of actually existing Space, thereby transforming this present existence into the past, which of course simultaneously becomes its own past as well. Territorial or geopolitical othering that is addressed by the IR scholars discussed above is merely an historically specific mode of the actualisation of this logic and its possible demise, conjured up in idealist or critical IR discourse, does nothing to efface the spatial character of othering. It is not at all necessary that the self-other interaction takes the form of mutual exclusion on the basis of the principle of sovereign territoriality, whose historical emergence has been an entirely contingent event.[24] What *is* necessary for any historical action is the existence of some spatial locus of given being that is nihilated into the past. It is thus evident that temporal and spatial othering are two aspects of the very same action, since it is impossible to negate only temporally or only spatially. In Kojève's eloquent formulation, 'Man [...] is a Nothingness that *nihilates* as Time in spatial Being, through the *negation* of that Being.'[25] In this action, present being that exists in Space is transformed into the past, whose locus is memory or, in Kojève's terms, 'concept'.

Particularly in Kojève's own existential interpretation of Hegel's dialectic, the idea of the negation of spatial being must be taken literally in the sense of destruction or annihilation. We need only recall the way the historical struggle for recognition *ends:* 'In truth, only the Slave 'overcomes' his "nature" and finally becomes Citizen. The Master does not change: he dies rather than cease to be Master. The final fight, which transforms the Slave into Citizen, overcomes Mastery in a *nondialectical* fashion: the Master is simply killed and he dies as Master.'[26] Thus, in the final moment of the historical process the Slave must negate his own present-being *qua* Slave (transforming it into the past) through the murder of the Master in a literally negating action against the 'spatial' Other, who, as it were, *embodies* in the present that which the Slave strives to make his past, that is, his condition of slavery. We must emphasise that the Slave does not simply negate the abstract *concept* of his enslavement. Indeed, even to arrive at such a concept he would have to engage in negating action in space against a concrete Other that serves as a spatial incarnation of that which the Slave nihilates temporally.

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[23] Ibid., p. 137. Emphasis in original.
[24] See Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Walker, 'State Sovereignty and the Articulation of the Political Space/Time', *Millennium*, 20 (1991), pp. 445–62.
[25] Kojeve, *Introduction*, p. 48. Emphasis in original.
[26] Ibid., p. 225, note 22. Emphasis in original.

Thus, from a Kojèvian perspective, the process of othering, which eventually leads to the attainment of Self-consciousness or the 'ideal self' at the end of history, always involves both spatial and temporal dimensions. Just as any spatial othering necessarily involves the temporal aspect in either transforming the present being of the Other or, in the extreme case, annihilating the Other physically, any process of temporal othering requires a concrete spatial locus, whose occupant would embody in the present that which the Self wishes to 'nihilate' into the past. Just as it is impossible to argue that the spatial Other retains its self-identity in time after being negated by the Self, so it is impossible to propose that a Self can temporally negate its own present being without negating anything in space: 'if there were no *real* World that was annihilated, Time would be pure nothingness; there would be no Time.'[27] The idea of Europe's Other being its own past is therefore quite uncontroversial: after all, any historical action transforms one's present being into the past that is then conserved as memory and concept. What *is* controversial and, from a Kojèvian perspective, outright absurd, is the claim that Europe's past is its *only* Other, that is, that Europe's mode of being is no longer ontopological. Spatial othering is not simply an unfortunate complement to temporal self-differentiation but rather the only way the latter can take place in empirical reality. In other words, the Self transcends itself temporally by negating the Other spatially and there is no possibility whatsoever to separate the two dimensions. Temporal and spatial othering, which were originally presented as alternative modes of self-constitution, now appear as absolutely indissociable. The process of othering is always 'onto-*chrono*-topological'.

Proceeding from this thesis, we may fully appreciate the caution of Diez, Browning and Joenniemi with respect to temporal othering as a 'peace project'. Although Diez departs from a conceptual, if not empirical, distinction between two modes of othering, his argument complicates this opposition by introducing the notion of the 'incarnation of the temporal other'.[28] The past that (Western) Europe has othered in the process of integration is revealed to be present as a spatial Other, exemplified by the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe and particularly the former Yugoslavia, whose violent fragmentation recalls the worst examples of intra-European strife, 'a past that the West had overcome, a zone of war and nationalism that was stuck in history'.[29] What still makes the othering of Eastern Europe 'temporal' in Diez's account is presumably the inclusive and integrationist orientation of the EU towards this region, which contrasts with the policies, prescribed by the sovereign-territorial mode of spatial othering. Yet, as the 1999 NATO campaign in Kosovo demonstrates, Europe has not been averse to engaging in literally negating action against the specific spatial 'incarnation of the temporal Other', in this case Milosevic's regime in Serbia. In this case, Europe clearly went beyond asserting its transcendence of its past as an abstract concept and engaged in the act of relegating into the past the actually existing regime that served as a concrete embodiment of this very concept.[30] Irrespectively of whether we treat the reference to the 'temporal Other' in the Kosovo case as a valid

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[27] Ibid., p. 137. Emphasis in original.
[28] Diez, 'Europe's Others', p. 326.
[29] Ibid.
[30] See Joenniemi, 'Kosovo and the End of War', in Peter Van Ham and Sergei Medvedev (eds), *Mapping European Security after Kosovo* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002),

normative principle or as political instrumentalisation and selective use of history,[31] this reference acquired its very meaning solely within the ontopological context, since in the absence of any 'incarnation' of the temporal Other any claim to other one's own past would be perfectly vacuous.

The converse holds true for Diez's examples of contemporary territorial othering (Islam, Turkey, Russia), in which it is easy to observe a temporal dimension, whereby the concrete spatial Other is presented not in terms of total alterity, which would make any relation with it impossible, but rather as a phantom from one's own past, exhibiting the features that Europe used to possess but has fortunately transcended. Whether these features are concretised in terms of theocracy or authoritarian nationalism, they all belong to Europe's othered past and, for this very reason, serve to legitimise their negation in the present. As Diez notes, the danger of temporal othering is that, in conjunction with spatial delimitation, it makes it possible for the Self to legitimise the domination of the Other on the grounds of the latter's 'backwardness', 'underdevelopment' and other modes of being 'stuck in the past'.[32] The history of European colonialism offers abundant examples of such use of 'temporal othering', which has nothing to do with reflexivity and openness but rather 'adds insult to injury' by endowing spatial alterity with the connotations of immaturity and infantilism. Similarly, Rumelili has argued that the fact that 'difference is also located temporally (internally) does not mean that it is not simultaneously located spatially (externally). For example, by constructing Europe's past to be Others' present state – as is the case in most development discourse – the past/present dichotomy maintains the distinction between inside versus outside.'[33] The studies of European identity politics that depart from Edward Said's seminal *Orientalism* amply demonstrate the way Europe's neighbours were never simply delimited as spatial Others but also inscribed in temporal relationships with Europe, which made possible the politics of tutelage, 'development aid' or 'democracy promotion' that sheer spatial alterity would only hinder.[34]

As our reading of Kojève demonstrates, this reduction of the present Other to one's own past Self for the purposes of either its violent exclusion or its asymmetric and hierarchical 'inclusion' is not a dangerous aberration or a historically contingent idiosyncrasy but rather a permanent possibility, inscribed in the structure of negating action. Rather than unfold in a chronological succession, whereby temporal othering 'temporally others' spatial othering, the two modes of differentiation are at work simultaneously and derive their efficiency from their

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pp. 48–65; Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, '"War is Never Civilized": Civilization, Civil Society and the Kosovo War', in Van Ham and Medvedev (eds), *Mapping European Security*, pp. 162–78.

[31] For a detailed study of the politics of memory in post-World War II Germany see Maja Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory: The Politics of War in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See more generally, Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (eds), *The Politics of Memory in Post-War Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). See also Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, pp. 95–124 for a reading of the politics of memory in terms of 'hauntology'.

[32] Diez, 'Europe's Others', pp. 320–1.

[33] Rumelili, 'Constructing Identity', p. 33. See more generally Rumelili, *Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), ch. 1.

[34] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: 'The East' in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North–South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

mutual conditioning. What is othered temporally must be assigned a spatial locus in the present in order for othering not to remain a merely abstract negation, while the negation of the present existence of the spatial other is legitimised by the claim that it already 'belongs' to the past.

The conflation of temporal and spatial othering is thus not an exception but the rule: Europe others spatially what it has othered temporally and the other way round. Exactly the same logic applies to the hypothetical world state, which, while by definition lacking a spatially delimited Other, would inevitably combine the temporal othering of its 'anarchic' past with the spatial othering of the opponents of world statehood, who would embody the persistence of anarchy within the world state. Of course, neither the relegation of one's present into the past nor the spatial delimitation of alterity necessarily result in war or other form of violent confrontation, which depends as much on the Other's response to its 'being othered' as it does on the initial othering move.[35] Nonetheless, the potentiality of violent antagonism is ontologically inscribed in the very process of othering *qua* negating action, which nihilates *in* space *as* time. The insistence on this potentiality should not be read as a condemnation of every act of othering: after all, many things *deserve* to be annihilated, both spatially and temporally. The target of our criticism is rather the idea that this potentiality of violent antagonism can be eradicated by effacing the spatial aspect of othering and elevating its temporal aspect to the status of an autonomous mode of self-constitution. As our Kojèvian reading has demonstrated, any attempt to find in temporal othering an *alternative* to spatial othering is entirely in vain.

Othering and the end of history

At the same time, it is important to recall that our argument on the mutual supplementarity of spatial and temporal othering is based on the Hegelo-Kojèvian understanding of historical action. Insofar as we are committed to viewing Europe or a hypothetical world state in historical terms, there is little ground for enthusiasm about its capacity to dispense with spatial othering in favour of a purely temporal mode. However, from the same philosophical perspective it is evident that the historical process is not infinite and the negating action in the struggle for recognition actually drives it towards its end.

Any inquiry into the possibilities of doing away with spatial othering, in its modern-territorial or any other mode, should therefore not stop at the point of temporal othering, whose promise of a purely reflexive self-transcendence is manifestly false, but must rather pursue the logic of othering to its ultimate limit, that is, the end of history, which marks the end not of particular modes of othering but of historical action as such. Given the plethoric, if superficial, criticism of Francis Fukuyama's revival of the Hegelo-Kojèvian discourse in the aftermath of the Cold War,[36] the reluctance of contemporary IR theory to pursue this path is easily understandable. Nonetheless, the idea of the end of history clearly haunts all

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[35] Rumelili, 'Constructing Identity', pp. 37–9.
[36] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

discourses on world politics that seek to transcend the logic of anarchy, whereby a political community is necessarily constituted by exclusion or delimitation from its Other. Indeed, to proclaim that the Other is history is essentially to pronounce history itself as the Other. The discourses of temporal othering that we have addressed above are evidently animated by the desire to put to rest the historical logic of negating action, yet refrain from phrasing this desire in the explicit terms of the end of history.

For example, Wendt's thesis on the world state clearly invokes this thematic in presenting the latter as not merely a Weberian state of the monopoly on legitimate violence but also a Hegelian state of reciprocal recognition,[37] that is, precisely the 'universal homogeneous state' that *only* emerges at the end of history.[38] If Wendt takes the 'Hegelian state' seriously, his argument turns out not to have any need for 'temporal othering' at all, since in the post-historical state the negating action of the Slave is finally ceased and recognition becomes truly universal. Yet, rather than pursue this idea, Wendt attempts to sideline the question of the end of history by resuscitating the logic of temporal othering that presents as still unfolding the history that has come to an end.

The reluctance to pursue the theme of the end of history is perhaps also related to the paradoxical ethico-political consequences of this thesis. According to Kojève, the end of history logically entails the 'disappearance of Man' in the sense of a radical cessation of grand historical action ('the disappearance of wars and bloody revolutions').[39] In the famous 1962 note to the Second Edition of *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* Kojève describes post-historical action with the help of a caricaturistic figure of the Japanese *snob*. In the absence of properly historical 'Religion, Morals and Politics', the Japanese civilisation nonetheless created 'disciplines, negating the 'natural' or 'animal' given, which in effect surpassed those that arose [...] from historical action'.[40] Referring to the Noh Theatre, tea ceremonies and the art of bouquets of flowers, Kojève claims that this snobbish disposition leads to a life 'according to totally formalized values – that is, values, completely empty of all "human" content in the "historical sense"'.[41] Thus, post-historical beings will remain human, albeit this humanity will no longer consist in the transformative work of negation that *produced* new content, but rather in the formalised rituals that the snob tirelessly *reproduces* with no developmental effects whatsoever.

In Kojève's argument, a post-historical community that has dispensed with all othering is thus a snobbish community that finds satisfaction in the meaningless reproduction of old rituals, a community of Nietzsche's 'last men', who have famously 'invented happiness',[42] or Fukuyama's 'caretakers of the museum of history'.[43] Evidently, such a vision of a smug and complacent Europe or even a global community 'without others' is just as far away from today's critical thought as the idea of history culminating in the universal homogenous state. Nonetheless,

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[37] Wendt, 'Why a World State is Inevitable', pp. 504–5.
[38] Kojève, *Introduction*, pp. 67–70.
[39] Ibid., pp. 158–9.
[40] Ibid., p. 161.
[41] Ibid., p. 162. See Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, pp. 69–74 for a detailed reading of this note.
[42] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (New York: J. M. Dent, 1961), p. 9.
[43] Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), p. 18.

the somewhat embarrassing character of post-historical existence in the Hegelo-Kojèvian discourse is not sufficient to discard the problematic of the end of historical action but rather calls for an inquiry into alternative possibilities for political praxis that avoid both the perpetual recurrence of spatiotemporal othering and the ritualised complacency of Kojève's post-historical snobs. While we accept the Hegelo-Kojèvian claim that spatiotemporal othering can only be brought to an end along with historical action as such, there is no need for us to subscribe to Kojève's construction of the post-historical condition. In the final section we shall propose an alternative solution to the problem of othering and historical action, developed on the basis of Giorgio Agamben's political philosophy.

The end of history and the bankruptcy of the present

The end of history and inoperative praxis

Throughout his work Giorgio Agamben has maintained an explicit dialogue with the Hegelo-Kojèvian problematic of the end of history, Kojève's work becoming a permanent reference in his texts from the 1982 book *Language and Death* onwards[44] and assuming particular prominence in his more recent political writings.[45] Agamben's approach to the end of history simultaneously targets two dominant readings of the contemporary constellation in global politics, namely the Kojèvian 'end of history' thesis, in which it is the liberal *state* that fulfils the historical dialectic, and the diverse field of globalisation theory, in which it is precisely the eclipse of the state by the globalising logic of capitalism that constitutes our present as a distinct historical epoch. In contrast, Agamben insists that we should think 'the end of the state and the end of history *at one and the same time* [and] mobilize one against the other'.[46]

For Agamben, the end of history, understood in terms of the termination of the dialectical process of negating action, must necessarily presuppose a radical crisis of the state or any other form of constituted order. The search for a post-historical ethos of humanity becomes entirely heterogeneous to any statist project, but rather probes the possibilities of the human re-appropriation of historicity, whereby time is no longer subjected to the work of negation and becomes available for free use in social praxis. '[T]his appropriation must open the field to a *nonstatal* and *nonjuridical* politics and human life – a politics and a life that are yet to be entirely thought.'[47]

This is not the place to attempt a detailed engagement with Agamben's own prelude to this coming politics. Let us merely address its central concept of *inoperosity* that provides a point of departure for Agamben's intricate resolution of

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[44] Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 49–53, 99–101.

[45] See Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 60–2; *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 109–11; *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 6–12.

[46] Agamben, *Means without End*, p. 111. Emphasis in original.

[47] Ibid., p. 112.

the problem of othering. Agamben's notion of inoperosity is derived from Kojève's term 'worklessness' (*dèsœuvrement*), which the latter reserved either for post-historical 'snobs' or the 'intellectuals' whose vacuous, 'indeterminate' pathos of negation he famously derided.[48] This notion must not be confused with pure inactivity, but must rather be grasped as a mode of praxis that is nonetheless deprived of any future-oriented goal and therefore cannot be incorporated into any determinate project of negating action.

For Agamben, the event of nihilism, whose political manifestation reached its heights in World War I, discloses the absence of any historical tasks that humanity must devote itself to.

[T]oday, it is clear for anyone who is not in absolutely bad faith that there are no longer historical tasks that can be taken on by, or even simply assigned to, men. It was in some ways evident starting with the end of the First World War that the European nation-states were no longer capable of taking on historical tasks and that peoples themselves were bound to disappear.[49]

Yet, the vacuity of all historical tasks does not entail the end of politics but rather its rediscovery as a praxis devoid of all tasks:

There is politics because human beings are *argos*-beings that cannot be defined by any proper operation, that is, beings of pure potentiality that no identity or vocation can possibly exhaust. [. . .] Politics might be nothing other than the exposition of humankind's absence of work as well as the exposition of humankind's creative semi-indifference to any task, and might only in this sense remain integrally assigned to happiness.[50]

The ethos underlying this inoperative politics consists in what Agamben calls 'the one incomparable claim to nobility our own era might legitimately make in regard to the past: *that of no longer wanting to be a historical epoch*'.[51] This striking claim demonstrates most clearly the divergence of Agamben's position from the Hegelo-Kojèvian standpoint, which, as we recall, defined all historical action as future-oriented negation of present-being into the past. A society that no longer wants to live in a historical epoch refuses the very logic of negating action that makes epochality possible through the conjunction of the sheer negativity of temporal othering with the concrete positivity of spatial othering. It is easy to observe the difference of this ethical disposition from the pathos of epochal transcendence at work in the discourses of temporal othering in the context of European integration or the designs for a world state. What is at stake in Agamben's vision of inoperative politics is not the inauguration of a new epoch of a 'postmodern' Europe or a 'post-sovereign' world but the termination of epochality itself, whereby the end of history is no longer thinkable as a 'new beginning'.

Agamben's version of end of history has nothing to do with the Hegelo-Kojèvian eschatological idea of the *fulfillment* of all historical epochs but rather consists in the radical *interruption* of the epochal dimension as such, whereby the Slave does not achieve recognition in the universal homogeneous state but simply suspends his work and in this manner refuses to engage in negating action

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[48] Stefano Franchi, 'Passive Politics', *Contretemps*, 5 (2004), pp. 30–41.
[49] Agamben, *The Open*, p. 76.
[50] Agamben, *Means without End*, pp. 141–2.
[51] Agamben, *Idea of Prose* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 87. Emphasis in original.

altogether.[52] The struggle for recognition is thus not won by the Slave through the murder of the Master but simply discontinued, whereby the Slave exits his condition of slavery by abandoning his work and Master is consequently left without anyone to be the Master of. Contrary to the Hegelo-Kojèvian argument for universal recognition as a condition for peace, echoed most strongly in Wendt's 'world state' thesis,[53] Agamben argues that only the abandonment of the struggle for recognition makes possible the kind of peace that would not 'come from war and end in war'.[54]

Yet, how does a community that no longer others or recognises anyone or anything at all constitute its identity? Agamben resolves this seemingly intractable problem by abandoning the differential logic of identity and affirming the non-positive and non-representable singularity of 'whatever being', whose essence is contained entirely in its existence and which evades any positive identification.[55] Whatever being or 'being-thus' is irreducible to any positive predicates of identity and no longer requires the work of negation to constitute itself, which places it at an unbridgeable distance from any state, including the post-historical world state: 'Whatever singularity, which wants to appropriate belonging itself, its own being-in-language, and thus rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, is the principal enemy of the State.'[56] For Agamben, what is absolutely threatening to the state, what the state 'cannot tolerate in any way' is not any particular claim for identity, which can always be recognised, but rather the possibility of human beings co-belonging in the absence of any identity: 'A being radically devoid of any representable identity would be absolutely irrelevant to the State.'[57] This 'whatever being' can never be mobilised in any historical project and remains both ungraspable by statist rationalities and indifferent to the temptation of appropriating the state for its own project: '[W]hatever singularities do not possess any identity to vindicate nor any bond of belonging for which to seek recognition.'[58]

The other as one's present

In accordance with his affirmation of inoperosity, Agamben refuses to frame the confrontation between whatever singularities and the state organisation as a form of negating action that could be assumed as a historical task. Insofar as whatever being neither vindicates an identity nor seeks recognition but simply asserts its existence beyond any particular predicates, this confrontation is best understood not as the attempt to take over or destroy state power but as the abandonment of the degraded state form to itself. Instead of proposing anti-statist anarchism as yet

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[52] For a detailed interpretation of Agamben's conception of the end of history see Sergei Prozorov, 'Giorgio Agamben and the End of History: Inoperative Praxis and the Interruption of the Dialectic', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 12 (2009).

[53] Wendt, 'Why a World State is Inevitable', pp. 507–16.

[54] Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, p. 82.

[55] Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 1–4, 89–106. See also Jenny Edkins, 'Whatever Politics', in Matthew Calarco and Stephen DeCaroli (eds), *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 70–91.

[56] Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p. 86.

[57] Ibid., p. 85.

[58] Ibid., p. 86.

another historical project, Agamben's political philosophy seeks to illuminate the inherent vacuity of existing states and thereby render inoperative the historical machine that has for over a century been running on empty. The nation-state, the perfect embodiment of 'Europe's past' invoked in the arguments on temporal othering, is not to be destroyed or taken over by the Slave-turn-revolutionary, but rather revealed in its utmost *bankruptcy:*

[O]ne of the few things that can be declared with certainty is that all the peoples of Europe (and, perhaps, all the peoples of the Earth) have gone bankrupt. Every people has had its own way of going bankrupt, and certainly it does make a difference that for the Germans it meant Hitler and Auschwitz, for the Spanish it meant a civil war, for the French it meant Vichy, for other people instead it meant the quiet and atrocious 1950s, and for the Serbs it meant the rapes of Omarska; in the end, what is crucial for us is only the new task that such a failure has bequeathed us. Perhaps, it is not even accurate to define it as a task, because there is no longer a people to undertake it. As the Alexandrian poet [C. P. Cavafy] might say today with a smile: 'now, at last, we can understand each other, because you too have gone bankrupt.'[59]

At first glance, the idea of the bankruptcy of the peoples of Europe (or, perhaps, of the whole world) resonates with the logic of temporal othering whose inextricable dependence on its opposite we have demonstrated above. Yet, Agamben's argument introduces a minor yet crucial displacement within this logic that permits us to present the idea of bankruptcy as a full-fledged alternative to othering one's past. Agamben's usage of the present perfect tense in the fragment above clearly indicates that what is at stake here is not an event that took place in the past that we would not want to be repeated in the present. On the contrary, 'having gone bankrupt' clearly describes something that, having begun in the past, continues into the present. While particular events that have led to this bankruptcy (from Auschwitz to Omarska) have indeed been consigned to the past and survive only in the collective memory, the fact of bankruptcy arising from these events relates squarely to our present existence, indicating the manner in which the past survives in and haunts our present.[60] Thus, the experience of bankruptcy cannot be othered into the past through the negation of its actual embodiment in the present, but must rather be *assumed in the present* as the irreparable condition of our contemporary existence.

Moreover, Agamben's ethical injunction is that this bankruptcy must by no means be negated into the past as something that contemporary Europe (or the 'Earth') has 'overcome'. This refusal to conceal one's bankruptcy by means of a complacent claim to self-transcendence is what separates Agamben's standpoint from the contemporary politics of spatiotemporal othering in Europe and elsewhere, in which vacuous gestures of apology and contrived invocations of shame and repentance coexist perfectly well with the very same practices they denounce.[61] In contrast to the complacent tone adopted in much of the discussion of Europe's temporal othering, which posits it as a way to escape the antagonistic

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[59] Agamben, *Means without End*, p. 142.

[60] In its emphasis on the survival of the past in a spectral form that 'haunts' our present, Agamben's approach resonates with Derrida's notion of *hauntology* that denotes the undecidable being of an event as simultaneously both present and absent, originary and repeated, real and unreal, etc. See Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, pp. 10–2, 51.

[61] See Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), pp. 20–4; *Means without End*, pp. 128–36.

terrain of ontopology, Agamben's approach emphasises the utter impossibility of fleeing one's bankruptcy either in space or in time. While, as Joenniemi's argument demonstrates, the discourse of temporal othering has served to legitimise an increasingly exclusionary and security-oriented stance on the part of Europe that has attained its 'ideal self', the community that fully assumes its bankruptcy no longer posits anything like an ideal self to be attained but rather appropriates its own undoing as a dwelling place or *ethos* in the original Greek sense.[62] Instead of transcending its own past through the negation of its spatial incarnation in the present, Agamben's 'coming community' dwells in its own bankruptcy and thereby necessarily harbours otherness within *itself*. We may therefore conclude that while the Hegelo-Kojèvian logic of spatiotemporal othering is guided by the imperative of self-transcendence, summed up by the slogan 'I am not what I was', Agamben's ethics of post-historical inoperosity is rather best summed up by the famous aphorism of Arthur Rimbaud: 'I is another' (*Je est un autre*).

Agamben uses this aphorism to designate the elementary structure of the subject as necessarily non-identical within itself. In order to be constituted as a subject of language, the individual must undergo the expropriation of its concrete living being and enter the abstract linguistic system, identifying itself with the absolutely insubstantial pronoun 'I'.[63] On the other hand, once constituted as the subject of enunciation, the subject does not encounter the wealth of meaning to be transmitted, but rather the web of signifiers beyond his control. 'The subject has no other content than its own desubjectification; it becomes witness to its own disorder, its own oblivion as a subject.'[64] The structure of subjectivity is thus not differential, conditioned by the delimitation of alterity, but *auto-affective*, that is, characterised by a paradoxical indistinction of activity and passivity, whereby the subject is affected by its own receptivity or suffers its own passivity.

This auto-affective structure is existentially manifested in the emotive tonality of shame, a sense of being consigned to something that cannot be assumed but from which one cannot dissociate oneself. In an experience of shame one suffers one's own presence to oneself and the incapacity to break free of oneself, that is, the impossibility of that very self-transcendence that the advocates of temporal othering credit contemporary Europe or the hypothetical world state with. Agamben's idea of the bankruptcy of peoples similarly points to the rupture or division that is strictly internal to the subject and relates to its incapacity to transcend the condition that it desires to evade, since this condition is not something external to it but rather something most intimate, one's own presence to oneself. The Self no longer emerges by means of delimitation from the Other, either temporal or spatial, but rather harbours otherness within itself, this otherness being nothing other than its own bankruptcy that it must appropriate as its ethos.

In this reading, the Other of Europe is not its past, but rather its *present*, in which it is forever split between its active self-formation and the sufferance of its own ruin. If, as Agamben says, to be a subject is to bear witness to one's own desubjectification, then contemporary Europe only attains subjectivity by testifying to its (present, not past) bankruptcy. While it would be meaningless to claim to be

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[62] Agamben, *Language and Death*, p. 93.
[63] Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, pp. 87–135. See also Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, pp. 95–7.
[64] Ibid., p. 106.

ashamed of the *past* that one has happily transcended and that cannot therefore enter an auto-affective relation, the properly ethical experience begins with the assumption of the impossibility of this transcendence as being ashamed of one's own bankrupt *present*. While the last men of the Hegelo-Kojèvian end of history do not other anyone or anything because they no longer desire recognition and therefore see no reason for negation, the Agambenian subject of shame does not engage in othering because it *is* at heart its own other, consigned to the experience of its own bankruptcy that it cannot transcend. To recall the closing narration of Lars von Trier's 1991 film *Europa*, which powerfully captures the experience of (de)subjectification in post-World War II Europe, 'you want to wake up, to free yourself of the image of Europa. But it is not possible.'

Conclusion

Agamben's vision of the post-historical Europe or the world at large carries none of the optimism of the analyses of contemporary Europe or the designs for the world state through the prism of temporal othering, addressed in the beginning of this article. However, as we have demonstrated, that optimism is entirely misplaced, since temporal othering cannot function as an alternative to the spatial delimitation of alterity but only as its complement. Departing from the empirical demonstration of this interdependence of the two aspects of othering in contemporary European politics, we have offered a conceptual argument for the impossibility of elevating temporal othering to the status of an alternative mode of self-constitution. Drawing on Kojève's understanding of historical action as 'nihilation in space as time', we have argued that all othering is inevitably spatiotemporal so that any attempt to dispense with the negation of spatially delimited alterity requires dispensing with othering *tout court*, which is only thinkable in the context of the end of history. While Kojève's own reading of post-historical existence in terms of the snobbish reproduction by a reconciled humanity of rituals that no longer have any meaning is uninspiring both intellectually and politically, it is certainly not the only possible construction of social praxis after the cessation of negating action.

In contrast to Kojève, Agamben understands post-historical praxis in terms of inoperative 'whatever being' that does not seek epochal self-transcendence and universal recognition but rather assumes its own bankruptcy without setting a new historical task of overcoming it. With shame as its primary emotive tonality, Agamben's post-historical community does not take pride in its alleged overcoming of its past and negate the spatial incarnations of this past in the present but rather comes to terms with the irreducible disjunction *within* its identity, with its being its own Other.

Entirely devoid of the pathos of self-transcendence, Agamben's argument nonetheless provides grounds for a cautious optimism with respect to the future of the international society, constituted by subjects that consciously assume their own bankruptcy. In the conclusion of the above-cited fragment Agamben paraphrases Constantine Cavafy's statement to E. M. Forster: 'You English cannot understand us: we Greeks went bankrupt a long time ago.'[65] Whereas the radical

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[65] Agamben, *Means without End*, p. 142.

incompatibility between the subject that assumes its bankruptcy and the subject that continues to assert itself by the negation of the Other evidently precludes any possibility of mutual understanding, the universality of the experience of bankruptcy, which in Agamben's theory pervades global politics in its entirety, finally makes this understanding possible: 'now, at last, we can understand each other, because you too have gone bankrupt.'[66] While Agamben's theory of subjectivity has been criticised as grounded in the individual experience of entry into language and lacking an explicitly social dimension,[67] it is evident that the sheer universality of this experience forms a horizon of possibility for social praxis that escapes the dialectic of negating action, in which identity is necessarily constituted in relation to a spatiotemporal Other. Although at first glance the affirmation of this post-historical praxis appears to throw the baby out with the bathwater by abandoning the terrain of politics altogether in a utopian project of a world community without contestation and conflict,[68] such criticism is only valid as long as we continue to conceive of politics in terms of interaction between plural particularistic entities, constituted in spatiotemporal othering. While this political ontology makes possible various forms of politics, from Schmitt's decisionism to Laclau's populism, what it excludes by definition is a *world* politics, no longer grounded in the onto-chrono-topological logic of the constitution of political community. The advantage of Agamben's theory of subjectivity is precisely its capacity to conceive of community as no longer grounded in a positive identity that delimitates it from otherness but rather emerging on the basis of assuming alterity within oneself. Without sharing any substantive identitarian traits, the subjects that testify to their own bankruptcy nonetheless constitute a community by virtue of having undergone exactly the same experience of (de)subjectification.

While *what* has gone bankrupt certainly differs from state to state, the assumption of this bankruptcy in the present levels the difference between these positive forms by transforming them all into *ruins*. In Don Delillo's novel *Falling Man* that is set in New York in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001, a character makes a bitter joke when contemplating a trip abroad, someplace historic and exotic: 'Ruins. [...] We have got our own ruins. But I don't think I want to see them.'[69] While the post-9/11 foreign policy of the US and other Western powers was certainly characterised by an intensification of spatial and temporal othering in order to prop up the security of a wounded Self, Agamben's ethics point to the possibility of a different relation to oneself that does not shy away from facing one's own ruins. It is only by assuming the bankruptcy and ruination at the heart of our subjectivity that we may escape the deadlock of spatiotemporal othering.

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[66] Ibid.

[67] See Catherine Mills, *The Philosophy of Agamben* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), pp. 102–5; Mika Ojakangas, 'Conscience, the Remnant and the Witness: Genealogical Remarks on Giorgio Agamben's Ethics', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 36 (forthcoming).

[68] See Ernesto Laclau, 'Bare Life or Social Indeterminacy', in Matthew Calarco and Stephen DeCaroli (eds), *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 11–22. For a more detailed discussion of Agamben's politics that responds to this type of criticism see Prozorov, 'Generic Universalism in World Politics: Beyond International Anarchy and the World State', *International Theory*, 2 (2009).

[69] Don Delillo, *The Falling Man* (London: Picador, 2007), p. 116.