

BADIOU: DEMOCRACY, CITIZENSHIP  
DEMOCRACY INTO AND ONTO THE WEB  
(A PHILOSOPHICAL-HISTORICAL PROFILE)

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*‘Mythical thought without the formative logos is blind, and logical theorizing without living mythical thought is empty.’* Myths are the shadows (from the story of the Cave in the Plato’s Republic) that show their own shadow-like nature. In this way myths are able to work hand-in-hand with dialectic to educate philosophers.

Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture*.

‘For democracy remains to come; this is its essence in so far as it remains: not only will it remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the time of the promise, it will always remain, in each of its future times, to me: even when there is democracy, it never exist, it is never present, it remains the theme of a non-presentable concept.’

Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*.

ABSTRACT: Examining the fraught question of ‘democracy’ from the Greek myths and Prometheus’ gifts until the present day, the paper pursues two main avenues of inquiry. First, it gathers some suggestions presented in Alan Badiou’s small book *Democracy in What State?* Second, pausing at the Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, it examines Badiou’s hyper-translation of Plato’s *Republic*. In the final section, it explores some connections/disconnections within the disputed issue of democracy *into the net and onto the net*, considering at length Derrida’s concept of ‘democracy to come’. Although the paper pursues various angles and sources, it must be regarded as a unified whole, bringing into focus the theme of democracy yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

KEYWORDS: Badiou; Democracy; Citizenship; Democracy into and onto the web; Plato; Derrida

PREAMBLE (REGARDING *GODS AND HUMANITY*)

Recently, following Aristotle, Zena Itz<sup>1</sup> argued that man's nature is political, that man needs others to live and to live well (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7, 1097b8-11; 8.12, 1162a16-19; 9.9, 1169b16-22). In contrast, the gods are perfect, self-contained, and self-sufficient beings (*Eudemian Ethics* 7.10, 1242a19-28). Aristotle also admonishes that men ought to become like gods as much as possible, following the divine part of their nature: 'We must not follow those who advise us to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything'.<sup>2</sup> The good life for humans imitates the divine life by its self-sufficiency, its provision on its own of what is worthwhile, and its relative lack of dependence on external goods and matters of chance. Yet, Aristotle's call to imitate divine self-sufficiency seems to conflict with the political nature of people and their need for other people. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle addresses this potential conflict between humanity's political nature and divine nature in ways that are not obviously consistent one another.

In order to approach our age and confirm the exordium, I will remind the reader that in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* Martin Heidegger explicitly refers to mythology as the most appropriate way of engaging with a primal history, and an originary pre-theoretical science, also called "*prisca sapientia*".

Let us return to the Greek gods. The Prometheus' myth reported by Plato in the *Protagoras* tells us that Prometheus gave man the fire, the techniques and the number. In truth, Prometheus is an intermediary between the cosmic rhythm of the *physis* and the breach engendered by his gifts. His name means 'he who ponders on, he who thinks it over before acting', unlike his brother Epimetheus, who lacks just that quality. The eponymous protagonist of *Protagoras*, Protagoras attempts to inculcate the belief that all people have some basic expertise in questions of justice, and to do this he composes a fantastic story about the manner in which the titans furnished mankind with technical knowledge and fire, and the gods instilled into people a concern for justice. After receiving these gifts, however, men were unable to be happy, they remained at a primordial and savage state, living in chaos and anarchy. Prometheus' various gifts demonstrated their failure. Angered, Zeus intervened and sent Hermes with one last gift - politics-, in order to link men via friendship. In sum, the myth warns that a technical man is unable to unravel completely the difficulties of existence: the limits are always caused by his part. Moreover, in his apparent diversity Prometheus is a worthy brother of Epimetheus, and ... his double. To the Epimetheus' fault follows his remedy, to the Prometheus' theft of fire other fraud/fault. Only by means of omnipotent/quasi-omnipotent Zeus' intervention does

humanity received the remedy to an unjust *polemos* (polis) and existing outside physis. In this way the gold age closes.

#### WHAT DOES IT MEAN DEMOCRACY, TODAY?

What type of democracy, what kind of polis? In the introductory note of a recent book which encompasses contributions by a variety of intellectuals and thinkers on the concept of democracy, Giorgio Agamben started writing that in most cases the word *democracy* refers, on the one hand, to the political and juridical field, on the other, to the technique of government, ‘these two areas of conceptuality (the juridico-political and the economic-managerial) have overlapped with one another since the birth of politics, political thought, and democracy in the Greek polis or city-state, which makes it hard to tease them apart’.<sup>3</sup> In the *Republic* - I will return at length in this work - Plato identifies four types of government: timocracy (military society organized around imperialism); a sort of oligarchy (elite government by minority); tyranny/fascism (the government of One); and democracy (the government of the People’s Assembly). Selecting a variation of this latter form of government, Aristotle in *The Constitution of Athens* characterizes the ‘demagogy’ of Pericles this way: ‘*demotikoteran synebe genesthai ten politeian*’. A Standard English translation of this is: ‘the constitution became still more democratic’.<sup>4</sup> In the modern period, according to M. Foucault, J. J. Rousseau in *Social Contract* (1762) emphasized the dichotomy between the legislative power of the body of citizens (*sovereignty*) and the executive power (*government*), and attempted to reconcile juridical and constitutional terms, such as *contract*, *general will*, and *sovereignty with the art of government*. He then divided *sovereignty* from *government*. But, for the umpteenth time one cannot help see the overwhelming preponderance of the government and economy over anything one might call popular sovereignty. In *The Democratic Emblem*, which share space in the same volume Alain Badiou discusses democracy as an untouchable emblem in a symbolic system; he asks how a society that claims to be democratic can be guilty of economic and social horror?. Shortly after, he adds: ‘The only way to make truth out of the world we’re living in is to dispel the aura of the word democracy and assume the burden of not being a democrat and so being heartily disapproved of by “everyone” (tout le monde)’.<sup>5</sup> The emblem of democracy paradoxically seems to have denied the same democracy, ‘if the world of the democrats is not the world of everyone, if tout le monde isn’t really the whole world after all, then democracy, the emblem and custodian of the walls behind which the democrats seek their petty pleasures, is just a word for conservative oligarchy whose main (and often bellicose) business is to guard its own territory, as animals do, under the usurped name *world*’.<sup>6</sup> In the past, democracy did not save the Greek polis. The *République Française* isolated itself with an invocation of republican values. The Soviet Union could not save itself in the twentieth century. The very beginning of this contradiction may be traced even as

far as to Plato and Aristotle. Turning to Plato, Badiou explains such failures with the following assessment:

Within a horizon in which everything is equivalent to everything else, no such thing as a world is discernible . . . this is what Plato has in mind when he says that democracy is a form of government ‘diverting, anarchic and bizarre, which dispenses an equality of sorts indiscriminately among the equal and unequal.’<sup>7</sup>

It is certain that Plato criticized the false democracy of his time.

#### EQUALITY, THE SOPHIST INCLUDED. *AMANTHA*

To go back to Plato, then? And, how? What can the great Athenian tell us or give us, today? On the back cover blurb of the book *Plato’s Republic- A dialogue in 16 chapters* of A. Badiou, signed by Slavoj Žižek we read: Badiou’s translation of Plato follows the ancient habit of pre-copyright times: it freely changes the original to make it fit contemporary conditions. So instead of sophists, we get corrupted journalists; instead of soul, we get the subject; and instead of Plato’s critique of democracy, we get . . . well, a critique of today’s democracy. The result is a resounding triumph: Plato comes fully alive as our contemporary, as someone who directly addresses our issues. This, not aseptic scholarly work, is the mark of true fidelity to our past’. More, Plato’s *Republic* is most of all an act of *thinking*, not simply the analysis or critique of the existing Athenian democracy of the past or the utopian program for improving it. In Badiou’s view it is *thinking* of the construction of idea/ideas. In the “hyper-translation” literary remix of Plato’s *Republic*, Alain Badiou invites the reader into the Plato’s classic polymorphic dialogue on politics and justice, adjusted to the tweenty-first century in which Socrates and his interlocutors adopt a vernacular speak, a lively street talk both accessible and familiar. With his enjoyable Introduction: *Badiou’s Sublime Translation of the Republic*, Kenneth Reinhard writes: ‘The constant proponent of universalism, always pushing Socrates to extend his arguments to ‘all people without exception’, is Amantha, Badiou’s feminization of the character Adeimantus’<sup>8</sup>, certainly the most conspicuous modification of Plato’s text. Amantha is an exceptionally vivid, fascinating creation, one of the true delights of Badiou’s text, a character for whom Socrates (as well as Badiou) clearly has great love. To a certain extent feminization is, for Badiou, a way of introducing what Hegel calls ‘the eternal irony of community’,<sup>9</sup> and the equality with men (all people without exception). Attacking a few hint of sexism, Amantha frequently challenges Socrates, or other non-egalitarian views, questions his reasoning when she thinks Socratic arguments appear unsound or inconsistent. She is always quick to leap on Socrates every now and then ‘she suspects him of glossing over intellectual difficulties with evasive statements, or when her brother Glaucon recourses to vague sociological, psychological, or anthropological categories’.<sup>10</sup> But, ‘despite the

brilliance of Amantha's personality, the heat of her temper and the quickness of her thinking, Badiou does not use her merely to spice up the dialogue; nor does she represent her just as feminine "difference".<sup>11</sup> Amantha 'represents not so much the particular qualities of her gender as the *universality* of the *generic*;<sup>12</sup> as for her, it is important that '*Socrates remains true to the radical universalism and egalitarianism*' (my italics), her femininity is the mark of a refusal to mark differences';<sup>13</sup> she goes as far as to oppose whatever phallogocentric privileging. In this way, Badiou manages to traverse the twentieth century's aversion to Plato as a totalitarian philosopher, and to present - via Amantha - a new and original way to understand Plato's conception of truth, an ideal form of government, and a manner of participating in politics.

Within Badiou's *Plato's Republic*, there are two crucial issues: *Equality* and *paideia*. Regarding equality, one needs to remember that in *Conditions* Badiou does not consider the notion of equality as a political designation, 'Equality' as such is not to be taken as a political name. Politics is given in always singular statements in situation... it consists in a desire for equality. But "equality" can be a philosophical name *for* the compossibilization of emancipatory politics, ... equality neither designates nor presumes the advent of a totality ... because it has been possible ever since Cantor to think equality in the element of the infinite.<sup>14</sup> Cantor established the importance of one-to-one correspondence between sets, and defined infinite and well ordered sets. Cantor's theorem implies a pluralized infinite. In the social and political context the concept of equality can and 'must be secured in the absence of any economic connotations (equality of objective conditions, of status and of opportunity).'<sup>15</sup> Regarding  $\pi \alpha \iota \delta \epsilon \iota \alpha$  one must attend to Amantha's words uttered at the beginning of the Chapter Four in *The Republic*. Badiou translates his question 'But how can the problem of political leadership not be connected to the ideas of the people who embody it, to what they know, to what they don't know, to what they love or loathe, and therefore to their childhood and education?'<sup>16</sup> *The Republic*, judged a dialogue about the state, is indeed a pedagogical and revolutionary book. A manifesto of a new, philosophical  $\pi \alpha \iota \delta \epsilon \iota \alpha$ , a sort of technique that aims to understand diversity and ambiguity, and a sense of proportion; furthermore, it advocates the concept that proper education is one of truths.

#### PAIDEIA. REDUCING THE SOPHIST TO SILENCE. THE CAVE.

In Book 7 of Badiou's translation of the *Republic* (502c-521c) in which we are placed in an imaginary movie-theater (the cave in Plato-text) we discover Socrates, Glaucon (Plato's brother), Socrates' interlocutors, and Amantha (Plato's sister) in dialogue. Socrates instructs:

Imagine an enormous movie theater. Down front, the screen, which goes right up to the ceiling (but it's so high that everything up there gets lost in the dark) blocks anything other than itself from being seen. It's a full house. For as long as they've been around, the audience members have been chained to their seats, with their eyes staring at the screen and their heads held in place by rigid headphones covering their ears. Behind these tens of thousands of spectators shackled to their seats there's an immense wooden walkway, at head level, running parallel to the whole length of the screen. Still further back are enormous projectors flooding the screen with an almost unbearable white light.

-What a strange place! *said Glaucon.*

-Hardly any more than our Earth. . . All sort of robots, dolls, cardboard cut-outs, puppets, operated and manipulated by invisible puppeteers or guided by remote-control, move along the walkway. Animals, stretcher-bearers, scythe-bearers, cars, storks, ordinary people, armed soldiers, gangs of youths from the *banlieues*, turtle doves, cultural coordinators, naked women, and so forth go back and forth continuously in this way. Some of them shout, other talk, others play the cornet or the concertina, while other just hurry silent along. On the screen can be seen the shadows of the chaotic parade thrown by the projectors. And through their headphones the immobilized crowd can hear sounds and words.

- My God! *Amantha burst out.* That's one weird show and an even weirder audience!

- They're just like us. Can they see anything of themselves, of the people sitting next to them, of the movie theater, and of the bizarre scenes by the flood of lights? Can they hear anything other than what their headsets deliver to them?

- Not a thing, for sure, *exclaimed Glaucon,* if their heads have always been prevented from looking anywhere but the screen and their ears have been blocked by the headphones. . . <sup>17</sup>

The residents in the cave are forced to a very ghostly existence. Only an escaped prisoner, arrived at the last stage of *παίδεια*, can be conscious of these conditions. To be sure, his second descent to the cave is neither an agreeable diversion nor an amusement; it is the achievement of his ex-istence of being-free. As liberator of fellow men chained to their seats, he is exposed to risk; he may be refused and attacked; he may even die for his ideas. Returning, he aims to release his fellow citizens. He is the man who, within the natural world, makes the choice of searching for true human existence. He is the philosopher.

Let us listen to Glaucon again:

But what would happen if, once their chains were broken and their delusions cured, their situation changed completely? Careful now! Our fable is about to

take quite a different turn. Imagine that they unchain one member of the audience suddenly force him to stand up, turn his head right and left, walk around and look at the light streaming out of the projectors. Naturally he'll suffer from all these actions that he's not used to. Dazzled by the flood of light, he won't be able to see any of the things whose shadows he was calmly gazing at before this forced conversion. Suppose they tell him that his former only allowed him to see what was tantamount to idle chatter in the world of illusion, and that it's only now that he's close to things as they really are, that he can face things as they really are, so that his vision is finally likely correct. Wouldn't he be stunned and ill at ease? It would be even worse if they showed him the parade of robots, dolls, puppets, and marionettes on the walkway and they grile him with lots of questions to try and get him to say what they were. Because the shadows from before would most certainly still be truer for him than anything they showed him.

Socrates responds:

No doubt we should go on to the end of the fable before coming to any conclusion as to what he real is. Let's suppose our guinea pig is force to stare at the projectors. His eyes hurt horribly, he wants to run away, he wants to go back to what he can endure seeing, those shadows whose being he considers a lot more real than that of the objects they're showing him. But all of a sudden a bunch of tough guys in our pay grab him and drag him roughly through the aisles of the movie theater. They make him go through a little side door that was hidden up till then. They throw him into a filthy tunnel through which you emerge into the open air, onto a sunlit mountainside in spring. Dazzle by light, he covers his eyes with a trembling hand; our agents push him up the steep slope, for a long time, higher and higher! Still higher! They finally get to the top, in full sun, and there release him, run back down the mountain and disappear. So there he is, all alone, with this boundless landscape stretching out all around him. All that light plays havoc with his mind. And oh, how he suffers from having been dragged, pushed around, and left out in the open like that! How he hats our mercenaries! Gradually, though, he attempts to look over toward the mountaintops and the valleys, at the whole dazzling world. At first he's blinded by the glare of everything and can see nothing of all the things about which we routinely say: "This exists, this is really here." ...He nevertheless tries to get used to the light.<sup>18</sup>

And further along in the discussion :

- What if, *Glaucon, fearing a quarrel, cut in*, we imagined that our escaped prisoner really did go back down into the cave?

- He'd have to, *said Socrates solemnly*. At any rate, if he returns to his old seat, this once it will be the darkness that suddenly blinds him after the bright light of the sun. And if, before his eyes get used to the dark again, he starts competing with his old fellow-prisoners who've never left their seats to guess what's going to be projected next onto the screen, it's a safe bet he'll be the laughing stock of the row. They'll all whisper that he went out into the light and climbed so high only to return nearsighted and stupid. The immediate consequence will be that no one will have the slightest desire to do the same. And if, obsessed with the desire to share the Idea of the sun, the visible Idea of the true, with them, he attempts to realise them and lead them out so that, like him, they may know what a new day is like, I think they'd seize him and kill him.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the cave dwellers begin to react to one another as a result of the former prisoner's intervention. Despite their chains, they are now aware of and able to converse with each other.

Within the bounds of mythological/metaphorical narrative, the cave image generally has been taken to represent the city, in which human beings are enchained by shadows, phantasms, customs, until the escaped prisoner will release them and lead them out. And we must not forget the role of education: Greek *παιδεία* is present alongside the platonic dialogue. Plato, as well as Badiou, is at war with sophistry; he is against opinion in favor of right thinking, of dialectics. He is continually engaged as the teacher-philosopher. Towards the end of the eleventh chapter of the book, Amantha states that education is not a matter of imposing, but rather of orienting; that is, a process subject to a technique of conversion. In the wake of the utopian program of communistic emancipation, Amantha concludes:

We've got to create the condition- since we know that anyone's thought can be the equal of anyone else's - whereby the great masses of people will turn to that knowledge we call essential, the knowledge oriented by the vision of the True. Everyone, whether he likes it or not, must come out of the cave! Everyone must take part in the anabasis to the sunny mountain top! And if only an aristocratic minority manages to reach the top and revels in the idea of the true up there, we won't allow what has nearly always been allowed them.<sup>20</sup>

Thinking in and onto the web, I imagine that Amantha would say the people may stay at home and at the same time in a spectral cave. And yet, anyone's thought may be the equal of anyone else's.

#### DEMOCRACY INTO THE NET AND ONTO THE NET.

(Or living in the age of digital technologies: from the specter of community to the community of the specter).



Apparently the opening of cyberspace has made obsolete transcendence. It has made also obsolete the metaphysics, for the reason that the messages of cyberspace interact from end to end along a uni-verse without any territoriality, exceed hierarchies, continually fold and refold, and modify the metamorphic tissue of future intelligent cities. Cyberspace is like an agorà, a virtual gathering place that works as a site of exploration into topics and problems and of plural debates for collective valuations and decisions. It is a place in which humanity might realize a direct world-wide democracy, in which one can speak and be heard, as well as, inform and communicate. Engaging with cyberspace begets a post-mediatic device which produces a transparent market of ideas, of proposals, of competences; a place for the community of understanding which expresses great variation, difference and free forms. But, who is entitled to control this virtual world (virtual worlds)? No one. To begin with, from the point of governance the virtual world cannot but be organized in/as a totally anarchical and autonomous way. Digital interactive multimedia clearly reveals logo-centrism's end; that is, the issue of the deconstructing the supremacy of the logos via traditional, oral or written media.

In what way the concepts of democracy, citizenship and politics together are transformed by contemporary 'tele-technologies' (including television, telephones, and other tele-communication systems implying transmission across a spatial distance)? About a decade ago, in reference to the new technologies of communication J. Derrida argued that 'With the contemporary tele-technologies, the geo-political boundaries and territorial markers are subject to displacement and permanent dislocation. Whether demands are made to establish or to protect the national borders and state sovereignty, and whether claims are advanced for the citizenship and the democratic rights, these demands all together find a measure of their historical, legal, and discursive formation inscribed into the geo-political markers and topographical-spatial boundaries. In short, what the accelerated development of tele-technologies, of cyberspace, of new topology and of 'the virtual' is producing, Derrida argued, is a *deconstruction* at work of the traditional, dominant concepts of state and citizenship. In a world ruled by the mono-perspectivism of global market economics, when and wherever a television is switched on, when and wherever a phone-call is made, when and wherever an Internet connection is established, the question of critical culture, of democracy, of political, and of de-territorialization erupts.'<sup>21</sup> Here, Derrida seems more interested in the issue of the de-territorialization, but, enlarging his view to include the Internet, he puts forward the idea that the Internet creates 'ghostly duplications' in transmitting and declaring something present; that instead is a spectral imagine of something occurring in a different place. At the end Derrida

concluded that the effects produced by hyper-tele-technologies offer 'at once a threat and a chance,' demanding both critique and deconstruction, they also take into account a 'partage', a division, including 'dissociations, singularities, diffractions.' In other words, networks create what is 'common', but commonalities are also constitutively inscribed by dissociation, de-liaison, distance, and detachment. Or better, there is no thought of association without the constitutively inscribed possibility of dissociation, no liaison without de-liaison, no proximity without distance, no attachment without detachment, and it is precisely this (supplemental) 'logic' for Derrida that is effaced in appeals to 'community.'<sup>22</sup>

Could the Internet solve the 'problems' of democracy? Does it hinder democracy, challenging the traditional processes of public and political reflection? And, finally, there is a path via the Internet that leads in the direction of direct-digital democracy? At first glance the Internet seems innately democratic and revolutionary. Whatever the medium, in this case *techné*, theoretical democratic, Prometheus teaches, does not always work democratically in practice. The Internet's challenge to traditional media certainly gives voice to people who are voiceless. Yet, in order to answer accurately such questions, we need at least to insure that processes of public reflection, democratically organized, can take place in both official and unofficial public spheres, maximizing the opportunities for citizens to listen and learn, to speak and to be heard. Any genuine public debate will be one into which each participant enters already, unavoidably guided by assumptions about what it means to be a human being. Internet use increases political knowledge only among citizens already interested in politics; each participant, speaking in their respective language of evaluation, enters into a hermeneutic circle, and would be enabled to move *dialectically* in Platonic sense, back and forth, between and amongst the different conceptions of what is to be human.

In a book review of Matthew Hindman's *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, Jan A. G. M van Dijk remarks on Hindman's critique of the Internet "those who advocate the open, accessible and peer-to-peer nature of the Internet' neglect 'the deeper linking structure of the Internet that works according to a power law: a few sites attract the vast majority of traffic while most sites draw almost no traffic.'<sup>23</sup> Here, Van Dijk seems to echo the old, well known Marcusean valuation of *technology* as a mode of production, as the totality of instruments, devices and contrivances which characterize the machine age' and 'a mode of organization and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behavior patterns, an instrument for control and domination.'

Many questions can be raised. The most important seems the key problem of language and communication. On a practical plane new telematic- informatic communication does not run in a uniform and dialogical way everywhere, in every context. Some researchers have shown that social and hierarchic barriers strengthen; the existent and the present living standards persist; the physical and cultural differences of users remain. In dialogue face to face those of higher status are inclined to speak more, to rule the scene. It remains the diversity among the interlocutors, their specific diversity and individuality which depends on social, psychological, physical, cultural, elements.

Today, political discourse tends to increase the distance between citizenship and representation; elite classes remain even with the model of participative democracy, even with the evolution of platforms. Then, we ask: how many real persons may be involved in making digital democratic decisions? To be sure there is a web-elite which has access to connections and the ability to dictate themes. The participate-democracy in the age of Internet makes sense only if the network aids all humans. Is the web an instrument that raises or lowers the threshold of admittance to the debate? May horizontally connected citizens avoid the limits, the distortions of decisional processes of traditional democracy? The issue of representation is always around the corner. When a “numerical majority” ‘votes out democracy and eliminates the polity’s dialogic space, we cannot legitimately say that it is acting democratically... It is a mistake to call such a procedure democratic when its aim is anti-democratic, done in the name of some political order other than democracy.’<sup>24</sup> More exactly, we can maintain that ‘the procedure is *internal* to democracy only if it is coupled with unlimited questioning and the condition the latter implies: the commitment to maintain a space for rejoinders. When it is not accompanied by this commitment, such a procedure is non-democratic and *external* to democracy.’<sup>25</sup>

I largely agree with Michael Margolis and David Resnick in particular as they hold that political action mediated by Internet runs the risk to fall into new and old traps; that online politics do nothing but mirror traditional patterns.<sup>26</sup>

By way of conclusion, I ask: Are we before the most recent gift of Prometheus or Hermes? Are we faced with a sort of *pharmakon*, of poison and remedy? Is the nexus writing/*pharmakon*, as Derrida suggests, profitable for thinking adequately the problems of our age? Are we moving from the specter of community to the community of the specters? Is there the sophist in the web? Father Plato would say yes. Indeed, contemporary philosophers sometimes resemble sophists! To be sure we are spectators/actors in a cultural and social evolution, and to be sure we need a critical *paideia*, adequate appropriation of media. While a democracy *into and onto* the Web is very

difficult to enact, let us remember that anyhow, as Plato wrote, as Jacques Derrida has shown and taught, democracy remains to come, democracy is like a devise signed by the structure of the promise. *For democracy remains to come; this is its essence in so far as it remains: not only will it remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the time of the promise, it will always remain, in each of its future times, to me: even when there is democracy, it never exist, it is never present, it remains the theme of a non-presentable concept.*' Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*.<sup>27</sup>

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