

## **Adventures in Contemporary Culture**

### **Movement 4 "Song About Nothing in General"**

Ryan Tanaka

I contend that the proselytization of literature as discourse is not a mere fantasy, but a truth. Even the heuristic investigation of Marx's manifesto reveals a commonality that transcends local boundaries, for proletariat over every national border, though ensconced in cultural milieu--in multitudinous epistemes--rose to the podium and preached without hesitation their hermeneutic variations on that common literary wellspring.

Your "ontological account of literature" is based on a theoretical paradigm that is bankrupt in terms of its potential for political insight. What must we believe about the theory-praxis relation before we can follow Spanos in reading the history of Western imperialism through the lense of Heidegger's ontological difference?

We must believe that political history unfolds as a series of discrete "ontic structures" that owe their existence to the "forgetting" of an original indebtedness to some unfathomable power of Being, whatever that may be.

The only source of critical insight vis-a-vis such broad categories as "liberal humanism" is the Heidegger-patented flight into obscurity, the forfeiting of all empirical and theoretical analysis (easily dismissed as "humanist" and relegated to the wastebins of "ontotheology") in deference to the ontological "dispensation" of Being (Habermas's phrase).

The implicit assumption, of course, is that ALL political programs are equally guilty of the humanist sin and are therefore equally deserving of smoke-and-mirrors "de-structuration."

Spanos sees Heidegger's de-structive hermeneutics as the only hope for political salvation, and as a consequence he flattens out the socio-political (ontic)...

(chorus)...side of the ontological difference under the assumption that "structure" is an intrinsically bad thing, or, more to the point, that "structure" can only be understood in the kind of dualistic model that underwrites Heideggerian "critique."

The question for Spanos would be, what kind of politics suggests itself after we have uncritically assumed this Heideggerian framework? There's nothing to be said here--this should make us skeptical.