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Umberto Eco's Writing Labyrinth: From the Code's Theory to the Interpretation Process

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Abstract:

The present text will concentrate on some of Eco's theoretical books on the semiotic method. The primary focus shall be on the narration theory, semiotics "proper" (at least, according to Peirce), and the structural approach to semiotics. The reason for stating the above is the interdisciplinarity in developing the semiotic method (as designated by Eco, among other related authors) to demonstrate its importance in the present century. Not only is one academic approach relevant for exploring scientific matters of the sort, but more of them (such as the dichotomies between ontology and epistemology, "artistic" vs "realistic" occurrences, as well as the method of writing itself as a "special technique"). As initially designated by Peirce, the "unlimited" semiosis process is meant to unite or see as a totality of several semiotic approaches closely related to Eco's work, besides, naturally, the permanent and uninterruptible "transformation" and moveability of signs. The goal is twofold: methodological and scientific.

Keywords: semiotics; interpretation; codes; Peirce; semiosis

1. Introduction: Umberto Eco's semiotics itself

Eco's contribution to semiotics demonstrates the omnipresence of the mentioned method for more than one reason. As we shall attempt to explain, some reasons represent revolutionary achievements, whereas others represent an integral part of existing theoretical paradigms (within the semiotic method, naturally). I shall generally divide them into two main totalities (entities): those that regard the development of the field itself (i.e., facts contributing to the establishment of the "semiotic process", or otherwise named: matters of "semiotics proper"), on the one hand, others, that regard methodological matters (i.e., "tools" that enhanced reaching determined theoretical paradigms), on the other. The last entity attempts to show how to create and exemplify diverse theoretical approaches in various life spheres. Other existing theories of semiotics, other than the ones mentioned above (authored by other scholars), however, have represented an additional component in Eco's theoretical understanding of the mentioned method, which, summed up in one word, have endeavoured to create what one may call "theoretical semiotics" today. It should be remarked, however, that the present text does not aim for an overview of semiotics' historical development. Instead, it aims to

provide an in-depth overview and analysis of Eco's contribution to it and its comparison with other "masters" of semiotics who have contributed to the discovery of similar innovative theoretical paradigms. Let me now intentionally pose matters the other way around.

What I explicitly mean is the following: first, not only is an artistic way of writing complex, multifaceted and "over-coded", but there are methods and ways to render a work artistic. One such method is the "narration theory" (both explicable through the structural or logical paradigms of semiotics, as I hope to be able to show), which is widely used and applied in Eco's theory. Though not the only one, it will be one of the objects of the present discussion.

Second, such methods are not and cannot be created "ad hoc"; instead, the procedures to which each one pertains hold their semiotic relevance. Moreover, the procedures I refer to explicitly regard Eco's codes theory above all other issues. Such procedures shall also be elaborated on in the present text for the above reasons.

Hence, one cannot see Eco's contribution to the semiotic field one-dimensionally (or taken only from one analysis aspect). However, one also has to be familiar with a spectrum of disciplines (mainly concerning "social reality", "objectified realities", or, after all, a "subjective" sort of "semiotic reality"), which represent an argument for inter and trans-disciplinary scientifically discussable matters.

It should, however, be undeniably true that authors like Eco (similarly to the works of other "masters" of semiotics) cannot be fully covered in a single contribution or a single monograph. The reason for this assertion is simple: Eco's contribution relates to a wide range of social, cultural and philosophical phenomena, out of which matters must be singled out for potential research.

For the mentioned reasons, therefore, this paper shall concentrate on some of his capital works, namely, "Theory of Semiotics" [see: (Eco 1975; 1976)], "Six Walks in the Narrative Woods" [see: (Eco 1994a; 1994b)], "The Role of the Reader..." [see: (Eco 1979; 1984)], and the "Open Work" [see: (Eco 1989; 1962)]. Naturally, the books in question shall be elaborated on to the extent this paper can allow. A logical question would follow: why are these Eco's works elaborated here, not others? The following lines of this text shall attempt to answer the question.

Out of the matters explained above, one must emphasise here at least two significant matters which explicitly regard semiotics: the first issue is the narrative process and the text as semiotic entities (as seen in Eco's understanding), and the second one is "Eco's theory"[1]. Alternatively, one determines here which components are utilised to create a semiotic theory, as understandable, as designated by Eco's provisions. My choice, naturally, is intentional: it aims to disclose the "enigma" that semiotics in Eco's comprehension holds [like I have also mentioned elsewhere; see: (Hoxha 2022)]. Explicitly speaking, disclosing metaphoricity, implicitness instead of explicitness, and interpreting in the realm of meaning is, in other words, what Eco mainly discusses, but semiotics generally discusses. Such an "enigma" [as, after all, described in detail in Eco's "Absent Structure", see: (Eco 1968)] will be an object of our discussion, both attempting to exemplify Eco's theoretical and narrative works. The aim is, therefore, twofold: theoretical in terms of presenting essential postulates in semiotics and practical in exemplifying them regarding Eco's and other authors' artistic productivities.

2. The communication process as a theoretical challenge

2.1. The "code" notion in Eco's understanding

I will initially refer to two critical semiotic matters: the communication and signification process [as Tarasti sorts them, see: (Tarasti 2015)][2]. Let me attempt to clarify the reason(s) for the importance of the mentioned notions. The reason, in turn, is simple: to explicate Eco's "labyrinth" of writing, or his semiotic "intrusion" in almost all life spheres and the arts field generally, one must clarify which elements construct a semiotic process. After all, as I hope to be able to show, sign definitions in Eco are given by way of encoding and decoding processes [see: (Eco 1976; 1975)]. I find this matter essential and mutually inclusive of the communication processes. Matters that precisely concern semiotics, however, should be explained subsequently.

Otherwise, communication is as old as human existence. One can trace it to ancient times and the prime developments in the philosophy of science. Explicitly speaking, however, its actual scientific nomenclature obtained its full status in modernity and post-modernity [at least, in its general terms, see (Deely 2001)], disregarding the fact, as mentioned, that the "concept" itself, or the theoretical assumption of a "human inter-activeness", has long time ago existed. It relates somewhat to *natural* phenomena compared to *cultural* ones. Let us now return to the "communication process" and its relevance to the semiotic method.

Notwithstanding the above facts, not only did communication cover various disciplines that later grew into new (or, later re-shaped) scientific discussable matters, but it also covered matters exclusively characteristic of human nature in terms of our psycho-physical development (such as in the case of "perception", "cognition", and "sensation", as we hope to elaborate further on). These and other facts (still to be mentioned in this text) make this component necessary for explicating Eco's theoretical contribution to semiotics.

Otherwise, we all communicate to survive, or at least render the meaningfulness of our reciprocal inter-activeness to understand our multifaceted functionality properly. Not only is this philosophically and psychologically relevant, but it is also biologically significant: even our nervous system interacts uninterruptedly, commonly in the shape of transmission of signals, "messages", to make us biologically functional subjects. In this sense of the word, this inner and outer activity of our being(s), either in the straightforward or metaphorical sense, marks a process in a permanent movement. It asserts a thesis of the "signs way" [see: (Deely 2009)] on the one hand and the definition of our "umwelt" and "inner world" (or: *Innenwelt*) [see: (Deely 2001)]on the other, aimed to enhance, or better expressed, finally produce a *Lebenswelt*[3]. It means, in other words, it defines our biological status as well. It also marks the signs of a permanent movement for the sake of the process of semiosis [among other related matters, see (Peirce 1960)].

Let us now attempt to show how such signs behave in determined circumstances: understandably, from a semiotics viewpoint. Two key issues can at least be concluded from the above assertions: the first regards a relation between our organic functionality (independently functioning, i.e., excluding our consciousness or intentional functioning), and the next one regards a signification process

deriving from our behaviour and conceptualising things and phenomena (therefore, being of a philosophical and logical origin). In my view, the first one regards definitional matters, whereas the second one regards relational and methodological matters, as I hope to be able to show. Moreover, suppose one wishes to further "semioticize" the mentioned terms. In that case, it supposedly belongs to the semiotic study, as we shall see, precisely because of the interpretative capacities of semiotics in the first place, but of the human reasoning and imaginative power in the second.

To begin, let us refer to the "code". Eco's definition(s) of the "code" notion, otherwise, refers precisely to the above assertion, among other issues defined throughout his theoretical discussions. Explicitly speaking, one would rightly ask: why should one choose the "code" when explaining Eco's semiotics? The reasons are complex and entail a wide range of scientific discussions.

First, the "code" notion is as interdisciplinary as semiotics is today. Not only does it concern rigorous sciences, as it has been initially conceived, [see for instance (Shannon and Weaver 1948)], but it concerns humanities: almost each life sphere. Moreover, the theses in question discuss code's mutual exclusivity or inclusivity with semiotics. What I mean is, how many times does the message have to be encoded to get a metaphoric relevance? How inclusive is it in communication science, and what is it? Which scientific principle renders it semiotic?

The answers to the posed questions are found in the code's functions [see: (Eco 1975; 1976)]. If the four functions (as described by Eco) combine or unite, we conclude that a semiotic process is at hand. It is so because of the following: not only have "classical" communication processes been overcome in Eco's theory, but they have also been "revisited" for a semiotic process. It means a "semantic" (explicitly speaking: "meaning") feature has been added, including a semiotic process. There are two arguments to prove the above: the second code function in Eco argues the "meaning" features' addition, in the first place and the second, there is physical and semiotic information distinguishability in Eco's understanding [see: (Eco 1968:57; 1975)]. It means information can be conceived of in many of its underprints or comprehensions.

Semiotic information must be singled out from other "types" of information, which may belong to the communication sciences or other related scientific fields. Either seen as "signals", "information" still unprocessed, or already "transformed" into messages, they contain the component of the sign. In other words, signs get complex if encoded or better expressed if semiotically processed. For this reason (and other reasons to follow), these "types of information" must be singled out. Understandably, it is the *semiotic information* that we are interested in.

Explicitly speaking, therefore, "semiotic" information is the information ready to be processed for further procedures that render it semiotic in the sense of inducing or deducing meaning. In other words, the aim is to render, generate, induce (depending on the approach) or deduce meaning. If one includes the mentioned terms, then not only does the information get encoded through determined procedures (as is known through "classical" models of communication), but it also contains a semiotic relevance. In other words, semiotics "begins" in terms of the relatedness of signs among each other, their ability to combine, and finally, their ability to signify.

If one conceives the scientific entities in the mentioned fashion, one will conclude, as Eco himself would frequently state, that the "information", in the semiotic sense of the word, is in the permanent movement [see: (Eco 1968; 1976), my paraphrasing] for the sake of transforming itself into a brand-new shape. If such an assertion holds its scientific validity, then one should be aware of the code's theory's importance in the semiotic sense of the word. We ask: why do we emphasise the "movement" itself? The answer is because later (in terms of a "semiotic process"), such mentioned "information" in movement holds its possibility to "transform" or "re-shape" itself employing "interpretation" when it becomes a message, as we shall attempt to show. One should finally not doubt that such "interpretation", besides fundamental sign "functions", is a part of Eco's comprehension of the semiotic method, in the first place, and in the second, it is an introduction to the "complex semiotic function" as I have named it elsewhere [see: (Bujar Hoxha, O'Halloran, and Passarini 2022).

The permanent movement of signs[4] and their reciprocal relatedness, otherwise, as recently launched semiotic theories claim [see, for instance:(Deely 2009; 2001)], renders the information a message or makes it subdue to a semiotic process, by which it holds a semiotic relevance either by way of actualising it [such as, in: (Greimas 1973)] or by way of further encoding processes. It thus marks a significant shift in conceptualising the communication process: an essential component is being added, the one of meaning.

When meaning becomes a part of the scientific discussion, one should conclude that not only one shape of the semiotic information (as defined by Eco) is what we are interested in. It means, in other words, that the information renders itself a message if adequately encoded. It is precisely at this point that phenomena are rendered semiotic. After all, as Eco himself says, such a viewpoint is phenomenological [see: (Eco 1962; 1989)]. We ask: why is that so? Because of, understandably, more than one reason.

First, "classical semiotics" (by which we intend structural and post-structural semiotics) [see: (Tarasti 2000)] needed a sort of "conflictual situation" in order to render issues "semiotic". This, in its broadest understanding, asserts the structural method in semiotics. In such a case, one has to see, analyse, or elaborate on an encoded message. Second, Eco's codes' functions' definitions entail multiple possibilities for the meaning's choice; therefore, they can "overcome" the dual or dyadic view of semiotic phenomena (that early structuralism used to foresee). Not only can this be done in rigorous sciences (as explained in Eco), but it can also be in arts and humanities. Eco's merit, in my opinion, lies precisely in the following issue: he interconnects both mentioned fields through the codes' functions. The aim is to render an interpretative sort of semiotics. In the sense as explained above, by "interpretation", here we mean more than one obtained "meaning (s)" or "re-shaping" it after all. The choice, finally, which "meaning" shall be determined as final, belongs to the semiotician: its interpretability is endless, as we hope to explain further in the text.

As should be expected, matters get more complex at this point. Once interpretation is mentioned or applied, one should be aware of its complexity: it does not regard only structural semiotics but Peirce's

conceptualisation of the signs and their signifying functions. Additionally, it also regards finalising meanings in the "metaphoric" sense of the word: rendering signs moveable and "transformable" [see: (Greimas 1973)].

I believe that Eco has combined several scientific approaches to make life and artistic phenomena visible, accountable, and analysable by semiotics. Thus, semiotics' borderlines become limitless. In other words, they regard both "real life" and "cultural" phenomena. It is to understand, finally, that interpretation as a philosophic phenomenon entails Eco's known "world of possibilities", or, as he precisely says, "possible worlds" [see: (Eco 1962; 1979; 1989; 1984)], which argues Eco's legacy to Peirce.

Before presenting more scientific data in the mentioned context, let me exemplify this through a specific process that emerged from artistic expressivity. The goal is to connect several semiotic approaches according to Eco and demonstrate their applicability.

3. The narration process as Eco's theoretical challenge

3.1. Does it belong to the structural method, or is it interpretational semiotics?

Narration as a method (in arts, in general, or semiotics itself) means telling or better-expressed retelling. One can use this term of Latin origin in many instances in science, such as medicine, the arts, everyday speech, psychology, etc. As I have emphasised elsewhere [see: Hoxha 2018)], it may be utilised by a patient who tells or narrates to the specialist what his/her health problems are. It may as well be utilised in psychiatry to tell past events in human life: the aim would be to reconstruct a past event, to see what has previously happened, so that one can diagnose it and find solutions for determined problems. One may rightly pose the question: what does it have to do with semiotics?

To answer such questions, one must be reminded of the following: once defined as a "science of signs" [see: (Saussure 1959)], and today, as a science of the "cognitive interpretation of meaning", semiotics is obliged to examine past events: be they realistic taken from real life, or of an imaginative nature, belonging to artistic realities. Eco's concern is exactly how narration can be pertinent and why. Which elements in an artwork's creation contribute to its flow of events? Why do some elements of an artwork contribute to its "delaying the end" [see: (Eco 1994a)]? To give answers to the above questions, one should assemble more data.

It should, however, be understandable that in the instance of Eco, "narration" as a component is used to describe and interpret artistic creations, which are complex in their semiotic understanding either because of their decomposing in tinnier units, or because of juxtaposing components, to aim to create a totality, say, for instance, a text. Two critical matters can be singled out in this context: the understanding of the "narration" component itself (mainly originating from structural semiotics) and the "text" notion, understood in its semiotic comprehension (belonging both to the structural and philosophic approach to semiotics).

I have singled out both approaches for the following reasons: if structuralism was focused on dichotomies (or, like I said, on various sorts of "conflictual situations"), one must compare two different phenomena. For instance, why do the "black" and "white" contrast? Is there any meaning

deriving from the mentioned notions? What are the elements used to constitute a semiotic relation? All these questions, naturally, have their responses if seen by the eyes of a semiotician. Let me try to explicate the connectivity between structuralism and narration now.

Let me give some examples first. If Saussure's semiotics [see: (Saussure 1959)] focused mainly on binary analysis, it did not mean that entities always represented a relation, a semiotically relevant matter. What matters instead in semiotics is the combination of the two: either *langue* and *parole*, as Saussure would say, or say, an image as compared with its linguistic nomination (or nomenclature), a word with its meaning, or a "word" (taken from the linguistic viewpoint, with its "another" meaning, the one that someone would only refer to, but not visualising it). In structuralism, such "pairs" of items or entities create a relation. Therefore, a "relation"[5] is a semiotic entity or function. Alternatively, as Eco says:

> A sign-function is realised when two *functives* (expression and content) enter into a mutual correlation; the same functive can also enter into another correlation, thus becoming a different functive and therefore giving rise to a new sign function (Eco 1976: 49).

Correlation, therefore, is the keyword here. One can think of a semiotic function if entities presented, seen, or elaborated combine. If this is semiotically justifiable, then naturally, even past events described in an artistic expression obtain their semiotic status. It is so because, to describe them, one should reconstruct events at least. Then, of course, some practical questions follow: why did Eco compare the description of Alexandre Duma's works (and events in them) with realistic historical occurrences? Why, then, so many documents were used to describe determined "stories narrated" in "The Name of the Rose" [see: (Eco 1980)]? Has the "echoing of the caves" in Foster's "A Passage to India" [see: (Forster 1981)] any meaning, or does it only repeat itself endlessly, while the main characters of the story tell us of determined events happening in the "story narrated"? Alternatively, even further questions: what nature did "a hidden love" have between Mrs Quested and Dr. Aziz, or should it have by all means been forbidden? It is worth noting that all these questions, belonging principally to different narrative works, have their responses if viewed semiotically.

I shall present here only a single case out of the questions above. In concrete terms, one must suppose, or better expressed, "suggest" that sympathy, an apparent likeness, occurs between the two protagonists in "A Passage to India". It becomes gradually evident to the reader that such a sort of "sympathy or love" between the two is almost impossible, as Foster is attempting to explain the relations between the "coloniser" and the "colonised". It is to conclude that this example and other examples of the sort regard a semiotic relation, above all.

Otherwise, in most cases, they regard "content", i.e. as Eco says, the *fabula* of the story. In other words, they intend to answer the question of the reader's interest in what has been written. Secondly, and more importantly, they may regard the "time flow" of events, which marks either a shift in content's conceptualisation or another "text" which becomes a part of the "main text". What matters to us here instead is the question: how many times has the author referred to in determined

related contexts regarding various stories narrated to enhance the reader's interest in the text? Not only does this create a semiotic relation (a "relation", as intended in the above Eco's citation, or in the structural sense of the word), but it also refers to the interpretation of an artwork (in case, determined theoretical "tools" combine to reach a particular goal). I intend to assert that oppositional relations can also understandably enhance meaning and its interpretation, including all necessary components. Hence, both approaches to semiotics (structural or logical) are relevant for a decent analysis and for obtaining meaning in artworks. The truth is that, besides what has been mentioned above, the meaning can also be "inferred" and "abducted", as Peirce says. It is so because the more a "single" time-flow of events that occurs in a work, as long as it may last, another one can become a part of the "main text": through another "text", another time, a new sort of flow of events. In such a case, one sort of "text", in the semiotic sense of the word, must interpret the remaining one. Thus, only two contradicted items would not suffice. For this reason, Eco names or defines the different types of authors and readers. The aim is the "encyclopaedic" knowledge [see: (Eco 1979; 1994b; 1984)], which each of them must possess. Finally, this is the instant and the case in which, as Eco says, interpretation becomes an integral part of the semiotic processes.

4. Concluding remarks

Except for the facts above, which have attempted to assert that "meaning" as a semiotic entity must be reached through interpretation, there is a possibility of a multifarious or a multiform interpretation of artworks. It should be remarked, however, that, naturally, interpretation as a process, as mentioned, regards all life spheres. Instead, I have chosen artworks primarily because of their "obviousness" of determined elements, which make them diverse, or better expressed, unique, compared to the rest of social reality (or, of" living world"), or as Deely expresses himself, Lebenswelt [see: (Deely 2001)]. After all, as we are attempting to demonstrate the above assertions practically, how can one call resulting entities "final" in semiotics after whichever semiotic process has been accomplished? Is it impossible to interpret them permanently or using other ways of interpretation? Or, after all, is it possible to interpret them using other "tools" different from those initially used?

The answer is undoubtedly "yes". The above assertion and other "contextual circumstances" (supposedly included in a possible semiotic analysis), as Eco himself says, [see, (Eco 1979; 1994b)] make the "semiotic situation" interpretable. What I mean is the following: all interpretations are possible on the one hand (including their diversity), but on the other, not all interpretations are semiotically relevant. Let us attempt to describe this situation.

Earlier in the text, I mentioned the "complex semiotic function". By such a "semiotic function," I intend to emphasise interpretability above all. One rightly asks: why? For the following reasons.

Besides the unification or uniting of determined "tools" (such as, in the cases mentioned above, of the "oppositional" phenomena in structuralism) that assist in creating and performing a semiotic process, there are such "semiotic situations" where the process of decoding (thus, using Eco's terms) becomes "difficult" or challenging. I intend, therefore, by a "complex semiotic function",

the instances when the meaning cannot be immediately disclosed or better expressed when one needs to decode an entity more than once. It regards situations when the "semiotic object" (using Greimas's terms) is not instantly visible or decodable. Similarly, to what I have written elsewhere: "By a complex semiotic function, I mean multi-layered meaning productivity [see, (Eco 1976; Peirce 1960; Tarasti 2015)], which not only pertains to existent constituent elements compounding it (or that are part of its composition), but also to such elements that might not be concretely visible or existing, but rather, that can be imaginative or referential" [see,(Hoxha 2023)]. A logical question follows: why do I mention semiotic functions at this point of the text? The answer is because of the interpretation process, or in other words, because there is more than one way of interpreting phenomena.

Let us sum up this discussion now. First, starting from the encoding and decoding processes, Eco rightly relies on a communication process, aiming to produce a signifying one. By the process of signification, however, he means including a "third" component, such as given by the definitions Peirce gave to the semiotic study. Second, as mentioned, this situation entailed adding the "meaning" features and enabling an interpretation process. Its vividness and obviousness can naturally be better seen in artistic creativity, as they are exposed to the audience. Third, and most importantly, each signification process relies on diverse sorts of "interpretants" in Peirce's terms [see:(Eco, 1986)] because not a single sort of interpretation can be thought of as "final" in semiotics.

In my view, the article in question attempts to clarify the "labyrinth" Eco mentions (1986), not only for the philosophic reasons he thoroughly elaborates in his writings but also for practical ones: the diversity and multifariousness of his scientific entities. It is finally to remark, as also Deely claims (2001), that Eco's legacy to Peirce (and structuralism, analogically) is due to the "conventional" nature of signs as well as to the "cultural" phenomena, as opposed to the "natural" ones, which definitionally, since the prime developments of semiotics entailed the "sign", and its meaning outcomes [see: (Deely, 2001; Eco, 1986)]. It is so because the goal is, in my view, human inter-activeness, as I mentioned in sense-making, and the signs' permanent movement for the sake of an unlimited semiosis process, a fact that does not contradict earlier established semiotic theories and paradigms. Finally, the multifariousness and diversity of approaches are a reality in semiotics. However, it is also true that, on the other hand, if only one "theory" or "paradigm" were in question (or a methodological way of analysis), then semiotics would not be as interdisciplinary and omnipresent (almost in all life spheres), as it is today.

Endnotes:

1. Understandably, other matters related to this term shall gradually presented in the following sequences of this text.
2. As otherwise known, the two concepts in question, are not novel in semiotics. Their utilization for scientific purposes has began even before the Middle Ages [see: (Deely 2001)]. It is also true on the other hand, that the present text must focus on its specific interests and underprints.
3. According to Deely (2001), as we shall attempt to explain, especially in the Modern Era of the philosophic thought.
4. By which I intend "the signs' way" [see: (Deely 2001)].

5. Understandably, the term stemming from philosophy generally [see: (Deely 2001)], does not hold unique connotative capacities in the field of semiotics. Let us remind ourselves of Piaget, who said to have "hired" from the linguists the term "semiotic function", by which he intended, linking, or better, relating the "form" to its "function" (in the sense that some structuralist say to connect the "form" with the "essence", or "meaning") [see: (Piaget 1969)].

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Predication and Opposition in *Dào Dé Jīng*
Thought Experimental Analyses of (e.g.) 道可道 非常道 (III)
Global Cross-cultural and Religious Aspects

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Abstract:

True words sound like irony.
(*Dào Dé Jīng* Ch. 78 – trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

In this contribution we apply methodologies of semantics of thought experiments (TE) to *Dào Dé Jīng* (*DDJ*). Like all TE research, the research is not foremost about explanation of the contents of *DDJ*, although some indications may be given, but it is intended as a manual how to read and understand *DDJ*, e.g., how to handle the many oppositions (pairs of opposites, linguistically speaking, antonyms), how to understand the many aphoristic conundrums, like the first line 道可道 非常道 *dào kě dào fēi cháng dào. Dào kě dào* ... may be analyzed and interpreted as modus ponens instantiation, whereby relevant aspect is derived as major from information in same chapter or elsewhere in *DDJ*, in this case, e.g., chapter 35, as in accordance with hermeneutic principle that interpretation of single parts may be derived from other parts or whole of the text, and vice versa (hermeneutic circle). *Wúwéi* (無為) and its aphorisms could be analyzed as (double) negation resulting in seeming contradictions (paradoxes) and univocal tautologies—as in Donia Zhang (2022) on translation of 'non-action contrary to nature'—instead of mystifying adagial advices. In the first part of Interpretations we touch upon Wittgenstein's 'noticing of an aspect' (1953, # xi), Da Costa's and Beziau's paraconsistent situation, optical illusions, *yīn-yáng diagram* (Ch. 32), *Huàtóus*, *Kōans* etc. Hofstadter (1979/1999) proposed a global cross-cultural hypothesis that feedback loops (as we know from present-day IT and AI) may represent the core of cognition, seat of consciousness. We show that logical analyses of spiritual thought experiments (STE), like *Huàtóus* and *Kōans*, are well-possible without denying possibly beneficial effects of meditation. Lastly, in Interpretations, we try to explain enigmatic nature of many aphorisms from an antithetical attitude towards views and practices of contemporary ruling government, as by putting the generic statements back into their particular context.

Keywords: semantics, thought experiments, opposition, aphorism, paradox, predicate logic, modal logic, modus ponens (instantiation), (double) negation, global cross-culturalism, *wúwéi* (無為), *dào kě dào fēi cháng dào* (道可道 非常道), Lǎozǐ (老子), *Dào Dé Jīng* (道德經), Daoism

Introduction

In memory of Anand Vaidya

In this paper we propose a 20th-century linguistic and logical interpretation after Wittgenstein and Quine as because of emphasis of *Dào Dé Jīng* (*DDJ*[1]) on *ming* (名), name (Ch. 1, 3-4) that may yield thought experiment identification, analyses and interpretations of many well-known aphorisms of *DDJ* (in fact, global cross-cultural aphorisms that may occur in western philosophy, too), which we particularly demonstrate for the opening line *dao ke dao fai chang dao* (featuring on *dao* 道) which may appear as enthymematic conclusion of an argument, that can be completed by explicitation of explanation of the first verse as in remainder of Ch. 1 and some more chapters, particularly Ch. 35.

Next to the classical analytical approach, that may touch on far-reaching investigations into basics of cognition, consciousness, information technology (IT) and artificial intelligence (AI), we discuss a couple of modal logical formalizations that may be triggered by metaphysical and religious readings of *DDJ*, meditating on classical Chinese interpretations, and ending with some global cross-cultural considerations as contemplated at 4th World Congress on Logic and Religion (WoCoLoR 4) in Sinaia (RO/EU) last summer.

We could indicate a couple of (formal logical) interpretations of first verses *dao de dao*, suggesting strong contradictory or paradoxical readings—as 'Tao called Tao is not Tao' as after Addiss and Lombardo (1993)—don't accord with gist of the treatise, and a modal logical reading (as triggered by Da ≠ Db) may do more justice to argumentation of relative comparison of aspects, which we see in many chapters of *DDJ*, conjectures like everything comes with point of view as in Wittgenstein (1953) (*Phil. Inv*) # xi ... (*seeing as* and *seeing an aspect*) or Quine's holistic rejection of (notions as) synonymy—Quine's (1951) two dogmas of empiricism, Jacques Derrida's (1974) there is nothing without context— 'il n'ya pas de hors-texte' – Derrida (1967), Clarence I. Lewis (1918, 1932, 1959) rejection of (nonmodal) identity in favor of strict (modal) identity (as comment on Russell's and Whitehead's – 1910-1913 – *Principia Mathematica*), Nelson Goodman's pluralism—of arts and worlds – e.g. Goodman (1976, 1978), Carl Hempel's (1945) proposals of empiricist logic, or paraconsistent logical interpretations—as after e.g. Da Costa (1974).

Instead of discussing or investigating application of logical laws, which we expected to be *DDJ* main objective on our first hypothesis, it may turn out that *DDJ* may have no special preoccupation with logic and may use many simple and complex oppositions merely as rhetorical devices, which appears quite successful, working out quite effectively, conveying main contrasts, adding subtle shades of meaning by adding different aspects, comparisons from different points of view. Although *DDJ* may have no particular interest in logic, we consider our logical interpretation not intrusive but adequate to lay bare a basic structure of the text and background assumptions—like e.g. Hertogh (2024b) on *Zhuangzi*.[1]

The paper goes on defending a rationalist interpretation of *DDJ*, and manual how to clarify and resolve the many aphoristic conundrums of *DDJ*, notably the very first line.

1. Identifications

In the first part, Identifications (see Hertogh 2025b), we identified *Dao De Jing* (*DDJ*[2]), e.g., first line 道可道 非常道, as a set of near-spiritual or religious thought experiments, (S/R)TE[3], paradigmatic like Descartes's *Cogito*, for originated in time of crisis, starting off a new era and still famous today as initial text of Daoism[4], to whose interpretation as an ancient philosophical or religious text application of procedure of hermeneutic circle (basic assumption is, in words of Lau (1958), that 'the greater part of the present Lao Tzu really belongs together' instead of only 'a haphazard collection of sayings' (Lau 1958, 349 n. 13) as well as its logical criticisms[5] may be fruitful. We prefer modern gender neutral translations as Donia Zhang (2022) or Clark Gillian (2021) over traditional translations, such as James Legge's, e.g., because of feminist nature of *DDJ* (e.g. Ch. 61 may be read in a post-feminist mode, holding on to gender stereotypes but turned in advantage of women 'Feminine quietness often outperforms masculine strength' – see also e.g. Lai 2000, 2007 for femininity, maternalism and Daoism, and e.g. Greenhalgh 1977, Li 2000, Gillian 2022 for feminism in China) and Zhang's quite consistent translation of *wuwei* statements, thereby resolving assumed paradoxes and mysteries of authoritative translations.

2. Analyses

The analyses we propose don't pretend to be the only possible logical resolutions, more analyses are possible, possibly starting from different versions and translations of *DDJ*, or from different interpretations of the same chapters and aphorisms (it is congruent with pluralistic philosophical assumptions as Goodman's and Quine's – see Hertogh 2020).

We propose three types of logical formalizations, the first (Section 2.1), applying to simple oppositions, showing there is no attempt to breach any logical laws in *DDJ*, the second (Section 2.2) which may apply to complex oppositions, applying predicate logic, deriving major (part of argument) from elsewhere in chapter or *DDJ* text, or more Chinese classics as *Analects, I Ching* and *Zhuangzi*, and the third (Section 2.3), a modal logical interpretation, applying modal logical box and diamond operators, and Kripke-style model of triple set of possible worlds, accessibility relation and valuation function.

Lastly (Section 2.4), we discuss a logical interpretations of concept of *wuwei* as (double) negation which could simplify traditional translations to a high extent.

2.1. Logical Analyses

Simple oppositions don't violate logical laws. There are some examples of linguistic opposition in Ch. 2, which may be considered as concerning mainly predicates:

> beauty vs. ugliness
> kindness vs. unkindness
> difficult vs. easy
> long vs. short
> high vs. low
> front vs. back (Ch. 2 – Zhang 2022)

As Lau (1958) observes *yīn* and *shēng* (e.g. sound and speech, or Legge's musical notes and tones) is not like a simple opposition—is 'hardly of the same type as ... good and not-good, beautiful and ugly' (Lau 1958, 347 n. 2), who goes on to discuss different types of oppositions as gradual vs. abrupt.[6]

Oda and Zheng (2023) propose a generic predicate logical formula including conjunction to express contradiction where (inclusive or exclusive) disjunction may do, like this:

$\forall x (\Psi x \vee -\Psi x)$

which describes relations 'within an ultimate and universal set of *Dao* (x)' as on a pluralist view of Dao (e.g. 'myriad things' – see also e.g. Fox 2023), but not particularly contradiction, rather e.g. exclusive or inclusive disjunction, possibly depending on type of (semantic) opposition. (cf. Oda and Zheng 2023, 1[6])

There are many more oppositions, or pairs of opposites, semantically speaking antonyms, in *DDJ*—in different grammatical forms, e.g. verbs:

to shrink vs. to expand
to weaken vs. to strengthen
to abolish vs. to promote
to take vs. to give (Ch. 36)

which are part of what is called 'the subtle sign, the weak overcomes the strong' (Zhang 2022), 'Hiding the light (of his procedure)./ The soft overcomes the hard; and the weak the strong' (Legge 1891). 'subtle discernment: The submissive and weak will overcome the hard and strong' (Lau 1963).

And predicates again:

Therefore, the ancients wrote:
The *bright* Dao looks *dark*;
The Dao *forward* looks *backward*;
The *smooth* Dao looks *rugged*. (Ch. 41 – italics added – 'even' and 'rough' synonyms of 'smooth' and 'rugged')

From different realms of reality, including (social) values, virtues vs. vices:

Misfortune is where good fortune rests;
Good fortune is where misfortune hides
Who knows whether it will be misfortune or good fortune?
There are not established standards.
Good suddenly turns into evil, kind suddenly turns into cruel. (Ch. 58)

Ethical values that collapse into their opposites when describing the way of the sage or good ruler:

> So it is that the sage (ruler), wishing to be above men, puts himself by his words below them, and, wishing to be before them, places his person behind them. (Ch. 66 – Legge 1891 – 'lead' and 'follow' are synonyms of 'be before' and 'be behind')

This interpretation is consistent with logico-linguistic interpretation as offered in Zhuangzi paper (Hertogh 2024b) where we discussed e.g. interdependency of opposities as after Zhuangzi's *wuhua* (物化) in *Butterfly Dream* (see also e.g. Chen 2020, Coutinho 2002, Komjathy 2007, 2021, Jiang 2011, Poškaitė 2017, Yao 2013). From perspective of studies of *Zhuangzi* the pairs of opposites may be interpreted as exemplifications of the principle of interdependency of opposites (e.g. *wuhua*) as between many more opposites, e.g., few/many, small/great (Ch. 34), thick/thin, highest/lowest virtue (Ch. 38), bright/dull, forward/backward, even/rough (Ch. 41) etc.; the interdependency is phrased and explained in different ways, e.g., as 'subtle discernment' regarding shrink/stretch, weaken/strengthen, lay aside/set up, give/take in Ch. 36 ('This is called subtle discernment'), or 'the blending of the generative forces' regarding yin/yang (Ch. 42) (see translation Lau 1963).

DC Lau discusses *DDJ* oppositions at length in 'The Treatment of Opposites in Lao Tzu' (1958) and tries to explain them as slightly different from hexagrams and principle of constant circular change in *I Ching*, as (e.g.) 'valuing the soft', 'abiding by the soft.'

2.2. Explicitating of Aspect

Complex oppositions may be analyzed by TE methodology of TE Matrix, which in this case comes down to explicitation of an aspect, or point of view, relevant context of comparison, (thematic) dimension etc.[7] It may remind of Jacques Derrida 'il n'ya pas de hors-texte' (Derrida 1967, e.g. there is nothing without context), or Wittgenstein's (1953) contextualism (e.g. Vaidya 2023).

The Chinese signs of the first two lines of *DDJ* are the same in traditional and modern Chinese, we quote Chinese text and English translation from Zhang (2022), who uses modern Chinese transcript (different from traditional in e.g. *wuwei*); Hanyu Pinyin (including tone marks) is derived from e.g. *Wikibooks*. The title of the first chapter is omitted (like titles of all chapters in this paper) since translations vary widely, e.g., Embodying the Dao (Legge 1891), Reason's Realization (Suzuki and Carus 1913), What is the Dao? (Goddard 1919):

> 道可道，非常道；
> 名可名，非常名。(Chinese characters e.g. Zhang 2022)

> *dào kě dào fēi cháng dào*
> *míng kě míng fēi cháng míng* (Hanyu Pinyin e.g. *DDJ* 2020 *Wikibooks*)

> The dao that can be said is not the true Dao;
> The name that can be called is not the real Name. (English translation e.g. Zhang 2022)

In the literature we find a great variety of translations, e.g. of *chang*. Fox (2023) refers to Boodberg (2007):

> 常 *ch'ang*, 'constant,' 'regular,' 'common,' 'ordinary,' 'persistent,' 'conventional,' 'enduring,' never meant 'eternal' or 'absolute' in our sense, as wrongly used by so many translators of the first couplet of the *Lao Tzu*. (Boodberg 2007, 603)

Apart from these translations we have found 'unvarying' (e.g. Waley 1934/1958), 'uncharted' and 'nature' (e.g. Blakney 1961), 'nature' and full expression or representation (e.g. Bahm 1956), 'immortal' (e.g. Red Pine 1996), 'everlasting' (e.g. Yang 1962), 'common' and things instead of names (e.g. Xu 2006), 'unchanging' (e.g. Richter 1988), 'permanent' (Duyvendak), 'true' and 'real' (e.g. Zhang 2022), 'perennial' (e.g. Ryden 2008). We will take no side in the debate and propose logical analyses for both, let's say, secular philosophical and (possibly westernized or Christianized) metaphysical religious positions by use of respectively classical logic and modal logic.[8]

Our first provisional formalization derived from proposition logic is rather complex, saying Dao under aspect *a*, is not equal, identical (with respect to, say, A_1) to Dao under aspect *b*

[1]

$D_a \neq D_b$
$D_a \neq_{(A1)} D_b$

A second formalization applies TE methodology and tries to find relevant aspect, explanation in more lines of the chapter or parts of the treatise, and was eventually successful in discerning, let's say, major of incomplete argument of first line in Ch. 35:

> When the Dao is spoken out,
> it becomes plain and tasteless,
>
> One can not see it, nor can hear it,
> but its effects are endless. (Ch. 35 – Zhang 2022[9])

After exemplifying missing part of the argument, the analysis may be completed with help of predicate logic, where it appears the missing part is the major of the argument, generalizing the individualized statement of the first line:

[2]

Suppose

D	to be (true) Dao		
Dx	x is true Dao	(Ch. 1)	lit. x Daos
-Dx	x is not (true) Dao		
Sx	x can be said, Spoken	(Ch. 1)	or any other perceptual property

Deriving major (P_2) from context or theory, in fact one (more) passage(s) from same treatise *DDJ*, e.g. Ch. 35[10] as on an individualized reading of the first line *dao ke dao* … (P_1 - Chinese grammar does not distinguish between singular and plural, concrete or abstract here):

P_1	$Sa \wedge -Da$	(Ch. 1)
P_2	$Sx \rightarrow -Dx$	(Ch. 35)

C_1	$Sa \rightarrow -Da$	(Ch. 1)
C_2	$Sx \rightarrow -Dx$	(Ch. 1)
C_3	$\forall x\ (Sx \rightarrow -Dx)$	

We may generalize from constant *a* to variable *x*, i.e., from C_1 to C_2, as after John Norton (1991) definition of TE, where there is an inductive step from particularity of (TE) premise(s) to generality of conclusion:

> Thought experiments are arguments which:
> (i) posit hypothetical or counterfactual states of affairs, and
> (ii) invoke particulars irrelevant to the generality of the conclusion. (Norton 1991, 129)

The core argument may be simplified to modus ponens instantiation as after Carnap (1966):

[3]

$Sx \rightarrow -Dx$	(Ch. 35)
Sa	(Ch. 1)

$-Da$	(Ch. 1)

on which interpretation *dao ke dao fei chang dao* appears as minor and conclusion to major as derived from Ch. 35 and the original TE may be displayed like a bracketed TE argument (cf. Descartes's *Cogito*)

[4]

```
 __          _
|             |
|     Sa      |
|     ------- |
|     -Da     |
|__          _|
```

It is not just about imperceptibility, as some translations may suggest, in the sense of inaccessibility

by the five senses, for which there is support in Ch. 35 but also Ch. 14[11], since the strongest formula is 'is spoken', whereby also possible nonsensuous perception and religious interpretations are included as e.g. Dao as a Godhead may be an abstract entity that is not directly accessible to the five common senses (like metaphysical entities as substance but also virtue, humility, simplicity etc.) but that can be spoken about. Many religions may say their Divine entity is accessible by indirect and/or nonsensuous perception, that goes beyond the Humean direct sensuous perception, as in visions, prophecies, miracles, signs etc. possibly mediated by supernatural agencies or the Divinity itself (in secular terminology these phenomena are partly covered by ESP, extra sensory perception, such as telepathy). Next, it may be a mode of perception that goes beyond words, discursive reasoning, logic as in meditation, *Kōans* and *Huàtóus*, where the words only point at a next level that is not expressible in words, nor accessible by logic, discursive reasoning and so on, in western religions e.g. emotivism. The latter interpretations may also go beyond the limits of religious TE, RTE, that are derived from phrasings and passages in religious texts.

Nevertheless, as we have argued in analyses and interpretations of STE as *Vipassanā Meditation*, *Kōans* and *Huàtóus,* logic may take us further than often suggested and above logical analyses are to be understood in this vein (see also Section 3.1.2). Besides, above logical symbolization may capture a manifold of nonmetaphysical and nonreligious interpretations of *DDJ*.

2.3. Modal Logic

When considering the second part about essential *Dao* and *Name*, 'essential' may be logically translated as 'necessary', with help of modal logical box operator $\Box$ or (higher-order) predicate logic, symbolizing necessary by quantification over all (possible) worlds (e.g. Kripke).

As with help of modal box operator e.g.

[5]

$Da \neq \Box Dx$ *a* is Dao is not *x* is necessarily Dao

Additionally suppose

Mx x is/has a N/name

$Ma \neq \Box Mx$ *a* is a name is not *x* is necessarily a name

Or with help of Kripke semantics, supposing model <W, ||-, R>, where *W* is a nonempty set of (possible) *w*(world)s, ||- is a valuation function that assigns subsets of *W* to propositions, and *R* is a binary accessibility relation (e.g. y*R*x) saying which *w*('s) are accessible to which *w*('s) e.g.

[6]

$w_0 \Vdash Da \neq \forall w: w \Vdash Dx$ *a* is Dao in actual world (w_0) is not *x* is Dao in all worlds

[5] (and [6]) may go against an axiom of modal logic (e.g. Kripke 1959, 1 - [A]xiom] 1])

[7]

$$\Box A \rightarrow A$$

since = equals ↔

So, we should change [3] into

[8]

$$Da \nrightarrow \Box Dx$$

And we should change [4] into

[9]

$$w_0 \,||\!-\, Da \nrightarrow \forall w: w \,||\!-\, Dx$$

2.4. *Wúwéi* (Double) Negation

Wuwei (or *wu-wei*, trad. Chin. 無為, mod. Chin. 无为 Pinyin *wúwéi*) may be literally translated as 'not' (無) 'to do', 'to act' (為), e.g. as 'non-action' (e.g. Liu 1991, Slingerland 2000/2003, Moon 2015), modified into variants as 'effortless action' (Slingerland 2000/2003), 'actionless action' etc., which latter term is itself contradictory. The concept is considered to have originated in *DDJ*, but is also used in Confucianism and (Zen) Buddhism, where is may signify e.g. non-attachment.

Many authors consider *wuwei* a core concept of *DDJ* and Daoism. E.g. Loy (1985) considers *wuwei* 'the central paradox' of Daoism:

> *Wei-wu-wei*,'the action of non-action', is the central paradox of Taoism and as a concept is second in importance to the Tao itself, which incorporates it... (Loy 1985, 74)

And Hansen (2007) in *SEP* considers *wei* and *wuwei* (無為 deeming action and non-deeming action) one of the important Daoist concepts (among more, like *Dao* 道 Way, Guide, Road, *De* 德 Virtuosity, Virtue, Power, *ming* 名 name, *chang* 常 constant, eternal, *pu* 樸 pre-linguistic purity).

Checking a variety of translations and comments, *wuwei* and its paradoxical statements in *DDJ* (e.g. in Ch. 3, 37, 38, 43, 48, 57, 63, 64 in Legge 1891 *Chinese Text Project*) may appear a problem of negation and double negation, possibly explosion principle of contradiction, from a contradiction may follow anything and this is indeed the case when you negate non-action which does not result in just one particular action but (possibly on modal interpretation) in all possible actions**.**

Law or principle of double negation is one of the basic logical laws or principles, next to law of identity (LID P = P), law of excluded middle (LEM P ∨ -P), law of noncontradiction (LNC – (P ∧ -P) as acknowledged by e.g. Russell and Whitehead in *Principia Mathematica*:

[10]

... $\vdash . p \equiv -(-p)$
This is the principle of double negation, *i.e.* a proposition is equivalent of the falsehood of its negation. (Russell, Whitehead 1910-1913, *4.13)

However, we could expect, analogous to our view on oppositions, that it is not about strict contradiction (formalized with help of conjunction) but about contextualized (exclusive or) inclusive disjunctions, that it is not about theoretical oppositions but practical courses of action (e.g. Slingerland 2000), that is is not a logical but rather a rhetorical device e.g. not a meaningless semantic formal contradiction but rather an emphatic pragmatic colloquial linguistic confirmation like *there ain't nothing*, meaning *there is nothing* instead of *there is not nothing* possibly meaning *there is something* or on explosion interpretation *there is everything* or on a modal view *there is possibly something/anything/everything.* On this interpretation the so-called paradoxes may lose their mystery and change into (emphatic) tautologies rather that contradictions, e.g. Donia Zhang (2022), who translates *wuwei* as no(n-)action contrary to nature (e.g. Ch. 43 twice, 45, 47, 48 twice, 57 no action..., 63, 64), i.e. action not contrary to nature, action in accordance with nature, natural law, or

non-action contrary to nature
no action contrary to nature
all action(s) in accordance with nature/natural law

which view occurs in *DDJ* again and again with and without contextual mention of *wuwei.* Interpretation of reference to natural law, nature is confirmed by e.g. Moon (2015):

... Away from its literal meaning of inactivity or taking no action, *wuwei* refers to not taking action that is against Natural Law. That is, letting Natural Law take its own course is important... (Moon 2015)

We may agree on Zhang's univocal near-tautological translations of, e.g., Ch. 3 and Ch. 64 which some comments may consider paradoxes and some translations (as Legge 1891's and Lau 1963's) render incomprehensibly abstract and mysterious:

Do things in accordance with nature,
Then the world will be well governed. (Ch. 3 – Zhang 2022)

instead of Legge's underdetermined and abstract:

When there is this abstinence from action,
good order is universal. (Ch. 3 – Legge 1891)

and Lau's mystifying adagial advice:

> Do that which consists in taking no action,
> and order will prevail. (Ch. 3 – Lau 1963)

Zhang 2022 translation of Ch. 64 reads like a tautology:

> And they [the sages] follow the natural laws with non-action contrary to nature. (Ch. 64 – Zhang 2022)

rather than incomprehensible translations like Legge's:

> This is because the saint has no reason and is undefeated. (Ch. 64 – Legge 1891)

and Lau's still using unexplained and possibly inexplicable metaphysical terms from the first chapters like 'myriad creatures':

> In order to help the myriad creatures to be natural and to refrain from daring to act. (Ch. 64 – Lau 1964)

The 19th-century 'very capable' but 'a bit pedantic' translations by James Legge et al. are criticized by John Bruno Hare, founder of Internet Sacred Text Archive (ISTA) in 2004, recommending Dwight Goddard's translation instead, that, however, still is quite impenetrable:

> ... The concepts of Taoism are very lucid, and wrapping them in too much verbiage, as Legge *et al* did, add an unneeded layer of obscurity...

The Chinese have developed (formal) logic in Mohism (see e.g. Mozi 2006-2023, Mei 1929, Liu and Zhang 2010, Hansen 1983). If, and in as far, rhetoric and informal use of logic in *DDJ* may have affected Mohist logic (and possibly vice versa in later editions of *DDJ* as also in Neo-Daoism) goes beyond the scope of the present research, but may possibly change some of the outcomes of TE analyses and interpretations.

We mention only one related example here, Gongsun Longzi (公孙龙 ca. 320-240 BCE) paradox:

> 白馬非馬
> *pai ma fei ma*
> white horse is-not horse. (quoted in Hansen 1983, 140)

which shares negation *fei* with first two lines of *DDJ*. It is discussed in e.g. White Horse Discourse (白馬論 – see at Gongsun Longzi in references), which could be considered sophistry showing the limits of logic and reason, of which Wittgenstein could have said 'Now you are only playing with words.' (Wittgenstein 1953, #67). Slingerland (2000) shows *wuwei* is unlikely to be understood in a relativistic, sophistic way as it has a long history in Chinese philosophy, from the (noble warrior in) *Book of Odes* to (the virtuous sage-ruler in) (Neo-)Confucianism of Xunzi, and in the sense of 'try not to try', it is, apart from political contexts, about how to acquired spiritual ideal of self-cultivation, either spontaneously in Daoism ('not to try') or by training in Confucianism ('try').

3. Interpretations

It is about multiple interpretations because we would principally prefer inclusive pluralism over an exclusive monistic interpretation. And with regard to *DDJ* this principle matches with a pluralist fourfold view of Dao as in Ch. 25

> So, it is said the Dao is great, Heaven is great, Earth is great, and humans are great.
> These are the Four Greats in the universe, and humans are one of them.
> Humans are regulated by Earth, Earth is regulated by Heaven,
> Heaven is regulated by the Dao, and the Dao is regulated by its nature. (Ch. 25)

Our interpretation may match division of the 'Four Greats', humans, Earth, Heaven and Dao, in as far as this division may accord with threefold of our interpretations, secular (humans, Earth), metaphysical (Earth, Heaven) and religious (Heaven, Dao)—please, see Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.[12]

3.1. Logico-linguistic Interpretations Wittgenstein-Quine

With regard to philosophy of language, logic (let's say, standard classical logic)—Explicitating logical structure as with the help of classical logic, although *DDJ* is not a logical treatise, may yield the conclusion that logical laws are quite often adhered to, but higher-order predicate logic, modal logic may be required to add a metaphysical dimension as in accordance with metaphysical translations, such as Legge's and Zhang's, and many more.

It is obvious for the simple oppositions, linguistically speaking antonyms, as used in Ch. 2—e.g. $\forall x (\Psi x \vee -\Psi x)$. Complex oppositions, or comparisons under an aspect, dimension etc., are still but more difficult to formalize with help of predicate logic. Example *dao ke dao fei chang dao*

> e.g. $Sx \rightarrow -Dx$, Sa therefore -Da (see Section 2.2)

Complex oppositions may be analyzed with help of procedure called explicitating of an aspect (see Section 2.2). 'Noticing of an aspect' is also in Wittgenstein (1953) Pt. II Section xi, *seeing as*, *seeing under an aspect.* In the second part of *Philosophical Investigations* Ludwig Wittgenstein discusses differences between 'seeing that' and 'seeing as,' seeing something 'under a new aspect' and in this way gaining new knowledge about it, discovering a new aspect, seeing it

from a new point of view etc. This is a well-known psychological phenomenon introduced by (e.g.) Gestalt psychology (e.g. Jastrow 1901):

> I contemplate a face. And then suddenly notice its likeness to another.
> I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing of an aspect.' (Wittgenstein 1953, # xi, 193)

and nowadays considered social constructivism (e.g. Gendler 1996), which may explain how thought experiments may create new knowledge about the (external) world, e.g., on the Aristotle/Galileo paradigm shift in gravity theory, rebaptized to 'reconfiguration of conceptual commitments'

> Between immoderate empiricism and immoderate platonism lies a third sort of explanation. Eschewing the assumption that there is sharp line between theory on the one hand, and raw data on the other, the position introduces an element of constructivism. It suggests that the new knowledge in the Galileo case comes neither from argument nor from insight, but from a reconfiguration of conceptual commitments on the part of the Aristotelian which enables him to see old phenomena in a new way. (Gendler 1996, 198)

which we explain in our 2015 PhD thesis, Ch. 4 of Identifications, 'TE—Contradictio in Terminis?', bridging the rationalism – empiricism gap in traditional Kantian mode by analysis of synthetic a priori statements, such as '7 + 5 = 12' and 'A straight line between two points is the shortest' (maths) or 'In all communication of motion, action and reaction must always be equal' (physics) or 'the world must have a beginning' (metaphysics)—where the new knowledge is not empirical, but acquired by recourse to intuition, and may reveal new principles (Hertogh 2015a, 150-155, Hertogh 2023b, 2024a), e.g., Albert Einstein in relativity physics, applying non-Euclidean, Riemannian geometrics (as involving curvatures), and Saul Kripke in logic, introducing noncontradictory analytic a posteriori propositions (e.g. 'Hesperus is Phosphorus', 'water = H2O'—in e.g. Kripke 1980).

Optical illusions, such as *duck-rabbit* (e.g. Wittgenstein 1953, # xi, also derived from Jastrow 1901 – see Figure 1), Indian update of *bull-elephant* (see Figure 2), *Necker cube* (e.g. Wittgenstein 1961, # 5.5423 – see Figure 3), or *Penrose triangle* (e.g. Penrose 1989, 2004 - see Figure 4), show that it is about an either/or exclusive disjunctive phenomenon, either one sees a duck, bull, front cube, or a rabbit, elephant, back cube, our biological perception does not facilitate us with possibility to see both at the same time. In case of Penrose triangle we can't see a triangle at all, no matter from which angle we see it, it is an impossible, self-contradictory figure or object; it cannot exist in Euclidean space (see Penrose 2004, 992).

Da Costa & Beziau (2020) discuss a situation in which both aspects may be retained, an inclusive disjunctive situation, or a 'paraconsistent' situation. They mention example of a cylinder (see Figure 5 – baptized *square-circle cylinder*), lit from two different sides casting both shadow of a square (or rectangle if it is a long cylinder) and a circle:

> The cylinder appears as a square and as a circle. 'It is a square' and 'It is not square' are two propositions true about it considering that a circle is not a square. The cylinder is paraconsistent from this point of view, or better from these two points of view. This does not necessarily mean that the cylinder itself is intrinsically paraconsistent. (Da Costa & Beziau 2020, 323)

The description of opposites as in *DDJ* may result in paraconsistent situations, but not necessarily or in all situations, and, we may assume *DDJ*s discourse about oppositions is not meant to suspend any logical laws, although some logical laws may be breached in some particular situations. The oppositions are used as a rhetorical device rather than a foremost logical device.

3.1.1. Yīn-Yáng Diagram

The use of oppositions has been famously represented by the *yīn-yáng diagram* (see Figure 6). *Yīn* (阴 trad. Chin. 陰 – black in diagram) and *yáng* (阳 trad. Chin. 陽 – white in diagram) are introduced in Ch. 32:

> If the *yin qi* and *yang qi* between heaven and earth harmonize, honeydew will fall,
> And people will naturally balance themselves. (Ch. 32)

And next Ch. 42:

> The Dao is one and unique, which contains the two of yin and yang.
> Yin and yang intersect to generate a third state that produces all things.
> Everything is against yin and facing yang,
> Yin and yang are in constant exchange to form a new harmonious entity. (Ch. 42)

Yin and yang may remain within the category of simple oppositions, balancing and intersecting each other, in constant exchange and harmony, oppositions that possibly both contradict and complement each other.

The yin-yang diagram (*taijitu* —太極圖 diagram (圖 *tú*) of the supreme ultimate (太極 *tàijí*) has been developed many centuries later in the Song Dynasty and may look like interdependency of opposites, or complementary yin/yang duality (Ting 2023)—different from Penrose triangle it is a (perceptually) well-possible, not (self-)contradictory figure, different from optical illusions as duck-rabbit, bull-elephant, Necker cube it is not ambiguous in exclusive disjunctive sense, different from square-circle cylinder it is not just like an inclusive disjunction, but rather a dualistic or binary unity, like a universe that is ruled by two intersecting opposites, as it is described in *DDJ*, a harmony of balancing interchanging opposites.

3.1.2. *Huàtóus* and *Kōans*

With regard to optical illusions and examples of feedback loops in *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (Hofstadter 1979/1999), we don't consider Hofstadter's cross-cultural hypothesis far-fetched as that optical illusions (such as Necker cubes, Penrose figures, rabbit-ducks, Kanizsa triangles, spinner dancers) could be considered congruent to Chán (禪 short for 禪那 *chánnà* from Sanskrit *dhyāna* meaning 'meditation') *Huàtóus* (話頭 meaning 'word head'), Zen (anglicized Chán) *Kōans* (公案 meaning 'public case') and ancient forms of Taoist *yīnyáng* (阴阳), ambiguous syntheses of opposites. E.g. in the Necker cube one either sees left and top front first (most common angle) or right and bottom front as if congruent to one of the most famous modern *Kōans* by Hakuin Ekaku (白隠慧鶴 Edo Period Japan ca. 1686-1769):

> Two hands clap and there is a sound,
> What is the sound of one hand?

And a traditional *Huàtóu* from *The Gateless Gate* by Zhaozhou Congshen (趙州從諗 Tang Dynasty China ca. 778–897), considered the greatest Chan master of the Tang dynasty:

> Has a dog Buddha-nature or not?
> Zhaozhou answered, Wú (无). (Trans. Robert Aitken 1991)

reminds Thomas Nagel's *What It Is Like to Be a Bat* question that is eventually answered by a similar self-referential *un-ask the question.* Nagel's *Bat* as well as his speculative proposal of an objective phenomenology tries to unite opposites as objective and subjective and it can be considered a similar feedback loop based on analogy as it is the logical structure of the argument defining not only cognition but consciousness itself (see also Hertogh 2018, 2021b).

Douglas Hofstadter considers impossible objects and figures, optical illusions etc. in west and east, so-called feedback loops, basic building blocks of human cognition and consciousness—

> an interaction between levels in which the top level reaches back towards the bottom level and influences it, while at the same time being itself determined by the bottom level. (Hofstadter 1979, 709)

As such, it may amount to building blocks of IT (information technology) and AI (artificial intelligence) as well. In these tumultuous days of globalization, and fear and uncertainty about robotization, AI (software designed to imitate aspects of intelligent human behavior – according to Webster's), it may be a comforting feeling to see basics of IT and AI going back on elementary concepts and logical figures of classical and ancient philosophy like *DDJ*, that may seem to be shrouded in mystery and mist as much as the near-technological future is not, which may be way more transparent and accountable. This paper is an attempt to contribute to international transparency of ecological and global cross-cultural classics.

And also these 'impenetrable' *Huàtóu* and *Kōan* conundrums are accessible and assessable with help of predicate logic as we have shown in contribution to 2nd USAPP Summit, July 21-24,

2021, in Manila, Philippines, identifying e.g. Hakuin's *Kōan* as a spiritual thought experiment.

We propose next (S)TE resolution, redefining clapping as a process of moving one body part to another body part in such a way that it results in producing a sound, introducing 'clapping' as a two-place predicate letter (e.g. Cxy or Mxy), that does not only apply to two hands but also to movement of fingers to hand palm thereby still producing a light sound

[11]

Suppose

M(xy)	Moving (body part) x to (body part) y
S(xy)	producing a Sound by moving x to y
a, b	left, resp., right hand
c, d	(one or more) finger(s), resp., hand palm
→	material implication *if ..., then ...*

We may analyze two hands clapping as universal modus ponens, or universal instantiation (cf. Carnap 1966), as follows:

M(xy) → S(xy)
M(ab)

S(ab)

And next is how to logically formalize the sound of one hand clapping:

M(xy) → S(xy)
M(cd)

S(cd)
(see Hertogh 2021b, 96-97)

The context of these conundrums is often a dialogue between a Zen teacher and students, where the teacher poses a paradoxical question and the students try to find answers. Buddhist interpretation (as from Reps's and Senzaki's compilation) about dialog between teacher Mokurai and student Toyo:

> For more than ten times Toyo visited Mokurai with different sounds. All were wrong.
> For almost a year he pondered what the sound of one hand might be.
> At last little Toyo entered true meditation and transcended all sounds. 'I could collect no more,' he explained later, 'so I reached the soundless sound.'
> Toyo had realized the sound of one hand. (Reps, Senzaki 1998, 42)

We have shown that logical analysis of one hand clapping is easily possible as with help of (higher-order) predicate logic (higher-order because it involves a two-place instead of simply one-place predicate letter), and assume it is not about a soundless sound (paradoxical contradiction) but about a very soft sound. This being said, we won't deny the spiritual benefits meditation on this and more *Kōans* and *Huàtóus* may yield for the practitioners of Zen Buddhism, we only want to show that the *Kōans* are not ultimately impenetrable, irrational, illogical, contradictory, paradoxical, beyond words, beyond the realm of discursive logic, and so on, and we do think that meditation on a logically valid statement may yield same spiritual effects; in other words, the meditative experience is not brought about by (passage through) some illogical phase or realm, as one can meditate on the void as well, or on an image of the Godhead (e.g. dancing Shiva from Hinduism), on fragments from Holy Scriptures etc.

3.2. Metaphysical Interpretations incl Modal Logic

One can't deny that the metaphysical translations of first and many more verses of *DDJ* may find some justification, corroboration in the remainder of the text. E.g. Legge's (and many more) translations of *chang* in first verse as 'eternal' (Dao) we also find in Ch. 52, e.g., This is called the 'eternal Dao' (trans. Zhang 2022).

Philosophies may contain metaphysical terms such as 'essence' or 'substance' without being considered religious. There are many translations of *DDJ* that suggest a metaphysical interpretation of Dao, main concept and entity of Daoism. E.g., true Dao, real Name (Ch. 1 - Zhang 2022) and particularly Ch. 21:

> It is so deep and dark, that there is essence in it,
> The essence is very real, that there is trust in it. (Ch. 21 – Zhang 2022)

Linguistically speaking, it may not matter if entities as Dao are considered metaphors or metaphysics. Words considered as polysemic complexes develop by metaphorical and metonymical extension from concrete to abstract entities e.g. from 'a road' or 'the Dao' 'that can be trodden' (Ch. 1, verse 1 in translation of e.g. Legge 1891) to an abstract road or way (e.g. 'true Dao' in Zhang 2022). Possibly distinction between metaphorical and metaphysical use is demarcated by capitalization, dao/way/etc. (e.g. metaphorical translations) or Dao/Way etc. (e.g. metaphysical translations), or possibly by italicization, underline etc., but these conventions of capitalization etc. may vary per language, genre and even individual authors, so they are no hard guarantees to distinguish metaphors from metaphysical entities, like it may remain difficult to decide on ontological commitments (see e.g. Fox 2023). Lau (1958) ('The Treatment of Opposites in Lao Tzu') considers 'abiding by the soft' the most important view of *DDJ*, related but slightly different from *I Ching's* doctrine of circular change:

> From these passages [in e.g. *Zhuangzi* about Laozi *DDJ*] we can see that the view that the lower is valuable, and that it is best to abide by the soft is one of the views most widely attributed to Lao Tzu. We would, therefore, be unlikely to go far wrong if we take this as the most important view of *Lao Tzu*. (Lau 1958, 349)

In a speculative way arguing about the treatment of opposites, such as lower and higher, female and male, soft and hard, weak and strong, Lau is defending this view, referring to e.g. Ch. 36 ('This is called the subtle sign, the weak overcomes the strong'), against objections as that terms like 'higher' and 'lower' will cease to have fixed application and become empty terms, e.g., since the terms are only used in a relative way and don't correspond to 'contradiction in things':

> The gentle can overcome the strong, the soft can overcome the rigid,
> No one in the world does not understand this, but no one practices it. (Ch. 78)

Same arguments may be used against hermeneutic and phenomenological reasoning, but nevertheless, although the view does not stand up to analytical scrutiny, it shows a direction in which *DDJ* is and has been understood by Daoists and Chinese tradition.

According to e.g. Lau (1958), the situation of complementary and contradictory, balancing opposites may be bypassed in annihilation and return to its roots, unto a level of sophistication that is rather characteristic of *Zhuangzi* than *DDJ* (see Lau 1958, e.g. 360, Pt IV; see also e.g. Hertogh 2024b on e.g. wuhua 物化).

Possibly updating the ancient Chinese view, we could add from natural science that 'abiding by' the 'lower' may betray a remarkable similarity with gravity, where the lower may 'triumph' over the higher because of gravitational force of Planet Earth.

3.3. (Cross-)cultural (Religious) Interpretations

This Section—as different from Section 3.2—is about comparing properties of Dao, now considered as Divine—instead of only metaphysical—entity, with Divine entities of more (western) religions, e.g.: The Dao is one and unique... (Ch. 42).

These qualities match Divine properties in Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc., one and unique (Ch. 42), omnipresent (Ch. 34), eternal (Ch. 52), infinite (effects Ch. 4), deep, far-reaching, profound (Ch. 4, 21, 25), invisible (Ch 4, 14, 25, 40), inaudible (Ch. 14, 25), intangible (Ch. 14, 40), first cause (beginning of heaven and earth Ch. 1, ancestor of everything, older than God Ch. 4, beginning of the universe Ch. 14, beginning of everything Ch. 21, existed before the formation of Heaven and Earth, mother of everything Ch. 25, root of everything Ch. 52).[13]

Although there are also some indications that God is not the first origin and that Dao is different from God e.g. 'I do not know whose offspring it [the Dao] is, it looks older than God' (Ch. 4) and possibly, already quoted, 'Heaven is regulated by the Dao, and the Dao is regulated by its nature' (Ch. 25).

It may not be coincidental that *DDJ* cosmogony matches both religious and (present-day) natural scientific cosmogony as the beginning of all things, which is qualitatively different from the

universe, world it brings into being. However, this linear description of cosmogony (Ch. 1, 14, 21, 52) is not consistent with remarks on Dao having or relating to a cyclical structure (e.g. Operating cyclically and never exhausting... Ch. 25, e.g. The movement of the Dao is cyclical... Ch. 40). The cyclical view may also allow for many deities, daos, polytheism. (Possibly advanced Sinological studies could spell out these ambivalences.)

Not only Divine properties accord, but also some properties of the sages, and personal qualities the sages prescribe for the people, like simplicity and honesty (Ch. 38, 65, 74) surpassing capabilities like cleverness, craftiness etc. These qualities are confirmed in the preferred way of life:

> The ancients were good at the Dao
> did not teach people to be smart and crafty
> but to be simple and honest (Ch. 65)

> Those who live a simple life are wiser than those who live a luxury life (Ch. 74)

The sages are (in Ch. 75 and more chapters) equated with the wise, which may add wisdom like an indispensable part of religion.

Quite often religion, wisdom, the view of the sages is critical, if not contrary and opposite to views and practices of the contemporary (political) rulers. *DDJ* is explicitly political (see Ch. 28, 48) and against deterioration of ancient values by contemporary regimes of rulers, government etc.:[14]

> Simple and original things are made into artifacts for the sages to use,
> They will become leaders in government, so it is inseparable from perfect politics. (Ch. 28)

And *DDJ* advises to abstain from engagement in current politics:

> Too many political orders are unworkable,
> It is better to keep quiet and stay in the middle. (Ch. 5)

Although *DDJ* criticizes and rejects cleverness, craftiness etc., *DDJ* sophisticated aphorisms and paradoxical wisdom statements may be considered sophistry, trickery, too (cf. Chu 2021). However, in our view these seeming perplexing views and statements may lose their paradoxical character if considered in context of all of the treatise instead of studied as isolated aphorisms, for quite a few views are retaken later on and statements are nearly literally repeated. This may be considered a defect of composition of the treatise, but it may also bring about more clarity, reducing some of the mysterianism of individual statements that have become world-famous proverbs and sayings, common in many languages now. E.g.:

Those who know do not talk,
Those who talk do not know. (Ch. 56)

Logical formalization may help to disambiguate e.g.:

[12]

Suppose

∃x	existential quantifier, *there are some x ...*
Kx	x Know(s)
Tx	x Talk(s)
-	negation

∃x (Kx → -Tx)	there are some people who know but do not talk
∃x (Tx → -Kx)	there are some people who talk but not know

Conclusion Kx↮ Tx, there is no logical relation between knowing and talking, possibly related to dao can not be spoken, said etc. in e.g. Ch. 1.

The aphorism runs counter to common sense opinion about good practice in daily life, politics, law etc., and this opposition to daily usage constitutes mystery of the aphorism, which may be explained and clarified from an attitude of criticism of contemporary government and rulers. Part of the mystery may shrink if this rationale is explicitated, which may be particularly political.

Next, It may be logically interpreted as deviation from Paul Grice's Cooperation Principle (Grice 1975), maxims of quality and manner, that people usually speak truth, and perspicuously, for if one does not know where one is talking about one may not first feature on truth and clarity, and there is no guarantee that the statement will be true (rather to the contrary) (see also Hertogh 2025a on The Liar *forthcoming*). This aphorism is a very good example of *DDJ* beliefs, as in Ch. 78, that true statements sound like irony.

E.g. kind of Socratic aphorisms

Those know that they do not know are wise
Those who do not know but think they know are unwise (Ch. 71)

Most importantly, these aphorisms may lose their paradoxical character if they are considered antithetical to the then ruling government, which may have a bad effect on the people, that is causing their defects etc. This negation effect is confirmed in Ch. 78

True words sound like irony. (Ch. 78[15])

i.e. true words deny common sense and view of ruling government.

Slingerland (2000) assumes Daoism—in its later phases as Mawangdui version (see e.g. Henricks 1989, Kim 2012)—could be interpreted as criticizing Confucianism, e.g., Ch. 38 about Confucian rites and the beginning of disorder

> In Laozi's view it is the rise of Confucian morality and values that ruined the original purity of the ancients and brought about the fall from wu wei (Slingerland 2000, 306).

And Slingerland continues about e.g. Ch. 48 and 63:

> Laozi's purpose is thus – by means of a sort of *via negativa* – to reverse the process of decline begun by Confucius through stripping away the accredited layers of civilization and learnings that have obscured the Way, thereby allowing human beings once again to realize wu-wei perfection
>
> … Laozi thus uses *wu-wei* in something close to its literal sense of 'non-action' or 'non-doing' and wields it in concert with other negative slogans such as 'no-activity' (*wushi*), 'no-desires' (*wuyu*), and 'no regarding' (*wuyiwei*) in order to dramatize his opposition to the ways of the contemporary fallen world. (Slingerland 2000, 307-308)

Although further on Slingerland suggests both religious Daoists and Confucianists may long for a Golden Age:

> For the early Chinese (Daoist or Confucian), the Way represented a normative, metaphysical order that had once be realized in the world during a past Golden Age but from which their contemporary world had strayed. (Slingerland 2000, 314)

And the achievement of *wuwei* was considered as a 'reestablishment of the original state of harmony between the human and the Heavenly' (Slingerland 2000, 314).

Like some more esoteric religious views, *DDJ* may be considered elitist—drawing a divide between the (good) sages and the current (bad) governments and their obedient citizens—and this may amount to one of the main political, democratic or populist, criticisms of *DDJ.* Ames and Hall 2003 write in commentary to Ch. 41:

> Indeed, there is a cultural elitism in Daoism that is reminiscent of classical Confucianism. It is Confucius himself who says: 'The common people can be made to travel along the way, but they cannot be made to realize it' (Analects 8.9). Importantly, both the Confucian and the Daoist are proactive, and what makes one 'common' for both of them is a lack of concentrated effort within their somewhat different regimens of self-cultivation.

Refuge to elitism may be another explanation why some *DDJ* statements are so mysterious, indeed esoteric, but we have seen that much of pedantry may be reduced by a competent translation; and it is

not sure the Chinese text was considered cumbersome in its days, maybe it is only a defect of the English translations, although antithesis to society remains an adequate explanation for reclusive language usage.

DDJ is received in abstract mode as a philosophical treatise, while it may have been intended as a historical text of the state of Chu, a regional part of the Zhou Dynasty.[16] Yan and Zeng (2021) investigate intermingling of language, culture and communication (eco-translatology) in Lin Yutang's and James Legge's translations of Ch. 2 and conclude

> Tao Te Ching is not only a manifestation of Chu culture and civilization but also a bright pearl in the long history of China (Yan and Zeng 2021, 4).

During presentation at conferences, some questions in Q&A may have wanted to stress possible irrationalist interpretation of *DDJ*, that its aphorisms etc. are beyond words, logic, reason etc., similar criticism has been uttered during a conference on logical analyses of *Vipassana Meditation*. In the 1970's, Alan Watts's *Way of Zen* gained great popularity with an irrationalist interpretation of Zen (and, in the 1980's, Roland Barthes 1970/1983 poststructuralist account of Japan), which has fascinated the present writer for some time, too. However, the present writer may think now that the perplexity, absurdity interpretation may remain within realm of phenomenology and that a logical interpretation may enhance our linguistic, philosophical and religious analyses and interpretation of *DDJ*, like more philosophical and religious treatises. As answered the questions during the conferences, rational interpretations may understand irrational interpretations, but irrationalist interpretations may not comprehend rationalist interpretations, thereby meaning that the rationalist hypothesis may enhance and further research significantly more than the irrationalist hypothesis, and that's why we could prefer the former as students and researchers, that we may inevitably remain all of our life in face of the tradition of the great religions of the east.[17]

During WoCoLoR 4 there were analyses from more religions, exemplifying same structure of complementary and contrasting oppositions as visualized in yin-yang diagram, e.g., Wiesna Mond-Kozlowska's comparative study of the Judaeo-Christian symbol of the cross as sign of balancing opposites and generating order (Mond- Kozlowska 2023).

Endnotes:

1. Abbreviations and logical notation:

DDJ	*Dào Dé Jīng*
TE	thought experiments
STE	spiritual thought experiments
RTE	religious thought experiments
$\Box$	box operator *necessary/ily*
$\Diamond$	diamond operator *possible/y*
$\rightarrow$	material implication *if ... then ...*
$\not\rightarrow$	material nonimplication *if not ... then ...*

-	negation *no(t)*
∧	conjunction, ... *and* ...
∨	(inclusive) disjunction, ... *or* ...
∃	existential quantifier *for some, at least one, x it holds that* ...
∀	universal quantifier *for all x it holds that*...
=	identity, *identical to*
≠	nonidentity *not identical to*
↔	biconditional ... *iff* ...
≡	necessary equivalence (strict biconditional) ... *iff necessarily* ...
↮	nonbiconditional *not (... iff ...)*
<W, ||-, R>	Kripke model
W	set of Worlds
||-	valuation function
R	accessibility Relation

2. 道德經 (Chinese), *Dàodéjīng* (Hanyu Pinyin), alternate transliterations *Tao Te Ching*, *Tao Teh King* is said to date from Chinese Warring States or Hundred Schools of Thought Period, and conceived by Laozi (老子Lǎozǐ Lao[-][T]zu/[T]zǔ, Lao[-][T]ze, Lao[-][T]se etc.). Questions about authenticity of text(s) and author(s) are beyond the scope of this research, but we may make some remarks on composition and rhetorics of the text, as related to our thought experimental logical analyses.
3. This paper will add possible logical analyses and interpretations, opting for an *(Extended) Argument View* of TE, according to which TE are, logically speaking, incomplete arguments (e.g. enthymemes). It is about RTE, religious TE, in as far as *DDJ* is considered a religious treatise (instead of only a phlosophical text). Although *DDJ* is part of the Eastern canon of classical treatises, the verses of *DDJ*, e.g. the first lines *dao ke dao fei chang dao* (analogous for *ming*), may not usually be contemplated in the mind, thought, like e.g. *Kōans* or *Huàtóus*, which are used for practicing mindfulness, meditation etc. and which are together with the *Vipassanā Meditation* perfect examples of spiritual thought experiments (STE).
4. Thomas Kuhn states in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) that thought experiments may prosper in times of crisis such as beginning of new era (e.g. Descartes, Galileo) and modernism (e.g. Einstein) in western history of philosophy and science. The names of the historical period, Hundred Schools of Thought, Spring and Autumn and Warring States Period already indicate that Laozi's *DDJ* was conceived in kind of times of crisis when many states, such as Chu, Wu, Jin, Qi, were existing independently, just before unification of the Qin Dynasty in 221-206 BCE.
5. Hermeneutics may seem to be dominated by nihilistic and relativist presumptions as 'no man can jump over his own shadow' or 'all of interpretation is self-projection', but one may find oneself to be able to understand the act of translation as an act of negotiating and mediating between 'self' and 'other', 'project' oneself (as a reader) in another text and 'life world' or reach 'broadened encounters' (see e.g. Berger 2017, Kearney 2007, Ricoeur 1981).

   When returning to traditional classics and hermeneutics, we should be very careful not to unnecessarily rehabilitate unwarranted obsolete (sexist, racist, antisemitic etc.) authority, prejudices, ontological assumptions etc. (cf. Gadamer 1989). Logic should counterbalance hermeneutics, not only to reveal basic structure of a text and counter nihilism and relativism, but also as applied in critical thinking, a societal application of formal and informal logic, defined as (e.g.) an academic methodology of deciding whether a claim is always true, sometimes true, partly true, or false (Hertogh 2015a, 64).

   See also e.g. Bocheński's *Logic of Religion*:

   > When justification is concerned, it must be repeated, logic alone is competent, and no other discipline. (Bocheński 1965, 134-135)

And Tarski's view on logic as the basis of all sciences:

> Logic is justly considered the basis ... of all other sciences, even if only for the reason that in every argument we employ concepts taken from the field of logic, and that ever correct inference proceeds in accordance with its laws. (Tarski 1941/1994, 101)

6. Oda and Zheng (2023) propose ∀x (Ψx ∧ -Ψx) and explain on p. 2 n. 2:

   > The interlocking Ying-Yang opposites, such as non-being/being and occult/manifest, are one and the same ultimate reality that embraces all. In the Daodejing, these opposites can be understood in 'correlative' logic and thinking (both/and), which are neither monist nor dualist (either/or)... More specifically, we formulate correlative opposites into sentences about contradictions.

   And it may depend on type of (semantic) opposition. Although lexical semantics may consider the word pairs of opposites or antonyms binary, the relation between the antonyms may vary as from gradual to abrupt (Lau 1958)—or updated by modern semantics

   > The term **antonym** (and the related **antonymy**) is commonly taken to be synonymous with opposite, but antonym also has other more restricted meanings. *Graded (or gradable) antonyms* are word pairs whose meanings are opposite and which lie on a continuous spectrum (hot, cold) *Complementary antonyms* are word pairs whose meanings are opposite but whose meanings do not lie on a continuous spectrum (push, pull). *Relational antonyms* are word pairs where opposite makes sense only in the context of the relationship between the two meanings (teacher, pupil) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposite – *italics* added - retrieved May 24, 2025).

   Part of thought experimental logical analyses of the aphorisms containing oppositions in *DDJ* consists in finding appropriate contexts, dimensions, aspects, points of view or comparison of the opposition in same chapter of elsewhere in *DDJ* text or possibly in related texts as *I Ching*, *Analects*, *Zhuangzi*, as well as appropriate logical operator or connective, which is, generally speaking, rather (inclusive or exclusive) disjunctive than contradictory.

7. In analyses of metaphors (e.g. Bartsch 1987, Leezenberg 2001, Hertogh 1989/1997) we may distinguish between standard semantic metaphors and context-dependent or pragmatic metaphors. The latter may be identified, analyzed and formalized with help of thematic dimensions, like a semantic term for context; in case of metaphors it is most often about the actual context, that is the sentence in which the metaphor theme appears. One may criticize this treatment as contextualism, but we don't think it boils down to relativism, possibly to relativity, saying that different parts of reality (domain, discourse etc.) may be analyzed and interpreted differently as in accordance with possibly different structure, texture, substrate etc. of different parts of reality. E.g. Galileo's gravity theory may hold (by approximation) for Planet Earth, Einstein's for micro- and macrocosm. E.g. Voodoo and Hollywood Zombies should be analyzed differently from *p-* or philosophical *Zombies* (see Chalmers 2017). E.g. poetical metaphors may be analyzed differently from philosophical metaphors, which latter ones are often a tip of a (theoretical) submerged model.

   It would be a kind of word magic to suggest that a word may mean the same in each context. Historical and etymological research may show how word meanings develop by, e.g., metaphorical and metonymical extensions, whereby sunstantial use of a word in a new context may result in a new (dictionary) sense.

8. Fox (2023) claims there is no eternity in western or Christian sense in *DDJ*, so like Boodberg Fox rejects 'eternal' as translation of *chang* 常etc., e.g.,

   > Many readers of the *Dao De Jing* have identified an ontology associated with the text. In such an ontological reading, the term *dao* is taken to refer to some type of monolithic (hence the use of the definite article "The *Dao*"), eternal (a troubling yet consistent translation of *chang* 常 in the first chapter), abstract (hence the use of the upper case for '*Dao*'), and uniquely ineffable fundamental reality (fundamental reality posits a reality on which all other realities depend, as opposed to the concept of reality as interdependent and intercausal).

Fox (2023) defends a cyclical (instead of linearly eternal), concrete, interdependent and intercausal concept of *daos* (plural) against appearance to the contrary in the first chapters.

However, we may also conceive of a syllogistic argument in favor of the metaphysical-religious interpretation following Zhang, who translates the last concluding line of Ch. 52, involving *chang*, by 'This is called "the eternal Dao"', and *chang* in the first two lines of Ch. 1 as resp. 'true' (Dao) and 'real' (Name). Since Ch. 52 starts off with a linear cosmogony ('Everything in the world has a beginning, this beginning is the root of everything') it may confirm a similar interpretation of Ch. 1, assuming that possibly ambiguous parts of the first chapters are to be explained later in the text.

9. Translation of Ch. 35 by James Legge in Chinese Text Project:

   > But though the Dao as it comes from the mouth, seems insipid and has no flavour, though it seems not worth being looked at or listened to, the use of it is inexhaustible. (Legge 1891)

   Translation of Ch. 35 by DC Lau:

   > The way in its passage through the mouth is without flavor.
   > It cannot be seen,
   > It cannot be heard,
   > Yet it cannot be exhausted by use. (Lau 1963)

10. Similar methodology may be practiced by more scholars of *DDJ* e.g. Oda and Zheng (2023), Oda (2024) after Sōseki Natsume (2004):

    > Argument 1 ...
    > 1. 無名天地之始: Nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth. [*Daodejing*, ch. 1]
    > 2. 道常無名: *Dao* (i.e. the 'way') is always nameless. [ch. 32]
    > 3. 故道天地之始: Therefore, Dao is the beginning of heaven and earth. (Oda and Zheng 2023, 2)

    In the article published after WoCoLoR 4 presentation Oda adds another example, as it appears derived from Japanese novelist Natsume Sōseki (夏目漱石, 1867–1916):

    > Argument 2 ...
    > 1. 萬物的實體是道: ... The substance of everything is *Dao*. [chs. 4, 25]
    > 2. 道不可知於五官: *Dao* cannot be known by the five senses. [chs. 14, 21, 35]
    > 3. 故萬物的實體不可知於五官: Therefore, the substance of everything cannot be known by the five senses. (Oda 2024, from 'Introduction')

    remarking at first premise of argument 1 that Oda uses Ryden's 2008 translation of *DDJ*, and at first premise of argument 2 that Sōseki does not provide the original Chinese quotations for the second argument and that Oda has translated Sōseki's Japanese into (traditional) Chinese and English. Oda explains both arguments are derived from Sōseki, who 'learnt analytical methods of philosophy whilst studying Western logic and philosophy' at Tokyo Imperial University; both arguments have an Aristotelian syllogistic structure, consisting of two premises and a conclusion, having S(ubject) and P(redicate) in conclusion and a M(iddle term) in each of the premises, (generalizing) resp. Barbara (all M-P, all S-M, all S-P) and Celarent (no M-P, all S-M, no S-P). (See Aristotle *Prior Analytics* e.g. Aristotle 2014, Copi et al. 2014, e.g. 211-254).

11. There are some more indications of imperceptibility of Dao in Ch. 14:

    > Looking at it, it cannot be seen, this is called 'colorless;'
    > Listening to it, it cannot be heard, this is called 'soundless;'
    > Touching it, it cannot be felt, this is called 'formless.' (Ch. 35 – Zhang 2022)

    We may derive relevant major from notably Ch. 35 (and 14), generalizing Dao has no perceptual properties, Dao is imperceptible. However, see text at the end of Section 2.2 on different forms of perception.

12. Contra Goldin 2002 it may be argued that nonnative comments and translations of Chinese classics may improve on native comments and translations for at least two reasons in two innovative situations.

    First, nonnative comments and translations can apply novel conventions (e.g. feminist orthography—see

e.g. Zhang 2022 e.g. s/he), new methodologies (see Section 2, application of logical symbolism etc.), such as in this case, methodology of semantics of thought experiments, consisting of TE Matrix, and TE Diagram, which has been applied to e.g. Daoist (R)TE after lecture on Zhuangzi for Chongqing University in May 2013, results of which have been discussed in Hertogh 2022b.

Second, nonnative comments and translations may add cross-cultural interpretations, e.g., comparison with Divine qualities of more eastern and western religions (please, see Section 3.3).

13. Full quotes of some properties, comparable to divine qualities:

    The Dao is running widely, and it is omnipresent everywhere. (Ch. 34)

    This is called the 'eternal Dao.' (Ch. 52)

14. Daoism had a great influence in Tang Dynasty, but Confucianism may have been Chinese state religion from the Han Dynasty in 202 BC through the imperial epoch in 1911.
15. Alternate translations of last line of Ch. 78 e.g. James Legge's:

    Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical.

    and D.C. Lau's

    Straightforward words seem paradoxical.

16. Zhang Yimou's 2002 *wuxia* (武侠 - martial heroes) movie 'Hero' may bring ancient history of Warring States to cinematic life, showing the many conflicts in those days, when China consisted of seven states, which situation ended with Qin state unification and building of the Great Wall. The movie is about an attempt to assassinate the King of Qin.
17. With regard to Christianity—Susana Gómez Gutiérrez argues in favor of rationality of theistic belief, involving theological paradoxical mysteries as Incarnation:

    Lastly, to account for the epistemic warrant of the doctrine as a Christian doctrine, I adopted Anderson's model, which follows Plantinga's proposals for the *rationality of theistic and Christian beliefs*. With this proposal, Plantinga responds to the foundationalist idea that to be rational, every theory or proposition must be based on basic beliefs such as experiential beliefs, self-evident truths, and so on. I did not follow up on this problem here, but if Anderson's model is acceptable, his project and mine respond to what I suppose is Kierkegaard's objection that the doctrine cannot be rational because we cannot give an account of it based on experience. *What Anderson and I, following him, would be showing is that the doctrine of the Incarnation can be rational without meeting that requirement.* (Gómez Gutiérrez 2023, 21 - italics added)

18. We omit most of the diacriticals and tone marks from Chinese, Pinyin and more transliterations, both in text and listing of references (e.g. 'Lao Tzu' instead of 'Lao Tzŭ'), only particularly in the abstract, in titles of (sub)sections, on first mention and explanation of the main terms Chinese characters and Pinyin including tone marks may be used.

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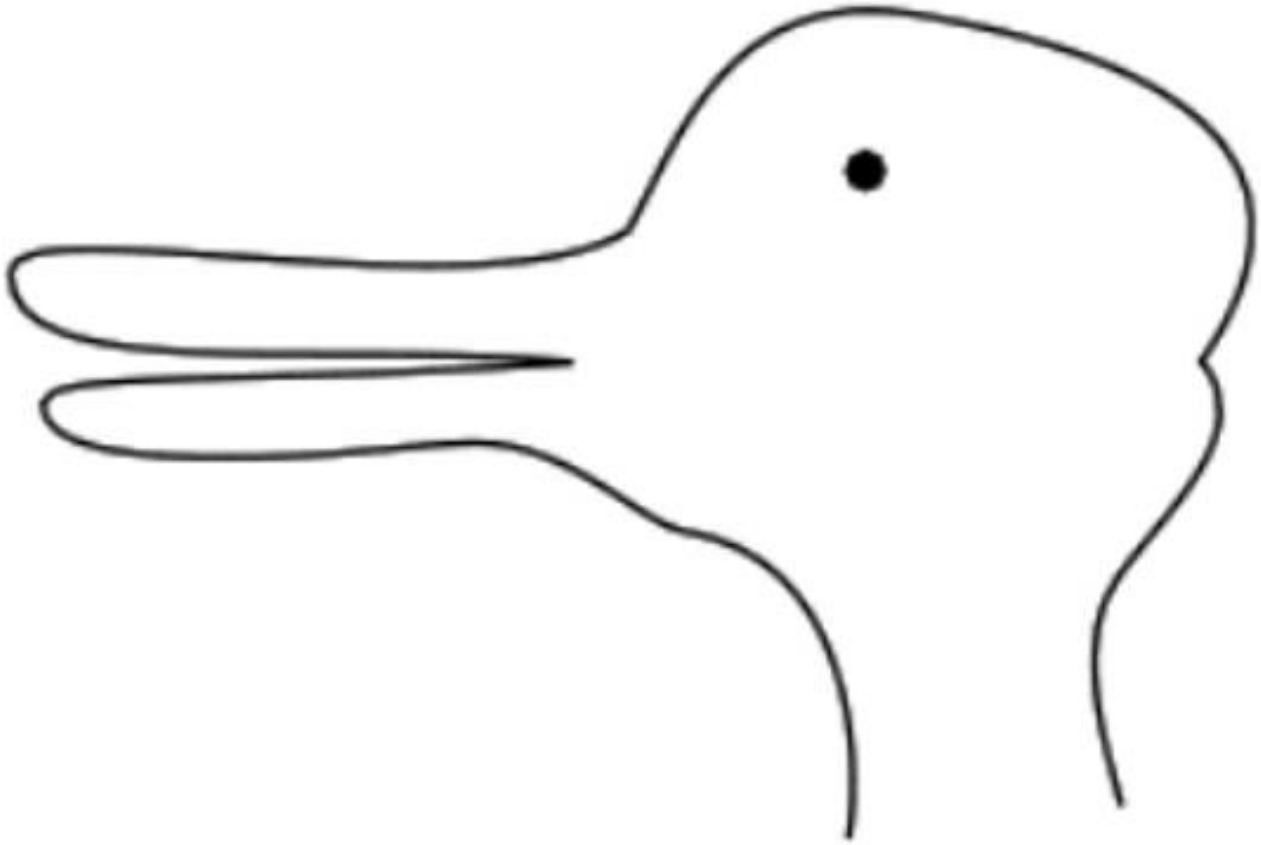
Figures:

Figure 1.
duck-rabbit



Source:
https://ia800209.us.archive.org/7/items/philosophical-investigations-ludwig-wittgenstein/Philosophical%20Investigations%20-%20Ludwig%20Wittgenstein.pdf.

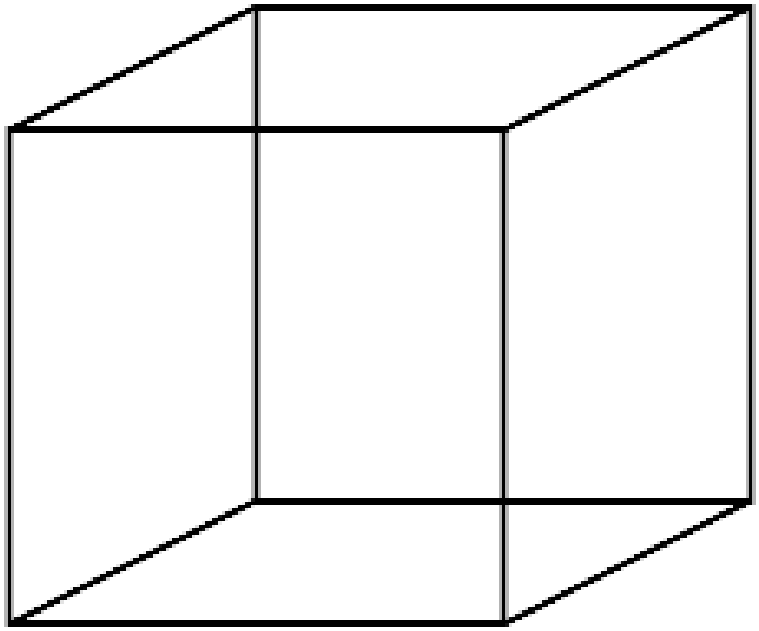
Figure 2.

bull-elephant

Source:
https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/health-fitness/de-stress/worlds-oldest-optical-illusion-how-many-animals-do-you-see/articleshow/103986370.cms.

Figure 3.

Necker cube



Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_optical_illusions.

Figure 4.

Penrose triangle

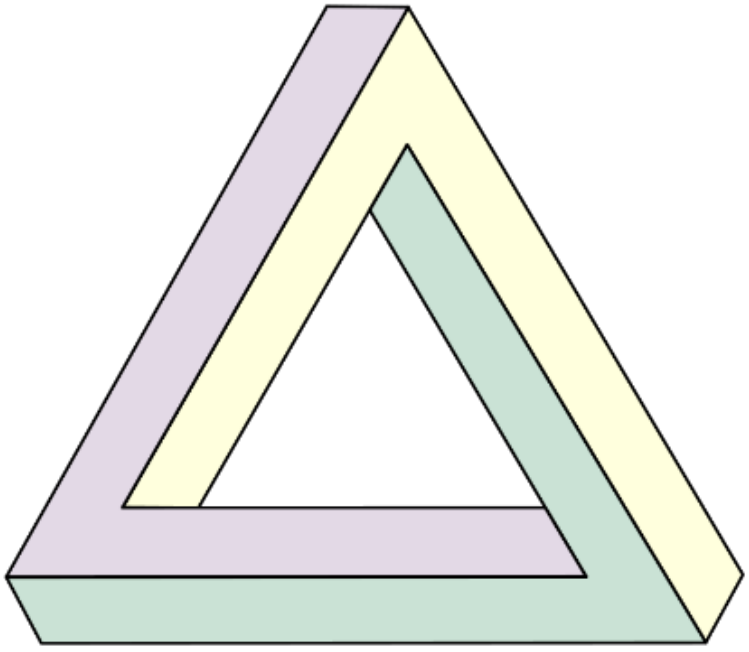


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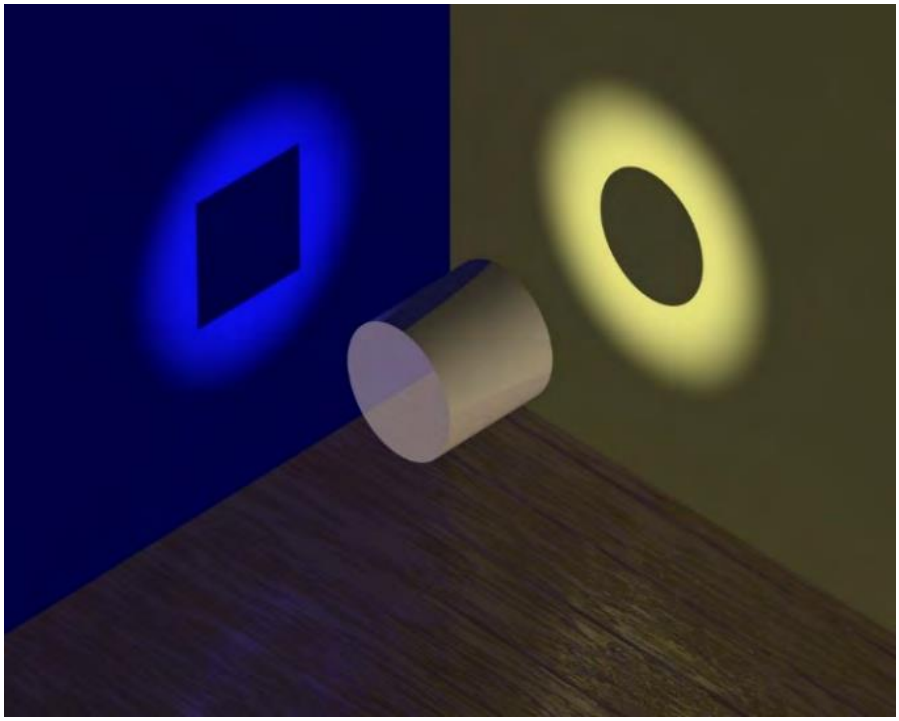
Figure 5.

square-circle cylinder



Source:
Costa, N.C.A. Da, and J.-Y. Béziau (2020). 'Is God Paraconsistent?' In: Silvestre et al. 2020, 323.

Figure 6.

yin-yang diagram

Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_yang.

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Historicity and Axiology: Temporal Implications for Axiology

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Abstract:

To develop the axiology of moral (or ethical) values, phenomenological analysis must look at temporality in a way that is unfamiliar to it. This way is through knowledge and experience of the actual historical past, from which it has been separated by the Heideggerian conception of historicity and its classical Husserlian analysis of time consciousness. The development of historical studies helps to make this possible. A simple sample model of the diachronesis of the awareness of ethical significance, value, and obligation is presented. It moves the analysis from a presentist focus to the field of experience in which subjects develop moral agency. Two concepts, historical phenomenology and interpersonal values-making, are advanced as the bases of a research program. It will amplify the potential of phenomenology to understand ethical goods such as empathy and will also encourage interactions of ethics, philosophy of history, and phenomenology.

Keywords: empathy; ethics; historicity; moral philosophy; philosophy of history; social ontology; temporality; philosophy of time; transgenerationality

1. Introduction

If the principles of moral value are universal, then judgments of moral value must depend on them. If on the other hand there are no universal principles of value, then moral values would float free of authority or grounding. This is a very simple statement of the age-old problem that moral philosophy has had with the binary of the one and the many. It is by this route that ontology and even epistemology cris-cross moral philosophy, turning it into a muddy field, as if it were a natural waterway that every season of heavy metaphysical rain makes sodden. To solve this, Kant, stressing the unity of reason, proposed a form of universal authority of reason for moral judgment that each person can and must make her own in creating what Christine Korsgaard calls one's practical identity (Korsgaard 1996, 102-130). Phenomenology from its start, stressing the variety of reality, aimed to conceive a universal capability that obviates the skewed control that such universal reason exercises over the manifold world. But just how normativity extends throughout human life, in all

its activities, productions, expressions, and communications the practices of phenomenology has never quite made clear. They, and other approaches, have advanced our understanding and acceptance of the omnipresent moral valence of human action; but their advance is itself obviated by, among other causes, the intuitive and practical sense that facts and values are different sorts of things that do not have the ability to interpenetrate one another. This is the obsidian lump of positivism in each one of us. Although "Hume's guillotine," dividing values from facts, has been dulled, or disassembled, or disposed of in a number of effective ways, something remains that moral philosophy has not so far fully and really confronted. This something is, I contend, the diachronesis of the movements of the affairs of moral agents — that is, in a word, history.[1]

As historical events occur and are then received into both recollection and study, people are embedded in a proliferating web of ethical obligations arising from past events that form their current situations. Sometimes we listen to the voices of past persons, becoming aware of these obligations; sometimes these press upon us after long dormancy; sometimes, very quickly; not seldom, or not at all. But we nonetheless are connected to the potential to prescribe for ourselves what it is right and wrong to do because we are part of the moral community that our history creates. In this paper, I will show a part of how *stretching* a phenomenological approach to the collective making of ethical significance across temporal moral change out from the narrow constitutive present to historical diachronesis can help to generate a robust, prescriptive axiology of ethical values and goods upon temporal interpersonality.[2]

By "axiology" in relation to ethics I mean the philosophical discourse concerning moral values, that is, judgments of right and wrong and just and unjust. By "prescription" and "prescriptive" I mean the understanding that moral values have a force that obliges personal actors to govern themselves accordingly, which is what we generally mean by "moral obligation."

To do this requires first an evaluation of the limitations in the phenomenology of time and historicity, followed by my proposal of an approach that overcomes these limits. This approach comprises two concepts: *historical phenomenology* and *interpersonal values-making*, developed in the central sections of this paper. I will conclude by considering the implications of this for a prescriptive ethics and for social ontology

2. Historicity and historiography

One of the most consequential insights from phenomenology that Martin Heidegger made was his separation of historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) from what the English translators call historiology (*Historie*). The issues pertaining to time, history, and humanity having expanded over the course of his early seminars (Heidegger 2007, 63-90), this distinction became a foundation for his illumination of historicality (*Geschichtlichkeit*) in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962, 441-443). Historiology is the study of past events. The English word historiography most commonly refers to a study of the scholarly work on an historical topic. But philosophers of history increasingly follow Azevier Tucker's suggestion that we use historiography to mean writing about history and, by extension, the study

and knowledge of the past (Tucker 2004, 10ff.). Historiology and historiography therefore denote generally the same things within the philosophical discourse to which this paper pertains. In Heidegger's use of this distinction, historiography is possible only because of *Dasein*'s historicity and so not wholly delinked from it; but historicity itself refers us to temporality as the condition of the possibility of human existence, being-with-others, and thus of history, and not to any particulars of historical actions, events, or structures as objects of scientific knowledge (Heidegger 1962, 434, 436, 447). *Mitsein* as the whole historical world is consistent with the aloneness of *Dasein* since it is constitutively fundamental (Heideger 1962, 307-308), but to be immersed in historiography seems to come as close to inauthenticity (Heidegger 1962, 120-121, 283-284, 438-439, 448) as does immersion in everyday chatter. Also, *Dasein* is more concerned with the future than the past (Heidegger 1962, 281, 433, 437). Persons share *Geschick* but not much else.

And yet Heidegger's segregation of the empirical and inductive study of positivities is unexpectedly in partial agreement with the traditional scientism of academic historians, by which the discipline seeks to describe what past events "really" were. The lexical and conceptual separateness in which Heidegger enveloped the profound relations of historicity and temporality even gives historians some freedom to ignore historicity. To the extent that philosophy of history has been committed to rejecting speculative *grands recits* in favor of a positivist approach to historiography, Heidegger's profound *coup* contributed to the avoidance of any axiology in our relationship to history. Perversely, it yields ground to positivism — ground that even non-positivist constructivists and narrativists are reluctant to reclaim because historicity and temporality were created as value-oriented concepts by being lopped off from the factuality of the past.

As it turns out, even narrativism and constructivism follow Heidegger along the borderline that positivism fortified. They have not changed the basic schema, but they and various historiographic approaches have chipped away at the edges. These research methodologies have done so much that we know now that Heidegger was wrong to regard historiology as a friend of nihilistic technology that helps to hide our kairotic temporality. For example, Hayden White proved that historiographic accounts have as much of the affective depth of literature as they do of hard factuality (White 1987), Eelco Runia showed us how to take account of our deepest communal wounds in understanding the past (Runia 2014), and Frank Ankersmit linked the historian's calling to both narration and to trauma-based art (Ankersmit 2005). Within the phenomenological tradition, Paul Ricoeur and David Carr saw the deep link between narration and the temporality that constitutes being human (Ricoeur 1990; Carr 2014). Beside these, expansions of the topical range of historiology that Heidegger could not have foreseen have truly enriched our understanding of past and present life-worlds. These sophisticated approaches include, among others, histories of sexuality and gender, the study of popular culture, environmental history, micro-history, and the history of emotions, as well as the advanced affordances of structuralism and its successors, critical theory, class analysis, electronic imaging, and other methods and technologies. Frequently this kind of work relies on the staggering increase in the amount of data and the accessibility of archives, the skillful and sensitive use of which

can take us deep into the intimate lives of past others; this goes to show that even data can advance the humane sensibilities of empirical research in history.

All these developments mean that the practice of historiography is now vastly more sensitive to the context of being human than the more straightforward causality that Heidegger understood to be the object of inquiry by *Historie* in contrast to the possibilities of existence inherent in *Dasein*. If he were confronted with these developments, Heidegger nevertheless might say that they are changes of comparative standpoints that need not alter his approach to the ground of historicity. But we can propose that these developments make history more deeply human, closer to what it really is for us to be alive.

The value for Heidegger of splitting historicity from historiology is that it enabled him to advance the human into Being itself and away from beings in the natural world that science takes as supporting or even including human life and that "metaphysics" takes as overwhelming and governing it in the supernatural sphere. Heidegger's original move to split these, although it served him well in developing some of his most consequential ideas, is, I suggest, one of the principal reasons for the uneasiness of that kind of phenomenological axiology in which, despite the forms of ethical care for others in the work of Levinas and Sartre, the possibilities that history affords have largely been closed off, especially as the problem of individualistic versus collectivity-oriented understanding continues to vex social ontology as well as phenomenology

This has not gone unchallenged. I have already referred to the work of Ricoeur and Carr. The eminent philosopher of history Ethan Kleinberg has integrated ideas of both Levinas and Derrida into an approach to our experience and knowledge of past temporality that has thick political and ethical direction (Kleinberg 2017). A thorough re-consideration of Levinas' ideas about history is well overdue, as previous work on this matter does not match the potential of the topic (Caygill 2002, 134; Nelson 2014; Schroeder 1996, 77-78).

But the job of re-connecting actual history to phenomenology has not been accomplished for a reason deep inside the enterprise of phenomenology. Standardly, phenomenological analysis holds that the sensuous objects of consciousness are not sense-perceptions but mind-independent entities, that consciousness exists through its primordial integration to the world and of the world to it such that distinctions of the real and the unreal under the naturalistic attitude occlude our awareness of the primordial constitution of consciousness, and that this analysis allow us validly to examine the normative ocean in which consciousness exists. Thus, the world is to be understood at this level for what it means to a subject, to collective subjects, and universally to humankind. The middle term here — groups of subjects — has been the topic of considerable and constant debate as to how to align it with the traditional focus on the *célibataire* subject as the locus of consciousness and, on the other hand, with the universal constitutional structure of consciousness. The difficulty arises from the intense development of primordiality — or what Heidegger once called "the *à quo*" — as the framework for understanding consciousness. The problem this produces has two layers.

From and for such the search for the primordial, the noema is real, and the noesis is no less

real; and this lay-out is a massive advance on any reductionistic theory because it does lighten the impact of the problem of the one and the many by deflating the opposition of the human or divine subject over against the manifold of the world. However, social groups or collectives are more thoroughly miscegenate the two sides of this and related binaries. The historical activities of humankind form an immense middle term between the primordial consciousness ineliminable from all being human and the I to which we must attend as the purest and essential actor. Furthermore, it is in the relations of persons to one another on every scale that the mark of normativity infiltrates all our thinking and feeling. Therefore, the first layer is that the status of values arising from or attached to the history of interactions with noemata is separated from the primordial fundaments that obtain no matter what goes on or does not go on in our individual and collective lives by the ceaseless provision of ongoing challenges and consequences for us coming from intentional objects. This results in no interpersonal or social axiology. The second layer lies in the view of time: a view that, regarding retention and protention as interdependent wings of the present in which consciousness necessarily exists and moves, cannot include the past and future as such that collectives require and without which society is not intelligible. I will further address this layer below.

Not only quotidian moral judgments are troubled by this. Even the universal worth of human existence cannot be affirmed on the basis of its primordial constituents except by further deliberations, or operations, or authority, or belief. In a sense, any and all history, any and all motion and change, any and all coming-to-be and passing-away, any and all meaning-making temporality has always put this problem on the table. Today it is an existential issue such that we face as never before.

I hold that somewhere in some adaption of phenomenology and robust social critique lies a possibility for grasping a well-wrought prescriptive axiology that both historical theory and philosophical ethics pass by. But the possibility is so far unrealized in the moral situation of the human community to which theory today must respond. On the one side, philosophy of history has done little of this work, with some exceptions I have mentioned and some others I have not catalogued here. The field has largely been content to regard itself as more or less exhaustively divided between "speculative" philosophy of history and "critical" philosophy of history. The former refers to superannuated but still sometimes-tolerated large-bore explanations of the meaning and purpose of human history. The latter refers to endeavors to understand evidence, events, and historiographic accounts as epistemology. The term in this usage does not refer to Critical Theory, which, with the exception of the work of Walter Benjamin, is barely recognized in the field even though the first generation of the Frankfurt School were philosophers of history; or to critical forms of theoretical endeavor understood as committed to leftist activist critique. Instead, it refers to an approach to historical knowledge that grows out of philosophy of science. Most of the disciplinary field is content to let positivists and constructivists fight it out (Trouillot 2015, 1-30). Beyond this impasse, innovations admitted into the field include animal and other non-human histories and problems of the alterations of human temporality in the Anthropocene (e.g., Domańska 2020; Simon 2019). Although these are promising because they take seriously issues of moral agency, nonetheless in sum there is little help for axiology

based on the phenomenology of historicity to be had from contemporary philosophy of history, although it would serve everyone well were it otherwise.

For its part, the ways in which philosophical ethics takes up temporality result in a gaunt understanding of diachronesis and quite dehydrated sorts of moral philosophy. One prominent effort is the so-called "pragmatic genealogy" associated with Bernard Williams and more fully developed recently by Mathieu Queloz (Queloz 2021). This fails the goal I have specified on three grounds. First, it is not properly phenomenological, that is to say, it lacks the virtues of sensitivity to human existence that we appreciate in phenomenology. Although it seems to attach a time line to its accounts, in the end it looks solely at reasons and justifications, which in turn take on the structure of logical operations. This is at least partly because, second, it has no views of temporality to speak of. Third, the genealogies it produces are to actual historical accounts like a toy model train is to an actual train: simplistic, of inadequate scale, and not adequately powered. One finds a more satisfying effort in "descriptive ethics," inspired by the work of Wittgenstein and Iris Murdoch and other thinkers (Murdoch 1970), as developed by, among others, Alice Crary and Nora Hämäläinen (Crary 2007; Hämäläinen 2016; also Critchley 2007). It is in some cases influenced by linguistic or phenomenological narrativisms. Descriptive moral philosophy uses facts in narratives that can be excused from formal stricture and that support rather than are supervised by ethical commitments, such as we find in fiction. It produces accounts that, while more interesting than "pragmatic" concept analysis in so far as they include actual human motivations, do not establish any axiology. What we can call a phenomenological-historical approach can remedy these defects.

3. Temporality and ethical values I: historical phenomenology

By what route (if any) to or through "history" can we increase the valence of a phenomenological axiology and thereby contribute to the growth of moral consciousness and philosophical ethics? How can the manifold of history stand with the trans-temporal availability of principles of moral value? I have referred to a cluster of large concepts and theories such as history, historicity, time, temporality, process, and diachronesis. Before fitting a set of versions and portions of these concepts to theorize the task at hand, I will propose a simple phenomenological analysis of a process of moral awareness as a sample of what I aim for.

The model I use below is my own invention as a sketch of the moral change by which an agent deliberating a moral dilemma makes a decisive choice on which she stakes an important part of her identity as a decent person. It is wholly an experiment and a suggestion of what we can do if we take the temporal diachronesis of moral life into account. Begin by regarding subjects as moral agents in constituting interpersonal or social outcomes, actions, or entities, focused on their lived experience. Starting with this, consider the following schema as a model of moral change:

> An action or event —> an observed situation —> a moral quandary —> attention to it —> penetration into it —> understanding of it —> commitment concerning it —> surrender to the need for a decision or action in response to the original action or event

A situation or event becomes an ethical problem or question by getting the attention of some actors. Thereafter increasing numbers of people become aware of the situation. The degree of interest increases the epistemic and affective resources for solving the problem, penetrating it until a relevant community reaches an understanding sufficient for action. The actors choose and exercise their social commitments based on their higher-order commitments. "Surrender" here denotes that intense form of deep commitment to a cause or goal which plays such a large role in human history.

For this model agents are regarded as capable of communication in any medium that is intelligible to others, though sometimes at the cost of great effort. It also regards agents as conscious, or at least increasingly conscious, of their intersubjectivity, at any degree of experience, skill, or neurological capacity whatsoever in their relations with others. As a process, it covers both "primary" and "secondary" intersubjectivity, that is, the range of abilities to regard others as completing one's self or as existing independently of one's ego (Gallagher 2009, 293), including both ego-centric subjectivity and also the matured states in which arise the more consequential states of ethical awareness.[3] Indeed, it is necessary to this story of moral change that this sequence, when applied to the joint activity of two or more persons sharing an interest, experience, need, or shock that ignite the process must cease to be neatly linear, as the agents move through it at different paces and because the development of this awareness by each agent affects the development of the other agents along this path.

The interest of this model, or any model like it, is that it introduces a phenomenological narrative of temporal extension that is stretched out and multiplied by the various courses it takes in individuals and groups that are part of the social effort or entity to be inscribed into the historical point of view, which is thoroughly particularized, as each agentive entity works along different temporalities that ought not to be reduced by axiology, phenomenology of intersubjectivity, or social ontology any more than by bad monocausal historiography or by rationalist metaphysics. Its value to the present inquiry is that it directs our attention to a process over time deformalized by human intentionality and by the huge cast of players in every human situation.

Following this schema of moral change, the subject or subjects discovers in events coming to their attention "temporal structures that call for narration" (Ricoeur 1990, 59). In doing so, they then artefact their own narration(s), borrowing perhaps from older received or remembered narratives but also inevitably somewhat altering them. The "call for narration" thus stems from temporality as the mode of our existence in which we act. But the "call" might be soft or loud, gentle or demanding; the point is that as lived by subjects it grows through their agency. What I call "penetration" is the lived experience of passing through a boundary that encloses one's self away from others. This rebarbative border might be conceptual or affective or social. Also, it can reject admission, no matter how much attention falls upon it, rather than fall to urgency. The metaphor also allows us to say simultaneously that the subject penetrates the matter at hand and that it penetrates her, both at one and the same time. When the results of this mutual ingression are processed, a person starts to have understanding such that compassion takes root in her subjective

experience. Thus, in each of these three states the urgency of the moral call has intensified, become louder and more persuasive. A common way of expressing this is to refer to conscience, in which moral demands that bind us meet the will as felt in our intuitions and practices of freedom in ways that are likely always to be, as they have been, paradoxical.

"Conscience" also covers commitment and surrender, because it is conventionally understood to begin somewhere in the later stages of what here is called understanding. Indeed, this is one of the difficulties in understanding conscience: it has the character of instantaneity, or "fulguration," the Latinate theological word for what we commonly call the "spark of conscience," that instant in which the heart turns. This has value, for it does match the many experiences of conscience; but what is wanted is not a mystery or a generalized term but instead a way to understand values by a closer inspection of lived experience, since axiology is an opportunity for the phenomenological method. Doing this requires, in particular, looking at the generation of values stretched out into "slow motion," or, more correctly, in the diachronic processes of the life-world. So in order to open the whole stretch of the process for reflection I distinguish commitment from its prerequisite of insightful awarenesses; and I distinguish it as well from surrender, which is a greatly under-theorized part of the formation of ethical values.

One chief value of this simple notional framework is that it focuses inquiry in phenomenological axiology on temporality. It opens up the temporality of the moral agent as a phenomenon of her consciousness by theorizing that she would roughly follow a stretched-out pattern in coming to be impressed by the urgency of a moral quandary, whether the quandary is private, as in something familial, or is political and social in nature. But this framework next shows us that because even the most interior moral awareness is activated by reflection on the contents of consciousness there must be not just one but several temporalities in play. This is because embodied consciousnesses relies on several temporalities, such as the fluctuations of the organism's material constituents, or the activity of the unconscious, or the time-scales of social groups of different sizes (such as a family or a religious denomination). From this we quickly see that any exterior condition imports another temporality, such as those of the economy or of the weather. Processes in general have this quality of ramifying interconnections; indeed, it is almost impossible to think of process without including this feature.

Another of its values for normative ethics is that it shows what a rich sphere of emotions and decisive factors we can observe through a phenomenology of moral life. I have referred to surrender, a concept from spiritual traditions also found in Twelve Step thought; it is affectively and intellectually profound. The processes by which information about moral problems sharpens from awareness into deep understanding are not propositional entailments nor are they patternless passions. They lead to the normative force we call moral obligation, or prescription, which is not reducible to either logic or appetites, neither form nor chaos. It is in fact only through philosophical grasp of these moving forces in moral life that we can justify, or even explain, what this kind of obligation, and willing reception of its necessity, can possibly exist and exist as one of the most important features of human existence.

It is now easy to see that in the case of ethical challenges that pertain to collectives of subjects so many temporalities intersect that we ought to call them a polyphony.[4] Whether the subjects as moral agents respond as collectives of individuals or in a more fully corporate manner, the several temporalities of each combine with the temporal processes of other groups as well as those of external events. What the phenomenologist and the moral philosopher ought to observe in this development is that the temporal distension intrinsic to consciousness ceases to be linear and becomes spiraling polyphonic temporalities. At this point the more classical analyses stemming from Husserl — echoed as well by Freud and Aby Warburg (Didi-Huberman 2018) — might balk, holding that retention and protention are meant to analyze solely the subjective experience of time itself as a universal medium (Brentano 1988; Husserl 1991). For Husserl this was a necessity because by understanding the inherence of time in all consciousness we could move from the Cartesian ego as a precipitate of the world and its "permanently solipsistic science" to "the tremendous realm" or "infinite field of the transcendental experience" with its "harmonious flow" (Husserl 1973, 29-31). This flow is the flowing present in which I "empathetically presentify" myself to the world and the world to myself (Theunissen 1984, 80). We are one and the same I in the present and Other in our pasts, though Husserl treats the relation of an I to its own pasts in a complex, rather than an eliminative, way because we proliferate into others and into our pasts and futures. Temporal immanence in the present is the "ultimately valid apodicity" that potentiates the I (Theunissen 1984, 153-154, citing a ms. note by Husserl). From the my home base ego, I fill myself in by fill myself out and outwards. My "transcendental historicality" is mine, based in my "uniqueness" (Husserl 1970, 208, 218).[5]

Here is the core of the mistake I described above that unnecessarily separates axiology off from phenomenology. For limiting temporality to universal subjective time excludes the transgenerational relations within which human life takes place. Under this view, historicity is mine, not that of past and future others as well as mine. If we fully admit, rather than exclude, our predecessors and our successors in their generations, we immediately take them in as persons to whom we might have moral responsibilities. The possibility of any such responsibilities requires consideration, and that is exactly what we do as we move from initial attention to deciding whether or not to commit ourselves to responsive actions or beliefs.

The Husserlian style of analysis of time and self centers upon the present (although the extent of this in his work as a whole is the subject of debate [Staiti 2010]). Heidegger's objection to what Derrida called Husserl's "Living Present" is part of Heidegger's critique of Husserl (Derrida 2016, 139-140). The desirability of connecting the present to the past and to the future is indeed, as Husserl understood, very much like the desirability of working philosophically to connect individual subjective intentional contents to collective intentional contents. At root these two might very well be just the same thing if we sufficiently simplify the matter or abbreviate discussion of it. But phenomenology — not to mention humankind as a whole — has not in general developed this to the level of transgenerational human community.[6]

The diagesis of moral life that I present above, running from quandary to decision, includes a group of developments — those I call understanding, penetration, commitment, and surrender — that we must see in poly-temporality rather than in linear time. Actors hesitate, are distracted, grow discouraged by inwards and outward influences. The weight of a moral claim might take years or centuries to provoke enough persons to respond, as contingencies roll through the lives of persons and communities. It can, as well, take minutes, or even seconds, for an agent to travel from awareness to thorough, sometimes profound, attentive action. But even inside the passage of minutes a polyphony of temporalities unroll themselves in the meeting of external and natural contingencies with the paths of memory in the persons concerned in any given issue.

To this diagesis then must be added two closely related key elements that control the raveling movement of temporalities: memory and communication among persons. Memory in persons that enters the transgenerational stream of communications is the faculty that helps to create society and therefore history. In classical phenomenology, it enables the continuity of consciousness, but it also enables the interdependence that makes societies into intergenerational enterprises. Memory studies have highlighted this and moved attention from the self to group remembrance, but the consequences of this for moral philosophy seem to have been overlooked. For memory is also one of the sources of the failure of coherence in the histories of human affairs because it brings with it repression that yields misdirection and the affective forces of disruptive conflict. Whether it is connecting or disconnecting persons in their moral relations, it is extended through imagination into responses to moral claims. Attention to an observed situation, for example, becomes a process of understanding that progresses to deeper penetrative understanding and thence to commitment because the imagination powers memory in enhancing moral life. Jeffrey Barash argues that "imaginative associations" are formed into symbols that embody and transmit the meaning of memories, especially collective memories (Barash 2016, 47). This is true of the inward deliberations of individuals as well, in which "symbolic embodiment" likewise makes ideals, fears, and needs into powerful presences drawn from past and future. Usually, as Barash points out, symbolization of this sort occurs spontaneously, often at the edges of awareness. But all such "work" is the work of persons, in whom memory and consciousness inhere. It is their labors as agents in the normative web in which we conduct our lives. In this way, recollection of a situation yields a locus by which "symbolic incorporation raises remembrance beyond personal experience to confer upon it significance and communicability in the collective sphere" (Barash 2016, 58).

Communications among persons, often prompted by the sharpness of private memory and based on the forms of intelligibility, such as symbolization, that human cultures have developed, feeds moral issues that reside in memory into the hermeneutic of collectives and of humankind. Communicated memories of moral issues, thoughts, and feelings, do not rest on a transcendental ground. Instead, they build the ground that counts: the deliberation that results in actions that change human affairs through moral progress and moral regress. The rich flux of expression and response is historical, all history being social.

If temporality is to help us understand moral life, we must consider it not only as individual time consciousness but as the bigger sky of the history of human societies. Now, this observation might seem a simple one. But its consequences are that under thus view we are less hampered by the constitution of the subject and, by extension, even less hampered by the metaphysics of subjectivity in either its empirical or its supernatural basis as against the manifold world. The authority for moral value moves reliably from coherent conclusion to the search for answers and from the unity that makes meaning in one way to the plural sphere in which we persons make meaning in other ways, even if persons carry a touch of the divine within themselves.

4. Temporality and ethical value II: Interpersonal values-making

Stretching over persons and groups and through time, the polyphony of temporality into account suggests that linear time is of little use in the matter of the phenomenology of ethical value. The value of some sort of demechanized time for a phenomenological ethical axiology is that the model of polyphony for temporal implication in our common fragility and vulnerability reveals an existential condition by which to take an ethical stance toward others based on shared finitude. Temporal implication permits joint attention — through fear, or hope, or joy, or grief, or love, for example — and by consequence permits "participatory sense-making" (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007; Gallagher 2009). The presence of others shapes our attention to the world (Gallagher 2009, 302). "Our perceptual access to the other's affective expressions" is an aspect of intersubjectivity that lies at the basis of and is active throughout all intersubjectivity (Gallagher 2009, 293). Understanding others involves understanding the world (Gallagher 2009, 303). This concept is in certain respects more important than joint attention. It involves more complicated capabilities, experiences, and processes of subjects. But most importantly for present purposes, it suggests that values arise through interpersonal processes rather than as logical conclusion of "engineered" concepts. The fact that ethical values can and usually do come to be through process of collectives of subjects, in degrees of concentration ranging from association in the unconscious to fanatical mass political movements, means that stating that I am "always and already deeply interlinked with" my predecessors and successors "in various social relations of generativity" and yet "still confined as a historical observer," though true, does not suffice to clarify the co-standing of these two aspects of subjects or even to show how they can co-stand at all (Szanto 2020, 299). Scheler's "co-determination" or Gurwitsch's "consociate partnership" simply point to different aspects of the problem (Szanto 2020, 296, 298).

In order to understand this well, conceptions of the effect of communicated, intelligible memory in the development of moral deliberation should be distinguished from theories of empathy and sympathy used to explain the co-standing of subjects. There are many such theories, but they all involve feeling another as one's self in some way. Empathy and sympathy surely are often parts of moral change. But observe that they are subjective states rather than communications. As such they might contribute to linking persons to one another, but they denote states rather than processes. Because they are static, in general, approaches to these and related concepts do not much advance analysis for two chief reasons.

The first is that the as concepts they lead to denying that the "phenomenal fusion or breakdown of individual boundaries" can be achieved by strong social interaction (Léon, Szanto, and Zahavi 2017, 4856). This is not factually true. People lose themselves in all kinds of objects and socialities. While it might nonetheless be true that the I cannot fully and finally lose itself by its essence, the commitment of phenomenology to this principle of the holistic individual detaches inquiry from the manifold of historical processes that ring all the changes on our relations to ourselves. For even "lost" experiences and alienation can be extremely rich. These, as well as more integrative or unalienated experiences, do lead people to their deepest selves; conversely, too, the most rapturous and rigid experiences of inwardness can open onto the cosmic ocean in which the self disappears and yet generate axiologically rich praxis. If indeed we have ways of sharing emotion, whether by social extension, or by fusion, or by some other alteration of the solitary I, the diachronic processes that achieve this arise out of the specific character of human temporal implication as it incessantly varies temporalities, rather than out of the essence of the I. If the path that Husserl sought from solipsism to intersubjectivity on as large as scale as possible — that path through the contradictories which phenomenology so often attempts to balance in social and ethical fields of inquiry — really exists, it must be sought outside of the terms that originally create the double-bind. Our character as temporal selves can be universalized only in the ways permitted by the consequences of lives we have lived with actual other people who have lived, rather than through new names for the same thing and also rather than by elaborating embodiment or enactivism in terms that are not fully diachronic or processual. This is the reason to reconnect historicity with history, which is, as narratives and meta-narratives, the very act, the many wonderful acts, of collective creation of ethical significance.

The second reason follows from this conclusion. Connection to history shows the source of ethical values and also helps to create them. Our ongoing understanding of the past is a real part of the force of past persons on us through what they did and what happened to them. The fluctuating losses and gains of a subject in the courses of her history and of the broader histories of which she is a part are precisely that force of human temporal implication that gives rise to ethical values. In the paragraph above, I referred to "ethical significance." It is the transgenerational range of history that gives an axiology for phenomenological analysis that we can develop through *interpersonal values-making*. This refers to the difference between meaning (or "sense) and importance or significance; I have in mind the distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Meaning is necessary to but not sufficient for an axiology. Significance is the further understanding that arises from and reaches beyond the basic sense-making of consciousness that a presentist analyses of time-consciousness as "now-points" explains (De Warren 2009; Staiti 2011). In the web of temporalities that inform the history of human life and behavior, persons develop significance in the context outside of their egos and even through and beyond intersubjectivity. It moves out of the constitutive or "fundamental" always on-going time-consciousness into more complex and interdependent interpretations of existence developed by attention throughout spans of time. This attention to increases or decreases in the urgency an action becomes the ethical values the subject holds. Such time-relative urgency is much of what

ethical significance is. The reality of life with others generates the responsibility, or irresponsibility, of each to some or many others along temporal lines that are just as ongoing as the fundamental present and continue in a creative tension with it that characterizes human history. Our responses in every present create significance, which exists in the historical web of sociality. Phenomenological axiology is in reality a part of that, diminished if this way of thinking falls short in recognizing the transgenerational level of deliberation and choice of moral values.

We might re-conceive the necessary irreducible solidity of the individual at the basis of this. The way of doing this that I suggest here is to hold that meaningfulness is the heart of a life-world and making meaning requires interpersonality. Centering interactions with it, "some of which liberate us, and some of which enslave us" (Gallagher 2009, 304), we might begin to re-conceive the social aspect of the individual, not to lose the moral weight of autonomy our responsibility but so as to analyze social entities through the ways in which they shape the individual with whom they stand in putative contrast as ontologically constitutive, influence our participation in collectives, generate the vast array of communications and expressions that groups use and are shaped by, process experience, make meaningfulness in lives and in life, and develop along the polyphonic temporality of actual history.

5. Prescriptivity and social ontology

In a recent essay, Jan-Ivar Lindèn writes that "the temporal reality of history concerns the relation between significance and meaning" (Lindèn 2023, 243). The actual complex polyphony of our interdependence, though founded on contingency, points us in a direction opposite to that in which Heidegger found authentic meaning through finitude organized by death as the great individualizer. To the contrary, the flow of contingent circumstances itself, just because it is multiple, changing from one hand to another in the sphere of the pluralistic manifold that if our life-world, is the movement from *Sinn* to *Bedeuting*, from intentions and limited contexts to meaningfulness in broader and deeper modes.

The development is by definition cumulative. But it need not and very often does not equal progress in the sense of leading agents to choose a more just and kinder world. Moral change can be decline, as I or anyone might judge matters according to their principles. Communicated living memories plus the farther range of understanding the historical past, moves us from intra-generational to inter-generational to transgenerational moral life and whatever sort of knowledge or wisdom inhabits it, just as it does in the sphere of technical an scientific knowledge. The kind of intrinsic meanings that moral life has for us — deep within us, always in front of us, inherent in the normative web of societies and culture — though irreducible to facts or quantified versions of material reality, does share in common with bodies of rationally organized knowledge the power of the way that epistemic bases expand. Whereas bodies of information about the physical world and, to a lesser extent, of the social world tend to augment exponentially — or at least to appear to do so, although with periods of halt, retracing, and regress — moral life has an analogous way of moving because it is part of our history, though it moves without the rationalized pattern that the sciences more often seem to have.

Because we no longer can credit philosophy of history with creating or expressing the cohesive intelligibility it seemed to posit in place of the stable metaphysics of previous shapes of philosophical thought, as Hegel and his successors thought (also as his predecessor Kant thought, in a less distinct but still powerful framework), we are not thereby entitled to walk away from any hope of moral impact from that sum of human behavior which is history. Normative ethics as a systematic enterprise on the one hand and phenomenological investigation into human feeling as a yet more basal study of human actualities on the other both have yet to take on the way in which grasping the diachronesis of moral life can help us to align demands of the universality of moral prescription and the demands of many local loyalties and projects. And philosophy of history must, if it is to be in accord with this project, expand in an unaccustomed direction and in unfamiliar ways.[7]

This point of view requires a more robust and concrete conception of the past than we usually find in phenomenology, or even in process philosophy, much less in analytic philosophy of time. Husserl of course recognized that time and ethics stand together, but our task is to expand our understanding of the depth and power of their relations. But even interpretation of the whole body of his work that finds a greater place for the past in the constitution of consciousness does not re-link consciousness to its creativity as history (De Warren 2009). At most it seems Husserl considered how one's own whole life history can be a foundation for ethical value (Staiti 2010). Pastness becomes merely abstract when the focus is on the way the present is freshly renewed by its futurity.

And yet it is, I argue, the road by which to develop phenomenological axiology because historical studies have been so broadly enriched in their moral implications that they can begin to break free of the "natural attitude," and both historical studies and phenomenology therefore can in concert of some sort enrich ethical axiology. Despite the shyness, justified to an extent, of most academic historians toward both fundamental philosophy and toward expounding history as any sort of ethical guide, or *magister vitae*, the situation of global society and culture after post-modernism calls upon historians for such ethical engagement as against the dehumanization imposed by late-stage global hyper-capitalism. If we can create linkage of phenomenology and historiography, the reward will be a prescriptive axiology for phenomenology grounded in the actual life-world of the sum of human behavior. When taken in the direction of immanent critique, as distinct from critique of norms, we might want to call this critical phenomenology, on the model of the critical social ontology of Rahel Jaeggi or Sally Haslanger (for example) as opposed to standard general social ontology (Jaeggi 2018; Haslanger 2012). But if we are afraid to state an affirmative program of moral prescription and remain instead in the shelter of the empirical, descriptive, and social-scientific character of social ontology, we will not have brought out what history as a moral study can do for us.

Finally, the question remains as to why it is worthwhile to call this axiology prescriptive. Prescription seems unnecessary or harmful because we commonly want to resist moralizing and moralism. Yet phenomenology pursues erasure of the bright line between description and prescription by seeking to know what holds us together as persons and what binds us as societies and

as humankind, none of which can be shown by naturalistic science, rather than the foundations that traditional rationalist metaphysics and science alike seek. And so, if the past — its persons and the world they give us — upholds every society and every one of us, then it is a way to seek to know what we ought to do in so far as we can come to know this not as an objective ground but as our moral necessity. But if our actual history of moral imagination, deliberation, and action creates the prescriptive force we know as moral obligation, then the difference between genesis and validity, or between the temporality of moral life and the more abstract conceptions of rightness and wrongness and of justice and injustice will daunt us less in feeling ourselves confident on secure ground in prescribing for ourselves what is the nest right thing to do. An historical phenomenology can help us to figure out how the facts of history can still teach us, even now amidst so much lost faith.

To follow this line of thought is to help lay a foundation for here is an existential axiology on which phenomenological inquiry and philosophy of history can meet to assist, extend, and enrich each other. This is a path for research. Investigating the reality of the past helps us to see just how individuals and collectives interrelate, rather than to oscillate between these two aspects as binary. It illuminates the specific and actual development of human moral connection in a way that supports a universal approach to the ethical value of these forms of solicitude for humankind in a way that, in my view, the moral psychology of empathy and sympathy cannot do. And it amplifies the force of our transgenerational moral obligations that Walter Benjamin and others explain, making them exemplars of what prescriptive ethics can be and do. These implications require discussions beyond what the present occasion affords. It is a start to those discussions to show how stretching phenomenological inquiry over historical time enables its approach to ethical values and goods.

Endnotes:

1. In this paper I use "ethics" and "moral philosophy" interchangeably (although I prefer the latter term), and I likewise especially use "moral" and "ethical" interchangeably.
2. I prefer the term "interpersonality" to "intersubjectivity" because as a personalist philosopher it serves better to connote the range of life-world and especially the moral agency of persons, as well as because it veers away from the complications of "subjects" and "subjectivity." I use this word in what follows except where the discussion of phenomenological approaches is better served by using the term "intersubjectivity" that is the technical term traditional in and specific to phenomenological discourse.
3. What it excludes is very intense degrees of learned, willful, or tragic alienation from the moral instrumentality the world offers and from human community (including nihilism).
4. My use of this word is inspired in part by Ethan Kleinberg's "Reflections on Theory of History Polyphonic" (Kleinberg 2022/2023).
5. Jeffrey Barash makes this point when he says that memory — and, I take it, history too because of its contingency — "could hardly furnish an absolute basis" for the unified constitution of the subject that Husserl sought. He adds later that "an adequate theory of social time" is required for understanding collectivity (Barash 2016, 74, 88).
6. Within the last few years, however, Hans Ruin's *Being With the Dead* has made an important re-direction toward a transgenerational phenomenology and consequent ontology by developing concepts that found human sociality on our relations with past persons (Ruin 2019). Ruin relies on anthropology, to which phenomenology is akin, as it is indeed also akin to the study of history.

7. Or at least partly unfamiliar: the struggles of neo-Kantianism with "historicism" covered an earlier version of this territory, one that we who live after the disruptions if the previous century cannot again travel in our efforts to grasp the power of moral obligation and to affirm the reality of moral goods and harms. Sophie Marcotte-Chenard (2022) recounts the debate between Dilthey and Rickert in that period and helpfully suggests that "historicism can be partly freed from its negative connotations when understood not as relativism, but as pluralism" (Marcotte-Chenard 2022, 2) — a provisional and incomplete conception that requires something like the approach I outline to affect philosophy of history, much less moral philosophy.

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The Ideal of *Bildung* in the 20th Century: Crisis – Reconfiguration – Erosion?

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Abstract:

The following article addresses a peculiar development, namely the abandonment of the concept of Bildung in Germany; the same state where it has been developed, discussed, and refined. This development can be traced back to the 1950s – despite humanistic Bildung also being under attack during National Socialism – and be ascribed to different dynamics which mutually reinforced each other. Therefore, this article will cover three key aspects regarding the reconstruction of the here hinted at dynamics: Firstly, it will further sketch out the peculiarity of this specific dynamic and further contextualize it historically. Secondly, it will identify Bildung's main adversaries (the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and the empirically-minded educational science) and illustrate their axiomatic presuppositions as well as their coming-into-being. Thirdly, the paper will elaborate on two positions (Reinhart Koselleck and Hans Georg Gadamer) which attempted to argue for the usefulness of the concept despite them ultimately failing, at least nationally. The paper will close with a reflection on key aspects and an informed speculation regarding Bildung's future.

Keywords: Bildung, Critical Theory, Humboldt, history of education, self-cultivation, self-formation

> An educated *(gebildet)* person is not one whom nature has treated generously; an educated person is one who treats the gifts that he has kindly, wisely, properly, and with the highest regard. He who takes this seriously, he who can bear to look with resolute eyes at his own shortcomings and admit them: this is, in my opinion, a duty and no gift; and it constitutes for me, all by itself, an educated person. (Rahel Varnhagen)

1. Introduction

The German educational landscape features a concept that is unique to its geography, history, and language: the concept of *Bildung*. Despite being grounded in a long philosophical tradition – ranging back to the 11th century (cf. Hedley 2021; Neuhaus & Vogt 2022a) or, depending on the

consulted perspective, Ancient Greece (cf. Böhm 2004) – *Bildung* only entered the mainstream discourse as well as the German educational realm in the 18th century (cf. Nordenbo 2002, 342). Considering the manifold intellectual influences the concept of *Bildung* has experienced over time[1], it can be argued that it serves, at least in part, as a projection space (cf. Luhmann & Schorr 1988) for philosophers, educators, and others to think about important aspects of a good life, proper personal conduct, as well as skills and knowledge to acquire (cf. Pieper, Neuhaus & Vogt 2023).

These negotiations of what *Bildung* means have also been influenced by externalities, such as (geo-)politics or economic realities. As proposed by Horlacher (2011), *Bildung* served as a unifying narrative in the process of state or nation-building (see also Tröhler 2006) providing a "hidden national grammar" (Stieger 2020a), and helping Germany to demarcate itself from its French foes during the Napoleonic Wars and beyond. However, the discourse on *Bildung* has also changed the prior cited externalities as Wilhelm von Humboldt – the creator of one of the most comprehensive and compelling definitions of *Bildung* (cf. Alves 2019) – also created the foundations of Germany's educational system as he was selected responsible for doing so in 1809/10 (cf. Sorkin 1983). Humboldt's appointment to the position was the result of Germany's defeat to France on the battlefield as the emperor attempted to re-vitalize Germany's potential by transforming its educational sector (cf. Vossler 1954). Depending on the selected perspective, the longevity of Humboldt's ideas and ideals can be considered the result of a potent philosophy, a convenient political climate, or both.

As briefly illustrated, the concept of *Bildung* has served as a central cornerstone in Germany's educational philosophy, practice, and public discourse (cf. Horlacher 2012). However, regarding present times, a substantive change can be noted. The term *Bildung* still exists and is frequently referred to – so do compound words, such as *Bildungssystem* or *Bildungsinstitution* –, yet the underlying ideas and ideals have been replaced by more measurable concepts, such as skills and competencies (cf. Vogt & Neuhaus 2021). Historically speaking, this dynamic can be traced back to the 1950s[2], in which the idea(l) of *Bildung* has been challenged[3] – by two adversaries: The Critical Theory originating in Frankfurt and the empirical turn being perpetuated by international education agencies.

This paper aims to reconstruct the dynamics that led Germany's educational landscape to abandon the concept of *Bildung* (or to be more precise, to only use it superficially). Therefore, this paper follows a threefold structure: Firstly, the already mentioned lines of criticism (Frankfurt School and the empirical turn) will be outlined and further contextualized regarding the associated historical circumstances (section 2). After having illustrated the uttered criticisms, these will be re-evaluated by considering the perspectives provided by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Reinhart Koselleck (section 3); both argued respectively that *Bildung* cannot be undermined on the Marxist or empirical basis; however, the reinterpretation made by Gadamer and Koselleck were unable to prevent the concept from being abandoned, or at least from losing the centrality it had had in the German-speaking world until the First World War. The paper will close with a critical reflection on the dynamics sketched out in the prior sections and will end with an informed guess regarding the future developments of the idea of *Bildung* (section 4).

2. Bildung and its Adversaries

As already briefly outlined, Germany's educational science and institutions faced a decisive phase post-1945 in which they either had to re-emphasize old ideals or re-calibrate them regarding their normative orientation. Generally speaking, the idea of *Bildung*, with its grounding in the humanistic tradition, was first neglected and later replaced during National Socialism[4] (1933-1945) with a concept that catered more towards the fascist political- ideological agenda of the time (cf. Aurin 1983). Speaking for the educational realm, the times from 1933 to 1945 have primarily been characterized by a lack of coherent theories and a pronounced focus on power politics manifesting themselves especially on the institutional level (cf. Kater 1979). After the war, while the Federal Republic of Germany strived to rebuild itself, its educational landscape struggled to identify a new normative orientation. In part, this was also the result of two newly emerging schools of thought, namely the Critical Theory from Frankfurt with their critical framework of *Halbbildung* as well as the emergence of a more empirically minded approach towards education. Both can be considered hostile to the humanistic ideal of *Bildung*. The following sections will outline some key arguments of these schools of thought and further contextualize them with historical observations.

2.1. Critical Theory, the Frankfurt School, and *Halbbildung*

Theodor W. Adorno commences his criticism by laying out Humboldt's main presuppositions, namely that *Bildung* is supposed to be a holistic endeavor that is primarily driven by encountering foreign elements – i.e. knowledge, languages, different disciplines, etc. – and the attempt to incorporate these into one's being[5] (cf. Dörpinghaus 2015, 467). Through these acts of alienation and subsequent incorporation, the human being is – following Humboldt's ideal – developing its forces to the fullest. According to Humboldt's elaborations, this process of *Bildung* can only take place in a protected space because externalities such as economic woes, considerations of usefulness, the dynamics of power, etc. would hinder and corrupt the process of the individual's free development (cf. Clemens 2020). Creating such a space is very likely to be an utopian task, yet Humboldt aimed to get as close to this ideal as possible by setting the German school system up as a bubble protected from the 'real world' in 1809/10.

The core of Adorno's criticism is the claim that this protective space *Bildung* was supposed to provide collapsed or, more precisely, came too close to the 'real world' and thereby aligned itself with the associated realities and power structures. Adorno conceptualizes *Bildung* as an entity which, in order to exist, needs to oscillate between the inner process of understanding the world and the real-life application of *Bildung*[6] (Neuhaus 2021, 122). By only focusing on real-life applications (people only spending time on what is most useful, i.e. to earn money or gain power) *Bildung* is not just reduced in its scope but also only perpetuates existing structures and creates social conformity (cf. Hutmacher 2019, 67). On the contrary, if *Bildung* is exclusively located in the realm of inward-facing processes of understanding and only occupied with creating congruence in this theoretical realm, it likely results in a self-righteous ideology that neglects its public responsibilities (cf. ibid.). In

the years after the Second World War, Adorno suspected the central crisis of *Bildung* (cf. Hutter 2009, 210) in the one-sided approach towards it, namely the over-emphasis on application-oriented (knowledge) gain. Due to his interest in culture and mass media, Adorno argues that cultural products, e.g. operas, art, or literature, are primarily *consumed* with the aim of application-oriented gains, such as bravado or one's social demarcation (cf. Tischer 1989, 8/9). As Adorno equates culture and *Bildung* (cf. Neuhaus 2021), this mode of consuming or perceiving culture is considered *Halbbildung* in Adorno's lingua. *Halbbildung* should not be mistaken as merely a poor, partial, or deficient education in terms of content or curriculum, instead, it is the diametric opposite of *Bildung* (cf. Bulthaup 2007) as it neglects an entire dimension of *Bildung* (the inward-facing search for truth). Following Humboldt and, by extension, also Adorno, the key process of Bildung is the constant and on-going oscillation between these approaches or extrema – inward-facing reflection and outward-oriented application –, which is – following Adorno, in the given economic configuration of society – made impossible by neglecting one of the two sides and thereby corrupting the very core of *Bildung,* ultimately resulting in *Halbbildung*.

The Frankfurt School and its Critical Theory, spearheaded by Adorno and Horkheimer, saw and still sees the underlying (primarily economic) realities as the key factor inhibiting actual processes of *Bildung* as well as deep, meaningful engagement with the arts. Also, a certain part of society is primarily held responsible for this degenerative process, namely the *Bildungsbürgertum*. This group consists of people who advanced in society due to their achievements in educational arrangements and institutions, translated these achievements into higher social status as well as economic resources, and then closed the door behind them trying to demarcate themselves from the rest of society (cf. Neuhaus, Jacobsen & Vogt 2021). In Adorno's analysis of society, he indicates that the *Bildungsbürgertum* first emerged in the 19th century resulting from Humboldt's educational plans and, in line with Nietzsche's prediction, that the "triumph of the middle class" and the "crisis of values" will be the "the seeds of the destruction of European civilization" (Washburn 2019, 173). The cruel irony in this prediction is that a generation educated on the ideals of (new) humanism committed (or, at least, enabled) mass murder (Neuhaus 2021, 118) during the times of National Socialism. The key problem of the idea of *Bildung* did, according to Adorno and his disciples, not vanish after the end of the war, but just transformed itself in scope and aim. Lundbye Cone (2018, 1025) summarizes these ongoing and/or underlying problems as follows:

> Witnessing the rise of modernity and individualism through the twentieth century, Adorno picked up the notion of *Halbbildung* as a pertinent picture for describing what he experienced as an increasing narcissism and quasi-engagement amongst the bourgeoisie in Western Germany in the years following the Second World War.

Considering Adorno's criticism of the idea of *Bildung* as well as its degeneration in modern societies into *Halbbildung*, it can be suspected that *Bildung* lost appeal not just as a cultural and philosophical framework but also as a normatively set goal for educational endeavors as well.

Accordingly, the abandonment of the concept of *Bildung* after the war can be considered the result of its suspected enablement of National Socialism but also the result of Adorno's substantial criticism which brands *Bildung,* at least in modern, capitalistic societies, as an impossible endeavor; people still following the paradigm of *Bildung* are thereby deemed as elitist and pseudo-educated (or, following Adorno's lingua, *halbgebildet*).

2.2. The Empirical Turn of Educational Science

While the criticism from the disciples of Critical Theory originated in Germany and heavily referenced German history as a reason to abandon the concept of *Bildung*, *Bildung*'s second adversary, the emergence of empirical educational science, has been imported from the United States. However, there were also contextual factors that helped this approach to become dominant in Germany.

The backstory of the empirically-minded approach can be traced back to the early 20th century USA, in which two fronts – the administrative progressives and pedagogical progressives – fought for the transformation of the United States' educational landscape. The pedagogical progressives can be considered the continuation of Dewey's child-centered ideals in which "holistic form" is regarded as important and "where multiple domains of skill and knowledge are integrated into thematic units and projects" (Labaree 2005, 281). On the contrary, the administrative progressives focused on standardization, assurance of quality through management, and measurement. Disciples of this branch aimed at a kind of educational instruction that would be free from philosophical or ideological positions and debates (cf. Tröhler 2019, 8). Primarily "social efficiency" (Labaree 2005, 281) and job readiness were considered relevant factors.

The self-characterization of the administrative progressives as "ideology-free" (Tröhler 2015) supposedly manifests itself in the methodological approach as large quantitative studies only analyze the objective data at hand without putting a distinctive spin on it; at least, that is the (questionable) claim. As such, the administrative progressives found a natural ally in behaviorism as both approaches shared methodological considerations but also ideological viewpoints as they agreed that "American teachers had been seduced by the false ideals of progressive education instead of becoming committed to a modern technological worldview" (Tröhler 2013a, 5). B.F. Skinner (1954, 27), a leading figure in behaviorism, comments on the educational situation as follows: "Skills are minimized in favor of vague achievements, educating for democracy, educating the whole child, educating for life, and so on."

These two diverging approaches, the administrative and pedagogical progressives, have been in a constant struggle for supremacy. However, in 1957 the Sputnik shock unbalanced the dispute as politics, driven by the dynamics of the Cold War, favored the output-oriented administrative approach focusing on improving learning (especially in the STEM fields) and helped it gain momentum by setting up national large-scale tests and later relating the results of these measurements to school funding (Neuhaus & Vogt 2022b). Also, relevant positions – educational planners, supranational institutions, etc. – have been given to people who either stemmed from the camp of administrative progressives or looked with favor on it (cf. Tröhler 2016). The Sputnik shock affected not just the

American educational landscape but, through international organizations such as the OECD, its subsection the CERI (the Center for Educational Research Innovation), as well as the United Nations[7], also manifested itself globally (cf. Tröhler 2013b; Neuhaus, Jacobsen & Vogt 2021). Accordingly, the majority of globally operating testing, evaluation, and monitoring agencies can be considered off-shoots from the initiatives based on this bureaucratic mindset and launched in the 1960s (cf. Tröhler 2016).

In the early 1960s, the dominant narrative in the Western industrialized countries was that the West was falling behind in education and would, without intervention, also fall behind in the relevant fields of the hard sciences and thereby lose its position to the USSR as a political and economic powerhouse. The narrative of economic failure and the inability to compete with other states also manifested itself in Germany, powered by Georg Picht's book '*Die Bildungskatastrophe*' (The Educational Catastrophe) published in 1964[8] (cf. Lambrecht 2008). While Picht started his career with a strong belief in humanistic education (cf. Schmoll 2013), his experiences in educational policy but also his reception of OECD data (cf. Herrlitz 2002) turned him into a supporter of the bureaucratic policies focused on measurable indicators as tools of decision-making.

Picht's arguments seem to resonate with the *Zeitgeist* as his criticism sparked debates on the state and goals of the educational system; these debates later resulted in the establishment of newly founded monitoring and consulting agencies as well as structural changes in the educational system. One such agency is the 'Max Planck Institut für Bildungsforschung' which was first founded as a subsection of the Max Planck Institute in 1963 and has operated as an independent institute since 1971 (cf. Tenorth 2023). Another relevant agency from the field is the DIPF (Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung) in Frankfurt, founded in 1950/51 with the support of US expertise (cf. Behm & Reh 2016). Both institutes operate until the present day and can be considered powerhouses; also, the themes of measuring and optimizing educational instruction resonate strongly in these institutions and dominate their research profiles (cf. ibid.).

The here-outlined international as well as domestic dynamics resulted in an environment that was keen on measuring and improving educational instruction to produce highly skilled or, following the empirical lingua, competent students (cf. Vogt & Neuhaus 2021b). International pressure on Germany has amplified over time and culminated in 2001 when Germany received, based on its self-understanding, relatively poor PISA results resulting in public outcry and yet more rhetoric of crisis (cf. Schwager 2005). While the dynamics from the 1960s onwards favored research and politics stemming from the empirical-quantitative field, the PISA shock in 2001 amplified this tendency yet another time (cf. Grigat 2012). As such, the status of humanistic *Bildung* is further denigrated, neglected, and replaced by the internationally more transferable framework of competencies and competence-based learning (cf. Liessmann 2012).

3. In Defense of *Bildung* as a critical and reflexive concept

In its golden years, between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 20th century,

the core objective of the ideal of *Bildung* was to foster personal uniqueness through self-development while also harmonizing it with communal ties (cf. Alves 2019; Böhm 2004). As such, it encompassed a comprehensive agenda for societal change and reforms through the recasting of the relationship of individuals with themselves and the cultural realm. Its cohesive influence stemmed from its aspiration to reflexively incorporate into the individual core cultural goods and knowledge contents, thus bringing together subjective and objective culture. The concept's semantic flexibility and strong evocative capacity permitted diverse applications and understandings across time, facilitating its enduring relevance.

However, as outlined in the prior sections, the cultural climate in the post-war decades became increasingly hostile to the ideal of *Bildung*. On the one hand, the classical ideal of *Bildung* was denounced as the false consciousness of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, averse to politics, which had been responsible for the rise of Nazism and the catastrophe that resulted from it. On the other hand, the educational anxiety resulting from the acceleration of scientific and technological change led to the bureaucratization of the educational system. The language, still with theological echoes (cf. Bühler, Bühler & Osterwalder 2013), of interiority and personality formation gave way to the language of educational investment and the formation of human capital.

Some of the arguments used against *Bildung* at that time have been repeated ever since. In an article, Masschelein and Ricken (2003) state that in the 'learning society' the concept of *Bildung* has lost any appeal it may have had in the past and is no longer capable of playing any critical role in the field of education. Gruschka (2001) also considers *Bildung* to be an outdated and dysfunctional pedagogical concept. The problem would be its normative content, always linked to the idea of an unfulfilled promise. In Gruschka's view, the concept of *Bildung* implies a normative 'idea of humanity' that functions as a mechanism of control and exclusion in our contemporary societies. Biesta (2002, 2003) sees a certain value in the concept of *Bildung*, as it allows us to explore how education can be more than just the transmission of content from one generation to the next. However, in Biesta's view, *Bildung* was a specific response to a specific question in the German-speaking territories in the 19th century, namely, how to create unity and citizenship in a fragmented society undergoing rapid modernization. For him, the modern conception of *Bildung* as 'rational liberation' is no longer possible in a world where difference and multiculturalism are taken seriously.

In the last two decades, however, we have also seen an attempt to rehabilitate the concept of *Bildung*, not only in Germany but also in other countries (in English-speaking countries, Bildung is connected to the tradition of 'liberal education'). The concept of *Bildung* is seen as a way of designating the qualitative aspects that are irreducible to any attempt at quantification and measurement and would be an essential pedagogical concept that we could not give up.

Two collections bear witness to this renewed interest in *Bildung*. In *Educating Humanity: Bildung in Postmodernity*, authors such as L. Løvlie, K. P. Mortensen, and S. E. Nordenbo, among others, come together to think about how the classic idea of the education of the self can make sense of the education of humanity in the information age – an insight which is echoed in further

collections of this sort (e.g. Kergel et al. 2022; Pieper & Neuhaus 2024). The contributors to the collection share the premise that the legacy of humanist thought is still necessary and relevant for dealing with the dilemmas of today's society. Another collection, published in Germany, *Was ist Bildung?* (2012), is an anthology of texts on the subject, from classics such as Herder, Humboldt, and Schiller to contemporary authors. The collection also tries to bring classical German humanism closer to the perspectives of Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, and Judith Butler. Rebekka Horlacher's studies on the history and uses of the concept of *Bildung* are also worth mentioning. Horlacher (2011, 2012, 2017) takes issue with the ways *Bildung* is increasingly acknowledged in current debates on educational matters, including issues such as standardization, teaching to the test, evidence-based policy, and high-stakes testing. Her books and studies aim to dispel confusion and misunderstandings about *Bildung* by exploring the concept's origins and its historical applications. By doing so, she provides educators with a clear understanding of *Bildung* and its potential benefits, paving the way for its effective implementation in education.

Part of the misunderstandings about the meaning and historical role of *Bildung* are due to a partial and superficial reading of the concept. More recent approaches tend to clarify the debate, dissolving old prejudices and arguments. Because of their analytical depth and conceptual sophistication, two central references for this revival of interest in the concept of *Bildung* are the classic studies on the subject by Gadamer and Koselleck. Gadamer chooses the concept of *Bildung* as a central reference in his proposal for a philosophical hermeneutics that should serve as a framework for the human sciences. Unlike the natural sciences, whose purpose is to make the world predictable, the human sciences aim to understand the human and incorporate it into us as a formative experience. For this reason, the human sciences cannot give up the humanistic tradition, as well as the classic concept of *Bildung*, connected to it.

According to Koselleck, the link with notions like autonomy, self-determination, and reflexivity constitutes a foundational and enduring aspect of the *Bildung* concept. This association has persisted despite the catastrophes of the 20th century and the societal shifts brought about by advancements in technology and the rise of consumerism. Consequently, its capacity for critique endures, notwithstanding the pushback it received in the post-war era. Within pedagogy, *Bildung* remains a fundamental framework for rethinking the objectives of education beyond the utilitarian managerial focus on human capital development and large-scale testing. Below we will analyze Gadamer's and Koselleck's positions in more detail.

3.1. Gadamer – Truth and Method

The fundamental claim of *Truth and Method* is that the advancement of modern science and technology has transformed how we perceive the world and ourselves, causing us to overlook other experiences of truth embedded in the tradition of the *Geisteswissenschaften* and art. In the book's first part, Gadamer opposes the Enlightenment's conception of the method to the humanist tradition's search for *Bildung*. Gadamer argues that the obsession of the modern human sciences

with objectivity and method has obscured that which constitutes the truth and the positive significance of the humanities: that they inevitably involve the understander in their understanding. While the natural sciences aim to offer explanations that enable us to predict the behavior of a phenomenon seen as an 'instance of', the human sciences aim to "understand the phenomenon itself in its unique and historical concreteness." (TM[9], 4). For the human sciences, the knower cannot be separated from that which she knows.

Thus, the hermeneutic circle is not an obstacle to be eliminated for the sake of objectivity, but the very condition of knowledge. Accordingly, in his theory of hermeneutic experience, Gadamer argues that any understanding begins with our preunderstanding and prejudices, thus rehabilitating tradition and authority as sources of knowledge. The understanding happens when there is an encounter of traditions, a "fusion of horizons" between the subject and the object. To achieve this, we have to become aware of the silent work of history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) that shapes our historical constitution as linguistic beings that can only relate to the world through the medium of language.

The positivistic obsession with the method has led to the rupture of the connection to the humanistic tradition, which has become increasingly strange to us. So, one of the main tasks attributed by Gadamer to his book is to restore the meaning of the tradition, i.e., to state what this tradition consists of. He summarizes the humanist tradition by remembering four key concepts that he refers to as its guiding ideas: *Bildung*, common sense, judgment, and taste. Among these, *Bildung* is the first for it reminds us that the humanities aim to give form to the individual, her personality, and her mind, i.e., the proper function of the humanistic tradition is to provide her with a culture or education. So considered, *Bildung* offers the individual common sense, a capacity for judgment, and taste according to the models and lessons of history. According to Gadamer, the idea of *Bildung* was "perhaps the greatest idea of the eighteenth century, and it is the concept which is the atmosphere breathed by the human sciences in the nineteenth century, even if they are unable to offer any epistemological justification for it." (TM, 9). The idea of *Bildung* is initially intimately associated with the idea of culture. He recalls the basic definition Herder has given of the idea of *Bildung*: "rising up to humanity through culture", or as Gadamer rephrases it "the properly human way of developing one's natural talents and capacities" (TM, 10). But, in Humboldt's times arises an increasingly sharp difference between *Kultur* and *Bildung*, which Humboldt deems a "disposition of mind" that is "both higher and more inward" (Humboldt quoted in TM, 10). Now the word evokes the mystical view that "man carries in his soul the image of God, after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in himself." (TM, 10). *Bildung*, in this sense, describes the result of the inner process of formation and cultivation rather than the process *per se*. Consequently, *Bildung* is viewed not merely as a way to cultivate one's talents, i.e., as a means to an end, but instead as a continual, never-ending process with no goals outside itself.

To substantiate his definition of *Bildung*, Gadamer relies on Hegel's understanding of it (Nielsen & Lynch, 2022; Odenstedt, 2008). Like other authors in the German classicism tradition, Hegel envisages *Bildung* as a rise up of ourselves to the idea of humanity inside us[10]. In Hegel's view,

the goal of *Bildung* is to surpass nature by instilling beliefs, norms, and customs until they become ingrained habits. This process of *Bildung* challenges the child's insistence on prioritizing its own beliefs and desires. However, the second nature developed through this *Bildung* can later be refined through formal education, creating what Hegel describes as a 'third nature'. Hegel suggests that this is one of the objectives of studying history. An individual who has undergone *Bildung* no longer unquestioningly accepts the validity and significance of their culture. Instead, they achieve reconciliation with it by adopting a more reflective, universal perspective.

But Gadamer rejects Hegel's contention that this universal perspective amounts to achieving absolute knowledge, i.e., an unconditioned state that grants us a kind of intellectual mastery over the world. Gadamer argues that being an educated (*gebildet*) individual is best understood as a transition toward maturity. As we reach this mature state, we become so educated that education itself becomes, as the ancient Greeks would have said, an *ethos* – a fundamental aspect of our character, our fundamental beliefs, and our way of existing.

Thus, Gadamer envisions *Bildung* as a process induced by the incorporation of particular perspectives of the other that continually defies our established beliefs and compels us to broaden our perspective:

> That is what, following Hegel, we emphasized as the general characteristic of *Bildung*: keeping oneself open to what is other - to other, more universal [allgemeinere] points of view. It embraces a sense of proportion and distance in relation to itself, and hence consists in rising above itself to universality [*Allgemeinheit*]. To distance oneself from oneself and from one's private purposes means to look at these in the way that others see them. [...] The universal viewpoints to which the cultivated man [*der Gebildete*] keeps himself open are not a fixed applicable yardstick but are present to him only as the viewpoints of possible others. (TM, 16)

By exploring what is unfamiliar, foreign, and different, we broaden and enrich our limited perspective and historical context. In this journey of personal development, self-awareness is attained through a dialogue with the other. In this interaction, we aim to merge perspectives and to fusion of horizons. Gadamer holds that the mature state, so achieved, i.e., the *ethos* of the educated person, is precisely what makes possible the experience of truth in the human sciences and what distinguishes them from the natural sciences. While the goal of the natural sciences is to validate universal knowledge claims using the scientific method, the human sciences aim to justify interpretations of individual human experiences through the broader understanding that can only be provided by *Bildung*. Accordingly, whereas in the natural sciences, the method is what assures the universal validity of knowledge, in the human sciences the universality dwells in the acquisition of the capacities for common sense, judgment, and taste, which are necessary to orient us in the world and to make sense of the human experience.

3.2. Koselleck's Conceptual History of Bildung

Koselleck's main treatment of the concept of *Bildung* is to be found in his text "On the

Anthropological and Semantic Structure of *Bildung*", which was published as the general introduction to the four-volume work on the history of the cultivated bourgeoisie in the 19th century Germany, [german: *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*]. In contrast to Gadamer, Koselleck is not fundamentally interested in making *Bildung* part of a new philosophical framework, but more modestly in retracing its historical and semantic trajectory using the tools provided by the conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*).

Perhaps precisely because it is more descriptive in nature, Koselleck's text sheds light on the historical role of the ideal of *Bildung* and helps to dispel various misunderstandings resulting from a superficial and reductive reading of the concept. Koselleck begins his investigation by observing that *Bildung* cannot be reduced to its institutional preconditions, nor can it be dismissed by the critique of ideology as the false consciousness of those who believe themselves to be educated.

In his historical-semantic investigation, Koselleck views *Bildung* as a dynamic meta-concept that transcends any specific ideology, intellectual trend, or particular social class. As a supra-political concept, *Bildung* is found in various ideologies, and is theoretically compatible with any social stratum, as it appeals to individuals regardless of their background or social status. According to Koselleck, the permanence of the concept and its semantic stability for two hundred years is precisely due to its reflexibility, openness, and resistance to easy reductions:

> No definitive knowledge and no single discipline, no political stance or social pregiven, no denominational affiliation and no religious tie, no ideological option or philosophical preference, not to mention any specific aesthetic inclination in art and literature, is sufficient to characterize *Bitdung*. With respect to all concrete exemplifications in its life-world *(Lebenswelt), Bildung* is a metaconcept that constantly adapts to the empirical conditions of its own possibility (Koselleck, 2002, 184).

However, the concept's content is socially influenced because not everyone is in the condition to appropriate cultural elements to effectively build a personal culture. Nevertheless, as Koselleck points out, it would be a methodological error to limit *Bildung* to its emergence context around 1800 and to the neo-humanist, neo-classical, and romantic discourses that supported it during this period.

According to Koselleck, the *Sonderweg* interpretations[11] linking the classic concept of *Bildung* with traits like introversion, passivity, and apoliticism distort its true meaning. As a holistic development of the individual, *Bildung* doesn't lead to passive contemplation of high culture but rather urges individuals to engage with the world, communicate, and dedicate their energy to the betterment of society. It stimulates the *vita activa* rather than the selfish cultivation of inner life: "*Bildung* does not lead to contemplative passivity but instead always necessitates communicative achievements, leading to the *vita active*" (Koselleck 2002, 181).

Koselleck also emphasizes the critical and emancipatory nature of the concept of *Bildung*, which was considered the foundation for the emergence of a new society, no longer based on birth privileges but on individual merit and talent. Therefore, education should be general and formal rather than vocational, as vocational training, in a society of estates, was always tied to individuals' origins and social status. The aim was to free people from predetermined roles dictated by the social

order. It was precisely the detachment of this ideal from the world of work that gave it an emancipatory character. It was believed that education would empower individuals to freely choose their profession, replacing authority and tradition with personal autonomy and judgment.

Hence the link between the concepts of *Bildung* and *Aufklärung*. As Koselleck emphasizes, in contrast to the strong anti-clerical character of the French Enlightenment, in Germany, the language of Enlightenment remained theologically impregnated. Both concepts emerged at the same time, in the last third of the eighteenth century, and both were associated with the hope of redemption and the educational imperative of perfecting ourselves as a path to progress and societal change. Koselleck states that *Bildung* is both the result of Enlightenment and an answer to it. *Bildung* is, in a way, nothing other than *Aufklärung* turned inside out to generate the conditions for the self-realization of the individual in society.

> The Kantian demand of self-determination, a morally general obligation, was pluralized, historically reproduced, and individualized, without, however, loosening the tether to the Enlightenment. Kant's demand: "Have the courage to use your own understanding!" – this motto of the Enlightenment was directed at the whole person and his self-formation *(Selbstbildung).* "*Bildung* of the mind without *Bildung* of the heart and of taste results just in Enlightenment." With this, Enlightenment was not bid farewell, as little as upbringing *(Erziehung)* was separated from the means of formal education *(Ausbildung).* Rather, both were integrated into a communicative process [...] (Koselleck, 2002, 180).

Contrary to the so-called *Sonderweg* thesis, Koselleck also highlights the emancipatory elements of the *Bildung* ideal. He demonstrates that between the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first one of the nineteenth century, the concept of *Bildung* had a markedly emancipatory function, and was strongly associated with ideas such as the independence of all external authority (churches, State, parties, all those that claim the role of tutors of humanity, to use Kant's expression), the liberation of the hierarchies of estates, which at that time still regulated social relations in Germany, and the rejection of theological precepts and dogmas, both Protestant and Catholic.

The ideal of *Bildung* had as its fundamental objective to enable the affirmation of the individual singularity through the formation and development of the self and, at the same time, to reconcile it with the community bond. It implied a whole program of social transformation through the inner transformation of individuals. Its integrative force was in the ambition of reflectively incorporating to the subject the cultural goods and the contents of knowledge, uniting subjective and objective culture. The semantic opening of the concept and its great evocative power allowed a diversity of uses and interpretations over time and contributed to its circulation to the present. According to Koselleck, the association with ideas such as autonomy, self-determination, and reflexivity is one of the basic and structural features of the *Bildung* concept, which was maintained even after the catastrophes of the twentieth century and the transformations in social life resulting from the development of technoscience (Koselleck, 1990).

4. Reflections on the (Im-)Mortality of Bildung

This article's aim was to reconstruct the dynamics which led to the downfall of the German concept of Bildung. As it could be shown, the two presented adversaries – the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory as well educational science's empirical turn – played a major role in the obliteration of Bildung. Summarizing, it can be stated that the term Bildung is still frequently used in the German language, yet it has very little to do with the concept as outlined by German philosophy's greats. The renunciation from the idea and ideal of Bildung took place despite powerful, intellectual agents – as presented here, Gadamer and Koselleck – advocating its usefulness.

However, while some observers consider Bildung to be relict of the past (cf. Biesta 2002; 2003), others argue that at least some aspects of Bildung – Vogt and Neuhaus (2021a, 162) differentiate between Bildung's superstrate and substrate layer – have temporal-spatial continuity as they address universal human dynamics, such as (but not limited to) moral education/ acquisition of wisdom (cf. Jakubik 2023), critical thinking/ reflection (Elmborg 2022), or goal-setting (Sanderse 2024). Such claims of universality are echoed when Bildung is being ascribed "archetypical" traits (cf. Neuhaus & Vogt 2022a); the same authors (Vogt & Neuhaus 2021, 164/165) further speculate that Bildung – despite currently being "at its weakest point" – will "resurrect yet another time". Instead of summarizing ideas of this article or providing a, more or less generic, outlook on future research, we would like to further specify the speculation by the authors mentioned: Bildung's resurrection will not take place within Germany but primarily outside of it as – shown in the preceding discussion – adversarial positions are too pronounced in Germany at the time. However, outside of Germany, an empirically-minded and output-oriented educational sector has dominated long since, a phenomenon Biesta (2022) has tried to describe as learnification. Simultaneously, this system has also been hijacked by a neoliberal agenda (cf. Mintz 2021; Ambrosio 2013) and, again following Biesta's (2022) argument, has actively excluded meaningful areas of life from the educational realm (cf. also Teschers, Neuhaus & Vogt 2024) creating highly skilled, yet disenfranchised, disoriented, and disappointed graduates. Bildung is suspected to create a counter-balance to this current tendency (cf. Hardy, Salo & Rönnermann 2015) by inspiring educators, students/ learners, and others to think outside the given box and (re-)imagine educational endeavors which are holistic in nature. Bildung is a promising candidate to serve as an inspirational force, yet primarily outside of Germany.

Endnotes:

1. As illustrated by Vogt and Neuhaus (2021a) as well as by Alves (2019), the concept of *Bildung* has been defined and negotiated by a plethora of scholars, philosophers, and others and has often incorporated new aspects corresponding to the *Zeitgeist*. Especially the period of German Idealism and Humanism have proven themselves to be of extensive value regarding the discourse on *Bildung*.
2. Here it should be noted that during the Third Reich (1933-45), the concept of *Bildung* – with its focus on individualization, self-cultivation, etc. – was canceled by the National Socialists and replaced with *Erziehung*, which focuses more on drill, emulation, and obedience (cf. Benecke & Link 2022).

3. Regarding the development of the concept of *Bildung*, it should be noted that Germany's educational science landscape has not fully abandoned the idea of *Bildung* as the works of Koller (and colleagues) on a transformative theory of *Bildung* (cf. Koller 2023) have shown. Yet, the transformative theory of *Bildung* is considered by some (e.g. Stieger 2020b) rather the expression of a continuous struggle of *Bildung* instead of its re-vitalization.
4. Nickel (1970) points to the fact that there have been some attempts to amalgamate Germany's humanistic tradition and National Socialism in the educational realm, yet none of the attempts has widely been adopted and education during National Socialism was primarily oriented towards drill and obedience; thereby diminishing and undermining the idea of *Bildung*.
5. Adorno's reception of Humboldt's ideas is, at least in part, influenced by the reading of Hegel (cf. Clemens 2020) as both – Humboldt and Hegel – rely on processes of estrangement/ alienation and incorporation/ atonement (cf. Sandkaulen 2014).
6. It can be argued that this problem has already been identified by Schiller in his attempt to reconcile Bildung by sketching out his idea of Herzenbildung (cf. Alves & Neuhaus 2023).
7. Almost needless to say, these institutions have primarily been staffed with scholars from educational psychology, psychology, and economics, as well as further empirically minded (read as quantitively-oriented) fields (cf. Ydesen & Andreasen 2021). While the selection of relevant disciplines for the global re-design of education may appear odd at first sight – teachers/ practitioners, educational historians, and others have completely been excluded –, it should also be considered that, within the dynamics of the Cold War, the OECD claimed that education was "too important to be left solely to the educators" (OECD 1961, 35).
8. Picht also wrote a series of articles, comments, and opinion pieces that catered his views to larger audiences.
9. All Gadamer's quotes are from the Weinsheimer and Marshall translation of *Wahrheit und Methode* (*Truth and Method*, Bloomsbury, 2004), abbreviated hereafter as TM.
10. In the words of Humboldt: "The ultimate task of our existence is to give as much substance as possible to the concept of humanity in our person, whether in the duration of our life or beyond, through the traits [*Spuren*] that we left behind from our vital activity. This can only be achieved through the linking of our self and the world to the more vivid, free and universal reciprocity [*Wechselwirkung*]" (Humboldt, 1994, 12). For authors such as Humboldt and Goethe, the cultivated individual is seen as a symbolic synthesis of all mankind. The point is that without the cultivation of the self, there could be no individuation. *Bildung*, thus, designates the process of the balanced, all-round, and multidirectional development of the individual's forces. Since each individual would contain all the potentialities of mankind in germ, unfolding their personality and their forces in all directions would be the inner destiny of each and every one. (Alves, 2019).
11. A subject of intense debate among historians since the 1960s, the *Sonderweg* theory (special path) was used to explain the historical origins of Nazism and the Holocaust. Proponents of this theory argue that, unlike other core nations of Western Europe such as England and France, Germany followed an anti-liberal and authoritarian path to modernization. They argue that power remained concentrated in the hands of the feudal and military aristocracy in Germany until the early twentieth century. The German bourgeoisie, unable to seize power from the aristocracy in the nineteenth century, allegedly developed an anti-political worldview. In this worldview, the impossibility of political participation led to the idealization of cultural and internal spheres. As a result, individuals withdrew into themselves, showing indifference to everyday politics and passivity in the face of the atrocities committed by the Nazis.

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L'éclat de Antigone: For the Plural Form of Lacanian Ethics

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Abstract:

In this paper, starting from the idiosyncratic ethics of heroin, we attempt to follow the thread in Lacan to specifically delineate Antigone with her unbearable splendor. Antigone inherits her debt of the incest from her lineage while pays it off at the cost of her life. In an ambivalent sense, she does not succumb to the desire of the Other and not to the desire on her own, either. This Lacanian Antigonean ethics is antagonistic to the chimera of moral ideals as well as the commensurable politics for the good(s). By powerful and close reading, we rather take the very path to the archi-ethics through her traversal of the limit of Atè and of being human, bearing henceforth "beyond death" the connotation of the ever-presence of the signifier. In conclusion, the desiring subject for the void unravels the particular dimension towards the death-beyond-limit which vindicates the Lacanian ethics in plural form.

Keywords: Antigone, desire, ethics, death, Atè, *ex nihilo*

Introduction: Antigone as the ethics of hero-in

Antigone for Lacan is the perfect heroine who embodies an authentic ethical act all the way through death, a paragon who acts absolutely that accords to her unparalleled desire, be it recalcitrant, uncompromising or unapologetic, etc. Certainly, her end is atrocious at the cost of her life in exchange for the fulfillment of her astounding and concrete *desire*. However, before we survey Lacan's text, should we ask a preliminary question: isn't her heroism beyond all calculations, merely making her to become an extraordinary, non-pathological in Kantian sense, figure? Or what she eventually opts for is a whimsical idea, a *de-facto* paranoiac individualistic forbidden alternative, doesn't it? The answer is salient. Lacan exalts her image, sparing no effort on her unbearable splendor that she glistens and, in this regard, the unapproachable sublime object. The tragic hero(in) according to Lacan, insists upon his/her own desire until being elevated to the un-demolished Thing. It amounts to a radical rupture so much so that even abolishes the limit of the object, unfolding thereafter the dimension of infinity.

Who is Antigone? She is actually the personage who Lacan identifies with. She is inscribed in a contradiction: on the one hand, she defends rather than breaks up with her lineage, her loyalty to Polyneices. She is the fruit that through transmission inherits her very culpability from the incest of

her family's irrevocable genealogy. On the other hand, even so, she rips herself off from being the descendant, effacing being the offspring at her own fertility and exterminating the curse exerted upon her family. What she does is nothing but "céder sur son désir". In this light, she is inflexible, there is no such power enabling to distort her back onto a designated track, in the name of whatsoever common interest or under the dominion of the ruler. In a word, she then attains the limbo, representing herself as a living-dead between two deaths.

In Žižek's reading,

> La mort naturelle qui fait partie du circuit naturel de la génération et de la corruption, de la décomposition et de la recomposition, donc de la transformation incessante de la Nature, et la mort absolue, la destruction, l'anéantissement de ce circuit lui-même, qui libérerait la Nature de ses propres lois et ouvrirait la place pour la création *ex nihilo* de nouvelles formes de vie (Žižek 2011, 329).

> There is natural death, which is part of the natural cycle of reproduction and corruption, decomposition and recomposition, and therefore the incessant transformation of Nature. Then there is absolute death, which is the destruction, the annihilation, of this cycle itself, which would liberate Nature from its own laws and thus open a space for the creation of new forms of life *ex nihilo* (Žižek 2014, 175).

Between carnal death and absolute termination of the circulation, has Antigone found a new life, a life which is perpetual to readers? It's not hasty to answer this question. We endeavor to add an inter-text which should be read in juxtaposition with the previous quotation:

> ici, si elle n'introduisait ce qu'on peut appeler la discordance des deux morts, introduite par l'existence de la condamnation. L'entre-deux-morts de l'en-deçà est essentiel à nous montrer qu'il n'est pas autre que celui dont se soutient l'au-delà (Lacan 1966, 776).

> here did it not introduce what one might call the discordance between the two deaths, introduced by the existence of the condemnation. The between-two-deaths of the shy of [l'en-deçà] is essential to show us that it is no other than the one by which the beyond [l'au-delà] is sustained (Lacan 2007, 654-655).

Antigone is in custody alive and suffered from an ongoing death sentence, a chronic torture is imposed on her and thus gives rise to the predicament of double death. She is condemned to her primary mental death, or more exactly, she suffers the anticipation of her effacement in symbolic order by virtue of her insistent reclamation for the burial of her brother. We'd rather conclude instead that corporal annihilation does not necessarily take place prior to the symbolic one — which is in contrast with the aforementioned disintegration/rejuvenation of natural order: she appears in a place bringing to light a void which can neither be narrated nor historicized. Put succinctly, death traverses every clavier and is merely in concerto with the real, buttressing the whole texture which weaves into a symphony in and beyond Antigone.

Antigone is recalcitrant, she is obsessed with what she clings to. However, her seemingly odd and bigoted act is not pathological but takes on authentic ethical bearings. In Lacan's view, taking on the duty what we common people are reluctant to or are not able to attain embodies the highest debt in psychoanalysis: how to transfer it and terminate the very interminable? Antigone is she who gives it all up on her supposed mundane royal privilege while her act is not only indecent but also a treason to her identity. Notably, the original and extant political order is denied by her. Due to her idiosyncratic self-sacrifice, "Ne pas céder sur son désir" can be ambiguously read (either in third person singular form or in first person by third person perspective) as "don't succumb to the Other's desire" as well as even "don't succumb to the desire on one's own" (son propre désir), the latter of which implies *a fortiori* the imploding force for us to accentuate. Briefly, the common ground for them both breach positive politics and moral restrictions.

In this article, we will defend that the Lacanian ethics is the ethics of desire, the ethics of tragedy[1], the ethics of the real as well as lastly, the ethics of the hero(in). It is *maleur* (misfortune) which is opposed to *bien-être* (well-being) that reveals the core of psychoanalysis, given Lacan is enamored with Antigone in particular. In essence, the hero-in is not becoming great because of what he or she does; on the contrary, from the act to the plot, it is not sacrifice itself wherein lies the crux, do as what the ethics of desire inspires people to do matters the most. Basically, it surpasses not only any utilitarian account but also subverts the standard we habitually define what is success and defeat.

In my mind, I hold the view that Antigone's immutable *appalling* act and sheer break from the matrix of routine co-constitute the polarity for the heroic ethics: the refusal both to morality *en tant que* set pattern and to politics where we settle down — this is with no doubt the bedrock at the threshold of Antigone.

A Too Exigent Moral Ideal Chimera or Politics Beyond Community

Lacan is a labyrinth, he is always circuitous and roundabout. That means the linchpin to ethics[2] requires people not to be submerged in cliché, even though moral implications denote an insurmountable horizon. Therefore, the origin of morality and the traditional analytic ideals have vehemently been the target and Lacan has thus taken a radical position, unraveling eventually the cornerstone of his ethics. There is a deep transmutation in Lacan that between the particular duty, where lies the veiled desire beneath which pinpoints the duty and the imperative which straightforwardly opens up a trail to affirm the kernel of morality that constitute a tension: an interrogation stemming from the subject is actually in conflict with obsessional superegoic imperative. The difference is stark: duty is never the patent of morality. In essence, the duty to maintain one's own desire is uniquely the gist of Lacanian ethics. As we know, demand from the analysand always draws to the proclaimed outcome of *ne pas souffrir*, though the analytic ideals of conduct is nonetheless paradoxically in lack of this accomplishment and becomes henceforth unattainable. It is not completely ideal at all because the sufferance is bound to arouse, there must be something that inevitably breaches the possible imposition upon the restrained subject (*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*). Not any imperative can make up for its gap with desire.

We should not neglect the semantic distinction which is essential in the moral-ethical couplet. There in Lacan, it's never been vague and indifferent to what merely belongs to ethics. Moral, the word literally designates an inclination to construct a common ground, to co-habit with one another. Even though he is not prone to deny common life which is entangled with the good(s), needless to say that he, not deity, just can't ignore it totally — the insight is he insists clearly and assuredly on the importance wherein moral rules play a vital role in view of "idéal de l'amour génialtisé, idéale de l'authenticité, idéale de non-dépendance" (the ideal of genital love, the ideal of authenticity and the ideal of non-dependence). But what is his own "authentic" idea?

> Eh bien, chose curieuse pour une pensée sommaire qui penserait que toute exploration de l'éthique doit porter sur le domaine de l'idéal, sinon de l'irréel, nous irons au contraire, à l'inverse, dans le sens d'un approfondissement de la notion du réel. La question éthique, pour autant que la position de Freud nous y fait faire un progrès, s'articule, d'une orientation du repérage de l'homme par rapport au réel (Lacan 1986, 21).

> Well, as odd as it may seem to that superficial opinion which assumes any inquiry into ethics must concern the field of the ideal, if not of the unreal, I, on the contrary, will proceed instead from the other direction by going more deeply into the notion of the real. Insofar as Freud's position constitutes progress here, the question of ethics is to be articulated from the point of view of the location of man in relation to the real (Lacan 1992, 11).

Except the interwoven fabric of the symbolic and the imaginary, Lacan extracts separately the real, not the least to grant it a unique place which is absolutely distinct from the idealization: the ideal is ironically unreal, but the real is all the more ungraspable. It's evident that for him the question of the ethics is a realm where man is implicitly attached to the real, either encountering it in a sudden passively or voluntarily bursting into the real by one's proper acts. The core distinction between the fictitious and the real once taken into account, then we are easily to discern the further discordance inside the moral axe repleting with calculations and its un-symbolized kernel. What is ideal attests to be unreal, even though these three ideals are responsive to the demand in psychoanalysis "not to suffer" and its appeal purports to be freed from "ignorance". These ideals are neither solely derived from moral imperatives nor sheltered in analytic refuge. They grow in abundance as quote. Although the sense of obligation should be maintained which normally is pervasive in a certain register of moral thought, we should yet ascertain that it is not the duty of psychoanalysis indeed. In narrow sense, these ideals are actually not attributed to Lacanian psychoanalysis. It is complicated to be rid from all of them and merely get to what Lacan clings to for his idiosyncratic ethics. We begin with the preliminary examination on these ideals.

The first ideal is the fulfilled love (*l'amour achevé*). Through this love, moral optimism specifically directs to genital love.

> Et vous savez que j'ai souvent pris ici comme cible le caractère approximatif, vague et entaché de je ne quel moralisme optimiste, dont sont marquées les articulations originelles de la forme dite de la génitalisation du désir (Lacan 1986, 17).

> And you know that I have often taken aim at the approximative and vague character, so tainted with an optimistic moralism, which marks the original articulations taking the form of the genitalization of desire (Lacan 1992, 8).

By contrast, for Lacan, once the genital love is soaked into a dual relation, i.e., to make a baby, it becomes enclosed/fulfilled. The intersection of the homonym *docte*-love and doctor-love inscribes the rudimentary difference: for a relation examined in the copulation of genitals, it has an external standard of measurement, for instance to maintain hygiene in the doctor's barometer; since love which is a too subtle and *docte* theme to explore, psychoanalysis does not constrain its scope to an ideological tone of hygiene. Rather, love is a notion at all times to be deployed and rewritten in macrocosm. In this direction, psychoanalysis is a novel sort of erotology. It is devoted to reveal *Was will das Weib?*, the fundamental query of Freud.

The second ideal calls for authenticity. Lacan's emphasis is once again to traverse the limit of commonsense, this time not on hygiene but on moral experience. The preoccupation is not the avoidance to the very task of his own peculiar field of ethics but to debunk the imprudent, excessive and inadequate formulations not viewed by those moralists circumscribed in the economy of inter-human relations, i.e., the pseudo-moral authenticity. Aside from the norms demanded underneath social relations, the clinical guidelines are distinctively formulated in line with something desirable as specific value to seize. Psychoanalysis therefore can not be standardized because it is not a path, a stage or a progress that applies for or adjusts to the set norms in society. Lacan uncovers the persona of morality by virtue of the "as if" logic posed by Helene Deutsch: as if marked by the others, however no other than catering for adaptability and control stemming from them. In short, pondering over the conditions adequate for the subject to satisfy such and such demands and maintain its function, this restrictive perspective seems quite reasonable or "moral" but halts over here. Lacan denounces this "as if" logic and at the same time christens the very significance of "unmasking", refuting that the "absence" of the ethics in life lies utterly where routinely the ways trailed and the virtue takes its root. Thus, we can't be more clear to find out the general disposition for Lacan's delimitation between the moral and the ethics: it is rather in a "*d'avec*" relation which designates a sheer rupture within a continuum. "As if" follows the non-reflected social norms, conducted by the anchored others reacting upon the subject-for-recognition and thereafter virtue is actually hollow or imaginary.

Last but not least, the third ideal is forged to the prophylaxis of dependence. This is obviously the only one Lacan enlists in affirmative sense. As is indispensable in order for his thought to keep sound, the final boundary now is transmitted to the distinction between orthopedics and ethics. There is some misunderstanding in analysis, the analysand would incessantly aspire to ask: can the

means of the analyst verify the purpose for cure? Assuredly, this is exactly the chimera of dependence. Means vindicates its end is typically a long-kept ideal seemingly out of question. However, it's far from being true in analysis. The fundamental field retained in analysis can never bear with any encroachment of the interventions by means of embracing our habits, disposition or presupposition no matter they are good or bad. In other words, the means people accord to achieving their ends does not correspond to what they employ and insist on. More precisely, it is owing to the split between means and ends once touching upon the "real". What are then the interventions and what is the desirable? The ethics of analysis involves effacement, withdrawal, and even cleansing from culpability that embedded in obligation. Put it bluntly, the ethical thought persists in view of a very trauma which haunts and precedes us. The kernel of tragedy is what utilized to fill up the blank since morality is removed. The ends, in other words, is not on the same plane with the means we implement afterward; rather, means in Lacanian sense should be attributed to the category of the desirable, to its dynamics.

In Charles Freeland's recapitulation, he orients us a direction:

> While Lacan's ethics of psychoanalysis did not promise new foundations or ideals, it does offer something else. One could account for this "something else" [...] where for the classical European tradition, the primary passion was a passion for the Good, the True, the Just, the Beautiful, and so on, in Lacan, there is something one is almost tempted to call a "passion for the real... and in particular, a passion for the *jouissance*, for the "limitless love", that is access to the real (Charles Freeland 2013, 191).

Admittedly and objectively, psychoanalysis is not external to politics; however, we should assert primarily that by itself, it trails a specific approach toward politics quite distinct from the others. For instance, Lacan holds that psychoanalysis unfolds the kernel either overlooked or veiled in our seemingly tranquil life — the genocide in the second world war emerges from the ashes of all the past theories, it attests to anything but the sacrificed — this appalling and horrendous scene is captured by the chthonic deities. Following Lacan's thread, this is more a metaphor which implies what leaks from the science of the politics than plain superstition that can only be broached in Lacanian analysis in the real — the obscurity, the terror, the abominable and the devastating. All of them induces the extimacy of the politics-in-platitude.

In Chantal Mouffe's *the Return of the Political*, she considers that politics doesn't entail a sort of establishment or social status, what it leaves aside is the ontological condition. In this sense, the lack is what the morality (eudemonia/well-being) does not enable to evade — the tension lies in-between the attempt for the suture of the tragic and the eventual failure, the crack *per se*, indicating the unattainability from the hole to the whole, in Lacan, the *faute*.

> L'impossibilité est ici meilleur signe d'authenticité d'une éthique que la faisabilité la plus directe qui ne fait que faire tourner dans l'illusion des objets et des biens. Une éthique qui n'a pas l'impossible comme mesure de nos actes et de nos objectifs n'en est pas une à la hauteur de nos désirs. Seul un point pris à l'infini évite le constant retour, par interposition d'un circuit d'objets, à la même place (Jean-Pierre Cléro 2006, 92).

> Impossibility is here a better sign of the authenticity of an ethics than the most direct feasibility which only causes objects and goods to revolve in the illusion. An ethics that does not have the impossible as a measure of our actions and our objectives is not one that lives up to our desires. Only a point taken at infinity avoids the constant return, by interposing a circuit of objects, in the same place (my own translation).

A natural person, prior to becoming a subject, is apolitical; politics is possible but tends toward the impossible (e.g. one famous slogan of May '68: "Soyons réalistes, demandons l'impossible!"). More essentially, even though human being cannot reside alone which is yet far from buttressing the necessity of the community. What is the tension within politics? From another angle, we'd rather delve into this point by posing a question: why is there only the ethics of the desire rather than the politics of the desire? Put succinctly, "never giving ground to one's desire", the very motto of Lacan marks that the subject's undertaking its individual fate — the ethics in Lacan's context is stripped off from the operation of positive politics, regardless of in different regimes it is multifarious. Nonetheless, the category of politics itself is equal especially to a cluster of notions such as collectivity, universal will, the texture of public expression, the commonwealth, so on and so forth. We can't help asking that the Lacanian duty to take on one's own fate, is it even too selfish? Anyhow, this opinion isn't still floating on the surface? There exists assuredly the collective desire after all, exemplified through Luther's preach, Lenin's revolutionary will, etc. More objectively and more exactly, here is our answer: desire should not be confined to the spectrum of politics — desire is not entirely predicated by politics no matter the latter's conceptual potential is for combination or for separation.

The ethics of desire refuses to get bogged down in the narcissistic love of the neighbor, refuses to stir up the overflowing sympathy and refuses to endorse the not in the least goodwill. On this basis, Lacan drains off the gigantic root of humanism — human being inherently is not commensurable, neither can they be naturally assembled in a certain establishment. Obviously, Lacan pulls away a maximal distance from any utilitarian consideration. The thread is clear and thorough: by means of the lacunae in the Other, we are able to look back into the ever procrastinating character of desire. Between desire and all sorts of *biens*, this unfulfilled discrepancy exacts the inevitable sacrifice, the hard-to-payoff debt. Desire in essence exceeds both the principle of the market and all what is partaken — the real of psychoanalysis has broken *le calcul des phénomènes* (the calculation of phenomena).

The cornerstone in politics, i.e., the community, is quite like a category mistake for Lacanian psychoanalysis. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson has demonstrated that either the collective identity or the illusory equality is circumscribed by the convention of politics. If we look through the geographical space, it is only by means of the imagination out of mental imagery, the disconnected people are thus integrated. Put succinctly, the origin of nation state is none other than attached to *Erde und Blut*, in native soil society, the constraint and appeal that nature and pedigree bring forth prior to its incorporation by politics is an obscure sentiment thus do not suffice. However, from Lacan's viewpoint, there is no solid social relationship, and there is no such social construction no matter in nationalist version or

whatever else. Based on resembling logic of the imaginary, this community is yet devoid of its ground to the access of symbolic register (the imaginary and the symbolic cannot be mingled or replaced), let alone tackling the *ek-sistence* of the real and its in-congruence which is non-political.

The Splendor of Antigone and the Traversal of the Limit

> Polyneikes – for tending to your body, this is my recompense ! And yet to those wit clear thoughts I did well to honor you. For I would never my assumed this burden, defying the citizens, if it had been my children or my husband who had died and had been left to rot away out there. In deference to what law do I say this? — Were my husband dead, there could be another, and by that man, another child, if one were lost. But since my mother and my father are hidden now in Hades, no more brothers could ever be born — this was the law by which I honored you above all others (Sophocles 2003, 95).

For any of the other characters, this excerpt of declaration may smell like a scent of scandal. Nonetheless, the exception merely leaves for the eternal Antigone. All the notions and questions we have coped with purport to reach this destination. In this epic drama created by Sophocles, we need to probe into his intention at first sight: the characters under his plume are in majority very recalcitrant and laudable, it reflects his own ideal of the hero(in) — the heroism comes from the epoch of Homers. After the Greco-Persian war, this thought has since then been deeply rooted in people's heart. The characters of Sophocles bear a common trait: no matter it is Antigone, Electra or Teucrus, they either commit some faults but brave enough to take on the responsibility by themselves or commit suicide for the sake of glory — all of them endure the tribulations that ordinary people cannot even imagine. Once Sophocles recounted that he wrote according to what the characters should be like while for Euripides his figures were as what they looked like.

The traditional reading to this play aims at revealing the multiple meanings of it, for instance: first, Creon's deeds to keep up the social order are correct, but his means toward Antigone is a felony; second, the law of gods is higher than that of human, what Antigone does has safeguarded no other than ultimate justice, so this play is progressive; third, since patriarchal society gives its way to civil society, so there is a split between text analysis of Antigone *per se* and the advancement of history for its inevitability; fourth, the dispute between security (for the *polis*) and fate (for Antigone) overlap on the figure of Creon, who is an agent at the juncture of the transformation of society.

Frankly speaking, I can't deny none of the above points, but the more acute should-be-posed question is: what about eradicating the teleology of history? The coolest out-of-order women certainly have nothing to do with wickedness or being egoists — they are not narcissistic or soaked in self-pity, annihilation is the unchanging *terminus*. Inherited from Antigone, the ancient image of the female does not take on the burden, the very fetter of history, which is therefore not contradictory to carry on one's own duty. Born for herself, the difference between hero and heroin at least lies in that for female, the primacy is not the loyalty/treachery dichotomy in the political context — strictly speaking, there is no enemy for her, obviously she doesn't need to conquer anybody. In a word, she incarnates *l'échantillon sanglant* (bloodshed sample) of the desiring subject.

Ever since history is already terminated in Napoleon, according to Kojève, only through war, the new conqueror is the succeeding terminator who cuts off all feeble pleasure at the end of history. "At the end of history", borrowing this expression, the desire of Antigone is irrelevant of the then-dominance. History halts and never continues. Except burying her brother, what else glory can she pursue? The *polis* doesn't belong to women, so the root to gain "great achievements" is transcendentally deprived, despite Antigone originates from the royal family. It is not bizarre for Creon grumbling like "it's not possible for me to lose under a woman". The logic in the operation of spirit merely aligns with the rational principles of the daylight, as the ruler, defying the secular law is worst offence of rebellion — no matter through the chthonic, the bygone, the dark and horrendous underworld. If darkness elevates high above the ground, the original pedigree among the siblings must not cede its place to the vertical relation of dominance fraught with slaughter, alliance, conspiracy and collusion fades away. Without sanguinary battle, without history. But without the underworld, without the detachable distinctive politics.

Compared to politics which is bright and positive, what emerges from the underworld is beyond verification — it incorporates the mythic elusiveness, a formless world reigned by the imaginary non-entity, despite this force is paradoxically so stalwart upon the nether world and keeps its firm but raw force. We thus cannot neglect that the archi-formulation of politics is in fact not unitary: the antagonism is never dissolved — what is obscure for the lucid deliberation in the order designates on the other side the real, the eruptive void that chisels the substantive, i.e., the tragedy for the splendor of its figure. Antigone claims that she is born for love instead of for hatred. This love is perverse in the modern perspective of reading aforementioned; nevertheless, as I have pinpointed, the heroine is apolitical, it is she who copes with the deities, distinguished drastically from what is shrouded the ode to human being, especially the power and craft of man, by the chorus. Evidently, that's why it leaves endless room for the scholars to interpret generation by generation and opens up a very rich field for feminism on sexuated being, no matter from what stance.

> It was not Zeus who made that proclamation to me; nor was it Justice, who resides in the same house with the gods below the earth, who put in place for men such laws as yours. Nor did I think your proclamation so strong/ That you, a mortal, could overrule the laws of the gods, that are unwritten and unfailing. For these laws live not now or yesterday/ But always, and no one knows how long ago they appeared. And therefore I did not intend to pay the penalty among the gods for being frightened of the will of a man (Sophocles 2003, 73).

The renowned play writer Jean Anouilh has modified his own namesake Antigone in Mid 20th century. In contrast, that Antigone bears some tiny but stark difference compared to Sophocles'. If for the ancient Greek, the figure of Antigone is "inhuman" and sublime, for the modern Frenchman, she is all the more belligerent and childlike. On the one hand, she takes on the short-circuited means-end encounter — burial for her second brother adumbrates actually her own fatality while on the

other hand, she is exacting her idiosyncratic life (not in the name of gods), for she cannot bear with even an instant of being alive without burying Polyneices. There is no such tension in Sophocles, for the ancient former, the dichotomy indicates the not-whole life/the doomed death; however for the modern latter, the dichotomy turns into the seemingly whole life/the extremely slim improbable death. That's the drastic difference and modern twist between classical tragedy and romantic drama. However, all in all, Anouilh's dispute is uni-directional: since she is a rational being, hence freewill (deliberate reasoning which is too much emphasized) rather than deities must overwhelm fate (preordained obligation) that fundamentally goes too far and too narrow-minded (although we don't overlook the background of Vichy regime and the resistance movement), tearing their intertwining obscurity in Sophocles. In my view, it is the insight from Lacan designating the desire from the unconscious that totally transforms the superficial active/passive contention (such as she said to Ismene, "you choose to live but I choose to die") to another realm, marking the unparalleled contribution on Lacanian analysis of the ethics.

> Une ligne, donc, se franchit — "ici et maintenant, et non pas *ad aeternum*". L'au-delà de cette ligne, c'est à la psychanalyse, comme éthique ou comme archi-éthique, non pas seulement de le désigner, mais d'entreprendre d'y accéder. Il y va d'un "espoir", dit Lacan avec une particulière gravité, la gravité qu'on peut attendre d'une pensée que hante, c'est partout lisible, une eschatologie catastrophique: s'il n'y a pas cet espoir, la promesse de cet espoir, si le pas ne peut être franchi, alors c'est la fin, le monde du bien "nous entraîne tous à notre perte", nous sommes au bord du désastre — ce qu'il faut entendre littéralement si, du "discours surgi des petites lettres mathématiques", ce "discours qui, par structure, n'oublie rien" et qui affecte la "toute-puissance" du signifiant, on ne sait pas s'il faut attendre "l'intégration de la Nature ou... sa disintégration" (Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe 1991, 24).

> A line, therefore, is crossed — "here and now, and not ad aeternum". Beyond this line, it is up to psychoanalysis, as ethics or as archi-ethics, not only to designate, but to undertake to access it. There is a "hope" at stake, says Lacan with particular gravity, the gravity that one can expect from a thought that haunts, it is readable everywhere, a catastrophic eschatology: if there is not this hope, the step cannot be taken, then it is the end, the world of good "drags us all to our doom", we are on the edge of the disaster — what must be understood literally if, from the "discourse arising from small mathematical letters", this "discourse which, by structure, forgets nothing" and which affects the "omnipotence" of the signifier, we do not know whether to wait for "the integration of Nature or... its disintegration" (my own translation).

It is tantamount to remould an ethics in its stark contrast to virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism. There are a series of questions to pose: what is the unlimited ethics of Lacan?; is it legitimate to discuss hope in the context of Lacan?; what is the discourse that forgets nothing?, etc. Intuitively, we are not conscious of the boundary that we live in a habitual world, and it needs to be interrogated. Our world is the one surrounded by the good but at the same time gets caught in

discomfort and irreparable lack, and also a world covered by capitalized knowledge and science. In this situation, the possibility to delineate the traversal of the limit is already *en souffrance* (in suspense).

It is incisive to divide several strata from Lacan's original text:

First, needless to look back *Kant avec Sade*, the inherent dialectics is evident — the world of good turns directly and immediately into the world of evilness. It is reflected through the prospect in pursuit of happiness in contemporary politics. The good/s circumscribed within moralism stands merely for the sake of the positive politics while the future happiness is the cause that masks the approaching terror and massacre.

> Disposer de ses biens, chacun sait que cela ne va pas sans un certain désordre, qui en montre assez la véritable nature — disposer de ses biens, c'est avoir le droit d'en priver les autres... La dimension du bien dresse une muraille puissante sur la voie de notre désir (Lacan 1986, 270).

> What is meant by defending one's goods is one and the same thing as forbidding oneself from enjoying them. The sphere of the good erects a strong wall across the path of our desire (Lacan 1992, 230).

Second, no matter historically or theoretically, there is always a limit to traverse for Lacan. But what lies on the other side of it? Briefly, it designates the archi-ethics which we have cited from Lacoue-labarthe. However, this limit should not be a singular term — there are multiple barriers to traverse; and moreover, the barrier of knowledge is more resistant to cross over. Basically, the supposition of psychoanalysis steers towards the unconscious, i.e., the unknown realm for explicit knowledge. It is clear that *Antigone*, the mythos, appeared much earlier than the establishment of the later Socratic-Plato philosophy, let alone the virtue ethics for good since Aristotle.

Third, as is axiomatically shown that the good/s lies in the centre of politics which is highly entangled with interest and all the tangible gains and benefits, essentially, in the turmoil of political intrigues, the good is still caught in exchange among the images. In this sense, the schema of politics shuttles back and forth between the imaginary chimera and the forbidden Good which is neither reachable nor commensurable in practice.

Fourth, there is an inherent transition towards death. In the narrow sense to grasp what it means beyond death, it designates nothing other than to live as long as possible which is merely within commonsense seizure, the immortal — in Antigone, this prototype has opened up the zero degree of death that ordinary usage cannot reach. In essence, it is the signifier that settles the subject beyond death for mortal beings. Whence the signifier is attached to the subject, the latter has been coagulated as stagnant, comprising in itself a paradox — insofar as it is dying, it immortalizes (the content is hollowed out). Moreover, this zero-degree pierces into public reason which is un-symbolized or can never be absorbed by the matrix itself. There is a penchant of an ultimate opposition between disintegration, destruction or disorganization and solidity or consistency.

> Qu'Antigone sorte ainsi des limites humaines, qu'est-ce que cela veut dire pour nous? — Si ce n'est que son désir vise très précisément ceci — au-delà de l'Atè.// Le même mot, Atè, sert dans atroce. C'est ce dont il s'agit, et c'est ce que le Chœur répète à tel moment de son intervention avec une insistance technique. On s'approche ou on ne s'approche pas d'Atè, et quand on s'en approche, c'est en raison de quelque chose qui est lié dans l'occasion à un commencement et à une chaîne, celle du malheur de la famille des Labdacides. Quand on a commencé de s'en approcher, les choses s'enchaînent en cascade, et ce qui se trouve au fond de ce qui se passe à tous les niveaux de cette lignée... (Lacan 1986, 306).

> What does it mean to us if Antigone goes beyond the limits of the human? What does it mean if not that her desire aims at the following - the beyond *of Atè?* That same word *Atiè* is to be found in "atrocious." That's what is involved here, and that's what the Chorus repeats at a given moment in its speech with an emphasis that is technical. One does or does not approach *Atè,* and when one approaches it, it is because of something that is linked to a beginning and a chain of events, namely, that of the misfortune of the Labdacides family. As one starts to come close to it, things come together in a great hurry, and what one finds at the bottom of everything that goes on at every level in this family (Lacan 1992, 263-264).

The very term Atè is the key to further treat the limit that Antigone traverses: etymologically, it designates the goddess of

> mischief, delusion, ruin, and blind folly, rash action and reckless impulse who led men down the path of ruin. She also led both gods and men to rash and inconsiderate actions and to suffering. *Até* also refers to an action performed by a hero that leads to their death or downfall (Wikipedia: Atë).

True, Antigone is ruined and she definitely encounters her death but it is hard to attribute this to rash action or reckless impulse. She traverses this line of atè *coûte que coûte* (at all costs) which is opposed to Creon's suffering from his own fatal blow out of *harmatia*. If we pose a question like: what does she want? The answer leads to nothing more than the horrific total non-recognition which doesn't exist in daily life amid you and me: she is devoid of worry, fear, terror and regret, for her act has nothing to do with the catharsis already.

Her initial talk with Ismene is too clear to repeat over again:

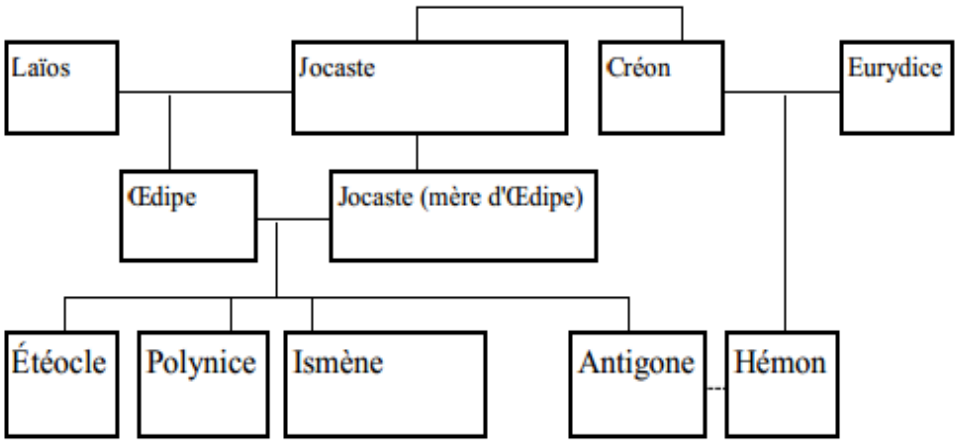
> – Ismene: Must I, in my misery, fall short of your fate?
> – Antigone: Yes — because you chose to live, and I to die (Sophocles 2003, 78).

From the below family lineage, we are not laborious to discover the correlation Antigone bears with Creon: both as his niece and daughter-in-law, as for Haimon, he is Oedipus' nephew as well cousin. In a word, in this very complexity and distortion within domestic relation, no one can be spared from the oracle, the lingering condemnation originated from this blood, from the same womb

that gives birth to the brothers and sisters. In Antigone's stance, after her death, the cursed family, notably, the sin of the incest finally comes to an end. Antigone's deed is an enigma, a human being without humanity, and this enigma is not only incredible but also can't be imitated, either. This inhuman-ness discloses an alternate legality outside the public sphere which emits a scandalous smell of her presumed incest[3] whilst for Lacan, conspicuously, he puts the martyrs in contrast to the "human" category, no matter the tyrant or the headsman, and he writes that:

> Il n'y a que les matyrs pour être sans pitié ni crainte. Croyez-moi, le jour du triomphe des martyrs, c'est l'incendie universelle. La pièce est bien faite pour nous le démontrer (Lacan 1986, 311).

> Only the martyrs know neither pity nor fear. Believe me, the day when the martyrs are victorious will be the day of universal conflagration. The play is calculated to demonstrate that fact (Lacan 1992, 267).



In other place, the hymn for Dionysus in this case runs invalid because the limits away from the field of the conflagration have been breached. In Lacan's view, Antigone takes on her own desire by means of trespassing the human law, and this marks the highest form of desire — the desire of nothingness so as to accomplish this supreme univocity. The image of Antigone directs toward the kernel of tragedy: this little, flickering and enthralling figure which is so vivid and full of tension. She lies, with no doubt, at the centre of tragedy, and the ethics of Antigone opens up a space between two deaths — the sepulchre, the limbo that is located between the secular and the chthonic. Antigone is neither lured, nor directly related to the irredeemable punishment; instead, for Antigone, it is through her own act rather than incurred from something described as "erroneous" that penalizes the obtrusive behavior (e.g. for Creon). What Antigone does cannot be confused with the pseudo-transgression soaked in perverted jouissance under the hidden dominion of the Other, either. Evidently, what should be accentuated steps one leap forward in the contentious debate within and beyond humanism:

> [...] thinking and talking about death has been always part of the humanistic discourse. Testing the limits of mortality and considering human finitude, especially in the context of Antigone, have been raised succinctly, as of late, by feminist scholars as part of the discourse renegotiating our humanity... Thus, are we entitled to talk about post-humanism and rather than humanism? Death, we all agree, is part of the human condition: can we draw the fine line that distinguishes between 'death' as a discourse of the human condition and "death" as "voice coming from elsewhere", that is, the "voice of the non-human" (Karakantza 2017, 22).

It is clear that from Homer onward, death is regarded as a part of human condition, for instance, Odysseus chooses mortality over Calypso's immortality no matter it is superior or divine. The backdrop of Antigone's act originates from the wretchedness of her family and the war that broke out in Thebes. Actually, there is a transition inside the play from being too humane to inhuman — she cannot hold back her tears and lamentations at the end of her life:

> O tomb! O bridal bedchamber! O deep cave of a dwelling-place, under guard forever, where I must go to be with my own dear ones/ Most of whom Persephone has received dead among the shades! And I, the last of them, will go in the worst way of all down there before my portion of this life comes to me.// But as I go I hold strong hopes that will arrive as one loved by my father/ Loved by you, mother, loved by you, my own Dear brother — for when you died I washed and laid out your bodies properly with my own hands... (Sophocles 2003, 94-95).

Is such thing the ordinary groan or is she pursuing some relief? Obviously, in this situation of deadlock, although she's not arrived the palace of Hades yet, up till then, she still treats the dead in a disproportional way — because she cares none other than the burial of Polyneices. We are usually bogged down in the platitude of the set-patterned tripartite definition of human: the individual autonomy of will and behavior, the authenticity to express such autonomous individuality in social dimensions of labor, language and desire plus the reflexive unity of what is conscious of itself as the cardinal attributes of the humanity of human beings. Nevertheless, for Lacan, the key turn he accomplishes moves from human control to therapy: the sufferance derived from the indetermination for treatment rather than for cure versus a certain normativity of life constrained in political science. In brief, a small step realized *from* stability and determination *to* designate the incompleteness of non-substantial subject which is not disposed any longer through the correspondence of objective validity with the very foundation of ego.

> Insensé contresens, car pour Antigone, la vie n'est abordable, ne peut être vécue et réfléchie, que de cette limite où déjà elle a perdu la vie, où déjà elle est au-delà — mais de là, elle peut la voir, la vivre sous la forme de ce qui est perdu (Jacques Lacan 1986, 326).

> It's an absurd misinterpretation, for from Antigone's point of view life can only be approached, can only be lived or thought about, from the place of that limit where her life is already lost, where she is already on the other side. But from that place she can see it and live it in the form of something already lost (Lacan 1992, 280).

How to evaluate this distinction between socio-historical catastrophe (still within the Symbolic) and subjective impasse beyond recognition in social structure that indicates the very limit traversing already human and inhuman? This is a difficult problem to investigate for sure, for in Lacan's thread, both the man-made world and the underworld are covered by the anchoring of signifier: her birth, her grown-up are all mingled with her lineage, her destined tragedy. In this sense, the tautology, "my brother is my brother" is bound up with such efficacy. The name Antigone has been captured in advance by the commendation of the Labdacides family is indelible. For the ever-presence of the signifier, *le défilé du signifiant* (a signifier represents the subject for another signifier), concretely, the death leaps beyond or to expiate the family atè, and both of them co-direct toward the desire, the fundamental non-eradicable desire:

> Mais Antigone mène jusqu'à la limite l'accomplissement de ce que l'on peut appeler le désir pur, le pur et simple désir de mort comme tel. Ce désir, elle l'incarne. //Réfléchissez-y bien — qu'en est-il de son désir? Ne doit-il pas être le désir de l'Autre, et se brancher sur le désir de la mère? Le désir de la mère, le texte y fait allusion, est l'origine de tout. Le désir de la mère est à la fois le désir fondateur de toute la structure, celui qui a fait venir au jour ces rejetons uniques,..., mais en même temps un désir criminel...//... Il n'y a personne pour assumer le crime, et la validité du crime, si ce n'est Antigone (Lacan 1986, 322-323).

> Yet she pushes to the limit the realization of something that might be called the pure and simple desire of death as such. She incarnates that desire. Think about it. What happens to her desire? Shouldn't it be the desire of the Other and be linked to the desire of the mother? The text alludes to the fact that the desire of the mother is the origin of everything. The desire of the mother is the founding desire of the whole structure, the one that brought into the world the unique offspring...; but it is also a criminal desire. [...] There is no one to assume the crime and the validity of crime apart from Antigone (Lacan 1992, 282-283).

In the fissure and limit of atè, the signifier which incarnates Antigone's anticipatory death simultaneously accomplishes through *au-milieu*, *vers* and *au-delà* (in the midst of, toward and beyond). It is via this dynamic of the signifier and in this a-temporal eternalization of this proper figure that she, by her own sacrifice, perpetuates *l'origine de tout*. Death stalks language and desire, but how about the purification of desire? What if the desire of the female is beyond symbolization?

We endeavor merely to touch upon what is this very purification. Dialectically, any life fraught only with affirmative trait is not worthwhile to possess. Imagine, the subject doesn't pay the price to

trespass the barrier of the good is s/he who simply doesn't make the sacrifice, that pound of flesh *par excellence*. How can s/he thus not succumb to the call of sensual stimulation and temptations? For Antigone, frankly speaking, Jocaste delivers life without conferring death because the sin is successively befallen to her offspring as long as the subsequent generation stretches for the "good" in life. The mother breeds her children, she passes her sin that is obviously "known" to her utmost in the unconscious. Nonetheless, the pathway of purifying the origin of this criminal desire is unknown upon Antigone's birth, so her own desire is to entirely terminate the catastrophe of the incest. The given life turns directly into the total annihilation with no mediation for instance exhibited from Ismene's pragmatic choice.

However, the daughter/sister made from Jocaste's intercourse with his son Oedipus, although branding the name "opposed to be born", is not possible to go back to her mother's womb, what leaves for her is the sheer rebuttal to her generation/genesis, the rebuttal for her inheritance of maternity. This purification by means of desiring the void on the plane of the secular takes the place of prolonging the tarnished blood, notably, the inherited debt should be cleansed. Other than regarding her as the true heroine, there is another opinion that attributes her as an absolute victim. With no doubt, she was the survivor, together with Ismene, of the family, after the male siblings (including Oedipus, in this incestuous sense) have perished. But this life mingled with her mother's desire is not worthy in her eyes: evidently, the desire of Jocaste is not pure at all — it is rather a mixture with complicated ingredients, i.e., foundation and dispossession, birth and death, inheritance and clearance. They are overlapping and converged into the unwipable debt. For Antigone, she can deliver nothing other than the void *per se*. From the demise of her brothers, she excludes her noble lineage, her narcissistic and imaginary identification with it *par excellence*. Moreover, she finds thereafter her chance performed and permitted by herself to cut off the dominance of atè once and for all. Importantly, Antigone is reluctant to rather than incapable of being a mother.

It inevitably gives rise to another poignant and impressing issue: Lacan talks too much about death, such as death drive, between two deaths, etc. Is the end of the purification of desire, always and merely leads to death? After all, not everyone is Antigone! In my view, as I have stated, psychoanalysis possesses its own gist and foothold. In other words, only because of the incredible stance it adopts which not only breaches common sense but also seems counter-intuitive and even anti-human that it seems idiosyncratic and precious. Thus, we cannot debase Lacan as someone preaching the nihil and destructive force, and who is also incapable of transforming the negative into the creative. Inspired by the sublime second body of Sade outside life cycle, Lacan reveals the dimension of *ex nihilo* that glitters through Antigone's particular death beyond limit. Besides, in ancient Chinese thought, the distinction of *You* (有) and *Wu* （无）can be supplementary to this bi-dimensional variation. *You* (有) refers to the state of a thing after it has come into being and before it dies out; *wu* (无) refers to the state of a thing before its birth and after its death. The void of desire indicates meanwhile the presupposition and circumscription of the symbolic order which just denotes the proper subject before the birth and after the death.

All in all, Antigone incarnates this fundamental purified desire (not the purification of fear and pity in tragedy for sure) as the personification for us all.

Endnotes:

1. According to Jean Bollack, tragedy plays its role not aside from its knot and conflict, but more precisely in its core, the contradiction does not lie utmost among the figures in the intrigue; rather, we should make a clear-cut distinction between theatre and its story (*histoire*). The former is not a witness of the meaning anchored by the latter. On this basis, it is to be circumscribed that since there is no ready-made material to coincide with a concrete setting, we need to explore its own causality as what is still remaining to open up. In a word, the tension and split *per se* rooted in its theatricality precedes the internal contradiction of its *mise-en-scène* in the plot.
2. In Lacan, the authentic ethics is instead opposed to goods and interests (*des biens*). The good in Lacan is a conceptual establishment in two aspects: the corruptible things are mostly good, they erect themselves as a first barrier man should come across all the way to desire; the good written in capitalized letter denotes beyond "natural needs and satisfactions", therein it reaches (rather doesn't reach) a Good that mustn't be touched. When we examine this particular use of Good, it amounts to a supreme ideal from antiquity in pursuit of *Souverain Bien*. Lacan calls the Supreme Good is nothing other than a "transcendental appearance" that whisks the final and fatal object out of sight. Henceforth, it loses all positive determination and can only be defined negatively, as something irrevocably prohibited.
3. According to Bernardete, he poses a hypothesis: if Polyneices is still alive, Antigone's claim "lying abreast the dear in Hades" seems entirely incestuous, but I don't agree with him because this particular smell of incest once laid upon her name Anti-gone in literal meaning then dissolves.

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Historical Revisionism as Trauma Revisited: And, Why Historical Revisionism Is Necessary Anyway

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Abstract:

Historical revisionism is a feature of much history writing, because much history writing is done by members of dominant social groups or by historians unaware of, or consciously working to uphold, dominant historiographical (or social, cultural, religious, or political) paradigms. "Historical revisionism," in this usage, means the occlusion of parts of the past, often traumas by which dominant historiographical paradigms are constructed and maintained. But this first act of historical revisionism necessitates a corrective, a second historical revisionism that overcomes the first, falsifying revision of historical truth. This second act of historical revisionism often entails revisiting occluded traumas. However, this is necessary, because history is a moral act, and historians are, ideally, moral actors.

Keywords: historical revisionism; historical trauma; moral philosophy of history

Introduction

The first act of much historiography is the trauma of erasure. Historians past and present who work within dominant paradigms tend to erase the histories, and often the memories, of peoples whom central powerholders have conquered or subjugated. Historians also often erase the violence which brings central authorities to power. Historians working outside the bounds of, or against, dominant-paradigm historiography must therefore make *their* first act of historiography reading archives against the grain (Spivak 1988, Trouillot 1995). Dominant-paradigm historiography in the nation-state era involves not only erasing, but also the additional trauma of totalizing that erasure. Nation-states are built upon shared historiographical framings. Peoples who are erased from nation-state histories are not just historiographically de-presenced. They are also politically, culturally, ethnically, and socially de-presenced. The trauma of their historiographical erasure is as totalized as are the nation-states which come into being through that erasure.

In the nation-state era, then, reading against the grain becomes much more difficult to do. Dissident historians who are alert to the trauma hidden beneath national histories must work against both historiography and entire epistemes. Sometimes, therefore, those who read archives against the nation-state grain write against historiographical erasures by attempting to read the erased back into

the historiography of the nation-state. This kind of revisionism revisits the original trauma without finally healing it. In recent years, for example, scholars with the 1619 Project have offered sharp critiques of mainstream national American historiography, but as an alternative to what might be called the 1620 Project, or the mythos of a white American founding. The 1619 Project, and other interventions into nation-state triumphalist history-writing, may thus replicate the trauma of nation-state historiography even while working against a particular iteration of it.

In this essay, I argue for an historical revisionism that takes into account, while fundamentally aiming to overcome, the trauma of history-writing done in the service of centralized power. Historical trauma is not best left undisturbed because history writing is not an act of power, but an act of moral agency, a core act of humanity by which the past, and the dignity of those who suffered there, can be at least partly restored.

What Is Historical Trauma?

The trauma of history can take at least two forms. First, there is the trauma of events in the past, the trauma that inheres in human life and which carries forward into futures after those events are declared matters of history, over. Second, there is the trauma of historiography, of erasure from written records of, and shared discourse about, the past, and of the enforcement of information regimes in which disputed and erased histories and events are elided. Oftentimes the trauma of historiography compounds the trauma of history, such that denial of past trauma exacerbates the experience of that trauma in the present.

The voices and traumas erased in the service of dominant-paradigm history never really go away, of course. Gayatri Spivak has asked whether the subaltern, who might be described as the historiographically and politically de-presenced, can speak, that is, whether those whom history writers and political powerbrokers have erased from past and present significance may find a voice with which to articulate an existence unacknowledged in dominant social milieux (Spivak 2010). This rhetorical question is itself a re-presencing of the subaltern, however, and so even the lacunae in historical records remind us that what is missing are not words in texts but human voices, often voices speaking of human pain. As with much of Spivak's work, Michel-Rolph Trouillot has taken up this question archivally, seeking a reading of archives as not so much records of past events as already curated distortions of events, ink-and-paper renderings of the world as it appeared to those who were already in positions of power (Trouillot 1995). These inquiries of how history is written and who and what gets left out in the writing find ready affinities in traumas of the past and present (Duran et al. 2023).

However, it is important to remember that many of the historically de-presenced do not have strong written histories with which to displace dominant historiographical paradigms. Enari Tsuneo's historiographic photography brings into the present the faces of the forgotten, people who had been left behind as young children on the Asian continent when the Japanese Empire collapsed in 1945 (Enari 2021). Yang Haiying works in a similar vein but without the geographical dislocation of Asian

continent and Japanese archipelago. Yang uses extensive archival and oral history work to piece together the crimes that the People's Republic of China carried out against Mongolians during the throes of the Cultural Revolution (Yang 2014). Wang Youqin brings bringing forth painful personal memories of Cultural Revolution-era China while contextualizing those recollections within the conflicting historiographies about that time and place (Wang 2023). It is not just that centralized powers have caused trauma and then erased those traumas in later historiographies. It is also that the traumas and traumatized are themselves in search of a first, strong narrative which can then work into, correct, and in some cases overcome the historiographical erasure on which dominant-paradigm historians relied and continue to rely.

There are also those whose histories are overlain by dominant histories, sub-histories, which are often main histories, which interrogate and challenge historiographical paradigms, acting not as complement to those paradigms but as beliers of it. Nakamura Eri reminds us of the memories of the overlain, the persistence in time and society of the people who bear the traumas of the past. This division between what occurred and what continues to unfold, a division that runs through the memories of some of the living and acts also as a kind of partition of the present from the past while re-presencing the past in the present as trauma, is a human one, Nakamura's work reminds us (Nakamura 2018). Likewise, Timothy E. Nelson traces the history, almost entirely forgotten and erased, of a site of Black belonging in the midst of the de-privileging of Black Americans in wider American life (Nelson 2023). Imani Perry, for her part, takes a broader, regional view of trauma and remembering. Perry notes how the gaps in memory between the traumatized and their progeny, on the one hand, and the dominant social class then and now, on the other, are reproduced in American culture and also reproduce that culture in turn. Perry's views of the American South as both unique to, and representative of, America, demonstrates how trauma is encapsulated as history and also covered up by that history at the same time (Perry 2022).

Nahum Dimitri Chandler takes an even broader, even more philosophical view, understanding the work of W.E.B. Du Bois as a meditation on history and time, and re-interpreting Du Bois' ideas within the wider historical scope gained in the intervening century and more since the time of Du Bois' first writings. Chandler's concept of "renarrativization" is germane to what I mean by "historical revisionism" in this essay. Chandler sees Du Bois as having invested his famous dictum on the "global 'problem of the color line'" with two "turns" of discourse (Chandler 2022, 214). "*In the first turn of this discourse*," Chandler writes,

> [the "problem of the color line"] is simply a certain fiction that makes possible a narrative. This narrative, both geographic and temporal, in the instance, is a performative gesture. It introduces an object for inquiry, a dimension of historicity, by a progressive act of naming the eventualities of the past according to a specific order of attention. This whole operation can thus be understood as a theoretical practice of *renarrativization*. What has been ostensibly given as the terms of historiographical understanding is remarked in this reelaboration. This yields a specific order of thematization, which amounts to hyperthematization, of a dimension of historicity, which may well have remained

> sedimented or suppressed according to the previously given orders of thought and understanding and which would have thus been obscure or unsusceptible to a critical reflection. It can thus be understood, in *the second turn* of this discourse, that the object in question is not a simply given thing—a punctual point, perhaps—but an objectivity adduced by way of a certain theoretical attention. Therein this attention can remark and thus render into phenomenal relief a historical organization of relation according to which the order of thing can be named. And the theoretical discourse is itself part of that relation. [...] Du Bois's discourse is not oriented toward a thing as a finality—that is the hypostasization of an absolute. Rather, his practice as thought is solicited by the difficulty of naming for itself an always temporal organization of relation that would predetermine and even foreclose its announcement of historical possibility (Chandler 2022, 214; emphases in original).

The historian and his or her work are always carried out within history, but some work carries the power to transform historical understanding going forward and backward in time. Chandler's intervention into Du Bois' thinking and historical explication transfers to historical revisionism as I mean it here. The past is not something separate from us in the present. It is a trauma we bear, some much more than others, and we must plunge back into it, recovering it from (intentional) oblivion, as a moral act, a recovery of our humanity and of a truer, more complete historical narrative simultaneously.

The recovery I mean here is of the highest importance, not least because the task is daunting and will require us to rethink, even abandon, much of what we think we know about the past. In the context of the United States, for example, Pekka Hämäläinen returns us to a standpoint that the entirety of dominant American historical paradigms has tried to dispense with, namely that of the Native American. Reading Hämäläinen's books on Native American history brings one in contact with a grounded current, which jolts one back to a place in time and a place in history radically uncontingent on European invaders and their prerogatives, historiographical and otherwise (Hämäläinen 2008; Hämäläinen 2019; Hämäläinen 2022). *A fortiori* for the work of Ned Blackhawk, who challenges readers to follow along in the "unmaking of U.S. history" by placing Native Americans at the center of the history of North America (Blackhawk 2023). But such "unmakings" are hardly limited to North America. Tim Harper's book *Underground Asia*, for example, does the same kind of work on a global scale, showing how revolutionaries from various places in Asia worked with and against one another, and with and against the occupying European, American, and trans-Asian powers, to effect a future autonomy which remains largely unacknowledged in Western writing about Asia (Harper 2021).

Historical trauma, as the above-cited works make clearer, is therefore both a burden from the past and the burden of the past, and is also the burden of living in a present that is both inseparable from that past, and separated from it, simultaneously.

What Is Historical Revisionism?

The fact of conflicting histories, and the reality of trauma of historical erasure and of the pasts and presents of lived traumas logically prior to history-writing, call forth a response: historical revisionism. But here an important distinction must be made. "Historical revisionism" is often used

to mean the erasure of events from historiography, the re-writing of history books for the purpose, most often, of hiding trauma from public view in the present. The most glaring examples of historical revisionism of this kind are books that minimize or even deny atrocities committed by the National Socialists in Europe in the middle of the twentieth century. This kind of historical revisionism is a fresh trauma visited upon those who survived such assaults, upon the families and acquaintances of the victims, and also upon the consciences of those in the present who struggle to understand the historical, theological, and political consequences of past atrocities. Such historical revisionism does no historical work in the moral sense. It is, conversely, deeply immoral, retraumatizing cruelly, simply for the sake of the trauma, thereby deepening, not lessening, historiographical darkness. This kind of historical revisionism is not what I advocate.

What I mean by "historical revisionism" here is a rewriting of history to bring into historiographical focus, either better or perhaps for the first time, past traumas that have been insufficiently examined in historical records and writing. The historical revisionism I mean is precisely the opposite of the historical revisionism that would downplay or deny events of the past. Dominant historiographical paradigms tend to erase and otherwise devalue women, for instance, as the works of Donna Haraway show, but there are many other ways in which dominant historiographical paradigms, especially ones produced in strongly ideological milieux (communist, socialist, liberal, and so forth), overshadow complicating histories as well (Haraway 1991). Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, for example, have produced works of scholarship that challenge prevailing historiographies in the United States by showing the extent to which the American government and American institutions, such as academia, were infiltrated by Communist and Soviet sympathizers and agents during the middle of the twentieth century (Haynes and Klehr 1999). Huanani-Kay Trask, who faced discrimination for her views and, perhaps, because of her identity, devoted her career to writing into dominant American historiography the stories of the colonized peoples and land of Hawai'i and Polynesia, and not only writing into American historiography but against it, through it, and around it, seeking to refashion, radically, the way in which the stories of Hawai'i were taught and told in the present (Trask 1993).

A similar initiative is underway at the hands of Timothy Brook, Michael van Walt van Praag, and Miek Boltjes, who have found a historiographical voice for Tibet separate from, and yet in interplay with, the dynastic histories often connected in history writing with the current regime in Beijing. Like Hawai'i to Washington, Tibet to Beijing is a separate entity, a history unto itself, but it is also, as Brook, van Walt van Praag, and Boltjes explain, interlaced with Han peoples as well as with Mongolians, Indians, and other Asian neighbors (as well as, via the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, the cosmos as a whole) (Brook, van Walt van Praag, and Boltjes 2018; see also van Walt van Praag and Boltjes 2020). The work of Evelyn Rawski and other so-called New Qing historians does similar work for Manchuria and Manchus (Rawski 1996).

As a site of centuries of colonial exploitation, Asia is a particularly rich field for confronting and overcoming historical trauma, writing historical wrongs in order to right those wrongs, at least historiographically. On that score, Park Yuha's scholarship on the relationship between people from

the Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula during the Greater East Asia War is among the most exciting and promising works of historical revisionism in Asian historiography today. Park, a literature professor, insists on going beyond the usual archival record to include reminiscences of personal interactions between Koreans and Japanese, finding tremendous complexity and human emotion in the often cut-and-dry military and social histories about East Asia in the middle of the twentieth century (Park 2022). Hirai Kazuko's work on postwar women in Japan is similar to Park's, in that it follows intimacy, both bodily and emotional, between Japanese women and the American occupiers (Hirai 2023). Nakamura Eri, mentioned above, adopts similar positions in examining women in Manchuria, a site of fraught negotiations of social position and political power among Japanese, Korean, Manchurian, and other women during the war years.

The history of postwar Japan, where Americans directly controlled, or attempted to control, an entire linguistic sphere in Asia, is currently being rewritten to take into account local agency during a time of Western domination. Takahashi Shirō has shown how American Occupation authorities rewrote much of the Greater East Asia War and subsequent Occupation in a way preferential to Washington and prejudicial to Tokyo (Takahashi 2019). Nishio Kanji's work on *funsho*, or "burned books," sheds further light on the Occupation, revealing Washington's programmatic erasure of the Japanese past and even of part of the Japanese identity (Nishio 2008). Etō Jun, by a similar token, shows how Occupation-era censorship distorted understandings of history and also of the present by means of what Etō called a "closed-off discursive space" (Etō 1994). Itō Shichiji, the author of several books "burned," that is, banned by the Occupation in the postwar, brings into stark relief the contrast between the prewar and postwar discursive spaces about which Etō theorized (Itō 2023). And Annō Yutaka has gone deeper into the history of the Greater East Asia War to reveal the goal of colonial liberation that lay at the heart of Japan's involvement in that conflict (Annō 2017).

From inside these Asian re-examinings have come more, and even more extensive, revisitations of the too-pat past. Onishi Yūichirō brings to light the anti-racist nature of some trans-Pacific interactions, especially between Japan and the United States, while Takizawa Ichirō reminds us that the Soviet Union was a powerful, if often unacknowledged, player in Japanese political and military affairs before, during, and after the Greater East Asia War (Onishi 2013; Takizawa 1993). Rhee Younghoon views Japanese annexation of the Korean peninsula and the interweaving of Japanese and Korean culture, education, politics, agriculture, and industry, as matters of record, and laments the interpolating use of Korean history as political tool by postwar forces seeking to sanitize the past by erasing, or exaggerating, Japan's role in it (Rhee 2019; Rhee 2024). Inoue Yoshikazu looks back at Japan's own wartime trauma and its effects on the present, asking how future Japanese should face the trauma of a future war, whenever and wherever it might happen (Inoue 2019). In American historiography, Charles Beard took a critical view of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration's entry into the Second World War. Beard's skepticism came with a personal price, as his refusal to adopt pat, patriotic narratives led to his virtual exile from American academia as simplistic versions of World War II history became dominant in the United States (Beard 1948).

Challenges to the United States' dominant historiographies are often traumatic for those who write those challenges as well as for those who read them. The aforementioned W.E.B Du Bois, for example, wrote powerful interrogations of such mainstays of American historiographical hagiography as Reconstruction, finding that—by a great irony—the role of Black Americans in that series of events had been minimized in white-centric histories. Benjamin Madley presents, in many ways, an even sharper challenge to American historiography than does Du Bois, as Madley charges some Americans with having committed a "genocide" in California (Madley 2017; see also Dunbar-Ortiz 2016). If charges of genocide hold, then it would seem that most, if not all, of the triumphalist mode of American historiography would fall. At the very least, Madley's work has the effect of de-exceptionalizing America in American historiography, something certain to cause trauma among those today who accept American exceptionalism as fact. Ilan Pappé, for his part, subjects his native Israel to intense historiographical scrutiny, finding that the project of Zionism, by which the current nation-state of Israel was constructed, works to erase the histories of those already in Palestine, while also setting up dangerously distorting histories of Israel itself (Pappé 2014).

Why endure trauma twice by revising history?

The revision of history to bring to the historiographical surface events that have been overwritten by historians working for and within a dominant group is a task fraught with danger. Challenging entrenched political and social forces invites counter-resistance, to include violence. Even in an irenic research environment, though, bringing past trauma into the circle of more widely shared memory can mean retraumatizing those who already bear historical wounds. So, then, why do it?

The answer lies in the ideal of history-writing. The writing of history should be a moral act. To tell a story should be to tell the truth. Historians have a particular remit and mission in this regard, as their work should be responsible, that is, should be able to stand up to scrutiny by being rooted in and reflective of the full range of known information about the past. No historian is omniscient, of course, but all historians must tell the full truth as best they know it. What has been hidden, whether through ignorance, cowardice, or malice, must be brought back into the flow of knowledge in the present. What has been exaggerated must be re-evaluated. What has been minimized must be given room to grow, in the writing of historiography, to its full proportions, both as historical fact and as accumulated social force.

This is not to say that historical revisionism must be a sub-set of moral philosophy. The revisiting of the past can, and should, be empirical. Empiricist revisionism can even be a method in its own right, with new moral force flowing from the writing of history as grounded in the complex truth (Chen 2010; Mizoguchi 2016). To tell the truth is itself a moral act, and works of historical revisionism are, on that definition, works of moral uplift (Mishra 2012). The texts of such works speak for themselves, in moral parallel to the facts presented in those texts (Polanyi 1944; Morton 2017). But to confront the past is often to confront one's own limitations as a human being, one's own prejudices, one's own gaps in knowledge. It is also, possibly, to be called to explain to others why

one does not hew to the narrative that a particular group holds to be true (Finkelstein 2005; Horne 2004; Horne 2018; Horne 2019).

In any event, the work of re-traumatizing those who carry the traumas of the past is imperative because history-writing is the moral appraisal of human conduct. To speak the truth about the present, we must speak the truth, however painful, about the past. Once thus morally aligned, historiography becomes a collective act of moral striving, an act of solidarity across the very lines that those who have written dominant-paradigm historiographies have created and enforced. Historical revisionism is trauma re-visited, but that revisitation is a matter of great urgency.

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From Great Deeds to Time Sequence as the Source of the Meaning of History: Christianity, the Enlightenment, and Marx's Alternative Modernity[1]

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Abstract:

This essay argues that linear time is not inherently colonialistic; rather, its politics emerge from its interactions with the power structures of its era. I explore the progressive roles of linear time in Christianity, the Enlightenment, and Marxism within key *historical* contexts, highlighting also the diversity of linear temporalities. This diversity enabled Marx to position his "Revolution" against both Christian and Enlightenment temporalities while drawing from them. Key points include:

• All three linear temporalities challenged social hierarchies—for instance, by redefining human identity on their future potential rather than birth origin.

• The Enlightenment's homogeneous time was countered by Christianity on "original sin" and Marx on capitalism. Christianity maintained grace as humanity's only salvation from cycles of "vanities"; Marx advocated for proletariat revolution to break capitalist alienation's vicious cycles.

Building on the (dis-)continuities among these temporalities, I show how Marx initiated an alternative modernity, radically heterogenizing (the temporality of) modernity before post-structuralism. Christianity emphasized grace as humanity's salvation from cyclical time, while Marx advocated for proletariat revolution to escape the cycles of alienation. I illustrate the (dis-)continuities among these temporalities to show how Marx initiated an alternative modernity, significantly contributing to the heterogenization of modernity before post-structuralism.

Keywords: Christianity, Marx, Enlightenment, Dialectic, evolution, revolution, City of God, City of Man

Reinhart Koselleck observed that at around 1750-1850—a period he named the *Sattelzeit*—the social and political vocabulary in German-speaking Europe became increasingly temporalized, democratized, politicized, and ideologized. In the same period, history became historicized (Koselleck 2004, 140). Narratives in the West have not always been "temporalized"—that is, they have not always been concerned with time sequence. (Hi-)story telling in classical antiquity, for example, was preoccupied with great deeds rather than temporal development.

My essay begins by pushing Koselleck's argument much further back by tracing the modern West's penchant for temporalization to Christianity. In contrast to classical narratives' emphasis on

great deeds, Christianity and its secular descendants locate the meaning of history in time sequence. My original contributions include:

- uncovering how the trumping of great deeds by time sequence is *intrinsically* tied to the erosion of social hierarchies by democratization;
- identifying how the divergences in the shared linear temporality of Christianity, Enlightenment liberalism, and Marxism bear on the differences in their ideological *contents*.

By scrutinizing the continuities and the critical differences among the three *forms* of linear time, I demonstrate how Marx already struck a new path for alternative modernity *avant la lettre*, and perhaps, Kierkegaard apart, made the most radical contribution before post-structuralism to heterogenizing the temporality of modernity—and hence modernity itself. I also demonstrate echoes in the atheist Marx's alternative modernity of Christianity's heterogeneous temporality—a heterogeneity emptied out by the Enlightenment's abstract homogeneous progress.

Numerous insightful critiques of linear time in postmodernity exist. Nevertheless, my essay embarks on a distinctive journey by uncovering the progressive roles that linear time assumes within specific historical contexts. I maintain that temporal constructs acquire political significance only when viewed within their historical milieu and in relation to the ideologies of their respective eras.

1. Time Sequence Supplanting Great Deeds as the Key to the Meaning of History: The Modern West's Abandonment of Episodic Narratives and Its Dismantling of Social Hierarchies

The modern idea that time sequence is charged with meaning and a cosmic purpose was a Christian invention. In classical antiquity, the focus of history was not time (sequence) but the great deeds of men, the meaning and lesson of each was revealed in and by itself, and the purpose of history writing was to rescue these "great and wonderful actions" from the ravages of time. Far from being impregnated with meaning, time for the Greeks and Romans was cyclical and purposeless, and it was mutability generated by the teeth of time that human beings countered with historical writing (Arendt 1954, 64). Herodotus opened his *History of the Persian Wars* with the famous line: "These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of [...] preventing the 'great deeds' of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due measure of glory."

The monumentalization of great deeds accounts for the episodic structure of Greek narratives—with one heroic episode after another being spotlighted, while time continues without heading toward any particular goal.

Christianity gave the West a beginning and an end to time in a rectilinear manner charged with a salvation mission. Time was made into a *plan*—the divine plan of salvation. This telos saturated time sequence with "a significance independent of and transcending all single occurrences" (Arendt 1954, 65) in contrast to pagan history's foregrounding of individual deeds. Christian scholars began to read History in order to force from it the ultimate "Truth." Not surprisingly, only with Christianity

did there emerge a well-defined outline of world history and a philosophy of history (Arendt 1954, 65).

After Christianity, the Enlightenment and Marx also saw meaning in the *ordo temporum*. I demonstrate how the preoccupations of all three with deciphering in time sequence the meaning of history were intrinsically tied to their dismantling of social hierarchies. Christianity, the Enlightenment, and Marxism which invested meaning in *time sequence* rather than deeds share the common characteristic of *dignifying the generic humankind*. Not coincidentally, all three were concerned with "*mass mobilization*."

The switch from great deeds to time sequence as the force imbuing history with meaning went hand in hand with the equalization of "men." *Once the meaning of history was vested in time sequence rather than the action of "great men," birth origins and social ranks ceased to matter*. Greek narratives devoted to great deeds centered on the action of heroes who were noble-born, and history was made up of the achievements of the illustrious few. By contrast, the master/slave distinction did not exist for Christians; they addressed each other as "brothers" irrespective of their social ranks. The spirit of fraternity that resurfaced in the Enlightenment was vividly captured in the French Revolution's motto "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*." The radical equalization of the people was evident from the revolutionary salutation practice of the First Republic. Everyone was hailed "Citizen X" rather than being greeted by his or her social ranks (such as "*votre Altesse* [your Highness]," "*monsieur* [*mon sieur*; my lord]," and "*madame* [*ma dame*; my lady"])—a practice that would subsequently inspire the communists to address all equally as "Comrade."

1.1. Christian Time and the Equalization of Human Beings

Once divine planning rather than heroic actions was deemed to be the driving force behind history, human beings were not only trivialized but also equalized. Under divine planning, all human enterprises were doomed to the same "vanity of vanities." Human beings, regardless of birth origins, were equally helpless in their original sin. At the same time, they were equally dignified by being created in the image of God, and Christ's sacrifice was made for the entire humanity. No human being was "higher" than others, evident in how "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (*Galatians* 3:28).

In contrast to Greek narratives' focus on heroes, Christian narratives foregrounded humble people. God was incarnated through the vessel of a lowly carpenter, and died a most humiliating death by being crucified between two notorious thieves. Erich Auerbach observes how "the great and sublime events in the Homeric poems take place far more exclusively and unmistakably among the members of a ruling class" (Auerbach 1953, 22).

Corresponding to the high status of the Greco-Roman heroes was the high style of classical rhetoric. This was broken by Christianity. In contrast to the classical elevation of the polis above the *oikos*, "in the Old Testament stories, the sublime, tragic, and problematic take shape precisely in domestic and commonplace: scenes such as those between Cain and Abel, between Noah and his sons, between Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, between Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau, and so on, are inconceivable in the Homeric style" (Auerbach 1953, 22).

1.2. Linear Temporality and the Dismantling of Social Hierarchies in Eighteenth– and Nineteenth–Century Europe: Redefining Identity on the Basis of Future Potentials Rather Than Birth Origins

The common folks and the quotidian became dignified subjects of representation in novels and history which were built on the meaningfulness of time sequence and which held sway in Europe in the late eighteenth and especially the nineteenth century. Simultaneous with the elevation of the commoner was the rise of prose as a respectable and preferred language. In the 1890s, the quotidian became an epistemological issue and a substitute for the philosophical notion of "Truth," thus contributing to the emergence of Sociology as an academic discipline (Gumbrecht 1996, 13-35).

There were reasons why the emphasis on the meaningfulness of time sequence went hand-in-hand with the equalization of "the people" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In classical antiquity, one factor for the irrelevance of time was the inflexibility of social standing. With the possibility of social mobility in modernity, time sequence assumed importance. Social mobility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rendered modern humanity much closer to biblical characters than those of the Greek narratives—the low could rise to the top and the high could fall low, *even though such mobility in modernity was seen to be in the hands of human beings rather than God*.

Particularly worth noting is the role played by the new temporal framework—namely, linear time—in the equalization of all. The entire population regardless of birth origins could be deemed equal, because *the linear temporal scheme which projected a future different from the past* opened a channel for *defining people not by their past, but by their projected future.* The more an age pursues the myth of "autonomy"—such as "self-made man" or "We the Nation" in the post-Napoleonic era—the stronger this drive. *The new temporality detaching identity from birth origins and attaching it to "what one would become in the future" created "the people" as equal among themselves and to other peoples—because their futures were equally open to being created anew by their actions.* The redefining of the present by the future rather than the past was also the driving force behind *pouvoir constituant* which impassioned so many political declarations of this period, through which "We the People"—a collective identity without referencing differences in social statuses could literally be created.

The Greek heroes were heroes because their present was based on their past—that is, their birth origins. By contrast, the bourgeoisie could create a "citizen hero," and Marx could call into being a hero-proletariat changing human history, because future-oriented linear temporality defined human identity in terms of the future. *The bourgeoisie created this new "futurological" identity for the people of modernity via political philosophy and novels; Marx did this via history*.

1.2.1. Historicity: Equalizing Humanity by Focusing on Inner Life Rather Than Outward Attributes

A more direct legacy running from Christianity to the Enlightenment, which contributes to the internal linkage between temporalization and the equalization of humanity in both, was inner life and its correlative historicity.

Augustine's "inner self" which was continued by the "bourgeois interiority" in modernity rendered external attributes such as birth origins and social status irrelevant, and facilitated the equalization of humanity in the common seriousness of their interior lives and existential conditions. Auerbach points out how in the novel—that "bourgeois genre"—the historicity of the human and society is the primary supposition for the serious imitation of the everyday (Auerbach 2007, 439-465). Hence the prominence of the *Bildungsroman* in this period.

1.2.2. The New Temporality of Modern Warfare and the Equalization of the People

Unlike ancient Greece where victory could depend on the heroic elites on the battlefield, wars in modernity were of much larger scale and far more *drawn out over time*. This became especially the case with the rise of total wars since the French Revolution. Long wars which developed over *time* require the total involvement of all members of the nation. *New time transpired into new beings*: under the new temporality of modern warfare, all people regardless of their class standing became *citizens* equally capable of creating a meaningful history for their nation.

2. Three Kinds of Linear Temporalities: Christianity, The Enlightenment, and Marxism

2.1. The Two Temporalities of Christianity

Christianity pays no heeds to birth origins or human deeds, because nothing lasts in the human world.

With the almighty monotheistic God who absolutely transcends human comprehension presiding over the universe, social ranks lose their ironclad permanence, and individuals find their social standing susceptible to drastic and unpredictable change. In addition, time now is seen as imbued with the grace of God and the possibility of salvation. *Once time becomes the prerogative of God instead of nature*, *time sequence rather than human deeds emerges as the key to the meaning of history*. Correlatively, *historicity* emerges in figures like Abraham, David, and Job—a historicity intertwined with the biblical characters' inner life and spiritual depth, as Auerbach observes.

It is commonly assumed that Christianity espouses a linear concept of time in contrast to the Greeks. In reality, Christianity maintains two concepts of time—*cyclical time as pertaining to the City of Man, and linear time for the City of God. The former is described by Ecclesiastes as filled with "vanity of vanities [...] Nothing new under the sun." By contrast, linear time is the time of divine redemption*.

The term *modernus* was coined in medieval times. Although it was used to denote "of today" (which includes both the "now" and the "just now" in contrast to the more remote past), under Augustinian influence, the term came to acquire a special overtone designating Christianity with its linear time as a radical break from the preceding pagan world. One articulation of this break was the replacement of cycles of the "old and new" noted by pagan antiquity with a sense of the present as an irreversible break with the past (Osborne 1995, 9). Especially consequential was Augustine's *City of God*, written to refute those who blamed the fall of Rome on Christianity. Central to that refutation

was the contrast between the cyclical time theories of Augustine's era, and the Christian linear time foregrounded by the radical singularity of Christ's life and death on earth: "Once Christ died for our sins; and rising from the dead, he dieth no more" (Augustine 1882, Bk. XII, chap. 13). Two points worth noting in Augustine's quote: (1) the radical singularity of Christ's Incarnation which gave rise to the subsequent philosophical idea of "the Event" was made possible by a linear temporality with faith and hope looking toward the future; (2) the Incarnation of Christ marked the Event in history when eternity erupted into the course of earthly mortality. *Time for the saved henceforth became redemptive, because time itself had been redeemed by the Event*.

In contrast to the time of grace, *secular time expresses change as the transiency of human existence and the inevitable decay of even the most majestic human edifice—amply documented in pagan lamentations over mutability, and continued by Christian equation of secular time with the "vanity of vanities."*

Arendt calls Augustine "the first philosopher of history" (1954, 65). From the viewpoint of Christianity and modernity—only linear, goal-directed time could create real history—because only non-repeatable time promised *real change*. *Under linear, goal-directed time, history was not a mere string of random episodes or deeds, nor an endless repetition of the passing of all human enterprises. Rather, time made up a meaningful sequence—shot through and through with divine purpose*, which brought the Europeans *a concept of change that could be positive*, in contrast to the classical culture which depicts Kronos as devouring his children.

2.2. The Enlightenment

With the success of Christian ideology, *modernus* gradually gained grounds in the West after its coinage, such that—after the triumph of "the modern"—all periods from the late Medieval Ages onwards came to be regarded as modern—be it early modern, modern, or post-modern. In modernity's secularization of the Christian temporality, the agent of change switched from God to human beings. In place of theonomy, modern time sequence told the tale of the realization of human *autonomy* through reason and knowledge.

Part of the Enlightenment's confidence in modernity ("the new") and progress was triggered by the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries which undermined a range of old presuppositions conditioning previous philosophical inquiry. Confident about humanity's infinite capacity for progress, *modernity tried to seize the power of redemption from religion by taking over linear time from God, displacing it from the sphere of the transcendent to a system of complete immanence. What Christianity promised to bring in the afterworld, modernity vowed to realize in this world through progress*. Inscrutable divine planning got secularized as human rational planning to create paradise on earth.

Due to space limitations, my characterization of the Enlightenment will reflect primarily the mentality of frontline thinkers such as Adam Ferguson, Abbe Saint-Pierre, Turgot, and Condorcet, and their demonstrated optimism that knowledge and the progress of reason would solve all human problems. I might also add that even their colleagues with more ambiguous views subscribed to

"progress" (except Rousseau). For instance, despite Voltaire's acknowledgment of evil in history, he fervently believed that reason and expanding literacy would lead to progress, and joined other philosophes in lauding material acquisition and commerce for advancing progress and civilization in *Essay sur les moeurs*.

2.2.1. The Enlightenment's Two Temporalities; "Progress" Combining the Infinity of Perfection with the Dynamic Process of Achieving this Ultimate Goal

Christianity contrasted the linear time of salvation to the cyclical time of unredeemed human beings who were doomed to repeat the purposeless cycles of nature. When transferring the agency of salvation from God to human beings, *modernity gave the control of linear time to human beings, leaving cyclical time to nature alone*.

While the Enlightenment thinkers were not a homogenous group, there was prevailing anticipation of humanity progressively mastering nature, general confidence in human civilization advancing forward, and even optimism that progress had no limit.

Progressus, a secular term that emerged as a key concept toward the end of the eighteenth century (see Koselleck 2004, 246), displaced the spiritually charged *profectus*. "Progress," signifying the *processual* character of the Enlightenment's linear time, subjected the completeness of the telos to *temporalization* and the process of *worldly* occurrences: "*progressus est in infinitum perfectionis,*" wrote Leibniz who first temporalized perfection. With this act, "the objective of possible completeness, previously attainable only in the Hereafter, henceforth served the idea of improvement on earth and made it possible for the doctrine of the Final Days to be superseded by the hazards of an open future" (Koselleck 2004, 265-266). Perfection was also temporalized in France as *perfectionnement*, to which Rousseau assigned the meta-historical sense of the *perfectibilité* of men (Koselleck 2004, 265-266).

Kant's *Fortschritt* in the 1780s incorporated both *perfectibilité* and *perfectionnement*, bringing together in one word "perfection" (or "completeness") and the *process* of its realization. The term also summed up in one "collective singular" various empirical expressions of progressions—such as *Fortgang, Fortschreiten,* and *Fortrücken*, all of which were natural translations for the French plural *les progrès* (Koselleck 1997, 18).

2.2.2. Abstract Homogeneous Idea of Linear Progress (1): Quantitative and Cumulative Progress, Including Capital Accumulation

The Enlightenment concept of time was homogeneous and empty in the Cartesian sense, devoid of existential concreteness and historicity. A major factor for this homogeneous and abstract character is the Enlightenment's tendency to understand progress in quantitative, cumulative terms. As Gabriel A. Almond, Marvin Chodorow and Roy Harvey Pearce point out: "the powerhouse of progress has always been the growth of knowledge, and the pattern which this growth has been held to take has been one of cumulativeness" (Almond, Chodorow, and Pearce 1982, 11). Along with the *growth* of knowledge came *development* in science and technology, *increase* in material comforts, etc.,

leading the liberals to scrutinize historical growth at an incremental rate, such that the Enlightenment created a legacy that continues to influence sciences today—namely, the legacy of viewing progress as a cumulative advance, and science as a collective and cumulative enterprise.

The Enlightenment's cumulative concept of progress is inseparable from its endorsement of "capital accumulation." Turgot's *Discourse on the Historical Progress of the Human Mind* included the concept of development by capital accumulation and investment as crucial for progress. Like Turgot, Condorcet was a great enthusiast of liberal economy. Continuing Turgot's legacy, Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* portrays the history of progress as the cumulative ordering of ideas into more and more comprehensive combinations.

The secularization of Christianity via Calvinism's legacy of quantifying and "*counting* your blessing" was one way how *the radically heterogeneous temporality of Christianity became emptied out by the Enlightenment*, leading to what Weber calls the "disenchantment of the world." *This heterogeneity was subsequently revived by Marx*.

2.2.3. Abstract Homogeneous Idea of Linear Progress (2): Hasty Conjoining of Natural and Human Sciences

Understanding progress in cumulative terms went hand-in-hand with the Enlightenment's propensity to reduce hard sciences and human sciences under the one umbrella "progress," and the era's naïve assumption that the two would advance together. The Enlightenment belief in the symbiotic relations between scientific and political advancements is described by Gabriel A. Almond, Marvin Chodorow, and Roy Harvey Pearce as follows:

> the spread of knowledge, science, and technology and of material welfare has both contributed to and been furthered by the development of modern organizations—political parties, organized interest groups, governmental bureaucracies, corporations, schools and universities, and the mass media of communication. Political parties and organized interest groups have been the instrumentalities that created modern mass representative democracy, made public office generally accessible, democratized and "meritocratized" educational opportunity, and introduced the welfare state (Almond, Chodorow, and Pearce 1982, 6 and 9).

The abstract homogeneous character of Enlightenment "progress" allowed it to make claims to universality, by glossing over many eruptions of *die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen* on both local and global levels produced by modernity.

2.2.4. Modern Politics under the Aegis of "Progress": "-Isms" Legitimated by the Future Rather Than the Present

Koselleck and his followers observe how European social and political languages around 1750-1850 became charged with a strong future dimension and teleological overtone. Numerous future-loaded neologisms emerged including the different forms of "-isms." These "-isms" were concepts of

movement which justified themselves in terms of what they promised to bring in the future and not what they were. All "-isms" thus necessarily took on the form of *movement*, suggesting a movement into the future. Take, for instance, the following example:

> Republicanism was [...] a concept of movement which did for political action *what 'progress' promised to do for the whole of history*. The whole concept of 'republic,' which had *previously indicated a condition*, became a *telos*, and was at the same time rendered into a concept of movement by means of the suffix 'ism' (Koselleck 2004, 287; my italics).

2.3. Marx

In their strong orientations towards the future, the Enlightenment and Marxism are both secularized products of Christianity. Future-oriented history is directional and purposeful, and all three modes of thought deem time sequence as meaningful. Of the three kinds of linear time, one might assume that Marxist temporality is closer to that of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment and Marx are not only much closer in chronology. Both are products of modernity, whose faith in progress could be traced to the rise of modern science in the seventeenth century. For both the Enlightenment and Marx, linear progress is powered by reason, and the agent of progress is human beings rather than God.

However, Marx is no blind follower of the Enlightenment. Similar to Rousseau's counter-Enlightenment voice within the Enlightenment, Marx argues for an alternative modernity to counter the liberals' modernity. I will demonstrate how the *form* of Marx's disjunctive temporality bears certain resemblances to Christianity. But even as he inherits certain legacies from both the Enlightenment and Christianity, Marx *inverts* both, such that he comes up with *a third way—an alternative modernity—which would not duplicate either the Enlightenment or Christianity, but a modernity expected to be free from contradictions, and whose progress to humanity's telos would not be stalled by alienation*.

2.3.1. Marx's Dissection of Capitalism's Disjunctive Temporality

Marx detects serious self-contradictions in the liberals' modernity project. Far from depicting modernity as one-way progress, *Marx's heterogeneous historiography highlights the self-contradictory and self-alienating nature of capitalism*. According to Marx:

- accumulation by the capitalists equals deprivation of the workers; the former's progress means the latter's regress;
- far from benefitting the whole humankind, the liberals' modernity decimates the lives of the workers. Modernity is marked by a disjunctive temporality whereby the workers are ruined by the growth of the capitalists' profits and their correlated modern bourgeois institutions;[2]
- there exists a contradiction between advances in science and regresses in society and politics. Every advance in the forces of production is stymied by reactionary relations of production, such that *utopia can only be achieved by a revolution rather than an evolution—by a radical rupture rather than a continuity with the bourgeois project of progress*.

Voltaire, Diderot, and Kant already doubted that increasing knowledge and technical development would necessarily produce political and moral improvement. *Marx goes beyond them*, however, by detecting that *the contradictions between the developments of the infrastructure and the superstructure (i) reduce linear temporality back to the cyclical; and (ii) a categorical break with Enlightenment historiography is required in order to arrive at true utopia*.

2.3.2. Marx's Criticism of the Enlightenment's Cumulative View of Progress

Marx detects a sinister side to modern "accumulation," including capital accumulation from the division of labor. In Part VIII, Volume 1 of *Das Kapital*, he spells out an analysis of exploitative accumulation via a criticism of Hegel's philosophy of history—that is, Hegel's conversion and sublimation of violence into the World Spirit. What Marx discerns in Hegel's Spirit is the *accumulation* of violence, suffering, and evil "productively converted in the service of the forces of emancipation, culture, civilization, and order" (Balibar 2016, 42-43).

To the extent that Marxism is a product of modernity, it also adopts the secular modern belief in linear time, but only up to a certain point. According to Marx, once human history enters the stage of capitalism, time switches from linear progress to self-contradiction and a vicious cycle: the more the workers work with capitalism toward the modern promise of liberation, the more disempowered they become.

2.3.2.1. Capitalism's Two Temporalities: Human Labor versus Animal Labor, and the Dehumanization of the Workers

As demonstrated in §2.1, careful examination shows that two temporalities are present in Christianity, and only the time of redemption is linear. Likewise, Marx's investigation reveals two temporalities in modernity. Contrary to the liberals who associate capitalism with linear progress, Marx reveals that capitalism engineers both linear and cyclical time. While the forces of production progress in a linear manner, its relations of production keep reducing the progress made back to the "vanity of vanities," until a communist revolution eliminates the cycles of production-alienation and progress-regress in capitalism. Only then could humanity truly advance in a linear manner to its telos.

In contrast to the capitalists who experience modernity as a linear progress toward "self-liberation," the workers encounter it as an alien hegemony destroying their agency. Marx distinguishes between human labor and animal labor. Human beings produce beyond physical needs and therefore "only truly [produce] in freedom," versus animals which produce merely in response to their natural urges by which they are driven, and hence are not free, as Rousseau and Kant already elaborated.

I wish to add another contrast between human labor and animal labor, in order to shed new light on Marx's problematization of the liberal concept of history, and his diagnosis of how capitalism, far from leading humanity toward self-realization and autonomy, is heading toward the exact opposite.

By laboring *beyond* immediate physical needs, human beings labor for the *future*, in contrast to animals who labor according to the dictates of their natural rhythm, and continually repeat the

same cycle of hunting-consuming without any possibility of moving beyond their current states of existence.[3] Human beings work more than they can consume at the moment. Through *accumulation*, they break through the cyclical form of existence. Like the Enlightenment thinkers, Marx believes that only through linear progress can humanity liberate and realize itself.

In capitalist societies, the path to human fulfillment is, unfortunately, repeatedly destroyed by alienated labor. The goal of capitalism being profit maximization, appropriating the workers' surplus labor is built into the system. Surplus appropriation entails keeping the workers laboring from hand to mouth, so that the business owner gets ever enriched by appropriating the surplus from the workers. *Appropriating the workers' surplus means taking away their future, and the linear temporality that would allow them to achieve freedom*. The harder the workers work, the more empowered their exploiter becomes, and the more oppression they suffer. As Marx points out, "the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own" (Marx 1972). The workers become *dehumanized*, not least in the sense that their chance for breaking out of the cycle of subsistence existence is appropriated from them. *Deprived of a future, they lapse from humanity's linear time into the animalistic way of repeating the same cycle of working-consuming day after day, generation after generation*. To expropriate Marx: "in his [the worker's] human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal" (Marx 1972).

In contrast to Kant's association of the Enlightenment with autonomy, what modernity brought to the workers was unprecedented heteronomy. The disjuncture between the capitalists and the workers' experience of modernity is complemented by the acute dissonance between the forces and relations of production. Modernity boasts of great advances in science and technology, which carries unprecedented potentials for liberating humankind from deprivation. Unfortunately, modernity's progressive forces of production are constantly being pulled back by its (self-)destructive relations of production which retards the ability of the workers, keeping them in a dependent and servile position, poorly educated, and ill-equipped for modern life. In so doing, modernity retards history in general.

Against the Enlightenment liberals' one-dimensional view of progress, Marx thus sees capitalism as a force that pulls in two opposite directions. For this reason, Marx and Engels criticize just about every Enlightenment liberal's concept of progress as naïve, superficial, unhistorical, and shamelessly apologetic. Inversion is a typical Marxist strategic response to Enlightenment thinkers. As Meyer puts it:

> Marxism represents an inversion *(Umstülpung)* of Ricardo's political economy or of liberal ideology in general, including eighteenth–century theories of progress [...]. Marxist theories incorporate and invert such ideas as the Lockean theory of property [...]; the Smith-Ricardo model of the market; Voltaire's hatred of bureaucratic arbitrariness; the materialistic and atheistic views of Holbach and Helvétius; and the skepticism of Hume (Meyer 1982, 68).

Against the liberals' depiction of modernity as linear progress in all spheres of human life, Marx detects in modernity a (self-)destructive superstructure that keeps compromising its progressive base

into a reactionary and retarding tool, by which the modern project of human emancipation is degraded into human enslavement.

2.3.3. Deconstructing the Liberals' Homogeneous Empty Time: Rousseau and Marx

Marx's temporal scheme shows how modern progress keeps negating itself—a pattern that *makes visible* the (self-)destructive, unjust, and oppressive elements in the liberal version of modernity. His temporality which features a series of inversion-subversions of Hegel and the Enlightenment liberals is deeply indebted to Rousseau—Marx's harsh criticism of certain Rousseauean ideas notwithstanding.

Rousseau's understanding of *alienation* goes far deeper and is far more existentialist than Hegel's, likewise his wrestling with alienation as it is rooted in the Christian concept of original sin. It is Rousseau, not Hegel, who enables Marx to see that *utopia cannot be achieved via the homogeneous empty time of the Enlightenment or Hegel; rather, to achieve utopia, a radical break with both is necessary. For Marx, only revolution—not evolution—could bring about the self-actualization of humanity.*

Engels describes Marx's fascination with Rousseau's dissection of the self-contradictory temporality of modernity in the latter's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Mankind.*[4] Engels highlights Marx's keen focus on Rousseau's belief that "each new advance of civilisation is at the same time a new advance of inequality. All institutions set up by the society which has arisen with civilisation change into the opposite of their original purpose" (Engels 1877, Chap. 13). In Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, Engels finds "not only a line of thought which corresponds exactly to the one developed in Marx's *Capital*, but also, in details, a whole series of the same dialectical turns of speech as Marx used: processes which in their nature are antagonistic, contain a contradiction; transformation of one extreme into its opposite; and finally, as the kernel of the whole thing, the negation of the negation" (Engels 1877, Chap. 13).

This is to say, the Enlightenment on its own would never allow humanity self-realization, given that progress in the forces of production is perpetually reversed by the relations of production. Marx thus proceeds to offer *an alternative concept and even a counter-concept to the liberal version of modernity*. The *Marxist "counter-modernity" is by no means "anti-modern."* Rather, it is an incorporation-*inversion* of the liberal project.

Not surprisingly, *Marx's search for an alternative modernity or counter-modernity* (which is generated within and by modernity itself) echoes *Rousseau who represents the counter-Enlightenment voice generated by and from within the Enlightenment*. This despite Marx's Communist utopia and his disdain for the Rousseauean small idyllic community of simple, honest, and virtuous folk uncorrupted by power, knowledge, or refinements.

2.3.4. Hegel's "Productive" Dialectical Conversion of the History of Violence and Sufferings into Civilization and Spirit: Marx's Critique

Hegel's dialectic is already a step beyond the one-dimensional Enlightenment temporality by including a dialectical other. History according to Hegel is not a straight advancement. Rather, *history*

features the "redemption" of *cyclical time by linear temporality with the spirals of retrogression and alienation being* progressively *sublated toward the* telos. Hegel's ingenuities, as Balibar points out, reside in his dialectical conversion of the negativity of historical violence into the positivity of civilization. The realization of the World Spirit, traced by Hegel in the form of a *Bildungsroman* in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is the civilizing process whereby violence becomes *converted* into non-violence, becomes sublimated or spiritualized, and transformed into political institutions and legal state power.

In the dialectical process of the realization of the Absolute Spirit, there is no cruelty in history, however extreme, that cannot be assimilated, converted, and sublated into institutions and civilization. Through Hegel's negation of negation, past human sufferings are "reasoned" away as a mere moment in World History, a means to an End—that is, the telos.

This is precisely how and where Marx breaks with Hegel and his Enlightenment predecessors. The break reveals the divergence between the temporal scheme of modernity with its reliance on the inner development of reason in an entirely immanent structure, and *Marx's hybrid of an immanent and an eschatological temporal structure*.

2.3.5. Marxism as an Alternative Modernity to Counter the Liberals' Modernity in order to Truly Realize Modernity as a Human Emancipation Project: Revolution versus Evolution

What Hegel fails to take into account in his negation of negation is precisely something absolutely inconvertible, not negatable, and non-negotiable—a remainder left over from the dialectics of violence and civilization, an excess, an ob-scene jouissance *associated with the superego which Balibar calls "cruelty."* At the center of what Marx discerns as a non-negatable, inconvertible cruelty is the overexploitation of capitalism: the capitalist economy is not only based upon exploitation, but on an *excess* of exploitation.

The cruelty of capitalism—inconvertible and unsublatable into civilization—renders necessary a revolution, a blowing up of the system which is rotten to its core, before the time of redemption or what Marx calls "real human history" can begin.

To Hegel's "negation of negation," Marx responds with the "expropriation of the expropriators" by way of revolutionary violence which acts as the "midwife" of history. Marx hunts for the real modern which is more modern than (the liberals') modern, by aiming at a modernity that is progressive in *both* its base and its superstructure. This *real modernity* can only be achieved when capitalism is blown up. Capitalist modernity is both necessary, and at the same time necessary to destroy, before real human emancipation—the true meaning of "modernity"—can be realized.

Marxism is thus the alternative modern or counter-modern voice within modernity. "Counter-modern" here does not mean "anti-modern." Rather, it is an alternative modern concept that Marx offers to counter the homogeneous liberal version of modernity. Marx's counter-modern is *more modern than modern*—and being "more modern than modern" does not mean that Marx is post-modern either. Rather, Marx is striving for the real modern and its project of human emancipation, in contrast to the superficial modern of the liberals which only appears to be modern but in reality

keeps dragging humanity backward with *a (self-)destructive superstructure*. Marx seeks to go beyond the self-alienation and self-annihilation of the false modern to truly realize modernity's project of human emancipation.

The self-alienation of the workers and the self-inflicted doom of the capitalists are not the only manifestations of self-destructiveness inside capitalism. Marxism itself embodies the self-contradiction of Western modernity. Marxism is the nemesis of Western modernity; it is the "heresy" created by modernity itself. In Christian language, the "ripening of the sins of capitalism" is that which produces Marxism.

3. Marx's Alternative Modernity: Affinities with Christianity in Marx's Subversion of the Enlightenment, and Enlightenment Influences in Marx's Critique of Christianity

Thematic, structural, and historical continuities exist between Christianity, the Enlightenment, and Marx:

- all three promise humanity liberation, salvation, and fulfillment;
- all three promise such through linear time;
- all three justify themselves in terms of what is to come in the *future*.

Nevertheless, *Marx offers an alternative to both Enlightenment and Christianity by inverting and going beyond both*.

It is worth noting that *the chronology "Christianity-the Enlightenment-Marx" by no means reflects a linear progression*. In my examination of how Marx inverts and goes beyond both the temporalities of the Enlightenment and Christianity, I scrutinize not only the legacies of the Enlightenment in Marx's critique of Christianity, but also *Marx's affinities with Christianity (however secularized) in his subversion of the Enlightenment.*

3.1. Marx's Affinities with Christianity in His Search for an Alternative to the Modernity of the Enlightenment

As shown in §2.3.5, Marxism is both the symptom and the product of the (self-)destructive superstructure of modernity. It is an *internal* growth of Western modernity that turns back on modernity. It is a counter-modernity generated *within*, and *by*, the modern West, and it features a heretic linearity that involves modernity blowing up itself before real modernity of human emancipation can be accomplished.

The following establishes certain proximities between Christianity and Marx in the latter's critiques of the Enlightenment.

3.1.1. Liberal Modernity Doomed to Lapse Back into Cyclical Time

In Marx's temporal scheme, *once human history enters the stage of capitalism, time lapses back from linear progress to cycles of self-contradictions*: the more the workers labor for a future, the more

they deprive themselves of one. The same self-contradiction also characterizes capitalism: the more capitalism thrives on exploitations, the closer it brings itself to its doom, until the "rational progress" of economic modernity explodes, before utopia—that is, the time of redemption—can finally be achieved.

In this critique of capitalist modernity, Marx comes quite close to Christianity. Capitalism's linear progress is bound to lapse back into the cyclical temporal pattern—the "vanity of vanities" which Ecclesiastes warns about. This is because, contra the Enlightenment's naïve optimism, both Christianity and Marx see the existing world as moving toward the exact opposite of human realization, the reason being that the existing world is *deeply flawed*.

The liberals presuppose that humans are rational autonomous beings. They believe in human perfectibility and the attainment of utopia via evolution. This is contradicted by both Christianity and Marx:

- Christianity preaches that *human beings on their own can never make the leap from cyclical time to linear time due to original sin.*
- Marx admonishes that *liberal modernity on its own can never deliver itself or humanity from cyclical time to linear time due to its self-alienating superstructure* which is bound to doom capitalism.

3.1.2. Marx and Christianity Contra the Homogenous Empty Time of the Enlightenment: Evil, Suffering, Faith, and Revolution

Michel Foucault remarks that "History becomes 'effective' to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being" (Foucault 1984, 88). Expropriating Foucault, I am going to demonstrate how Marx's "effective history" relentlessly disrupts the pretended continuity of the Enlightenment's historiography of progress.

For both Christianity and Marx, *time is out of joint*[5] until a radically new order displaces the existing one. The abstract homogeneous empty progress preached by the Enlightenment is disrupted by evil, sufferings, and an apocalyptic extinction of the existing order in both Christianity and Marx.

While Marx omits the term "evil," it has a concrete presence within both Christianity and Marxism—be it original sin or social ills. The correlative of evil is human suffering. Suffering—abstracted away by the superficial narrative of progress in the Enlightenment, and spiritualized and sublated into "civilization" by Hegel—has a potent and prominent presence in Christianity and Marx. The two's promises of delivering human beings from misery constitute their strongest appeal.

For Marx, no less than for Christianity, "evil" must be extinguished—that is, the existing order must be destroyed—before humanity could be emancipated. This means that, in contrast to the Enlightenment for whom the future is on a continuum with the present, Christianity's Apocalypse and Marx's Revolution posit a radically heterogeneous future marking a categorical break with the present and a complete overturning of the existing oppressive order. For both Christianity and

Marxism, therefore, there is a definitive break between the "*before*" and the "*after*" *of* the apocalyptic destruction of the existing order. For Marx, the time of redemption—which he called "real human history"—can only begin on the other side of the uncompromisable divide. A parallel can be found in the Last Judgment when the existing world will be destroyed before the unveiling of a categorically different world.

3.1.2.1. Suffering/Immiseration: History Became a Book to be Deciphered

The temporal-political significance of suffering in Christianity—referred to as "immiseration" in Marx— cannot be overstated. It is suffering that compels the human spirit to force open an *other* world in the *future* when humanity will be liberated from oppression: it is *suffering/immiseration in the present—and the struggle to be liberated from such—that calls linear temporality into being, and infuses time sequence with meaning*. In contrast to the Enlightenment which takes for granted the future to be the outgrowth of current progress, *Christianity and Marx required a radical rupture with the present which calls the future into being*. Consider how the Christians faced down their Roman executioners with the belief that martyrdom would send them on to a radically different future free from miseries. Or consider Marx, for whom the *ultimate trigger of revolutionary consciousness is not reason but immiseration. Extreme suffering* ignites the revolutionary consciousness, explodes the Enlightenment's homogeneous empty time, before real progress can begin.

Given that for Christianity and Marx, the future is categorically different from the existing state of affairs, a more sophisticated reading of time sequence is called for, and their hermeneutic compulsion with regard to the meaning of history goes deeper than the Enlightenment thinkers. It is no accident that eighteenth-century Europe's preoccupation with political theory was succeeded by its nineteenth–century obsession with history. The latter epoch witnessed a diversification of views on what forms and routes progress would take—or even whether history was indeed advancing forward. Under such circumstances, human beings began to read history in a way no one had done before. Arendt explicates it as follows: "they 'read in order to force from history the ultimate truth it could offer to God-seeking people'; but this ultimate truth was no longer supposed to reside in a single book, whether the Bible or some substitute for it. History itself was considered such a book, the book 'of the human soul in times and nations,' as Herder defined it".

3.1.2.2. What Christianity and Marxism Promise to Do for History in its Entirety: The Temporality of Faith and the Leap to the Other World

Faith does not enter Greek narratives because of their emphasis on deeds themselves rather than a yet-to-be-realized future.

By contrast, faith is central to Christianity, the Enlightenment, and Marxism, each of which is built on what it *promises for the whole of history*. Faith is a default requirement of all believers in linear time: given linear time's constitutive gap between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation, the future offered by all three modes of thought is merely promissory notes—carrying no value at all in the absence of faith.

Although all three modes of thought require faith, this mandate is far more stringent for Christianity and Marxism. The Enlightenment's future is a continuation of the present, and it takes no great effort to envision a future based on the present, however more desirable is the former. By contrast, both the Christian Paradise and the Marxist utopia transcend absolutely hitherto human experience. As Koselleck observes, "The lesser the experience, the greater the aspiration." However, precisely because such language owes more to hope than experience and trumps experience with aspiration, its visionary quality leaves unclear what the future Paradise looks like. For this reason, the promised lands of both Christianity and Marxism defy clear description, and can only be accepted on faith.

Faith is the insistence on unconditional and unwavering loyalty and devotion to a belief, even in the face of extremely unfavorable circumstances, a lack of tangible evidence, and situations that defy reason. The entire Christian life is lived out on the foundation of faith. Despite Marx's attempt to build his system on reason and science, there are neither empirical nor rational proofs for his claims about "historical necessity" or utopia either. Ultimately, both Christianity and Marxism rely on their followers' *leap* of faith.

Faith necessitates a leap across an unbridgeable divide across two worlds. There is no continuity whatsoever between the future and the present. Faith, similar to miracle, opens up radically heterogeneous temporality.

Not surprisingly, *both Christianity and Marx mobilize across nations with prophetic voices; both prophesied the destruction of the current rotten order and the coming of a perfect world. Faith* is central to both, so is *propaganda—which* originated in Christianity as "the propagation of *the Faith*." Despite Marx's rejection of religion, *holding fast to the belief against all odds*—that is, keeping faith that Paradise (on Earth) *will* come—is ultimately the groundless ground upon which his program is founded.

3.1.2.3. The Heterogeneous Temporalities of Marx and Christianity both Reflect and Effect Their Revolutionary Contents

Forms of time are both constitutive of, and constituted by, their contents. Not surprisingly, the heterogeneous temporalities of Christianity and Marxism are characterized by struggles, contradictions, and apocalyptic ruptures. Both feature revolutionary contents—namely, categorical *changes* which *turn upside down the current state of affairs*.

Marx's prophecy about the dictatorship of the proletariat needs no further elaboration. Let me demonstrate how Marx's radicality has a predecessor in Christianity: The Bible tells a (hi-)story where the humble are elevated and the overbearing is struck down. Christianity does not concern itself with heroes and nobilities, but with how the lowest can be lifted high while the highest can fall low. The stronger a worldly power, the harder it will fall. As Augustine explains, it is no accident that even Rome is doomed to fall. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (*Matthew* 5:5), whereas "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (*Matthew* 19:23).

Contrast the predicaments of Adam and Job to the Greek tragic heroes. *In ancient Athens, there is no divine consciousness manifested in and through time, and there is no meaning to time sequence. Nor is there a monotheistic God monopolizing power. For these reasons, the fall of Greek heroes is never as radical and categorical as it is in the Bible*: a tragic hero remains a hero, however tragic. As Auerbach points out, the pagans "are far more untouched in their heroic elevation than are the Old Testament figures, who can fall much lower in dignity (consider, for example, Adam, Noah, David, Job)" (Auerbach 1953, 18). Yet there is "hardly one who is not deemed worthy of God's personal intervention and personal inspiration."[7] The biblical characters' fall and salvation being situated within the Almighty's planning and execution, they assume a magnitude not within the reach of the Greek heroes, and their "humiliation and elevation go far deeper and far higher" (Auerbach 1953, 18).

The Christian radical overturning of the existing order finds an echo in the Marxist revolution which elevates the oppressed and knocks down the rich and the powerful. Another affinity can be found in Marx's promise that the miseries of the workers are a *passing* stage to be supplanted by utopia as the "final truth." This seems to echo Christianity's preaching that the oppressors' reign is *transient*, and will be replaced by the eternal Paradise where the oppressed will be free. The two are similar in spirit, despite Marx's insistence on returning agency from God to human beings.

3.2. Enlightenment Influences in Marx's Alternative Utopia to the Christian Paradise

Marxism offers a counter-temporality not only to his Enlightenment predecessors but also to Christianity.

In Marxist historiography, capitalism's exploitative relations of production doom the system to a cyclical temporality of self-contradictions: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the mightier labour becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labour becomes, the duller becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature's bondsman.

Above all, the more capitalism thrives on exploitations, the closer it brings itself to its doom. Here the Marxist temporal schema sounds *almost* like that of Christianity: the ripening of the sin of capitalism, so that the grand enterprise of Modernity and Progress is once again reduced to "vanity of vanities," and history lapses from its grand linear trajectory back to the cyclical.

There, however, the similarities between Christianity and Marx end, because Marx locates the motive force of history within history itself—in class struggle—rather than in some idealist or spiritual forces dominating history from the outside. According to the temporal scheme of Marxism, communism's combination of progressive relations of production with progressive forces of production will finally make good modernity's promise of creating Paradise on Earth—allowing human potentials to fully flourish—without lapsing back into the self-alienating and self-annihilating cyclical time.

Christianity on the other hand insists that the world is plagued by original sin and that salvation can only come from God. Human beings on their own are doomed to remain trapped in

cyclical time. Marx's "progress," no less than that of the Enlightenment, is an illusion doomed to "vanity of vanities." For Christianity, no human effort will be able to deliver humanity from cyclical time. Between human time and the time of redemption, cyclical time and linear time, there exists an unbridgeable divide.

The secular world for Christianity is anything but a preparation for Paradise. By contrast, Marx wants to explode the capitalist relations of production, but not the capitalist forces of production. The revolution has already happened in the latter, with advances in science and technology unleashing great potential for liberating humankind.

3.3. To Conclude...: The Temporality of Marx's Heroic Proletariat in Contrast to that of the Greek Hero

The main themes of Marx's theory of history can be found in the 1844 manuscripts. Robert C. Tucker sums them up as follows: "History, particularly under modern capitalism, is seen as a story of man's alienation in his life as producer, and communism is presented as the final transcendence of alienation via a revolution against private property" (Tucker 1978).

I wish to add, in conclusion, that Marx sees humanity not just passively caught in a temporal web into which they are thrown, but also actively fighting to access a reality *transcending* their temporal history. This is one reason why time is never homogeneous for Marx. Human beings' freedom and vitality are limited by the structures of nature and human society—but it is in their *refusal* of such limitations that they participate in the *historical* process not merely as its object but also its agent. In other words, while history is no doubt a web of givens restricting human beings, *history* is no less a product of humanity's heroic efforts to *negate* their given conditions. In place of the Greek individual hero caught up in deeds and his glory, the Marxist proletariat fight for the integrity of humanity in world history, and for a time sequence featuring "a present big with the future"—to expropriate Leibniz through a Benjaminian spirit.

Endnotes:

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   I dedicate this paper to the memory of Fredric Jameson, whose mentorship and unwavering support profoundly influenced my work.
2. This disjunction is later developed by Ernst Bloch as "the synchronicity of the non-synchronous."
3. Even though some animals store food for the winter, they merely store enough to survive through spring, at which point they start the hunting-consume cycle all over.

4. The book is singled out by Engels as a dialectical masterpiece in Friedrich Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (*Anti-Dühring*).
5. See Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* for an elaboration.
6. *Hebrews* 11:1 says: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
7. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 18.

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We Need to Talk About "Sumerian Literature"

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Abstract:

The scope and purpose of the world's earliest extant literature remain a matter of debate. Why bother to debate, however, since Sumerologists can study Sumerian literature despite their disagreement on the very definition of their topic, or even on the need thereof? Simply because this disagreement risks to hinder the understanding that the study seeks, is my contention. My research hypothesis is that a definition of Sumerian literature can be reached that is explanatory, involving a proximal *genus* and a specific *differentia*. In order to test this hypothesis, informed by Sherma's (2011; 2022) "hermeneutics of intersubjectivity", I argue that Sumerian literary compositions should be defined by the specific difference of being framed as distant in space, time, manner, or any combination thereof (that is, may I say, of their being of yonder, of yore, and/or of wonder) in contrast with other Sumerian compositions. A brief discussion of this definition against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern literature helps to situate this paper beyond Sumerology and in the theory and history of literature. Indeed, Sumerian literature has a "performative" dimension in terms of the self-transformation of its literary audience. The definition of Sumerian literature is a topic whose time has come.

Keywords: Akkadian literature; definition of literature; Egyptian literature; *organisme discursif*; performative; self-transformation; Sumerian literature; wonder; yonder; yore

'Stalking deer without a woodsman' (*Zhouyi*, 3:3).[1]

1. The need to define

Thus wrote Plato:

> If you wish to reach a good decision on any topic, my boy, there is only one way to begin: You must know what the decision is about, or else you are bound to miss your target altogether. Ordinary people cannot see that they do not know the true nature of a particular subject, so they proceed as if they did; and because they do not work out an agreement at the start of the inquiry, they wind up as you would expect – in conflict with themselves and each other (*Phaedrus*, 237 b7-c4).[2]

The concept of "literature" is famously elusive. This sobering fact has even found its way into dictionaries[3]. And yet, this fact is first and foremost famous with literary theorists. The rest of us must fight instead a deep and distinct feeling of familiarity upon reading world literature that ranges from the age-old *Epic of Gilgameš* up to the latest Nobel laureate. Literature's form and content may, and do, so vastly vary across time and space all while its fundamental function stays the same. Or does it? Nye (1990, 177) quipped: "power, like love, is easier to experience than to define or measure"[4]. Likewise, do we experience literature spontaneously, without much thought of measurement or definition; in case we like it (or dislike) it with a touch of emotion, and yet, constantly, with firm and false familiarity. But, ever since we witnessed several years ago Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize and thereby the redefinition of the boundaries of world-class literature – are we still confident that we all properly know our *Gilgameš*? The past is sometimes changing faster than the future. And that is, every time we take the time to deeply think about the past. And every time we understand how little we can understand the past. Especially through the use of "young notions"[5].

Veldhuis observes: "in the practice of Sumerology the question 'what is it that makes a literary text literary?' has not been appreciated as a particularly pressing matter" (2003, 32). Although understandable[6], this is a kind understatement. Swinging to the other "extremity" of the so-called Fertile Crescent (in Hallo's reworking[7] of Breasted's reworking[8] of Goodspeed's concept[9]), Assmann notes: "There has scarcely ever been a doubt among Egyptologists whether a text should be classified among literary or non-literary texts. In practice, this distinction works extremely well"[10]. If such is the situation in Egyptology, then Egyptology is better placed than her younger sister Sumerology[11]. Not only this distinction does not work so well (and never did) in Sumerology, but also Sumerologists of note are having serious doubts about it. Indeed, Veldhuis's question is anything but trivial, and false familiarity is a false answer, both anachronistic and culturally insensitive. The definition of Sumerian literature is therefore a topic whose time has come (*cf.* Pongratz-Leisten 2020, 21).

Foster aptly notes that "in ancient Mesopotamia, there was no concept of literature as a special subgroup of writing esteemed for beauty or emotional effect"[12]. This can never be repeated often enough[13]. "One may say that we see Sumerian through an Akkadian glass darkly,"[14] quips Edzard. Likewise, we see Sumerian, and Akkadian, literary texts *darkly* as literary texts. They are not literary texts. Not in the sense that we expect. I dare say, not in *any* sense that we expect.

Not every eminent scholar would necessarily agree with that. "The scholarly work of H. L. J. Vanstiphout, known as Stip to his friends, reads as a persistent, stubborn meditation on one central theme: the importance of Mesopotamian literature as *literature*, that is as verbal art" (Michalowski and Veldhuis 2006, 1). "It soon became obvious that some of these were truly literary in the sense of *belles lettres*" (Biggs 2007, xxiii).

> For all that, it is not too early to assay a history of Sumerian literature on strictly literary grounds, not only for the sake of a better appreciation of Sumerian literature, but also in the service of the history of literature.[15]

And yet, this is exactly what Sumerian literature was *not*: "literature as *literature*, that is, as verbal art", as "*belles lettres*", fit to be studied on "strictly literary grounds". In Veldhuis's (2004, 39) words: "as a category, therefore, Mesopotamian literature is a creation of modern scholarship and it therefore needs careful and explicit definition". However, as Hollis aptly noted (2009, 89-90) in an Egyptian literary context: "we need to exercise much care in the use of modern terminology for these materials, keeping ourselves ever aware that our designations and terms are just that, ours". It is notable in this respect that Parkinson, in an early attempt at systematisation, starts from a technical definition of Egyptian literature in terms of purpose "other than the merely necessary communication of practical information" but still ends with a "popular modern" usage determined by aesthetic considerations[16].

What then is literature in a Sumerian context? If Black in 1998 dispenses with the need for definition[17] – two years later, Black and Zólyomi's definition can serve as a useful starting point: "for present purposes, literary can be defined as referring to any composition which survives in multiple exemplars"[18]. This definition, while obviously operational, and fit for most literary cases, is not without its limitations. In order to do a thought experiment, please imagine for an instant that all but one of the exemplars of the *Keš Temple Hymn* (or of the *Epic of Gilgameš*) had never been discovered. Would those compositions cease to be literary by the simple accident of their surviving in one exemplar only rather than in many exemplars? (Please also note that this discussion is not merely academic; indeed, Rubio (2009, 26) reminds us that "a number of compositions are preserved in single copies"). A further and stronger objection, however, is that Black and Zólyomi's definition is descriptive, *not* explanatory. Rather than a descriptive or imitative definition, this research needs an essentially exploratory and explanatory one. Veldhuis's influential "curricular"[19], or "contextual"[20], approach, which is a corollary of Black and Zólyomi's definition, *is* explanatory indeed – but it presents the same type of limitations, being fit for most cases but not for all; moreover, for many cases, it is not even fully explanatory[21]. We clearly need a more precise definition. In 2003, Veldhuis (2003, 36) also discusses in a Sumerian context, and ultimately dismisses, the definition that Loprieno (1996) had given of the Egyptian literary discourse:

> Finally, we may discuss the concept fiction as a potential positive characteristic of Sumerian literature. A. Loprieno has defined Egyptian literature with the concepts of fictionality, intertextuality, and reception. Fictionality, according to Loprieno, "is the textual category whereby an implicit mutual understanding is established between author and reader to the effect that the world represented in the text need not coincide with actual reality, and that no sanctions apply in the case of a discrepancy". Loprieno uses the concept of fiction in particular to distinguish between literature and theology.

Loprieno's concept of *fiction* is criticized by Veldhuis, who notes: "Margalit Finkelberg has argued that literary fiction is an invention of the Greeks of the classical period. This invention constituted a revolution in poetics. Archaic poetry, represented by Hesiod, was evaluated as divinely inspired truth"[22]. Such triangulation involving Sumerian, Egyptian, and Greek poetry cannot obfuscate

the fundamental fact that neither Sumerians, nor Egyptians can boast of anything comparable to Aristotle's *Poetics*. They seem to know poetics in the guise of practice only, not of theory also. Conversely, it is a convenient logical shortcut to collapse Sumerian poetry, Egyptian poetry, and Hesiod under the same "archaic" label, but actually, this approach is inconclusive. Literary traditions that span millennia, like the Sumerian and the Egyptian, are hardly without major differences within; between, such differences become exponentially greater; and moreover so in a triangular relation to Hesiod. However, Veldhuis presents not only circumstantial Greek, but also direct Sumerian evidence to the effect that the concept of fiction is largely irrelevant in a Sumerian context (as for its original, Egyptian, context, notwithstanding intimations based on Greek evidence, it should perhaps be better left to Egyptologists to assess). Fiction is in the eye of the beholder, one could almost say. Thus, indeed, and quite anachronistically, Black *et al.* (2004, xxv) note:

> In other instances, Sumerian literary works are more obviously fictive: their main protagonists are gods, or talking animals, or even supposedly inanimate objects. But in each case the composition works hard to convince you of its plausibility, whether through setting, circumstantial detail, dialogue, or plot.

Sumerian gods are supposed to be fictive to whom: to ancient Sumerians, or to modern Sumerologists? Then, literature should be defined as fiction according to whose criteria: theirs or ours? But, if it is our criteria that really matter rather than theirs, then how explanatory can be fiction of the production and reception of Sumerian literature? Conversely, if gods are "obviously fictive" to ancient Sumerians, as the excerpt given above suggests – then where does the demarcation line run between "religion" and "literature"? "*La filosofía y la teología son, lo sospecho, dos especies de la literatura fantástica. Dos especies espléndidas*", writes Borges (2011, 577). *Reductio ad absurdum*, one might think. But this is not presumably so for Borges. And this is not necessarily so for anachronistic approaches.

However, it is noteworthy that Loprieno had stated (2000a, 41-42), three years before Veldhuis's critique:

> The combination of these three criteria defined in my previous work Egyptian literary discourse. I would like to lay the emphasis on the *combination* of factors, because – if taken individually – fictional, intertextual, or receptional features can indeed be encountered in a variety of non-literary genres.

The operative word is here not "combination" (if fiction does not apply aptly to the Sumerian literary case, neither would apply to it, logically, a combination of several criteria including fiction) – but "previous". It is indeed noteworthy that Loprieno (2000a, 41) was already changing of definition:

> One of the ways to define "literature" in Ancient Egypt is to identify texts that problematize personal concerns: not the concerns of the gods, or of the king, or of the deceased – to choose the three most frequent groups of referents –, but rather the problems of the individual human being in his dialogue

> with these groups: with god (or the gods), with society (or with the king, who in Egypt represents its symbolic personification), with death.[23]

Veldhuis is obviously free to choose to criticize whichever definition he prefers. Then, it remains for us to examine in turn Loprieno's later definition in a Sumerian context. I contend that this definition can work remarkably well in some Akkadian contexts, for instance with the world-famous *Epic of Gilgameš*, which combines Loprieno's three "dialogues". It works less well however in other Akkadian contexts, such as the world-famous *Enûma Eliš*, where the focus is indeed on "the concerns of the gods" rather than on Loprieno's "problems of the individual human being". And it works less well, too, in a Sumerian context, where the concerns of the gods often similarly outclass the problems of the individual human being. Therefore, I contend that Loprieno's later definition is largely inadequate in a Mesopotamian context. On the other hand, Rubio's beautiful definition ("literariness can be defined by the predominance of connotation over denotation, by the abundance of tropes, and by intertextual kinships"[24]) is *not* explanatory. An application to the Sumerian case of Schenkel's (2001, 54) definition – "Nonliterary texts such as correspondence diverge from inscriptions and literary texts principally in diction, not in grammar. Nonliterary texts are primarily illocutive, addressing the reader himself, and literary texts are predominantly delocutive, simply describing states of affairs" – makes it hard to distinguish Sumerian literary texts from lexical, administrative, or legal texts, or indeed from royal inscriptions (brushing aside the thorny issue of the "literary letter"[25]). Like Loprieno, Assmann contributes two definitions of Egyptian literature: the earlier one suggests that literary texts are non-functional while functional texts are non-literary (Assmann 1999; as he will later summarize his argument, "literature is born from literature and not from life and its functional necessities", Assmann 1999, 4); whereas the later one suggests that literary texts had an "identity function"[26]. The first definition is not explanatory. The second definition fails to distinguish between the "literary" and the other "cultural" texts, in Assmann's choice of terms. Finally, Parkinson (1998, 3) marshals a multiplicity of criteria in order to articulate his later definition of Egyptian literature:

> Egyptian literary texts exhibit various distinctive features: they mingle the general and the particular; they are self-conscious and concerned with self-definition and expression; they are not bound to any context or situation; aesthetic considerations are of central value; the speaker-hearer relationship is dramatized with framing devices. Perhaps most importantly, they are fictional. This last feature distinguishes them from commemorative texts, which were intended to be accurate – if idealized – accounts, and from religious texts, which were intended to be authentic reflections of the universe. Fiction, however, allows its audience a vision of a different reality and an experience of alternative possibilities. Egyptian literature was also a predominantly secular mode of discourse, being concerned with the 'here and now', but it was one which spanned various spheres, and crossed the secular-sacred and royal-private divides; it was not limited to a particular single function.

However, I contend that it is simplicity rather than multiplicity that can make for an apt

definition of literature. The more criteria Parkinson marshals, the less explanatory his definition becomes. Having thus briefly discussed ten definitions of literature, among many more extant, three suggested by four Sumerologists (Black and Zólyomi, Veldhuis, and Rubio), and seven suggested by four Egyptologists (earlier Parkinson, earlier Loprieno, later Loprieno, Schenkel, earlier Assmann, later Assmann, and later Parkinson), the time has come perhaps to suggest myself a tentative definition of literature in a Sumerian context.

2. First essay

In order to do this, I contend that an *explanatory* definition is best built on Aristotle's articulation in his *Topics* of what was later called *genus-differentia* definitions, involving a proximal *genus* and a specific *differentia*. Thus, for instance, religion is a species of "religion" (*cf*. Assmann 2008, 10, Eliade 1969, v); *i. e*., [monotheistic] religion is a species of the "religion" genus (a genus defined by the experience of Otto's 2014 *das ganz Andere*), a species defined by the specific difference of monotheism. Similarly, I contend that literature is a species of "literature"; *i. e*., [artistically valued] literature is a species of the "literature" genus (a genus defined by the medium of writing), a species defined by the specific difference of artistic value. More in detail, a leading English dictionary lists these two meanings of the word literature:

> 1 pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially novels, plays and poems (in contrast to technical books and newspapers, magazines, etc.): *French literature* ◊ *great works of literature* 2 ~ (on sth) pieces of writing or printed information on a particular subject: *I've read all the available literature on keeping rabbits*. ◊ *sales literature* (Hornby 2015, 883; slightly edited for fluency).

Thus, I contend that meaning 1 is a species of the meaning 2 genus of literature (as given in its above definition). Hence, logically, it would seem that Sumerian literature would be a species of Sumerian "literature"; *i. e*., [artistically valued] Sumerian literature would be a species of the Sumerian "literature" genus (a genus defined by the medium of writing in Sumerian), a species defined by the specific difference of artistic value. However, it would seem that what works logically does not necessarily work chronologically. Specifically, what works with a 21st century dictionary definition does not always work with a 21st century BC literary corpus in (Third Dynasty of Urim) Urim, or with an 18th century BC literary corpus in (Old Babylonian) Nibru, or with a 26th century BC literary corpus in (Early Dynastic) ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ. Indeed, this is the very type of definition, in the vein of Biggs, Hallo, or Vanstiphout, that I intend to criticize. Instead, and in order to keep in line with logic (because history as a science builds up at the crossroad of logical *and* chronological criteria), I contend that the above definition should be kept in part and in part altered to the following effect: Sumerian literature is a species of Sumerian "literature"; *i. e*., [*criterion of demarcation to be determined*] Sumerian literature is a species of the Sumerian "literature" genus (a genus defined by the medium of writing in Sumerian), a species defined by the specific difference of [*criterion of demarcation to be determined*]. One consequence of the preceding sentence is indeed that Sumerian literature is *not*

logically a species of literature, *i. e*., of (artistically valued) literature. Its artistic value, if any at all (full disclosure: I personally find Sumerian literature to be of often very high artistic value), pertains to *accident*, not to *essence*, to keep in line with Aristotle's terminology.

In order to determine this *criterion of demarcation*, I have pondered over the primary data from a pragmatic perspective. I have started from the discourse analysis of some more legible Early Dynastic literary texts from ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ ("literary", following Biggs's standard 1974 edition). I was struck by the wide divergence therein between what I will call *utter meaning* and *utterer's meaning* (thus revisiting the seminal conceptual distinction drawn by Grice[27]): *i. e*., between what an utterance means in general, free of context, on the one hand, and on the other hand what that utterance means in a specific context. For instance, these three lines from the *Early Dynastic Proverb Collection One*, "A malicious ox does not build a house./ 'Let the day pass:/ Let me build a house!'" (Alster 1991-1992, 21), have little to do with building, oxen, or even houses; they refer instead to the negative consequences of being malicious. The next line, "The eye is a deep place" (*ibid*.), is obviously literally incorrect, although quite suggestive. A further line, "A liar has no name" (*ibid*.), is similarly suggestive and literally incorrect. Based on many similar examples (and on many others more complex), I sought to suggest that Sumerian literature might be defined by the high frequency of the divergence between *utter meaning* and *utterer's meaning*. Or between literal and figurative meaning, to take an approximate but convenient short cut. Thus, my definition would run: Sumerian literature is a species of Sumerian "literature"; *i. e*., [figurative] Sumerian literature is a species of the Sumerian "literature" genus (a genus defined by the medium of writing in Sumerian), a species defined by the specific difference of a high frequency of figurative meaning. This definition would have much in common with Rubio's definition, but it would shed further light on the workings of form. However, I refrained from proposing this first definition because I have found that it had too little explanatory power.

3. Second essay

Continuing with discourse analysis of later, Old Babylonian, Nibru versions of the Early Dynastic literary texts from ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ ("literary", again, following Biggs's standard 1974 edition), that form the vast majority of the Sumerian literary corpus (*i. e*., those compositions that are commonly considered "literary"), I was struck by the widely acknowledged fact that both masters and pupils usually were Akkadian native speakers, while the language they wrote in usually was Sumerian:

> Like Latin in the European Middle Ages, written Sumerian carried a religious and often political cachet that was from time to time challenged by Akkadian but was never completely extinguished. By the eighteenth century BCE it appears that in schools like House F, Akkadian was actually the language of instruction although the vast majority of the curriculum was still in Sumerian; and in some places Sumerian remained the language of legal documentation until late in the eighteenth century (Black *et al*. 2004, l).

From that time and place, *A Supervisor's Advice to a Young Scribe* reads (in Sumerian, naturally): "You opened my eyes like a puppy's and you made me into a human being" (*ibid*., 278). Is it Vanstiphout's question, "*How Did They Learn Sumerian?*", or Veldhuis's question, "*How Did They Learn Cuneiform?*", that the young scribe has in mind? Presumably both, since he rejoins: "through you who offered prayers and so blessed me, who instilled instruction in my body as if I were consuming milk and butter, who showed his service to have been unceasing, I have experienced success and suffered no evil" (*ibid*., 280). Hence, I sought to suggest that Sumerian literature might be defined by the construction of a Sumerian *possible self*[8] in non-native Sumerians. Similarly, Sumerian "literature" would at that time serve for the construction of a Sumerian reality. Thus, my definition would run: Sumerian literature is a species of Sumerian "literature"; *i. e*., [formative] Sumerian literature is a species of the Sumerian "literature" genus (a genus defined by the medium of writing in Sumerian), a species defined by the specific difference of modeling the self. This definition would have much in common with the later Assmann's definition, but it would shed further light on the workings of content. However, again I refrained from proposing this second definition because I have found that it had too little explanatory power.

4. Third essay

It was only upon considering Sumerian "literary texts" as a whole that I ended up with my third definition. Classicists will certainly recall, for Greek, with Smyth that: "the chief demonstrative pronouns are ὅδε *this (here)*, οὗτος *this, that*, ἐκεῖνος, *that (there, yonder)*"[29]. For Latin, with Allen and Greenough, that: "*Hīc* is used of what is *near the speaker* (in time, place, or thought). It is hence called the *demonstrative of the first person*"; "*ille* is used of what is *remote* (in time, etc.); and is hence called the *demonstrative of the third person*"; "*iste* is used of what is *between the two others* in remoteness: often in allusion to the person addressed, – hence called the *demonstrative of the second person*"[30]. This ancient delicacy of nuance was often lost in modern vernacular. Hence, German *hier/da/dort* often means something similar, but much more imprecisely. English has *here/there/yonder*, but the last one is archaic or dialectal. However, it is indeed Japanese that captures best this threefold nuance, or tripartition of space:

> When referring to location, English distinguishes between the two categories of the area near the speaker ('this', 'here'), and any area not near the speaker ('that', 'there'). In Japanese there are three categories: words beginning with *ko~* indicate the area near the speaker, *so~* words indicate the area near the listener, and *a~* words refer to the area which is distant from both the speaker and the listener. As English does not distinguish the three ways, translations into English of words in the *so~* and *a~* groups are often the same (Bunt 2003, 186).

Koko, here. *Soko*, there. *Asoko*, over there (or, yonder). Then, I contend that Sumerian literature is defined by the construction of an "*asoko*" referential space; or by its equivalent in time; or by its equivalent in manner. Thus, my definition runs: Sumerian literature is a species of Sumerian

"literature"; *i. e*., [of yonder, of yore, and of wonder] Sumerian literature is a species of the Sumerian "literature" genus (a genus defined by the medium of writing in Sumerian), a species defined by the specific difference of being framed as distant in space, time, manner, or any combination thereof.

Here, there, over there (yonder). Now, some time ago, a long time ago (yore). Thus, otherwise, completely differently (wonder). Thus begins the *Keš Temple Hymn* in its Early Dynastic version from ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ (slightly edited for fluency):

> The prince, the prince came out of the temple;/ Enlil, the prince, came out of the temple./ He wore Keš like a crown on his head./ A pleasant, much admired place,/ The Keš temple lifted its head over all others in the land.[31]

Of yonder and especially of wonder: the setting is clearly distant in space and especially in manner from us, and from they who wrote this in ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ. Thus begin the *Instructions of Šuruppag* in their Early Dynastic version from ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ: "The intelligent one, the wise one, who lived in the country,/ the Man from Šuruppak, to "Father-in-Law" – the intelligent one, the wise one, who lived in the country,/ the Man from Šuruppak gave instructions to his son"[32]. Of yonder and of wonder: the setting is clearly distant in space and in manner from us, and from they who wrote this in ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ. The beginning of the *Keš Temple Hymn* changes eight centuries later, in its Old Babylonian version from Nibru, to that effect (slightly edited for consistency):

> The prince, the prince came forth from the temple./ Enlil, the prince, came forth from the temple./ The prince came forth royally from the temple/. Enlil lifted his glance over all the lands,/ and the lands raised themselves to Enlil./ The four corners of heaven became green for Enlil like a garden./ Keš was positioned there for him with head uplifted,/ and as Keš lifted its head among all the lands,/ Enlil spoke the praises of Keš (Black *et al*. 2004, 326).

Of yonder and especially of wonder. – The beginning of the *Instructions of Šuruppag* changes eight centuries later, in its Old Babylonian version from Nibru, to that effect:

> In those days, in those far remote days;/ in those nights, in those faraway nights;/ in those years, in those far remote years;/ in those days, the intelligent one, the one of elaborate words, the wise one, who lived in the country;/ the man from Šuruppak, the intelligent one, the one of elaborate words, the wise one, who lived in the country,/ the man from Šuruppak gave instructions to his son/ – the man from Šuruppak, the son of Ubartutu –/ gave instructions to his son Ziusudra.[33]

Of yonder, of wonder, and especially of yore. – More elaborate yet is the beginning of *Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Underworld*:

> In those days, in those distant days, in those nights, in those remote nights, in those years, in those distant years; in days of yore, when the necessary things had been brought into manifest existence, in

> days of yore, when the necessary things had been for the first time properly cared for, when bread had been tasted for the first time in the shrines of the Land, when the ovens of the Land had been made to work, when the heavens had been separated from the earth, when the earth had been delimited from the heavens, when the fame of mankind had been established, when An had taken the heavens for himself, when Enlil had taken the earth for himself, when the Underworld had been given to Ereškigala as a gift; when he set sail, when he set sail, when the Father set sail for the Underworld, when Enki set sail for the Underworld – against the king a storm of small hailstones arose, against Enki a storm a large hailstones arose (Black *et al*. 2004, 32-33).

Of wonder and especially of yore (even the very phrase "in days of yore" is present in translation). Incidentally, this certainly is an elaborate way to say "once upon a time" (and, incidentally, the Romanian counterpart of this English introductory set phrase, "*a fost odată ca niciodată*", is much more suggestive than the English, which means "once upon a time like no other time"). Moving from fairy tales to myths, Eliade's account of their setting "*in illo tempore*" (*vd.*, *e. g*., Eliade 1963) is further significant. This setting is anything but accidental. Indeed, this setting is essential. For fairy tales, *a fortiori* for myths, the distance is both temporal and modal. For Sumerian literature, as we have seen above, the distance can be either spatial, or temporal, or modal, or any combination thereof. But what about Akkadian literature? I contend that the same simple, single criterion of demarcation (*i. e*., distance, be it in space, in time, in manner, or in any combination thereof) works in an Akkadian context too. Thus begins the *Šamaš Hymn* in its Early Dynastic version from ʾAbū Ṣalābīḫ (slightly edited for fluency and consistency):

> The bolt of heaven,/ the exalted one of the gods,/ in whom heaven trusts,/ Šamaš,/ who holds the life of the land,/ the "arm" of the king of (the) TI.URU.DA,/ (which is) the ŠU.ÁG of "prince" Ea,/ the god of rejoicing,/ the burning light,/ the fiery radiance,/ the splendour of the Apsû,/ the leader among the Anunna-gods:/ to the young men, he gave great strength/ and fierce GIŠ.GANÁ (Krebernik 1992, 81-82).

Of wonder. Thus begins the *Enūma Eliš* in its late version from Nineveh:

> When on high the heaven had not been named,/ Firm ground below had not been called by name,/ Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter,/ (And) Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all,/ Their waters commingling as a single body;/ No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,/ When no gods whatever had been brought into being,/ Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined –/ Then it was that the gods were formed within them (Speiser 1969, 60-61).

Of wonder, and especially of yore. Thus begins the *Epic of Gilgameš*, for fifty lines, in its late version from Nineveh:

> He who saw the Deep, the country's foundation,/ [who knew the proper ways], was wise in all matters!/ [Gilgamesh, who] saw the Deep, the country's foundation,/ [who] knew the [proper ways,

> was] wise in all matters!// [He]explored everywhere the seats of [power]/ [he knew] of everything the sum of wisdom./ He saw what was secret, discovered what was hidden,/ he brought back a tale of before the Deluge.// He came a far road, was weary, found peace,/ all his labours were [set] on a tablet of stone./ He built the rampart of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,/ of holy Eanna, the sacred storehouse.// See its wall like a strand of *wool*,/ view its parapet that none could copy!/ Take the stairway of a bygone era,/ draw near to Eanna, seat of Ishtar the goddess,/ that no later king could ever copy!// Climb Uruk's wall and walk back and forth!/ Survey the foundations, examine the brickwork!/ Were its bricks not fired in an oven?/ Did the Seven Sages not lay its foundations?// [A square mile is] city, [a square mile] date-grove, a square mile is clay-pit, half a square mile the/ temple of Ishtar: [three square miles] and a half is Uruk's expanse.// *[Find]* the tablet-box of cedar,/ [release] its clasps of bronze!/ [Lift] the lid of its secret,/ [pick] up the tablet of lapis lazuli and read out/ the travails of Gilgamesh, all that he went through.// Surpassing all other kings, heroic of stature,/ brave scion of Uruk, wild bull on the rampage!/ Going at the fore he was the vanguard,/ going at the rear, one his comrades could trust!// A mighty bank, protecting his warriors,/ a violent flood-wave, smashing a stone wall!/ Wild bull of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh, the perfect in strength,/ suckling of the august Wild Cow, the goddess Ninsun!// Gilgamesh so tall, magnificent and terrible,/ who opened passes in the mountains,/ dug wells on the slopes of the uplands,/ and crossed the ocean, the wide sea to the sunrise;// who scoured the world ever searching for life,/ and reached through sheer force Uta-napishti the Distant;/ who restored the cult-centres destroyed by the Deluge,/ and set in place for the people the rites of the cosmos.// Who is there can rival his kingly standing,/ and say like Gilgamesh, "It is I am the king"?/ Gilgamesh was his name from the day he was born,/ two-thirds of him god but one third human.// It was the Lady of the Gods drew the form of his figure,/ while his build was perfected by divine Nudimmud.[34]

Especially of yonder, of yore, and of wonder. – I leave it to Egyptologists to decide whether, when, and to what extent this single, simple criterion of demarcation – *i. e.*, distance, be it in space, in time, in manner, or in any combination thereof – might be of any use whatsoever for the study of Egyptian literature (it would seem to work, for instance, with Middle Kingdom compositions[35] such as *The Tale of Sinuhe*[36], *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*[37], *The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*[38], *The Tale of King Cheops' Court*[39], *The Words of Neferti*[40], *The Words of Khakheperreseneb*[41], *The Dialogue of a Man and His Soul*[42], *The Dialogue of Ipuur and the Lord of All*[43], *The Teaching of King Amenemhat*[44], *The Teaching for King Merikare*[45], *The "Loyalist" Teaching*[46], *The Teaching of the Vizier Ptahhotep*[47], and *The Teaching of Khety*[48]). I leave it to Hittitologists to decide whether, when, and to what extent this criterion might be of any use for the study of Hittite literature (it would seem to work, for instance, with compositions[49] such as *The Moon that Fell from Heaven*[50], *Kingship in Heaven*[51], *The Song of Ullikummis*[52], *The Myth of Illuyankas*[53], *The Telepinus Myth*[54], and *El, Ashertu and the Storm-God*[55]). I leave it to Semitologists to decide whether, when, and to what extent this criterion might be of any use for the study of Ugaritic literature (it would seem to work, for instance, with compositions[56] such as *Kirta*[57], *Aqhat*[58], *The Baal Cycle*[59], *Baal Fathers a Bull*[60], *The Wilderness*[61], *El's Divine Feast*[62], *The Rapiuma*[63], *The Birth of the Gracious Gods*[64], *The*

Betrothal of Yarikh and Nikkal-Ib[65], *The Mare and Horon*[66], and *CAT 1.96*[67]). I leave it to Classicists to decide whether, when, and to what extent this criterion might be of any use for the study of Greek or Roman literature (it would seem to work, for instance, with Homer[68], Hesiod[69], or Virgil[70]). I leave it to literary theorists to decide whether, when, and to what extent this criterion might be of any use for the general study of literature. Gerrig and Rapp (2004, 267) note that "readers often describe literary experiences by invoking some version of the metaphor of *being transported*". They then discuss "the analogy between literal and metaphorical experiences of being transported":

> These experiences share several features:
> • Someone ("the traveler") is transported by some means of transportation as a result of performing certain actions.
> • The traveler goes some distance from his or her world of origin, which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible.
> • The traveler returns to the world of origin somewhat changed by the journey.
> With respect to this conceptualization, we suggest that the extent to which the traveler will be changed by the journey will depend in part on the types of activities in which the traveler engages while on the journey. In this case, we mean cognitive psychological activities: How much effort does the traveler devote to keeping the impact of the experiences of the journey isolated from his or her everyday life?
> To address this issue, we have defined a position that we call *the willing construction of disbelief*. Our central claim is that people must engage in effortful processing to disbelieve the information they encounter in literary narratives (as well as other types of narratives); otherwise, that information will have an impact in the real world. We intended our position to make a clear contrast to the notion, derived from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, of a "willing suspension of disbelief". The phrase, as typically interpreted, suggests that readers ordinarily would disbelieve a work of literature (because it is a work of fiction), but they suspend that ordinary impulse so as not to undermine their narrative experiences. However, as Noël Carroll observes, "we cannot will our beliefs". Instead, "belief is something that happens to us".
> One can, by contrast, engage one's cognitive resources to retrieve evidence from memory that undermines belief in particular propositions. Our core claim is that, to forestall belief change from the content of literary narratives, readers must invest exactly such effort...[71]

I contend that literature (starting with its oldest precursor, Sumerian literature) also has a function of world-building-by-word. That world built by word is distinct, and distant, from this day-to-day world. The distance between them is distance in space, in time, in manner, or in any combination thereof. In purpose, it is actually mental distance, which can hence be modulated in scope as distance in space, in time, in manner, or in any combination thereof. The building by word of a distinct world is not an activity specific to literature; indeed, it is the same activity that supports science. Gonseth (1958, 294) noted that: "*En se développant dans le climat de cohérence qui lui est propre, un discours va toujours au-delà de la simple fonction d'énoncer. Il est d'abord un organisme discursif pour lequel l'accord qu'il recherche avec une activité investigatrice ne fournit guère qu'un certain ensemble de points de repère*". In more detail (*ibid.*, 293-294):

> *Nous avons fait observer que l'activité énonciatrice reprenant le matériau expérimental avec la spécificité qui lui est propre, confère une certaine généralité au matériau discursif avec lequel elle opère. Le discursif revêt, de ce fait, une certaine qualité d'existence autonome qu'on peut supposer appartenir à un certain horizon de réalité. L'horizon géométrique en est un exemple frappant. Il est irréductible à l'horizon de réalité des choses sur lesquelles opère la géométrie expérimentale. Ces deux horizons sont à distinguer l'un de l'autre et à opposer l'un à l'autre comme doivent l'être le front de l'énonciation et le front de l'investigation.*
> *Or (et c'est là la constatation sur laquelle il nous paraît utile d'insister) l'activité discursive a la faculté d'organiser un discours dans lequel le matériau discursif entre et figure avec les modalités de son existence discursive. Un discours a quelque analogie avec un organisme : il est comme animé d'une intention de cohérence. Il tente ainsi à imposer certaines normes d'usage aux éléments discursifs qui y participent. Il devient alors assez malaisé d'indiquer ce que devient le sens d'un mot, d'une expression ou même d'un passage appartenant à un discours déterminé. La fonction "d'avoir une signification" se trouve en quelque sorte transférée au tout du discours. Même visant à constituer des énoncés idoines aux mêmes faits expérimentaux, les mêmes éléments discursifs peuvent ne plus être chargés du même pouvoir de signification s'ils participent à des discours différents. Pour les éléments discursifs pris séparément, ce n'est plus seulement d'un sens inachevé qu'il faudrait parler, mais d'un sens plus ou moins indéterminé.*

The major difference between literature and science in this respect is that science strives to build up a distinct world that comes as close as possible to our day-to-day world, while literature strives to build up a distinct *and* distant world. But, why? Why strive indeed for mental distance? Oatley, Mar, and Djikic (2012, 237) argue that:

> Pieces of fiction are simulations of selves in the social world. Fiction is the earliest kind of simulation, one that runs not on computers but on minds. One of the virtues of taking up this idea from cognitive science is that we can think that just as if we were to learn to pilot an airplane we could benefit from spending time in a flight simulator, so if we were to seek to understand ourselves and others better in the social world we could benefit from spending time with the simulations of fiction in which we can enter many kinds of social worlds, and be affected by the characters we meet there.[72]

I contend that the concept of "simulations of selves in the social world" that Oatley, Mar, and Djikic relate to literature can also relate to Sumerian literature, which is *not* necessarily best described as "fiction". My contention warrants qualification. Indeed, Sumerian literature deals with issues relevant to Sumerians[73]. Therefore, a large number of Sumerian literary compositions focus not only on the social environment, but also *infra*, on the natural environment, and *supra*, on the divine environment (thus recalling Black *et al*.'s concept of Sumerian fiction quoted above: "In other instances, Sumerian literary works are more obviously fictive: their main protagonists are gods, or talking animals, or even supposedly inanimate objects"). One should then more appropriately speak of "simulations of Sumerian selves in the social environment, or in relation to the natural environment, or in relation to the divine environment". Indeed, Mar and Oatley (2008, 182) take a modern perspective:

> The content of literary fiction is largely about people and the problems that arise when their desires, emotions, and goals come into conflict. We are attracted to literature because we are social creatures who are interested in one another. It is important to note that social information is not only fascinating – it also possesses survival value. To survive the harsh environments of our history, early humans needed to form and maintain groups so that protection from external threats, hunting, gathering, and other necessary pursuits were more likely to be successful. Such conditions required consummate skill in social navigation. The social environment probably ensured that fictional stories have played an important role in the communication of information relevant to social skill throughout history, a role that seems more important than the need for amusement.

However, in a Sumerian "mutual cognitive environment" (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 41-42), relevant information was not only social, but also natural and divine. Therefore, I contend that Sumerian literature relates to the communication of these three classes of relevant information, in addition to "simulations of selves" in relation to this information. I further contend that the fundamental function of Sumerian literature is the facilitation of self-transformation. As Mar and Oatley (2008, 182) add:

> Thus, understanding characters in a story is a means through which we can come to better understand ourselves and others. The impact of character in a novel or short story is that a reader essentially enters another mind as they enter, Alice-like, through the looking glass of the narrative. This mind is like his or her own in some ways and unlike his or her own in other ways. The impact of this experience illuminates the nature of selfhood by means of the literary idea of character. Because this experience of being within another mind is also accompanied by other perspectives, such as impressions of the protagonist formed by other characters in the novel, it offers the reader not just the possibility of clarifying his or her mental models of self, but also a sense of polysemy and self-transformation; such a potential is unique to fictional narratives.[74]

Again, theirs is a modern perspective. Then, rather than an "experience of being within another mind", I will contend indeed that the experience of being with another being (who belongs to the natural, social, or divine environment) is apt to facilitate self-transformation in the sense of self-diversification, self-development, and self-adaptation. Hence, (Sumerian) literature's function of world-building-by-word facilitates self-building-by-word. Whereas that world built by word is distinct, and distant, from this day-to-day world – the self built by word is neither distant, nor distinct: it is the self of her or him who hears or reads (Sumerian) literature. Then, the function of (Sumerian) literature is double: world-building-by-word beside this day-to-day world, and self-building-by-world inside this day-to-day world. One should not conclude, however, that world-building-by-word is an activity specific to literature, or science, or any other world distinct from this day-to-day world[75]. Indeed, this day-to-day world is also largely built by word (and this day-to-day world includes not only the social, but also the natural and divine environments). Yet, this day-to-day world is built by word not as a function of a specific discourse, literary or scientific for instance,

but through the hugely complex network of human communication and cognition. The theory of the construction of reality does not claim otherwise (*cf*., for instance, Schütz 1945; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Watzlawick 1984; Searle 1995; and *id*. 1999). Thus, the reality of literature (that distinct, distant world), or the reality of science (that distinct, close world), for instance, are built by word just as this day-to-day reality is built by word. And indeed, just as the self that participates in this variety of worlds is to a large extent built by word. Therefore, Sumerian literature has a "performative" rather than a "constative" dimension (*vd*. Austin 1975): rather than *mimesis*, imitation, or description – it serves to change the world by changing the self of her or him who hears or reads it in a Sumerian context. Indeed, here as elsewhere, not only the "locutionary" level (what is written) and the "illocutionary" level (what is meant) are decisive, but also the "perlocutionary" level (what is achieved; *ibid*.). What is achieved is the building by word of a Sumerian literary world distinct and distant from the day-to-day world that has in turn significant effects on the day-to-day world in terms of self-transformation of its literary audience.

It has often been noted that the question of the author is problematic in ancient Mesopotamia[76]. It would be unwarranted to consider in turn that the question of the audience is *not*. Three circumstances are noteworthy in this connection. First, the native language of the audience of Sumerian literature presumably ceases to be Sumerian, after a lapse of time. Second, the native language of the audience of both Sumerian and Akkadian literature presumably ceases to be Akkadian either, after another lapse of time. Third, the native language of the audience of Mesopotamian literature is now a modern language, after yet another lapse of time. Thus, the self-transformation of a Sumerian, Akkadian, later Mesopotamian, or modern audience is *not* necessarily an effect achieved with the same breadth, depth, and adaptive value. I need hardly say that this effect widely varies not only across, but also within audiences: there are likely not two persons who take precisely the same meaning from a given literary text. One could almost say that everyone takes from a literary text what she or he brings to it in the first place. In ancient Mesopotamia, the issue is made even more complex by the fundamental fact that the distinction between author and audience was not so dramatically drawn as in our modern world. As Foster (1991, 31-32) aptly notes:

> The real significance of the absence of an author's name may lie yet deeper in recognition that performer, traditer, or auditor of the text play roles no less important than that of the author himself. As was stressed, the author's inspiration and composition of the texts were events circumscribed in time. Nearly all examples urge the importance of dissemination and understanding the product. Without this the text is lost, and the author's achievement nullified. Just as the text is impossible without its initiating inspiration and its mediating author, so too it is impossible without its traditer and appreciative auditor. Authors in Mesopotamian civilization well knew and were wont to recall in their texts that composition was an ongoing, contributive enterprise, in which the author, or "first one", was present only at the beginning.

Gonseth's concept of the "*organisme discursif*" thus acquires a social dimension in a Mesopotamian context. I contend that Sumerian literature is an *organisme discursif* which is socially

conditioned in both its purpose and scope: in scope, Sumerian literature is punctually transformed through multiple interactions in social settings – while in purpose, Sumerian literature punctually transforms the selves of them who take part in those interactions. Thus, my third definition of Sumerian literature (as a species of the Sumerian "literature" genus which is defined by the specific difference of being framed as distant in space, time, manner, or any combination thereof) does not relate either to form (as did my first definition of Sumerian literature) or to content (as did my second definition of Sumerian literature) – but to the *organisme discursif* of which form and content are but aspects. It would be wrong however to conclude that I was completely mistaken in my first two definitions of Sumerian literature – or, *a fortiori*, that I consider the distinguished scholars that I briefly discussed mistaken in their respective definitions of Sumerian, or Egyptian, literature. There is truth in my previous definitions, I think, and certainly there is truth in their respective definitions. Indeed, Sumerian literature often obeys "aesthetic considerations" (earlier Parkinson); often "survives in multiple exemplars" (Black and Zólyomi); is often best described by a "contextual" approach (Veldhuis); can often be also described by a combination of the "fictionality, intertextuality, and reception" criteria (earlier Loprieno; however, to what extent is fictionality a heuristic concept in a Sumerian context? this question warrants qualification); it often "problematizes personal concerns" (later Loprieno); it is often characterised "by the predominance of connotation over denotation, by the abundance of tropes, and by intertextual kinships" (Rubio); it is often "delocutive" (Schenkel); it is often "non-functional" (earlier Assmann; however, to what extent is functionality a heuristic concept in a Sumerian context? this question warrants qualification); it has an "identity function" and also "serves the purpose of an initiation into the art of writing" (later Assmann; but arguably, so do lexical texts); it often "exhibits various distinctive features" (later Parkinson). Moreover, Sumerian literature has a high frequency of figurative meaning (my first definition). And Sumerian literature models the self (my second definition). But I contend that there is one condition that, making a difference from the other definitions recapitulated above, is both necessary and sufficient for an adequate definition of Sumerian literature, and this is the condition of being framed as distant in space, time, manner, or any combination thereof. This frame is implicit rather than explicit. However, this frame is both necessary and sufficient. Loprieno and Rubio came perhaps closest to giving an account of this frame as they discussed the concept of *distance* in two insightful contributions (*Toward a Geography of Egyptian Literature* and, respectively, *Time before Time: Primeval Narratives in Early Mesopotamian Literature*). However, they did not discuss distance as a distinct descriptor of Egyptian, or Sumerian, or Akkadian, or any other, literature; they did not discuss but one type of distance each; and, most importantly, they did not discuss distance in relation to a definition of Egyptian, or Mesopotamian, literature.

As seen above, distance in space (and in time, but not in manner, again) is best framed in Japanese, for instance, with *a~* words. The Japanese grammatical distinction between *ko~* words, *so~* words, and *a~* words relates to a tripartition of space whose perpetual mobility is mental rather than physical. These three realms of reality recall Charaudeau's (1992, 574-575) distinction between three

types of speech-acts, "*élocutif*", "*allocutif*", and "*délocutif*", and, more generally, the grammatical distinction between first person, second person, and third person with pronouns (and verbs). However, I contend that, more specifically, the Japanese grammatical distinction between *ko~* words, *so~* words, and *a~* words can serve to suggest a distinction between three fundamental functions of writing in a Sumerian context. As Assmann notes:

> Concerning the primary functions of writing I would like to start with a very general reflexion. There seem to be two fundamentally different functions of writing, namely storage and communication. They may be understood as extensions of two different bodily capacities. As the medium of storage, writing extends the range of human memory and as the medium of communication it extends the range of the human voice. In the first case, writing is employed in order to preserve data that would otherwise be forgotten, and in the second case to reach addressees who are distant in space or time. Any look at the early history of writing can teach us that it is not communication but storage that was responsible for the invention of systems of notation that preceded real scripts and that might therefore be referred to as prewriting.[77]

Therefore, I contend that *ko~* words relate to storage, *so~* words relate to communication, and *a~* words relate to literature. "As the medium of storage, writing extends the range of human memory and as the medium of communication it extends the range of the human voice": as the medium of literature, it extends the range of human imagination. Significantly enough, in Sumer, written storage comes first (*c*. 3200 BC), written literature second (probably *c*. 2600 BC), and written communication third (*c*. 2350 BC)[78]. Hence, I conclude my excursus *ex abrupto*, in Mar and Oatley's words:

> It is worth recalling the ideas of Booth, who likened books to close friends. There is no doubt that friends influence us, and so do books of fiction. Just as we are careful in choosing the friends who surround us, so should we be careful in choosing the books with which we spend our time (2008, 185).

5. The need to refine

The ideas that I have suggested above should be related, on the one hand, to Michalowski's description of Sumerian as "the poetic language ("one may propose that beginning perhaps as early as the late third millennium, Sumerian was, simply speaking, the poetic language", 1996, 147) – and on the other hand, to Pongratz-Leisten's interpretation of myth:

> I myself suggested that we conceive of myth not as text *per se* but as a "charter myth" (Malinowski), "hypotext" (Genette), or "conceptual metaphor" (Lakoff and Johnson), i.e. a narrative that can translate into the discourse of the various media of text, image, and ritual (2020, 32-33).[79]

Their rich heuristic insights should inform further research needed in order to refine my explanatory model. "Finally, to specialists it will need not stressing that what is advanced here is

entirely provisional and put up for discussion", writes Lambert (1989, 1, n. 3). As Edzard writes, "there is no end of addenda – and corrigenda" (2003, 179). And, as Hornung writes: "Modesty is appropriate to these age-old problems of mankind. Every 'final' insight is only a signpost on a road that leads farther and may be trodden in the company of others who think differently" (1982, 11).

Endnotes:

1. 'Entering deep in a forest, a prince considers giving up the chase. Going on is distressing' (Rutt 2002, 226). In the original Chinese: "即鹿无虞，惟入于林中，君子幾不如舍，往吝", "Book of Changes." *Chinese Text Project*, https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/zhun, 8 February 2025.
2. In the original Greek: "Περὶ παντός, ὦ παῖ, μία ἀρχὴ τοῖς μέλλουσι καλῶς βουλεύσεσθαι: εἰδέναι δεῖ περὶ οὗ ἂν ᾖ ἡ βουλή, ἢ παντὸς ἁμαρτάνειν ἀνάγκη. Τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς λέληθεν ὅτι οὐκ ἴσασι τὴν οὐσίαν ἑκάστου. Ὡς οὖν εἰδότες οὐ διομολογοῦνται ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς σκέψεως, προελθόντες δὲ τὸ εἰκὸς ἀποδιδόασιν: οὔτε γὰρ ἑαυτοῖς οὔτε ἀλλήλοις ὁμολογοῦσιν". 'And a definition is a formula which is one not by being connected together, like the *Iliad,* but by dealing with one object', notes Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* (1045a12-13; in the original Greek: "ὁ δ' ὁρισμὸς λόγος ἐστὶν εἷς οὐ συνδέσμῳ καθάπερ ἡ Ἰλιὰς ἀλλὰ τῷ ἑνὸς εἶναι"). And again, in his *Topics*: 'a definition is a phrase signifying a thing's essence' (101b38; in the original Greek: "ἔστι δ'ὅρος μὲν λόγος ὁ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνον").
3. Thus, Hornby's (2015, 485) best-selling *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* gives three examples of use for the word *elusive*: the second one being "the elusive concept of 'literature'".
4. *Cf*. Martin's (1971: 241) similar, somewhat less poetic, stance: "power, like love, is a word used continually in everyday speech, understood intuitively, and defined rarely".
5. "There is no need to recall that literature, as we know it today, is a young notion" (Korthals Altes 2007, 183). *Cf.* Michalowski's critique of the generic label "epic": "I believe that the term 'epic', when applied to the Enmerkar, Lugalbanda or Gilgamesh material, is prejudicial, for generic labels, among their multifold functions, are primarily providers of clues to modes of reading and thus when we speak of ancient epics we subconsciously bring to bear upon these texts very specific anachronistic expectations and interpretive strategies" (1992, 228-229).
6. "In part, the primary focus on textual elucidation and the lack of literary-critical approaches stem from the fact that the cuneiform literary tradition has been disclosed to us in stages or segments largely dependent upon the fortunes of archaeological or archival discovery and retrieval. Because of this, we have not confronted all at once a truly 'full' and received tradition, rather, we have had to work in fits and starts, and consequently we have been forced to adjust and readjust our research and thinking to the vagaries of discovery. Given this state of affairs, literary-critical studies and related formulations of a theory of cuneiform literature could only be frustrated instead of growing apace with other developments in the discipline" (Ferrara 1995, 86). On the decidedly fragmentary nature of Sumerian evidence, *cf.* Michalowski's quip: "Our ignorance of these matters is so large that scholars are still debating whether the balaĝ was a harp or a drum; but this matters little, since they will stay silent for eternity" (1996, 144).
7. "The ever growing abundance of textual materials and their increasingly sophisticated analysis and integration, makes it possible to claim that large portions of the Near East moved in a common rhythm from the beginning of history, some five thousand years ago. Repeatedly, the two extremities of the 'Fertile Crescent', Egypt and Mesopotamia, have been the natural foci of imperial concentrations of power, destined to aspire to rule the entire Near East. These imperialistic triumphs repeatedly gave way before the onslaughts of crasser and more bellicose elements from the less hospitable environments bordering on the Fertile Crescent. This collapse of these Empires at either

extremity, provided the recurrent opportunity for the middle – Israel or Syria – to assert itself" (Hallo 2010, 44).

8. "This fertile crescent is approximately a semicircle, with the open side toward the south, having the west end at the south-east corner of the Mediterranean, the center directly north of Arabia, and the east end at the north end of the Persian Gulf. It lies like an army facing south, with one wing stretching along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and the other reaching out to the Persian Gulf, while the center has its back against the northern mountains. The end of the western wing is Palestine; Assyria makes up a large part of the center; while the end of the eastern wing is Babylonia. This great semicircle, for lack of a name, may be called the Fertile Crescent" (Breasted 1916, 101).
9. "Looking at the whole region thus bound together, we observe that it has somewhat the character of a crescent. The two extremities are the lands at the mouths of the two river-systems – Egypt and Babylonia. The upper central portion is called Mesopotamia. The outer border consists of mountain ranges which pass from the Persian Gulf northward and westward until they touch the northeast corner of the Mediterranean, from which point the boundary is continued by the sea itself. The inner side is made by the desert of Arabia. The crescent-shaped stretch of country thus formed is the field of the history of the ancient Eastern World. It consisted of two primitive centres of historic life connected by a strip of habitable land of varying width" (Goodspeed 1904, 6).
10. "Better perhaps than in our postmodern days when we don't know whether to read Jacques Derrida as literature or as philosophy, or Carlos Castaneda as fiction or ethnography. There are very few Egyptian borderline cases of this kind" (Assmann 1999, 1).
11. "Sumerology had come of age in the early twentieth century, with the start of the French publications of documents and inscriptions from Lagaš" (Black, *et al*. 2004, lvii). By that time, Egyptology already had a tradition. "A threshold in the development of the discipline was 1881, which saw the beginning of controlled site excavation in Egypt and, fueled by pivotal discoveries such as the oldest religious text corpus of humankind, the Pyramid Texts, a series of scholarly milestones, among them the first cultural history of ancient Egypt. So when Amelia Edwards came to give a series of lectures at the Peabody Institute in the winter of 1889/1890 – probably the first Egyptological lectures offered at what is now a part of Johns Hopkins University – she was able to look back at the transformation of Egyptology into an independent academic discipline. A reflection of this state of affairs was the 1891 publication of the first monograph-length presentation of Egyptology, as was its further institutional acknowledgment with the creation of new chair positions in several European countries" (Schneider 2012, 57).
12. "Likewise, comprehensive studies of cuneiform literature through the 1960s treated all writing in cuneiform as literature, including scientific and scholarly works and letters" (Foster 2009, 137).
13. The modern solution to this ancient problem, which consists in ignoring it, and in ignoring the taste of the ancients, in considering our own taste instead, making our own guided shopping tour on the Mesopotamian "literary" market, assessing it by our own standards of "beauty or emotional effect" (beauty to us, effect on us) – this dubious solution does offer us indeed millennia more of history of literature and masterpieces to enjoy, but not to understand. Since understanding them eludes us greatly even when, and if, we constantly strive to consider them on their own terms. If we consider them on our terms only, then understanding them remains little more than a beautiful, a touching dream.
14. "Because the values ('*Lautwerte*') of nearly all signs used in the Sumerian syllabaries of different places and periods have been identified by way of Akkadian syllabic spellings or – additionally – from the so-called tu-ta-ti syllabaries" (Edzard, 2003, 7).
15. "For Sumerian literature meets the criterion of basic linguistic unity which has now been reinstated as a principle of literary history. But beyond that it can claim distinction on the basis of three remarkable superlatives: it leads all the world's written literature in terms of antiquity, longevity, and continuity.

Its beginnings can be now traced firmly to the middle of the third millennium B. C., and native traditions would have it that it originated even earlier, with the antediluvian sages at the end of the fourth millennium. Its latest floruit occurred at the end of the pre-Christian era, and at least one canonical text is dated as late as 227 of the Seleucid Era and 163 of the Arsacid (Parthian) Era (or 85 B. C.). And in the long interval between these extreme terminals, much of it was copied and preserved with a remarkable degree of textual fidelity" (Hallo 1976, 182).

16. "Egyptian literature can be defined as a body of written high culture with purposes other than the merely necessary communication of practical information. Within this literature there was a significant body of texts which were more concerned with aesthetically structured form and were consistently composed in verse: religious, funerary and monumental texts. There was also a smaller group of texts in which aesthetic considerations were primary. This latter group corresponds to the popular modern idea of things 'literary', and I will use the term to describe this group alone" (Parkinson 1991, 22-23).
17. "Despite the many questions which arise, it actually does not seem necessary for present purposes to devote much space to an appropriate definition of literature. By contrast, that has been a rather crucial question for Egyptologists to answer" (Black 1998, 5). Not only is Egyptian literature identified rather than Sumerian literature as being in the need of definition, but also is Akkadian literature, see *ibid.*, n. 8.
18. Black and Zólyomi 2000, 3.
19. Classics of the "curricular" approach are Vanstiphout 1979; Veldhuis 2000; and *id*. 2006.
20. "The contextual approach of Sumerian literature will concentrate on the consequences of studying this literature as a main element in the curriculum of the scribal school. This approach may not replace the historical, poetic, or intertextual approaches discussed above. However, it may put them in a different light. Regarding literary history we may ask: what is the difference between a new composition and an old one? What is the significance of copying texts with a long transmission history? There can be little doubt that Babylonian scribes were aware of the historical dimension of writing. Some of the lexical texts included spellings that had gone out of use long ago, and testified to the consciousness that scribal habits had changed. There are few texts that were considered so prestigious that they were copied verbatim sign by sign. Most ancient texts were adapted – at least in orthography. Is there a curricular or educational significance to the age of a composition? The poetic problem, 'what is a literary text?' may receive a straightforward answer: everything that was studied in school is by that token a literary text. There is no indication that literature as such was a separate realm or institution in Old Babylonian society. The option to equate the literary with the curricular has the advantage that it emphasises the anachronistic element in the concept 'literary'. We will end up, then, with a corpus of literature that does not correspond in all respects to our idea of what literature is, including lexical lists, mathematical tables, letters, and even administrative documents. This problem is a minor one, though. First, we can make a distinction between earlier and later phases of the curriculum. The earlier phase contains most of the text types that strike us as non-literary (mathematical tables, lexical lists, model documents). This will allow the definition of a group of texts that corresponds more closely to our idea of literature. Second, however, we may actually take advantage of this unusual definition of the literary by appreciating links and cross connections between literary and lexical texts which would otherwise not be apparent. The contextual approach does not invalidate the poetic discussion about the concepts 'literary', 'religious', 'scholarly', and 'fiction'. We will have to investigate what (institutional) contexts we may identify for religion and knowledge. The phenomenon of cultic texts entering the literary corpus may then be described as a type of interaction between institutions or rather fields. Finally, intertextuality receives a very specific meaning once we realise that the texts studied by us were all studied in a well defined context: the scribal school. The intertextual is not an aspect of the texts themselves; these texts actually encountered each

other in the hands and heads of teachers and pupils. There are good indications that the assumption that *all* Sumerian literature derives from exercises in the school has to be abandoned. Quite a few Sumerian texts are known in a single copy only – or in very few copies. Steve Tinney, in a forthcoming article, argues that several such unique pieces may belong together as a 'cultic archive'. The tablets in question are similar in format and paleography. A problem is that we have very little archaeological information on the most important find-spots of literary tablets in Nippur. The excavations happened late in the nineteenth century and very little was recorded about the provenance of the objects found. There is no way to know, therefore, whether Tinney's cultic archive was actually found as a single lot, and if so, what else was related to it. It is probable that in addition to Tinney's cultic archive we may identify other groups of texts that may have had their own characteristic context. This will make a contextual approach more differentiated and therefore even more attractive" (Veldhuis 2003, 41-42).

21. "Many Sumerian literary compositions are thoroughly scholastic and appear detached from performative goals of any kind. They are in fact scribal artifacts from conception to transmission. This understanding of the scribal setting of Sumerian literature is embodied in the modern curricular approach to its corpus. However, the curricular approach does not imply that all Sumerian literary texts are scribal exercises or merely the result of scribal activities. A number of compositions are preserved in single copies and some groups of tablets seem to constitute homogeneous cultic archives, sharing similar format and paleographic features. Moreover, many hymnic compositions were most likely performed. Many royal hymns devoted to the kings of the Ur III and Isin dynasties were probably performed at those courts – but it is also quite likely that many other royal hymns were produced at the school, by the school, and for the school. In a few instances, both the performance and extracurricular nature of some compositions were inherent to their genres, as is the case of many cultic compositions, especially canonical lamentations, dirges, and songs (e.g., *balags* and *eršemmas*)" (Rubio 2009, 26). *Cf*. Alster and Oshima 2006.
22. "This concept of poetry and truth is later on rivaled by new prose genres, which develop after the spread of writing. Inspiration is kept as a literary *topos*, but the corollary, that poetry has an exclusive claim on truth, is abandoned. For Aristotle, the truth-value of a literary work is entirely irrelevant. The poet has become an artist, and he is supposed to make good verses, not to tell the truth. Poetry, in particular fiction, becomes an autonomous phenomenon that is gradually separated from non-fiction such as medicine or philosophy. Part of Finkelberg's argument is related to the concepts of responsibility and knowledge. The archaic poet is not responsible for his verses. The muses inspire him, and tell him about events he did not know. For the classical poet, however, traditional stories are not knowledge that he is supposed to transmit, but rather the raw material from which he creates something new. He is an artist, and being inspired does not free him from the responsibility for what he has made. He will be judged not for his truthful-ness of his creation, but for its aesthetic value" (Veldhuis 2003, 36-37).
23. *Cf*. his similar label in another article published in the same journal issue: "*les textes littéraires, ceux qui appartiennent donc à la sphère humaine*" (Loprieno 2000b, 137).
24. "Moreover, the specifically poetic nature of Sumerian literary texts can be established on the basis of the frequency of specific tropes (parallelisms, repetitions), a common repertoire of imagery (similes, metaphors, metonymies), and a shared body of lexical items. The presence of a literary lexicon and the accumulation of tropes establish a tapestry of intertextual connections and genealogies. These intertextual bridges configure a referential system within which works are written and read. In the case of Sumerian literature, such interconnections stretch beyond literature itself, as in the case of literary texts that are shaped on the template of lexical lists. Ultimately, one should not ignore the fact that prose tends to be a later development and that poetry normally predates prose in most literary traditions. In fact, as Godzich and Kittay noted, prose literacy is not simply a matter of style but rather a radically different signifying practice" (Rubio 2009, 21-22). *Cf*. Veldhuis 2003, 38: "A

literary corpus may be defined by the intertextual links between its parts. A significant intertextual aspect of Sumerian literature is the personal name. Personal names in great majority refer to existing beings: kings, legendary kings, or gods. Only very rarely do we encounter names of other people. Some of the disputations are between named protagonists, but this is quite exceptional and its significance is as yet unclear. Most names are well-known to us and must have been well-known to an ancient audience". For a broader perspective on the issue of intertextuality, critical for theory and typology, *cf*. Genette 1982.

25. "The archival letters were used in everyday transactions. Since the scribes had to learn how to compose such texts, practice letters quickly gave birth to the literary epistle. This was to happen time and again in literary history; indeed, it is impossible to distinguish between 'real' and 'imaginary' letters. This is true for Sumerian 'literary' letters as well as for classical Greek or Renaissance epistles. As early as the Old Babylonian period, letters of Ur III scribes and officials from Nippur and Ur were copied and recopied by students as writing and rhetorical exercises. In addition, revised versions of almost thirty letters between Ur III kings and their high military officers were studied in the schools, as were a few letters from the early rulers of Isin. Not a single Ur III original of this correspondence has survived, and if these texts are copies of authentic texts, then one has to assume that the orthography of the letters had been revised to conform with later standards, as there are no surviving traces of earlier writing habits. Although it is possible that all of these texts were fictitious, it is more probable that the core of this royal correspondence was based on actual archival letters, but revised, and that other texts of the same type were written long after the death of the kings of Ur. We have no ways of unraveling the levels of authenticity, and one could argue that any attempt to do so would be technically impossible, as well as theoretically futile" (Michalowski 1993, 4).
26. "Cultural texts in general initiate the novice into culture in general. There are, however, specialized fields of culture which require special initiation. With regard to ancient Egypt, one would think in the very first place of the art of writing, which, in this society, is tantamount to the art of administration and all the other branches of political, legal, ritual, economical, mathematical, and technical knowledge. Writing and reading form the entrance to the ruling class, the class of 'literatocracy' which, in Egypt, is not recruited by birth but by education. It is evident that this subsystem developed its own institutions of recruitment, socialization, and structural reproduction which we became accustomed to subsume under the somewhat anachronistic term of 'school'. By using this term, we must not think of special buildings, large classes, and professional teachers. Classes existed only for the first four years of elementary education; they were small and were taught by priests or officials who held positions in the temple or in the civil administration. After these four years, education was continued on the basis of individual apprenticeship. With these necessary changes, we may employ the term 'school' in order to denote the whole system of socialization, education, training, cultural formation, and promotion. The Egyptian school in this broad sense is designed to impart not only special skills but above all fundamentals of cultural and moral formation in the sense of *musar*, *paideia*, or *Bildung*. My thesis is that this is the functional frame for most of those texts which we are used to classify as 'literature'. These texts, as well as the orally transmitted cultural texts, were meant to be learned by heart and to be stored in memory. This is what constitutes their identity function. But at the same time they served the purpose of an initiation into the art of writing. For that purpose they had to be written down from memory after having been learnt by heart. They imparted literate and cultural competence, the knowledge how to write in order to become a scribe and how to live in order to become a gentleman. We must not forget that the scribes did not just belong to a specialized guild of craft but that they represented the Egyptian aristocracy and the ruling class. Things changed somewhat during the New Kingdom and so did literature, but this description may apply fairly well to the Middle Kingdom and, therefore, to the classical age of Egyptian literature. Scribal culture was held representative of culture in general. Unlike India, where every caste developed its own system of values and code of honor, Egypt did not develop a stratified

system of different cultural codes. The scribal class embodied in a representative way all the culturally relevant values and moral codes. The scribe was the exemplary Egyptian. It seems as if this educational system did not yet exist during the Old Kingdom and that it only developed in the 12th dynasty and its efforts to create a new class of priests and state officials. I think it was in the functional frame of this cultural and political project that most of the great texts of the Middle Kingdom had been composed. They were meant as cultural texts to function in the specific frame of textual or scribal culture and to form the cultural memory of the new ruling elite" (*ibid*., 8-9).

27. "Utter meaning" is my tentative formulation; "utterer's meaning" is Grice's original term. Grice's original terms, "timeless meaning of an utterance type" versus "utterer's meaning", have been more commonly rendered in pragmatics as "sentence meaning" versus "speaker's meaning". They might almost be called "semantic meaning" versus "pragmatic meaning". In his *Meaning Revisited*, Grice puts it this way: "the main theme will be matters connected with the relation between speaker's meaning and meaning in a language, or word meaning, sentence meaning, expression meaning, and so on" (Grice 1982, 283). In the present paper, I keep Grice's "utterer's meaning" and tentatively use "utter meaning" as a term that: 1. can be applied at the level of *speech act*, anywhere between word meaning and sentence meaning; and 2. suggests that its meaning is *by default*. For Grice's theory of meaning, *cf*. Grice 1957; 1989a; 1989b; and 1982. For a thought-provoking development of Grice's ideas into relevance theory, *vd*. Sperber and Wilson 1995. For speech act theory, *cf*., *e.g*., Austin 1975; *id*. 1979; Searle 1969; and *id*. 1979. For Skinner's application of speech act theory to the history of political thought, *vd*., *e.g*., Tully 1988.
28. For the social psychological concept of "possible self", *vd*. Markus and Nurius 1986. *Cf*. Markus and Wurf 1987.
29. Smyth 1956, 94 (§ 333). *Cf. ibid*., 307-309 (§ 1240-§ 1261).
30. Allen and Greenough 2006, 177-178 (§ 297).
31. Biggs 1971, 200 (A i-ii).
32. Alster 2005, 176 (lines 1-3).
33. Alster, 2005, 56-57 (lines 1-8).
34. George 2020, 1-3. This is the standard translation. The standard edition is George 2003. The standard account of the various versions is Tigay 2002.
35. For translations, *vd*., for instance, Parkinson 1998.
36. Especially of yonder and of wonder.
37. Of yonder, of yore, and of wonder.
38. Especially of yonder and of wonder.
39. Especially of yore and of wonder.
40. Of yore and of wonder.
41. Of wonder.
42. Of wonder.
43. Of wonder.
44. Of yore and of wonder.
45. Of wonder.
46. Of wonder.
47. Of yore and of wonder.
48. Of yonder, of yore, and of wonder.
49. For translations, *vd*., for instance, Goetze 1969.
50. Of wonder.
51. Of yore and of wonder.
52. Of wonder.
53. Of yonder, of yore, and of wonder.

54. Of wonder.
55. Of wonder.
56. For translations, *vd*., for instance, Parker 1997.
57. Of wonder.
58. Of wonder.
59. Of wonder.
60. Of wonder.
61. Of yonder and of wonder.
62. Of yonder and of wonder.
63. Of yonder and of wonder.
64. Of wonder.
65. Of wonder.
66. Of wonder.
67. Of wonder.
68. Especially of yonder, of yore, and of wonder (for both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*).
69. Of yonder, of yore, and especially of wonder (*Theogony*); of wonder (*Works and Days*).
70. Especially of yonder, of yore, and of wonder (*Aeneid*); especially of yonder and of wonder (*Bucolics*); of wonder (*Georgics*).
71. *Ibid.*, 267-268. *Cf*. Prentice and Gerrig 1999. *Cf*. also Mar and Oatley 2008, 174.
72. "This simulation facilitates the communication and understanding of social information and makes it more compelling, achieving a form of learning through experience. Engaging in the simulative experiences of fiction literature can facilitate the understanding of others who are different from ourselves and can augment our capacity for empathy and social inference" (Mar and Oatley 2008, 173). "It trains us to extend our understanding toward other people, to embody (to some extent) and understand their beliefs and emotions, and ultimately to understand ourselves. Fictional literature brings close attention to distant worlds that would otherwise remain unknown. Fictional stories not only allow us access to environments and situations that are difficult to experience firsthand, such as faraway countries and cultures, but it also takes us to places that are impossible to reach, such as past societies. Moreover, literary narrative allows us to experience rare situations many times over. In much of literature, the author challenges readers to empathize with individuals who differ drastically from the self" (*ibid.*, 181).
73. On the fundamental concept of relevance in communication and cognition, *vd*. Sperber and Wilson 1995.
74. "Literary fiction allows us to experience social situations vicariously, thus allowing for personal consideration of response and action. The simulation of interacting ideas and emotions evoked by a story simultaneously permits the exploration of our own ideas, feelings, and desires, and of our own potential reactions to the story's plot. Constructing a complex simulation of concepts, ideals, or emotions allows for an arena within which we can test out our own affective reactions. Fiction is a laboratory that allows us to experiment in a controlled and safe manner with intentions, emotions, and emotion-evoking situations that would be impossible and often highly undesirable in the real world" (*ibid*., 183). "Projecting ourselves into these difficult circumstances also provides us with an opportunity to grow emotionally. Fictional literature not only allows us to simulate ideas and situations, it can enter our emotional system and prompt it toward the experience of emotions that we might otherwise rarely acknowledge. By engaging in these emotional experiences, we may not only gain a greater understanding of emotions and of their breadth and quality, we may also pick up emotional cues implicitly communicated by the author" (*ibid*.).
75. *Cf*. Schütz's (1945) theory of "finite provinces of meaning". *Cf*. also Couliano 1991.
76. *Cf*. Foster 2010-2011, 61: "Since Sumerian works were normally referred to by their opening words,

no indication of their authorship remains. One group of poetic compositions, however, represented here by tablet YBC 7169, is a striking exception to this pattern. These are works ascribed in antiquity and today to a woman, Enheduanna. An identifiable historical personality of the twenty-third century BCE, she actually named herself in the text, and by this evidence may be deemed the first author in history to whom specific, surviving works can be ascribed" – and *id.* 1991, 17: "That the names of the authors of major works of Akkadian literature are unknown seems strange to us, to whom authorship implies a named author. Only a few works of Akkadian literature can be identified with a specific author".

77. "Systems of prewriting such as knotted cords, or calculi, or picture writing served as memory supports. The most typical functional context for the development of such databases was economy. This has a very simple explanation. Economical data have no intrinsic mnemophilic quality. Because of their contingency they demand exterior notation. This is the origin of the archive" (Assmann 1999, 5-6).
78. "This is the oldest Mesopotamian letter that can be dated with any degree of accuracy" (Michalowski 1993, 11).
79. "The full meaning of any literary text, image, or ritual then can only be fully grasped when analyzed not only as a narrative in itself but in its intertextual and intermedial relationships with other cultural forms of expression and with 'myth' as the underlying 'hypotext'" (Pongratz-Leisten 2020, 33).

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Stigma/ta:
Eyes Slant like Chinks of Christ, or Chin-Kee of *American Born Chinese*

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Abstract:

Genuine pushbacks from Asian North American—off-white, yellow-ish—minority against white mainstream stereotypes are few and far between, given that the bulk of off-white (self-)representations blossom in English after a lifetime of nurture by, and internalization of, white culture. Thus, in their mother tongue of English, projected from the white patriarchal gaze, off-white visual culture reprises Western Orientalist polarization of the "Chink," pardon my Americanism. On the one hand, the racial slur "Chink" stigmatizes the they-all-look-alike Asian Other as having eyes slanting upward and/or in long narrow slits, from Robert Hans van Gulik's self-designed book cover to off-white Gene Luen Yang's graphic books and Domee Shi's animations. On the other, the West projects its own longing onto the exotic Other, whose visual, auditory, and sensorial differences "open sesame" to otherworldly, fantastical escapades. The offensive stigma of slant-eyed Asians hence morphs into, not to mince words, the crucified Christ's stigmata, windows to the soul of transcendent resurrection. The West—white as well as off-white—manages to eat the body of the Other and to have it, too, as proof of the West's spirituality. This project examines cases of Oriental stigma of slanting eyes transformed into stigmata of white and off-white spiritual triumphalism. I hereby talk back against the linguistic and cultural hegemony that schizophrenically splits the racial or immigrant other, skewing/skewering Oriental eyes, from Van Gulik to Yang, Shi, and the like. Let us turn our gaze to those strange, even monstrous, eyes in the mirror!

Keywords: slant eyes, Chinese stigma, Christian stigmata, Gene Luen Yang, Domee Shi, Robert Hans van Gulik, *American Born Chinese*, *Boxers & Saints*, *The Shadow Hero*

Genuine pushbacks from Asian North American—off-white, yellow-ish—minority against white mainstream stereotypes are few and far between, given that the bulk of off-white (self-)representations blossom in English after a lifetime of nurture by, and internalization of, white culture. Thus, in their mother tongue of English, projected from the white patriarchal gaze, off-white visual culture reprises Western Orientalist polarization of the "Chink," pardon my Americanism. On the one hand, the racial slur "Chink" stigmatizes the they-all-look-alike Asian Other as having eyes slanting upward and/or in long narrow slits, from Robert Hans van Gulik's self-designed book cover

(Figure 1) to off-white Gene Luen Yang's graphic book (Figure 2) and Domee Shi's animation (Figure 3). On the other, the West projects its own longing onto the exotic Other, whose visual, auditory, and sensorial differences "open sesame" to otherworldly, fantastical escapades. The offensive stigma of slant-eyed Asians hence morphs into, not to mince words, the crucified Christ's stigmata, windows to the soul of transcendent resurrection. The West—white as well as off-white—manages to eat the body of the Other and to have it, too, as proof of the West's spirituality.

Robert Hans van Gulik's cover to *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee* (1949), Figure 1 features prominently the stilted chinks for eyes, which are, in turn, simulated by off-white artists, not to mention the frontal nudity of femininity and the frigidity of masculinity that are de rigueur of gender divisions within Orientalism. In his nominal "translation" of an eighteenth-century Chinese chapter novel, the Dutch diplomat-*cum*-Sinologist Van Gulik's has given "a lot of face" to the Chinese text, a face that has launched a thousand Detective Dees on the big and small screen in global visual culture. Yet that face and body oblique in a "Dutch angle" manifest age-old Euro-American Orientalism of misshapen eyes and gender dynamics bordering on sadomasochistic bondage.

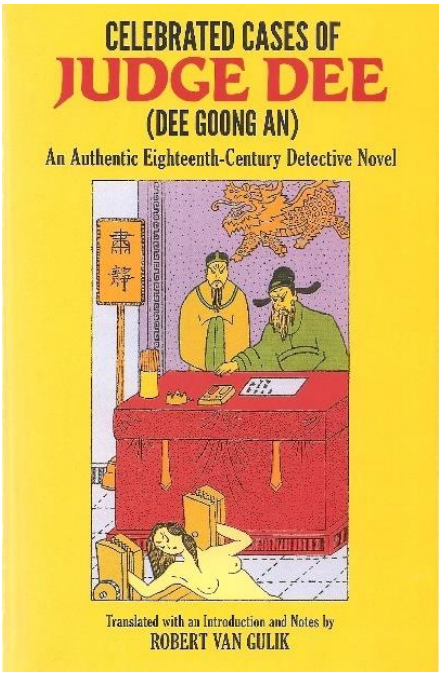

Figure 1: The front cover to Robert Hans van Gulik's *Celebrated Cases*.

Figure 2 captures the heart of MacArthur Genius awardee Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006, henceforth *ABC*) on, allegedly, ethnic awakening. A wish-fulfilling turning point for the protagonist Jin, homophone of the author's Christian name Gene, the slit-eyed, unnamed herbalist wife in San Francisco Chinatown transforms Jin into the whiteface Danny. Magically, Jin's almond-shaped eyes "norm" into Danny's round eyes, among other desirable physical traits, such as a white mask over yellow skin, to rephrase Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Ironically, such magical touch is delivered via the most stereotypical caricatures against Orientals, specifically, a non-English speaking alien with a Disney witch's missing teeth and crooked, long-nailed

digits, eyes closed like a blind Teiresias in trance, casting an unintelligible, unpronounceable spell of "變" blown up in scarlet red against the dark background. So striking visually, the sound and sense of 變 elude most readers, which intensifies the mystique of the Orient. The unsayable 變 functions as a void that is pregnant with meaning, a blip of a pause in moving lips. That stoppage and lacuna in the reading experience conjures up non-Sinophone readers' imagination to fill this ornamental, Oriental inaccessibility.

Figure 2: The ABC protagonist is turned into a white male by the herbalist wife in Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006).

Mistaken for an abstract painting subject to any interpretation, 變 is in fact pronounced *biàn* in the fourth tone in Mandarin, meaning "change" among a host of homonyms, including "urine" or "feces," or more colloquially, "shit." What a *mot juste* biàn is! It captures the essence, first of all, of the Monkey King's magic of seventy-two metamorphoses in Wu Cheng'en's sixteenth-century chapter novel *Journey to the West*, which inspires Yang's graphic novel; secondly, of Yang's own adaptation of *Journey* into a coming-of-age story in *American Born Chinese*; and, lastly, of the cinematic cross-dissolve from Jin to Danny on the bottom of the panel. What possesses the MacArthur Genius to skip the code-switching from "變" to "biàn" to "Change," not to mention the "shit" inherent in the Monkey King's urinating on the Buddha palm, that epitomizes the ethnic imaginary over empowerment? Yang could have accomplished that by means of a modicum of angle brackets, parentheses, and asterisked glosses within the comic panel, as Yang has done consistently throughout. The explanation appears to lie less in oversight than in Yang's priority of American tales in English over decorative details such as 變, a wallpaper-like design to silhouette the transubstantiation below.

Should the Word be made flesh (John 1:14), then a word that is not a word becomes a self that is not a self, namely, the herbalist wife effecting that word. The herbalist wife's sleight of hand is

accompanied by a "translated" chant in angle brackets for Mandarin in the speech balloon, along with the sound effect of mechanical, metallic, and consonant-filled transfiguration of "CLICK, CLACK" (194). Like a puppet with her hand raised by Yang's invisible string, that cameo comes at the expense of robbing the subjectivity of an elderly female immigrant apparently with her own name, voice, and ordinary life, as trapped as she may have been in Chinatown peddling dead animal parts and dried, desiccated plants, with an occasional side job of wish-granting to any ABC amid identity crisis. Set against all the readable, intelligible scripts in English, angle brackets notwithstanding, the sole Chinese ideograph 變 is mute, just as the Oriental matron-magician performing the "whitewashing" race change is but an extra, receding into the background soon after. Yang's visualization only entraps and crucifies her in the name of elevating, ennobling her.

Figure 3 is a high-angle shot of the teen protagonist Mei-Mei's slant-eyed grandmother with protruding Mongoloid cheek bones in Domee Shi's full-length animation *Turning Red* (2022). That her eyes are visible at all comes after the Chinese Canadian director Shi has been roundly criticized in Chinese social media for the portrayal in Disney-produced *Bao* (2018), an Oscar-winning short animation featuring the Chinese immigrant mother with two choppy lines for eyes, as though hardly ever open, akin to the herbalist wife's. What impresses Oscar only infuriates Chinese viewers. Scathing Chinese criticism opened Shi's eyes to the Chinese mother with no eyes. Shi's self-correction in *Turning Red*, nonetheless, clings onto the exotica of an alien arrival, as the grandmother debuts in oversized sunglasses that completely conceal her eyes, glasses that she holds in her hand in Figure 3. As alienating as this retiree with a heavy accent appears, she doubles as the revenant of mythical empowerment from ancient China, a guardian angel for Mei-Mei's maturation/menarche, indeed a fetish of stigma/ta for chinky pain and Christian deliverance. The winning formula of Orientalism: the undead heathen reanimated by the touch of God—Christian, that is.

Figure 3: Mei-Mei's slant-eyed grandmother with high Mongoloid cheek bones in *Turning Red* (2022).

This project proceeds to examine cases of Oriental stigma of slanting eyes transformed into stigmata of white and off-white spiritual triumphalism. To pedants who dismiss this project for its use of pop culture, I submit that liminal, "unserious" whodunit and young adult readings betray the West's symptoms of neurotic repression and displacement. To get even more personal, literally, the play on Christian tropes of stigma/ta and on the Anglophone double entendre of chink the epithet versus chink to epiphany bespeaks this Taiwanese immigrant, a(n) (un)naturalized American, subverting his stepmother tongue of English, prosecuting his "yellow stain" of writing, decades-long, in the midst of whiteness. A Mao's/Trump's "bad element" within the model minority within American exceptionalism repurposed as MAGA, I hereby talk back against the linguistic and cultural hegemony that schizophrenically splits the racial or immigrant other, skewing/skewering Oriental eyes, from Van Gulik to Yang, Shi, and the like. Let us turn our gaze to those strange, even monstrous, eyes in the mirror!

Gazing into the Nietzschean abyss, we spy Chin-Kee from *American Born Chinese* (2006). Needless to say, Yang's character is "slitty-eyed" in the memorable words of the late Prince Philip during his 1986 tour of Hong Kong. The long ē ending in "Kee" subscribes to racist pidgin of nineteenth- and early twentieth century caricature against Cantonese-speaking coolies prone to suffixing such consonants as "k" with vowels, as in "No Tickee, No Washee" from Chinese laundrymen. Serendipitously, "kee" puns with "key." Even more so, Yang's Chin-Kee embodies both the worst of reprehensible xenophobia and the best of all-knowing omnipotence, leading a charmed double life of clown-*cum*-crown—as his pidgin transposes "r" and "l" anyway.

To borrow from Chinese Canadian young adult writer Judy I. Lin's *A Magic Steeped in Poison* (2022), such teas/tease of "the Golden Key" opens onto the West's Orientalism. Such keys to white culture—honorary whites, aka, off-whites, included—have long been bestowed upon Chin-Kee's "ancestor," Charlie Chan, from his debut in Earl Derr Biggers's *The House Without a Key* (1925), blundering all the way to *Keeper of the Keys* (1932) and Biggers's death in 1933. In reverse, Charlie Chan is the *key* to Biggers' longevity of detective stories. A discursive insult holds the clue to whodunit, initiating the apocalyptic denouement by way of Oriental mystique-*cum*-buffoonery. Hence, the Oriental Other like Chin-Kee serves as the key to Yang's *American Born Chinese*, or American Born Christian, rather, given the religious motif "slanting," pun intended, Yang's oeuvre, ever since his earliest graphic books, *The Rosary Comic Book* (2003) and *Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order* (2004). The yEast of Chin-Kee et al. is kneaded/needed within the West's cultural leaven for Heaven in literature and film. Far from a one-off is this yEast for Western Leaven/Heaven in Yang: his subsequent *Boxers* & *Saints* (2013, henceforth *B&S*) and *The Shadow Hero* (2014, henceforth *TSH*) manifest a repetition compulsion of eyes sloping like Chin-Kee's, the key to Christian redemption. Before returning to the off-white Yang, though, the context of yEast as a fermenting agent for white artistic and cultural alchemy merits a brief sidetrack, a fleeting side-eye.

Take, for example, Figure 4 from Gore Verbinski's 2002 Hollywood remake of the J-Horror classic *Ringu* (1998).

After Verbinski's male protagonist has watched the female ghost's cursed video that brings on death seven days hence, he is shocked by an Asian cashier's ominous prognostication out of left field, "You're gonna die," when she hands over a pack of cigarettes, staring fixedly with her slender eyes. "Oriental" clairvoyance, which is one extreme of the bifurcated Orientalism, shifts in the same breath to its opposite of clowning and trickstery with her next line: "us[ing] two packs a day." Yet the ensuing shot of his distorted, as though scrambled and erased, reflection on the convenience store's surveillance camera, amplified by the soundtrack's grating sonic boom, portends the coming of the anti-Christ to claim her viewer's life. Code-switching between Orientalist stereotypes of supernatural intelligence and utter unintelligibility—the cashier's elders at the counter conversing in what sounds like Cantonese in the background—taps into the proverbial "perennial alien," both the straight-faced, dead-panning girl cashier and the girl ghost. Nevertheless, that Asian cameo sheds light on Verbinski's J-Horror provenance, and on the West's projection of its anxiety onto the racial other while caricaturing her. The fetish of the East, expediently, enables the West to work out and articulate its Munch-esque *Scream* long repressed by the New Gods of modern science and narcissistic ego. The cashier extra embodies the West's displacement extraordinaire.

Figure 4: An Asian-looking cashier prophesying death in *The Ring*.

"Out of left field" is right on the mark in diagnosing such whimsical, negligible, and haphazard meetups: the eyemaker Chew (James Hong) in *Blade Runner* (1982); the unnamed Keymaker (Randall Duk Kim) in *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003); the Indian-looking Mara (devil), doppelganger to Keanu Reeves's yellowface Siddhartha, in *Little Buddha* (1993); and many more iterations in

English words and screen images. The eyemaker, the Keymaker, and the kingmaker are one and the same, malleable in the white master's hands, from Verbinski to Ridley Scott, the Wachowskis, and Bernardo Bertolucci. All these marginal characters from the East serve as the yEast for Western enlightenment, providing, practically, the source of light, yet predetermined to fade out anon. Like Mara rising out of the puddle when Reeves looks down into it/himself, the East is the West's reflecting pool before nirvana (Figure 5). What the Italian auteur Bertolucci visualizes is, in Western eyes, the archetype of Buddhist Zen awakening by defrocking, baring South Asianness. The Freudian definition of joke that comprises the rhyme of "*Verblüffung und Erleuchtung*," rendered in English as "bafflement and light dawning," finds its butt in the nudity of the vanquished Mara (*The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* [1905], 3). Bertolucci's Zen joke on the racial other is exposed herein, for Zen *is* a joke, its litany of *gong'an* (public cases) of epiphany nothing but riddles that make no sense, thereby tranZENding all human senses and, ultimately, meaning itself.

Figure 5: Reeves's yellowface Siddhartha facing off with the evil Mara in *Little Buddha*.

Without missing a beat, this "J'accuse" moves from Exhibit A to Exhibit B, from the white slant in Verbinski et al. to the off-white slant in Yang, or from four white directors to one off-white graphic novelist's three books: *ABC*; *B&S*; and *TSH*. Throughout these three texts as well as spanning Yang's oeuvre and those of myriad Asian North American artists, the key to their creativity is, to put it bluntly, Chin-Kee, whose name "Chink" personifies all the stereotypes against Asians, leading to the struggle for self-identity. To borrow from Fredric Jameson's maxim of "history is what hurts," Asian American culture is what hurts, so much so that it feels like self-hurt. Arising out of a minority drive for subjectivity in denial of racial stereotypes, Asian North Americans resort to juxtaposing erstwhile stock images found in the dustbin of history vis-à-vis ethnic identity founded on the debunking thereof. The dialectic approach of thesis and antithesis, of stereotype and refutation, theoretically results in synthesis that is ethnic identity.

It begs the question, though, when the President of the United States, who is Pax Americana

incarnate, one that surely enfolds Asian America, raises good old anti-Chinese zombies by spewing such white trash as "CHINESE virus" and "Kung Flu" during the COVID-19 pandemic, strategically provoking nation-wide divisiveness in general, and anti-Asian hate crimes in particular. Since they are all alike, anti-Asian violence spins off into anti-Asian American violence. When Brandon Elliott assaulted a petite sixty-five-year-old Filipino American woman right outside a luxury Manhattan apartment on March 29, 2021, screaming racial slurs and "You don't belong here," he did not stop to inquire whether she is an FOB or ABC. The "street show" was in full view of such idle spectators as the apartment's security guard, two additional apartment personnel, and one delivery man. Nor did the anti-masker Ebony Jackson think of asking two women wearing face masks whether they were Asian or Asian American before hammering them on the head on May 2, 2021, once again near Times Square. Where have all the syntheses of Asian Americanness gone in Trump 1.0, 2.0, and, conceivably, 3.0 and beyond? Or is Asian Americanness itself the trigger for Ebony-on-Yellow, or anti-white-on-off-white violence? After all, even one of "our own," Yang, in his thrice-told tales of the twenty-first century, parrots nineteenth-century white caricatures of slant eyes and such.

The fundamental problem lies in the source, the alleged thesis, which is already an antithesis inherent within Trump's Sinophobic stigma, a mold and a collective psyche so twisted that it (fore)casts not so much transcendent stigmata Yang intended as re-traumatization. Any perversion and devaluation ill-fits to serve as foundation for born-again selfhood. The dialectics of ethnic consciousness yields, hypothetically, new identity, the alchemy of which goes beyond arithmetic addition and subtraction. In multiplication, however, a negative and a positive still makes a negative, still a revalidation of the same old, same old. The mathematical or psychological formula is further doomed by Asian American poetic license or "immigrant license" that represents Asianness—be it immigrant (grand)parents in the promised land or Asians on the other side of the Pacific or both—of, by, and for Western eyes. By virtue of their "birthright" of Asian ancestry, Asian American artists feel entitled to speak for/as Asian immigrants by leveraging Orientalist binarism of mystery and menace, power and atrophy. The schizophrenic split crystalizes in Maxine Hong Kingston's immigrant mother, holographically flipping between the woman warrior and the idiotic laundress, in her classic *The Woman Warrior* (1976). This fault line in immigrant (mis)representation calcifies into, alas, a throughline within Kingston's heirs apparent, from Amy Tan to Kevin Kwan and beyond. Such bifurcation of Asianness caters to white readership, which eases into the time-honored tradition of reckoning with perennial aliens in terms of either eighteenth-century "Celestial Kingdom" or nineteenth-century opium addicts. Asian America kneads their biological parentage in the distorted, internalized image fancied by their adoptive white parentage. Bloodline is trumped by the assembly line for Made in America, aka, Asian American handmaids in the employ of America!

What actually transpires within the dialectics evokes the turn-of-the-last-century technology of stereograph or stereoscope to fashion three-dimensional optical illusion of depth over an object out of its two flattened images captured at a different angle by the stereographic eyewear, no different from how the two eyes receive an image slightly apart. The stereoscopic scenario taps into Derridean

différance for both "to defer" and "to differ." To differ is to defer judgment; therefore, Yang's comic riff critiques "the distance between the cultural Real and the cultural Ideal" (Ben Urich's "Humor in Popular Culture," 303). If stereotypical belittlement is the Real, then what is the equalitarian Ideal that, as Simon Dentith puts it, "contradict[s] our addressees" (*Parody* 2)? Whereas the Greek root of "stereo," meaning stiff, gives solidity and "body," it also fixates and calcifies the object, particularly when the organic, evolving Asian self, estranged as Asian America's Other, is nowhere to be found, a phantom limb of ethnic pain.

Yang's splicing of stereotypes and their alleged subversion, of past and present images, telescopes the US Census Bureau's designation of "Asian American," with the last word "American" understood to be the synthesis, the operative word, "colored," pun intended, by the adjective "Asian." Yet the Asian American project has largely been thwarted, given the persistent, ruthless scapegoating from the nineteenth-century "The Chinese Must Go!" movement to the cross-century Chinese Exclusion Act to the anti-Asian febrility of MAGA. The ethnic failure is written on the face, specifically, the eyes of, respectively, Yang's triptych of book covers, featuring the veritably slant-eyed protagonists of Chin-Kee; of Bao and his avatar, the First Emperor of Qin (Figure 6); and of the Shadow Hero (Figure 7).

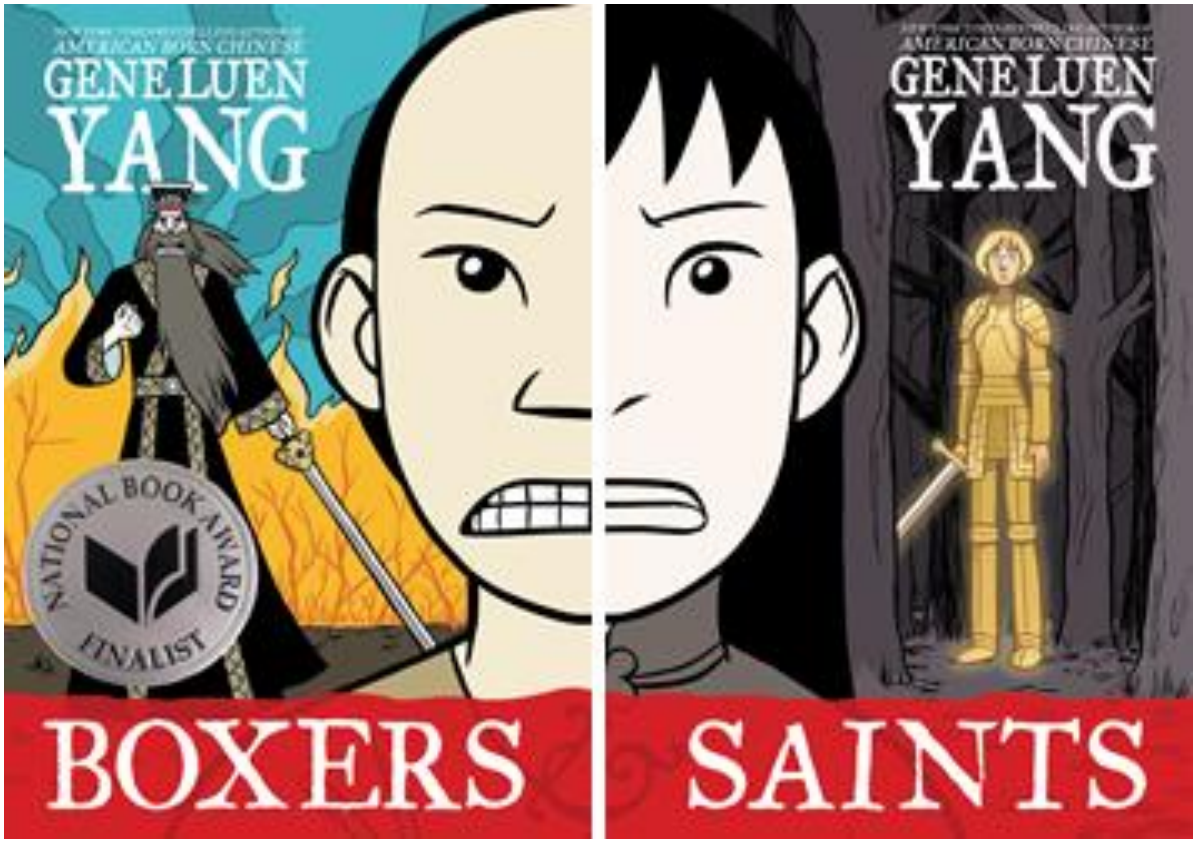

Figure 6: Bao and his avatar, the First Emperor of Qin, joined by their doppelgangers of Vibiana and Joan of Arc in *Boxers* & *Saints*.

In *B&S*'s book cover (Figure 6), the titular ampersand of "&" yokes form and content, graphics and meaning. Grammatically, the ampersand functions as a conjunction of what precedes and what

follows. Formalistically, "&" with its flourishes twirls in the shape of a traditional Chinese frog button of cloth loop and knot that ties together the two separate graphic novels *Boxers* versus *Saints* by way of the collars of the two protagonists, Bao and Four Girl, a misogynist pun on Death Girl, flanked by their guardian angels of the First Emperor of Qin and Joan of Arc. The right half of Bao's face nestles with the left half of the face of Four Girl, baptized as Vibiana. Gender differences notwithstanding, their knitted brows, tilting eyes, and grimace complement each other. The tension in their countenances is kindled by their avatars' swords, the emperor's tongues of fire, and Joan's burnished armor and halo. Bao leads the peasant group called the Fists of the Harmonious and the Righteous during the Qing dynasty against colonial oppression. Their slogan of "Repel the Foreign, Support the Qing" finds favor in the Empress Dowager, who manipulates them against the West and Japan. Four Girl enjoys no such imperial backing, her gender having devalued her in the eye of Chinese patriarchy. Instead, she converts herself into Vibiana, adhering to another system of patriarchy, going beyond that which discriminates against half of the Chinese population. Although accessed through the female visions of Joan of Arc, Vibiana relies on French Father Bey and the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ's crucifixion, which Joan witnesses as she breathes her last burning at the stake. In turn, Vibiana witnesses the saint's vision before her own execution. A Christian lineage runs from the Heavenly Father to the Son to the saint to Vibiana, painstakingly forged by Yang.

All eyes in Figure 6, except Joan's, tilt upward, in epicanthic folds to boot. The box set of two-in-one revisits the ABC—the acronym for American Born Chinese that doubles, unwittingly, for American Born Christian—Yang's Catholic passion throughout his artistic career. Here, Yang weds the Western obsession over the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) with Saint Joan's campaign against the English invasion. For his imaginary homecoming, Yang gravitates to the Qing dynasty's Boxer Rebellion, a favorite subject in Western scholarship replete with monographs on this nativist revolt against Western imperialism that prompted the allied forces of eight colonial powers of Germany, Japan, Russia, Britain, France, the United States, Italy, and Austria-Hungary and, ultimately, led to the downfall of Qing a decade later. Yang's page-long list of "Further Readings" in the end matter to *Boxers* testifies to what drives his retelling, reminiscent of the collective motif of his Western scholarly peers, let alone in pop culture (327). Pitted against the Boxers' swords, spears, and ritualized possession by theatrical warriors, American soldiers in Yang don cowboy hats, wielding six shooters and bowie knife. Like the historical gunboat diplomacy, bullets decide the outcome of the fight. Yang's skirmishes set in the capital city conjures up the Hollywood dramatization of *55 Days at Peking* (1963), where Charlton Heston and his, for lack of a better word, cavalry come to the rescue of Westerners, Ava Gardner included, besieged in the foreign diplomatic compound (291).

The First Emperor of Qin features traditional upward-tilting "Phoenix Eyes" in Peking Opera, ink-brush painting, and temple sculpture. Such Phoenix Eyes, slender with a "lilt" in the corners, are de rigueur in traditional art, an aesthetic stylization. Van Gulik has evidently transcribed such style onto the courtroom characters in his DIY cover design for *Celebrated Cases*. Phoenix Eyes on the Chinese stage, on rice paper, and on temple walls are universalized as Chinese facial features. Akin to

Van Gulik, Yang repurposes Phoenix Eyes in the emperor and the Boxer leader Bao. The mise-en-scene of two slant-eyes in *Boxers*' cover equates the emperor's theatrical makeup called *diao fengyan* (to hang and stretch Phoenix Eyes) with the peasant boy's supposedly born eye shape. If a "foreign devil," a Flying Dutchman over Chinese curios that are Van Gulik's hobby, slant Chinese eyes, does that make Yang who subscribes to the same pattern yet another foreign devil? Van Gulik and Yang's mistake lies in popularizing an artistic stylization as Chinese eyes writ large. The slant resides less in Chinese eyes than in Western hearts, Yang's as well. This is tantamount to representing the stride of Western women in line with ballerinas en pointe, namely, they all walk on their tiptoes. Absurd indeed! Yet absurdity is Orientalism's middle name, or self-Orientalizing, for that matter.

Figure 7 is the cover to *TSH* designed by Yang's co-creator, Sonny Liew from Singapore. Himself from Asia, Liew copies instead of critiques his Asian American partner's visualization of slant eyes. The dark shadow on the cover suggests the protagonist's guardian, the tortoise spirit in exile from China. On the heels of the cover's slant eyes, the tortoise on the opening page— accompanied by his fellow Chinese mythical guardians of dragon, tiger, and phoenix—sports eyes slitting upward as dramatically as any theatrical warrior spirits from *B&S*. To complement the stilted depiction, *TSH* is riddled with Orientalist usual suspects of Chinatown tong wars, gambling dens, dragon ladies in risqué *qipao* of high side slits and standing collars, mortal combats, a Fu Manchu lookalike, even the martial arts personage Yuen Siu-tien of *Drunken Master* fame, all perpetuated under the justification of repudiating said usual suspects.

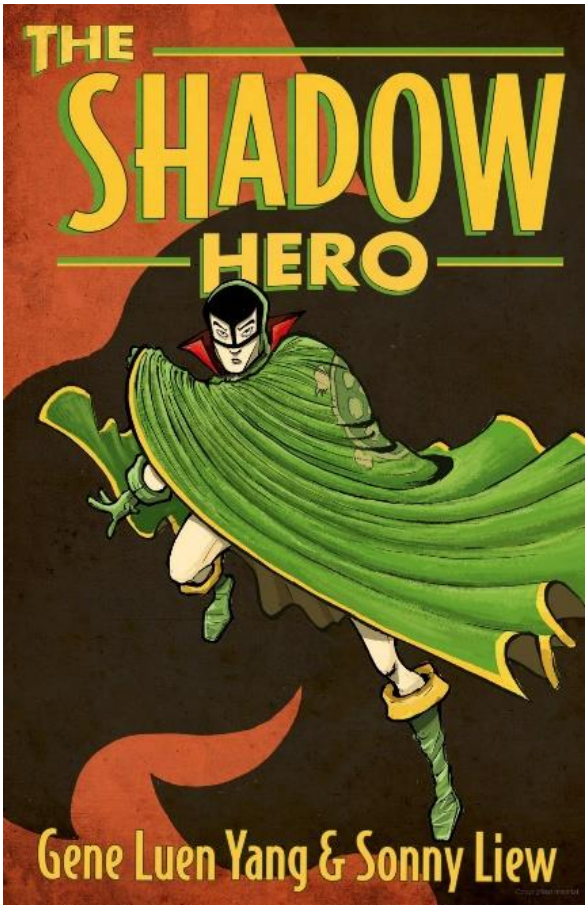

Figure 7: *The Shadow Hero*'s cover

Yang's artifice excels in seamlessly suturing East and West, while secretly privileging the latter. Not only apparently Anglophone in the Western tongue, but Yang's visual repertoire prioritizes Christian symbolism. Such favoritism extends from the frog button on the cover design to the saving grace of "The Lord's Prayer" to the triumphant Jesus and Guanyin, Goddess of Mercy, in contrapuntal pictorials of the resurrection and of Guanyin of one thousand hands, one thousand eyes. Figure 8 in *Boxers* tells of Guanyin's filial pious self-sacrifice—gouging her own eyes and cutting off both hands—to heal her ailing emperor father. Nothing so torturous ever punctuates Guanyin's Chinese legend; her magic power of multiple eyes and hands does not derive from self-blinding and -amputations. Yang's sleight of hand evokes the cover to *ABC*, where the portmanteau of Tze-Yo-Tzuh (自有者 "Self-Owned One" for Jehovah) substitutes the Buddha seal that imprisons the Monkey King for five hundred years. The autograph of Tze-Yo-Tzuh is, supposedly, an authentic Chinese moniker that authenticates Yang's ethnicity, yet it is a construct found nowhere else in the infinite Sinosphere. Likewise, the bespoke Guanyin is tailor made by Yang to match, what else, Jesus's stigmata in his palms and feet. From Guanyin's eyes to the eyelets in her palms, they invariably slant, not so with Jesus's eyes in Figure 9, although the halo-like, peacock-feather eyes resemble one another in the hagiographic twins.

Figure 8: Bao and his female companion imagine Guanyin of one thousand hands, one thousand eyes to tend to the masses' woes.

Figure 9: Vibiana witnesses Joan's vision of the Resurrection while burning at the stake.

The speech ballon in Figure 9 delivers Jesus's message, via Joan, to Vibiana: "Be mindful of others as I am mindful of you," a rendering in plain English of the King James Version's "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4). By contrast, Guanyin in Figure 8 is as reticent as Van Gulik's nude, or as unintelligible as Yang's herbalist wife. The page preceding Figure 9 shows three panels where the wound in Jesus's palm open up incrementally like a teary eye, transubstantiating blood and death. This reanimates Bao's master in *Boxers*, whose potbelly conceals an eye that eventually transmits *qi* or mythical breath onto Bao. As Bao comes to possess supernatural might, his master turns deflated and expires. Whether a pierced palm or a Chinese navel, whether Vibiana stabbed to death or Bao spared by the mercy of God, twice or thrice removed, Yang sublimates wounds into eyes, blood into tears, pain into pleasure, Chinese stigma into Christian stigmata. Any psychic sublimation rises like air out of corporeal cremation.

To close this essay, to shut the slant eyes, hopefully, in perpetuity, I revisit the Blakean, tyger-lamb "fearful symmetry" in *B&S* of Figure 6. Faced with the "secondary devil" Vibiana's refusal to renounce her faith, not even divulging her Chinese name, Bao resolves to put her to the sword after a short reprieve of listening to what turns out to be "The Lord's Prayer." The opening words, "Our . . . Father . . . Our Father," are all Bao manages to recall and stammer, feigning to be a Christian convert like Vibiana, when the tide of war turns and a Western soldier holds a pistol to his head (*Saints* 167).

What saves Bao from the West's bullet is the Heavenly Father of the West. "Hallelujah, hallowed be thy name!" appears to be the last word from an American Born Christian in the yellow mask of American Born Chinese.

How many of the illustrated characters in all nine figures are staring at us? Nearly all of them are, with their "slitty" and/or narrow eyes! Even in Figure 8 when Bao and his female companion have their eyes closed in an intimate moment, Guanyin's one thousand eyes remain trained on us. The frame-within-the-frame of Figures 8 and 9 have the protagonists bleed to the edge of the panel, as though reaching beyond the page and all the way to the reader. The mise en abyme structure echoes *B&S*'s cover when "real" protagonists in the foreground are "backed," literally and figuratively, by their mystical familiars of the Chinese emperor and the Catholic saint. Indeed, reading slant eyes onscreen and on paper is to read ourselves, since we slant them in the first place. Like its Western gunslinger Clint Eastwood, the West squints its eyes to set the unknown East in its crosshairs of beauty and bestiality. The pretend game of Chinese speaking not only in English but in Christian metaphors ought to awaken us to the chink, the fissure, that rips apart Western metanarratives plied by whites and off-whites alike. To undo it once and for all, however, is far from an open-and-shut case. What is closed out, blanked out needs to be filled in, preferably, by a pair of human eyes neither stigmatized nor stigmata-like.

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A Schopenhauerian Reading of Lovecraft's Fiction: The Will, the Intellect, and Never-Ending Struggle of Life in Cosmic Horror

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Abstract:

This essay aims to explore how Lovecraft applies Schopenhauer's theory of the will. Lovecraft's works reflect Schopenhauerian Will, wherein Schopenhauer underscores the service of the intellect to the will. Yet Lovecraft develops his cosmic horror by reiterating the vanishing of humanism into an unknown amorphous form of life due to the influence of a monstrous force within the will. The first section of the essay involves the explication of the will in Schopenhauerian ideas: the will itself is immanent, undifferentiated, and indifferent to the existence of an individual while it maintains the existence of the species. The second section provides a discussion of Lovecraft's worldview. The significant notion in Lovecraft's view of the world as something sad parallels Schopenhauer's theory regarding the will and immeasurable sufferings in the world of phenomenon. However, the horror presented in Lovecraft's fiction might be more frightening than the blind force of the will in Schopenhauer's ideas: Lovecraft's creatures regress to amorphous beings manipulated by the monstrous force of the will. Finally, the essay focuses on Lovecraft's fiction, including *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and *At the Mountains of Madness*, tracing the extraterrestrial beings as representations of an indefatigable and despotic will.

Keywords: Schopenhauer, Lovecraft, the will to live, cosmic horror, amorphous form

Introduction

Lovecraft's fiction has been posited as a straightforward reflection of the author's fantasy, with no basis in reality, as there are so many phantasmagoria combined with incredible events. One of the most impressive scenes in Lovecraft's fiction is the one depicting the insanity of Danforth in *At the Mountains of Madness* (as Danforth and his professor William Dyer are escaping from the mountains of the Antarctic, Danforth continues to whisper "bizarre conceptions" that recall a mysterious book, *the Necronomicon*). Other strange things include an unknown color that disturbs the mental state in "The Colour Out of Space" and the mental breakdown of the narrator in *The Shadow*

over Innsmouth before his assimilation into a world of an alien being. Given his apparent lack of interest in writing about "ordinary people," we might believe that the writings of Lovecraft have nothing to do with reality. However, we cannot deny that many of his stories are inspired by real world locations. It is undeniable that Lovecraft writes about the truth: through his weird settings and characters, he reveals a world not as one linked to enlightenment, but as one linked to darkness and horror. As Morgan remarks in "Cosmic Errors: The Peculiar legacy of H. P. Lovecraft," Lovecraft's protagonists are "verbal wind-up toys subjected to whatever universal unknowns his stories throw at them" (Morgan 2017). Lovecraft writes of his own reality, a painful and disappointing life, in many ways integrating Schopenhauer's philosophy of the will into his stories.

Schopenhauer's Will: immanence, un-differentiation, and its relationship with the world

Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Representation*, expatiates on the will and its relationship with the world of phenomenon. Schopenhauer recognizes the will as a blind force of the desire to live which exists immanently within each and every living organism: "the hitherto infallible certainty and regularity with which the will worked in inorganic and merely vegetative nature, rested on the fact that it alone in its original inner being was active as blind urge, as will, without assistance, but also without interruption" (1:150).[1] The will "in itself is absolutely free and entirely self-determining, and for it there is no law" (Schopenhauer Volume I 1966, 285). Moreover, he posits through his works that the will "is only a blind, irresistible urge, as we see it appear in inorganic and vegetable nature and in their laws, and also in the vegetative part of our own life" (275). Further, the will itself is undifferentiated and inaccessible. A variety of differentiated objects we see is not the will itself, but merely objects within the phenomena of the world which stand as representations of the will. The will, as it manifests itself in such a variety of ways in the world as representation, is objectified in the hierarchy of beings. All objects in the world as representation execute the same will: "all things in the world are the objectivity of one and the same will" (144). Human beings are identified as higher grades of phenomena of the objectification of will, while chemicals and mechanical forces such as gravity function as lower grades. Other animals and plants rank between humans and simple chemistry within this hierarchy. Each phenomenon of the will strives for higher grades of objectification. As such, conflicts occur between the lower grades of the objectification of the will. As the lower grades are subsumed, higher grades of the objectification of the will are produced: "from the contest of lower phenomena the higher one arises, swallowing up all of them, but also realizing in the higher degree the tendency of them all" (145). However, as these higher grades of the objectification of the will are produced, striving to exist among each lower grade is incessant: "Although these lower Ideas have been brought into subjection, they still constantly strive to reach an independent and complete expression of their inner nature" (146). Those subdued lower

grades strive to win their way back when the higher grades decline and die. Thus, what every individual manifests is the will to live in this incessant circle of life and death. In other words, the will is the will to live, manifesting itself in all organisms without distinction; it is the same force at work in all animals, plants, and inorganic bodies.

Schopenhauer's Will: suffering in the continuity of life

The will serves as a blind urge maintaining the continuity of life in nature. The concept of life here refers not the life of an individual, but the whole of nature. Though each individual comes into being and then dies, its death cannot "injure the whole of nature" (Schopenhauer Volume I 1966, 276), since new individuals will come into beings that compensate for the loss of those individuals who pass:

> For it is not the individual that nature cares for, but only the species; and in all seriousness she urges the preservation of the species, since she provides for this so lavishly through the immense surplus of the seed and the great strength of the fructifying impulse. The individual, on the contrary, has no value for nature, and can have none, for infinite time, infinite space, and the infinite number of possible individuals therein are her kingdom. Therefore, nature is always ready to let the individuals fall, and the individual is accordingly not only exposed to destruction in a thousand ways from the most insignificant accidents, but is even destined for this and is led towards it by nature herself [...]. (Schopenhauer Volume I 1966, 276)

Though the mechanism of nature, under the urge of the will, ensures the continuity of all species in nature, it is indifferent to individuals: "the affairs of individuals in all their ephemeral totality are very insignificant; hence he is always ready to sacrifice these arbitrarily" (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 549). Nature is indifferent to individuals when individuals are urged to "serve the maintenance of the species" by the will, and this makes the continuity of life a never-ending cycle of suffering.

Schopenhauer perceives suffering in the phenomena of the world. Nothing in the world can exempt any individual from suffering. Perhaps knowledge or intellect can help solve predicaments or enlighten one's spirits, but that does not entail perpetual liberation from the force of the will. Schopenhauer's argument that the intellect is enslaved by the will manifests the evidence that the essence of life is suffering. The will masters the intellect, for it possesses certain qualities that make the destiny of manipulation of the intellect inevitable. The will is metaphysical and immortal, whereas the intellect is something physical and subject to decline and exhaustion.

> The intellect grows tired; the will is untiring [...]. It [the will] alone is active, unbidden and of its own accord, and hence often too early and too much [...]. The intellect, on the contrary, develops slowly, following on

> the completion of the brain and the maturity of the whole organism. There are the conditions of the intellect, just because it is only a somatic function. (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 211-212)

The perpetual thing is not the intellect, but the will. The will is the kernel of inner nature; it is indefatigable and shows itself in the desires and passions that permanently affect an individual, including influencing the intellect of that individual. While intellect or knowledge is "exposed to oblivion," the will is "unchangeable, indestructible, does not grow old [...]" (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 239); the real destiny of the intellect is "the service of the will" (386). The intellect requires rest just as the other organs in the body need rest, because when it is overused by the will, it might lose itself: "it becomes permanently dull, and in old age this dullness can pass into complete incapacity, childishness, imbecility, and madness" (213). There are examples in which the individual escapes the manipulation of the will, but this escape is temporary. For example, genius, as "an intellect that has become unfaithful to its destiny" of being enslaved by the will (386), helps maintain a "*pure subject of knowing*" (219).[2] When the intellect of the genius successfully escapes enslavement by the will, the genius does not lose all faculties of reason. As such, without the disturbing influence of the will, or through the emancipation from the service of the will (386), the intellect of the genius is still capable of operating correctly. However, genius is very rare to achieve, if not impossible, and is destined to decline because it is a somatic function.

Schopenhauerian Will in Lovecraft's worldview

It is uncertain whether Lovecraft read Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, but the significant notion in Schopenhauer's theory regarding the will's dominance on nature is seen in Lovecraft's stories. Lovecraft applies Schopenhauer's enunciation of the world as representation of the will. His conviction of the insignificance of human beings complies with Schopenhauer's notion of the subordination of the body and intellect to the will. However, Lovecraft revises Schopenhauerian Will in terms of cosmic horror. While Schopenhauer argues that the will urges the preservation of the species in the circulation of life and death,[3] Lovecraft's cosmic horror reveals the horror in the extinction of human beings and vanishing humanism along with the possibility of inter-species hybrid individuals. To reiterate the horror of the vanishing human species, Lovecraft dramatizes the will as an amorphous force of a monstrosity that might transform human beings into unknown beings. Recognizing the power of the will, both Schopenhauer and Lovecraft ascertain that immensurable suffering is an essential part of life.

As S.T. Joshi notes, Schopenhauer profoundly affects Lovecraft's ethics concerning life, existence, and suffering. Both Schopenhauer and Lovecraft perceive that suffering is an inseparable part of life (Joshi 1990, 30). "It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds

everywhere in the world, and originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself, as serving no purpose at all and the result of mere chance," says Schopenhauer in "On the Sufferings of the World" (Schopenhauer 2004). "All life is fundamentally and inextricably sad," reiterates Lovecraft (Lovecraft 1971, 292). Lovecraft situates the immeasurable pain and suffering in his weird fiction wherein the monstrosity of horror is pervasive in the world of phenomenon, which is itself a representation of the will.

Lovecraft's most intelligent creatures — the extraterrestrial beings who lived on Earth before human beings — are driven by the will to survive, which is the same will that urges humans and all earthly creatures to live. The force that urges all lives to persevere depends not on the faculty of reason, but on the indefatigable will, which, as manifested in the world of phenomenon, is absolutely inhuman. As Ben Woodard in "Mad Speculation and Absolute Inhumanism" indicates, it is not humanism, but "the absolute inhumanism" (Woodard 2012, 172) that dominates the universe. Lovecraft links inhumanism of the monstrous extraterrestrial beings to the manifestation of the will in time and space. For example, his "sickly amorphous nature of the Shoggoths" that "invade[s] materialism at large" (178) is the manifestation of the will to live. The monstrosity embodied in Lovecraft's Old Ones, who lived on Earth before human beings and who are seeking their own survival, is actually the manifestation of the indefatigable will in the world of phenomenon. Though the will manifested in the Old Ones and the Shoggoths is the same will manifested in human beings, those extraterrestrial beings possess a stronger will to live, strong enough to eliminate human beings.

The force of intellect is subject to the force of will; it is enslaved to the will until it is completely exhausted. The will is indefatigable, whereas the intellect and body of human beings are subject to decline and death. Thus, the faculty of reason in humanity is subject to decline and dissipation; it cannot hold out permanently against the dark force of the will. Although human beings have constructed a civilization in order to shelter themselves from dissipation, their civilization "provides only a thin barrier against the cosmic and ever-present pressures ensuring our eventual destruction" (Link 2016, xiii).

In Lovecraft's works, the will to live that his human beings sense in those alien beings is something immanent mirroring their inner nature. When his human characters encounter a monstrous alien being or a preternatural force, whether it is violence or a contagious germ, the inner nature within leads them to mentally break down, for those human characters might have perceived that inner nature — something like an enormous amount of horror and suffering — dominates nature as never-ending existence and suffering on Earth. Those human-survivors, urged by the will to live, *continue to live*, though they might be regressing to something inhuman when being subsumed by extraterrestrial beings. As Woodard notes, Lovecraft's human characters are regressing to "a becoming-creature" (Woodard 2012, 179), for they cannot elude the amorphous force of the monstrous will. This causes human beings to feel they are "completely overwhelmed and left in a state of unending terror" (Houstoun 2011, 168).

With the recognition of pain as an essential part of life, Schopenhauer advocates "the denial of the will to live" in order to lessen the influence of the will on life. In much the same vein, Lovecraft resorts to the Epicurean principles of promoting tranquility and calmness in life (Joshi 1990, 31). Schopenhauer enunciates that the will is defined as the force that drives an endless and insatiable striving for life; this incessant drive to live, whether at the moment of saving lives in crises or looking to satisfy one's desires, might lead to madness if one cannot recover rationality. The will is unchangeable; it is fully integrated with life itself. However, the will, though unchangeable and indestructible, can be lessened via "asceticism and quietism" (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 615). Schopenhauer advocates a denial of the will to live, with the purpose of tranquilizing the will, to salve the suffering caused by desires and passions. With "asceticism and quietism," the individual acquires a relief from an insatiable will that continues urging him to strive on; the individual can avoid emotions such as fear, hope, joy, desire, grief, fury and madness if the intellect remains detached from the will (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 367-375). Schopenhauer uses Buddhism in his search for tranquility via renunciation of the will. Affected by Schopenhauer, Lovecraft regards achievements in life as ephemeral trivialities and adopts a stoic attitude equivalent to Schopenhauer's renunciation of life:

> The cosmos [...] is simply a perpetual rearrangement of electrons which is constantly seething as it always has been and always will be [...]. We are conscious by accident, and during the unfortunate instant that we are so, it behooves us only to mitigate our pain and pass our time as agreeably as we may. Since good sense shews us, that pleasure is but a balance betwixt desire and fulfilment; 'tis the part of reason to avoid needless labour by having as few wants as possible, and gratifying them in a manner so quiet as not to encroach on the pleasures of others and stir them up against us. (Lovecraft 1965, 260-61)

However, Lovecraft does not depend on religion to search for renunciation of the will. On the contrary, religious rituals in Lovecraft's literary works are dramatized as a bridge for the resurrection of his extraterrestrial beings, the prototype of horror and suffering. Apart from religion, science for Lovecraft ushers forward the force of destruction. Lovecraft's way of lessening the misery of life — avoiding being driven towards madness — is to have a "warmth of heart and natural good feeling" (Lovecraft 1965, 247), something he finds in traditional New England before its fall into decline.

The Dunwich Horror: the key of the door ushering one toward unknown knowledge

In *The Dunwich Horror*, the indefatigable will is embodied as a monstrous force in the form of the extraterrestrial entity, Yog-Sothoth. The knowledge of the will is inaccessible, but the worshiper of Yog-Sothoth, Old Whateley, intends to evoke the unknown knowledge, probably because he desires to possess the most powerful force from the will. To possess such power, he must obtain the

key for the gate held by Yog-Sothoth, since that key can open the gate leading to knowledge concerning the resurrection of the Old Ones. He then reads the book relevant to Yog-Sothoth — a copy of the *Necronomicon* — and he produces the offspring of Yog-Sothoth by marrying his daughter to Yog-Sothoth. As Wilbur and his twin brother—the interbreeding creatures of human-Yog-Sothoth — are born as the offspring of Yog-Sothoth, the key opens the gate of the door leading to the unknown knowledge. The consequence is horrible: all living creatures in Dunwich village confront fear, terror, and madness. The dogs emit "half-mad growls and barks" (Lovecraft 2016, 690) as they sense the approach of Yog-Sothoth. The whippoorwills madly snatch the souls of the dead. They pipe wildly near the dwellings of the victims, waiting for the souls of the dying:

> It is vowed that the birds are psychopomps lying in wait for the souls of the dying, and that they time their eerie cries in unison with the sufferer's struggling breath. If they can catch the fleeing soul when it leaves the body, they instantly flutter away chittering in daemoniac laughter; but if they fail, they subside gradually into a disappointed silence. (Lovecraft 2016, 677)

Not only are the animals driven mad as they smell the alien body odor from Wilbur and his twin brother, but the human beings in the village also go mad. As the twin brother of Wilbur, who is representative of the monstrous force of Yog-Sothoth (the form of the will), approaches the villagers, the villagers perceive what the unknown knowledge is: the villagers scream in "a fright-mad voice" (Lovecraft 2016, 697) before they die. Perhaps what Lovecraft's victims perceive at the moment of being killed is the amorphous force of the will that manifests itself in the world of phenomenon and drives all lives toward never-ending suffering and never-ending catastrophic regression into becoming-creatures.

The Shadow Over Innsmouth and "The Colour Out of Space": germ and disease as the manifestation of the will in the world of phenomenon

In *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, in which the Deep Ones threaten the lives of human beings, Lovecraft dramatizes the dominance of the will over human beings. The Deep Ones — a race of amphibious humanoid ocean-dwelling creatures more intelligent than humans — are seeking their resurrection by interbreeding with humans. Through the obedience of Obed Marsh and his followers, the alien beings successfully resurrect themselves by colonizing the body and wakening the nonhumanity dormant within the DNA of human beings. Obed Marsh, due to his obsession for immortality and wealth, makes deals with the Deep Ones, performing human sacrifice to the Deep Ones in exchange for wealth and forcing the villagers to breed with the Deep Ones. Since Obed Marsh married into the Deep Ones race and became subservient to the will of the Deep Ones, his

descendants are human-fish hybrids. The protagonist (Robert Olmstead), a descendant of Obed March and Pth'thya-l'yi, is born as a human, but gradually acquires fish-like physical traits and loses his mental state of rationality as he ages. Uncle Douglas and Cousin Lawrence, the relatives of Robert, go mad in the process of their transformation to amphibious beings; eventually, Uncle Douglas shoots himself, and Lawrence is shut up in a sanatorium.

Lovecraft's scenarios of the hybrid interbreeding concern the manifestation of the will in the world of the phenomenon as well as the struggle of the body against the will. Two phenomena of the objectification of the will dwell within Robert Olmstead — human beings and the Deep Ones; the lower grade (humanity) is gradually subsumed into the higher intelligent grade (amphibious creature). Finally, this transformation leads him to break from human society and return to Y'ha-nthlei, the submarine world of the immortal Deep Ones. Those town people of Innsmouth, who once resisted the Deep Ones, eventually compromise with the Deep Ones, and as a result they lose the ability to reason. Lovecraft's fictional human characters do not have much opportunity to maintain the faculties of reason; as they confront the superior will, they eventually become enslaved to the will. The intellect of human beings is something somatic that cannot conquer the immortal will.

Moreover, the will manifests itself in the form of germ and disease spreading over the ruined town in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth.* The town is not prosperous, but teems with disease and madness, because it has been infected by a germ. There is "the germ of an actual contagious madness" that "lurks in the depths of that shadow over Innsmouth" (Lovecraft 2016, 916). Under its influence, the appearance of those human-fish hybrids in Innsmouth is described as being characteristic of disease: having a "skin disease or deformity" (868), "some cutaneous disease" (875), "a strange and insidious disease-phenomenon" (882), etc. The odor of fish embraces the decayed city with "maddening intensity" (912). Old Zadok, an entirely human citizen who escapes being transformed by the Deep Ones in the weird, decayed city, hates "the decay, alienage, and disease around him" (896), and nevertheless goes mad due to the maddening intensity of the alien odor. Robert, after his visit to Innsmouth, is affected by "some odd nervous affliction," gradually transferring from "the sane world of wholesome life into unnamable abysses of blackness and alienage" (921). He must have been infected by a germ of madness. Finally, he is drawn into the world of the deep sea in his dreams, scheming to rescue his cousin from a madhouse, and yearning to live in Y'ha-nthlei — the marine world of the Deep Ones. The narrator's transformation augments the horror of physical and mental corruption (Joshi 2001, 240) as well as the omnipresence of the amorphous will.

The influence of the germ is primitive, as it has been affecting all creatures since the Old Ones. Its influence is both mental and physical. Infected by the germ, Lovecraft's unfortunate human characters become physically ill and mentally unsound. The most noticeable example is "The Colour Out of Space." In the story, an unknown meteorite poisons the soil, and its color has a "diseased,

underlying primary tone," and "chromatic perversion" (Lovecraft 2016, 645). The unknown color brought by the meteorite is an alien entity, through which anything living on Earth, if infected, would die from the disease — a "gray brittle death." The unfortunate Gardners, who have imbibed the polluted well-water, quickly become deranged and die. Just as with the alien odor and disease in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, so the germ that causes mental and physical corruption and death is the most ancient form of the will that all lives on Earth cannot escape.

The Whisperer in Darkness and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*: the enslavement of the intellect in an infinite cosmos

As Schopenhauer enunciates, the real destiny of the intellect is "the service of the will" (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 386); many of Lovecraft's talented characters, though capable of maintaining their reason, eventually fall victim to the will. In *The Whisperer in Darkness*, the will is externalized as monstrous extraterrestrial beings, and the intellect is embodied in the character Henry Wentworth Akeley, an intellect in the realm of science whose brain is eventually extracted and placed into a cylinder by the aliens. His intellect is shown in his letters to the narrator, Albert N. Wilmarth. In those letters, he demonstrates an abstruse understanding of the extraterrestrial race and his combat with them. On the verge of mental breakdown, he is still capable of staying sane, revealing to Wilmarth the secret murder activities of the extraterrestrial beings. Nevertheless, Akeley is eventually transformed by the extraterrestrial race: the real Akeley is mutilated, and his beheaded brain is contained in a cylinder. Later, the identity of Akeley is used by the aliens when they trap their next victim, Wilmarth. The person who whispers in person to Wilmarth is not Akeley, but a non-human being, who might be Nyarlathotep. The brains of the victims contained in a cylinder and manipulated by the aliens symbolize the enslavement of the intellects in an infinite cosmos. Further, the alien disguised as Akeley invites Wilmarth to be beheaded with his brain contained in a cylinder so as to immortalize himself and fulfill his space journey to Yuggoth, the beings' outpost on Pluto. Wilmarth feels a vague sense of unease towards the whispers of the fake Akeley: he obeys "those whispers so slavishly" (Lovecraft 2016, 764) at the start, but gradually he senses "the queer odour" and "the sick, motionless whisperer in the dark" (766), as the fake Akeley promises him no pain in the process to an immortal body and brain. Fortunately, Wilmarth has his doubts and manages to escape the danger. The manipulative forgery of the aliens reveals a ghoulish and miserable situation: the intellect's enslavement to the will. The beheaded brain of Akeley underscores the horror of this enslavement.

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is another example in which the intellect is enslaved to the force of the will. Charles Ward is a young scholar interested in antiquarianism, but his indulgence in the investigation of his ancestor, Joseph Curwen, leads to misfortune. In the eighteenth century, Joseph Curwen was a shipping entrepreneur, yet his real identity was that of a malignant alchemist-

necromancer engaged in a long-term conspiracy of manipulating the world's wisest people. In cooperation with certain other necromancers, Curwen exhumed the bodies of the wisest men and resurrected and tortured them so as to gain enough knowledge to make him and his followers the most powerful. Those necromancy rituals that he and his fellow-necromancers committed to are associated with the resurrection of Yog-Sothoth. Later, Curwen was killed by the raiders, and since then he has been seeking the opportunity of resurrection. Charles' interest in this ancestor gives him this opportunity. After Charles successfully resurrects Curwen, he is then killed by Curwen, and Curwen disguises himself as Charles. However, the identity of the person behind the disguise is disclosed: some remarks of Curwen reveal themselves on the body and the mind. The body is ageing with "a morbid chill and dryness" (Lovecraft 2016, 527), and the mind is diagnosed as being taken by madness. The resurrected Curwen, living under the identity of Charles, is incarcerated in a mental asylum. He steals not only the identity of Charles, but also his intelligence.

> Psychologically, too, Charles Ward [the forgery by Curwen] was unique. His madness held no affinity to any sort recorded in even the latest and most exhaustive of treatises and was conjoined to a mental force which would have made him a genius or a leader had it not been twisted into strange and grotesque forms. (Lovecraft 2016, 527)

To deter the conspiracy of Curwen, Charles writes a letter to Dr. Willett, a family doctor of the Wards, informing him of the plan of the malignant Curwen. Under further investigation, Dr. Willet discovers that Charles has fallen prey to the notorious Curwen. By the end of the story, Dr. Willet, following the instruction offered by an enemy of Curwen, kills Curwen, but he cannot resurrect Charles.

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is a story relevant to the torture of the intellectuals or wise men. In this story wherein some wise men buried in graves are resurrected and manipulated by the lunatic Curwen and his fellow-necromancers, Lovecraft reveals to readers the horror in the indefatigable force of the will. Dr. Willet exclaims the horror as he finds the crypts that confine those victims:

> God! Could it be possible that here lay the mortal relics of half the titan thinkers of all the ages; snatched by supreme ghouls from crypts where the world thought them safe, and subject to the beck and call of madmen who sought to drain their knowledge for some still wilder end whose ultimate effect would concern, as poor Charles had hinted in his frantic note, 'all civilisation, all natural law, perhaps even the fate of the solar system and the universe'? (Lovecraft 2016, 618)

Lovecraft dramatizes Schopenhaurian Will: the will to live. Just as those human brains contained in a cylinder live in the status of mutilation in *The Whisperer in Darkness*, so the wise men

who were exhumed from their graves and resurrected by the necromancers do not acquire a normal form of life, but a monstrous body. They are tortured not only by the command of those malignant necromancers, but also by an unknown force of Yog-Sothoth — the form of the will — that urges them to continue to live. Whereas the wise men are urged to live in the form of monsters, the intellect of Charles is overused by the will when he is indulging in study and research. His enthusiasm for knowledge makes him unintentionally access to the dark force of his malignant ancestor. Dr. Willet, standing detached from the dark force, pushes Curwen back to grave, but he is unable to extinguish the will. Through the stories of the intellectuals, Lovecraft reveals the world of phenomenon not as a world linking to enlightenment, but as a world of darkness and horror.

At the Mountains of Madness: decline in the intellect of the extraterrestrial beings

Perhaps the most intense atmosphere of madness is the one in *At the Mountains of Madness*. Lovecraft reveals to readers the insanity of human beings and animals in the Antarctic world. As Danforth and his professor William Dyer are escaping from the mountains of the Antarctic, aboard the plane he continues to whisper "bizarre conceptions" that Dyer identifies as those concepts that Danforth read from the *Necronomicon*. Danforth has lost his reason. Danforth is not the only one losing his sanity: Lake and Lake's party are driven mad when they are being slaughtered by the Old Ones who are returning to life. The blind penguins scream madly while being chased by unknown beings. Danforth goes insane as he looks back and sees an extraterrestrial being, Shoggoth, when he and Professor Dyer are confronted by the alien beings. Those victims go mad due to the maddening intensity from the Old Ones and Shoggoths, who are the manifestation of the will in the world of phenomenon.

The Old Ones and Shoggoths are the insane amorphous form of the will. Their essence is madness. The Old Ones wildly search for resurrection within the Antarctic mountains. As the intact specimens of the Old Ones return to life through an unknown power, the resurrected Old Ones wantonly kill Lake and his team. The way they dissect human beings and animals at Lake's camp recall the ways in which human beings treat other animals for "the sheer pleasure of killing" (Houellebecq 2005, 33). Shoggoths, who were once the slaves of the Old Ones, ramble madly throughout the mountains as well. Urged by the will to live, the Old Ones and Shoggoths are striving to discover a new form of life for resurrection.

The sickly form manifested in the alien beings exhausts not only the human beings and animals, but also the alien beings themselves. The Antarctic mountains are a microcosm of the world of the phenomenon — a representation of the will. All lives in the mountains, including those of the extraterrestrial beings, are driven by the will to live. The Old Ones, the highest grade of the objectification of the will, once built a brilliant civilization. However, the civilization did not exist permanently, for the intellect in the Old Ones was some type of somatic function that wore out in time and space.

Greatly stimulated by the will when the Old Ones experienced the repeated shocks of climate change, wars with other extraterrestrial beings, and the rebellion of their Shoggoth slaves, the intellect of the Old Ones was exhausted. Later, the Antarctic mountains lost prosperity, falling into nothing more than the outer walls of an ancient, abandoned stone city. Just as Joshi notices, the reasons for which the Old Ones abandoned their city and became extinct are "unfathomable" (Joshi 2001, 10). Dr. Dyer identifies the Old Ones with human beings in terms of their social and economic structure (11).[4] Dr. Dyer humanizes the Old Ones, sympathizes with their loss of prosperous civilization, and reinforces the connection of human beings and the Old Ones in terms of "biological and psychical vulnerabilities" (Ralickas 2007, 379). However, Dr. Dyer does not see in the fall of the Old Ones something more horrible: the vicissitude of the Old Ones provides evidence that the intellect cannot escape its destiny of being enslaved by the will.

Conclusion

Lovecraft's stories dramatize the philosophy of Schopenhauer's Will. Though the intellect becomes dull in the status of decadence, it still cannot acquire rest, for it is perpetually enslaved by a will whose purpose is to maintain the continuity of life. Lovecraft perceives horror in the never-ending struggle of life: in endless birth, death, and resurrection. Lovecraft's stories present not only a world of horror and disgust, but also a world of suffering and exhaustion. The will manifests itself as a despotic ruler dominating nature. The will never relinquishes its grip on all lives. In addition, Lovecraft revises Schopenhauer's Will: Lovecraft ascertains that a monstrous force in the will could make human beings lose their humanity while they regress into amorphous becoming-creatures. Along with Schopenhauer's view and his revision of it into cosmic horror, Lovecraft's monstrous force of the will might be the highest gratification of the representation of the will manifested in the world of phenomenon. When the will in Lovecraft's fiction is represented in the world of phenomenon, it can dwell in the form of a germ or disease, a hypnotic whisperer, or a sickly amorphous extraterrestrial being. The extraterrestrial beings — the most ancient creatures on Earth — are seeking their resurrection, even though they survive in the form of a monstrous body. The town people who are not killed by the Deep Ones in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* agree to compromise with the Deep Ones, living in the form of human-fish. In the scenarios of never-ending life in the form of a monstrous body, some become victims. Akeley continues his existence in a form of a brain in a cylinder; his "life" is perpetuated by a machine designed by the alien beings. The wise men, whose intellect are being exploited by those malignant villains who make them monsters, do not rest in the crypts. Lovecraft's characters encounter a variety of situations in which the will operates with no other purpose than the perpetuation of existence. There is no ending in Lovecraft's stories, for the world of horror never ends.

Endnotes:

1. See Johnathan Newell's *A Century of Weird Fiction, 1832-1837: Disgust, Metaphysics and the Aesthetics of Cosmic Horror*.
2. Schopenhauer did not deny the possibility of genius in the world of representation, and he found that on some occasions, genius has been mistaken for madness. He once visited the "insane" geniuses in a hospital and found that they were not madmen, though they lost correct memories or had problems such as perceptual distortions (e.g., hallucinations). The geniuses had a "pure subject of knowing": [...] the most perfect knowledge, the purely objective apprehension of the world, that is, the apprehension of the genius, is conditioned by a silencing of the will so profound that, so long as it lasts, even the individuality disappears from consciousness, and the man remains *pure subject of knowing*, which is the correlative of the Idea. (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 219)
3. For more about Schopenhauer's idea of the essential invariability of species, see Baptista's "Arthur Schopenhauer and the Current Conception of the Origin of Species: What Did the Philosopher Anticipate?"
4. This comparison of human beings and the Old Ones suggests Lovecraft's reading of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (Joshi 2001, 11). See *An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*.

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Different Shapes of Anarchy in Edward Albee's *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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Abstract:

Edward Albee's *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1961) starts with chaos and anarchy, subverting the traditionally strict gender roles and cultural prescriptions and expectations. Albee's play has revolutionized dramatic writing by opening the play with a deep male identity crisis. The repressive and oppressive gender roles are mimicked. This paper will try to demonstrate that Albee's play is a one pervaded by different levels anarchy, instability of meanings and both verbal and structural turbulence. The play's title indicates two instances of anarchy and sources of fear: the female and the mad. This paper will demonstrate how the reversal of gender roles operates in the play: the husband is feminized while the wife is masculinized, the wife plays an emasculating and unfeminine role while the husband is dominated and in a submissive position. The play's anti-realistic and post-modern structure conveys ideas of improvisation, structural anarchy. It is unbound, fluid and both regressive and digressive. If anything, the play's structure is anarchically unstable, defying the traditional realistic strictures. It is written in a grotesque and comic way that subverts the conventions of the comic genre. The disruptive verbal energy and dueling in the play aims at displaying disrespect for some of the main American values and institutions: family, marriage and academia are constantly debunked. The play stages a state of anarchy beneath the happy and tranquil surface of these institutions. This paper will also attempt to show how the play of anarchy has eventually to be stopped in order for the social order to be restored and vindicated.

Keywords: staging, anarchy, gender, subversion, chaos, crisis, mimicry, structure, digressive

Introduction

The 1950's were dominated by conservative gender and social norms. In the aftermath of World War II, the American society emphasized the household role of women as the guardians of the American family and values. There was an abrupt return to conservative values. The Cold War only intensified the enforcement of strict gender roles as McCarthyism aimed at controlling both the political body and the physical body. The nuclear family was the ideal structure in which American values could be maintained and thrive. Masculinity was hailed as a salient American characteristic. Conversely, new heretic ideas started to emerge. The Beat Generation advocated subversive ideas and modes of behavior while rejecting traditional norms and lifestyles. There was a growing loss of faith in the main American values. As David Savran notes:

> Both the Beat writers and the beat subculture of the late 1940s and 1950s took up an avowedly oppositional stance during what is surely the most repressive period in modern U.S. history, the era that witnessed the apogee of the postwar economic boom, the Cold War, and McCarthyism...They consciously, if confusedly, rebelled against and critiqued the deeply conservative official culture that emerged at the end of World War II. (45)

Edward Albee's *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? was written against this ambivalent background of both entrenched conservative ideas and the destabilizing emergence of new ideas related to gender and family roles.

Literature Review

The play has been interpreted from different perspectives. To start with, in "Illusion in Edward Albee's Selected Play '*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf"*. Susan Jaf and Zhang Zaihong focus on the theme of illusion and on the relationship between illusion and reality. They agree that "the play seems to be about illusion, but in fact it examines and presents crises of modern American values and their way of life" (60). Indeed, the play represents the reality of being disillusioned with reality, deterioration of moral values and the effects of materialism. This paper will develop the same idea of oscillation between illusion and reality by demonstrating the role of modern crises in generating anarchy. On the other hand, in 'Pathological Interaction in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia* Woolf" Samira Susani focuses on the open endedness of the play. She argues that there is "a system of interlocking spiral perspectives in this play which leads to a pathological interaction, a game without an end" (1491). This idea about open endedness will be challenged in this paper by showing that the play has an end and order can be established when anarchy stops. The play is also approached from a postmodern angle. In this respect, in "Laughing out Loud in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf:* A Postmodernist Reading" Mourad Romdhani and Olfa Gandouz affirm that "Laughter transforms into an anti-foundational non-verbal expression against constraints and oppression" (107). Humor transforms into anarchy, chaos and disorder. Humor is meant to point out the modern socio-economic and ethical crisis. Other critics examine the role of

absurdity in framing the actions and reactions of characters. For example, in 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf toward the Marrow' Mathew Roudane states: "Language and action that these characters have developed in Beckettian sense into habit, their routines anesthetizing their responses to the self, the other and the language they inhabit" (39). Language plays a fundamental role in determining the responses of characters, their dislocation and meaningless existence. This paper will differ from Roudane's belief in Beckettian absurdity as we will decipher the meaning behind anarchy and chaos. Finally, in 'Who Can Keep Learning the Linguistic Games We Play: Linguistic Games and the Parody of Contemporary American culture in Albee's W*ho's Afraid of Virginia Woolf",* Olfa Gandouz uses a linguistic perspective to perceive the way Albee satirizes contemporary American culture. She writes, "Albee criticizes the nasty effects of popular culture but he also stages his belief in the implementation of a new American system based on encouraging creativity and on preserving the individuality of the human being" (Gandouz 16). In the same way, this paper develops Albee's belief in recreating a new order based on individuality and authenticity. Indeed, a new social order can be established when anarchy comes to an end.

Methodology

The critics we came across have dealt with psychoanalytic, gender and postmodern readings of the play. This paper brings an innovative study by linking anarchy to feminism, structure, plot and themes. French feminist hints will be applied to the play to grasp the playwright's criticism of anarchy, disorder and chaos. This paper will demonstrate how the reversal of gender roles operates in the play. This paper will try to show that Albee's play is a one pervaded by different levels of anarchy, instability of meanings and both verbal and structural turbulence. This paper will also attempt to show how the play of anarchy has eventually to be stopped in order for the social order to be restored and vindicated.

Research Questions

This paper is meant to answer the following research questions:

•How is anarchy presented in Albee's text? What is the relationship between structure, plot, themes and anarchy? How does French feminism help us study Martha's reversal of traditional gender roles? And how does this reversal create anarchy?

•In what ways do contemporary couples debunk the social institution of marriage? How do couples create illusions, linguistic games and anarchy to survive? How does the relationship between the signifier and the signified contribute to create anarchy?

•What is the relationship between illusion and real reality? How do George and Martha face reality? When does anarchy come to an end? and how does reality establish social order and stability?

Anarchy: Thematic and Structural Levels

Edward Albee's *Who is afraid of Virginia Woolf*? announces anarchy on the thematic and structural levels as it stages middle class marriage as a dysfunctional institution. The play stages a

seething state of anarchy beneath the happy and tranquil surface of this institution. In this play, parody and satire are the means used to unleash the anarchy, turmoil and utter absence of authority, thus subverting the traditionally strict gender roles and cultural prescriptions and expectations of American drama. The play opens with a deep male identity crisis as the husband is disempowered while the wife is empowered, the wife plays an emasculating and unfeminine role while the husband is dominated and in a submissive position. The reversal of the traditional gender roles is made clear through the use of puns and playing with words. For instance, when George asks: "For God's sake, Martha, it's two o'clock in the..." (Act 1,11), Mary responds in a harsh and sarcastic manner: "What a cluck! What a cluck you are." (Act 1, 11). The use of the sarcastic expression 'cluck' is meant to humiliate the husband. This humiliation creates a sort of anarchy. The repressive and oppressive gender roles are mimicked.

The reversal of gender roles is further indicated through verbal irony and Martha's description of her husband as 'a dump!' (Act 1, 12). Her condescending behavior and the view of the husband as a fool man indicates the secondary position of the husband. In addition to the opening scene, the play's title indicates two instances of anarchy and sources of fear: the female and the mad. In one of his interviews, Albee explains the meaning of the title using the following words: "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf means Who's afraid of the big bad wolf.... Who's afraid of living without false illusions" (qtd. in Flanagan). The title translates the fear of facing the reality of failure, the illusions about achievement and the oscillation between bitter reality and fake illusions. The play's anti-realistic and post-modern structure conveys ideas of improvisation and structural anarchy. The play is a departure from conventional realistic expectations and mimetic clarity It is unbound, fluid, metatheatrical, both regressive and digressive. If anything, the play's structure is anarchically unstable, defying the traditional realistic structures of control and containment. Albee does not follow the traditional Aristotelian structure that is based on organic growth and continuity. The play encompasses three climaxes which create a sort of anarchy at the level of the dramatic structure. For example, the third climax occurs at the end of the play which is supposed to be the denouement. The third climax appears when George kills the illusionary son. George declares: "I could kill him any time I wanted" (Act 3, 138). The game of the son leads to anarchy and makes the couple and the audience vacillate between illusion and reality. There is a sort of absurdity and a doubt about the identity of the child. The imaginary son may stand for the American dream and its failure to endow some American citizens with productive success.

Anarchy and "the Masquerade of Femininity"

The play is written in a grotesque and comic way that subverts the conventions of the comic genre. The disruptive verbal energy and dueling in the play aims at displaying disrespect for some of the main American values and institutions: family, marriage and academia are constantly debunked. This paper will make use of the French feminist Luce Irigaray's ideas of 'mimicry' and 'masquerade' to demonstrate how the gender and aesthetic orders are subverted and are supplemented by anarchy. Irigagray never envisions a radical gesture of emancipation from masculine discourse. She rather thinks women have to start from the inside of masculine discourse, turning 'mimesis' into 'mimicry.' For her,

"the issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the *subject* or the *object*, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretention to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal" (Irigaray, *The sex* 78). By 'jamming' the masculine hegemonic discourse, women can show that the univocal truth and meaning conveyed by such discourse is an illusion. 'Masquerade' is another concept theorized by Irigaray. Irigaray believes women are induced into masquerade, it is imposed on them. They masquerade marriage and other social institutions that silence them. Women perform their roles playfully. Irigaray defines masquerade:

> What do I mean by masquerade? In particular what Freud calls "feminity," the belief for example, that it is necessary to *become* a woman, a "normal" one at that, whereas a man is a man from the outset ... A woman has to enter into *the masquerade of feminity*...The female Oedipus complex is woman's entry into a system of values that is not hers and in which she can "appear" and circulate only when enveloped in the needs/desires/fantasies of others, namely men. (134)

The female has to remain a stranger, other to herself, in order to be part of the dominant male ideology. The female is never herself because she has to act, to perform, to appear. A female has to undergo the process of becoming what she is not: a representation, a role, an imposed image. Irigaray adds that

> the value of a woman would accrue to her from her maternal role , and, in addition , from her "feminity". But in fact that "feminity" is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In the masquerade of feminity, the woman loses herself, loses herself by playing on her feminity... Masquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man's desire. (132-133)

By entering into this 'system of values' alien to them, women indulge in subversive mimicry of their prescribed gender roles, thus questioning the patriarchal system. They have to perform some "playful crossing and an unsettling one, which would allow woman to rediscover the place of her "self-affection" (This *Sex* 77). The male needs a mirror to maintain his sense of wholeness. The female, is such a mirror, in Irigaray's terms "*a flat mirror* as most apt to capture the image, the representation, the auto-representation" (*Speculum* 77). In addition, Irigaray wonders: "How can we introduce ourselves in such a tightly-woven systemacity?" (*This Sex* 76). For Irirgaray women are left with only one alternative, which is that of mimicry. As she puts it,

> One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it... To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it (76).

By flagellating each other, Martha and George perform a distorted form of middle-class marriage. Martha tells George: "If you existed I'd divorce you...I cannot even see you...I haven't been able to see you for years..." (18) They insist on the theatrical aspect of marriage: acting, playing roles.

Anarchy and the Institution of Marriage

George and Martha transform marriage into a game where anarchy wreaks havoc. For example, they play with the word bit to refer to the game of the kid. George informs Martha: "Just don't start in on the bit about the kid" (Act 1, 19). The kid refers to the dream of being fertile, having a son and a balanced couple. Martha responds: "I'll start in on the kid if I want to" (Act 1, 19). Martha's response shows that she is the dominant partner and she patronizes over George. The unconventional relationship between husband and wife transforms traditional marriage into anarchy.

The couple also debunk the traditionally prescribed roles of husband and wife, satirize the conventional meanings and truths the middle class audiences expect to see performed and eventually confirmed on Broadway. In trying to seduce the guest Nick and by dressing for him, she masquerades the male objectification of the female body. She lets her body express what conventions forbid but what the male gaze craves. To be a mimic for a female

> means to resubmit herself – inasmuch as she is on the side of "perceptible," of "matter" – to "ideas," in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means "to unveil" the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere:* another case of the persistence of "matter," but also of "sexual pleasure" (Irigaray 76).

Martha constantly refers to her unmanageable sexuality, to her supposed infidelities in order to further make the two male characters anxious. In this context, Martha invites Nick to dance with her: 'Nick and Martha move apart now, and dance on either side of where George and Honey are sitting. They face each other, and while their feet move but little, their bodies undulate congruently" (Act 2, 80). Martha tries to seduce Nick and to provoke George's jealousy. She is a playful woman who masquerades the commodification of the female body. The masquerade is meant to debunk the patriarchal system from within. Mary tries to attract Nick revealing: "I like the way you move' (Act 2, 81). She is a dominant lady who intends to make Nick and George anxious. Nick responds in a passive way: "I like the way you move, too." (Act 2, 81). His response shows that he oscillates between male gaze and the fear of being unfaithful to his wife. On the other hand, George informs his wife: "You have ugly, talents, Martha" (Act 2, 81). The ugly representation of reality suggests George's failure to seduce his wife and his anxiety about infidelity. The common point between the two male characters of the play is that they remain situated between desire and fear.

Anarchy and Setting: Public vs. Private spaces

Another anarchic element in the play is the absence of separation between the public and private spheres as is traditionally the case. The public and the private spaces interact and are performed concurrently, simultaneously, hence the scandalous and subversive aspects of the play. The guests, the younger couple, enter the flat with expectations of order, assigning the female strictly

domestic roles as the two wives are housewives. The domestic paradigm expects women to be docile, obedient, and passive. Martha turns these normalcy expectations into anarchy by behaving violently, like a shrew, using vulgar and bawdy language. The wife in modern American drama has traditionally had a passive family-centered role. Martha's verbal energy is the most conspicuous aspect of her anarchic behavior. George claims "Martha is a devil with language" (20). Like her body, her language is temporarily free from the grammatical and syntactical restrictions, refusing to be a complement or an object. Martha does not respect the sanctity of the house and she humiliates her husband in front of the guests: "Look, muckmouth. You cut that out" (Act 1, 20). The use of the pejorative term 'muckmouth' proves that Martha deploys verbal violence and she does not respect the privacy of the couple. When she verbally travels to the edge, the stage overflows. She anarchically oversteps, she finds some room from which to maneuver. Martha's self-created signifieds slip the two men's conventional male understanding. Despite being a housewife, Martha occupies center stage and manipulates much of the verbal action in the play. George objects to his wife's attitude in front of the guests and he describes her using the following words: "Vulgar girl! with guests here" (Act 2, 22). She unleashes anarchy as she aggressively addresses her husband and the guests. She stages and performs the masquerade of marriage and femininity. The guests try to resist the anarchy besieging them but, with the subversive help of alcohol, they eventually fall into the older couple's trap and reveal the hidden secrets of their marriage and the pathological relations inside that marriage.

Anarchy and Inventing Games

George invents "Hump the hostess" (Act 2, 85) to trap the young couple and to make them reveal the reality about their dysfunctional marriage. George reveals: "His mouse, she tooted brandy immodestly and spent half of her time in the upchuck" (Act 2, 88). The mouse stands for Honey who drinks heavily and she is often sick. Honey blames her husband for revealing the secret about their intimate relationship and she starts getting sick. Honey screams "[hysterically] Leave me alone … I'm going …to…be…sick" (Act 2, 90). Honey is organically sane, but psychologically traumatized by the institution of marriage. She reveals to the audience: "the doctors say there's nothing wrong with me organically" (Act2, 75). Sickness suggests the pathological relationship between Honey and Nick. Honey adds "I don't want any children. I'm afraid! I don't want to be hurt…please!" (Act 2, 105). Sterility reflects the failure to establish a balanced family. In reality, there is a sense of isolation and miscommunication between Honey and Nick. In this way, the play becomes a stage for "the painful striving of isolated individuals for communion [which] leads mainly to even more terrifying solitude" (Kolin and Davis 90). The couple disclose the anarchy inside, the institution of marriage, an institution supposed to breed order and containment.

Anarchy and the Theatricalization of Marriage

Martha and George perform marriage to show the elsewhere of marriage, its unspoken and hidden pathological and dysfunctional aspects The elder couple stage their marital problems in front of the young couple and later make them speak about their own dysfunctional marriage. The unsaid

and unspoken is anarchically on the stage. What is traditionally tacit is now explosively explicit. The apparent surface harmony of Nick and Honey, the young couple, is revealed to hide simmering materialism, self-interest and corruption. The wife, Honey, is a priest's daughter who made a fortune using god's name. In this respect, Nick criticizes his father-in-law: "He built hospitals, and he sent off mercy ships, and brought the outhouses indoors, and he brought the people outdoors into the sun and he built three churches" (Act 2, 69). The sarcastic tone conveys Nick's denunciation of the priest as a materialistic man who builds churches as an opium to divert some citizens' attention away from important issues and to steal money. It is the traditional paradoxical combination of the material and the spiritual in the American Dream. There is no fusion of egos in marriage but it is rather a wedding of interests. Through the theatricalization of marriage, George and Martha destroy the young couple's illusion that has held them together. When Martha retells her marriage story she dismisses romance, as socially nothing is had for nothing. Her first marriage quickly aborted because it was a romance while her marriage with George has external social motivations. The president of the university, Martha's father, needs a male heir and so she loves him for what he has to offer. She cannot love him gratuitously but only in turn for the security required by her father. Only then is it safe to love George.

Anarchy, Satire and Plot

Aesthetically, confusion replaces realism as the play slips out of the social structures and strictures implied by realism. The realistic requirements of typicality, life-likeness and plausibility are played with. Characters are not predictable; the linear plot is constantly subverted by regressions to the distant and even mythical past, fictionalized by the characters. Causality is disavowed as characters create their own narratives regardless of the laws of probability and temporality. George remembers his teens during the Punic Wars, then mentions the Prohibition era to speak of the same period in his life. He anachronistically states:" when I was sixteen and going to prep school, during the Punic Wars, a bunch of us used to go into New York on the first day of vacations…this was during the Prohibition". (61) Again aesthetically, satire and parody are used as forms of anarchy for they destabilize and decenter the verbal and social meanings from their fixed comfortable connotations. Parody is a form of distorted imitation that aims to ridicule or make fun of the imitated idea. Using an extravagant and exaggerated style, parody burlesques established meanings. The concepts of masculinity and feminity are played with and they therefore lose the solidity of their constructed meanings.

Throughout most of the play and under the satiric and parodic gestures of Martha, the concepts of feminity and masculinity glide. The emasculation of George appears through the story of boxing. Indeed, George refuses boxing which is supposed to be a male activity related to strength and physical power. Martha mocks at the vulnerability of her husband "and George wheeled around real quick and he caught it right in the jaw… Pow! [Nick laughs]… Right in the jaw and he was off balance…he must have been …and he stabmled back a few steps, and then, crash, he landed" (Act 1, 40). The funny situation indicates the emasculation of George and the virilization of Mary. In this

way, meaning in this play becomes puzzling as the audience, Nick and Honey and even the reader puzzle over what is meant by any statement. Their received meanings are dislodged.

Anarchy and Metatheatricality

The constant reference to the illusion-truth dichotomy is a metatheatrical element meant to make the play self-reflexive and destabilize the audience's ontological security. When Martha feels George may be tired of playing/acting, she wonders: "what's the matter with you, George? You given up" (Act 2, 77), to which George replies: "No... no. it's just I've got to figure out some new way to fight you, Martha. Guerilla tactics maybe... internal subversion... I don't know. Something" (Act 2, 77). Martha acts as a theatrical creature who unmasks the artificiality of the traditional gender roles and rules. Martha explains the significance of theatricality and playing games: "tis the refuge we take when the unreality of the world weighs too heavy on our tiny heads" (Act 3, 111). In other words, Marthat's theatricality is meant to escape the tragic reality about failure. In fact, "reality exists at the moment when language stops" (Bigsby 282). By playing with words, theatricalising life and herself, Martha engages in a fluid narrative while her husband George remains obsessed with closure and unity. Martha has slipped out of being into becoming. this slippage is the moment "when a woman moves away" (Act 1, 14). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, slippage is defined as an "unstable relationship between the signifier and the signified" (*Lacanian* 190). The unstable relationship is made conspicuous through the games when the signifier and the signified do not correlate. For instance, Martha and George refer to the son as a 'Bean Bag' (Act 2, 63), but Nick does not grasp the meaning of the game. He affirms: "I didn't say I was deaf. I said I didn't understand. I meant I was implying I didn't understand" (64). Nick does not grasp the meaning of 'Bean Bag' (63) because the signifier does not correspond to the signified. Only Martha and George grasp the meaning of the words they use and they try to divert the guests' attention away in order to entrap them about their dysfunctional marriage.

The son in the family is a complement of the mother. As Irigaray notes, "it is the coming of the boy, the birth of a son, that will solve the squaring of the circle. The family circle. ... by giving life to one who has the right to power, she wins the right to be perfectly happy" (107). In other words, a woman becomes powerful and she gains more attention in the patriarchal society when she becomes a mother. The son in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is a parody of mimesis. He is "their son". The possessive adjective is without any mimetic representation in reality, a mere illusion. Accordingly, Martha does not easily accept the act of killing the son. When George authoritatively kills the fantasy son, Martha protests against George's authority: "NO! NO! YOU CANNOT DO THAT! YOU CANNOT DECIDE THAT FOR YOURSELF! I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THAT" (135). The motherhood that Martha needs to validate her femininity is an illusion imposed by patriarchy.

Anarchy, Illusion and Reality

George has been the playwright and director of the play within the play. He knows the precarious line separating illusion from reality and the danger of mixing them. George reminds

Martha: "I warned you not to go too far" (93) again George seems to be pulling the strings: "you try it and I'll beat you at your own game" (95). He asserts his author's authority. Martha is sad because George has accepted her as she is while she hates being fixed; she wants to be in a state of flux, flow, a state of becoming. Martha addresses her husband:

> Who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad ... who I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes; this ill do; sad, sad, sad (Act 3, 113).

His return to reality aims at a utopian and secure reunion of her signifier with her strictly socially defined signified. The couple's life is threatened by the loss and blurring of boundaries. He asks her to come back to the real and social because she has lost track of her fixed 'WHO.' George wants to arrest the endless anarchic movement of signification initiated by Martha's satiric acting of her wifely function. She becomes a character rather than a person. Madness, anarchy par excellence, is a refuge from the "unreality of the world": the heavy weight of rules, the law of the father, the obligations, the endless masking. At the end of the play a new glimmer of hope is created when George declared that "There is a moon, the moon went up" (Act 3, 117). The image of the moon may stand for regeneration, truth and facing reality. Facing reality paves the way towards eternal happiness and inner-peace.

Conclusion

To conclude, the present paper has sought to delineate the manifold shapes of anarchy in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and the way characters move from chaos to order, from illusion to reality and from meaninglessness to meaningfulness. Anarchy is not only present through the structure of the play, the linguistic games, the instability of meaning, satire, parody and the reversal of gender roles. Albee problematizes anarchy when he deploys metatheatricality to accentuate the way gender roles, the institution of marriage and the sanctity of the family are subverted. Debunking the traditional institutions creates disorder and anarchy. From the lens of French feminism, Luce Irigaray' ideas of "mimicry" and "masquerade" show that gender orders are subverted and this subversion creates anarchy. Martha's "masquerade of femininity" is meant to debunk gender roles, to mimic the patriarchal system from within and to challenge the system. Anarchy at structural, thematic and linguistic levels distorts the ideas of traditional order and creates a new concept about postmodern order. Consequently, the stage becomes like an optical prism where order is mirrored. Each ray mirrors real reality and excludes anarchy. Anarchy stops at the end of the play when the older couple go back into real reality. They succeed at facing reality, going beyond anarchy, transcending mystery and re-establishing social order. The main finding is that facing reality is the beginning of happiness.

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Broken Clocks, Reclaimed Spaces: Melancholy and Resistance in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and Ghassan Kanafani's *All That's Left to You*

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Abstract:

This paper explores the themes of melancholy and resistance in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and Ghassan Kanafani's *Mā Tabaqqā Lakum / All That's Left to You* (1966). Reincarnated in Kanafani's work, the characters in Faulkner's novel oscillate between past and present, experiencing a sense of imperial anxiety that casts a melancholic shadow over them due to colonialism or the fall of imperial "empire". Following Faulkner's Quentin and Jason Compson as well as Kanafani's Hamid and Maryam through their day and night journeys, this essay studies motifs such as the wall clock, the wristwatch, and the land offering a postcolonial analysis of time and space. It concludes that while the colonized individual uses this melancholy as a means of resistance, finding in it a threshold to voice and identity, the colonizer, faced with this resistance, experiences a melancholy that prompts a reevaluation of prevailing colonial concepts.

Keywords: Postcolonialism; time; space; melancholy; oppression; resistance

Introduction

When Ghassan Kanafani wrote *Mā Tabaqqā Lakum / All That's Left to You* (1966), he certainly had in mind William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). Kanafani's text mirrors Faulkner's in narrative structure and thematic elements. In both narratives, events revolve around a sister's wretched amorous experience and its profound impact on her brothers and family. Faulkner's Caddy Compson, who engages in a sexual affair with Dalton Ames, finds a parallel in Kanafani's Maryam, who becomes pregnant out of wedlock, compelling her brother Hamid to escape to the desert in an attempt to evade the community's humiliating gaze. The narrative style is strikingly similar, with both texts presenting fragmented, non-linear events built upon the stream of consciousness technique. In Faulkner's text, each Compson brother is provided with his own section where he unboundedly presents his thoughts and concerns while, in Kanafani's text, Maryam's and Hamid's interior monologues run naturally then suddenly overlap and their thoughts fuse into a final scene, which adds to the complexity of the narrative. Aida Azouqa notes that both texts are like "jigsaw puzzles" obscuring narrative direction and reflecting the characters' internal turmoil (155). Although

she rightly highlights the narrative similarity between the two texts, Azouqa's assertion that both texts concentrate more on internal reality can be discussed as both narratives employ the internal to highlight an external reality of struggle and oppression.

More importantly, both narratives affirm the argument that melancholy and resistance arise as responses to oppressive structures such as patriarchy and imperialism. In *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2004), Paul Gilroy refers to "postcolonial" or "post-imperial melancholy" concurring with the fall of the British Empire, the change in circumstances and moods that followed such a fall, and the consequent loss of imperial prestige (90). Inversely, Nouri Gana, in *Melancholy Acts* (2023), talks about "the melancholia of the oppressed" as a state experienced by the colonized when uprooted and dispossessed from his own land. Gilroy's "postcolonial melancholy" stems from a feeling of loss on the part of the colonizer, whose privileges are no longer enjoyed whereas Gana's "melancholia of the oppressed" is the outcome of native people's feelings of dispossession, a form of resistance, and a claim to one's voice and identity. While Gilroy and Gana precisely stress the sense of malaise and loss central to the melancholy of the colonizer/colonized, there still lies a yearning for power and agency within the depths of both melancholic states.

Faulkner's text explores the decline of the traditional South, the melancholy of the colonizer, and resistance to new oppressive policies by the nation. By the same token, Kanafani's narrative highlights not only the colonizer's oppressive presence in Palestine but also their psychological scars inflicted by the resistance of the colonized populace. Thus, in both texts resistance and melancholy overcome boundaries reaching out a universal status.

While it might initially appear unlikely to conduct a postcolonial analysis of Faulkner's text, given that neither the novel's Anglo-Saxon context nor the author himself directly experienced imperial oppression, the relevance of a postcolonial interpretation of *The Sound and the Fury* still persists as the writer demonstrates a clear understanding of colonialism on both a global and national scale. With recent discussions of the American South as a postcolonial space, the simplistic narrative of "bad colonizer" versus "good colonized" is revisited through scrutinizing the colonizers' psychology. Scholars like Joel Williamson and Scott Romine argue that the postbellum South's history can be understood through a postcolonial lens, with the Civil War marking a shift towards Northern control over Southern resources. This created a sense of "estrangement from tradition" among Southerners, shaping their identity as colonized people within their own land (Smith & Cohn 3). Vann C. Woodward further asserts that the South's experience of military defeat and reconstruction aligns it with other colonized regions globally, with a historical trauma exacerbated by the collapse of the plantation system (175).

Likewise, Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn argue that the US South is a postcolonial space characterized by cultural discord, where bodies are still controlled in a post-plantation environment influenced by racial slavery (2). Accordingly, although they may expose imperial sensibilities in their relationship with the family women and the land, the control they seek to wield over them, and the violence with which they exert it, having a lot more in common with the Israeli border guard in

Kanafani's text than with the colonized Hamid, Quentin and Jason Compson still share the melancholy of the oppressed that leads to their rise and resistance. They are indeed a good example of "people being conscious of themselves as prisoners in their own land" (Said 1993, 214).

Additionally, as "dominance can carry its own wounds, even if they are veiled in colonial privilege" (Gilroy 52), the male Compsons experience imperial fall and postcolonial melancholy as they share with the Palestinian Hamid the loss of a sister, a mother and land. This paper attempts to analyze Faulkner's and Kanafani's texts within the context of colonial practices, asserting the characters' struggle to break free from the remnants of the past and aspire to a better future. By closely examining Quentin's and Hamid's day and night journeys, this study delves deeper into the themes of postcolonial melancholy and resistance. It scrutinizes the connection between the characters and spatiotemporal motifs, such as the wall clock, the wristwatch, and the land in both texts, ultimately concluding that melancholy is not merely an experience of failure but also an expression of resistance and empowerment.

Time in Faulkner's and Kanafani's texts: From melancholy to resistance

The issue of temporality is taken seriously by characters displaying a heightened awareness of time in Faulkner's and Kanafani's texts. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin wakes up in his dormitory at Harvard College to find out that "the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains, [that] it was between seven and eight o'clock and [that he] was in time again, hearing the watch" (73). Affected by the relentless ticking of his watch, he first turns it face-down then breaks it in a bid to conquer the constraints of time. Similarly, in *All That's Left to You*, the two time devices are the wall clock in Maryam's marital chamber and Hamid's wristwatch. The wall clock looks "like a small bier" (Kanafani 6) reminding Maryam of having "tripped thirty-five virgin years of [her] life piece by piece and year by year" (12). The ticking of the wall clock equally reminds her of Hamid's steps into the desert and his "death march" (8). Hamid's wristwatch, a device tethering him to past memories, proves incapable of offering any sense of the present amidst the desert's darkness.

Time haunts Quentin, Hamid, and Maryam as they strive to elude its grab only to fail. The characters' futile attempts to escape the relentless ticking of clocks carry an existentialist attitude about time as a destructive force, robbing individuals of the joy of life, persistently reminding them of their failure, and giving rise to their melancholy. Symbolically, Quentin smashes his grandfather's wristwatch and Hamid throws his watch in the desert and walks into a dark timeless space. Getting rid of their wristwatches, identified as sources of "terror and anxiety" (Kanafani 20), and timelessly strolling in nature both symbolize an attempt to break free from the past and exist unburdened by its weight.

In Quentin's and Jason's sections, the incessant ticking of the clock serves as a constant reminder of the Compson brothers' journey towards an inevitable end. Jason is left with a headache due to the "bright disorderly tatters of sound. . . along the broken air" (267). In this context, the sound of time serves as an indication of the Compsons' decline, unsettling Jason with its auditory effect and

exacerbating his sense of melancholy which stems from postimperial pain. Pursuing his fugitive niece, Miss Quentin, Jason drives twenty miles away from the town. However, he cannot escape the sound of the church bells, serving as a reminder of the relentless march of time and compelling him to succumb to a "motionless movement of this formless monster" (Sartre 266). This stagnant state traps Jason in a loop of past memories, each narrating tales of colonial decline and decay. Standing motionless with his hand on the knob of a shuttered drug store, standing for his business and investment failures, Jason, with a head slightly bowed (277), is unable to escape the relentless sound of time. The tolling bells serve as a constant reminder of his shortcomings, depicting him as a Compson male who fails not only to protect his sister but also to sustain the continuity of his business. Hence, in failing to preserve the family's welfare, both Jason and Quentin suffer from "postimperial and postcolonial melancholia" characterized by "violence and shame-faced tides of self-scrutiny and self-loathing [and] outbursts of manic euphoria" (Gilroy 102). This experience is triggered by the Compsons' feelings of guilt and rage voicing a sense of "collective shame" and narcissistic denial of defeat (Gana 8). Quentin's incestuous fantasies about his sister Caddy and Jason's pleasure in controlling his sister and niece exemplify postcolonial melancholia and its violent manifestations in the male characters.

Likewise, Quentin's gesture of breaking his watch is highly symbolic, articulating his yearning for a timeless existence that liberates him from the frozen past. Quentin's watch is transmitted from one generation to another standing for imperial power and dominance. His section starts with his father's assertion that time cannot be conquered as any attempt to conquer this force is futile, leading to one's failure and despair. However, to Quentin, time as constructed and run by the colonizer to serve imperial interests and agendas, has to be reconsidered. Symbolically, in an act of defiance, he "got up and went to the dresser and slid [his] hand along it and touched the watch and turned it face-down and went back to bed" (73).

Thus, in *The Sound and the Fury* and *All That's Left to You*, time acts as a repressive force caused by historical facts shaping the characters' fate and highlighting their crises induced by the collapse of the traditional American South as well as the fall of Palestinian lands to colonial abuse. The characters' reality lacks a discernible present or future, akin to "a tunnel blocked at both ends" (Kanafani 39), as Hamid vividly depicts it. In such a reality, the characters "sink back into the past and rise only to sink back again; the present is not. . . and everything *was*" (Sartre 239). For both writers, the past remains an ever-present force evolving into an obsession that molds the intricate lives of the characters. The narrative method, based on the stream-of-consciousness in both texts, adds to temporal discontinuity and distortion as the past frequently invades the characters' present, reflecting their troubles and disillusionment with historical events like the Civil War in Faulkner's text and the crisis of 1948 in Kanafani's. Therefore, for the Compson brothers and for Hamid and Maryam, time is a chief enemy (Howe 136), trapping them in past memories and preventing them from moving forward.

Quentin and Hamid recognize that to embrace real-time experiences and attain true freedom, they must let go of devices that quantify this force:

> I tried to look at my watch, but it was pitch black. As I did so, I came to realize how insignificant a watch is when compared to the absolutes of light and dark. In the infinite expanse of this desert night, my watch appeared to represent a temporal fetter which engendered terror and anxiety. Without hesitation I unstrapped it from my wrist and threw it away. I heard it hit the earth with a barely audible sound. *It wasn't long before the watch went crazy. Abandoned in its exile, it went on ticking to itself, building up that impenetrable barrier that madmen erect between themselves and the world*. (Emphasis in original, Kanafani 20-21)

Both characters subscribe to the modernist conception of time advocated by philosophers like Henri Bergson and Jean-Paul Sartre. Bergson's concept of "durée" or "duration," which is essential for forming a coherent understanding of time, resonates with Quentin's and Hamid's perspectives on measured time. Since the notion of homogeneous and measurable time is artificial, "duration" emphasizes the continuous and indivisible flow of time as subjectively experienced. Unlike the mechanical, segmented time measured by clocks, "duration" reflects the uninterrupted flow of our inner life and cannot be fragmented into disconnected moments. It is an abstract experience that fuses the past and the future in a constantly renewed present (Bergson 90).

"Duration" represents a complete process where past, present, and future merge and mutually influence each other, forming a fluid existence that defies measurement by the ticking of mechanical clocks haunting our reflective consciousness (99). Therefore, since it has to be felt and lived rather than quantified, "time comes to life only when the clock stops" (266), Jean-Paul Sartre argues in the same context. Quentin's and Hamid's gestures of breaking/throwing their wristwatches symbolize their liberation from the "ghost" of measured time, in Bergson's terms, granting them access to "duration"—a temporal fluid experience that goes beyond any attempt to quantify or objectify time. As their present is chaotically intruded upon by the past, both characters decide to abandon measured time and its melancholic memories in favor of a timeless universe that promises more meaning and fulfillment.

Drowning himself in the river waters – a symbol of peace, fullness, and ideality, as noted by Bowling (134) – Quentin metaphorically transcends clock time and returns to "the very fluidity of our inner life" (Bergson 219). In this symbolic act, he retreats to a state akin to his mother's womb, free from the haunting toll of bells and the relentless ticking of clocks that burden him with past memories. In the same way, Hamid embarks on a night journey deep into the dark desert, spanning an entire night and culminating in the first signs of hope brought up by dawn. This journey is implicitly celebrated in Hamid's confrontation and manipulation of the colonizer in a scene of victory where he transcends the past and redefines both time and space. Hence, in their acts of getting rid of time devices, Quentin and Hamid exhibit a postcolonial belief that "in history's nightmare when things fall apart, awakening to a new day requires. . . new strategic representations" (Romine 177). Thus, transcending the conventional definition of time is the character's strategy to shape a new reality that breaks with the constraints of measured time.

Quentin's and Hamid's journeys, coupled with their deliberate actions of breaking/throwing their wristwatches, resonate with Michel De Certeau's assertion regarding the necessity of silencing

the past as a crucial condition in the pursuit of present evidence (2). Since the writing of history can begin only "when a present is divided from the past" (3), both characters get rid of their watches in a symbolic act of exclusion and separation. By breaking/throwing their watches, both Quentin and Hamid deliberately shed their past memories, creating a clear divide between past and present. This act of exclusion and separation signifies their pursuit of a clearer perspective on the present and future. This sense of clarity facilitates an objective emancipation from the remnants of the past.

Thus, objectifying the past marks an initial step toward understanding the present—a laborious process that paves the way for new beginnings. In Faulkner's and Kanafani's texts, Quentin's river drowning, often interpreted as a symbolic return to the origins of life in his mother's nurturing womb, and Hamid's emergence, likened to a new birth from the desert's womb, as symbolized by the dawn, illustrate this process. It is only by getting emancipated from the constraints of the past that Quentin and Hamid perform the heroic act of bounding time, overcome the sense of loss characterizing their existence, and reach truth. Therefore, Quentin's and Hamid's journeys deconstruct time toward transformation and regeneration; a quest reverberated in Kimberly Hutchings' sociopolitical definition of time.

In *Time and World Politics* (2008), Hutchings distinguishes between "chronos" and "Kairos" two defining features of time. Whereas "chronos" refers to the quantitatively measurable time, associated with the individuals' inevitable birth-death life cycle (5), "Kairos" is the "transformational time of action" that challenges the certainty of death and decay and chronological irrevocability (5). While "chronos" is associated with devices that measure time and record the "natural" progression of events like clocks, calendars, and timetables, "kairos" refers to the possibility of interjecting such "natural" succession by making exceptions to chronological time. By getting rid of their wristwatches, Quentin and Hamid actively repudiate measurable chronotic time. Instead, they aspire for a kairotic, transformative time of action, symbolizing their rejection of the dominant imperial conception of time as synonymous with linearity and progression.

According to Hutchings, time is often conceptualized in homogeneous egocentric terms, in ways that exclude "the possibility of recognizing. . . temporal plurality in world politics" (154). She argues that "temporal plurality" embraces additional voices and diverse temporal experiences that are often suppressed within the imperial construct of time. Therefore, Hutchings' concept can be seen as a postcolonial expression that broadens the understanding of time, inclusively incorporating marginalized voices and experiences that have historically been silenced within the Western imperial narrative.

The imperial definition of time frames daytime as a symbol of colonial dominance, reinforcing the traditional colonial dichotomy of light and darkness. Daytime represents a period when the colonizer holds power and exerts control over the colonized, often associated with the darkness of night. However, seen from Hutchings' perspective, the night's darkness can symbolize moments of subversion and resistance against colonial oppression, providing moments where the colonized challenges the dominant narratives, assert their agency, and reclaim their identities. Accordingly,

colonized voices that are silenced or marginalized during the day find in the night's darkness full articulation, fostering a sense of collective identity and resistance. In this line of thought, Jean Paul Addie, Michael R. Glass, and Jen Nelles posit that the night serves as crucial terrain for transgressive social activities and infrastructural appropriation. The cover of darkness grants the colonized opportunities to access locations and observe phenomena that are ordinarily restricted. Nighttime fulfills the oppressed people's fundamental requirements for rebellion and resilience, prompting us to consider its temporal advantages (279).

Hamid's confrontation with the Israeli border guard during his night journey, climaxing in the colonized asserting control over the colonizer, symbolically marks a transformative move toward redefining time and space. This act represents Hamid's determination to transcend borders, challenging the power of the state encapsulated not only in the guard but also in the wristwatch—an emblem of the dominant imperial conception of time. Similarly, appropriating the border guard's wallet and official papers (Kanafani 38) serves as an expression of dominance on the part of the colonized. Capturing the colonizer, Hamid reverses power dynamics as dictated by the imperial discourse. As Hamid stands with the border guard huddled at his feet (38), he experiences a moment of triumph that opens new possibilities for empowerment and agency within a timeless and boundless physical setting. By seizing the border guard's official papers, he engages in an act of subversion, demonstrating his unwavering resolve to reclaim what has been lost and confront a colonial history marked by transgression, dispossession, and oppression.

Equally, representing the downfall of the Old South and the sense of displacement Southerners experienced in the aftermath of the civil war, Quentin embarks on a journey from the institutionalized space of Harvard University to the natural wild space of the Charles River. In such a passage, he seeks to shift from the constraints of imperial laws to a borderless and timeless condition. During his ultimate moments by the river, "all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical" (188), which implicitly questions fixed realities and advocates a new vision overcoming the constraints of imperial systems.

In "Expanding the Limits", Thadious Davis talks about the South as "a region that, though fraught with pain and difficulty, provides a major grounding for identity" (6). He points out to "gestures of bonding with the South" (11) as a way to claim identity. Although it may be read as his "inability even to face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the empire and consequent loss of imperial prestige" (Gilroy 90), Quentin's suicide in the Charles River is accordingly a gesture of bonding with the South and an expression of a Southerner in front of the North's colonial projects of expansion. It is in Rey Chow's argument "an act of resistance rarely discussed in postcolonial debates, [reflecting] the struggle between the dominant and subdominant within the native culture itself" (153).

While Quentin's suicide may be viewed as an individual manifestation of a broader collective melancholy, a psychoaffective response to the deepening crisis of the postcolonial project of national liberation and social transformation, it also serves as a desperate response to the persistent dominance of a new imperialism (Gana 2) enforced upon the postbellum South. Caught in the grip of profound

insecurity and torn between paranoia and melancholy, Quentin confronts two stark choices: "to kill the other or to kill himself" (Lazali 148). Ultimately, in a gesture that externalizes his internal struggle, Quentin chooses the second option. Quentin's suicide is thus an expression of melancholy over defeat that "offer(s) a rare and genuine occasion for introspection and contemplation . . . for repurposing and finding a direction, an orientation, and a horizon for individual or collective action" (Gana 73). Accordingly, drowning himself, Quentin discovers a new form of expression, takes control of his own destiny, and liberates himself from imperial spatiotemporal confines.

The recurrent reference to the metaphor of shadows[1] in Quentin's final scene on the river bridge is highly functional in conveying the Compson Son's sense of disillusionment with his existence in a postimperial setting. According to Laurence Bowling, the repeated reference to shadows stands for "all things of this world, which Quentin considers unreal and unsubstantial as contrasted with the world of pure ideas and abstractions" (133). Crucially, the mention of shadows gives rise to a third-space reality which celebrates temporal and spatial plurality. Quentin's recognition of the interplay between shadow and light serves as a poignant reminder of the imperial dichotomy of light and darkness, civilized and uncivilized associating the colonizer with enlightenment and casting the colonized into shadows and darkness. Thus, the shadow imagery places Quentin in a liminal space within this dichotomy, navigating between these contrasting worlds. More significantly, allusion to the shadow signifies "a moment of ambivalence and ambiguity" (Bhabha 232), serving as a temporal metaphor for melancholic contemplation aimed at transcending the "hard hedges" of colonial resistance. This fleeting, shadowy instance, suspended between light and darkness, liberates Quentin from the restrains of predefined spatiotemporal boundaries and cultural norms; a shadow enabling him to move beyond chronotic time and exist in a more fulfilling kairotic realm of openness and plurality.

Watching the shadow which "hadn't quite cleared the stoops" (Faulkner 77) and enduring the ticking sound of his watch, Quentin sees a sparrow on the window darting through the sunlight: "As the hour began to strike, the sparrow stopped switching eyes and focused on me with one eye until the chimes ended, seemingly listening too. Then, it flicked off the ledge and disappeared" (75). The appearance of the sparrow is highly symbolic, as the bird historically represents the post-bellum South and its struggle to redefine boundaries in response to immigrants from other underprivileged parts of the world[2]. As Quentin listens to the campus chimes, symbolizing the imperial definition of time, the bird's flight communicates a symbolic message of emancipation. It prompts Quentin to consider shedding the constraints imposed by imperial orders on space and time, aspiring instead to an "absolute state of permanence and unchangeability," as observed by Lawrence Bowling (134).

In the same context, R.B.G. Walker (1993) stresses the distinction between "the inside" and "the outside" of the sovereign state in his definition of time. The inside/outside division can be linked to the main idea about "the possibility of progress inside the state and the impossibility thereof outside the state" (Lundborg 264). Hence, within the state, there exists a progressive comprehension of temporality, whereas outside the state, time is characterized by a sense of meaningless repetitiveness.

This definition highlights the egocentric nature of the sovereign state in its colonial endeavors. It establishes a connection between what the colonizer claims as his own—associated with order and significance—and the outside, which is equated with repetition and meaninglessness. Thus, within the colonial discourse, the individual experience of time is confined to the limits of what may happen inside the borders of the sovereign state, whereas the outside is characterized by disorder and insignificance and upon which a series of exceptional measures like torture and surveillance are inflicted (Lundborg 268). In this respect, Andrew Linklater, in *The Transformation of Political Community* (1998), stresses the unqualified confidence in the superiority of the sovereign state's own way of conceiving time (46). Accordingly, exploring novel methods of organizing time that transcend the confines of the inside/outside distinction and extend beyond the borders of imperial politics can enable a more hybrid and universal experience of existence.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy runs away and opts for absence in the aftermath of her sexual adventure, pregnancy, and childbirth. Her escape from the Compsons' home, a sovereign patriarchal domain of authority and control, signals her movement from the inside to the outside definition of time. Nevertheless, Caddy has a powerful presence in her brothers' thoughts, haunting their memories even though she no longer exists within their inside realm of space and time. Caddy's oscillation between physical absence and full presence as a memory grants her the power of existing beyond colonial temporal norms as she no longer belongs to the inside time of her sovereign masculine-based community though she still shapes the lives of her brothers. In the same manner, Quentin insults Gerald Bland, who arrogantly boasts of his adventures with girls and becomes a copy of Dalton Ames, Caddy's abuser. As the name implies, "Bland" is associated with whiteness as it shares a homonymic kinship with the French 'blanc' meaning 'white'. Thus, Gerald Bland is a representative of a colonial white community that stands for the sovereign state. Insulting Bland and hitting him, Quentin re-experiences his fight with Dalton Ames. In two chronologically distinct incidents, Quentin, who used to oppress Caddy, confronts his sister's violators, surpassing the limitations of the immediate spatiotemporal domain and aspiring for a timeless universe devoid of all forms of repression.

Similarly, in *All That's Left to You*, marrying Zakaria, a collaborator with the sovereign state, and becoming a second wife in his household, Maryam is doubly burdened by her situation as a second-grade wife left with an unwanted pregnancy. The wall clock in her marital bedroom is a reminder of her sense of alienation in the inside time zone of Zakaria's household.

> The next moment the clock creaked and ceased ticking for a second, as though primed to announce a calamitous message to crowds waiting in silent anticipation. Then the big hand sprang to connect with the small one, and both were drowned in the metallic clamor of the twelve strokes. The last stroke came like the weary shudder which ends an orgasm. An instant later, the big hand slid off and resumed its solitary ticking pace in the darkness. Midnight. Dawn—that recurrence of light which threatens all fugitives—was just four hours away. Suddenly, it began throbbing in my womb: a slight movement that flowed through my body for the first time in some recess, unknown, and infinite. (Kanafani 30)

The clock in Maryam's marital room serves as a symbolic reminder of the impending dawn, representing rebirth and regeneration. More significantly, the clock striking midnight and marking the commencement of a new dawn, along with the subtle, mysterious, and boundless motion coursing through her body stand as a movement beyond the constraints of imperial time and signals a new beginning in the woman's life. Although the movement in Maryam's womb could enlist her in the work of reproducing the order of the colonial state, birthing new collaborators, there is still a measure of hope in the ticking of the clock and the "unknown infinite" movement in the woman's body "that is not mathematically calculable but that nonetheless resides in the steadfast commitment to a lost cause" (Gana 10).

Most of the time, Zakaria remains oblivious to Maryam's irritation with the wall clock that seems to confine her within his inside-time zone and even when he does notice it, he fails to comprehend it:

> I broke off as I looked at him. He looked stiff and unapproachable, and appeared not to have seen the clock. I started looking out of the window again, but the hand he placed on my shoulder restrained me, and I was forced to turn around and face him. His tone was gentle, as though he was addressing a child: 'Listen Maryam, if that damned clock's stopping you from sleeping, then I tell you what we'll do. You probably don't realize that if we tilt it a bit to the side its pendulum will stop.' (43)

In requesting Maryam to stop the clock, Zakaria unwittingly offers her an opportunity to break free from his inside time zone and assert her identity and agency. Thus, by killing Zakaria, Maryam enacts a symbolic gesture of movement and transgression. In his introduction to Kanafani's novella, Roger Allen explains Maryam's obsession with time, in addition to her recurrent speculation about the whereabouts of Hamid, as the Palestinians' preoccupation with the land. He adds that the ticking away of hours and minutes comes to their disadvantage (xii-xiii). More significantly, Maryam's fixation on time reflects a will to go beyond the confines of her husband's timed territory and reach out a new immutable realm that allows her to exist outside masculine and imperial authority.

In the same context, Hamid escapes the imperial definition of time in his encounter with the board guard and engages in a quest toward timelessness:

> 'Perhaps you only know Hebrew, but that doesn't matter. But really, isn't it amazing that we should meet so dramatically here in this emptiness, and then find that we can't communicate?' He went on looking at me, his face dark and hesitant and somewhat suspicious, but there was no doubt he was afraid. As for me, I'd crossed the barrier of fear, and the emotions I was feeling were strange and inexplicable. (35)

Overwhelmed by an inexplicable sense of triumph, Hamid asserts his power and agency by throwing his watch into the desert's darkness and crossing the threshold of fear. Allen observes that both Hamid and Maryam confront enemies, one internal the other external, describing them as "the

one within and the other without" (xiv). The imperial conception of time rooted in the distinction between inside and outside emerges as a significant adversary for Faulkner's and Kanafani's characters. Through symbolic acts that defy temporality, they challenge this framework and propose an alternative model of time, one that seeks to amplify marginalized voices and identities. In the final scene, the darkness that once enveloped Hamid's and Maryam's inner lives gives way to a resolute determination to escape a time defined by constraint and submission. Their struggle transcends the mere reclamation of lost spaces, becoming a fight to wrest time itself from the colonizer's grip.

Spatial Resistance, Reclaiming the Land

In the works of Faulkner and Kanafani, characters share a common plight: landlessness. This condition reflects the experience of individuals who have been severed from their land, either physically or psychologically (Young 51). Faulkner addresses this theme through the narrative of the Compson family, whose decline is marked by the loss of their ancestral land. In a final effort to maintain their fading prestige, the Compsons sell their last piece of land to fund Quentin's education at Harvard. The eventual transformation of this land into a golf course symbolizes the intrusion of bourgeois capitalist culture into the South, eroding its cultural authenticity and purity[3]. This shift not only strips the Compsons of their former power and influence but also plunges them into a melancholic state. Confronted with the abrupt loss of both material wealth and moral standing, the Compson family eschews the collective mourning necessary to process their losses. Instead, they succumb to a deep depression, paralyzed by their grief and unable to make meaningful efforts toward rebuilding their legacy (Gilroy 98).

Similarly, in *All That's Left to You*, the theme of landlessness is reflected in the characters' exile and their yearning for a home. This is paralleled in The Sound and the Fury through Quentin Compson's poignant refrain, "If I could say mother," and Hamid's journey across the desert in search of his lost mother. In both cases, the mother figure symbolizes land, belonging, and identity, highlighting the characters' profound connection to the land and their quest to reclaim a sense of home and agency.

Allen observes that Kanafani poignantly captures the blend of anger and despair experienced by different generations of Palestinians as they confront the bleak reality of diaspora and exile from their homeland (xi). A similar sense of exile defines Quentin's journey from Harvard to the Charles River, underscoring his detachment from the Compsons' cherished land. For both Faulkner and Kanafani, the land is portrayed as a vital, life-giving force, pulsating with vibrant rhythms that sustain their characters (xviii). Its loss, however, leads to profound alienation and an enduring sense of melancholy.

In a similar vein, the characters' spatial journeys position them within the strategically sociopolitical construct of the nomad. In *Nomadology: The War Machine*, Gilles Delleuze, and Félix Guattari define the nomad as a person who most effectively resists the control of the state or the colonizer since his/her life involves a permanent condition of mobility that cannot be contained or

stabilized[4]. The colonizer's appropriation of land, described by Deleuze and Guattari as "territorialization," occurs at the expense of the original owners' "deterritorialization." This dynamic ultimately gives rise to a third phase, "reterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 51-52), which manifests as an act of resistance against the forces of "deterritorialization."

In the works of Faulkner and Kanafani, male characters exhibit various forms of resistance to displacement. Quentin, for instance, abandons Harvard University, rejecting the dominant colonial narrative that seeks to monopolize knowledge and science. Similarly, Hamid resists "deterritorialization" by confronting the Israeli border guard and seizing his weapon. Quentin's suicide in the river, symbolizing a profound return to the maternal womb, and Hamid's ultimate embrace of the desert at the end of his journey can both be understood as acts of "reterritorialization," defying the forces of "deterritorialization."

This entails a symbolic return to the original space, even though it has been usurped by the colonizer. Hamid's close ties with the desert emphasize this assumption, for when "he flung himself to the ground, [he] felt it like a virgin quiver beneath him" (Kanafani 6), and when he walked his steps are described by the speaking desert as "charged with life which he beats out endlessly against my breast" (8). While Hamid reunites with his long-sought mother, the land, Quentin Compson reunites with his mother's womb in the river waters. At the end of Kanafani's text, the voices of Hamid and Maryam, each fighting their own "reterritorialization" battle, fuse into each other despite the distance that separates them. The long-awaited miracle both characters hoped for to salvage their dwindling possessions is finally tangible. The act of confronting adversaries, whether internal or external, holds symbolic weight in two interconnected realms: the domestic sphere and the homeland (El-Hussari 1012). In both cases, each fight symbolizes reclaiming territory from the colonizer.

Intricately tied to identity and belonging, land is not merely a physical setting but an intrinsic part of the characters' psychological, cultural, and social wellbeing and the disruption of this strong connection has profound repercussions on identity construction. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Jason's monologue reveals symptoms of frustrations at the loss of one's land and his sense of belonging:

> Like I say, if he [Mr. Compson] had to sell something [a piece of land] to send Quentin to Harvard we'd all been a damn sight better off if he'd sold that sideboard [Benjy] and bought himself a one-armed straight-jacket with part of the money. I reckon the reason all the Compsons gave out before it got to me like Mother says, is that he [Mr. Compson] drank it up. At least I never heard of him offering to sell anything to send me to Harvard. (197-198)

Jason struggles to reconcile with the Compsons' decision to sell their land, a choice that leaves him with the prospect of having nothing to inherit and a profound sense of disconnection. To Jason, the sale of the land is utterly meaningless serving only to fund Quentin's failing tuition and Mr. Compson's selfish drinking habits. These purely materialistic motives underscore the family's decline, ultimately contributing to their collapse. This downfall evokes melancholic reactions rooted in "the loss of a fantasy of omnipotence" (Gilroy 99) that the Compsons once enjoyed during the antebellum South.

In a similar vein, to the child-like Benjy Caddy is the land as he constantly associates her with

trees, repeatedly reminding us that "Caddy smelled like trees," (Faulkner 15, 16, 44). Doreen Fowler explains Caddy's association with the smell of trees, water, and ripe honeysuckle as Faulkner's instrument to portray the female character as an "inexhaustible, self-regenerative life force" (142). Caddy's association with trees raises her to the mythical level of a goddess since "charged with sacred forces, the tree reproduces the natural laws of development and transformation" (143). Losing its leaves then regaining them, the tree stands as an emblem of resistance and change. Whether it is the pear tree in Faulkner's South, a symbol of fertility and renewal, or "Hamid's feet firmly implanted in me [the desert] like the inevitable roots of a tree" (24) in Kanafani's Palestine, the image of the tree evokes themes of regeneration and resistance. Symbolically, it embodies the myth of eternal return (143) while also reflecting notions of identity and rootedness.

Azouqa stresses the historical element of Caddy's association with trees, maintaining that the girl's smell of trees turns her into a goddess of fertility representing the old South. Her motherly love and devotion to Benjy qualify her to rise to that status, whereas her disappearance, from which Benjy never recovers, stands for the decline of the old South (161). While this reading rightly clarifies Caddy's association with trees, an unvoiced reality still lurks in the female character's smell of land and trees. Indeed, in Faulkner's novel, Caddy is not merely an embodiment of the fall of the traditional South as she moves beyond boundaries becoming a universal cause of the oppressed and the marginalized.

The novel opens with Caddy climbing a pear tree to observe her grandmother's funeral, revealing her muddy drawers as symbols of fertility and life. By daring to climb up and confront death, she displays signs of vitality to her brothers below, becoming their conduit to reality. As she ascends above them, Caddy assumes a goddess-like role, transcending both time and place. Within a colonial framework, she embodies a lost cause, simultaneously victimized by the colonizer and venerated by the colonized.

Additionally, Caddy is sexually abused not only by Dalton Ames but also in her brother's thoughts:

> I held the point to the knife at her throat it won't take but a second just a second then I can do mine I can do mine then. . . it won't take but a second I'll try not to hurt all right will you close your eyes Caddy do you remember when Dilsey fussed at you because your drawers were muddy. . . touch your hand to it. . . push it are you going to? Do you want me to push it? (Faulkner 188)

The knife, with its phallic dimension, reveals Quentin's unsettling fantasies of incest and his desire to exert control over his sister's body. A similar motif appears in Kanafani's text, where Hamid dreams of plunging a knife into Maryam's body, echoing themes of domination and violence:

> He'd imagine himself rushing to her bed, armed with a long knife, uncovering her face; then while she looked up at him with eyes like a madwoman's, he'd grab her by the hair, and say something brief yet cuttingly final—or else he wouldn't speak at all, but just look at her so that she understood everything, and stab her straight through the heart. (3)

In both masculine fantasies, the female body is subjected to sexual violation, perpetrated both by an outsider and a brother. This implicitly echoes the abuse of land that parallels female alienation within a patriarchal imperial system of oppression.

In a similar context, when Mrs. Compson "happened to see one of them kissing Caddy. . . she went around the house with a black dress and a veil, crying and saying her little daughter was dead" (Faulkner 286). Consumed by traumatic melancholy, Mrs. Compson mourns Caddy's kiss, interpreting it as her daughter's initiation into a world of masculine-dominated womanhood. For Mrs. Compson, the kiss becomes synonymous with death, symbolizing a *nakba* (tragedy) for the myth of the old South. This myth, traditionally rooted in a profound connection to the land, is reimagined as a lament for the desecration and loss of native territory to colonizing forces.

Kanafani's narrative begins with Maryam's forced marriage to Zakaria, which follows her physical violation and subsequent pregnancy. This event drives her brother Hamid to flee Gaza for the West Bank, seeking to escape the ensuing scandal. Maryam's wedding becomes a symbol of the disintegration of her family, characterized by her father's death, her mother's absence, her brother's departure, and her confinement within the bed of a collaborator. Simultaneously, as Hamid traverses the desert, he witnesses sunset, a metaphor for the decline of Maryam and her family's fortune. This marriage, akin to Caddy's experiences, represents a form of death cloaked in celebration, with both Maryam and Hamid confronting abuse and colonization. Despite her physical absence, Maryam continues to inhabit Hamid's thoughts and nightmares, underscoring the enduring impact of her ordeal.

Similar to Caddy, Maryam symbolizes the Palestinian land which is seized and abused. Her involvement with Zakaria, a traitor who betrays his people's cause and informs on freedom fighters like Salim, is not just a violation of her body but also of her family. It represents an act of colonization that transforms Maryam and her brother from a state of self-reconciliation to one of melancholy and alienation. In her stream of consciousness, Maryam reflects on her identity before and after Zakaria's intrusion into her life:

> Poor little Maryam, what sort of miserable life have you lived, that you've had to accept all this in the end? You were the flower of Manshiyyah, ambitious, educated, from a good family. What misery made you accept Zakaria as a husband, with his children and wife? (11)

Victimized by Zakaria, who represents the colonizer's gaze, Maryam mirrors the fate of the land. Her transformation from a state of purity and growth to one of abuse and dependence parallels the plight of the colonized territory.

Zakaria's words portray Maryam as a land taken over and subjected to abuse: "'Your body's a fertile land, you little devil, a fertile land, I tell you!'" (13). Maryam's response to Zakaria's description stresses the perspective of the colonized dispossessed from land and left to despair: "A fertile land, sown with illusion and unknown prospects" (13). The same truth is implicitly voiced by Hamid who thinks: "Gaza's behind you now, erased by the universal blackness" (25). To Hamid, Gaza is not merely

a physical space; it is a sister's body abused by a collaborator and invaded by the darkness of colonization; a reality that haunts him despite his attempts to overcome it. Thus, sexually manipulated by Dalton Ames and Zakaria, Caddy and Maryam stand for the abused land which is lost yet treasured and appropriated yet strongly present in brothers' memories.

Another important motif in relation to female identity and land abuse in Faulkner's and Kanafani's texts is the knife. As previously mentioned, Quentin's knife used to manipulate Caddy is a phantasmagoric instrument of abuse. However, as Wesley Morris accurately argues, the knife is a doubled phallic symbol being both an object of violation and an instrument of castration (139). In fact, despite his phallic knife, Quentin fails to control Caddy who "didn't move [with] eyes wide open looking. . . at the sky" (188) in an emasculating act of resistance. Likewise, Maryam and Hamid use the knife. Their acts, "though distant and disjoined, are combined into a moment of heroic action" (El-Hussari 1010). Maryam plunges the kitchen knife into the body of her abusive husband while Hamid threatens to cut the throat of his captive, the Israeli border guard, with the knife he seizes from him. Hence, Caddy's reaction to Quentin's knife as well as Maryam's and Hamid's knives highlight the possibility of rising against all forms of oppression and ultimately claiming return, agency, and power.

Conclusion

By transcending the constraints of time and space in their journeys, Quentin and Hamid tap into a deeper pulse emanating from the land itself, guiding them toward the essence of truth. Their journeys represent an effort to establish a new order, one that lies beyond the oppressive systems that confine them. For both Faulkner and Kanafani, Caddy and Maryam embody the land, which despite its abuse remains a cherished memory and a dream deferred. In the same vein, the abused land and distorted time continue to serve as powerful symbols for the colonized, offering an alternative reality that takes them beyond the confines of colonial spatiotemporal limitations.

In Faulkner's text, all that is left to the Compson brothers is the memory of an abused sister, which leaves them with a postimperial melancholy and a longing to transcend time and place, seeking to return to a state of eternal peace. In Kanafani's text, Hamid's thoughts and feelings are similarly imbued with melancholy and rage, directed at the abusers of both his sister and his land. Both texts conclude with the idea that the colonized, fueled by the desire to reclaim control over their own time and land, can still assert power over these spaces despite the weight of oppression and melancholy.

Endnotes

1. On his last day and as soon as he wakes up, Quentin's attention is drawn to the shadow of his window sash blocking the morning sunlight in his Harvard room. Later, on the bridge, he observes boys fishing, one of whom wears a shirt "motionless in the flickering shade" (136). This same imagery recurs with the white trout, which remains "motionless among the wavering shadows" (137).
2. See Gary Alan Fine, Lazaros Christoforides "Dirty Birds, Filthy Immigrants, and the English Sparrow War: Metaphorical Linkage in Constructing Social Problems". *Symbolic Interaction*, vol.14, no.4. Winter 1991, pp 375-393.
   Boria Sax. *The Mythical Zoo: An Encyclopedia of Animals in World Myth, Legend, and Literature*. 2001. p .236.

3. In "Sports in the South," Diane Roberts stresses the imperial feature of golf as it is a colonial British derived, British transmitted sport that underlined class differences in Faulkner's South (303).
4. While it involves movement across spaces as an expression of resistance to borders and hegemonic control, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the concept of nomadism is not restricted to the displaced person as it can be extended to refer to all forms of cultural and political activity that transgress or debunk the boundaries of mainstream sociocultural and political codes.

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Shaftesbury's Re-imagining of the Passions

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Abstract:

The Third Earl of Shaftesbury is generally viewed as the key philosopher in eighteenth-century England to reiterate the classical idea that man's virtue lay in recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings through his use of reason. In the face of a growing acceptance of self-interest as natural to man in the eighteenth century, Shaftesbury, through his writings, has been understood to have countered the view of man as naturally selfish by arguing that man through his reason can comprehend how all beings are organically linked, and desire the good of all. In this article, I focus on how Shaftesbury addressed a more particular problem – the idea of public good was now being seen as too abstract and remote to evoke the instinctive benevolence and virtue in man. In his time, the passions were increasingly understood as the prime mover or motivation for man's benevolent actions, and reason was not adequate enough to move men in desiring public good, especially the welfare of people outside their own familiar circle. This article shows how Shaftesbury reworks the older idea of virtue based on reason, into a virtue that is interwoven with the passions, in order to answer the problem of how people can be motivated to desire public good. Shaftesbury refurbishes a notion of virtue based on reason, and seeks to make it coterminous with a natural affection towards the idea of public good.

Keywords: Shaftesbury, virtue, eighteenth-century moral philosophy, passions, public good

1. Introduction

In the seventeenth century in England, an important question about the passions in relation to virtue was raised by many writers and there was a debate as to whether the passions could lead to self-interested or benevolent actions. An opposition between reason and passion was beginning to be challenged.[1] The passions, or affections as they were often called in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, were usually understood as feelings or desires not easily controlled by reason, and had most often been viewed with suspicion as not amenable to good reason and virtuous actions.

Passions were often seen as leading man to selfishness and the seeking of private interests at the expense of others. In the seventeenth century, this view was exemplified by the early modern English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. In his key treatise *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme and Power*

of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil (1651) written during the civil war in England, he suggested that power was the central dynamic in human relations, and popularised the idea of man as naturally selfish and competitive. His view was developed in a more cynical and perhaps playful way in the early eighteenth century by the Anglo-Dutch philosopher, Bernard Mandeville. He dismissed the possibility of a disinterested or selfless virtue, in his two-volume work *The Fable of The Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*[2] (1714) whose subtitle summed up his argument, which was that private self-interests were beneficial to society. He argued that individuals seeking their own profit would ultimately be a benefit to society. Mandeville condemned all claims of altruistic virtue as hypocritical and argued that those who were supposedly virtuous were driven by hidden, self-regarding motives. These writings of Hobbes and Mandeville accommodated expediency and the pursuit of power into their account of morality. There was an increasing visibility of such claims, and a steadily growing view in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century that saw man in a state of nature as naturally selfish, where his seemingly good actions were seen as motivated by self-interest, as Mandeville had suggested, and his inclination to his private self-interest, as Hobbes had argued, were inimical to public good.

The notion of many individuals with multiple interests as potentially frictional produced new challenges to imagining sociability. One response to imagine a new sense of sociability was to bring a renewed idea of virtue in eighteenth-century moral philosophy, which can be seen in the writings of the philosopher and writer, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, primarily in his treatise *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (1699) and *Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (1709). The former piece was revised as *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit* along with new material and all his writings were published in an anthology titled *Characteristics of Men, Manner, Opinions, Times* in 1711 consisting of three volumes. His work, especially *An Inquiry,* served as a counter-force to the troubling but influential account of self-interest and the normative position it had come to occupy in the eighteenth century.

A view of man as driven by base passions was countered in the same period with efforts to see the natural goodness in man who was viewed as inextricably concerned with the well-being of others or at least was made uneasy by their distress. Hence there were two competing views of man – as a naturally selfish and deceptive being pursuing his advantages, profit and power, and the view that with a self-conscious effort at virtue and his natural benevolence, man achieved his best happiness in a just and harmonious society.

One question that moral philosophy in the eighteenth century like Shaftesbury's addressed was how the idea of private interest, if it had no regard for the welfare of others, detracted from public good.[3] Even an action purported to be good, could be undermined by base motives. Any selfish motivation behind supposedly benevolent actions was a dubious form of virtue. An instance of such an exhortation can be observed in *Sensus Communis* (1709), where Shaftesbury uses the term *Sensus Communis,* to mean the sense we have of the common interests of all men or we may call it man's natural sociability, that Shaftesbury believed in.[4] He suggested that human virtue was rooted

in a natural human sociability. Importantly for him, there must be an unsolicited and natural propensity towards virtue to make it a true virtue — "If the love of doing good be not of itself a good and right inclination, I know not how there can possibly be such a thing as goodness or virtue" (Shaftesbury *Sensus*, 46). Shaftesbury bemoans how "men have not been contented to show the natural advantages of honesty and virtue" but have made virtue into "so mercenary a thing," and "have talked so much of its rewards that one can hardly tell what there is in it, after all, which can be worth rewarding" (Shaftesbury *Sensus*, 46). Virtue was not tied to religion for him and he observes that for Christians, only voluntary virtues like "private friendship and zeal for the public and our country" that do not earn rewards in the afterlife, may therefore have the quality of disinterestedness and virtue (Shaftesbury *Sensus*, 46).

Shaftesbury's main philosophical work, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit* (1711), has been read as a renewal of a classical account of society viewed as an organic whole and this view invoked an equation between the virtuous and happy way of life.[5] Shaftesbury tried to negotiate the growing view of seeing man as inclined to self-interest produced largely by the influence of Thomas Hobbes. The debate on the selfish passions in man was co-produced alongside a vigorous discussion on the natural compassion in man for many moral sense philosophers like Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury's account of virtue involves the passions as playing a role, social passions which are powerful in making man benevolent.

In this essay, I show how Shaftesbury transforms the practice of virtue into a dynamic quality. He examines the passions in relation to virtue to show that individuals could desire the collective good through their passions. Virtue for Shaftesbury is imbued with passion, as the natural passions were beginning to be conceived in the period as a source of man's compelling inclination to sympathy and benevolence towards others. There was a shift to how the passions as an inevitable part of man were to be negotiated.

2. The self-reflexive self

With Shaftesbury's writings, eighteenth-century moral philosophy took a modern turn in its question about virtue in a society of increasingly "disembedded" individuals, as Charles Taylor as termed it.[6] In his magisterial history of the self in Western thought, Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self*, offers a broad argument on how a self-reflexive self comes to its "full form" in Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers (Taylor *Sources of the Self,* 160).[7] A greater sense of individuation permeated the idea of the self in the eighteenth century which had come to indicate a self-reflexive individual as the object of his own reflective consciousness, a subject of his own feelings, and viewed by his own cognition.[8] A society of individuals had to be re-imagined as they were no longer organically linked in social relations.

The sense of selfhood was now imbued with an idea of a reflexive consciousness. This idea had been most prominently elaborated on by John Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). As we know, Locke's notion of consciousness is one that is always "of" or "about" something,

the preposition dividing the subject from the object, even if the two are one and the same person. Consciousness in man is to register what knowledge he receives. Locke describes consciousness as noting or attending to what is outside us or in our minds which produces knowledge — consciousness is "our Observation employ'd either about external, sensible objects; or about the internal operation of our Minds, perceived or reflected on by ourselves" that produces knowledge (Locke, Book II, chap. I.2 p. 104)[9]. "Observation" entails a noticing, and Locke's word "employ'd" suggests an effort that is purposeful. For Locke, even in the most immediate and passive receiving of impressions, a consciousness of taking in ideas is present. Consciousness creates a mediation that is implicit in all selfhood. The imagining of one's own mind resulted in the understanding of the self as available in a virtual register. Shaftesbury views a self-reflexive human subjectivity as creating a peculiar alienation within man, and also between man and society. This detracted from man's capacity to naturally desire the good of all, a problem he seeks to resolve with a recuperation of the passions in the interest of sociability.

This kind of individuation where the self was mediated and therefore in a way, virtual rather than immediately experienced, meant that solidarity or a connection with other individuals in society had to be imagined in new ways. Virtual subjects would not cohere into a spontaneously felt society, as an individual subject did not immediately connect to a collective. This modern sense of subjectivity led to the notion that people may not feel naturally inclined towards the good of a larger collective outside of one's familiars, a concern I will show below in my reading of Shaftesbury. A connectedness between people had to be based now on a new imagined fellowship in a public sphere, as Jürgen Habermas calls it, one that was not perceived as an organic society but an imagined or virtual collective.[10] Michael McKeon explains Jürgen Habermas's idea of the virtuality of the public sphere as a "discursive realm of imagined collectivity where people 'come together' in a sense far different from their traditional assembly in the agora, the public square, the meeting hall, or the like" (McKeon, 276). As McKeon notes, "the virtualization of the public sphere" needed "a re-conceptualization of the faculty of the imagination as capable… of a remarkably powerful and productive sort of human solidarity" (276). In other words, the representation of social bonds now had to be produced through a simulated connection between an individual and others. To this end, the philosophy of Shaftesbury in his treatise *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit* (1711), and later the Scottish philosopher Frances Hutcheson in *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), sought to sketch a continuum between the vividness of passions that may be felt in particular encounters between individuals, and the more abstract idea of a public or society.

3. Self-interest and Public interest as One

Shaftesbury invigorated the debate on "common sense or the love of mankind" as essentially constituting the sociability of man (*Sensus*, 57).[11] He deplored the narrow Hobbesian view that man suppresses natural affection "turning every passion towards private advantage, a narrow self-end" (*Sensus*, 56). The terms "society" and "public" in the eighteenth century (where "public" was often

used as an adjective like public interest, public good, public spiritedness) were often drawn together by writers, for instance, like Shaftesbury who says that "a public spirit can come only from a social feeling or sense of partnership with human kind [...] There is no real love of virtue without the knowledge of public good" (*Sensus*, 50). The social and public are aligned here just as public good and virtue are aligned too.[12]

The notion of a public good was not new, and according to J. A. W Gunn, it was re-conceived from an earlier version of a common good.[13] The traditional view of the common good was that private interests must bow before the common good, whereas the newer individualist discourse pitted private interests as a counter to state or monarchical interest. Hence the gradual replacement of "common good" with "public interest" or "public good" can be observed. It was towards this public good that Shaftesbury argues for a consciousness of an organic universe. Virtue for him lay in actively perceiving the interconnectedness of all beings.

In order to establish what virtue may comprise, early in the *Inquiry* Shaftesbury distinguishes between "goodness" which for him means an affection for others available in all species, and "virtue" which for him is a reflection on goodness, a capacity exclusive to humans. Shaftesbury defines goodness as what is fit or appropriate in "every living creature" (plant, animal or man) in relation to its essence and in consonance with the harmony of "a system or whole" to which the thing belongs. Therefore, nothing can be good or bad unto itself only. He then rebuts the idea of man as disincorporated from society, by using a series of linked metaphors from nature that stress an organic view of the universe – where beings relate to each other as the limbs and organs relate to the body, just as leaves and branches of trees to each other and to one root. In such a system, an anomalous part in a network affects the whole, just as one "pernicious man" is "justly styled an ill man" as he ill-fits in with others and with his own real nature which is connected to others (Shaftesbury *Inquiry*, 169). The metaphors of part-whole that are likened to creature-species and man-society allow for parts to exist as units but not independently of each other or of the whole.

For Shaftesbury, persons do not just aggregate into a society, but must come together as they affect each other. Virtue, or 'merit' by which he means a self-conscious sense of virtue, is predicated on man recognizing the web-like nature of the universe and his embedded position in it. The joining of parts to make a whole is extended infinitely whereby each constituted whole is a part of a larger system. In human terms, this means that a society is not just a conglomeration of people in a whole system but also a firmly-tied group of units gesturing towards something beyond itself. People are not just a part of society, but as he puts it, society is part of a "globe or earth," which is further a part of another system like a "galaxy" (Shaftesbury *Inquiry,*169). His positioning of a whole into a part of something larger, serves to tighten its constituent units so that they lose their discrete identities and forge a whole, thus fitting into a larger organic whole. By establishing the interrelated parts of systems, which exist because of the harmony amongst each other, Shaftesbury can claim that virtue must consist in the recognition of that which benefits the system to which a creature belongs.

Since society is shown as an organic whole and the individual as inextricably tied to others,

Shaftesbury points out that no self-interest which is inimical to the good of all can really be a good even to the individual. Even an injury to any part, he argues, hurts the whole, and conversely a good for the system will benefit the individual:

> Now if, by the natural constitution of any rational creature, the same irregularities of appetite which make him ill to others, make him ill also to himself, and if the same regularity of affections, which causes him to be good in one sense causes him to be good also in the other, then is that goodness by which he is thus useful to others a real good and advantage to himself. And thus, virtue and interest may be found at last to agree. (Shaftesbury *Inquiry*, 167)

In this passage "appetite" and "affections" are viewed as "irregular" and "regular" respectively. He suggests that appetite is a desire for a personal gratification without any rectitude, and it makes the individual and the system he is part of ill. Shaftesbury emphasizes that true interest cannot be just self-interest, and therefore cannot be opposed to public interest but in fact public interest and our self-interest "agree" or concur. The phrase "regularity of affections" suggests a conformity or symmetry of affections within a system that results in harmony so that "at last" or eventually, interest and virtue coincide. In such a framework, self-interest in the way Shaftesbury conceives of it, cannot be conceived apart from the interest of others. Therefore, the equation of virtue with interest is not to accommodate a private self-interest that is not compatible with the good of others, but to dismiss as illogical the idea of a discrete self-interest. For Shaftesbury, therefore, that which "the subject considered as private good, is not really such but imaginary," an impossibility because good cannot but be of all (Shaftesbury *Inquiry*, 170). The spectre of people placing their private good above society's good, haunts Shaftesbury even as he points out its cosmic harm. So, he firmly dismisses the idea of a private benefit, which is not in tune with the public, as "imaginary" or illogical.

Once Shaftesbury has shown the private and public as overlapping and the welfare of both as congruent, he pursues the logic of this argument so that a reader must acknowledge this congruence and must reflect on his own actions. Though goodness is natural and universal to all creatures, it is the possibility of conscious virtue or merit that differentiates men from other creatures. Selfishness must then be recognized not only as an immoral choice but as an irrational one: "Everyone discerns and owns a public interest, and is conscious of what affects his fellowship or community. When we say, therefore, of a creature that 'he has wholly lost the sense of right and wrong', we suppose that, being able to discern the good and ill of his species, he has at the same time no concern for either" (Shaftesbury *Inquiry*, 177-78). Shaftesbury stresses that those who pursue their self-interest to the exclusion of the interests of "their species," can "discern" what constitutes the public good, but nevertheless are showing a deliberate lack of concern for it. The conflation of being "conscious" and having "concern" is a significant move that tries to bind together affections or the passions, and consciousness. Shaftesbury seeks to show that an ideal and happy person in desiring public good, is making both a conscious move and following a natural social instinct.

Shaftesbury looks to the passions, not as other philosophers who viewed the passions as

leading man to error or mis-judgment, but as a basis for natural human benevolence and a concern for others, a moral sense quite like other human senses, and akin to taste. To explain the immediacy or instinctive nature of virtue, he compares this moral instinct or sense to man's aesthetic responses to art and music. The ability to sense what is harmonious for the order we live in, is for Shaftesbury akin to our aesthetic capacity to admire harmony and beauty. Shaftesbury stresses on our 'mind's sensor 'in detecting an ill action, just as we might detect an off-key note in music or an incongruity in a painting:

> The mind, which is spectator or auditor of other minds, cannot be without its eye and ear so as to discern proportion, distinguish sound, and scan each sentiment or thought which comes before it. It can let nothing escape its censure. It feels the soft and harsh, the agreeable and disagreeable in the affections, and finds a foul and fair, a harmonious and a dissonant, as really and truly here as in any musical numbers or in the outward forms or representations of sensible things. (Shaftesbury *Inquiry*, 172-73)

Shaftesbury sees our mind as a sensory organ responding to impressions, and the mind's perceiving and judging the behaviour and actions of others is just like the eyes and ears perceive and judge objects. He likens our mind's looking and listening to the thoughts and feelings of others, to our aesthetic responses to beauty that we feel "in the affections." We can detect through our affections a discordant note in those minds that are out of tune or in discord with the rest of society. The idea of a moral sense that Frances Hutcheson would later view as a mode in his writings, Shaftesbury here delineates as a capacity in man to be esteemed and valued.[14]

Thus virtue, in Shaftesbury's definition, holds together a sensory perception of an idea and a conscious knowledge of it. Shaftesbury's emphasis on consciousness of the mind echoes many ideas from John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). But Shaftesbury deploys sensation and reflection as a mutual process. The conceptual overlap between sensation and reflection is intensified in Shaftesbury's application of it to virtue.[15] Shaftesbury argues that with man's natural moral affections, an affection is developed for affections, that is to say, affections like kindness are objects too and virtue lies in an affection for itself.

Shaftesbury divides the self as having a natural goodness, then he has a self-consciousness of goodness that can be called virtue, and then man develops an affection for virtue itself. In a Lockean move, where the thoughts and feelings in the mind are themselves objects, Shaftesbury says:

> In a creature capable of forming general notions of things, not only the outward beings which offer themselves to the sense are the objects of the affection, but the very actions themselves, and the affections of pity, kindness, gratitude, and their contraries, being brought into the mind by reflection, become objects. So that, by means of this reflected sense, there arises another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the subject of a new liking or dislike. (Shaftesbury *Inquiry*, 172)

The relation between the sensation of goodness, and the reflection on virtue, becomes reflexive. In the above passage, affections like kindness are objects too and virtue lies in an affection for itself. Sensation relates particular experiences like receiving kindness, and reflection allows for an affection for the general quality of kindness. In suggesting a subsequent affection for virtue, the sequence becomes dialectical where goodness being an instinctive affection for the species, and virtue being a conceptual understanding of the organic nature of the species, the individual develops an affection for the concept of virtue, just as self-conscious virtue partakes of intuitive goodness. This two-way model allows for a back and forth between the experience of goodness, and an understanding of its necessity and value.

4. Role of the Passions in Virtue

It is important to see how Shaftesbury brings the natural passions in man to play a role complementary with a self-conscious goodness. In reading his treatise, we can perceive how Shaftesbury brings together a conscious commitment to public good in line with an instinct for benevolence in man. The passions were now increasingly accommodated into becoming a significant source of virtue in man.[16] The reliance on instinct in the formation of social bonds that Shaftesbury argues for reveals sympathy or the 'affections 'as the underlying bond between individuals, and when this sympathy is expanded across a spectrum, it could create bonds within a larger community. A desire for what he calls "universal good" was theorized along with the representation of relations between individuals as an affectively powerful one.

The problem identified by Shaftesbury and other moral sense philosophers like Frances Hutcheson in his *An Inquiry Concerning the Original of Our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good* (1725), David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) and Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) was not just of self-interest but of the abstract nature of public good that precluded in man a naturally-felt inclination towards it. Personal relations or even relations between particular strangers could evoke benevolence in man, but his lack of "affection" for a remote collective was a challenge since the source of inclination for an imaginative connect with an impersonal collective was unclear. Shaftesbury explains the problem lying in the difference between an immediate experience and reflecting on an abstract idea, and between the felt perception of a "community" and the imagination of a "body politic":

> Universal good, or the interest of the world in general, is a kind of remote philosophical object. [...] In less [smaller] parties, men may be intimately conversant and acquainted with one another. They can there better taste society and enjoy the common good and interest of a more contracted public. They view the whole compass and extent of their community, and see and know particularly whom they serve and to what end they associate and conspire. [...] [Their concern] can never find exercise for itself in so remote a sphere as that of the body politic at large. [...] The close sympathy and conspiring virtue is apt to lose itself for want of direction in so wide a field. (Shaftesbury *Sensus Communis*, 52)

The ability in men to visually embrace a smaller "contracted public" allows a familiarity that gives them a purpose and drive towards a common good. But the abstract idea of a public did not evoke man's social passions.

Shaftesbury thus attempts to define sociability through personal affective bonds, and link it to a desire for the welfare of an impersonal and virtual public. He termed "sociableness" or "associating spirits" (Shaftesbury *Sensus*, 53) as a natural desire in men to associate or feel connected with others. Shaftesbury elaborates on this desire by using various terms like "herding," "fellowship," and "affection" that he says leads man from love for his narrow circle of "kindred and clan" to a wider collective like a "country," and finally to "universal good" (Shaftesbury *Sensus*, 51). In other words, sociability includes man's personal and intimate ties with his familiar circle, as well as his relation to an impersonal society. For Shaftesbury, it is this widening spiral of the social passions emanating from man and progressing outward and through which "a public is recognized" (Shaftesbury *Sensus*, 51).

5. Conclusion

What becomes visible in my reading of Shaftesbury is that although instinct comes to be associated with the private sphere of an individual, and consciousness with his relationship to the public, this split between reason and passion is not strictly dichotomous in the eighteenth century. Even the most abstract reflections on the common good can be inflected with the passions since they provide momentum for activity whether of the mind or body.

Shaftesbury's treatise evoked a new idea of a self-reflexive sociability, one that is highly self-conscious and yet instinctive, anticipating future models of a sociability based on a moral sense. This model of linking the particularity of goodness and the generality of public spiritedness allows for an embedding of a desire for public good within what Shaftesbury believed was the natural goodness of man.

Endnotes:

1. See a comprehensive account of this shift in Susan James, "The passions and the good life" in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 210.
2. Bernard Mandeville had initially published a poem on this theme titled "The Grumbling Hive" in 1705, which he then included in a full commentary on virtue and vice in his work *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714), both published anonymously.
3. For example, Frances Hutcheson, a moral philosopher of the eighteenth century, and admirer of Shaftesbury uses "public" most often as an oppositional term to any kind of selfish gain, for example, "publick spirit" against "selfish," "publick good" versus "self-interest" (99) and "publick Good" versus "private Advantage" in his treatise *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, in Two Treatises*, edited by Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004 (104).
4. *Sensus Communis* in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). This text is referred to as *Sensus* in my article, and page numbers are given parenthetically to this edition. As is the common practice in scholarship on the third Earl of Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper), he is referred to as Shaftesbury in my article.

5. See Isabel Rivers, who reads Shaftesbury's career as demonstrating "the classical tension between otium [retirement] and negotium [service], between on the one hand, private retirement, self-examination, and individual virtue, and on the other, public service, love of one's country, and the good of the whole... For Shaftesbury true self-knowledge is not possible without wide commerce with the world, private virtue without commitment to public good" in *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, Volume II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 96.
6. I take this term 'disembedded' from Charles Taylor, who terms the eighteenth century as the end of what he calls the "Great Disembedding" (Taylor *Modern Social Imaginaries,* 77) which he explains as the process by which people are unmoored from a social matrix and society is "reconceived as made up of individuals" in the eighteenth century (Taylor *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 78).
7. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).
8. Charles Taylor, in his book *Sources of the Self,* distinguishes between being able to think about the self, and what he calls a "radically reflexive stance that emerges through the adoption of the first-person standpoint" (*Sources* 130). In his history of the self, Taylor grants the origins of "radical reflexivity" to Augustine, who sees it as a way to God, that "brings to the fore a kind of presence to oneself which is inseparable from being the agent of experience" (131) and that "this reflexivity is central to our moral understanding" (139). In Taylor's trajectory, Locke pushes this reflexivity further where a person is not just a self but always an awareness of a self. Taylor remarks on how this "completely third-person" perspective creates a human being from which "the last vestiges of subjectivity seem to have been expelled" (175-176).
9. John Locke's treatise *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
10. For this account of the public sphere, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989) where a "bourgeoise public sphere" is "the sphere of private people come together as a public (27). He says how the word "public" started to be used in Great Britain instead of "world" or "mankind" (26).
11. Shaftesbury's term 'common sense' is explained as the common interest of mankind in *Sensus Communis, An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (1709), his playful piece on the importance of genuinely free conversation in producing virtue.
12. In *Sensus Communis*, Shaftesbury melds common sense with common good – "[Some commentators] make this common sense of the poet, by a Greek derivation, to signify sense of public weal and of the common interest, love of the community or society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness, or that sort of civility which rises from a just sense of the common rights of mankind, and the natural equality there is among those of the same species" (48).
13. Gunn explains that the term 'common good' held too many traditional moral associations so either the term public interest or public good were used, the former often in a political context. He reminds us that the term 'public interest' became common from the seventeenth century beginning with the civil war, "gradually replacing the 'common good' of scholastic philosophy and the '*salus populi*' favoured by Roman law" (Gunn, ix). Moral philosophy exerts pressure to renew a desire for this refurbished public good.
14. Ernest Tuveson, in his article "The origins of 'moral sense'", says that the term "moral sense," later seen as a school by many, is used just once by Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury's broader argument is that "the mind's case in respect of that natural affection and anticipating fancy, which makes the sense of right and wrong" is independent from religious beliefs and atheism (Shaftesbury *Inquiry*, 179-80).
15. Despite Shaftesbury's reliance on Locke's empiricism, his ethical beliefs seem distinct from Locke's in the sense that Shaftesbury asserts an internal space for moral affections in man while Locke views

morality as arising from empirical experiences and has a somewhat utilitarian outlook. Shaftesbury in his letters was open in his criticism of Locke, who had been his tutor. For a discussion on this relation, see Jason Aronson about Shaftesbury on Locke ("Critical Note: Shaftesbury on Locke"). Locke's morality is tied to his epistemology where he tries to prove that knowledge is particular and we are not born with any general maxims. Lawrence Klein argues that Shaftesbury may agree with Locke's politics but not with his atomistic view of humans – "Shaftesbury sympathized with Locke's political beliefs but not his attempt to ground them on the consequences of a supposed natural state prior to society. A humanity prior to society was simply inconceivable if one insisted on natural human sociability" (Klein, xxviii).

16. Ann Van Sant, for instance, draws our attention to "the general shift of the foundation of moral life from reason and judgment to the affection," as the passions were cited as the source for "an intensely felt humanity or philanthropy" (Van Sant, 5).

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The Representation of Music in the Novels of Chinua Achebe, Aminata Sow Fall and Zora Neale Hurston

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Abstract:

This paper explores the multidimensional concept of musical representation in the African and African American novel with a focus on the works of Chinua Achebe, Aminata Sow Fall and Zora Neale Hurston. It analyzes how music conveys meaning both within and beyond linguistic frameworks. It contributes to the philosophical debates surrounding whether music can represent anything beyond its popular concept as means of entertainment. The study delves into the role of metaphors, symbols, gestures, and embodied cognition in musical understanding, arguing that listeners often credit narrative or emotive content to musical structures. Drawing on the examples of these prominent writers, the paper highlights how musical motifs can evoke movement, emotion, or narrative arcs without requiring textual elements. Finally, the paper concludes that music as a representational system operates through dynamic, non-verbal analogies to human experience; it challenges, to some extent, the notion that representation requires fixed semantic content.

Keywords: Music, folklore, aesthetics, rhythm, oral tradition, song

African and African American literatures have been shaped by a constant dialogue with traditional cultural forms among which music stands as a foundational pillar. Far from being confined to an aesthetic or entertaining function, music plays a structuring role in the narrative and symbolic architecture of literary works. In both African and African American societies, music is more than a mere art form; it is a language, a repository of memory, a ritual and social act, and a medium for communal expression. It preserves the traces of oral tradition, passed down through generations, and lies at the heart of everyday life, religious practices, social struggles, and expressions of identity. This is particularly apparent in the works of these novelists: the Nigerian Chinua Achebe, the Senegalese Aminata Sow Fall, and the African American Zora Neale Hurston.

These different writers give music a significant role in their novels. Through aesthetics rooted in orality, they weave musical elements—songs, rhythms, traditional instruments, or gospel—into the fabric of their novels. Music becomes a symbolic carrier of social cohesion, a voice of the ancestors, a means of resistance to overcome some psychological situations. It also appears as a mode of expression through which collective memory is extoled within the novel.

From this perspective, it is relevant to ask the following questions: how does music, as a cultural code and narrative device, contribute to the structuring of the African and African American novel? What role does it play in the literary projects of these authors? How does it build the connection between tradition and modernity, orality and textuality? This study proposes to examine the semiotic, symbolic, and aesthetic functions of music within a representative corpus of the afore-mentioned literatures. It comprises Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Aminata Sow Fall's *Le Jujubier du partriarche* (1993) and *Douceurs du bercail* (1998), and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939). Through a comparative and interdisciplinary analysis, drawing on narratology, anthropology, and semiotics, to some extent, the study highlights the role of music as a revealing force for identity and aesthetic choices.

Building on the theories of cultural intertextuality (Kristeva, Bakhtin), orality (Walter Ong) and the poetics of orature (Pio Zirimu), the objective of the study is to show that music is not only a textual motif, but an active principle in the construction of meaning. It operates simultaneously as a structuring element of the narrative, to some extent, a dissident voice, and an embodied memory. For Anne Mila (2006), "music in the African novel is analyzed as an extension of the poetic, touching the reader's senses through an aesthetic of textual musicality". In the African American field, spirituals and gospel are studied as forms of resistance and consolation during slavery. William T. Powell (2004) recalls that negro spirituals were both songs of survival and secret codes between slaves. In the twentieth century, gospel, born in urban black churches, became a music of liberation.

Indeed, in the corpus of this study, music stands as a means of revalorization of the oral tradition. One can go along with the general opinion which sustains that music in the texts of African authors is strongly linked to its role in traditional society. It is an element in the survival of "oral culture". In other words, "writers and poets want to safeguard their traditional values". However, it is not as apparent in one work as it is in another but very symbolic in terms of aesthetic value as it proves to be very expressive. Therefore, it is important to notice that its presence—or absence—in some novels (notably in Achebe's and Sow Fall's later works) can be understood in light of the sociocultural transformations their societies have undergone, marked by modernization, urbanization, and postcolonial political crises.

This paper, thus, seeks to demonstrate that music, in African and African American literatures, is not a mere folkloric backdrop, but a fully realized mode of expression, a space for re-creating reality, and a symbolic weapon of cultural reappropriation. It is an instrument of narration, subversion, and memory, and it allows writers to assert a literary voice rooted in tradition while remaining resolutely contemporary.

One might, then, ask to what extent does music, as a cultural expression rooted in oral tradition, constitute an aesthetic, symbolic, and narrative lever through which African and African American writers pen their works within a dynamics of memory, resistance, and identity construction? This paper seeks to argue that in the novels of Chinua Achebe, Aminata Sow Fall, and Zora Neale Hurston, music—be it traditional, religious, or epic—music functions as a matrix of meaning that organizes

the narrative while serving as a channel for collective memory. Its recurring presence, ritual intensity, emotional charge, or occasional absence are closely tied to the historical, social, and spatial context of each work. It appears as a major cultural indicator that reveals both a deep anchoring in orality and the authors' desire to revalorize a distinctly African or African American aesthetic feature within the novel.

Indeed, the study of music in African and African American literatures has given rise to a range of works that intersect literary aesthetics, cultural anthropology, colonial history, and postcolonial criticism. Far from being a mere decorative element, music emerges as an identity vector, a site of memory, a form of "written orality", and a full-fledged narrative strategy. Celestine Chukwuemeka Mbaegbu emphasizes the fundamental role of traditional African music as a "vehicle of emotions" and a "total art form," combining instruments, voice, and ritual function. According to Mbaegbu, music is not merely expressive; it is embedded in African social life and belief systems, which makes it a legitimate and powerful literary substance:

> African music on the other hand is unique in itself. It is any sounds produced by playing indigenous African instruments like the wooden drum *Ekwe*, and other major and minor wind instruments like the *Ogene*, the *Udu*, the *Flutes*, and the *Oyo*, etc. African music also includes any sound produced by the Africans with their mouths popularly known as the "African Voices". The most important thing about any type of African music is that it has beauty of form and is intended to communicate some emotion. (Mbaegbu 2015, 177)

This view aligns with the ideas of Amadou Hampâté Bâ who saw oral arts as the foundations of collective memory in Africa. In fact, the inclusion of songs, rhythms, and musical utterances in the African novel has been explored by Paul Zumthor (1983), who speaks of "voices in the text" and the survival of oral performance in written storytelling. For scholars, music in the African novel is an extension of the poetic, which appeals to the reader's senses through an aesthetic of textual musicality. In the African American context, spirituals and gospel songs have been studied as forms of resistance and consolation during slavery. William T. Powell (2004) reminds us that Negro spirituals were both survival songs and coded messages among enslaved people. Gospel, which emerged in urban Black churches in the 20th century, evolved into a liberating force. Zora Neale Hurston, rooted in the Harlem Renaissance tradition, draws from it to integrate scenes of ritual singing, "call and response," and musical performance into her narratives, emphasizing the link between spirituality, suffering, and emancipation.

As for Chinua Achebe, music is inseparable from folklore—the oral, mythological, and ritual heritage of Igbo culture. Scholars such as Biodun Jeyifo and Kwame Anthony Appiah have shown that the postcolonial African novel often acts as a "site for the transcription of the oral world," where drums, songs, and dances function as identity markers. This process of "orature"—a term popularized by Pio Zirimu—serves to de-westernize the novel's aesthetics by grounding it in endogenous systems of representation. Thus, researchers have emphasized that music acts as a structuring poetic principle

in these novels. It permeates the syntax, infuses the narrative with lyrical tonality, and alters the reader's reception of the text.

Music plays a central role in the novels under study. Mbaegbu defines it as follows:

> The term music means sounds made by playing instruments or singing. *Chambers Universal Learners Dictionary* defines music as the art of arranging and combining tones or sounds in order and often together to make a complete unit which has beauty of form and which is intended to communicate some emotion. (174)

In fact, music is deeply embedded in African and African American societies, where it remains a rich cultural legacy. It plays a fundamental role in these societies as both a unifying force and a vehicle for communication. According to Mbaegbu (2015), music occupies a particular and important place in African culture: "The most important thing about any type of African music is that it has beauty of form and is intended to communicate some emotion." (177)

This aspect reflects a highly significant cultural code in the lives of African peoples. While each society has its own culture, music remains a universal art form and one of the most widely shared cultural elements across the globe—hence its ubiquitous presence in world literatures. The underlying idea is that every culture uses music according to its own realities and cultural context. As a living art, music exists in all societies and functions as a force of social mobilization and cohesion. It has undergone many developments over time, with different musical forms emerging from the historical evolution of peoples. One may distinguish between traditional music, religious music, and modern or popular music. However, the latter is not fundamentally different from the traditional kind, as it often represents a modernization or industrialization of earlier forms—essentially a transformation or adaptation across time and space.

In the African context, Mbaegbu identifies various types of music and their respective functions:

> Mother Africa can be said to be a land of diverse music, and any type of African music plays a vital role, hence the existence of such, because Africans believe that the purpose of anything gives meaning and existence to the thing itself. Mother Africa hosts three categories of music among which are traditional, popular and classical. Traditional music includes all traditional or folk music that serve as media of expression of African people's culture. (179)

In this analysis, I focus primarily on traditional and religious music. Popular music is largely absent from the novels under study. It is worth noting that the term "folklore" is often trivialized and misunderstood. In Senegal, for instance, folklore is commonly associated with fantasy, flamboyance, dance, leisure, and other light-hearted aspects of culture. However, music remains a central and serious component of folklore.

In this paper, I am concerned with music as an art form and as a legacy of oral tradition. All three writers—Chinua Achebe, Aminata Sow Fall, and Zora Neale Hurston—highlight the cultural

dimension of their works through an aesthetic and poetics shaped by music. It is important to note that traditional music predominates in the African novel, while Hurston's fiction is more marked by religious music, particularly Gospel and Spirituals. This difference is contextual: the type of music used by each author corresponds to their socio-historical background.

The presence of music in the African novel is not surprising. As an artist of their communities, writers use music as a backdrop to the novel. Accordingly, Chinua Achebe offers a folkloric portrayal of Igbo culture through the use of traditional music. This representation is particularly apparent in his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, where he shows how music unites the people, strengthens social bonds, and animates the community. Music functions as a driver of social cohesion and cultural vitality. A relevant illustration is the New Year's celebration in *Things Fall Apart*. In Chapter Six, Achebe depicts a vivid folkloric scene during the second day of the New Year marked by a traditional wrestling match. On this occasion, musicians are vital to the festivities. The narrator describes the scene in a lyrical and poetic tone:

> The whole village turned out on the ilo, men, women and children. They stood round in a huge circle leaving the centre of the playground free. The elders and grandees of the villages sat on their own stools brought there by their young sons or slaves. Okonkwo was among them. All others stood except those who came early enough to secure places on the few stands which had been built by placing smooth logs on forked pillars. [...] There were seven drums and they were arranged according to their sizes in a long wooden basket. There, men beat them with sticks, working feverishly from one drum to another. They were possessed by the spirit of the drum. [...] At last the two teams danced into the circle and the crowd roared and clapped. The drums rose to a frenzy. The people surged forward. The young men who kept order flew around, waving their palm fronds. Old men nodded to the beat of the drums and remembered the days when they wrestled to its intoxicating rhythm. (Achebe 1958*,* 33*)*

This passage reveals how music operates through both drummers and wrestlers. Their actions are driven by the emotional force of music. As the narrator tells, the drummers become "possessed" by the music in the heat of their performance. This effect is emphasized when the narrator observes that, during the break, the drummers became "ordinary human beings" again: "The drummers stopped for a brief rest before the real matches. Their bodies shone with sweat [...] They became ordinary human beings again, talking and laughing among themselves and with others who stood near them." (Achebe 1958*, 34)*

This passage from the novel conveys a crucial idea: in the midst of their performance, the drummers show, to some extent, a kind of energy that seems unnatural. Thus, it becomes clear that there is a magical power embedded in this type of music. This is noticeably different from popular or modern music, which has been spreading and dominating the global music scene in recent decades. Traditional music, on the other hand, contains a multitude of cultural codes that are deeply tied to specific circumstances. It also carries a certain mystery and acts as a catalyst—it drives the individual beyond conscious awareness.

A particularly striking example occurs when Okonkwo is overtaken by the rhythm of music during the funeral of the elder Ezeudu in Chapter 13 of *Things Fall Apart*. The narrator recounts it tragically in the following lines:

> The drums and the dancing began and reached fever heat. Darkness was around the corner, and the burial was near. Guns fired the last salute and the cannon rent the sky. [...] All was silent. In the centre of the crowd a boy lay in a pool of blood. It was the dead man's sixteen-year-old son, who with his brothers and half-brothers had been dancing the traditional farewell to their father. Okonkwo's gun had exploded and a piece of iron had pierced the boy's heart. (86)

The narrator depicts a funeral ritual in which clan members dance to the tune of traditional music. By accident, Okonkwo kills the deceased person's son. This tragic event marks a turning point for him, as the music possesses him to the point of transgressing a sacred norm. He has to pay for this abominable act. Thus, he will be in exile for seven years. The narrator stresses that: "the only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman." (87)

Music, then, emerges as an essential cultural component during key life events. It is celebrated as a ritual and exerts, somehow, an uncontrollable effect on the individual; it possesses the soul and dominates it. This echoes what Jean Paul Sartre said about music in black culture: "It is rhythm that cements the multiple aspects of the black soul (...) it is the *tam-tam*, jazz, bouncing rhythm of these poems that figures the temporality of negro existence" (Sartre cited by Sacharewicz, 2019, 47). This dimension of music is emphasized by the poetic and lyrical tone of the narrative. In the above-mentioned funeral scene in *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator lingers on the impact of music, evoking the reader's passion or compassion, depending on the context. In festive moments, music takes on a poetic and lyrical tone that reflects the joy and entertainment of the event; while in ritual contexts, such as funerals, its magical or supernatural dimension transforms it into an instrument of possession. Such a portrayal by Achebe draws directly from Igbo folklore, which he celebrates and revalorizes in his art. As a matter of fact, the novel displays it through a lyrical and poetic register. Many events and cultural practices in *Things Fall Apart* exemplify this phenomenon.

By contrast, this aspect of music is less noticeable in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. It appears only occasionally—for instance, when Ikem recites a poem by David Diop or during the celebration of Elewa's child's naming ceremony. This is understandable given the novel's context, which conditions the presence of music as an aesthetic element. The sociocultural atmosphere in his first novel differs significantly from that of the last one. The setting is not the same. *Things Fall Apart* is anchored in a traditional society where oral culture lies at the heart of African civilization, especially in rural folk culture. *Anthills of the Savannah* is set in an urbanized, modern environment where the sociopolitical concerns overshadow the space by music occupies traditionally.

Given its themes and context, the presence of traditional music as an element of folklore would be disconnected from the central message of *Anthills of the Savannah*. Indeed, the novels

span two very different historical moments. *Things Fall Apart* refers to the precolonial and early colonial periods—circa the 1850s—while the latter novel focuses on the post-independence era, i.e., after the 1960s. This temporal gap may explain the absence of this cultural *décor* in Achebe's later novel, which is a political satire employing other forms of folklore without relying heavily on music.

As for Aminata Sow Fall, the physical setting influences the novel's content and context. It is in *Le jujubier du partriarche* that this connection is more clearly manifested. Traditional music plays a dominant role, particularly through the figure of Naani, an artist-character. In addition to the musical *décor*, there is a strong presence of traditional epic songs recited during specific rituals or gatherings. These songs serve the same cultural and spiritual purpose as traditional music.

In traditional ceremonies, the *griot* (traditional artist) is always at the forefront. He gets the audience to reconnect with the most cherished components of their cultural heritage. Through soft, evocative music, he catches the attention of the public. It brings culture to life and reaffirms the value of traditional society. Naani, in his dual role as artist and protagonist, never fails in his mission to connect people to their history and to safeguard the tradition of which he is the living memory. The passage below is one of the most beautiful moments in the novel that captures this role vividly:

> Later, everyone gathered in the central square of Babyselli, under the soft light of the moon preparing to retire. Naani sat in the middle for a memorable vigil. His hoarse yet still bewitching voice, despite his age, covered Babyselli. He announced that he would enter the epic of Foudjallon through the twelfth gate, where Guéladio bids farewell to the hunt after Dioumana flees into the belly of Tarou the whale. Naani plucked his *xalam* and his voice sailed into the sleepy night. (*Sow Fall 1993,* 122)

The griot's art contributes to the poetic imagination of the writer. Naani engages with the people through an art form that is precious to him and vital for the survival of culture. As an artist, he takes on the responsibility of preserving tradition. The cultural watch he holds with the folks, fascinates the audience. It come out that he is a gifted performer; well-admired by the entire community of Babyselli.

The following sentence tells a lot on the importance of music: *"Naani plucked his xalam, and his voice rose into the night under the watchful moon."* (123). It evokes the great moments of oral tradition, when the griot would connect with the community during a cultural watch, allowing the audience to recall their ancestral history. This scene, in which the narrator portrays Naani with his musical instrument before his audience, recalls the thoughts of the famous Senegalese musician Baaba Maal, who comments on the *griot*'s role in African oral tradition in his song *Taara*:

> African, my brother [...] listen to your music!
> It is the voice of our gods and of our ancestors.
> In the evening, during our cultural performances, our griots,
> after a moment of deep reflection,
> play the tune of a Taara on their guitars. (my translation)

In this artistic practice, traditional music and the song as an oral genre go hand in hand as they are intrinsically linked. Music accompanies the voice and gives rhythm to words. However, the song alone can fulfill both roles, since it is composed of melodic elements that carry musicality through its poetic and lyrical nature. This melodic and lyrical character of the song expressed through assonances and alliterations, provides the song with a sort of magical power. These phonetic devices enhance the musical dimension and drive the listener or reader into a world of musical poetry. To this end, the song lulls the individual and possesses them, just as music does. At this level, the reader is exposed to what Anne Mila calls "sensory imagination".

> Music, as a strong link in African oral culture, has been transmuted from oral to written form into a different modern form, one that is a priori unsuited to the written medium. It is no longer aural, no longer a matter of hearing but of seeing. Paradoxical as it may seem at first glance, this integration of elements from the oral tradition into writing, through poetry and the novel, appeals to the reader's sensory imagination. (Mila 2006, 44)

The song, therefore, becomes a musical embodiment of the *word* and its implication in the novel gives the narrative a poetic, lyrical, and melodic character, whether rendered in prose or in verse. Thus, when reading the songs embedded in the novels of Achebe and Sow Fall, one gets into an exercise of mimetic performance or epic recitation. In this way, the text moves the reader and takes them to feel emotional effects. The reader becomes active, journeying into a lyrical realm marked by rhythm and traditional poetry, where the *magical word* takes over.

The verses below from *Le jujubier du patriarche* are a relevant example of this phenomenon. While still immersed in the world of fiction, the reader becomes an indirect participant in the action. They sing and, in a sense, dance, mimicking the verses of the epic song.

> When the night is dark, the beasts bristle,
> When the night is pitch-dark, the sated lion
> Becomes the absolute master of woods and lands,
> Of thickets and clearings.
> From the Oualo to Boundou,
> From Mali to Ouagadougou,
> And on the coast where golden sands shine,
> Tekkrour, Macina, Mandingue—
> The night sleeps among the beasts. (Sow Fall 1993, 164-165, my translation)

This epic song is melodic. Its musicality occurs through a lyrical and rhythmic structure accentuated through assonance and alliteration. These literary devices appear in the repetition of vowels and consonants such as "u," "w," and "e," which describes the rhythm and tone of the performance. This effect becomes more vivid in the voice of the singer who can give the song a poetic

dimension, creating a melody that resonates through the vocal cords. Alliteration, on the other hand, is evident in the repeated use of the consonant "b". This consonant produces a deep, resonant tone because its articulation involves the vibration of the vocal cords.

In contrast with Achebe and Sow Fall, Hurston foregrounds this cultural dimension of music in both of her novels. Yet, what Achebe and Sow Fall share with Hurston is their combined use of traditional songs and music. Hurston emphasizes more on religious music—commonly referred to as *Gospel* or *Spirituals*. These musical forms are central to the works of African American writers and are part of the cultural heritage of slavery. William Powell underscored this point in his addressed at the College Music Symposium in May 2004:

> The Negro Spiritual, regarded as the first American folk music, grew out of the experiences of the American Negro slave in the South. It functioned as a means of self-encouragement, and it was used to communicate with other slaves via coded messages. Spirituals and other slave songs were preserved by oral tradition since literacy was unlawful for slaves. Although many songs were lost, song collectors notated the basic sketch of the music they heard. Several black institutions emerged after the Civil War, and choral groups from these schools provided another means of preserving and demonstrating the spiritual, but in concert settings.

Powell explains how the Spiritual gave birth to Gospel. The Spiritual emerged during the time of slavery, particularly when enslaved African Americans were suffering on plantations. It became a form of relief, helping them endure hardship. In composition, the Spiritual is a melodic song that allowed the enslaved to momentarily forget their suffering. It was also a coded form of communication among slaves, designed to elude the understanding of their masters. The Spiritual was thus a deeply powerful form for the Black community—even without the accompaniment of musical instruments, which is often the case with Gospel. While Gospel evolved from the Spiritual, it has since become commercialized and modernized. Gospel is typically performed with a choir and often outside of church settings. Rebecca Brite also provides a useful historical overview of both musical forms:

> Spirituals are sacred folk songs from the American South created by enslaved people. Their composers remain unknown. They lend themselves to collective interpretation, often structured as a dialogue (call-and-response) between a leader and the group. Concert Spirituals emerged from traditional Spirituals, with choral and solo arrangements based on the original melodies sung by slaves.
>
> Black Gospel music originated in the 1920s, in Black churches in Northern U.S. cities where its influence remains strong. Every Gospel song has a known composer, who fuses the musical elements of Spirituals with those of the blues, allowing room for improvisation and accompaniment on piano, guitar, or other instruments.
>
> While Gospel emerged from Spirituals and the blues, the Spiritual continues to exist as a parallel cultural force. (Brite http://voices-paris.com/repertoire/spirituals-et-gospel)

Brite's analysis facilitates the understanding how each musical genre appears in Hurston's fiction.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the Spiritual is present. During a political campaign, Davis delivers a poetic recitation. It is, in fact, a religious chant—a prayer articulated in poetic form. This is not surprising, as this type of music has evolved to resembles *Gospel* in form, having undergone multiple transformations and variations. This is evident in Davis's performance, which the narrator describes as follows:

> While Davis chanted a traditional prayer-poem with his own variations. Joe mounted the box that had been placed for the purpose and opened the brazen door of the lamp. As the word Amen was said, he touched the lighted match to the wick, and Mrs. Bogle's alto burst out in:
>
> We'll walk in de night, de beautiful light
> Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright
> Shine all around us by day and by night
> Jesus, the light of the world. (Hurston 1937, 43)

This moment is symbolic. Though less frequent in the novel, it is very symbolic and represents a ritual practice of the African American community. What is striking here is how Hurston stages the scene: the Spiritual merges with Gospel, which is performed differently. In this scene, a lead vocalist begins the chant and is followed by a chorus. The narrator emphasizes this performative dynamic: "*They, all of them, all of the people got up and sung it over and over until it was wrung dry, and no further innovations of tone and tempo were conceivable".* (Hurston 1937, 43)

This religious chant evokes the role of traditional and sacred music among African Americans. Though not apparent in the novel, Hurston highlights its symbolic and affective power. The *call-and-response* structure appears again in another chant, performed after the death of a mule:

> 'What killed this man?'
> The chorus answered, "Bare, bare fat."
> 'What killed this man?'
> "Bare, bare fat."
> 'Who'll stand his funeral?'
> 'We'!!!!!'
> 'Well, all right now.' (Hurston 1937, 58)

This performance highlights the tradition of the Spiritual through a *call-and-response* mode, revealing a dialogic structure between leader and chorus that embodies a collective cultural expression rooted in African heritage.

The Gospel, on the other hand, appears more in *Moses Man of the Mountain* with a different version and presentation from those of the Spiritual. For instance, after Pharaoh's death, the former slaves rejoice by performing a little singing act. One person begins in solo, and a choir follows. The narrator describes it in the following passage:

> They made a song on that and danced it off. A man with a good voice got out in the center of the ring and sang. 'Old Pharaoh's dead!' And the chorus answered, 'How did he die?' And the solo man went to dancing and said: 'Well, he died like this!' and he danced that off. Then he sang another part and everybody went on dancing and shouting. (Hurston 1939, 193)

In this novel, Hurston ironically shows the celebration of the king's death through an exceptional performance of Gospel music. This time, the practice of this musical genre is richer and more modern. The Gospel is celebrated in the novel with its distinct characteristics. The lead vocal announces in solo, then the choir follows with refrains accompanied by dance and hand claps. The narrator comments on it, providing the details of the scene:

> They sang that over and over and danced on it until they got tired. Then, Miriam took the cymbal and some women went behind her, and they went all over the camp singing: "Oh Miriam played the cymbal over the Red Sea Miriam played the cymbal over the Red Sea Miriam played the cymbal over the Red Sea. Oh, Miriam played the cymbal right over." (Hurston 1939, 194).

This performance, though ironic, in the triumphant celebration of the king's death, shows a fundamental aspect of African American culture through music, which is not only a means of appeasing suffering but also of rejoicing. In *Moses Man of the Mountain*, the Gospel performance is accompanied by a choir, dances, and musical instruments such as cymbals and harps. This representation of music through Gospel is recurring in the novel as the Hebrew people engage in their struggle against the oppressor. It is a long march toward freedom during which the Hebrew people praise God by singing Gospel, which serves as a catalyst. Ultimately, the Hebrews emancipate themselves and reach the Promised Land, where they receive God's blessing with the help of Moses, their guide.

This type of music appears more when the Hebrew people liberate themselves and rejoice. The audience is enthusiastic with musical instruments such as tambourines, cymbals, harps, etc., which depict the cultural setting of this people who have just witnessed God's glory. Often, one can feel through this music both the melancholic and sarcastic tone of the novel. Despite the variations and modifications that Gospel has undergone, it has not lost its cultural and artistic meaning within the African-American tradition.

In a nutshell, music is symbolically present in the works of these authors and plays a role as both a comforter and a cultural catalyst. It remains at the heart of tradition and energizes the cultural life of the Black people. Its symbolic presence in the novels reflects the writers' enthusiasm to showcase their local color. It is also a means of rooting the work in the oral tradition, which communicates a cultural depth through elements that allow traditional music to convey its message to society. This is what each of the authors tries to show by relying on their own oral tradition, which leads to view music not only as a powerful means of consolation but also as a revealing and reconciling art. What is also notable in this musical symbolism is that the setting can influence the context and content of the type of music to be showcased. As often said, man is defined by the environment, or the environment

determines man. The representation of music in the work also responds to a specific context. This context is determining and even influential for the writer as an artist and spokesperson for his people.

One can thus observe in Achebe's and Sow Fall's works that music does not appear in their second novels in our corpus. This exception might be due to the context, which conditions the thematic focus of their creative writings. Hurston's exception can be understood through the fact that both of her works are intertextually based on the same theme. These works complement each other in the interpretation of their aesthetic significance. They are produced in a literary context where the Harlem Renaissance movement held significant importance.

The study of the representation of music has demonstrated that it occupies a symbolic place in the aesthetic, narrative, and symbolic construction of the African and African American novels studied. Drawing from oral tradition, Achebe, Sow Fall, and Hurston have made use of diverse musical forms (epic songs, gospel, spirituals, traditional rhythms), integrating them into the narrative space not as decorative elements, but as engines of memory, resistance, and cultural revalorization.

Music, whether accompanying ritual scenes, catalyzes collective emotion, or structures narrative progression, and asserts itself as a language of interiority and identity. In Achebe's works, it reactivates the connection between text and ancestral tradition, reviving the drums and communal celebrations that unify the clan. In Sow Fall's fiction, it is carried by emblematic figures such as the griot—the voice of cultural heritage. In Hurston's narratives, gospel and spirituals serve as tools of spiritual expression and resilience, underscoring their central role in the African American culture inherited from slavery. However, the relative absence of music in some more modern works such as *Anthills of the Savannah* or *Douceurs du bercail* may imply that its narrative integration is conditioned by spatiotemporal context and thematic focus. The postcolonial or post-independence urban novel lends itself less naturally to musical folklore than rural narratives steeped in oral tradition.

Ultimately, music operates as a living memory within the African and African American novel. It anchors the text in the people's history, makes ancestral voices resonate within contemporary writing, and invites the reader into a sensory and symbolic immersion. By transcending genres and centuries, it transforms literary matters into poetic performance that preserves, transmits, and re-creates the heritage of oral civilizations. The novel thus becomes a space for dialogue between past and present, between voice and writing, between the individual and their community.

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Behind The Scenes of a Mysterious Meeting: Romanian And British Diplomacy on the 1983 Meeting Between Pope John Paul II and Lech Wałęsa

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Abstract:

Negotiations for organizing Pope John Paul II's second visit to Poland in 1983 were marked by controversies regarding a possible meeting between the Pope and Lech Wałęsa, the leader of Solidarity. The Vatican considered the meeting essential, while the Polish government rejected it, fearing its political impact. For months, intense negotiations took place involving the Vatican, the Polish government, and the Episcopate. The research uses diplomatic documents from the archives of Romania and the United Kingdom, supplemented by reports from the Western press. The visit, initially planned for 1982, was postponed due to political tensions. Eventually, a compromise allowed a private meeting between the Pope and Wałęsa, but it did not fully satisfy the involved parties. The events highlighted political tensions and underscored the symbolic role of the visit in supporting Solidarity's ideals. The meeting, lasting about 30 minutes, remained confidential but was considered a symbolic gesture of support for Polish workers and Solidarity's ideals. However, subsequent articles in the Western press speculated about an agreement between the Vatican and Jaruzelski's regime, suggesting that Wałęsa was marginalized to facilitate national reconciliation. The controversial editorial in *L'Osservatore Romano* highlighted Wałęsa's sacrifice, generating criticism towards the Vatican.

Keywords: Pope John Paul II; Lech Wałęsa; Solidarity; Catholic Church; Communist regime; Poland

Introduction and Methodology

During the tripartite negotiations between the Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, and the Polish government for organizing Pope John Paul II's second visit to Poland in June 1983, perhaps the most delicate issue was a potential meeting between the Pontiff and Lech Wałęsa, the man who embodied the efforts, hopes, and ideals of freedom cherished by the Polish people in recent years. When the Roman Curia made a formal request for such a meeting—considering it a primary condition for the papal visit—the Polish authorities began to assess and worry about the public relations disaster such a meeting could provoke. What followed were several months of negotiations from nearly irreconcilable positions, during which even the Pope's arrival was called

into question. These negotiations, as captured in diplomatic circles, are the subject of this study. Seeking a balanced approach to the topic, we have proposed an evaluation of how Romanian diplomacy, representing a socialist state, and British diplomacy, from the opposite ideological and geopolitical sphere, reported on, perceived, and analyzed the various stages and episodes of these negotiations over several months.

This methodological approach also determined the selection of sources used. Our focus was directed toward documents housed in the Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, primarily diplomatic notes sent by the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Romania in Warsaw between November 1982 and July 1983. These were complemented by analyses from Romanian diplomats accredited in Poland regarding the general political situation. The second set of sources consulted came from The National Archives in London, specifically documents contained in the *Records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors* collection. These sources are more varied in typology and include standard diplomatic notes sent from Warsaw or the Vatican, as well as political analyses and press reports. The research was further supplemented with press sources. In this case, the Romanian press of 1983, as expected, allocated only a few lines to the papal visit to his native Poland, merely highlighting the first meeting Pope John Paul II had with General Wojciech Jaruzelski on June 17. By contrast, the press from the United Kingdom and the United States, such as *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *International Herald Tribune*, followed every detail of the events closely, as did Radio Free Europe.

The premise of this study is that the negotiations regarding the possibility or feasibility of a meeting between Pope John Paul II and Lech Wałęsa at the end of the 1983 visit began from irreconcilable positions. The Pope and the Vatican considered it indispensable, while the Polish government deemed it unacceptable. In the middle stood the Polish Episcopate and the Catholic Primate, Józef Glemp. Over the course of several months, the positions remained firm: ultimatums were issued, arguments were presented, emissaries were sent, and by the start of the visit, nothing was certain. Ultimately, the compromise reached—a meeting that was not only private but outright conspiratorial—satisfied no one and even faced sharp criticism in some quarters.

A Turbulent and Unstable Political Context

At the beginning of the final decade of European communism, relations between the Church and communist governments were far from cordial. As religious sentiment grew stronger and Marxism-Leninism declined throughout the Soviet bloc, authorities became increasingly sensitive to this issue. In July 1979, shortly after Pope John Paul II's first visit to Poland, a conference of communist parties held in East Berlin expressed concerns that the Vatican's policy toward socialist countries had become increasingly active and that the Catholic Church might emerge as a center of political opposition. The dissatisfaction of Eastern Europeans with the atheist governments, which they viewed as imposed by a foreign occupier, was evident. This helps explain why the Church became a focal point for preserving strong national traditions with histories far longer than the few decades of communist rule (*The Times*, 9 May 1983, 11).

The second visit to Poland by Pope John Paul II was scheduled to take place in August 1982 to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the inauguration of the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, which also houses the highly venerated icon of the Black Madonna. A place which, according to Timothy Garton Ash, who witnessed the events, represented for the Poles both Westminster Abbey and Windsor Castle (Ash 1997, 52). However, the political situation in Poland was still volatile, and the proposed date coincided with the second anniversary of Solidarity, which led to the visit being postponed and the jubilee celebrations being extended for an entire year.

After the signing of the "Gdańsk Agreements" on August 31, 1980, and the establishment of the Autonomous and Independent Trade Union "Solidarity" (NSZZ "Solidarność") in mid-September 1980, the map and boundaries of relations between the state and society fundamentally changed. The union offered a political alternative, effectively nullifying the political monopoly of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP), which was a serious issue not only for Polish communists but also for other socialist countries, Poland's ideological "sisters," who now feared this precedent and the potential replication of a phenomenon they could not control. On the morning of December 13, 1981, the national television station broadcast General Jaruzelski's speech announcing the establishment of the Military Council of National Salvation-WRON (Constantin 2007, 500) and the imposition of martial law in Poland (Filip-Afloarei 2023, 141). The reasons, as outlined in the speech, stated that the country had reached the edge of an abyss and was threatened by chaos, demoralization, and criminality. Poles were informed of the limitation of certain civil rights, such as personal freedom and the inviolability of their homes; restrictions on travel outside localities, and a curfew banning street movement between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM (Constantin 1997, 501).

Immediately after the proclamation of martial law, the implementation of the established plan transformed Poland into a veritable military and police dictatorship, terrifying the population. The decreed measures paralyzed society: strikes and demonstrations were banned, and enterprises were militarized; telephone communications were cut off, gas stations were closed, and access to foreign currency accounts was blocked. The activities of professional associations and mass organizations were suspended, and any kind of meeting, gathering, or demonstration was prohibited. Correspondence was censored, and the publication and circulation of the press were drastically restricted. Borders and civilian airports were closed, and patrols began appearing in train stations and crowded places. (Constantin 1997, 502).

The military regime established a climate of terror that affected all social categories, from workers to intellectuals. The repression against the press was massive, resulting in hundreds of dismissals in both print media and radio and television, the suppression of dozens of youth and cultural publications, and their replacement with others that were, predictably, obedient to the regime. Teachers were also targeted, being required to sign declarations of loyalty to the regime, with those who refused being dismissed, harassed, or even detained. Judges who sympathized with Solidarity were removed, arrested, or threatened, while lawyers who defended cases involving violations of martial law were disbarred. (Filip-Afloarei 2023, 157-158).

It is interesting to note that the introduction of martial law in Poland fundamentally altered the typical structure of a communist regime, with power shifting from the Party to the Army. It has been said that December 13, 1981, marked "the official death of Polish communism, as the Party moved into the background," while a general and the Army assumed full responsibility for defending the regime. Party organizations at various levels fell into the background, replaced by military commissars and officials. (Constantin 1997, 502). This might be one of the reasons why the initial victory of the military regime was eventually perceived as a defeat—not just for the workers, but for the Party and the entire "socialist order."

The official announcement of the papal visit was made public on November 8, 1982, following a meeting between the Catholic Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, and General Wojciech Jaruzelski. The final date for the Pope's arrival was set for June 16, 1983, and the full program of the visit was announced through a simultaneous communiqué from Warsaw and the Vatican on May 17, 1983 (Open Society Archives-OSA 14 Jun. 1983, 1). However, in the months leading up to the visit, Polish authorities consistently claimed that protests by Solidarity posed a threat to its successful organization (*The Times*, 20 Apr. 1983, 1).

Indeed, the visit was to take place in a domestic climate marked by political and social tensions, an economic crisis, all compounded by Western pressures and messages demanding respect for human rights and the easing of martial law restrictions. In May 1983, the most recent clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement, Western pressures, or the authorities' repressive actions against Polish cultural figures such as Andrzej Wajda, cast doubt on the very possibility of the visit, even though government assurances were given that the Pope would be received in Poland. General Jaruzelski had proven incapable of restoring economic and social stability. Economic production was declining, as was the standard of living. Nevertheless, Jaruzelski claimed that Poland was on the path to normalization (*The Times*, 4 May 1983, 15).

Pope John Paul II, however, was not coming to Poland to maintain a dubious and unsustainable balance between the state and the Church, nor was his goal to preserve an appearance of cooperation. How could the Supreme Pontiff protect an atheistic regime that violently suppressed the just aspirations of Poles? He was coming to Poland on a pilgrimage and as a shepherd tending to his flock of believers, not merely as a head of state. For these reasons, it was possible that the authorities would organize a program to minimize his encounters with the public or with Lech Wałęsa (*The Times*, 15 Jun. 1983, 15). The same authorities, concerned and even worried about the prospect of the visit, drafted a document in February 1983 titled "Political and Organizational Premises for the Pope's Visit to Poland," intended for the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. According to their estimates, the Supreme Pontiff, fully aware of the internal and international climate of the moment and feeling obliged to fulfill a moral duty to Polish believers, intended to go beyond the strictly religious aspects of the visit, precisely to avoid betraying the hopes with which he was awaited and, according to the authors of the document, to "avoid losing his prestige in opposition circles." Furthermore, Party leadership speculated that even the distinguished guest faced

a dilemma: he did not aim for his presence in Poland to be used against the authorities but also did not wish to contribute to their credibility. Consequently, the visit's agenda was to include meetings with state officials limited to the minimum protocol requirements. (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1486)

Moreover, from the British Embassy to the Holy See, the picture painted was even more intriguing, portraying a Curia far from united in ideas and strategies regarding the Communist East, including Poland. Peter Nichols, *The Times* correspondent in the Vatican, described to the British ambassador a "state of war" between the Pope and Cardinal Casaroli, with the latter sidelined and a true "Polish mafia" orchestrating and preparing a confrontation between the Church and Communism. According to Nichols, the Pope's reason for going to Poland was not because he was Polish or because he was determined to attend the celebrations in Częstochowa, but because Soviet authorities were content to ignore him when he spoke from Rome or elsewhere, yet it was entirely different if he spoke in a Slavic language, right at the Soviet borders (The National Archives, Kew 6 Jun. 1983, 38). The same Nichols had also met with Monsignor Capovilla, former secretary to Pope John XXIII, who believed that John Paul II's policy towards the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact states was confrontational and thus completely different from that of his predecessor. This transformation was at the root of the conflict with Cardinal Casaroli. Other Church cardinals had a more accommodating vision when it came to relations with Communism, such as the late Primate of Poland, Stefan Wyszyński, or László Lékai from Hungary, but ordinary citizens in these countries preferred John Paul II's approach. Peter Nichols was critical of the current Supreme Pontiff and his decision to follow the path of confrontation with Communism, arguing that other high-ranking Curia officials were also sidelined when it came to Poland or other Communist countries (The National Archives, Kew 6 Jun. 1983, 38).

During this period, Solidarity, although clandestine, intensified its activity to the extent that even Wałęsa met with Zbigniew Bujak and other underground leaders. Consequently, the Political Bureau of the Polish United Workers' Party discussed the issue in an April 1983 meeting and acknowledged that, being more focused on economic problems, it had neglected the "fight against counter-revolutionary forces" and the "exposure of their actions." Within the Party's leadership, the idea of arresting Wałęsa was even analyzed, but it was abandoned to avoid turning him into a popular hero and antagonizing the Church. However, this time the Political Bureau issued a direct accusation against the Church, claiming it supported Solidarity's activities and encouraged its illegal actions (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1487). As evidence, the now-traditional protests on the 13th of each month had, in April, once again started from the Church.

On the other hand, the opposition's activity was invoked by the government as a possible reason to cancel the visit. Moreover, and very significantly, the Church was perceived by the political leaders in power as being behind the opposition—supporting it, encouraging it, and even participating in anti-state actions through certain priests labeled as reactionaries. Such actions were recorded, for example, immediately after the first appearance and public speech of Primate Glemp

on February 13, 1983, following his elevation to the rank of cardinal. On that occasion, several thousand believers attended, and at the end, many—especially young people—attempted to organize a demonstration "inspired by extremists in Solidarity." Authorities were forced to intervene forcefully to prevent it. For the authorities, this was proof that the underground union was beginning to implement a new action plan involving protests and demonstrations (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1486). Alarmed by such situations, Party leaders, such as those in Wrocław—one of the cities most affected by such unrest—issued threatening messages toward the Church, which they suspected of supporting the opposition. Thus, if protests were to escalate, the regime was prepared to initiate a public polemic with the Church, expose the anti-state actions of certain priests, and bring them before prosecutors. "It must be made clear that the Church cannot do as it pleases without facing consequences" (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1486).

Despite the authorities' concerns, clandestine Solidarity still called for order and calm during John Paul II's visit. Zbigniew Bujak, Solidarity's underground leader, who had been sought by authorities since 1981, gave an interview to the illegal publication *Mazowsze*, associated with the union, in which he urged calm. He argued that a peaceful visit would demonstrate Solidarity's ability to organize the masses and, obviously, its prestige among them. A similar statement was made by Wałęsa on June 6, who saw the Pope's presence and the possibility of meeting him as a chance to reactivate Solidarity under legal conditions (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1486). However, in the government's eyes, such appeals did little to alleviate concerns. At pilgrimage sites in Warsaw, such as Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's tomb, opposition activities were intensifying. Flower-laying ceremonies, an increase in anti-socialist and anti-state posters, and passionately sung songs attracted more and more people, particularly young individuals (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1486).

The Negotiations

The sensitivity of the visit and its preparation is demonstrated by the periodic briefings that PMUP, even members of the Political Bureau, gave to the ambassadors of socialist countries in Warsaw, with the general tone being to reassure them and convey that the regime was in full control of the situation. For instance, on February 28, 1983, Kazimierz Barcikowski and Miroslaw Milewski, members of the Political Bureau, assured that following negotiations with the Church, during the visit "there will be no attempts to meet with representatives of illegal organizations, the Pope will not ask to visit those interned, or members of the former 'Solidarity' organization" (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1486).

Even more delicate was the issue of a meeting between the Pontiff and Lech Wałęsa, a subject of negotiation within the Government, the Episcopate, and the Vatican until the day of the actual meeting. This point of the negotiations and the disagreement regarding it was immediately noticed by Western observers and diplomats who never failed to report to their capitals news about the

possibility of such a meeting. From this perspective, the British Embassy in Warsaw followed this issue with particular attention from the beginning of March (*The Times*, 4 May 1983, 15).

It is true that Wałęsa had long ceased to be a notorious and relevant figure only in Poland, having become an international figure whose statements, interventions, and visits were reported by the entire press. Therefore, when an intense negotiation for his meeting with John Paul II was underway, the London press also reported a possible assassination attempt on the Polish union leader. Thus, Ali Agca, who had committed the attack against the Pope in 1981, also admitted to preparing a plot against Wałęsa when he was in Rome in January 1981. The revelations were confirmed by an Italian trade unionist, Luigi Scricciolo, who was also imprisoned on charges of espionage for Bulgaria. Agca claimed that he was ordered to assassinate Wałęsa either at a press conference or at the "Victoria" hotel where he was staying, a hotel of an Italian union where, on the same days, four Bulgarians who received all necessary information from Luigi Scricciolo were also staying. Therefore, Agca's theory was that the Bulgarians were behind both assassination attempts (*The Guardian* 11 Mar. 1983, 1). Given that this first meeting between John Paul II and the leader of the Polish union further boosted and morally legitimized the actions of Solidarity, the Soviets' fury was at its peak, so, in all likelihood, the Bulgarian special services, in collaboration with the KGB, could resort to the solution of an assassination.

As the preparations for the visit progressed, in the second half of April, the negotiations became increasingly complicated when a deputy of the Polish Minister of the Interior arrived at the Vatican to discuss the details regarding the Pope's security. The most decisive request of the Pontiff was to meet, during an intimate lunch, with Wałęsa and his family. Obviously, at this point, no agreement or decision was reached, as reported to a British diplomat by Monsignor Luigi Poggi, the Vatican's itinerant envoy for Eastern Europe (The National Archives, Kew 25 Apr. 1983, 23).

In parallel, marking an important tactical shift, Wałęsa appealed to the government to initiate negotiations to overcome the internal crisis. The leader of the free union considered that the demonstrations at the beginning of May 1983 were a success for the opposition and that the authorities had no other way but to recognize the existence and social and political relevance of Solidarity and to initiate negotiations. The government gave no indication that it would respond to such an initiative (The National Archives, Kew 4 May 1983, 26).

At the beginning of May, other important details became available to the interested public. For instance, the English press wrote, based on sources from the Vatican, that one of the fundamental conditions John Paul II set for this visit was that the government should not restrict in any way the private visits the Pontiff would wish to make, so that he could meet with anyone he wanted. The Vatican was careful to include a day of free time at the end of the visit, in Krakow, for the Pope's personal and private wishes, without the authorities being able to dictate with whom he could or could not meet. Therefore, at the Vatican, a private meeting with Lech Wałęsa was not excluded if he received permission from the authorities to leave Gdańsk, a city not included in the official visit route. However, for the time being, this authorization was quite unlikely (*International Herald Tribune*, 8 May 1983, 2).

However, again, nothing was certain a month before the visit began. This was acknowledged by the Primate of the Catholic Church in Poland, Cardinal Glemp, in a meeting with the British ambassador in Warsaw on May 13. The issue of the Pontiff's meeting with Wałęsa was uncertain and still under negotiation, as the government strongly opposed it, accusing the union leader of ties with the clandestine opposition. On the other hand, Wałęsa was a very popular figure and a symbol in Poland, and there was a sense of anticipation among Poles for such a meeting. Cardinal Glemp believed it was the duty of Vatican diplomacy to resolve the issue, but he thought compromises could be found, such as a privileged, prominent place for Wałęsa at one of the meals or general meetings of the Pope with Polish believers (The National Archives, Kew 13 May 1983, 3).

To further increase the pressure on the Polish authorities, not only did the Pope want to meet with Wałęsa, but Wałęsa himself had made a request in this regard. On May 14, 1983, Wałęsa addressed a determined letter to John Paul II: "We refuse to live in the past, to founder in misery and regret. Our faces are turned toward our country's future. It is in the name of my country, Holy Father, that I permit myself to ask you for an audience" (Wałęsa 1987, 277).

Around the beginning of June, Polish diplomats in Moscow were trying to assure that this would not happen, relying on "the wisdom of John Paul II," believing that he should avoid talks with "extremist elements who have discredited themselves not only in Poland but also more broadly" (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1486). Therefore, for the moment, the working plan was the old one of a private meeting between the Pope and Wałęsa on the last day of the Pontiff's presence in Poland, a day deliberately left free in the schedule for his personal needs. The government was totally against a public meeting with the former Solidarity leader (The National Archives, Kew 3 Jun. 1983).

The situation could have been unblocked and a solution advanced during the discreet visit from May 30 to June 1, 1983, of Archbishop Achille Silvestrini, an important diplomat of the Holy See who even met with General Jaruzelski. However, the information is contradictory. The Romanian Embassy informed Bucharest that the Polish leader insisted to Silvestrini that the Pope abandon the idea of meeting with Wałęsa or other representatives of the political opposition because such a meeting would not contribute to stabilizing the internal situation in the country but would encourage clandestine movements (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1487). On the other hand, the British Embassy had a different version, according to which Silvestrini obtained a principle agreement from the authorities for a meeting at the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa after the mass on June 19 (The National Archives, Kew 9 Jun. 1983). This possibility was also confirmed by the British ambassador to the Holy See, who reported a conversation with Archbishop Martinez Samalo from the Secretariat of State. The Catholic prelate unequivocally stated that for the Vatican "it was inconceivable that the Pope would not meet with Wałęsa," despite the Polish authorities' efforts to find a solution with minimal political impact (The National Archives, Kew 13 Jun. 1983).

Even under these conditions, the meeting was not certain. On June 14, the Romanian ambassador

in Warsaw, Ion Cozma, assessed that the last meeting between Cardinal Glemp and Jaruzelski a few days before the visit marked the completion of preparations, especially the political ones, and informed Bucharest that the Primate of the Catholic Church had given up the request for the Pope and Wałęsa to have a meeting. It is hard to believe that Glemp could make such a decision on behalf of the Pontiff, who, according to Polish authorities, had not yet given up the idea. Despite the firm message transmitted through Archbishop Silvestrini, namely "that we do not want any meetings or talks with representatives of 'Solidarity' or other intellectuals 'declared enemies of the regime'," the Vatican's insistence continued. In parallel, Wałęsa himself was preparing for a meeting, requesting a few days off from the shipyards in Gdańsk during the visit (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1487). According to the union leader's memoirs, on the eve of the Pontiff's arrival, he was informed by the militia commander that he was to meet with John Paul II (Wałęsa 1987, 278).

On the other hand, on the very day of the Pope's arrival, the issue of the meeting with Wałęsa was not resolved, reported the Romanian ambassador in Warsaw. In his telegram to Bucharest, Ion Cozma assessed that all the political details of the visit were established except for this one, as the Vatican continued to insist while the authorities viewed such a possibility with concern, seeing it as moral support for 'Solidarity' (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1487).

On June 17, the second day of the visit to Poland, at the Belvedere Palace, (Open Society Archives-OSA 14 Jun. 1983, 10) ohn Paul II met with political authorities Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Henryk Jablonsky, the Chairman of the Council of State (Scînteia18 Jun. 1983, 6). That same evening, two members of the Party's Political Bureau, Mirosław Milewski and Jozef Czyrek, hurried to inform the ambassadors of socialist states. Reporting the meeting to his superiors in Bucharest, Ambassador Ion Cozma noted that the Pope raised the issue of Lech Wałęsa and a meeting with him three times, to which Jaruzelski responded bluntly that the former union leader was not what he seemed, that the facts showed he "was just a puppet in the hands of socialism's adversaries." The Pontiff's arguments, however, were more varied. Firstly, he emphasized that the Vatican was under considerable pressure from some Western countries, where socialists and even communists were in government, such as France, Italy, and Spain, to meet with Wałęsa during the visit. Secondly, he invoked personal sentimental reasons, showing that he had met with him when he led Solidarity at the Vatican, and now, in Poland, he could not avoid receiving him. The Pope found such a scenario outright immoral and therefore requested that the authorities not hinder him. At this point, Jaruzelski resorted to a bit of blackmail, presenting the Pontiff with two perspectives: one in which the visit would be understood as a real contribution by the Pope to the internal normalization process, or one that would mark the beginning of a new stage of confrontation between the authorities and the Church. Everything depended on a possible meeting with Wałęsa, and the government did not intend to forbid any meeting, but John Paul II had to carefully weigh the consequences (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1487). Finally, the Polish government's spokesman, Urban, declared that the Pontiff would receive Wałęsa along with

his family. However, he made it clear that the meeting would take place at the Pope's request and strictly for humanitarian reasons, and that the authorities' attitude towards him had not changed, considering him a man prone to political confrontations. He did not, however, provide details about the location and timing of the meeting (The National Archives, Kew 18 Jun. 1983, 56).

The Compromise

The meeting between the Pope and Wałęsa finally took place on June 23, at the end of the official part of the visit, in an area at the foot of the Tatra Mountains, near the border with Czechoslovakia. Wałęsa was brought there with the cooperation of the authorities, despite their initial opposition to such a meeting. This was not included in the official program, reflecting the regime's concern about the Pope being seen as a supporter of Solidarity over the government.

The meeting took place in a mountain cabin in the Chochołowska Valley, which had been prepared in advance by security forces. The entire area, part of the Western Tatra Mountain range, was heavily militarized under the pretext of military maneuvers. Tourist access was prohibited, the few permanent residents along the route were removed, leaving only a few employees at the Polana Chochołowska cabin and a few shepherds. Later, after the event, eyewitnesses reported that two army divisions, a missile unit, and numerous security troops descended from the mountains. A few months later, it was revealed that even an anti-terrorist unit of women had been deployed in the area. All these forces, some disguised as shepherds or mountain rescuers, had filled the forests, waterways, and mountain paths about a month in advance (Piętka, Kwaśniewski 2023).

Wałęsa was brought to the meeting place under escort, along with his wife and four children. Despite efforts to avoid any contact, he was recognized by a stray passerby who immediately made the 'V' sign of victory, much to the dismay of an escort member. The Pope, on the other hand, arrived by helicopter (Sala 2017).

A special room was designated for the meeting in the Polana Chochołowska cabin, equipped with listening devices. However, the two protagonists, sensing the possibility of being overheard, preferred a table in the cabin's hall, much to the consternation of the security personnel (Sala 2017). It was one of the strangest meetings imaginable. It is rare for the leader of a clandestine opposition in a communist state to meet, with the authorities' consent, with the head of a state, even if it is the Pope, with whom Poland did not have diplomatic relations, under conditions of strict secrecy.

The content of the meeting, which lasted no longer than thirty minutes, was never made public. From subsequent statements, it was concluded that it was an opportunity for the Pope to thank the union leader for his services and efforts in supporting Polish workers and to learn about his vision for the future, how the ideas of Solidarity, appreciated by the Pope during the visit, could be preserved, promoted, and applied (*The Times*, 24 Jun. 1983, 1). At that time, Wałęsa refused to declare anything concrete about the meeting he had with John Paul II. He limited himself to remarking, in a conversation with Western press correspondents, that the meeting "strengthened him spiritually" and that he would have to seriously think about the discussions he had with the Pope (Open Society Archives – OSA 8 Jul. 1983, 12).

It was evident that after the meeting, the same communist authorities tried to minimize it, diverting public attention and press questions away from its significance, and diplomats from communist countries accredited in Poland followed this direction. Ilie Ivan, the chargé d'affaires of the Romanian Embassy, reported to Bucharest that the meeting between the Pontiff and the union leader was just a courtesy gesture by the Pope and not an occasion to discuss concrete issues. In this sense, he noted that the meeting lasted only 20 minutes, during which John Paul II blessed Wałęsa's family, his wife, and children, without having time to address other issues (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1487).

The day after the meeting, in Rome, the conclusions of the pontifical visit to his native Poland were not discussed, but rather a very controversial article published by *L'Osservatore Romano* under the signature of a renowned and experienced journalist, even the deputy director of the publication, Virgilio Levi. He portrayed Lech Wałęsa not just as a simple and typical union leader, but as one animated by a profound, sincere, and especially manifest religious conscience. In most available images, he was seen wearing the image of the Black Madonna of Jasna Góra on his jacket like a badge; in August-September 1980, he signed agreements with government representatives using a pen with the image of the Virgin Mary; he placed a cross at his workplace at the Gdańsk shipyards. Therefore, he showed that the inspiration and strength that religious faith provides played a fundamental role in the fight for workers' rights. Perhaps this is why he had already been received at the Vatican in January 1981, along with his closest collaborators (Levi 1983, 1). But now, in 1983, the Pope received him privately and somewhat secretly, away from the eyes of Poles eager to see them together, which, in Virgilio Levi's opinion, equated to accepting that "he did not have a role in the present stage of the history of his country (...) Sometimes a sacrifice is called for from awkward people for the good of the community. Wałęsa seems to have entered into this spirit." It seemed like a thinly veiled accusation against the Vatican, the Pope, and the Polish Church for reaching some understanding with the regime led by Jaruzelski to neutralize Lech Wałęsa (Levi 1983, 1). However, Levi wrote, "history teaches us that people, whom everybody believed to be definitely marginal, reappeared one day as authentic saviors of their people." What he did for Polish workers could not be undone. The ideals he fought for in the early days of Solidarity could not be forgotten; on the contrary, they could be enriched and carried forward, especially in the very difficult conditions in which Polish society found itself. Receiving him only in a private audience was not enough; it betrayed the intention not to disturb the official effort of national reconciliation, and Poles could not be satisfied. "And they will suffer from it. But it was because of force majeure. It remained everyone's duty to honor this sacrifice of Wałęsa. It is a great lesson for all land, even in sorrow, it is a reason for hope" (Levi 1983, 1).

The day after the article was published, Virgilio Levi resigned, and the press and diplomatic world began to ask questions. From Rome, the British ambassador, Mark Heat, did not understand how a journalist with Levi's experience could publish such an article, how he did not understand its implications, and the fact that it put the Pontiff in a very bad light, especially at the end of a visit negotiated with great difficulty. The diplomat could not say for sure if there was an agreement

between the Polish government and the Vatican regarding Wałęsa that was disadvantageous to him, but he suspected that "there may have been a price to pay." He also invoked the assessments of the BBC correspondent who was in Poland during the visit and who believed, in agreement with several observers, that a certain modus vivendi had been agreed upon by the Pope and Jaruzelski, especially after their first meeting (The National Archives, Kew 28 Jun. 1983, 76).

On June 28, at a meeting of the heads of mission of the European Economic Community in Stuttgart, Levi's article was also discussed, one that was hard to explain, believed the Italian representative. The editorial was not authorized and dealt with a subject "which was strictly the Pope's own." It was clear that the internal mechanisms for verifying and authorizing editorial contributions had not worked, but there was also the possibility that Virgilio Levi wanted to leave *L'Osservatore Romano* with such a blow (The National Archives, Kew 28 Jun. 1983, 112).

However, a possible understanding made some analysts and observers think right then, immediately after the end of the pilgrimage; something seemed suspicious in this good collaboration, the partnership worked without hiccups during the visit, and the parties seemed satisfied with the result. Specifically, it was speculated that the regime made certain concessions to the Catholic Church, allowing it a wider space for affirmation in the desire to overshadow Solidarity and its leader, Lech Wałęsa. A secret agreement was suspected, which the Pope might have made with the political authorities, from which the Polish Church emerged strengthened, but Solidarity and Wałęsa were sacrificed. The term betrayal was even used at the end of the visit because the details of the meeting between the Pope and the union leader were not made public, and all these speculations were fueled by the fact that Wałęsa appeared very worried in the following period, and the papal Curia seemed divided on what results and conclusions of the visit to offer the public. Given that for months the Polish government opposed a meeting between the two, it was speculated that the solution of a simple private audience was the maximum concession Jaruzelski could make, and the Pope accepted it (Perrone 2012, 40).

Such analyses were made by serious publications that had closely followed not only the Pope's visit but the entire Polish epic of recent years. *The New York Times*, also picked up by *The Times*, was extremely harsh regarding the Pontiff's and the Vatican's performance, accusing them of undermining Wałęsa, Solidarity, and the cause of freedom. In the early days of the visit, the Pope's message reached the hearts of people around the world. He publicly condemned martial law in his first televised appearance; he stated that union activity is a natural right; he publicly defied the communist hosts by repeatedly using the word "solidarity." Thanks to his presence, Poles had the opportunity to gather and rediscover a sense of unity in the face of the oppression of Soviet puppets. Later, however, something unexpected happened. Perhaps the Pope felt he had overstepped; perhaps his advisers thought he was insisting too much on secular issues during a visit that was meant to be a pilgrimage; perhaps this vigorous initial rhetoric was the prelude to a very pragmatic understanding between the State and the Church.

The deliberate uncertainty, confusion, and lack of transparency that enveloped the meeting

with Wałęsa, the man who personified the martyrdom for Polish freedom, were suspicious. He was made to wait, almost publicly humiliated, and when the meeting took place, photographs were forbidden. Later, Wałęsa canceled a press conference that had been scheduled and declared that he needed to seriously meditate on the discussion he had with the Pope. In contrast, the second meeting with Jaruzelski, hastily arranged, showed only smiles and handshakes. The Pope understood perfectly the impact of public appearances, how they could be used, even calibrating his facial expression for such moments, and the impression left at the second meeting with General Jaruzelski was that an agreement had been reached (*The Times*, 28 Jun 1983, 10).

Shortly thereafter, as we have seen, the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* announced in a front-page editorial that Wałęsa had lost the battle, stating that sometimes inconvenient people must be sacrificed for the higher general interest of the community. The author of the editorial, an experienced journalist, committed the cardinal sin of crossing the official line and revealing an uncomfortable truth. He probably wrote at the initiative of that faction of the Curia that was concerned about Soviet threats and was later dismissed by the other faction of the Curia or even by the Pope, making the whole episode somewhat strange. The Vatican newspaper was traditionally very well-informed and accurate in its analyses, and finding a scapegoat in the person of a deputy director could be evidence of the Vatican's indecision regarding Wałęsa (*The Times*, 28 Jun 1983, 10).

The editorialist was very candid when he wrote that Wałęsa was one of those uncomfortable people whose courage could shake entire institutions; a stubborn individual who could not be threatened, blackmailed, silenced, forced to comply, or cooperate. For the communists, such an unconquerable soul was a threat, and for the Church, he was not entirely controllable, as was the case with the clergy or journalists of Catholic publications. This was the cause, these were the reasons why the Pope tried to be the sole symbol of Polish freedom, which suited the communist leaders in Poland and reassured those in the Vatican who feared that a resurgence of Solidarity would cause a severe reaction against the Church or even a Soviet invasion of Poland (*The Times*, 28 Jun 1983, 10).

However, this calculation by the Church was morally unfair. The Pope's actions seemed to undermine Wałęsa, which did not do him honor. At the limit, the Church sometimes had to make deals with the totalitarian regime, but it was unjust to weaken the position of those seen as leaders of Polish freedom by usurping their role. "For the individual, obedience to God does not imply obedience to tyranny. The Pope should support and protect Wałęsa, not try to take his place." For a truly glorious week, the whole world believed that the communists had made a terrible mistake by allowing the Poles to gather and greet the Pope, but in the end, "it was the Pope who made a mistake" (*The Times*, 28 Jun 1983, 10).

The Times wrote that "neither the Roman Catholic Church nor the Polish Government has the right to sacrifice Lech Wałęsa as inconvenient and usher him from the political scene." The aspirations of the Poles, which Solidarity expressed, "cannot be ignored in any bilateral agreement between church and state," because the Church was no longer the sole center of national resistance. Even if the Church's calls for the lifting of martial law and the release of political prisoners were

entirely legitimate objectives, even if the Vatican's diplomatic efforts to make the Church's message more accessible to millions of believers in communist countries had to continue, "principles should not be sacrificed to expediency, nor should Wałęsa be asked to leave the battle in which he has come to symbolize the aspirations of most Poles. In the circumstances, the Vatican owes him some public words of support." (*The Times*, 28 Jun 1983, 10)

A week after the end of the Polish visit and the publication of the article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the uncertainty had not dissipated. Many questions about the political future of the clandestine resistance movement and even Wałęsa's future persisted in diplomatic circles (The National Archives, Kew 30 Jun. 1983, 48).

Certainly, a few months after the meeting with John Paul II, Wałęsa remained in the spotlight not only in Poland but also internationally, and his prestige was set to grow even more. A significant image boost for Solidarity was achieved on October 5, 1983, when Lech Wałęsa was announced as the winner of the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize in Stockholm. The award ceremony, held in the presence of the union leader's wife and son and broadcast in dozens of countries, drew the world's attention to Poland. On this occasion, Wałęsa declared that the true winner of the prize was the Polish people "who suffer from the humiliation they are subjected to." In contrast, the communist authorities were dismayed by this decision, especially since they had organized an extensive campaign to discredit the laureate. They reacted with a very harsh diplomatic note of protest, accusing interference in internal affairs, which further compromised them (Constantin 2007, 520-521).

The awarding of the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize to the Polish union leader deeply worried and irritated the authorities in Warsaw, especially considering the prize's motivation, "for non-violent struggle for free trade unions and human rights in Poland." The regime-controlled press launched a furious attack against Wałęsa and the Nobel Committee's decision, accusing that the laureate "practically did nothing for peace. On the contrary, his irresponsible actions led to strained relations between East and West, which implicitly contributes not to strengthening peace but to undermining it." Zbigniew Tempski, editor-in-chief of the weekly *Przegląd Tygodniowy*, was convinced that the decision was strictly political but created a very delicate situation for the Polish authorities, considering that the laureate now became an international personality, could receive foreign journalists, make statements, and gain a certain untouchability that could not be ignored even by the Polish communist government (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1485).

In his new capacity, Wałęsa began to be visited by Western diplomats, as happened, for example, with a counselor from the Italian Embassy in Warsaw, who arrived in Gdańsk in November 1983 to convey a congratulatory message from the Italian president. Following the meeting, Marco Maresca concluded that the union leader still strongly believed in the ideals and values he had promoted in recent years, but it was noticeable in his speech the absence of the advisors he had in the past (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Romania 1983, File 1485).

From this prestigious position, Wałęsa requested the United States and other Western governments to lift economic sanctions on Poland as a first step towards improving the material situation and supply

for Poles. Indeed, in the following months, the sanctions began to be lifted (Constantin 2007, 521). The Washington government canceled the ban on the Polish fishing fleet and then the ban on LOT flights from Poland to the United States. Additionally, it ceased opposing Poland's membership in the IMF.

Conclusions

As seen, the Pope repeatedly requested the authorities to allow and facilitate a meeting with Lech Wałęsa at least at the end of his 1983 pilgrimage, which was not easy for the regime leaders to accept. They repeatedly rejected it, arguing that it could "contribute to complicating the political situation." For them, Wałęsa was just a private person, a former leader of a former union; but for the public, he was certainly more than that. He represented a living symbol of society's desire for self-determination, embodying in 1980-1981 the only successful workers' movement autonomous from state control. Perhaps for these reasons, the government emphasized through its spokesperson that Wałęsa was not, in any case, a possible partner in the dialogue between the authorities and the nation (Open Society Archives – OSA , 8 July 1983, 5).

Negotiations on this aspect of the visit, conducted between the Vatican, the Polish Episcopate, and the Warsaw Government, highlighted a total disagreement and it was speculated that it could have even caused the cancellation of the 1983 visit. The Pope's insistence was based on the enormous expectation from Polish believers to see the two people towards whom their hopes for freedom were most directed together. The message that John Paul II had repeatedly conveyed in recent months, from the Vatican or even from Poland, that association in free unions is a fundamental human right, would have remained inconsistent and merely rhetorical without a meeting with the one who symbolized this aspiration to the highest degree. Finally, the Pontiff's policy of countering communist regimes by promoting Christian values such as freedom, solidarity, and the courage of resistance also necessitated a meeting with Wałęsa. The meeting with Wałęsa and the visit as a whole were not intended to create a major political breach but to consolidate a "habit of dignified, solidary, and honest behavior," to encourage everyone to "call evil and good by their names," (Ash 1997, 64), to awaken consciences because only they could prevent the "normalization" desired by the regime, meaning a return to Soviet norms.

On the other hand, the government led by Jaruzelski had to prevent such a meeting. It tried to argue that the former Solidarity leader was a private person and even one irrelevant in the Polish context of 1983; it invoked a disruption of efforts to normalize the internal situation; it conveyed to the Pope that it would be an unfriendly gesture to meet with representatives of clandestine, illegal, "counter-revolutionary" formations. The meeting would have confirmed and exacerbated the gap between the political system, its institutions and values, and the population. This was known, but it was highlighted by the Pope's statements during the visit and, moreover, by the public's reactions to these statements, spontaneous reactions of people who displayed posters, sang hymns, made gestures associated with Solidarity, openly showing their distance from the principles of the officially prescribed political and social order. Therefore, and above all, the government feared an image in which John Paul II and Lech Wałęsa together would show Poles that there were hopes for a path other than communism.

In the end, the meeting took place as an expression of a compromise still not fully elucidated and especially contested then and later. The conditions under which it took place, as a strictly private audience, the conspiratorial nature in which it was shrouded, made it the target of speculations and accusations difficult to manage at the Vatican. There were speculations that, in exchange for the repeal of martial law and a possible amnesty for political prisoners, the Church would be willing to collaborate more closely with the authorities. Even from within, it was discreetly conveyed that the regime was prepared to make a "corporatist compromise," (Ash 1997, 64), granting broad areas of religious and cultural autonomy and even offering certain social and economic responsibilities to the ecclesiastical authority. Even within Cardinal Glemp's entourage, some were seduced by this perspective, but the Pope's visit tempered them. From the Pontiff came a categorical NO because he understood that any authentic dialogue with society had to involve authentic unions.

Romanian and British diplomats in Poland, Moscow, or the Vatican tried to inform their respective foreign ministries with as much accuracy and promptness as possible about all these matters. They gathered information from Polish government officials, discussed with high-ranking Catholic prelates, consulted with journalists, and transmitted their own assessments regarding the stage of negotiations, their outcome, and implications for the future.

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