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ROMANTIC AESTHETICS AND  
LOVE AS MELANCHOLY

IN CONSTANTIN CHRISTOMANOS'  
TAGEBUCHBLÄTTER (1898)

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LANGUAGE: THE THREAT THAT BINDS US TOGETHER.  
A JOURNEY FROM ENLIGHTENMENT TO EXISTENTIALISM  
TOWARDS HUMANITY

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“V.N. Karazin” Kharkiv National University.

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**Abstract**

We stand beneath the shadow of a thousand tongues, a monument not of unity, but of a fractured sky. A testament to human diversity, a divine punishment, or a blessing in disguise? Our journey begins here, with the story of Babel, as we explore the tension between unity and diversity.

**I. Babel Beyond Towers and Speech.** We embark on redefining unity, questioning the necessity of a singular language or monolithic culture. Instead, we propose a rich blend woven from diverse voices, exploring the stories of Babel, Rome, and forward.

**II. Tradition Resiliently Challenges Almighty Reason.** The Enlightenment's pursuit of a new human unity based on pure and free reason unveils the contradictions within its homogenising tendencies. We delve into the thoughts of Herder, Hegel, and neo-Kantian philosophers, who emphasise the importance of individuality and the role of language in shaping cultures.

**III. Language and the War.** Language, a double-edged sword, can unite and divide. We shall discuss the power of propaganda and manipulation, emphasising the need to recognize and resist its misuse. Heidegger's existential view after the Second World War and Freud's experiences after the First reveal the paradoxical force of the death drive, which compels us towards repetition. We explore the concept of *Sein-zum-Tode*, emphasizing the significance of authenticity in

language's encounter with existence, as a path forward and a solution to avoid bad infinity in history.

**Conclusions.** Herein lies the true magic of embracing another tongue. It's not just a collection of dusty grammar rules, but a passport to a new world, a chance to see through different eyes.

In the context of Russia invading Ukraine, with its army killing for another Wall raised towards bad infinity, language becomes a necessity for peace.

Shall we head for a more peaceful world and let us remember that unity and diversity are not mutually exclusive; instead, they are two sides of the same coin, enriching our collective human experience. By learning foreign languages and celebrating the rich blend of cultures, we build bridges, foster empathy, and a future where peace reigns in Ukraine and beyond.

**Keywords:** language, unity, Enlightenment, existentialism, Herder, Hegel, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ukraine, war, peace

Ladies and Gentlemen, esteemed colleagues, and friends,  
Good morning!

I'm honoured to stand before you as I am filled with joy by this opportunity to speak together. It is truly remarkable such events are continuing despite the cruel disruptions brought by the Russian invasion. A sombre beginning for this symposium. Yet, allow me to express my condolences and have a few moments of silence for relatives, colleagues and other innocent people who died since its beginning, in 2022.

Amidst our shared sorrow, it is also important to acknowledge the dedication and hard work that make gatherings like these happen, even in such challenging times.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Julia Shamaieva, Associate Professor of Languages at Kharkiv National University for her unwavering commitment to make this international conference possible and for inviting me. Julia has also been a valuable member of the Advisory Board of *Brolly. Journal of Social Sciences* since the beginning, 7 years ago, in 2017, when I started

editing it under London Academic Publishing. I am truly grateful for her ongoing support.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Dean of the School of Foreign Languages, Ms Svitlana Virotschenko, for extending to me an invitation from the part of the University to participate today, enclosing such kind words and thoughts. I also thank Ms Hanna Guseva, the Head of the Department, for her steadfast efforts in organizing this event during wartime. It is through the dedication and commitment of persons like them that dialogue and collaboration towards peace are made possible.

Many of us may think that Ukrainian universities are down. I recall my conversation with Julia, and I was struck by a mix of emotions. Amidst this chaos, there was a sense of shame in even questioning whether Kharkiv University still functions. But here it is, albeit under hard conditions. It is proof of strength and determination on the part of Ukrainian professors and students to make education go forth despite Russian missiles.

With this in mind, I invite you to join me as we explore the subject of my lecture, hoping the journey ahead will captivate you.

## INTRO

We stand beneath the shadow of a thousand tongues, a monument not of unity, but of a fractured sky. Think of Babel - some say a testament to human hubris, a tower to climb and pierce the heavens - stalled and crumbled, thwarted by a jealous god.

Was there genuinely a time when unity in language and thought embodied a common reality for all of humanity?

## I. BABEL BEYOND TOWERS AND SPEECH

The story from the *Book of Genesis* provides compelling insights into this. In the heart of ancient Mesopotamia, humans decided to build

a city with a tower that could reach the heavens. They believed this monumental task would prevent them from scattering across the vastness of the Earth.

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. (...) Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”.

But all of this seems to have been perceived as a threat by the Divine who, in response, confused their tongues, causing them to speak different languages.

Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.

Human unity crumbled, leading to their dispersion across the earth. Wholeness became fragmentation, wherein linguistic diversity acts as a divine punishment.

\*

Distantly following, Rome - like other empires ere and thereafter, seemed to revamp the unity, although vanquished under the weight of its own internal fractures. “The Roman Empire has had the contradiction in itself from the beginning” - Hegel, in Herder's footsteps, used to say in the 1820s, in Berlin, where he held his famous *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.

This unshakeable unity of the Empire followed the Greek world of individualities - heroes and poleis.

In the Greek principle we have seen spiritual existence in its exhilaration — its cheerfulness and enjoyment: Spirit had not yet drawn back into abstraction; it was still involved with the Natural element — the idiosyncrasy of individuals. (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 297)

After long resistance, Carthage was taken and laid in ashes.

The Romans were eager for war, destroyed Corinth in the same year as Carthage, and made Greece a province. (...)

After the conquest of Macedonia, both that country and Greece were declared free by the Romans. (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 325)

Formed on the contradiction between patricians and plebeians, the Roman Republic faced, soon after the Conflict of the Orders (367–287 BC), a second one, on a higher level.

We observed that contradiction previously in the struggle of the patricians against the plebeians: now it assumes the form of private interest, contravening patriotic sentiment; and respect for the state no longer holds these opposites in the necessary equipoise. (Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 326)

As a result of this second contradiction, *abstract sovereignty* arises, where the army, for instance, is used to gain political glory for particular individuals.

Their chief spectacles were triumphs, the treasures gained in war, and captives from all nations, unsparingly subjected to the yoke of abstract sovereignty. (...)

Ruin now broke in unchecked, and as there existed no generally recognized and absolutely essential object to which the country's energy could be devoted, individualities and physical force were in the ascendant. The enormous corruption of Rome displays itself in the war with Jugurtha, who had gained the senate by bribery, and so indulged himself in the most atrocious deeds of violence and crime. (Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 326-328)

*Abstract sovereignty*, as well as Roman liberty or democracy, manifested though in a higher, better form compared to the Ancient World, where only one person - the ruler - was free, the others his subjects. These abstract forms reflected themselves in language during the epoch, and Latin became a language of abstract rules and speeches in front of the Senate.

This time it is language itself, a unity under one ruler and one universal people, spreading across the Colosseum to the tranquillity of the Forum, permeating the Ancient World during the height of Roman power like the aroma of exotic spices wafting through

marketplaces from Syria to Britannia; it is this type of unity manifesting in language that split humanity apart.

It wasn't Jupiter, in a moment of anger, that destroyed the empire. Instead, this happened when abstract language faced the reality of a plurality of concrete voices.

Barbarians and their hundreds of thongs took over an Empire divided in itself. Similar to what happened to Ancient Greece, world history was carried forward, and preserved, this time too, by those formerly deemed slaves. Subjects of their masters, they glimpsed through their reflections in the real world what true, concrete freedom ought to be, and felt that neither they nor the masters, possess it. Political universality and individual freedom - Rome's contradiction - was not a true one. Its terms are opposing because they both are only abstract notions, both unconscious of their unity. As Hegel would say, a resolution is thus required at a higher level.

\*

On this thread of thought, I dare say, the Babylonian linguistic unity had a similarly contradictory character. It was an illusion of unity, an incipient *apparition* - in a Kantian manner of speaking - instead of its true *appearance*. God as well might have only appeared jealous, although it is about a blessing in disguise, with the diversity of languages preventing a singular dull, potentially destructive, goal.

There is no way to throw a physical bridge to the heavens. This compels us to reassess our understanding of what unity genuinely means. Should unity necessitate a singular language, a monolithic culture? Or can it exist in a richer framework shaped by the interplay of diverse voices?

Babel and Rome were both manifestations of abstract unities, both of them unaware of their otherness, and unaware, secondly, that true unity resides in dialectically overcoming such otherness through - as paradoxically it may sound - acknowledgement and internalisation.

Language has always been a bit of a tricky puzzle, wouldn't you agree?

## II. TRADITION RESILIENTLY CHALLENGES ALMIGHTY REASON

Thus began, our journeys shall soon encounter another horizon to explore the tension between unity and diversity. That is Enlightenment and the rise of a new human unity, this time based on a superior principle, which is reason; pure and free reason, a guiding light, universal in itself, uniting not only among people but humankind with the wholeness of the universe.

Humanity, exulting once again over their moment of glory, will soon discover that not only does the contradiction unity-diversity appear through, and should find its resolution in language, but language has in itself many such others: personal will vs. universal law; pure reason - impurities of tradition; meaningful - formal discourse, and so many others.

Language henceforth commenced internalising and gaining awareness of itself as a two-edged sword, both uniting and splitting apart.

### II. 1.

Imagine this: A glade bathed in the whispers of countless hearts. Each blossom, a language vibrant with tales, songs, and the rustlings of unique lives.

This is the essence of Herder's vision, a champion of individuality, a man of letters and philosopher of history, who challenged the Enlightenment's homogenising tendencies. Nearing the twilight of his Epoch, once with the *Sturm un Drang* Movement, Johann Gottfried von Herder tempered the enlightened joy of finding reason as common to humanity in genre and the universe, with a universal language capable of fully grasping reality. He showed the illusions of reason and gave rise to a new concept of *Humanity*.

Language is now understood as the soul of a nation, shaping who we are, allowing us to step into the shoes of another culture, to feel the sting of a foreign proverb and the warmth of a shared laugh,

thus expressing the richness of human experience. It enhances understanding, serving as a stage for personal and collective *Bildung* – the cultivation of fully realised *Humanity* in people.

## II. 2.

In 1774, ten years before the first volume of his extensive work *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (*Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*) (1784–91) was printed, and 15 years before the French Revolution, Herder published a brief yet dense essay titled *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (*This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity*), *Beitrag zu vielen Beiträgen des Jahrhunderts* (*Contribution to Many Contributions of the Century*).

Behind the pamphlet-like title, his core theory - aimed not only against thinkers such as Voltaire or Iselin, but also against authors with opposing conceptions, such as Hume or D’Alambert, and which remained prevalent in his main work - was, in short, that contemporary Europe is not at its peak stage, nor its unity is such Enlightened as people liked to think about themselves (Spirit (*Geist*) - Hegel would later say - was not yet fully aware of itself as Spirit).

For him, the Enlightenment is neither the last nor the ultimate stage of humanity’s formation. The reason it promotes is not self-sufficient, nor does it constitute an autonomous force of historic creation; also, due to the abstract formalism it conceals, it does not confer upon morals those high standards that it claims.

## II. 3.

Thus, the idea of progress (*Fortschritt*) in history loses its front position. In its stead, the German author prefers to speak of a progression (*Fortgang*) in which – and this is the first principle I would like to set forth,

- (1) Every culture, built on former ones, brings with it simultaneously a series of innovations and losses.

Concomitantly, (2) the values, aesthetic taste, political concepts, the passions and inclinations underlying them, change. Hence, their comprehension must be undertaken according to each particular historical moment.

Moreover, for Herder, unlike his professor from Königsberg, Immanuel Kant, (3) reason itself undergoes changes and developments throughout history.

Regarded through this lens, the status of civilised Rome was established through force and plunder. So that, after some years, “rude barbarians were requisite, to give it new people, new laws, new manners, and new courage” (Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man*, XIV, III, 411).

The same occurred for the people of Carthage. In their age of glory, says him, they suppressed all other neighbouring nations, treating them as barbarians, being themselves “barbarous auxiliaries of a barbarian” (Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man*, XII, IV, 340). As a Roman colony, however, Africa was no longer that same horn of plenty.

(...) it was a granary for the people of Rome alone, a menagerie of wild beasts for their amusement, and a magazine of slaves. (Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man*, XIV, III, 413)

All such facts made Herder say: “The history of the Romans is the history of the rule of inferno”. The Romans left behind them many nations that were destroyed, far from having reached their maturity, but full of lifeblood and vigour. From Greece were left only ruins “which the barbarous spoilers carried away with them in triumph”.

Das menschliche Gefäß ist einmal keiner Vollkommenheit fähig; muß immer verlassen, indem es weiterrückt. (Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*, 310)

The human container is capable of no full perfection all at once; it must always leave behind in moving further on. (Herder, *This Too a Philosophy of History*, 288)

In this dynamic, language is a record of local conditions and experiences. Contrary to the French way of universality, he recommends all nations (not only Germans) develop their own one.

The cultivation of its mother tongue alone can lift a nation out of a state of barbarism. (Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man*, XIX, II, 575)

By championing local cultural identities over monolithic homogenising tendencies and conformity, he challenges the universalist approach, fostering a profound reflection on the nature of cultural formation. This thoughtful stance sets the stage for his incisive critique of the Enlightenment. This era marked by intellectual vigour and innovative ideas paradoxically reveals a profound gap between thought and action. The warmth of its ideals stands in stark contrast to the coldness of its deeds, suggesting that such a society, despite appearing strong and free on the surface, is fundamentally weakened by deeper issues such as despotism and greed.

Herder also exposes the inconsistency in the European claims of moral superiority: while it congratulates itself on abolishing slavery domestically, it simultaneously exploits and enslaves others, non-Europeans, in distant lands for economic gain. This makes us confront the selective morality that condemns barbarism at home while perpetuating it abroad under the guise of trade and civilisation.

This cyclical pattern of exploitation, driven by the lust for wealth and imperial greed reminds us that the pursuit of economic gain often overrides ethics and morals, leading to suffering and injustice that reverberate through history.

Every classical humanist [Schöndenker] who considers our century's civil administration the non-plus ultra of humanity has an opportunity (...) to rave about our century's light, that is, about its superficiality and unrestraint, about its warmth in ideas and its coldness in actions, about its seeming strength and freedom, and about its real *weakness-unto-death* and exhaustion under unbelief, despotism, and luxury. (Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man*, 307)

What miserable Spartans they were who used their Helots for agriculture, and what barbaric Romans who shut up their slaves in prisons in the earth! In Europe, slavery has been abolished because it has been calculated how much more these slaves would cost and how much less they would bring in than free people. Only one thing have we still permitted ourselves: to use as slaves, to trade, to exile into silver mines and sugar mills, three parts of the world – but those are not Europeans, not Christians, and in return, we receive silver and gemstones, spices, sugar, and – secret disease; thus for the sake of trade and for the reciprocal brotherly help and community of the lands. (Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man*, 328)

(...) what were the Roman spoilers doing in Numantia, in ancient Spain, a country that had never harmed them? Gold and silver mines. Spain was to them, what America is now forced to be to Spain, a place for plunder. (Herder, *Philosophy of the History of Man*, 415)

#### II. 4.

Humanity means something more. As we've come to realise: 1) *cultural understanding* is a cornerstone. Then arises 2) *cultural exchange*. Herder believed in the exchange of ideas and cultural expressions among diverse communities. Encouraging dialogue and collaboration between them helps break down barriers and stereotypes, fostering mutual respect and cooperation. This results in 3) *respect for diversity*.

Such ideas make Herder a vehement critic of imperialism and colonialism. Using the example of Rome to make people aware of their contemporary issues, he advocated for the recognition of cultural autonomy and the right to self-determination. Respecting the sovereignty of nations and peoples is crucial for maintaining peace and stability in the world.

4) Humanity is not innate in man but must be cultivated by each individual. It is inherent within us as a predisposition only and, as such, it needs to be ceaselessly educated (Herder, *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, 140). Specifically, we must cultivate those basic components that define it: freedom, reason and equity (*Billigkeit*), among its other second terms.

Did Herder's insights convince his contemporaries? Well, the trajectory of their formation (*Bildung*) seems to have slid away. And Spirit, as a consequence, alienates and becomes estranged from itself.

## II. 5

*Der sich entfremdete Geist; die Bildung (Self-Alienated Spirit. Culture)* is called one chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It depicts what resulted when almighty reason confronted concrete reality and tradition.

Cultural formation, originated as a deliberate choice between good and bad, portrays - when applied to reality - state power as good vs. personal wealth as bad, and the reverse. Their resolution lies in virtuous consciousness - who uses both for noble purposes - as is to be opposed by the consciousness of baseness. Both reflect themselves in language until goodness becomes a *facade* only, a semblance carried by formalities and so-called noble gestures, but devoid of true substance.

Its peak, the concept of *utility*, produces an irreconcilable conflict among human beings - as occurred during the regime of Terror, following the French Revolution. The possibility of getting out of this circle is an extreme one. Only by perceiving its own suppression as imminent (the fact of being suspicious, the guillotine - a result of *absolute freedom*), consciousness returns or, better said, is forced to return upon itself, to perform the absolute negation (the negation of the negation) and take its own self as an object, thus becoming - in Hegel's journey - moral spirit.

(...) a negation, moreover, of the individual as a being existing in the universal. The sole work and deed of universal freedom is therefore death, a death too - which has no inner significance or filling, for what is negated is the empty point of the absolutely free self. It is thus the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water. (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 360)

Language again, the rational language of human freedom and

fraternity shows itself as a sharp guillotine blade, cleaving not only humanity from itself but the individual too. A Morgana, again and again, destructive on both sides: universal and personal unity.

## II. 6.

These thoughts had powerful echoes in the next century, as many thinkers facing the fast-developing industrial era strived to clarify the meaning of *objectivity* in Humanities. The neo-Kantian school of Baden, especially Heinrich Rickert's theory of *Begriffsbildung* (on how our concepts are formed or constructed) as facing the positivism of the Vienna Circle are powerful examples of many doubts and question marks concerning language.

Can we really use the power language? What is truth and what are only justifications for crimes? With these new questions and the considerable difficulties in answering them, the failure had unfortunately terrifying consequences, as the First World War was just to explode.

## III. LANGUAGE AND THE WAR

Beware the serpent's hiss in the garden of words, as it fuels the power of language to divide. Language can be a weapon too, a poisoned chalice filled with formal rhetoric and hate. It can build walls of misunderstanding, incite wars, propaganda and manipulation – all that nasty business masqueraded as communication.

Thus, genuine language turns into a wistful memory - evoking the thoughts of Sartre and Camus - before it fades into silence. All those empty speeches that fuelled two World Wars in just half of the XXth Century stopped valuing anything in front of death coming from trenches as it was in front of the guillotine during Terror.

As soon as humanity has reached a new, higher, unity and well-being as a result of the technological revolution, language splits again the unity and spreads death - this negative silence that puts everything into parentheses. But language is still there. And a second World War is to come.

### III. 1.

Heidegger's existential assessment of language from *Sein und Zeit* delves into authenticity versus inauthenticity, as they operate on different levels of human beings (*Seienden*). These levels, he termed *ontic* and *ontological*, where *ontic* denotes the impersonal, the anyone (*das Man* - in German) and everydayness, whilst the second, the *ontologic*, is the horizon where Being (that Being that gives essence to beings - *Sein (Seiendheit) des Seienden*) might be unveiled.

I chose to speak about this because Heidegger's viewpoint, in the context of the Second World War, resonates with the guillotine. Similarity is high. *Dasein* - the individual present here and, some sort aware of itself, reaches its state of authenticity only due to an existential shock. The existential leap between *ontic* and *ontologic* occurs, here too, when consciousness confronts its negative in the extreme: his *Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode)*. Thus, it starts regarding itself and acknowledges its state of being “thrown in the world” as well as its end, becoming able to hear and listen to the “question of Being”.

As well as in Hegel's example, consciousness manages to exceed the space of everydayness in a hard way. Although, for both philosophers, everydayness has never had bad connotations. And, in both cases, it is precisely this everydayness that constitutes the soil both to begin this movement and find possible other solutions than such premature death.

On the other hand, this also signifies that the very act of human understanding and interpreting the world around us is not something external, but an inherent component of factic life,

directed towards the ambient world, towards consciousness that I am, and consciousnesses that are the others around me.

H. G. Gadamer, one of Heidegger's former students, correlated both views (Hegel's and Heidegger's) to make us understand how important tradition is for comprehension, as well as that trying to eliminate its traces is a path that leads nowhere. The universe of everydayness is the place where the event or a text exists, and from which comprehension receives, more or less visible, its orientation. Historicity – the medium in which they occur – should be brought to consciousness. In other words, it must be acknowledged as an opening place.

Historicity, Gadamer also insists, should not be understood as suppressing the truth. Instead, its perfectibility resides in a “dialogical model” aiming for improvements through constant engagement with the negative - the concrete reality. That is precisely what is missing from the Enlightenment's imperative to eliminate prejudices through reason, and which produced the *absolute suppression* of the self. The requirement Gadamer draws forth consists of maintaining a constant openness to otherness, which does not imply eliminating prejudices and preconceptions, but a continuous revision of them in accordance with the object.

Yet all of these, I repeat, happen within the ontic horizon of everydayness. Authenticity and the “voice” of ‘Being’ still remain unperceivable.

My point is that such deathly silence wasn't a solution, neither in history nor even for Heidegger. *Sein und Zeit* is, in fact, an unfinished book. After hearing its voice, the voice of Being, nothing really happens. The author closes it and, in the following years, he undergoes a period of *Kehre* - the famous tournure that took Heidegger's philosophy nearing World War II, meaning that the question of Being should not start from Dasein anymore, but from Being itself towards Dasein. In short, Heidegger turned to aesthetics and Holderlin's poetry, as places to pierce the meaning of a Being... that is not really Being.

On its side, language continued to make innocent victims of war.

III. 2.

That's why I feel it's worthy to exist at this point from Heidegger's text and reconsider it by adopting Gadamer's hermeneutical principles, namely to take a look at it by starting from its own everydayness - the year 1927, and those destructive ones that came after.

The interwar years were also a terrain for another significant shift in the understanding of human instincts and desires. Sigmund Freud too underwent some sort of a *Kehre*.

Freud's experiences in treating soldiers returning from the frontlines led him to realise that human behaviour is influenced by more than just basic instincts - namely libido. This turning point made him write, in 1920, a book called *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle), thus bringing forth the notion of "death drive" (*Todestrieb*).

Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode* and the very fact that during this time he felt it necessary to include such a concept in his philosophy of Being, echoes, for me, with Freud's newly discovered "human drive".

*Trieb* (drive) and *Instinkt* oppose each other: when established, the death drive causes behaviours opposite to those dictated by vital instincts. *Todestrieb* is a diametrically opposed force to libido and, therefore to life, compelling us towards repetition. Eros, the sexual instinct of life, is not blocked, as in the case of his former patients suffering from neuroses, but is replaced because of this death drive, the drive of self-destruction.

*Todestrieb*, explains him in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, leads to repetition instead of evolution. The soldiers he treated suffered from recurrent dreams of the trauma, contrary to the expectancy of pleasure from sleep. This drive made them repeat the traumatic experiences instead of reminding them as something belonging to the past, thus in a cycle defying the natural inclination towards healing and evolution.

## III. 3. BAD INFINITY

I shall call this, using a Hegelian expression from his *Science of Logic*, bad, false or spurious infinity (*Schlechte Unendlichkeit*), meaning repeating traumatic experiences at the same level, unable to dialectically move to the next stage.

The true negation of the negation, for Hegel, does not return us to the initial moment, repeating it, but generates a third one which resolves the first two. Instead, *Schlechte Infinity* denotes a perpetual movement from one member of the contradiction to the other, “from the limit to its non-being, and from the latter back again to the other” (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 192). It is only the expression of contradiction, not its solution:

(...) because of the continuity of one determinateness in the other, the progress gives rise to the *semblance* of a resolution in a union of the two. (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 191)

The progress *ad infinitum*, unlike the true infinity (*die wahrhafte Unendlichkeit*), is “neither an advance nor a gain but rather a repetition of one and the same move” (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 192).

Just one example. The mistake of the Enlightenment, according to H.-G. Gadamer, consists, as we already saw, of the illusion that reason could eliminate tradition and prejudices. This claim is itself a prejudice. The consciousness of the interpreter is *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* - a historically affected consciousness. What is to be done, and it is productive to be done, is to capitalise on them.

For a dialectical experience to be completed, it is not enough for the opposites to overcome the contradiction between them, but also to conserve it - meaning to acknowledge their own internal contradictions, which caused, in fact, the first one, then to assimilate and memorise them. This is the meaning of one of the most famous Hegelian concepts: *Aufhebung* - overcoming and, at the same time, preservation.

The luggage of memories is enhanced by every new experience. On the one hand, it prevents consciousness from repeating what it overcame. On the other, it makes us capable of better understanding the new object. Heidegger, at this point, captures well this aspect when he defines consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) as *fact-of-being-conscious* / *fact-of-being-aware* (*Bewußt-sein*) - as a result of all memorised experiences.

I remember precisely not to repeat what I have overcome, nor to relive it for the purpose of fetishist pleasure of original identity or as a morbid memory of trauma, whereby to compensate for the present incapacibilities.

### III. 4.

Similarly, Eastern Europe may ask anything, as long as the judgements on the interwar period reveal positive values, like those of today, and those of the post-World War II negative ones. The monuments of the first period, for example, are perceived as objects of contemplation; those of the last, only as places of trauma produced by communism.

In Berlin, one of the main boulevards can still bear the name of Karl Marx and be preserved as an object of patrimony. At the main entrance, Humboldt University is still displaying one - the most famous - of his *Eleven Theses on Feuerbach*. In the East, such street names have been replaced and most objects from that period destroyed. That is because Berlin has overcome, at least for the time being, the need to maintain the ban on questioning about such issues. The East, on the other hand, prolongs the fetish precisely because the answer would shatter the current state of affairs. The true Unity does not occur, but only an illusion of it, produced by the infinite wandering between the two opposites, without a resolution that adapts accordingly.

## CONCLUSIONS: LANGUAGE AND FALSE INFINITY

My friends and esteemed colleagues, I took these pictures [of the Berlin Wall] one week before this wonderful conference, during a short stay in Berlin - a city indelibly marked by the war, followed by the building of a wall that once divided East from West. As born and studying in Eastern Europe, I resonate with the pain of a fractured neighbouring nation. There, near that fallen wall, the echoes of your struggle feel deeper.

What Russia generated our days by invading Ukraine reiterates toward bad infinity not just the imperial scene before the French Revolution, as criticised by Herder. In less than 35 years, it started again building the wall. *Schlechte Unendlichkeit* repeats trauma for all Eastern European countries inside or outside the EU and fuels a perpetual conflict.

As we journeyed from the ancient story of Babel, passing near the complexities of existentialism, until the present days' new higher unity - based, this time, on the brand new digital enormous power of connection, language emerged as a threatful force, yet one that binds us together.

Language can be a weapon, wielded to sow discord and fuel flames of conflict. As such, disinformation and propaganda overthrow its purpose of fostering understanding.

Misunderstanding, division, and the erosion of cultural richness come into its place. Yet, language also holds the key to peace. It's a bridge across divides, a celebration of the magnificent mosaic of humankind.

Let's assess some conclusions:

1. *Peace Through Understanding.* Our exploration revealed that genuine unity does not necessitate a singular language or culture but thrives in the rich blend of diverse voices. The story of Babel taught us that diversity, far from being a curse, is a blessing, preventing singular, potentially destructive goals. Instead, embracing linguistic diversity

may foster understanding, kindness and, ultimately, peace among nations.

2. *Herder's notion of Humanity*. Historical examples, such as Rome and Carthage, demonstrate the consequences of imposing one culture's values on others. Whilst the Enlightenment championed reason and universalism, Herder celebrated the individuality and inherent value of diverse cultures embodied in language. His advocacy for respecting each culture's autonomy and right to self-determination echoes the importance of respecting Ukraine's sovereignty and its people's right to determine their own future. Conflicts and wars sparked by linguistic and cultural imperialism highlight the urgent need for mutual respect and dialogue to resolve the tensions in Ukraine and similar regions. By fostering open communication, we pave the way for a better unity and horizon of understanding, a contemporary realisation of Herder's vision of *Humanity*.

3. Unfortunately, the long series of opposition residing in language has not yet come to an end in our contemporary world. Amidst the pursuit of unity - as Babel revealed only an abstract one - we encounter the obstacle of *false infinity*, wherein conflicts persist, in a fetishist manner, despite efforts to overcome them. The case of the Berlin Wall exemplifies this phenomenon, as the conflict between East and West still perpetuates on similar terms.

But there are other shapes too.

4. *Learning foreign languages is a necessity for peace*. Not to remake Babel's original unity, nor to be bound by an external reason - as happened in Eastern Europe when the Soviet Union - or unity, isn't it? - imposed the Russian language and excluded the others. USSR managed thus to throw upside down the very act of language learning which should have unlocked empathy and knowledge.

The path to unity lies not in forced homogeneity, but in embracing the beauty of linguistic diversity.

In Ukraine, linguistic and cultural differences perpetuate a cycle of tensions and instability, impeding efforts towards reconciliation. Overcoming false infinity demands a concerted commitment to addressing underlying grievances and forging a nation of unity.

This is where the beauty of acquiring another language comes in. It's not merely about memorising vocabulary or dusty grammar rules, but a jolly good adventure, a passport to experience otherness and handshake across the chasm. It's about, building bridges of understanding across cultures and divides.

Wouldn't that be a powerful weapon for peace?

5. Such is the paradoxical Hegelian way to overcome contradictions. Unity and diversity are not mutually exclusive. It is through this diversity that humanity was able to spread and populate the Earth, each group developing its own unique culture and way of life. And that gives us hope to transform conflicts into steps towards a higher truth.

Ukraine's rich tapestry is its strength, not its weakness. Let us not fall into the trap that repeats trauma *ad infinitum*. Instead, let us use language as a bridge that overcomes through internalising and acknowledgement of historicity and tradition, thus embracing our differences, confronting false infinity, and fostering a path for lasting peace and harmony.

Language showed itself as both a threat that binds us together and the key to unlocking a more unified humanity. May we be ever mindful of its power, both to divide and to unify, and let us choose to use it as a bridge, a celebration of the magnificent shared humanity. By acknowledging its potential for division, we learn to wield language and its power with responsibility and care.

In the context of Russia cruelly invading Ukraine, with its army killing to raise another Wall not towards the sky but towards bad infinity, let's use languages to spread empathy, kindness, understanding, and build a future where peace reigns in Ukraine and beyond.

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PRE-RAPHAELITE INTERTEXTUALITIES,  
ROMANTIC AESTHETICS AND  
LOVE AS MELANCHOLY IN CONSTANTIN CHRISTOMANOS'  
*TAGEBUCHBLÄTTER* (1898)

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**Abstract.** In this paper, I investigate the cultural fashion of Pre-Raphaelitism which, in the late 19th century, inspired Constantin Christomanos to write a work based on his virtual interaction with Empress Elisabeth of Austria-Hungary. This literary piece, first published in German in 1898, was titled *Tagebuchblätter*. I review the Greek version, published in 1908 under the title *Το Βιβλίο της αυτοκράτειρας Ελισάβετ. Φύλλα Ημερολογίου* (transliterated as: *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet. Fylla Imerologion*).

The *fin-de-siècle* spirit that sprang during that time disseminated common aesthetic principles throughout Europe. The contribution of art to the formation of national culture was suggested as an ideological principle in Victorian England. The phenomenon expanded and led to the ideologisation of Art. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was inspired by the early Italians and the *Stil Novisti*. Translation became a new creation. This resonates with what Oscar Wilde will later quote in his work *The Critic as Artist* (1891). Rossetti, in the translation of Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, *mirrors* himself, while Dante does the same thing in his own writing. It is a process of literary genealogy that moves between the two works. In the second case to be examined, that is, in Rossetti's artistic work, there is the embedment of a literary subject within an artwork. Christomanos assimilates reversely the technique by Rossetti into his own literary work.

The last part of my paper aims to explore *love as melancholy* in this writing of Christomanos through an original multidisciplinary perspective, that is to say: theoretical, literary, aesthetic, historical, psychoanalytic, as well as gender perspective that ranges from antiquity to modernity. The painting *Love Among the Ruins* (1894) by Edward Burne-Jones perhaps best and vividly portrays Christomanos' creative memories and self-reflection on the mood and feelings he

experienced over his dwelling in the Austrian Empire, where he was assigned to serve as the Empress' private instructor of Greek, bringing into light the tender erotic feelings he maintained for her (a fact that was previously addressed in earlier research: Christomanos 1990, 10-20). At this point, I suggest construing Christomanos' love aesthetics through the scheme of the bodily humor of *melancholy*, by applying the rather romantic motif of *unfulfilled love*, which is thus completed only through decay and death 'among the ruins'.

**Keywords:** Pre-Raphaelites, Christomanos, Empress Elisabeth, Austria, Hungary, Sissi, intertextuality, Dante, Rossetti, Wilde, mirroring, autobiography, fin-de-siècle, love-melancholy, Edward Burne-Jones, love among ruins

## INTRODUCTION

Pierre Bourdieu presented the work of art as a palimpsest revealing its modern aspect. He recognised the multitude of interpretations, the act of reading as a process of recreating, the boundless essence, the potential for both materialistic and symbolic significance in engaging with it, categorizing it, unravelling its mysteries, offering commentary, challenging its ideas, understanding it, and embracing it as a possession (Giebelhausen and Barringer 2009, 1).

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, established in the late 1840s, embraced the principles proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and their influence on the artistic and literary landscape endured for over 150 years. In an article published in *The Critic* on February 15th, 1850, Edward William Cox sought to introduce them as the epitome of the artistic tradition. According to *The Guardian* on August 28th, 1850, the era witnessed the emergence of Pre-Raphaelites as a group of intellectuals and artists, forming a *School*. (Corbett 2009, 81, 82, 96).

Although Pre-Raphaelites were often seen as complex and controversial figures, they were guided by a set of principles that defined their artistic identity. In *Victorian Art Criticism*, they were associated with debated concepts such as manliness and effeminacy,

Britishness and cosmopolitanism, tradition and modernity. The dualistic approach yielded a multitude of interpretations, where artistic influences, genealogies, and stylistic morphologies demonstrated a critical role in shaping the movement (Codell 2009, 54).

As it is argued: “By around 1908, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had [...] (come) to serve the needs of British cultural politics for a national imagined community” (Codell 2009, 54). In this context, from *daring rebels* Pre-Raphaelites transformed into *idols of Britishness*, intellectual and artistic conveyors of the *Victorian national identity*. The endeavour was conducted in the popular spirit of the period to assert the configuration of the *national culture* (Codell 2009, 54).

Furthermore, *Victorian national identity* in Britain was built upon the dogma of “deliberate *cultural construction*” (Codell 2009, 54). Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was the case to perform it. At this point, it is worth noting that Pre-Raphaelitism had a strong impact on the expansion of both British and other European and Continental national identities while, at the same time, the movement fostered every single nation’s cultural fashion all over Europe (Codell 2009, 53).

The process of nationalising in Victorian England had, as research pointed out, three dominant aesthetic principles: literary style, race, and interdisciplinary (see Codell 2009, 65). At this point, I do not discuss race as an aesthetic principle but showcase, in the lines below, the gender component instead. It is evident that during that time, in England intellectuals and artists insisted on emphasising the details, while European artists focused on the submission of an atmosphere. As Codell puts it: “While Europeans painted atmosphere, the English maintained bright colours” (Codell 2009, 65). Pre-Raphaelites were asseverating the spiritual in art and their “rebellion became a cultural Protestantism claiming to be both traditional and modern” (Codell 2009, 66).

THE FEMALE FIGURE BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI  
AND HER MIRRORING IN THE LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF  
EMPRESS ELISABETH BY CHRISTOMANOS

A leading figure in Pre-Raphaelitism was Dante-Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 1882). In his essay on Rossetti, later collected in the book *Appreciations*, yet first published in 1883, a year after Rossetti's death (McGann 2012, 89), Walter Pater puts the writer and painter at the centre of intellectual life in the *fin-de-siècle* (McGann 2012, 89). The years 1845-1846 are considered critical for Rossetti's artistic development. During that period, he was keen on translating Dante and other Italian poets of the early *Stil Novisti* (Codell 2009, 89, 90). Rossetti's reading of the early Italian poetry (Dante, Cavalcanti, Cecco Angiolieri) transforms his poetics into what Shelley (1792-1822) called "intellectual beauty" (McGann 2012, 90).

In the bibliography, Rossetti is characterised as a poet of love and physical passion, an intellectual writer like Dante, who follows programmatically a definite set of ideas (McGann 2012, 90). The virtual conversations between Christomanos and Empress Elisabeth on Dante were likely to have been triggered to some extent by the popular interest in Pre-Raphaelitism amidst the *fin-de-siècle*, as well as Rossetti who *read* the Renaissance anew.

Rossetti considered his translations as a way, a method that could function as a precursor for his own poetry. His translations of Dante and the early Italian poets "-probably begun as early as 1845- plunged him into a study of Europe's most significant body of love poetry" (McGann 2012, 90). He adapted his prosody into English and ventured to develop it into Italian prosodic forms (McGann 2012, 90). The main writing was *La Vita Nuova* of Dante, the writing in which Dante transformed his life into a poetic myth. According to research: Rossetti in his translation "was consciously trying to map Dante's life onto his own" (McGann 2012, 90). In other words, Rossetti was in the making of Dante's life a mirror of himself.

In a parallel reading, the backdrop of Dante's and Rossetti's works is brought to the forefront. Taking inspiration from Dante, Rossetti's love poetry embodies an intellectual depth, demonstrating both poets' view of love through a philosophical lens. Poets sought a style that could transform intangible concepts such as emotions, ideas, and spiritual forces into an objective form, often through language, semiotics or symbolism. The allegorical elements present in their works underscore the philosophical dimensions of their artistic expression. (McGann's lecture, "Dante and Rossetti: Translation, Pastiche, Ritual, Fate", delivered in 1998 and published by the University of London Press in 2005 in PDF format, with a subsequent release in 2020, 5).

The self-referentiality of Rossetti's work and the assumption of poetic genealogy - of Dante as well - can be traced within the narrative of *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet*, at text passages where Christomanos alludes to the artistic representation of *Beatrice*, by Rossetti who, according to him: *painted her figure as if she was mirroring herself within his soul* / in Greek: *που τη ζωγράφησε βλέποντάς τη στον καθρέφτη της ψυχής του* (Christomanos 1990, 69). Rossetti develops an intimate relationship with the poetic and artistic figure he crafts while he re-creates it through his own 'glasses', as a mirroring of his own life.

As it is argued: "Rossetti's inspiration was Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*), exploring the Italian poet's idealized love for Beatrice and her premature death" - Gallery label. November 2016, and "Rossetti draws a parallel in this picture (1864–70) between the Italian poet Dante's despair at the death of his beloved Beatrice and his own grief at the death of his wife Elizabeth Siddal, who died on 11 February 1862". Frances Fowle. 7 December 2000, Both found at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rossetti-beata-beatrix-n01279> (last access 25/10/2021).

One could say that Rossetti's translations were less translations but a sort of poetic essays in progress for his later work as a poet. *The Critic*, according to the famous quote that reaches Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900), becomes the new *Artist*. The poetic and painting

features of Rossetti's oeuvre share jointly the dogma of the undivided form that found its equivalent in many literary and artistic representatives of the epoch.

In the memoir of his brother, William Michael Rossetti vividly recounts the significance of the 1849 drawing, titled: *Dante Drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice*. The drawing is a “key example of how outline could be modified to enable a more personal expression of ideas”. (Cruise 2011, 54). The artwork, he asserts, stands as the quintessential embodiment of the *Pre-Raphaelite School* during that era. Remarkably, it appears to be the inaugural instance where Rossetti draws inspiration from Dante's personal narrative, transmuting the poet's verses into a visual representation. The image itself portrays the early Italian poet, Dante, surrounded by a circle of his companions, while an additional inscription records the location and date of this poignant scene: *Florence, 9th June 1291* (PretteJohn 2012, 103).

Within a broad frame, the same artistic representation technique inspired Christomanos in his own writing, *To Vinlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet*. The main difference lies in the fact that the latter makes the reverse: it is evident that the literary subject of Dante transforms into an artwork by Rossetti, while the artwork of Rossetti is embedded, as a literary subject, into the narrative of Christomanos, thereby forming an interdisciplinary genealogy process. Another difference lies in the aestheticisation of the latter. A hybrid form illuminates the two aspects, both expressed in the context designated in the narrative.

Going back to Dante, he launches a multiplicity of meanings. Rossetti used this technique as a methodological tool in poetry and painting. PretteJohn argues that, due to his personal obsessions and a destructive allure of women, he found himself distanced from the artistic milieu. Over time, his artistic expression transformed into a mere conduit for his personal desires. The tragic demise of his beloved Siddall served as the final blow towards a tremendous collapse that was followed by his descent into drug addiction (PretteJohn 2012, 103, 108, 109). His life and work explain one

another, while intertextuality of what he called *double work* is a technique which found its representatives to aesthetes and Anglosaxon modernists.

Through the pages of *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet*, the Empress is presented similarly to Siddall and, a few lines below, the analogy becomes more accurate: Christomanos likens Elisabeth's image during her hair rituals to the drawing by Rossetti *La Bella Mano*: in *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet*, translated in Greek: “η ζωγραφιά του Ροσσέττη *Τ' όμορφο χέρι*” (Christomanos 1990, 92). The writer, according to the well-known technique of Rossetti, combines the drawing with its literary counterpart. Therefore, he seems to adopt with scrutiny the literary style that features the aesthetic subject and theme he discusses.

In the writing *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet*, terms such as *The Beloved* - drawn from the title of Rossetti's painting (1865 – 6) - relate to Rossetti's biography. The term *The Beloved*, at Christomanos, derives from the same characterisation of Siddall by Rossetti. Other characterisations such as *The female figure of a lily* / in Greek: *Κοιμένα Υπαρξη* come directly from Rossetti's work. (For similar quotations, see Christomanos 1990, 103, 209). In Rossetti's work *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, where, according to the secondary bibliography: “the representational level of meaning works together with the technique, the Virgin is learning to translate the visual appearance of a lily (her symbol) into a work of visual art, an embroidery” (PretteJohn 2012, 103, 106).

#### THE INTERTEXTUALITY OF EDWARD BURNE-JONES' PAINTING AND THE ROMANTIC MOTIF OF “LOVE AMONG THE RUINS”

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) entered the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the late 1850s and was associated with Rossetti (Arscott 2012, 103, 223). In *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet*, the focus on interior spaces - characteristic of the art of Burne-Jones - becomes apparent in text passages where the writer describes the

interior of Achillion Palace in Kerkyra (Corfu) (Christomanos 1990, 123 - 138).

Another work cited in *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet* is the painting *Love Among the Ruins* (1894), translated in Greek by Christomanos as *O Έρωας μες τα ερειπια* (Christomanos 1990, 195). The writer confesses implicitly - almost subtly - the erotic sense he adds to that exclusive moment of his virtual promenade with the empress in *Villa Kapodistria*, located on the Ionian Greek Island.

For the research of common ground between the painting *Love among the Ruins* and the writing *To Vivlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet*, I examine literary and artistic features in the way they were depicted in Burne-Jones' artwork and how they were presumably perceived by Christomanos.

The rejection of the omnipotence of *masculinity* was considered as a *succès de scandale*. (Bullen 1998, 185). Edward Burne-Jones' statement sheds light on this aesthetics: "The more materialistic science becomes, the more angels shall I paint" (Bullen 1998, 185). Effeminacy was ubiquitous (Bullen 1998, 185). It is argued that "the lack of action" in the paintings by Burne-Jones "was not manly" and the unwillingness to introduce clearly "gender definitions was similarly unmasculine" (Bullen 1998, 185). But the strongest counterweight for masculinity was not only femininity but the androgynous. Between the 1860s and 1870s, aesthetic androgyny was firmly associated with Algernon Charles Swinburne's (1837 – 1909) and Edward Burne-Jones (Bullen 1998, 186).

Painted figures of Edward Burne-Jones and Botticelli (1445 - 1510) are *sexless*: The fusion of male and female characteristics to discerning the gender of the depicted individuals becomes a daunting task, if not an insurmountable one within the oeuvre of both. In the realm of this artistic movement, heroes and heroines bear striking resemblances, blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity. Male figures possess an uncanny resemblance to women, while the archetypal female form exhibits high cheekbones and a thin, almost starved countenance (Bullen 1998, 191).

These aesthetic features frame the painting *Love Among the Ruins* (1894). The work depicts an embraced couple with their arms tangled holding one another, their faces and bodies in side-to-side contact. In a distant shot, the two figures seem to be united. There is no space between them, the bodies and heads are presented in complete unity. However, the body contact has no clear sexual intimation. The two lovers neither are kissing nor is there a hint of a moment that precedes or follows sexual intercourse.

Their clothing is social as they wear early-Renaissance style long robes that cover the whole of their bodies. As noted, the characteristic female figure in Burne-Jones “has high cheekbones and rather a hungry face” (Bullen 1998, 191). The prolonged chin of the woman and her thin and pale face confirm the first part of the assumption. However, in this painting, there is not a sense of sexual deprivation on her face. The literary data (that is, certain passages from *To Vivilio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet* that I will examine below), associated with the painting’s interpretation by Christomanos, promotes the depiction of an *unfulfilled love* relationship, where *together is not feasible*.

According to historical testimonies, Burne-Jones during that time had a passionate love affair with the Greek artist and sculptor Maria Zambaco (1843 – 1914). The original composition was painted shortly after the end of Burne-Jones’ affair with his muse. The above information is given in *Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones* (Birmingham 1833 – London 1898) - *Love Among the Ruins*, [www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1288953](http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1288953) (last access 14/10/2021).

Christomanos reflects on the Empress’ reference to *Ruins* (in Greek: *Epelma*) and makes his personal associative remark. The associative reference to the painting of Burne-Jones gives insight into the way Christomanos was thinking of the close professional relationship he had with Elisabeth. In other words, the painting features can be taken as plot elements in *To Vivilio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet* and, to some extent, as historical evidence.

In this context, it seems that the writer was maintaining tender love feelings for Empress Elisabeth. By the painting's associative remark, which was triggered by her words, she is transferred to his personal aesthetic world, where the hope for intimacy, namely, the love interaction with the Empress (which, most likely, is not to be carnal) prevails. Looking closely through the modern bibliography on the phenomenon, and within my own assumptions, the bodily humor of *erotic melancholy* (in ancient Greek terms) is inherent in Christomanos' literary imagination.

The first reference to *melancholy* is found in *Air, Waters, and Places*, it is attributed to Hippocrates and dates back to the end of the 5th century BC (Rassidaki 2012, 24). The interface between imagination (that is to say, Christomanos' associative remark) and *melancholy* is given in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problem 30*, where “melancholy is associated with heightened eroticism” (Wells 2007, 27).

The expression of *erotic frenzy* (in Plato's terms) is the platonic (*divine*) *fantasy* intertwined with *melancholy*, and their conflation leads to divine *inspiration* that transcends the pragmatic sense of the world. The expression of *the frenzy of intellect* (a sort of *divine frenzy*) leads to sublime creativity.

In the bibliography, there is also a take on the concept of *melancholy*. It is contended by the old writers that there is a divine essence within this humor (Wells 2007, 29). The notion is further explored in the analysis of *Problem 30* in modern research, which sheds light on Christomanos' interpretation of *melancholy* as a sexualized and imaginative experience. The relationship between the imagination and *melancholy*, as depicted in *Problem 30*, holds great significance as it implies both the eroticisation of the melancholic imagination and a transcendent, divine inspiration that surpasses mere physical comprehension. These implications have also found their way into early modern writings on *melancholy* and *love-melancholy*. For instance, Jacques Ferrand's comprehensive work on *love-melancholy*, in 1610, inherits the perspective of a sexualised melancholic imagination. Similarly, André du Laurens emphasises the specific delusions experienced by melancholic lovers, suggesting

a connection between the eroticised imagination of the melancholic and the poetic inspiration of the artist (Wells 2007, 28).

*Melancholy*, in the long history of the English Renaissance, became emblematic (Sullivan 2016). From the 16<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> century, its epicentre was in England over the Elizabethan era, considering the status of *melancholy* as the “Elizabethan malady”. In the *fin-de-siècle* literature, the melancholic hero finds their archetypes in Romanticism. German Romanticism’s aesthetics can also be traced within this writing of Christomanos. The narrative imbued with the painting’s connotations is framed by a predominantly Romantic theme: the *unfulfilled love*, where the mental communication between the two lovers prevails. The phenomenon is aligned with a popular notion of the period, asserting that the individual communicates mentally and spiritually with his physical and human environment. The *fulfilment of love* occurs not in life but through their union *in death* (or *among the ruins*).

In Romanticism’s theory, the role of nature is redefined, since it no longer functions solely as a graphic setting but, due to its effect on the human psyche, it transforms into a critical component for the composition of the work. At this point, I should note the *Romantic* motif deriving from ancient Greek *melancholy* that promotes the idea of *romantic love* being profoundly infinite and completed only through tragedy.

According to these sources, even beyond romanticism ruins occupy a unique position at the intersection of various aesthetic concepts, such as *the beautiful*, *the picturesque*, *the sublime* and *melancholy*. Before a structure falls into ruin, it may possess qualities of smoothness and completeness, which are associated with *beauty*. However, when decay sets in beauty diminishes, as explained by Uvedale Price in his *Essays on the Picturesque*. The transition occurs when the embellishments of buildings are replaced by the embellishments of ruins, such as incrustations, weather stains, and the growth of plants on walls. At this point, the picturesque qualities take precedence over *the beautiful* and, eventually, all signs of smoothness, symmetry, and design disappear. Ruins hold an

abundance of associative triggers, evoking a sense of the past and the passage of time. They are repositories of history and carry a multitude of allusions. Additionally, ruins possess a sense of *sublime*, surpassing the pictorial effects of light and shade, as well as other elements of scale and proportion. They become images that inspire awe and even fear. For instance, Diderot's critique of Hubert Robert's paintings in the *Salon of 1767* deemed them excessively picturesque. Diderot's ideal of ruins was shaped by the aesthetic of *the sublime* (Bowring 2017, 20).

On the other side, romanticism – as reflected by the decadence of the *fin-de-siècle*, intertwines melancholy and the landscape. It is evident that along with the motif of *love-melancholy*, the literary depiction of an imposing landscape played an equally decisive role in Christomanos' writing, where the painting of Burne-Jones sets the backdrop for his virtual promenade with the Empress in *Villa Kapodistria*. The narrator describes the “desperate orchard, the trees, the sea like a second sky but deeper, more mysterious and more vast”, presenting the Empress' beauty as melancholic and ecstatic “among the ruins, surrendering to the sweet sorrow of all these plant-sorrows” (Christomanos 1990, 195), among humors of nature that surrounded her.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the Pre-Raphaelite movement as a conceptual and artistic scheme through Constantin Christomanos' writing, published in Greek in 1908, under the title *To Βιβλίο της αυτοκράτειρας Ελισάβετ. Φύλλα Ημερολογίου / Το Vinlio tis aftokrateiras Elisavet. Fylla Imerologiou*. My main aim was to show that, nearing the *fin-de-siècle*, a prevalent ideological dogma that claimed the contribution of art to the configuration of *national identity* gradually emerged. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 1882) was inspired by the early Italians' and the *Stil Novisti*.

Translation became new literature. Rossetti, by translating Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, re-creates himself as Dante did himself

through this writing. It is about a literary genealogy, a process which moves between the two writings. Christomanos uses Rossetti's intertextuality with scrutiny. Then, the visual arts' intertextuality of Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), and the scheme of love as *melancholy* reveal the intimate (although platonic) relationship with Empress Elisabeth, Christomanos was dreaming of while living in the Austrian Empire as her tutor, and being seduced by her mythical existence.

*Publication Notes* of the author: Constantin Christomanos was appointed to serve the Empress of Austria-Hungary for the first time in 1891, later on periodically until 1893 (Mavrikou Anagnostou, 16-17). "Konstantin Christomanos, Elisabeth's Greek instructor [...] tutored the Empress during her hair-styling sessions" (Gruber Florek, 9). Christomanos' literary work on his interaction with Elisabeth was first published in 1898, in German, with the title *Tagebuchblätter*. Here, in the transliteration of the Greek title, I decided to maintain the subtitle in order to designate that the German title of the first publication turned into a subtitle in the Greek version that followed, then in the French (1900), and the Italian (1901) versions respectively (Christomanos 1990, 9).

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BAUDRILLARD: COSMOLOGICALLY YOURS

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**Abstract.** Baudrillard's work shows that our perception of reality is not fixed but fluid, shaped by layers of memory, sensation, and thought., where subject and object continually interact. Baudrillard's idea that nothing exists fully in real-time emphasizes the fragmented nature of reality, which can only be understood through multiple perspectives. This interplay mirrors the cosmos, where galaxies drift apart, reflecting the complexity of existence. Like a Moebius ribbon, our understanding loops between what is real and how we interpret it, rejecting simple, reductive views of the world.

**Keywords:** Baudrillard, memory, sensation, cosmology

MOEBIUS RIBBON RATHER THAN *TROMPE L'OEIL*

When *the arc* of your thought (this immersion in the world) encounters a sovereign "real" outside it - for example, *me* who runs before your eyes in the form of letters and words - your arc first stretches itself, and as far as possible, towards its own source of propulsion: yourself<sup>1</sup>. In order to launch itself as a *jet of* meaning - a supposedly sharp, "pointed" javelin - a searching head aiming at me in these words as an *object* becomes the *subject* of study if the points of your sensations as they rise up like pirate tethers bring out, like a photo negative, an "ob". What is caught, grasped, crystallised: stopping the 'jet' (object) me in these words, subject of importance, if your sensations are transformed into impressions (memories, comparisons) and, finally, into feelings or judgements (decision to act in my direction: to look at me, to speak to you at last through these words that run before your eyes, to seduce you? Already with these images that are being triggered, can't you see them?) which we

will need to consolidate or not into attention (tension), especially when I, your reality too, now turns out to be *remarkable*. As we would say in the *meteorology of moods*, thus contracting Montesquieu (the link between climate and temperament) and Pascal (the play of the endocrine system).

And now, as the subject of your attention, and no longer just an object of observation, you will have to apprehend me through as many levels and flows of *knowledge* as possible (as Oleg Maltsev did in his last book<sup>2</sup>). In this way, I - your *object of encounter* - will become your *subject*, in the sense of being constantly interwoven with symbols. Even if our “body” is mass, it is also energy ( $E=MC^2$ ), which intersects, compresses and prints several streams of reality that are not only present but also expanding, both in my/your past and in my/your future.

The more accessible the understanding of your attention to me becomes, the more your perception sharpens and deepens as you multiply the number of points of observation, including comparisons, memories (Virginia Woolf: comparing memories of the same place after a few years) and also smells, traces, asperities, bruises of these factory walls, for example, in front of which I pass and through which I (sense) (press) whispers (Proust: these reverberate what is whispered in the city, and their waves bend the wheat in “Swann's Way”). I can make out their complaints, they are still “walled in” like pixels that give this extraordinary impression of depth, unlike a video rendering which, far from showing it, only reflects the viewer like a mirror or abreaction, whereas the point is to observe as much as possible in the object captured, which is an intersection distinct from us, though not separate. Baudrillard wrote some decisive pages on precisely these “points”: *punctum*, as Roland Barthes put it in his work on photography, or that which *grips*.

Now, what has been confused with relativism (including by this last author) seems to be the only truly “unsurpassable” legacy of Modernity, namely the logical possibility of rationally holding together several angles, and not just theologically: because the aim is to study the “total man”, as Marcel Mauss, Durkheim’s colleague

and friend, hoped<sup>3</sup>. A concept that should not be confused with Mussolini's "total state", or with the caricature of a transparent enveloping conception that seeks to make the Real an immanent copy of the Idea (or vice versa) in order to imitate the Ancients, even though this is a far cry from Plato (contrary to what the mannerists of the Renaissance or the followers of Popper think, condemning the latter to oblivion), whereas this distancing between the word and the thing (and not their separation) allows precisely a reciprocal enrichment that forms this universe of meaning in which we live.

Take, for example, this excerpt from *Le crime parfait* by Jean Baudrillard<sup>4</sup>:

The objective illusion is the physical fact that, in this universe, nothing coexists in real time, neither the sexes, nor the stars, nor this glass nor this table, nor myself and everything around me. Because of the dispersal and relative speed of light, all things exist only in deferred time, in an inexpressible disorder of temporalities, at an inescapable distance from each other. And so they are never truly present to each other, nor "real" to each other. (...)

This is the objective fact that you are never fully there in the moment and that full presence is only ever virtual. While it is true that at any point in time you are in this instant and not elsewhere, you are also never in that single point where the whole event is summed up. (...)

It's a good thing we don't live in real-time ourselves! What would we be in "real" time? We would identify with ourselves at every moment. A torment equivalent to that of perpetual daylight - a kind of epilepsy of presence, epilepsy of identity. (...) Yet otherness is that happy distortion without which everyone would be me simultaneously. It is the vital illusion of otherness that prevents the self from succumbing to its absolute reality. Language, too, is what ensures that not everything means something at all times, and that we escape the perpetual irradiation of meaning. This specific illusion of language, this poetic function, no longer exists in virtual or digital languages.

Let's take this *need for* "otherness" of gender and style very seriously, understanding it as a "visceral" (Baudrillardian) breath of air that rejects the oppressive exponential of technicist interchangeability, defended more and more, however, and just as much by our consumerist society as its "queer" double (which has become

resolutely hygienist to the point of haunting sex-change surgeries). This means that we need to confuse less and less the levels of reality (or angles of view). The statements that probe them rather consider that we *also* need to think of them as flows of thoughts, imaginations, plural apprehensions of perceptions and behaviours, which can in their own way enable us to reach a given otherness or level of sociability inhabited by people with the same desire for a *distinguished* connection - in the sense of allowing asperities to breathe despite the possible contaminations that are the crucibles of metamorphoses, at least if we know how to reduce them while strengthening our various immune systems.

\*

Hence the idea that the “chance: of encounters could also be the intersections of life “trajectories” which connect because they were, in fact, in the same “orb” of attraction/repulsion in search of “elective affinities”, as Goethe would have it, but not only because attraction can also be stabilised by repulsion or precisely the interface of otherness. Have fun, for example, asking yourself whether a particular encounter might not, in fact, be the “fruit” of your life, in the sense of going back, step by step, to what made it possible.

This is complemented by another of Baudrillard’s hypotheses (*Idem*, 86) - and, in this sense, this author appears to be truly a contemporary artist (in the sense defined above: multiplicity of angles). That is indeed hardly in the *destroy* paradigm stemming from Adorno’s pessimistic vision of “*after Auschwitz?*”, which Lyotard later exacerbated by accusing the Christian West of having been the cause<sup>5</sup> which underlies what Baudrillard was later criticised for when he wrote about the “conspiracy of art”<sup>6</sup>. But let’s take this cosmological hypothesis again:

While physicists search for the equations that would unify all energies, the galaxies continue to move away from each other at fabulous speeds. While semiotics searches for a unified theory of the linguistic field, languages and

signs continue to drift apart like galaxies, as a result of who knows what linguistic Big Bang, but still secretly inseparable. (...) If the world has a history, we can hope to lead it to its final explanation. If, on the other hand, it came into being all at once, it cannot be assigned an end (...)7.

Could it not be, as regards the first cosmological point emphasised by Baudrillard, that this “remoteness” illustrates an inextricable and largely, not only mysterious but even as yet unimaginable, link between us, life and the uni/multi/verse (which I sketch out in *Être et vérité du réel humain*<sup>8</sup>)? Let’s explore this *illusion* further: to what (atomic) *point* does such and such a butterfly effect multiply vital expansion (there are thought to be nearly a billion species on Earth, 99% of which are still unknown<sup>9</sup>)? How can we grasp the energetic aspect of the myriad stellar expansions that forge our atoms (dark energy)? Is it not the double (aura or orb) of our mass (dark matter or fortuitous or constant intersection according to currents of forces/time)? On the other hand, doesn’t this mass/energy duo ( $E=MC^2$ ) have a regenerative function at the level of the Bios through entropy/negentropy, in a way reiterating this hypothesis of the micro/macrocasm?

So this vital and stellar whole, these two sides of the same coin in the hollow of the smallest hadron and boson making up living cells, is not constantly modified (not everything would be there entirely in real-time, as Baudrillard points out) while, at the same time, being *there* in constant time (Planck’s as well) according to multiform space-time and diverse speeds or a fractal accordion combining each nano-quark or boson of each living cell with its myriad rhythms and pulses (pulsars, black holes) which, as humans, we have to refine harmoniously or just consume. This vital whole unfolds irrespective of whether it is multiplied (multiverse) or has a single origin and a fatal end. Since expanding sustentation can remain infinite as long as *there is* life. The more life is generated, the more expansive is the elasticity of its stellar substratum, in order to nourish the least of its quarks, and outside of which there would be *nothing* (in the sense that the uni/multi/verse would not flow into

another, larger space, but would indeed be “all that is”). Everything? Everything created, in any case. As for the “rest”... and its “Sum”?

But let’s not go any further into this “cosmological” tirade, which is only there as a kind of imaginary stimulus to what is said about what we would be “stardust”.

Let us observe only this: these Baudrillardian reflections, as much as what they allow us to think here, do not mean that we should oppose astrophysics and metaphysical poetry, science and consciousness. No, it is once again a question of holding together these various levels of reality so that their assembled clarity can, like a prism, both distribute the colours and not forget that they are also combined in this light that animates us. All the more so, given the advances in the sciences of matter, life, the mind and society, we are no longer in an era where analysis has to be absolutely distinct from other angles of view, on pain of losing its way. For it is now also a question of articulating them and linking them, and this “link” would be precisely the transcendental: or how to perceive *together* the questions posed by singular discoveries. Without, however, having the pretension of governing the human being to do so.

Isn’t that precisely the legacy of Baudrillard? That technological advances and explanatory comprehensives can exchange, certainly, instead of remaining merely compartmentalised, but not in order to establish and justify additional pretexts to better subjugate and re-impose a vision of the world, even if it were accurate. Because it is not enough for it to be true in the sense of being necessarily permanently integratable into our actions and gestures. It is true that this young girl has reached puberty and could therefore be subject to certain codes governing her behaviour, such as the fact of marrying her off, even without her effective consent; but should this accuracy be considered the only truth in the sense of not also considering that this young girl has not yet completed her psychological development, and this from a point of view that is not “Western” but morphologically universal?

Is this not the ultimate stumbling block between cultural relativism and universalist thinking, albeit without an imperialist

intent? Isn't it the latter that we are seeing again in the name of ecology, health and the fight against inequalities between genders, classes and ethnic groups, when everything is far more complex, far less binary and inescapably catastrophic? Isn't it this pretension to want not only to say "the right thing", but to impose once again that poses the problem, despite the resounding failures in this area?

Baudrillard's comments on the cosmos, language and the need to preserve their otherness are all worth pondering in depth to get out of the dilemma that has made us the centre of the world and, then, just another point. Our points (including our points of view) that make up our body and its orb (the soul) are no more "centre" than "periphery", but a contraction and dilation of the two ("the soul of the world"): what is pulsing or the very life that culture comes to cultivate, as recalled Leo Strauss, in a spiritual envelope or interface between "us" and "them". This forms an intricate web that matrixes the points between them, or that Moebius ribbon that so fascinated Baudrillard - an endless loop where the boundaries between opposites blur and intertwine.

## NOTES

1. Me (characters), I (temperaments), actor (political: creator of networked electrified interactions), agent (social: innate/acquired skills): this *rhombic* whole or form (four angles) see my latest Opus (May 2021, L'Harmattan).
2. <https://www.baudrillard-scijournal.com/jean-baudrillard-maestro-the-last-prophet-of-europe-chapter-1/>  
See also the work of Jean Baechler (1985) and Raymond Boudon (1968) on these various levels, which can be articulated rather than opposed: thus, the poet and the (meta)physicist are distinct but not separate.
3. <https://www.cairn.info/sociologie-et-anthropologie-de-marcel-mauss--9782707139580-page-97.htm>
4. Paris, Editions Galilée, 1995, 80-81.
5. See my book *Cannibal Philosophy* (2006, 2019).
6. <https://levadrouilleurbain.wordpress.com/2021/02/09/comment-jean-baudrillard-dut-se-taire-sur-lart-contemporain-par-jean-philippe-domecq-fr/>
7. Current illustration: <https://www.nationalgeographic.fr/espace/2019/04/la-vitesse-dexpansion-de-lunivers-depasse-toutes-les-previsions>
8. 2016, l'Harmattan.
9. [https://www.eurekaalert.org/pub\\_releases/2016-05/iu-iu042716.php](https://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2016-05/iu-iu042716.php)



NAVIGATING EXISTENTIAL REALMS.  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BORGES AND ZHUANGZI'S  
PHILOSOPHY

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**Abstract.** This paper offers a comparative philosophical analysis of Jorge Luis Borges's *The Garden of Forking Paths* and Zhuangzi's *Butterfly Dream*, arguing that both texts extend Heidegger's concept of *authenticity*. It introduces *ontological authenticity* in Borges's work, where authenticity involves an active engagement with one's existential conditions despite the ontical multiplicity made available by the cosmos. Similarly, it examines Zhuangzi's *structure of presence*, a term coined by Hans-Georg Moeller, advocating for experiencing existence directly and without the intermediary of fixed identities.

This analysis challenges traditional views on time, self, and death, proposing concepts raised by both texts: time is not fixed, but interferes with subjective perception; individuality as such is not real but illusory; and death should be treated equally with life because differentiation between life and death is unreal. Ultimately, this paper seeks to enrich cross-cultural dialogue and expands contemporary discussions on authenticity by delving into the philosophical depth of Borges's and Zhuangzi's texts, which are often overlooked for not falling into mainstream Western discourse.

**Keywords:** Borges, Zhuangzi, authenticity, structure of presence, mainstream Western discourse, comparative philosophy, existentialism

## INTRODUCTION

This essay conducts a comparative analysis of Jorge Luis Borges's *The Garden of Forking Paths* and Zhuangzi's *Butterfly Dream* to explore their existential and philosophical thinking. It investigates how these texts use abstract philosophical concepts of time, self, and death to derive real-life insights about existential authenticity. This paper first

presents a close reading of Borges's work, also introducing the notion of *Borgesian existentialism* — a form of *ontological authenticity* demonstrated by the protagonist, Yu Tsun. This concept revises and expands upon Heidegger's *authenticity* in the story's proposed ontology of the existence of multiple timelines, forking from other timelines, suggesting an engagement with one's responsibilities, emotions, and existence on the timeline he has, despite the recognition of multiple potential realities. This paper then analyses how the readers' reading experience of GoFP parallels the existential challenge of multiplicity and confusion that Yu Tsun faces. Then, the paper moves to a close read of Zhuangzi's *Butterfly Dream*, examining its *structure of presence* — the subject focuses on *simply being present*, stripped of worldly concerns and associations — and its implications for self and death, which advocate for a dissolution of the self and a dismissal of the fear towards death. Lastly, the essay moves to compare and contrast both texts' take on central themes of time, self, and death, focusing on how they challenge the traditional notion of time as linear, self-existing in individual-as-such, and death to be feared.

In both *The Garden of Forking Paths* (GoFP) and *Butterfly Dream*, the concept of time is not linear nor fixed but a cosmic time intertwined with individual cognition-based time. Borges introduces an ontology of multiplicity with his notion of time as forking paths, illustrating how an individual can lead an authentic life within a single timeline despite the existence of multiple possibilities. In contrast, Zhuangzi advocates for the dissolution of the self to harmonize with the Dao, the cosmic time. This philosophical approach intertwines the concept of self with time; while Borges views the self as illusory yet promotes living authentically with this recognition, Zhuangzi encourages a complete relinquishment of the self to align with the Dao. Furthermore, both texts suggest that death should not be feared: in GoFP, death is depicted as illusory due to cosmic multiplicity, and in *Butterfly Dream*, death is portrayed as indistinct from life, as both are merely different segments within the continuous structure of presence.

This research sheds light on the cross-cultural and cross-time dialogue between the Ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi and the contemporary Argentine writer Borges and emphasizes how real-life existential insights can be derived from seemingly purely abstract philosophy. This study doesn't only enhance the understanding of how these abstract philosophical concepts are treated in different cultural contexts but also provides insights into how these texts encourage readers to confront and engage with their own existential realities.

### I. *THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS* (GFP)

*The Garden of Forking Paths* is a short story by Jorge Luis Borges that initially presents itself as a spy thriller set during World War I. The protagonist, Dr Yu Tsun, is a Chinese professor living in the United Kingdom who doubles as a German spy. He discovers that his cover has been blown and that he must convey critical military information to his German superiors before he is captured by Captain Richard Madden, an Irishman working with British people. Yu Tsun's objective is to communicate the location of a new British artillery park. The narrative itself is framed as a deposition by Yu Tsun, later discovered by the story's narrator in a World War I military trial. He decides the only way to send this message is by killing someone whose name is also a location, thereby alerting German superiors to his target. He chooses Stephen Albert.

Dr Yu Tsun arrives in Ashgrove to find Stephen Albert, who is later revealed to be a sinologist studying Ts'ui Pên, Tsun's ancestor who had attempted to write a novel and build a labyrinth simultaneously, both ultimately intertwined as one project exploring infinite timelines. Albert reveals that the novel represents a maze of forking paths, each depicting possible futures stemming from moments within the story, essentially crafting a narrative about the complexities of time. This "symbolic labyrinth" reveals the ontological structure of the universe as constructed of multiple

timelines “forking” from one moment of choice (Borges 1941, 5). During their conversation, as Tsun realizes Captain Madden is approaching, he deceitfully asks Albert to turn around and then shoots him, using Albert's name to covertly relay the location of British artillery in Albert, Somme to his German commanders. Tsun reflects on his actions from his cell, acknowledging his success in sending the message, but burdened by “infinite penitence and sickness of the heart” over his deeds.

The plot unfolds through a series of coincidences that seem almost orchestrated. For instance, Yu Tsun ends up at Stephen Albert's house due to a random suggestion from a stranger on the railway. Further deepening this theme, Albert, remarkably, is deeply familiar with Yu Tsun's own family history and the work of Ts'ui Pên, Yu Tsun's ancestor, who authored a novel titled *The Garden of Forking Paths* and designed a labyrinth. In short, this coincidence is pivotal because it shifts the story's focus from a spy plot to an exploration of philosophical concepts. The central metaphor of the story, the labyrinth, is a direct reference to Ts'ui Pên's work, which Albert interprets not as a physical maze but as a novel where all possible outcomes happen simultaneously. This interpretation reflects the non-linear notion of time. His narrative, filled with regret and reflective introspection, underscores the tragedy of his choices and the personal cost of his actions.

*The Garden of Forking Paths* presents a dual-layered narrative: the short story itself proposes an ontological supposition of the labyrinthine nature of the cosmos because it proposes the ontological structure of time in the inner narrative — “*The Garden of Forking Paths* was the chaotic novel itself; the phrase ‘to various future times, but not to all’ suggests the image of bifurcating in time” (Borges 1941, 6). Simultaneously, the text induces a labyrinthine readers' response to the intentionally perplexing reading experience. All the philosophical characteristics — philosophical themes of this story — are echoed by the reading experiences created by the labyrinthine story.

The story commences with a statement that resembles a factual,

non-fictional historical recount of WWII stating that the following text is a “deposition, dictated by [...] Dr. Yu Tsun”, which has “the first two pages missing”, setting a tone that blends detective fiction with historical narrative (Borges 1941, 1). Through this narrative choice, Borges cleverly constructs suspense right from the outset, mimicking the process of uncovering a hidden truth about WWII. This approach aligns the readers’ experience with navigating a labyrinth — filled with implications and unknown paths that enhance the labyrinthine nature of the story.

Yu Tsun, as the narrator, provides a deceptive narration. He selectively reveals information, especially regarding the fact that this is a self-reporting deposition, initially concealing his true motives and his role as a spy, then later evolves to justify his subsequent actions of espionage and murder saying it’s for “[proving] to [the Chief] that a yellow man could save his armies”, with his whole actions and narration driven by desperate circumstances and extreme inner turmoil of “hatred and terror” (Borges 1941, 2). This deceptive narration complicates the story, leading the readers through a plot replete with unexpected twists and hidden meanings — for example, his identity as a spy - a symbol of deception and multiplicities itself, and the unexpected final homicide of Stephan Albert — akin to navigating a maze with multiple paths. The uncertainty and ambiguity generated by Yu Tsun’s narrative compel readers to question the reliability of the narration and, thus, the realities of the events described, creating a disorienting experience, parallel with confusion and disorientation. A subject in a labyrinth feels like deciding which way leads to the true exit or “answer”. While the readers are engaged in the story because of the suspense and ambiguity, the readers’ active participation makes the reading experience similar to the exploratory nature of traversing a labyrinthine path — thinking about the “truth” and trustworthiness of one path in a labyrinth and doubting the trustworthiness of segments of Yu Tsun’s narration. Thus, the story also inherently revolves around epistemic scepticism, as in their reading experience, readers have to doubt the truthiness of Yu Tsun — while they could

never know, as readers, whether the narrator is actually trustworthy or not.

From Yu Tsun's perspective, the day is laden with symbols and premonitions of the "implacable death" — like the shooting of Richard Madden and the only serendipitous but not certain moments that allow his temporary escape (Borges 1941, 1). He merely escapes Richard Madden by "an accident of fate" (Borges 1941, 3). All lead him to ask: "Was I to die now" (Borges 1941, 1)? Furthermore, at Albert's house, he sees the Chinese garden that parallels his childhood memory that "[he] had accepted fully". In Chinese folklore, people before death would see their own life and childhood flash past like a rapid sequence of slideshows, also known as "Zou-Ma-Deng"; the flashback of childhood memories when he sees the garden is thus a literal premonition of death. Yu Tsun, however, could only recognize these as harbingers of his fate retrospectively, adding another layer of complexity to his labyrinthine day filled with riddles and puzzles while introducing the theme of the limitedness of subjective, individual experience — just like how in a labyrinth, a subject could only see from his own perspective and see the path in front of them, "not all".

The inner narrative further complicates the story's labyrinthine quality by presenting a view of reality that is indefinite and subject to the constraints of individual consciousness: "At that moment I felt within me and around me something invisible and intangible pullulating. It was not the pullulation of two divergent, parallel, and finally converging armies, but an agitation more inaccessible, more intimate, prefigured by them in some way" (Borges 1941, 7). Because Yu Tsun only perceived his own consciousness, thus only existed on his own single timeline, he could not see the whole picture of the cosmic multiplicity but only "felt within [them] and around [them]" — it's a moment of epiphany: one commits to a timeline and navigates through this multiplicity by doing the action, or actualizing the potentialities offered by the cosmos. Every decision spawns divergent realities, and the narrative suggests that no version of events is cosmically definitive. As the ontological

supposition is unfolded by the inner narrative, revealing the simultaneity and convergence of all past and future events, it challenges any definitive understanding of Yu Tsun's existence, drawing the readers deeper into the cosmic labyrinth where not all paths are revealed — existence is only in some, and because the cosmos is “not [...] absolute and uniform, [...] an infinite series of times, in a dizzily growing, ever spreading network of diverging, converging, and parallel times. This web of time [...] embraces every possibility”, so that “we do not exist in most of them” (Borges 1941, 7). Moreover, the ontological premise is portrayed not as a formal theory but as a literary construct, akin to Ts'ui Pen's model of the universe. Just as Tsui Pen's creation mirrors Borges's own storytelling, where no ontological assertion is presented to be a confident formal theory but with whimsicality and uncertainty, the reading experience itself becomes a labyrinthine journey, fraught with complexity and uncertainty, while the philosophical theme of cosmic scepticism and epistemological uncertainty — the inherent philosophical implication of a labyrinth — is presented again.

Furthermore, GoFP is a revelation beyond the whimsical ontology but it allows an existentialist reading to shed light on insights for real-living experiences. Yu Tsun's decision-making within the labyrinthine cosmology of *The Garden of Forking Paths* exemplifies existentialist themes of freedom, responsibility, and the burden of choice, paralleling the reader's experience as they navigate the story's complex structure, and suggesting that a living of authenticity can still be reached in the labyrinthine cosmos. In Heideggerian existentialism, authenticity<sup>1</sup> is the individual's confrontation with his own existence rather than conforming or adhering to societal norms. Heidegger argues that authenticity arises when one actively engages with their own *being-towards-death* — realization of limitation and one's own *thrownness-into-the-world*. *The Garden of Forking Paths* sheds light on a *Borgesian existentialist* interpretation of authenticity in a somewhat ontological sense: unlike Heidegger, *Borgesian authenticity*, or *ontological authenticity* is less merely about faithful acting in accordance with the subjects'

own desires and non-conformity, but it's about one's commitment to engage with their own existence even in the ontological chaos of cosmos, where multiplicity of existence is allowed.

In exploring the existential implications of Borges's writing, this paper will employ Heidegger's concept of *authenticity*.

Yu Tsun's decision to become a spy, seemingly conforming to Nazi expectations, also represents his struggle with identity and recognition in the world. His actions are driven by the desire to change perceptions about his race, which are also an attempt to assert his agency and redefine his existence in a context where his choices are limited. This conflict is a nuanced form of Heideggerian *authenticity*, and his later actions, when he acknowledges the cosmic ontology, illustrate it: it's about his engagement with his own timeline while recognizing the ontological multiplicity of the cosmos. He confronts his struggles, responsibilities, and emotions within his timeline instead of acting randomly or being indifferent to his actions and the outcomes — “norms” or patterns of living, which the ontological presence of the myriad alternatives allows. Because of the multiplicity of the cosmos, on the individual level, many concerns seem illusory, for the self that a subject perceives is “in yet another [timeline], [...] an error, a phantom” (Borges 1941, 7). This cosmic ontology of multiplicity implies that multiple possibilities and realities coexist simultaneously, potentially leading to a sense of existential indifference as individual actions seem inconsequential in the grand scheme — all potentialities could be actualized in other ways. Moreover, one timeline “is forever dividing itself toward innumerable futures” (Borges 1941, 7). Thus, the sense of any single action's significance can diminish. This multiplicity allows for existential indifference because each choice is just one among countless others, each leading to different realities. The impact of one's actions might seem diluted; if all possibilities exist simultaneously, the consequence of choosing one path over another might appear less critical. It leads to a norm of indifference: personal agency and responsibility are less emphasized, encouraging a passive acceptance rather than active engagement with the one-timeline life

— for that seems like “an error, a phantom” (Borges 1941, 7). When Yu Tsun knows that “in one of [timelines] I am [Albert’s] enemy” — which means that he doesn’t need to take responsibility for his homicide as cosmically it doesn’t matter, he still engages with his feelings of “penitence and sickness” in regret and sorry (Borges 1941, 8). Thus, Borges’s authenticity regards being authentic — being responsible and fully engaging with — as the one “timeline”, or the path, that the subject sees, regardless of the existence of other paths and the multiplicity of existence, which potentially allows for indifference.

Again, this is the manifest of the dual narrative — philosophy is gained from the reading experience paralleling the story’s philosophy. The Borgesian existentialism in response to the proposed ontological structure is completed by the readers’ responses — the proposed ontological structure and its perplexity is experienced by the readers when they are reading this text because the text is itself so labyrinthine, deceptive, and confusing (as afore-discussed). Engaging with a multitude of labyrinthine myths, readers must exercise their rational and interpretive power to navigate through the expanded possibilities of interpretation. The narrative structure itself mirrors a labyrinth, filled with instabilities and tensions that challenge readers to discern reality from fiction. This engagement forces readers to confront interpretive challenges and broken expectations, enhancing their awareness of the radical freedom inherent in interpretation and rationality — there are so many possible ways to interpret the same text, and one must use rationality to identify which interpretation is to follow, just like in real life, there are so many ways to interpret the same event and act according to the interpretation, and one must exercise the power of rationality to identify what they commit to. This celebration of human capacity in navigating in a chaotic landscape of the world — here in how the readers realize they can use their interpretive capacity to navigate through the chaos of the text — is an existential confirmation. Moreover, this blurring of reality and fiction underscores the creative liberties taken by Borges, prompting

readers to recognize the aesthetic order he crafts within the narrative chaos.

The story itself explores existential freedom, presenting a universe where the future unfolds from choices made in the past. This theme of radical freedom reveals an open sea of possibilities, emphasizing the existential condition of human existence. Yu Tsun personifies the intertwining of choice, freedom, responsibility, and possibility. He must accept the consequences of his actions, illustrating the existential burden of his decisions — he is “condemned to hang”, emotionally suffering in “infinite penitence” (Borges 1941, 8). The concept of *forking paths* highlights the moments of decision-making that define Yu Tsun's fate, emphasizing that while outcomes are uncertain. One must still take responsibility for their choices. His existential journey, fraught with concern and desperation, symbolizes the broader human condition of navigating a world filled with unknowns.

Though the story is perplexing and confusing, the readers receive real intellectual and emotional engagement with the reading because of the suspenseful plot. Such dynamics between labyrinthine suspense and authenticity could be a further revelation of Borgesian existentialism: why don't we consider the world in such a way? The world is confusing and full of multiplicities, especially with regard to the labyrinth of ontological possibilities — the labyrinthine cosmology presented in the inner narrative. Concerning the *forking paths* of time, we still have authentic engagement with the world, just like how Yu Tsun has to pay back for his actions and how he goes through all concerns and desperation instead of being indifferent, like one would do knowing that there might be other universes present. Though what we experience is “not all”, we just need to engage with the one path we have.

## II. ZHUANGZI - THE BUTTERFLY DREAM

Zhuangzi's ontology revolves around the concept of Dao — the fundamental, indescribable, and ultimate both ontic and ontological

entity that underlies all reality. Dao represents the ultimate source and natural order, which is constantly changing and spontaneous: it provides a non-static harmony that naturally grows from things when they act and exist following their natural properties. Zhuangzi advocates for a life of simplicity and spontaneity, finally in alignment with Dao, which promotes a sense of freedom and detachment from rigid societal norms and personal desires, encouraging individuals to embrace Wuwei, which harmonizes with Dao and gains ultimate freedom. The ultimate goal is the intrinsic, unmediated connection between the individual and Dao — unobstructed engagement with existence as it is; when existing in this pure existence, the subject is manifesting the Dao through their very being (Moeller). Qi Wu Lun is Zhuangzi's musings on this alignment and merging, which condenses itself in *Butterfly Dream*.

The central concern of Zhuangzi's philosophical argument is the exploration of presence, a concept well-articulated by Moeller based on Guo Xiang's reading of Zhuangzi as "accord with itself, only itself and nothing else" (Moeller 1999, 5). It is the existing as the pure presence of simply being<sup>2</sup>. Understanding Zhuangzi's structure of presence is crucial to grasping the philosophical depth of the text and all the following ponderings. This reading underscores Zhuangzi's intent not to dwell on representational philosophy but to provoke a reconsideration of the distinction between reality and fiction, akin to Borges's narrative techniques. This structure of presence is proposed from level to level: plot level, allegorical level, and existential level.

First, at the plot level, the importance lies not in whether Zhuangzhou remembers the dream but in the indistinguishability of his wakeful state from his dreaming state. This reflects the absence of a continuous "I" in the original text, emphasizing a state of "doubtlessness", where Zhuangzhou and the butterfly exist without an anchored self-construed identity. At the allegorical level, Zhuangzi uses the analogy between wakefulness and dreaming to parallel life and death. Each state exists as a segment in the linear progression of life, where being awake is as final as being dead, each

perfectly aligned with its nature. This level suggests that distinctions, while perceived, do not alter the inherent authenticity of each segment.

Lastly, at the existential level, it is where Zhuangzi's philosophy culminates in the idea of pure presence: phenomenologically, the subject is fully “present” in one's experience without the interference of artificial distinctions and intellectual constructs, which are unavoidable if the subject remains personal. Zhuangzhou achieves enlightenment not by transcending his identity but by immersing fully in the present moment, devoid of distinctions or personal bias. This stage represents a complete engagement with being, where existence is accepted as it is without the need for representation or doubt: there is no doubt in the phenomenon because the subject is simply present.

This central idea and pursuit of alignment with Dao is echoed by the Zhuangzian view of the ancillary philosophical themes — death and self.

For him, death is not to be feared, for it doesn't serve as the end: death and life are both segments on this line of pure presence, and thus though life and death are separated from each other, they possess no significant distinction. Thus, life and death are mutually dependent, co-arising modalities of Dao — Dao equalizes both in its ontological oneness while demoting the other. Death leads to freedom of an ontological order: the wholeness of being stems from what precedes it, which is non-being, or cosmic nothingness, and death is thus antecedent of life. Death thus brings people closer to Dao: death *qua* nothingness is both a literal and metaphorical of Dao because it resembles Dao's state of emptiness (Chai 2016, 8). Thus, in chapter eighteen of *Zhuangzi*, in Zhuangzi's wife's death and having Huizi, another renowned philosopher, mourns over her, Zhuangzi doesn't grieve but rather responds: “I looked back to her beginning and the time before she was born. [...] In the midst of the jumble of wonder and mystery, a change took place and she had a spirit. [...] Another change and she was born. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It's just like the progression of the

four seasons, spring, summer, fall, winter” (Zhuangzi 369-298 BCE, 517).

Similarly, in the Zhi-Le passage of *Zhuangzi*, he “pillows a skull” and falls asleep on the skull, being “perfectly happy”, honouring the nature of Dao.

Zhuangzi emphasizes the notion of death, encouraging people to embrace it; yet, Zhuangzi does not stress the need for a self — he is to de-subjectivise himself. “Xiao Yao You” is a tale about “losing self” — about having an identity but no form, and the saint should lose himself, being “no-self”. Self is not a fixed, isolated entity as commonly perceived, but fluid, ever-changing, and interconnected with the cosmos. The boundaries between self and the external world are illusory, encouraging a detachment from the ego and personal desires, so a life of spontaneity and naturalness can be achieved, and the subject aligns with the Dao. Similar to accepting death, Zhuangzi wants to let go of worldly attachments by emphasizing the notion of “non-self” — Zhuangzi uses the metaphor of “the fasting of the heart” (Xin Zhai) to describe a mental state where one lets go of preconceived notions and biases, thus achieving a state of mental and emotional emptiness that is receptive to all experiences without prejudice.

### III. THEMATIC COMPARISON OF PHILOSOPHY

This section is going to compare Borges and Zhuangzi on time, self, and death — the major philosophical themes of their works. Borges’s philosophy of GoFP is mainly revealed through the fictional ontology of labyrinthine time, then derived to self and death, while Zhuangzian philosophy on the three themes is all manifestations of and narrative mediums to carry his *structure of presence*. Borges and Zhuangzi have nuance in their textual effect: Borges’s texts raise “ontological enigmas” meanwhile giving birth to “ontological existentialism”, while Zhuangzi illustrates the Daoist

worldview and way of living; still, both of them challenge the conventional conception of time, self, and death in a similar manner.

GoFP and the *Butterfly Dream* share a similar interpretation of time, and both talk about the tension between cosmic time and individual cognition-based time. Borges's narrative structure creates a complex interplay between perceived time and cosmic realities, eliciting not only sceptical reverence but also providing the possibility for an existentialist reading. This ontology intertwines the subjective experience of time with the notion of an infinite labyrinth of possibilities, emphasizing that while individuals experience time linearly, they are part of a vast, interconnected cosmic tapestry:

*The Garden of Forking Paths* is a picture, incomplete yet not false, of the universe such as Ts'ui Pen conceived it to be. Differing from Newton and Schopenhauer, your ancestors did not think of time as absolute and uniform. He believed in an infinite series of times, in a dizzily growing, ever-spreading network of diverging, converging and parallel times. This web of time - the strands of which approach one another, bifurcate, intersect or ignore each other through centuries - embraces every possibility. We do not exist in most of them. In some you exist and not I, while in others I do, and you do not, and in yet others both of us exist. In this one, in which chance has favoured me, you have come to my gate. In another, you, crossing the garden, have found me dead. In yet another, I say these very same words but I am an error, a phantom (Borges 1941, 7).

Borges's concept of time in GoFP challenges traditional notions of linear and singular progression. He suggests that all possible outcomes and realities exist simultaneously, though individuals perceive only a linear progression of time — what he calls “the experienced time”. Beyond the experienced time, there exists a cosmic labyrinthine time, only revealed to the subjects if they communicate with each other or propose the unperceivable cosmic ontology. In this way, “mankind is using multiple records to ‘re-establish’ the total experienced space-time manifold into a geometer's space-time manifold — trying to figure out a cosmic time structure by communication of experience” (Agassi 1970, 4), while transcending limitations of phenomenal individual perception.

The tension between the limitations of individual perception and the mystic cosmic order further highlights how limited individual perception is, and this mystic multiplicity elicits cosmic reverence as well as existential conflict. While the universe contains an infinite array of outcomes and realities, the individual experiences time through a singular, subjective lens. This juxtaposition highlights the existential struggle of the individual—acknowledging the boundlessness of time and possibilities while grappling with the constraints of personal experience and choice, and also the sense that when people go beyond their limited cognition, they still have to stay on the same timeline — almost tragic. Yu Tsun embodies this existential conflict. He is aware that in some cosmic version of events, Albert may not be killed, yet in his experienced reality he must proceed with his actions, which are authentic to his perceived temporal and moral context. This highlights the existential responsibility individuals hold over their choices, despite the awareness of other possible realities. Borges uses Yu Tsun's narrative to underscore the notion that individuals must navigate their paths authentically, even when faced with the overwhelming complexity of a multiversal existence.

Borges invites the readers to consider the profound existential implications of living within an infinitely complex universe. Each decision, while seemingly singular, is part of a broader cosmic dialogue, making the existential engagement with one's choice both a personal journey and a universal interaction, further giving meaning to individual actions and allowing authenticity.

Zhuangzi's take on time also involves dissolving the self in the cosmic time. The first level is a mental level as cognition-based time, indicating the existence of linearity of time in individual perception. Then, on the phenomenal level, there is experience-based time. The ontological level of time is the world-based time, or "Dao-based time". Dao exists as the ultimate foundation of time. In the *Butterfly Dream*, Zhuangzi proposes a way to transcend an individual's limitation of perception by being simply present and in accordance with Dao.

When Zhuangzhou dreams of himself as a butterfly, he cannot know the existence of Zhuangzhou outside its limited perception, and so does Zhuangzhou, who does not know the butterfly. When they cannot distinguish themselves, their individual consciousness of being an individual as such diminishes significantly, fostering a unique unity of subject and object: Dao is the ontology that underlies everything — both the subject and the object, embracing Dao allows one to see through the artificial distinctions and recognize the interdependence and interconnectedness of everything, thus dissolving the distinction between subject and object. Zhuangzi and the butterfly cannot distinguish themselves. This unity extends beyond Zhuangzhou and the butterfly, synchronizing him with the surrounding environment, and altering the dynamic state of conventional perception.

The conscious control and reflective doubt of identity or reality are replaced by the state of simply existing, indicating a transformation in the subject's state of consciousness — a flowing state. This experience thus reflects a shift from a mundane experience of time to one that approaches the Dao, because it is an integration with the universe. This emergence with Dao is further implied by the omission of time-indicating words in the original text, further implying the dissolving of cognition-based individual time. When individual perception is dropped out, the subject is closer to Dao.

Phenomenologically, time is perceived by a subject with a sense of self. Thus, the philosophy of self is interwoven with time unavoidably. Both Zhuangzi and Borges suggest the illusory nature of the self; Borges encourages authenticity with this even illusory self, while Zhuangzi proposes an embrace and ultimately forgetting self to align with Dao.

Deriving from Borges's labyrinthine time ontology, GoFP proposes the multiplicity of self, because of the multiplicity of existence. Such multiplicity, again, creates a tension in the cosmic reality of the self—self and individuality as such as illusory — and the individual perception of the self. Yet, Yu Tsun's choice-making

and authentic engagement with his responsibilities and such choice underscores, again, the possibility of individual authenticity under such a cosmos. On the other hand, Zhuangzi reveals a similar interpretation of self—self as illusory, and he proposes that, for a sage, the self is best to be forgotten.

Borges has different interpretations of self in different works, while this research focuses mainly on his take on the “self” proposed in GoFP, deriving from the multiplicity of existence. In his other works, especially “Borges and I” and “Labyrinths”, he reveals that the self is illusory. GoFP, echoing the overarching Borgesian interpretation of the self as illusory, reveals his metaphysical unreality.

Firstly, in terms of time and space, the concept of cosmic multiplicity challenges the notion of self at a cosmic level. There are multiple versions of oneself coexisting simultaneously, each diverging due to different past choices and resulting in various *forking paths*. It is thus impossible to objectively define an individual or “identity” matching a perceived self. In one timeline, Yu Tsun is imprisoned and successfully communicates critical information, while in another, he may assume a completely different identity or circumstances, and in yet others, he might not exist at all. In Stephan Albert’s explanation of the labyrinth to Yu Tsun, he introduces the variability of the seemingly very same individual:

We do not exist in most of them. In some you exist and not I, while in others I do, and you do not, and in yet others both of us exist. In this one, in which chance has favoured me, you have come to my gate. In another, you, crossing the garden, have found me dead. In yet another, I say these very same words but am an error, a phantom (Borges 1941, 7).

This variability means that one cannot definitively assert Yu Tsun's existence across all timelines, nor can one firmly identify what constitutes Yu Tsun, as his identity, appearance, or name may vary significantly. Due to this indefinability and the inherent uncertainty, the individual self, in a cosmic sense, is effectively non-existent.

Moreover, even within a single, linear timeline, the self exhibits a cyclical nature. The whole plot development of *The Garden of Forking Paths* relies on Yu Tsun's ancestral lineage. The ancestral lineage is, of course, a linear progression in which each individual represents a segment of existence. Biologically, descendants share physical characteristics with their ancestors, because our flesh is a medium for the DNA — the continuum of lineage; our rational thinking is inevitably impacted by familial teachings, making us “inside and out” continuation of the ancestral lineage. Moreover, in Chinese culture, it is believed that descendants will invariably find an ancestor with whom they share similarities, and the descendants are, in a way, reincarnations of their ancestors. Even in a linear timeline, individual as such is illusory: the Chinese ancestral elements in the story allow reading that we are cyclical continuums of ancestry — the ancestral traits and probably specific ancestors, for all our physical existence, thoughts, and characteristics are the continuum of what comes before us. This interpretation of lineage within the story trivializes individual differentiation, and thus again underscores the illusory nature of individuality as such even within a linear perspective: the sense of individuals being continuums of their ancestry blurs the end and start of each “segment” of the lineage line.

Yu Tsun's self-awareness and his continuous self-referencing demonstrate that, on a phenomenological and subjective level, the self can indeed be perceived. *The Garden of Forking Paths* illustrates various perceptions of self through Yu Tsun's experiences. Initially, when detected by Richard Madden, Yu Tsun experiences nervousness, reflecting the self as a series of mental states. At the train station, his explanation of his motives and goals reveals the self as an abstraction used to scaffold memories and rationalize actions. Finally, in his interaction with Stephen Albert, the self serves as a pivot for social interactions and memory recall. These examples show that, at the individual level, the self feels very real and tangible.

This perplexing dynamic, where the self is ontologically unreal yet perceived as real by individuals, is vividly illustrated and

embodied by Yu Tsun's identity as a spy. In his role, Yu Tsun exemplifies the multiplicity of self: his identity is undefinable and fragmented as he oscillates between his Chinese heritage and his role as a German spy. The very nature of being a spy necessitates multiple identities. Therefore, from an external viewpoint, Yu Tsun lacks a fixed identity; only he can perceive himself as a definable individual. His consistent "self" exists solely through his own phenomenological experience.

In this dynamic tension where the self is both tangibly experienced and ontologically uncertain, an existentialist interpretation becomes viable. Yu Tsun actively embraces the self he perceives, fully engaging with his singular timeline and existence despite the potential multiplicity of his "selves". Even as he recognizes that other versions of himself might not have committed the act of killing Stephen Albert — rendering Albert's death ontologically ambiguous — Yu Tsun still experiences genuine remorse and engages with his emotions authentically. He could have rationalized away his guilt by considering the existence of other Alberts who survived, yet he chooses not to dismiss his responsibility, highlighting the possibility of authentic existence within a cosmically multiple and uncertain ontology. This choice illustrates to readers that, although the self may be ontologically elusive, we can and should still engage authentically with the self as we perceive it.

In contrast with Borges's dynamic view of the self, Zhuangzi sees it as a container and proposes that the sage shall forget himself, within this *structure of presence*.

In Zhuangzi's *Dream of a Butterfly*, the notion of self is explored through a profound philosophical lens, emphasizing the transient and illusory nature of individual identity. Zhuangzi presents the idea that the truest form of self-existence is achieved when one is fully "present" and in harmony with oneself, without the constraints of empirical judgment or societal expectations. This state is exemplified by the sage who forgets himself, embodying the concept of "Nonself" and self-embracement.

The story famously depicts Zhuangzi dreaming he is a butterfly, floating on the whims of existence, only to awaken and question whether he was a man dreaming of being a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming of being a man. This narrative challenges the reliability of the self and the empirical world, suggesting a perspective where the self is seen as a container of experiences, yet not limited by them.

Further philosophical analysis such as by Wang Bo, highlights the idea of 天心 (Tianxin) or “Heaven's Heart”, which suggests an alignment with a more universal, cosmic perspective where personal desires and biases are transcended. This leads to a discussion about perspectivism, the unreliability of empirical judgment, and the conflicts and boundaries created by the “self” in contrast to the “other”, revealing deeper layers of conflict inherent in the self's definition.

Moreover, in reference to the linear progression of being — death, life, existence, self, or the perception of self-consciousness are ephemeral. It's only one segment on the linear progression of presence, so all are phenomena produced by the illusion of self-perspectives, intentionality, etc.

Zhuangzi's work invites readers to reflect on the nature of identity and existence, encouraging a detachment from the conventional understanding of the self to embrace a broader, more interconnected existence. This philosophical journey through Zhuangzi's narrative challenges and enriches our understanding of self and otherness, emphasizing the fluidity and interconnectedness of all things.

The last concern, both theoretically and chronologically for readers of the two texts, is death. In *The Garden of Forking Paths*, the proposed ontology of multiplicity and the existential call to authenticity allows for a blurring of the distinctions between life and death, akin to Zhuangzi's perspective that the differentiation between life and death is forgettable. Both Borges and Zhuangzi encourage living fully and authentically regardless of death.

Ontologically, the concept of death, or elimination, is challenged

by the existence of multiple timelines where death may not occur, underscoring its non-absoluteness. Since multiple potential existences are always possible, death on one timeline does not equate to cosmic-scale elimination. This renders death “unreal” on a cosmic scale; it does not signify the end universally because alternative timelines where the subject continues to exist are conceivable. This existence of possibilities, allowed by the cosmic multiplicity, renders death and elimination *inabsolute*.

Furthermore, conceptually, death is also unreal. Since death and elimination no longer exist on the cosmic scale, they can only be perceived as phenomena by the subject experiencing them; however, within the cosmos of *The Garden of Forking Paths*, the self is considered illusory. Death and elimination, which are inherently tied to the self, also become illusory concepts. Most importantly, from the subject’s limited perspective, even on a specific timeline, death is merely coincidental, as exemplified by Ts’ui Pen’s story. Thus, death, stripped of its traditional fear-inducing power, is presented as nothing to dread.

Zhuangzi similarly views the fear of death as unnecessary, a concept he articulates in *Pillowing the Skull by the Road* and through the allegorical interpretation of the *Butterfly Dream*. While sharp distinctions exist between life and death—mirroring the contrasts between dreaming and wakefulness, as well as between Zhuangzhou and the butterfly—these are perceived boundaries that Zhuangzi challenges, suggesting that such fears are grounded in misconceptions about the nature of existence.

The dream is allegorical to death. Falling into a dream without awareness mirrors the unconscious state of death, as both represent a departure from conscious experience. Zhuangzi likens this to segments on life’s continuum, where death and life are just phases much like dreaming and wakefulness are parts of a day. This perspective challenges conventional views of life and death as distinct, emphasizing their continuity in the existential journey.

In Zhuangzi’s philosophy, each state of being—whether living or dead—exists perfectly within its own realm, aligning entirely with its

inherent nature. Life and death, while vastly different, are interconnected segments of existence, each complete and authentic in itself. This view suggests that life flows seamlessly into death, with each segment independent and not carrying over into the next. Therefore, preoccupations about death during life, or thinking about dreams while awake, disrupt this natural order and the purity of present experience.

Death should be even celebrated. For example, death is inspiring, as it unravels the complexities of life — just like Zhuangzhou starts to think about what it's like to be a human after the dream. Recognizing the finiteness of life prompts introspection about our deepest attachments, enabling us to let go. In the ontological sense, life and death are mutually dependent, co-arising modalities of Dao. Dao equalizes both in its ontological oneness while demoting the other, while death *qua* nothingness is both a corporeal and metaphorical embodiment of Dao in that death and nothingness reflect the natural praxis of Dao to be still, empty, and quiet. Death, thus, is the antecedent of life. Life and death, existence and annihilation, are one body, just like a dream and awake.

Death is similar to Zhuangzi's emission of self in the *Butterfly Dream*: he doesn't identify with Zhuangzhou (himself), there's no first-person narrator, but he just thinks along with Dao — no predilections, loses himself in the midst of the present world, and dwells there – involved in it, yet not attached to any definite present form of being there, achieving great awakening. Thus, death is an analogy for being a Taoist sage.

Moreover, death can reveal the state of the sage. In Zhuangzi's philosophy, death represents a de-subjectivized version of the self, where personal sensation and subjective consciousness cease, yet continue within the linear progression of existence and flesh stays in the world. Death is similar to Zhuangzi's emission of self in the *Butterfly Dream*: he doesn't identify with Zhuangzhou (himself), there's no first-person narrator, but he just thinks along with Dao. Zhuangzi's emission of self is “wu-wo” sage. By losing himself in the present world without clinging to any fixed state of being,

Zhuangzi embodies the Taoist ideal of the sage, suggesting that death is analogous to the enlightened state of a Taoist sage—detached yet deeply integrated with the natural flow of life.

## NOTES

1. Heideggerian existentialism emphasizes the concept of "authenticity" and "Being-towards-death." Heidegger posits that to understand one's authentic self, one must confront their own mortality, an idea he elaborates on in *Being and Time*. This confrontation with death awakens individuals to their true potential and the finite nature of existence, encouraging them to live more genuinely and responsibly. This perspective contrasts with living in *inauthenticity*, where individuals conform to societal norms without acknowledging their personal choices and responsibilities. Heidegger argues that understanding and accepting our temporal existence allows us to live more authentically, fully engaging with our own being and choices in the world.
2. Seemingly, Zhuangzi's proposal to live *unintentionally* goes against the existentialists' teachings about avoiding everydayness, but Zhuangzi's end is in letting go of all human-constructed intentions after reflection, so one could be living naturally, stripped of worldly concerns, in alignment with Dao.

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SCHOLARS OF DECISION MAKING.  
A (NUDGE) PSYCHOLOGICAL READING OF NICCOLO  
MACHIARELLI'S *THE PRINCE*

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**Abstract.** This paper takes a closer look at Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* and seeks to offer a fresh perspective by focusing on specific facets, particularly those related to decision-making. The analysis will connect Machiavelli's ideas with those of contemporary scholars in this field, specifically from the psychological framework of prospect theory (and its applied form, nudging). The aim is to identify elements of *The Prince* that possess universal qualities and which, in turn, may help explain the enduring relevance and usefulness of Machiavelli's work.

**Keywords:** decision-making, Machiavelli, prospect theory, nudging

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The texts of Niccolo Machiavelli have been discussed extensively by admirers and foes alike. While some of them understand Machiavelli as an apologetic of tyrants, others stress his liberal and republican facets. However, across the spectrum, everybody has to agree that Machiavelli's writings – first and foremost *The Prince* – remain relevant to the very day as they are quoted, discussed, and applied by academics and real-life decision-makers alike. They survived the intellectual survival-of-the-fittest game for at least 500 years, which hints at a deeper (read as context-independent) truth discovered and described by Machiavelli. This paper will argue that one reason why they have remained relevant is that, due to their circumstances of creation as well as the applied methodology, they contribute to substantial observations about human decision-making processes. These processes are evolutionary-grown universals of human life and can be found, yet in varying degrees, in all human beings. As

these decision-making schemes can be considered universal, they exhibit an enormous degree of practicality (cf. Morris 1999, xv.), *i.e.* for winning elections, remaining popular, or exercising power. Through the field of politics, diplomacy and war, Machiavelli distilled observations and derived rules and guidelines for human behaviour.

While the texts of Machiavelli have been analyzed from a variety of angles, they have never been looked at with regard to the validity of his claims, as these could, for the longest time, neither be verified nor refuted. However, in the last 50 years, scholarship on decision-making processes has flourished tremendously. One of the most fruitful approaches has been the descriptive psychological approach, which analyses human behaviour with regard to errors, shortcuts, and heuristics. This line of thinking assumes two modes of decision-making: 1. the reflected, thought through, and slow system, as well as 2. the intuitive, fast, and impulsive one (cf. Thaler/Sunstein 2017, 34; Kahneman 2012) – basically the differentiation between blink versus think decisions (cf. Gladwell 2005). Machiavelli implicitly mentions these modes as he argues that a good ruler requires both, the animalistic (System 1) as well as the human nature (System 2) (cf. 2020, 573) – a thought he most likely got from Plato’s chariot allegory (cf. Zabarowski 2016). Both systems have their *raison d’être* as they are supposed to solve different problems. Irrationalities – read as errors or deviations from rational decision-making – arise when a mismatch between the specific question and the consulted system occurs. These errors can be provoked through a conscious modification of the decision architecture (cf. Thaler/Sunstein 2017). Machiavelli referenced these phenomena by stressing the point that most people judge based on their eyes (meaning: availability and vision) and not *with* their minds (2020, 575). The conscious modification of a decision architecture is referred to as “nudging” (cf. Thaler/Sunstein 2017) and is mentioned in *The Prince* by stating that people most often choose, prior to the decision, the paved way (cf. 2020, 514). While descriptive psychological research is primarily focused on the cognitive aspects of this *System 1/System 2*

mismatches, *i.e.* by certain ways of data presentation, nudging goes a step further and also involves cues stemming from sociology, linguistics, and social psychology. Examples of classical nudges may include certain (emotionally laden) wordings, specific framing of decisions, or the provision of selected reference groups as all of these can change the decision's outcome in predictable ways. The idea of consciously modifying one's decision architecture can also be found in Machiavelli (cf. 2020, 602/603) as he warns of flatterers in the position of advisors and suggests that only certain advisers should have the right to speak freely – a conscious modification of the presented data which prevents information overflow and can result in better decision-making. However, Machiavelli's nudging efforts do not stop there as his guidelines can be read as a way to modify the decision architectures of rulers, subjects, and enemies in order to make rulership more efficient and long-lasting.

Just like Machiavelli, yet in another referential discipline, nudging has made observations about the human nature of decision-making. The hypothesis of this paper is that, due to shared methodologies and contexts of creation, nudging, as well as Niccolo Machiavelli's studies, came up with similar results. In order to prove this point, I will conduct a comparative reading of the nudge theory and *The Prince* – a re-reading of *The Prince* with a nudging focus on trying to identify the *Tertium Comparationis* (cf. Rosello 1959; Hilker 1962). This study will commence by outlining the applied methodologies as well as the respective contexts of creation. After having provided this framework, the paper will recontextualize selected passages from *The Prince* with findings from nudge psychology, arguing that Machiavelli was one of the earliest empirical scholars of decision-making, which makes his works until the very day relevant to decision-makers all across the globe.

## 2. CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGIES

### 2.1. Context of Creation

When Niccolo Machiavelli outlined his key propositions and

phrased guidelines for successful rulership, Italy was in dire conditions. The experienced crisis stemmed from external occupation as well as internal incompetence, which transformed *The Prince* from a theoretical essay on rulership into a crash course on good rulership – in short, *The Prince* can and should be read as an educational manifesto (cf. Münkler 2020; Machiavelli 2020, 615) and Niccolo Machiavelli personally had skin – more likely even soul – in the game (cf. Taleb 2018). Besides the obvious crisis situation, the internal decision architectures of the ruling courts in Italy should also be considered. Machiavelli is often labelled the founding father of political science as an academic discipline; however, before Machiavelli and people like him consulted rulers, advice was often given by clerical staff. Almost needless to say: This kind of advice was most likely to be normative, dogmatic, and unempirical and – due to its limited predictive power and efficiency – resulted in detrimental effects for the states/kingdoms of Italy (cf. Scott/Sullivan 1994, 887). Machiavelli, on the contrary, emphasized a practical, empirical, and undogmatic approach to ruling (cf. Machiavelli 2020, 575; Dietz 1986, 777) which responds to the world as it is and not as it should be. Compared to his clerical predecessors, Machiavelli's approach oriented itself towards reality – making him one of the predecessors of *Realpolitik* (cf. Dietz 1986) – and did not occupy itself with normative rules, directives, or the alike.

When Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman started working on *Prospect Theory* – the cognitive-perceptual aspects of nudging – the main paradigm of decision-making - was rational choice theory based on the works of von Neumann and Morgenstern (cf. 1944). With mathematical rigour, rational choice theory dictated how people should act – game theory and the *homo oeconomicus* being two variations/realizations of this line of thinking which gained major popularity in economic but also political consulting. However, one key problem was that actual decision-making deviated from what normative rational choice theory predicted/dictated. Instead of modifying rational choice theory, it was often argued that people

would act purely rationally if only they had the mental capacities to calculate these decisions properly. However, Tversky and Kahneman argued that these “deviations of actual behaviour from normative models are too widespread to be ignored, too systematic to be dismissed as random error, and too fundamental to be accommodated by relaxing the normative system” (1986, 3). In the following, *Prospect Theory* looked at actual behaviour and tried to derive rules, patterns, and effects from these observations, making it a highly empirical line of research.

As outlined above, the creational context of the two compared works/theories shares the fact that both were created in times of crisis. In Machiavelli’s case, the crisis resulted from military occupation as well as political inability, while the crisis in the late 1960s was rather an epistemological one— speaking with Kuhn (1969/1973) – as the dominant paradigm was no longer able to explain real-life deviations from the paradigm as well as other occurrences. Also, both contexts share the fact that (up to this point) the dominant paradigms were highly normative. Machiavelli’s case was inspired by church doctrine while Tversky, Kahneman, and others saw themselves confronted with the idea of economic hyperrationality. However, these normative paradigms can be brought together when considering Sedlacek’s (2012) key finding: The economy (as well as related concepts) is, just like religions, a narrative which perpetuates certain norms. In his book, Sedlacek compares economic ideas with religious concepts and finds a high degree of overlapping arguing that these two do not differ that much from one another in multiple dimensions. The histories of Machiavelli as well as Kahneman, Tversky, and their colleagues support Sedlacek’s hypothesis.

## **2.2. Applied Methodologies**

As argued, methodologies play a major role in Machavelli’s as well as nudge theories approach. As outlined above, their respective predecessors worked primarily theoretical, *ergo* normative. Clerical consulting, as well as rational choice advisers, mostly have argued

how people should act, not how they actually act. Even though these normative doctrines may be grounded to some extent in reality – clerical rules can be read evolutionary as the ones which helped people live productive lives manifested themselves in (long-lasting) religions – they were too dogmatic for an ever-faster changing world. In short, dogmatic rules are, even if they are good in nature, decontextualized and cannot adapt to changing frameworks. On the contrary, Niccolo Machiavelli recreated meaningful context for his cause. As his country was facing external occupation, the meaningful context was war, diplomacy, and ruling. Based on that, he compiled a corpus of referential cases and analyzed these with regard to outcome, making him one of the first empirical political scientists and, as argued here, empirical scholars of decision-making.

Contrary to rational choice theory, nudging does not necessarily understand itself as a theory but rather as a toolbox of effects, scenarios, and settings that may result in certain, predictable outcomes. Further, nudging does not suggest any predefined paths but only emphasizes certain, already observed and tested, options as - with regard to decision-making, as well as the associated decision architectures – “a good rule of thumb is to assume that everything matters” (cf. Thaler/Sunstein/Balz 2014, 429) and must be handled on a case-by-case basis. By employing the medical evidence-based testing model – outcomes are compared to non-treated control groups – nudging is deeply grounded in real-life evidence, which prevents itself from giving dogmatic and automatized answers in varying contexts.

### 3. THE NUDGE PSYCHOLOGICAL RE-READING OF *THE PRINCE*

This section will present three of Niccolo Machiavelli’s key observations – from which he developed his guidelines – and will reframe/recontextualize these from a nudge perspective. First, Machiavelli’s guidelines will be outlined. Then, in the second step, the corresponding psychological effect will be presented.

### 3.1. Loss Aversion

On multiple occasions, Machiavelli stresses the point that losses (*i.e.* of people(s) and their possessions) should be considered by the authority. For instance, he argues (cf. 2020, 498 & 516) that the beneficiaries of a new order – *i.e.* after a conquest – will not support the new order to the same degree as the beneficiaries of the prior system will boycott it. The difference: while one camp benefits from the new order, the other loses its position, influence, or resources. Even if they are equal in number, as well as with regard to numerical or perceived losses/gains, the losers will always invest more to avoid losing than the camp of potential beneficiaries. Further, the feeling of loss is not limited to individuals and their possessions but also to entire communities and states. Those who lived freely prior to being conquered will react with hatred when their freedom is being stripped from them (cf. 2020, 513). Lastly, Machiavelli proposes that the successful ruler should –to create loyalty – remind his people that threats, as well as personal losses, await in case of foreign conquering (cf. 2020, 541). All of these individual references stress the point that losses seem to matter more to people than gains, even if they are equal in scope.

Speaking from a purely rational standpoint, it could be assumed that gains and losses are evaluated equally; the loss of a unit matters numerically as much as the gain of the same unit. However, Tversky and Kahneman (cf. 1991; 1992) found out that this is not the case. Losses are considered twice as bad compared to the gaining of a comparable unit – losing \$1 has a negative impact equally in size as winning \$2. The mental bookkeeping applied for gains and losses clearly violates the rules of rational choice theory. This empirically observable loss aversion has widespread implications for multiple areas of life, as people being affected by potential losses invest much more time and effort in order not to be affected by losses. This can be considered one reason why political reforms in which few people lose while a significantly larger amount of people gains, often fail. Loss aversion motivates the potential losers to a higher degree than it can motivate the potential winners of reform and, thereby, favours

the conservation of the *status quo* (cf. Kahneman 2012, 375). Evolutionary speaking, *loss-aversion* can be explained by the fact that losses threatened mankind's survival much more than potential gains could guarantee future survival. This conservative bias has lasted until the very day and shapes individual as well as collective decisions significantly – variations of loss aversion have been outlined by Machiavelli and made fruitful in the form of ruling guidelines.

### 3.2. Consistency

Machiavelli refers to the consistency nudge in two different contexts. Firstly, in case of conquering a new territory. For this scenario, he suggests that nothing in these areas should be changed, as the behaviour of people would be consistent with their behaviour prior to the conquest (cf. 2020, 499). As such, the behaviour of the conquered city or state would be predictable and, thereby, easier to handle for the new ruler. Secondly, Machiavelli warns rulers from adopting poor actions, *i.e.* plundering from one's own people. He argues that those who plunder once will always find reasons to continue this behaviour. Initially, this may be perceived as moral advice from his side. However, research has shown that people generally try to be *consistent* in their thinking, actions, and attitudes (cf. Guadagno/Cialdini 2010, 152/153). The desire to act in accordance with decisions and utterances made prior – Rogers (1957) refers to that as *congruence* – seems to be a relatively stable trait that can be found across cultures (cf. Petrova/Cialdini/Sills 2007). Further, it seems to be the case that the initial decision requires a relatively huge amount of mental resources. After the decision has been made, similar decisions or repetitions of the initial one require less mental effort. In the case of similar, related, or repetitive decisions, the decision steadily migrates from the reflective and slow *System 2* to the intuitive but faster *System 1*. This being said, single actions – even if they are insignificant at first – may have a wider outreach as they make repetitions of these actions more likely. Machiavelli observed this tendency in rulers and warned in his

manifesto about one realization (plundering) of the consistency nudge.

### **3.3. Anchoring**

Anchors are consulted when decisions and valuations under uncertainty occur. Oftentimes, the anchor serves as a value for comparison with the new and upcoming event, value, or occurrence. Festinger (1954) maintains that all comparisons are local in nature and nudging uses this fact by providing the right comparisons at the right time. These anchors can be completely random, as Tversky and Kahneman have shown (1974), but still influence the decisions in question and can result in normative judgements – better or worse, higher or lower (cf. Kahneman 1992, 296) – which are biased due to the provided anchor (cf. McElroy & Dowd 2007).

Machiavelli knew about the anchor's potency when highlighting different valuations of rulers. He states that a tyrant receives way more praise for a good deed than a generally benevolent ruler would (2020, 537). The fact that the same (good) deed results in diverging normative valuations, hints at the fact that Machiavelli was aware of anchoring, as well as the practice of local comparisons. In the case of the tyrant, the people compared the good deed against his average deeds as these are the available reference points; the same procedure takes place with the benevolent ruler. As the difference between expectations (the anchor) and outcomes (the event) is bigger with the tyrant, he receives – for the same kind of action – a larger amount of thankfulness and praise. Irrational as this may be, Machiavelli understood human irrationality in decision-making processes and used these productively to ensure long-term rulership.

## **4. FINAL REMARKS**

The here described and recontextualized observations – anchoring, loss aversion, and consistency – are all evolutionary grown and well-observable tendencies in human behaviour. Some of these are

deeply rooted in our biology and help us survive, while others are learned on an individual basis. In both cases, they are barely ever questioned, reflected upon, or consciously modified as they mask themselves as *the reasonable thing to do* and happen mostly automatically – a quick, intuitive, and unreflected *System 1* decision. The same holds true for the local nature of comparisons, as human beings (most often) do not consciously question their reference points and anchors. However, some people – Machiavelli being one of them – understood the potential which lies in these unconscious tendencies and processes. His guidelines in *The Prince* show a deep understanding of what should later be known as nudging. One key difference though: He only limited the context (effective ruling) and did not bother with explaining how these things work. For him, it was enough that they actually do work. Some 500 years later, psychologists and behavioural economists (re-)discovered the effects outlined above and can – due to more sophisticated testing methods – also explain them. Thereby, they were also able to apply them independent of context (*i.e.* in the economy, health-related decisions, finance, well-being etc.) while Machiavelli’s work is highly dependent on very specific contexts. Nonetheless, the universal nature of the found effects can also explain why Machiavelli’s work survived 500 years and still remains relevant – read as: read, quoted, and thought about – to the very day. As I could hopefully show, this (at least in part) stems from a shared methodology, as well as a creational context. Both approaches – Machiavelli as well as nudging/prospect theory – work empirically, undogmatic, goal-oriented, and mostly descriptive. This differentiates them from the approaches used by their respective predecessors and resulted, in both cases, in a paradigm shift as well as the creation of new disciplines (political science and behavioural economics). Unsurprisingly, both camps also came up, yet with varying degrees of sophistication, with similar results.

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## “LOGISTIKĒ” AND EPISTEMIC PROGRESS

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**Abstract.** Plato, in his writings, and in his interaction with the associates of the Academy he founded, never teaches. His goal is not to propose definitive solutions. Rather, his methodological insights are used to recognize a problem where others see just a fact that needs no further discussion. The introduction of the concept *logistic* gives us the chance to reflect on the problem of what calculations are: thanks to *logistic*, relations among numbers are taken into consideration. These relations are what render it possible to calculate. According to Plato, there are two different kinds - theoretical and practical - of *logistic* and arithmetic. *Logistic* and arithmetic, when considered theoretically, focus on the non-sensible. Today, however, the primary goal of mathematical research is no longer centred on the analysis of the intangible. Nevertheless, the Platonic method - his encouragement to view issues from a different, broader perspective - remains a source of innovation even in the contemporary age.

**Keywords:** cognitive interaction, method, logistic, arithmetic, theoretical, practical

### 1. COGNITIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN WRITER AND READER

In my work on Plato and intellectual development (Saracco 2017), I analyzed a crucial passage of his dialogues: that of the sixth book of the *Republic* (*Republic*, VI 509d-511), in which he explains the stages of the intellectual development of human being and what objects of knowledge are pertinent to each phase of cognition. Plato schematizes this idea of intellectual progress using a line segment divided into four subsections: two of them correspond to phases in which our knowledge is still connected to the sensible realm and the

other two sectors indicate a kind of knowledge which is pertinent to the intelligible realm.

My attention was captivated by the moment in which Plato, summarizing his idea of cognitive progress, tells his readers that there is much more to know about the subject than what had been discussed so far with Glaucon (*Republic*, VII 534 a):

But as for the ratios between the things these are set over and the division of either the opinable or the intelligible section into two, let's pass them by, Glaucon, *lest they involve us in arguments many times longer than the ones we have already gone through.*

Foley (2008, 23), commenting on the previous excerpt from the *Republic*, emphasizes:

(...) the passage shows that Plato is not willing to set forth his views on the further complexities that have emerged. It is a task that he *intentionally* leaves for his readers, revealing that his final assessment of the role of the divided line is to *force a thoughtful reader to transcend the text*. One significant aspect of the divided line is exactly that Plato refuses to explain its point. (Foley 2008, 23)

Foley's words reveal a crucial insight: Plato's text is a stimulus for a rational investigation which is not meant to *end* in the written words of his dialogues. Stating this, I do not want to associate my theory with the point of view of those scholars who claim that Platonic basic teachings are not part of his written dialogues because they belong to his unwritten doctrines<sup>1</sup>. On the contrary, I do think that the fundamental Platonic teachings are in the written dialogues. Plato uses his writings to ask his readers to actively participate in the text. Such participation is not meant to be a simple approval or criticism of the words of the philosopher; rather, this call for collaboration is designed to "force a thoughtful reader to transcend the text" (Foley 2008, 23). Plato, presenting in the *Republic* his schematization of intellectual development in connection with the objects of investigation that human reason can grasp, tells his readers that there is more to discover on the subject, and this is something that they have to do. In saying this, Plato calls for

collaboration between the writer and the reader. Plato has not written a textbook whose content can merely be summarized by readers. He has created a text to which they are required to respond and the act of responding to the text is as important as the text itself: the two of them together complete Plato's task. Plato does not want to convey a static description of how things are. He has created a text that calls out for completion through readers' further contributions. This does not mean that his words are incomplete, in the sense that they communicate thoughts which have not yet reached a good degree of elaboration. On the contrary, it means that the words written by Plato are so well mastered by their author that they are able to stimulate the reader to overcome them, as Foley highlighted. Plato's texts are composed not only of words, which have the goal of expressing the thinking of their author. They also comprise the thinking of their users.

Through dialogues, Plato is inviting us to reflect on our cognitive resources and develop them autonomously. He says this explicitly in *Meno*:

As the whole nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning—discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection. (*Meno*, 81 c-d)

It is useful to read these lines together with an excerpt from *Phaedrus*, where Socrates is reporting a dialogue about the art of writing between Thamus and Theuth:

O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with

the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so. (*Phaedrus*, 275 a-b)

Let us connect this passage with the fragment from *Meno* cited above. There, he tells us that learning is a process of “recollection” (*Meno*, 81 d) and in *Phaedrus*, we read that the written words will not help us to remember but they can only be used as *reminders* because they do not lead to ourselves but they rather depend on signs that “belong to others” (*Phaedrus*, 275 a). In *Phaedrus*, Plato explicitly connects the process of learning with remembering something that is inside us: what is inside us makes us remember and recollect wisdom that is merely reminded by written words.

It seems unlikely that the author of these passages would conceive of his own written words as the final destination of knowledge, but rather as a stimulus to reach that destination, which is internal to us. Thus, they are only a reminder of the necessity of looking for knowledge, where the answers to the dialogical questions come from inside us: from the organ capable of remembering which is, for Plato, the soul and its main component, reason. Consistently, Plato’s dialogues do not end with the thoughts of the author and the words, the reminders that he has selected to convey them, but they are enriched by the multitude of rational memories prompted by the autonomous investigations of Plato’s readers.

The dialogical character of Plato’s work is opposite to the will of indoctrinating or just instructing the readers. Plato chose to write dialogues and this choice is not only a formal but also a philosophical one: he wants to stimulate an active participation of his readers, which goes beyond the accidental criticism of written words that can take place whenever a text is read. In fact, as we saw, when Plato, in the *Republic*, presented his idea of what intellectual development is, he explicitly stated that there is more to discover on

the subject. But he does not tell his readers how they should do it. The modes of collaboration between writer and reader advocated by Plato are not predetermined by the philosopher. Plato's readers can choose to criticize radically his philosophical system or they can accept its basics. Plato interacts dialogically with them, asking them explicitly to transcend the text (Foley 2008, 23. Also cf. *Phaedrus*, 275 a-b), to complete it with their contributions. This Platonic request is at the base of the higher-order pedagogy that permeates his dialogues, where the role of the readers is not flattened to that of a student, who can merely absorb the content proposed by the teacher. Plato's readers are invited to become active creators of the philosophical message. This invitation is not to be considered as a consequence of a lack of Plato's argumentative ability. On the contrary, as we have just seen, the philosopher is able to stimulate his readers with explicit requests<sup>2</sup>.

For Plato, education has crucial importance. The philosopher is well aware of the fact that human rational nature can diverge from its positive capabilities when its direction is determined by messages that appeal simply to appetite. This intuition is itself remarkable for modernity. But what renders the Platonic rational pedagogy extraordinary is its character: Plato explicitly says to his readers that they have to find the truth by themselves, using what they are reading only as a reminder of the rational power that they possess (*Phaedrus*, 275 a-b). Plato's is a kind of higher-order pedagogy in which readers are not passive receptors of content but they discover themselves as authors of the content.

The dialogue between Plato and his readers takes place *via* the written words of his texts, which allow the continuation of the cognitive exchange between the philosopher's rational heritage and his reader's intellect. The dialogical interaction with readers and the consequent free development of their thinking abilities do not mean that the Platonic philosophy can be developed in any way. The intellectual stimulation of Plato's words consists of the exhortation to contribute originally and creatively to the development of what Plato thinks knowledge is. He tells his readers clearly what his idea

of knowledge is, namely the highest point of intellectual development that is reached when we become able to abandon the empirical completely to reach the purely intelligible. Only when our rationality is disentangled from the distracting stimuli which come from the tangible realm, we can grasp the purely intelligible truth. Nonetheless, the individual contributions of his readers can mould the concept of Platonic knowledge into the shape their intellect suggests. Furthermore, it remains possible for them at any point to use their rational capabilities, sharpened through texts written by the philosopher, to criticize his conception of knowledge or abandon his system.

### 1.1. A *Method* for Cognitive Growth

We just saw that Plato's dialogues prompt interaction with readers, which requires their active participation with the text: there are no definitive solutions that can be learned by heart but occasions for cognitive growth. This interpretation of Platonic dialogues is in line with the nature of Plato's Academy. We cannot really know what Plato did in his Academy, since external evidence available for the reconstruction is extremely slight (Cherniss 1962, 61-62). Nevertheless, there are facts that can help us get a sense of the interaction between Plato and his associates. Cherniss observes that there were "disagreements among Plato's associates concerning the interpretation of identifiable passages in his dialogues" (Cherniss 1962, 75): for instance, it was "hotly debated the comparatively simple question whether or not the creation - in *Timaeus* - was meant to be understood literally" (Cherniss 1962, 75). This kind of discussion among Plato's associates

should make us wary of the lazy assumption that, when they seem to ascribe to him notions which are not verbally expressed in his writings, their source for these must have been his oral teaching or discussion (...) the only legitimate conclusion which can be drawn is that Plato himself did not *teach* or discuss the doctrine at all. (Cherniss 1962, 75)

Cherniss' words remind us of Foley's. As we have seen, Foley highlighted that "one significant aspect of the divided line is exactly that *Plato refuses to explain its point*" (Foley 2008, 23), referring to Plato's idea of cognitive progress, schematized using a line segment subdivided into sections. Foley notices that Plato leaves to the reader the task of investigating the cognitive complexities introduced by the line segment and its association with intellectual growth. Cherniss points to the same concept: Plato does not write to make your mind rest; he writes to make it realize what is able to do. In the Academy, no recipe for truth was offered, but this does not mean that it has to be hypothesized the existence of an oral doctrine where these solutions are offered. On the contrary, the lack of definitive solutions to learn is the crucial character of Plato's philosophy. Another example presented by Cherniss contributes to reinforce the idea of the Academy, and of Plato's philosophy, as a place of cognitive stimulation:

Aristotle asserts that, for Plato, the mathematical objects were a third class of separate entities intermediate between the sensible particulars and the ideas, these mathematical numbers and figures differing from sensibles and resembling ideas in that they are eternal and immobile but differing from ideas and resembling sensibles in that there are many of each kind. All the attempts to find this intermediate class in the dialogues have failed; and it has been positively proved over and over again that Plato does not anywhere in his writings recognize mathematical numbers and figures as entities separate from sensibles on the one hand and from ideas on the other. Many scholars, therefore, have had recourse to the usual hypothesis that Plato must have taught this doctrine orally in the school and that this is the source of Aristotle's ascription. Insufficient attention, however, has been paid to the fact that *Aristotle's own testimony is inconsistent...* the inconsistency of Aristotle's own testimony and the discordant opinions of the different members of the Academy show definitely that *Plato did not* himself "teach" his pupils or associates a doctrine of mathematical objects at all and did *not* even resolve their disagreement about the meaning of what he had written on the subject by laying down an *authoritative interpretation*. (Cherniss 1962, 75-78)

This quotation makes us realize that Plato's words were devised to ignite complex debates; in fact, even Aristotle's own testimony

could be inconsistent regarding the interpretation of Plato's words. Nevertheless, Plato has never wanted to provide his associates with a solution to his cognitive riddles. He did not want to teach, offering a definitive solution to a cognitive problem. The different interpretations of his writings, elaborated by associates of the Academy, prove the fact that he has never wanted to end a debate with an authoritative interpretation. Plato's interaction with mathematicians was of the same sort:

Philodemus says that mathematics made great progress under the direction of Plato, who formulated problems which the mathematicians zealously investigated. Proclus, too, in his famous summary, which appears to derive ultimately from the *History of Mathematics* written by Eudemos, credits Plato's concern for mathematics with the great progress of these studies and particularly of geometry. Besides Theaetetus, Leodamas, and Philip of Opus, he names six specialists in mathematics who, he says, passed their time together in the Academy and pursued their investigations in common. It cannot be imagined that Plato *taught* any of these men mathematics, though he is said to have induced Philip to turn his attention to the subject, to have originated the theorems about the section, the number of which Eudoxus increased, and to have communicated to Leodamas the method of analysis. The last tradition Proclus repeats with obvious hesitation; and the truth probably is, as Tannery and Heiberg say, that *Plato formulated as a systematic method what the mathematicians had long been applying...* Plato's influence on these men, then, was that of an *intelligent critic of method...* and it was by his criticism of method, *by his formulation of the broader problems to which the mathematician should address himself*, and, as the summary of Proclus says, by arousing in those who took up philosophy an interest in mathematics that he gave such a great impulse to the development of the science. (Cherniss 1962, 65-66)

In this fragment, Cherniss points to the fact that Plato, also in his collaboration with mathematicians, was not a master, whose solution to a problem cannot be discussed further. His goal was not that of teaching by imposing solutions; rather, he used his insight and skills in the formulation of a problem to offer general advice and methodological criticism to other thinkers (Cherniss 1962, 65). In his writings and interactions with his associates, he aimed at stimulating cognitive growth, pointing at problems and showing a

method, not for the elaboration of a final solution to the issue at stake, but for its reconsideration in light of a different, broader, perspective, which could emerge thanks to open discussion. We are going to see how this hermeneutic horizon informs Plato's concepts of *logistikē* and *arithmētikē*.

## 2. LOGISTIKĒ AND ARITHMETIKĒ

The concept of *logistikē*, and its distinction from *arithmētikē*, constitutes a complex topic (Fowler 1987, 109). I am going to focus here on the epistemic function of the introduction of this distinction. The distinction of *logistikē* from *arithmētikē* is explicitly mentioned in *Gorgias*, 451 a-c. There, Socrates says that if he were asked with what arithmetic (*arithmētikē* - *Gorgias*, 451 b) deals, he would answer: "it belongs to that knowledge which deals with the even and the odd, with reference to *how much* either happens to be" (Klein 1968, 17). And of *logistic* (*logistikē* - *Gorgias*, 451 c) it is said further on: "it deals with the same thing, namely the even and the uneven; but logistic differs [from arithmetic] in so far as it studies the even and the odd with respect to the multitude which they [the single even and odd] make both with themselves and with each other" (Klein 1968, 17).

This is the interpretation, provided by Klein (Klein 1968, 18-19), of *arithmētikē* and *logistikē*.

In the face of definite multitudes of things, we habitually *determine their exact number*- we "number," i.e., count, the things (...). In order to be able to count we must know and distinguish the single numbers...Plato calls the totality of this science of all possible numbers the "art of number"- "arithmetic." But we are also in the habit of *multiplying or dividing these multitudes*. This means that we are no longer satisfied with the number by which we have enumerated the things in question, but that we bring to bear on this number new "numbers," whether we wish to separate off a "third" part of the respective quantity or wish to produce a multitude which amounts to "four" times the given one. In such multiplications and divisions, or, more generally, in all *calculations* which we impose on multitudes, we must *know beforehand* how the different numbers

*are related to one another* and how they are constituted *in themselves*. This whole science, which thus concerns the behavior of numbers toward one another, i.e., their mutual relations, and which first enables us to *relate* numbers, i.e., to calculate with them, is called the “art of calculation” - “logistic”.

In this excerpt, Klein points to a crucial distinction between arithmetic and *logistic*: *logistic* is a science addressed to relations of numbers as such; since all calculations are based on relations among numbers, *logistic* provides the common art of calculation with its foundation (Klein 1968, 38). As Cherniss pointed to (see *supra* 1.1.), Plato’s influence on mathematicians was that of a skilled critic of the method. He formulated broader problems which mathematicians should address themselves (Cherniss 1962, 66). Plato, introducing the concept of *logistikē*, allows reflections of individuals not to stop at the numbers as the end of the matter. Instead of considering numbers as such, it should examine their relations, as the foundation of the very possibility to calculate. This analysis belongs to a broader perspective, which makes advances cognitively, reflecting on the fact that calculations are based on relations. Plato poses a problem about what calculations are instead of offering a definitive solution, contributing, this way, to his interlocutor’s epistemic progress.

### **2.1 *Logistic* and Arithmetic: Theoretical and Practical**

Plato contrasts “practical” arithmetic and “practical” *logistic* with their respective “theoretical” counterparts (Klein 1968, 22). In *Philebus*, 56 d Socrates asks: “Don’t we have to agree, first, that the arithmetic of the many is one thing, and the philosopher’s arithmetic is quite another?” And to the question of his interlocutor Protarchus, “How could anyone distinguish these two kinds of arithmetic?”, he replies (56 d-e): “The difference is by no means small, Protarchus. First, there are those who compute sums of quite *unequal units*, such as two armies or two herds of cattle, regardless of whether they are tiny or huge. But then there are the others who would not follow their example unless it was guaranteed that *none of those infinitely many units differed in the least from any of the others*”. And Protarchus makes the point once more with emphasis: “You explain

very well the notable difference among those who make numbers their concern, so it stands to reason that there are those *two different kinds of arithmetic*” (*Philebus*, 56 e). This distinction is immediately expanded to include *logistic* (*Philebus*, 56 e- 57 a), so that Plato explicitly postulates here a *theoretical logistic* (Klein 1968, 22). What differentiates this one from *practical logistic* is the kind of multitude with which each deals. In one case, we are concerned with multitudes of “unequal” objects – and, obviously, all objects of sense are as such. In the other, with multitudes of wholly similar units, there are precisely those which cannot occur in the realm of objects of sense (Klein 1968, 22-23).

Theoretical arithmetic and *logistic* both have as objects, in contrast to the corresponding practical arts, not things experienced through senses (Klein 1968, 6). For Plato, the superior stages of cognitive development are reached when we gradually leave the sensible realm to investigate the non-sensible. The majority of modern investigations deal with explanations of the tangible. Despite this difference, Plato’s philosophy of mathematics still has contemporary relevance. Plato’s methodological insights create the possibility of considering the topic of calculation from a broader point of view. The introduction of the concept of *logistikē* makes us realize the existence of the problem of what renders calculations possible, expanding our epistemic perspective. Plato gives us the chance to see a problem where a fact that requires no further discussion is commonly seen. This capacity to recognize the necessity of deeply investigating an issue at stake using a novel lens is, also in contemporary times, a source of discoveries. Plato’s higher-order pedagogy, which does not offer definitive answers but proposes new points of entrance for reflection, has a crucial role in the advancement of research.

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indications have been the starting point of a search that has originated the present work.

## NOTES

1. See the Tübingen school, in particular Krämer, Hans J. 1990. *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics: A Work on the Theory of the Principles and Unwritten Doctrines of Plato with a Collection of the Fundamental Documents*, edited and translated by John R. Catan. Albany: State University of New York Press, and Szlezák, Thomas. 1999. *Reading Plato*, translated by Graham Zanker. London: Routledge.
2. Plato's intellectual stimulations are *not* limited to the *explicit* requests of collaboration between writer and reader, which the philosopher introduces in his dialogues. Plato is also able to elaborate intellectual stimulations, whose meaning is unveiled gradually by the readers who progress rationally. On this topic see my book Saracco, S. 2017. *Plato and Intellectual Development: A New Theoretical Framework Emphasising the Higher-Order Pedagogy of the Platonic Dialogues*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. See in particular the second chapter, *The Structure of Rational Engagement in the Reading of Plato*, pp. 13-52.

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A FAITH OR BELIEF IN MOVEMENT. THE INFLUENCE OF  
SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S REPETITIONAL FAITH ON GILLES  
DELEUZE'S CINEMA VOLUMES

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**Abstract.** This article explores Gilles Deleuze's evolving interpretation of Søren Kierkegaard's notions of repetition and faith, highlighting a significant shift from his initial scepticism to a later acknowledgement. Deleuze at first critiqued Kierkegaard's notion of repetition as a singular, transformative event — one that entails a “leap of faith”. However, 15 years later, Deleuze revised this view suggesting that Kierkegaard's repetition entails a continuous, enduring engagement. This revaluation coincides with his metaphysical exploration of movement in cinema, which also focuses on the disconnect between humanity and the world, as it diminishes human's ability to produce movements that significantly impact life. Deleuze posits that reestablishing this connection requires a form of faith or belief, subtly echoing Kierkegaard's ideas of repetition and faith — referred to in this article as “repetitional faith”. Moreover, this paper sets out to cover a reading of Kierkegaard involving repetition and faith as requiring a continuous engagement, and examines how Deleuze extends this reading into the concept of cinematic faith or belief.

**Keywords:** metaphysics, movement, Kierkegaard, Deleuze, repetition, faith, belief, cinema

## INTRODUCTION

In his early works, Gilles Deleuze is notably dismissive of Søren Kierkegaard. This is especially the case concerning Kierkegaard's works *Repetition* (1843) and *Fear and Trembling* (1843), which underlie his writings on movement. Deleuze's later works, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (1985), represent a significant change. These texts, delving into cinematic

movement, shift away from his earlier criticisms and highlight a newfound appreciation for Kierkegaard. As Deleuze remarked in an interview in 1986:

I liked those authors who demanded that we introduce movement to thought, ‘real’ movement. (...) How could I not discover the cinema, which introduces ‘real’ movement into the image? (...) Something bizarre about the cinema struck me: its unexpected ability to show not only behaviour but spiritual life [*la vie spirituelle*] as well. (Flaxman 2000, 366)

Deleuze began to see Kierkegaard as a forerunner to cinema since he had the ability to understand the fundamental imperceptibility of movement, and how nevertheless to touch upon it — productively, rather than conceptually (Deleuze 2005, 281). This entails a shift from observable movement defined by our behaviour or actions to a movement particular to spiritual life or the mind. Deleuze, examining the transition from “classic” to “modern” cinema — rooted in his firsthand experiences with cinema before and after World War Two — concluded that post-war emerged a doubt in our naturally assumed connection with the world. I argue that this issue is fundamentally about our failure to generate significant movements that reflect their impact on our lives. Post-war cinema shows us that what we are in need of is a movement-imbued faith or belief — what I will call a “repetitional faith”

With this in mind, I will investigate the perspectives of Kierkegaard and Deleuze on movement. To delve into this subject, it is crucial to first examine Kierkegaard's contemplations on movement, particularly through his notions of repetition and faith. This revolves around the question: what does Deleuze's reappraisal of Kierkegaard's repetition and faith entail? Following this, I will investigate how Deleuze, in his *Cinema* volumes, echoes Kierkegaard's exploration by examining cinema's capacity to mobilize thought. This exploration will reveal how Deleuze's analysis of cinema, and thereby philosophy, engages with and extends Kierkegaard's inquiries. In doing so, it highlights a form of existentialism pivotal to understanding cinema's power to

animate the mind. Ultimately, this discussion will lead us to consider why such an engagement necessitates the notions of repetition and faith, and how Deleuze extends this reading into a concept of cinematic faith or belief.

This article has two parts. Part I concerns Deleuze's reappraisal of Kierkegaard and, therefore, delves into Kierkegaard's exploration of movement through an analysis of *Repetition*, discussing its implications against the backdrop of ancient Greek and modern metaphysics. Further, I examine a lesser-known work, *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est [Everything Must Be Doubted]* (1842-1843), to deepen our understanding of movement, peculiarly in relation to doubt. This analysis of doubt leads us into a nuanced discussion of Kierkegaard's epistemology of faith. This is examined through the works *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (1846), which stand in a pseudonymous connection with *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*.

Part II addresses how Deleuze extends the previous discussion towards a cinematic faith or belief. The focus shifts to Deleuze's thoughts on movement in cinema as presented in *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema II: The Time-Image*. This inquiry starts by analysing Deleuze's interpretation of Bergsonian metaphysics, partaking in *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907). These works significantly influenced Deleuze's writings on cinema. This will further involve contrasting *Cinema I* with *Cinema II*, the *movement-image* with the *time-image*, to uncover insights into a movement peculiar to the mind. A particular chapter in *Cinema II* that discusses the relationship between cinema and thought will pave the way to understanding our need for faith or belief. Ultimately, I will let these discussions inform each other to conclude on the implications of faith or belief in movement, and the transformative power of cinematic experiences in shaping philosophical thought.

I. THE REAPPRECIATION OF KIERKEGAARD’S REPETITIONAL FAITH

Deleuze explores Kierkegaard’s category of repetition in various works, making it a shared focus<sup>1</sup>. Deleuze’s engagement with Kierkegaard’s repetition is initially scrutinized in his works *Difference and Repetition* (1968), and *The Logic of Sense* (1969), contrasting sharply with his later analyses in *Cinema I* and *II*. This is remarked upon by José Miranda Justo in “Gilles Deleuze: Kierkegaard’s Presence in His Writings” (2012), and by Andrew Jampol-Petzinger in *Deleuze Kierkegaard and the Ethics of Selfhood* (2023) (Justo 2012, 98; Jampol-Petzinger 2023, 68-71). Initially, Deleuze criticizes Kierkegaard by interpreting repetition as a singular, definitive event, a “leap of faith” during an encounter with God. For example, Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*: “[Kierkegaard] entrusted this ... repetition, ... to faith. ... However, faith invites us to rediscover *once and for all* God ... a repetition which, paradoxically, takes place once and for all. ... [is that not] comical?” (Deleuze 2006, 95). And in *The Logic of Sense*: “For what the Christian repetition brings back, it brings back once, and only once: ...” (Deleuze 2015, 300-301)<sup>2</sup>. However, 15 years later, in *Cinema I*, Deleuze surprisingly states that Kierkegaard’s repetition is something that one takes up “for all times” (Deleuze 1986, 115). The objective is to advocate for this specific reading of Kierkegaard. Part I of this thesis will first elucidate the category of repetition by examining the problems it addresses. Second, it will explore the close relationship between repetition and faith. Third, it will argue that repetition and faith must be seen as requiring a continual renewal, in contrast to a singular act or leap of faith.

### **Greek metaphysics**

Kierkegaard, writing under the pseudonym Constantin Constantius, begins *Repetition* with the following passage:

When the Eleatics denied motion, Diogenes, as everyone knows, came forward as an opponent. He literally did come forward, because he did not say

a word but merely paced back and forth a few times, thereby assuming that he had sufficiently refuted them. (Kierkegaard 1983, 131)

This anecdote introduces the discussion on movement in ancient Greek metaphysics. The Eleatics, who valued logic-based knowledge, debated the possibility of movement and change, highlighting their logical contradictions. In contrast, Diogenes embodies a type of unquestioning faith or belief in movement, unburdened by any conceptual considerations or representational limitations. Here, actual movement emerges as triumphant, underscoring its significance in abstract philosophical discussions. The rest of the book merely complicates this notion further, but nevertheless, let us follow Constantius' line of thinking.

While Diogenes is no longer mentioned, Constantius clarifies that the real opposition lies between the Eleatics and Heraclitus (Kierkegaard 1983, 148). The Eleatics rejected the notions of movement and change, advocating for a static reality. In contrast, Heraclitus rejected the notion of stable individual entities, emphasizing the constant flux of the universe. This sets the stage for Plato, who, like Heraclitus, recognized that the world is continually changing, thereby considering it an unreliable source of knowledge. However, Plato posited, much like the Eleatics, the existence of a stable and comprehensible world, which he termed the realm of Ideas (Carlisle 2005, 10). One's orientation towards this realm, which imbues us with knowledge, is *via* recollection or *anamnesis*. The realm of Ideas provides the individual with knowledge that is universally valid and timeless (Carlisle 2005, 71). Plato aimed to subdue the flux of existence under the domain of logic-imbued Ideas. This led Constantius to introduce the category of repetition to compete with Plato's theory of recollection (Kierkegaard 1983, 148-149). While recollection regains an already existing and universal knowledge, Constantius emphasized repetition concerns a truth that is the subjectivity of an individual continually coming into being (Kierkegaard 1983, 149). Thus, recollection is focused on acquiring permanent knowledge, whereas

repetition concerns the emergence of a truth subject to change through movement — a process that, as we will see later, necessitates a form of faith or belief (Carlisle 2005, 68; Kierkegaard 1983, 173).

To conclude, the discussion has shifted from the possibility of physical movement to the possibility of attaining knowledge or truth. While this shift might initially seem confusing, it becomes clearer when we consider that repetition is also a response to mediation (*vermittlung*, *vermittlung*), a key element in the dialectic of Hegelian philosophy (Kierkegaard 1983, 186). Mediation, with its circular and dialectical movement (of thesis, antithesis, synthesis), aimed to explain how knowledge emerges throughout history and in the world. It therefore attempted to reconcile Plato's realm of Ideas with the physical world of movement. Here, temporality starts to play a crucial role, with knowledge changing and progressing through time. Still, Constantius critiques Hegel for having erroneously applied logic to movement, a mistake similar to that made by the Eleatics (Kierkegaard 1983, 321-322). Movement, according to Constantius, is something that logic simply cannot support (Kierkegaard 1983, 308). Thus, Kierkegaard, through the pseudonym Constantius, sought a movement that fit modern philosophy. Nevertheless, he maintained a focus on temporality (Kierkegaard 1983, 131). Constantius emphasized subjective and interior truth as opposed to objective and exterior knowledge (changing or static). To support this, he paradoxically turned back to the Greeks, stating: "One should rather seek to think through mediation and then give a little credit to the Greeks. The Greek explanation of the theory of being and nothing, the explanation of 'the moment', 'non-being', etc. trumps Hegel" (Kierkegaard 1983, 148). These concepts, originating from Plato's *Parmenides*, appear to align more closely with Kierkegaard's thoughts than with Plato's, especially when considering their role in freedom (Plato 2009, 931-948). For example, consider the moment of choice as a coming into being from non-being, in *The Concept of Anxiety* (Kierkegaard 1980, 83). Constantius, by distancing himself from the aforementioned

debates, discovered a movement that increasingly focused on the interior. This movement retains a temporal character yet highlights freedom found outside any logical conception of movement or the world. This, however, raises the question of how Constantius reconciles the tension between a world characterized by movement and the realm of our ideas. The next section will aim to answer this question.

### **Repetition as a Temporal Category**

The previous section outlined various philosophical discourses on the metaphysics of movement, opposed by the pseudonym Constantius. Ultimately, the central problem addressed in *Repetition* is the everyday experience lacks significant movement (Kierkegaard 1983, 309). Constantius' goal becomes: "that of saving one's personality from being volatilized and, so to speak, in pawn to events" (Kierkegaard 1983, 315). This brings the question of movement and truth into an existential context. What does it mean for one's personality to be volatilized and in pawn to events? Repetition opposes any repetitive behaviour or thinking that follows a cyclical and logical pattern (Kierkegaard 1983, 301-302). Constantius also notes: "If one does not have the category of ... repetition, all life dissolves into an empty, meaningless noise" (Kierkegaard 1983, 149)<sup>3</sup>. This auditory metaphor, increasingly visual in a modern context, describes life as a chaotic flux of movement. The experience of life as pure noise contrasts with the experience of logical and repetitive continuity. Neither experience appears to facilitate the emergence of significant movements. This raises the question: how does repetition position itself between these two conceptions of experience?

This is best elucidated in Climacus's work *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*. Here, it becomes clear that repetition finds its expression solely within our consciousness, as it does not exist in reality per se (Kierkegaard 2013, 171). What does this mean? For Climacus, movement is a non-concept since real movement only exists in non-being and cannot be grasped conceptually or representationally. We

typically perceive movement through change, recognizing that an object has moved by comparing its past state with its present state. Reality itself is not concerned with change, as change relies on consciousness for its perception. Therefore, repetition reveals itself as an interior movement (Kierkegaard 2013, 168; Kierkegaard 1983, 221). How do we then conceive of this movement? The movement of repetition is characterized by an acknowledgement of a type of “renewal”, a “continually coming into being” which inherently involves a perception of change. So, while repetition entails recognizing change, it remains an immediate and temporal category, existing solely “in the moment” (Kierkegaard 2013, 171). This suggests that repetition views the past and present as a false dichotomy. In other words, repetition does not seek to perceive change from past to present states, but rather to capture change as it occurs instantaneously. How do we conceive of this change? In *Philosophical Fragments*, the moment is explained as merely a “passing by”, yet it also contains the “fullness of time” (Kierkegaard 2013, 18). Climacus emphasizes that the moment is more than just the finite present, as it also has the characteristic of the infinite. Viewing the moment merely as the present, situated between past and future, renders it finite. This conception gives it a logical continuity, where the past informs the present, and the present shapes the future. The crux of this discussion is that while perceiving change is straightforward, capturing the continual process of change is much harder. In attempting to grasp this process, we can simultaneously glimpse the infinite through a collision between the flux of existence and our own idealist thoughts. Thus, when we strive to perceive the flux of existence, a perception of change automatically comes in from higher mental and idealist faculties. In this moment, one renews, embracing new meanings — not through a repetitive act, but by opening up to various new possibilities. This originary experience of time allows for moments of freedom to move away from a logical and repetitive conception of movement and time.

In short, this abstract discussion reveals that repetition involves an originary movement of the mind, distinct from the logical and

repetitive movements of daily behaviour. It is in the decisive “moment” that repetition occurs. Here, the inherent flux of existence collides with ideas purely rooted in consciousness. Repetition does not merely involve capturing change, it involves capturing the continual process of change. This perspective challenges the traditional view of time and movement, emphasizing the infinite potential within each moment. It also allows for moments of freedom to go beyond the constraints of logical continuity. At first, Climacus, in *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, engages exclusively in a logically progressing thought. He undergoes the Cartesian task of doubting everything, yet he ends up stuck, being able to bring about no movement at all (Kierkegaard 2013, 119)<sup>4</sup>. Climacus does not consider until the very end that, besides logic, there is also freedom. He turns to repetition and faith, as these in contrast to doubt cannot be assimilated by logic, and thus form a turning point in Climacus’ journey towards freedom. This section has provided an in-depth exploration of repetition. The following section will elucidate the close relationship between repetition and faith through an analysis of doubt.

### **Immanence and Transcendence in Faith**

The previous section showed that repetition enables one to break free from logical cycles through an act of freedom, which gains significance in the moment. This opposition, between logic and freedom, is mirrored in *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* by examining doubt, which in turn invokes faith. Kierkegaard notes: “if someone were to discourse on doubt in order to arouse doubt in another, he could precisely thereby evoke faith, just as faith, conversely, could evoke doubt” (Kierkegaard 2013, 166)<sup>5</sup>. He concludes that doubt and faith share a paradoxical dialectic. Although faith is arguably inseparable from God, it is not merely about belief in the religious sense. Faith, like doubt, is an inherent part of basic human experience. As Climacus writes in *Philosophical Fragments*: “Belief [*tro*] is a sense for coming into existence, and doubt is a protest against any conclusion that wants to go beyond immediate sensation and

immediate knowledge” (Kierkegaard 2013, 84). Faith or belief — in Danish, the word ‘tro’ encompasses both — relates to transcendence, while doubt refuses to go beyond immanence. Kierkegaard views immanence as a world purely confined within logic, whereas transcendence involves surpassing these logical limitations. This dynamic is explored in the works of both Climacus and Constantius.

Constantius increasingly reminds the reader that what true repetition is about is transcendence, while simultaneously and paradoxically also stating it remains within immanence (Kierkegaard 1983, 133 and 186). He writes that immanence emerges as transcendence in the sphere of freedom (Kierkegaard 1983, 309-310). Again, freedom has to do with transcending the immanent world of logic. Thus, repetition attempts a transcendent movement, yet stays within immanence and, in this attempt, there must be the possibility for moments of freedom. Later in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, this time through the pseudonym Climacus, Kierkegaard notes the reverse. Climacus notes that repetition firmly remains within immanence (Kierkegaard 1992, 263). So, while for Constantius repetition is increasingly seen as pertaining to transcendence, later in Climacus’ writings repetition again is increasingly seen as pertaining to immanence<sup>6</sup>. One possible explanation for this could be, as theorized by translators Howard and Edna Hong, that Kierkegaard simply used faith in the works of Climacus as a synonym for repetition (Kierkegaard 1983, XXXIII). The pseudonym Climacus no longer endorsed repetition as pertaining to transcendence, as faith took its place — a repetitional faith. Since repetition and faith are not synonyms, at the very least, repetition served as the philosophical grounds for Climacus’ concept of faith. Climacus’ faith, like repetition, is grasped in the moment, as it is only in the moment that a finite subject can perceive a semblance of the infinite, *i.e.* God. However, this too does not hold, as it continuously folds into itself (Kierkegaard 2013, 63-64).

To conclude, a repetitional faith is characterized by the paradox of immanence and transcendence. This evolves into a form of

borderless immanence centred on freedom and potentiality, necessitating faith or belief. Since, residing solely in doubt confines one to the logical realm of immanence, thereby unable to produce significant movements. Constantius and Climacus provide the same analogy to explain their respective positions, namely that of love, another notion that logic cannot assimilate. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus calls the act of giving marriage vows of secondary importance (Kierkegaard 1992, 456). In this example, one's relationship with a loved one can be compared to their relationship with God. It is neither defined by marriage nor, for example, by being baptized. These entail one-off occurrences. Yet, certainly, they do not solidify one's love for or faith in either their spouse or God. This is shared by Constantius when he writes: "Repetition's love is in truth the only happy love. ... It has the blissful security of the moment" (Kierkegaard 1983, 132). Constantius aims to say that one does not love once and for all, one does not marry and then concede that love is something that one has to take up again and again. This is a happy love, a repetitional love. Through this analogy of love, we gain an idea of what a repetitional faith entails. Since reality is always in movement and change, the only way one can keep the object is paradoxically through constant renewal (Kierkegaard 1983, 149). This constant effort to surpass, yet never permanently grasp, is the essence of repetitional faith. It never achieves the object "once and for all", but continually engages it as if "for all times". Similarly, when it comes to love, this is the desired mode of existence. The reappraisal of Kierkegaard's repetitional faith, as found in Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes, necessitates such reading to prepare.

## II. THE NEED FOR A CINEMATIC FAITH OR BELIEF

In *Cinema I* and *II*, Deleuze analyzes the disconnect between humanity and the world as depicted in post-1945 cinema (Deleuze 1989, xi-xiii)<sup>7</sup>. This disconnect emphasizes the loss of ability to

pragmatically adjust reactions to the situations encountered in the aftermath of World War Two. Deleuze perceived this rift through cinema's emphasis on contemplative characters immersed in what he repeatedly calls "pure optical and sound situations" – essentially rendering them passive observers, engaged only visually and aurally with the world (Deleuze 1989, 9-15). He proclaims that the only way to reconnect mankind and the world is through faith or belief. Paola Marrati in *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy*, and Joe Hughes in "Believing in the World", have proposed to look at Deleuze's other works to answer the question as to what type of faith or belief this entails (Marrati 2012, 89; Hughes 2011, 66). Yet, such an approach would lead us away from the *Cinema* volumes and consequently from the topic of movement. In this part, the article will show the "similar movements" in Kierkegaard's work on repetition and faith and Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes. Additionally, it will examine how Deleuze extends this reading into a cinematic faith or belief. To begin, the article will clarify the focus and content of *Cinema I* and *II*.

### **Bergsonian Metaphysics**

Deleuze opens *Cinema I* with a reading of Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and *Matter and Memory*. He notes in the preface:

Bergson was writing *Matter and Memory* in 1896: it was the diagnosis of a crisis in psychology. Movement, as physical reality in the external world, and the image, as psychic reality in consciousness, could no longer be opposed. The Bergsonian discovery of a movement-image, and more profoundly, of a time-image, still retains such richness today that it is not certain that all its consequences have been drawn. Despite the rather overhasty critique of the cinema that Bergson produced shortly afterwards, nothing can prevent an encounter between the movement-image, as he considers it, and the cinematographic image. (Deleuze 1986, xiv).

Before unpacking this dense quotation, let's first note that the theme again revolves around the metaphysical distinction between movement and the image. Here, the "image" can be read as Plato's

Idea, the Idea as a purely mental representation. Later on, Deleuze phrases it as the opposition between: “one wishing to reconstitute the order of consciousness with pure material movements, the other the order of the universe with pure images in consciousness” (Deleuze 1986, 56). This opposition is no longer tenable. Bergson sought to overthrow this distinction as well. However, he did not look for a solution within cinema.

Deleuze emphasizes two conceptions of movement that he extracts from Bergson. The first is a logical understanding of movement. In this view, movement is seen as occurring within an abstract concept of time that is divided into distinct, separate instants, much like space can be divided. According to Bergson, this perception mistakenly equates movement with the series of points in space that are crossed during the motion. Essentially, movement is understood by breaking down time into a sequence of static, immobile moments (Deleuze 1986, 7). The second is a concept of real, imperceptible movement, where time is experienced as concrete duration (*durée*). Unlike abstract time, which divides movement into separate, static instants, duration represents a continuous, indivisible flow of time. This conception emphasizes that movement is not a sequence of fixed points but a fluid and dynamic process. Deleuze remarks that Bergson, in *Creative Evolution* in 1907, gives the first a name: “The cinematographic illusion” (Deleuze 1986, 1). Bergson argued that cinema is created by taking a series of static images of successive positions. As the filmstrip rolls through the camera, these images are animated, projecting the illusion of movement (Marrati 2012, 9; Deleuze 1986, 2; Bergson 1911, 322). Bergson essentially used cinema as an analogy for the false movement that defines both Greek and modern metaphysics.

In contrast, through controversially connecting various of Bergson’s theses, Deleuze argues cinema has qualities that effectively emancipate movement. He writes: “cinema does not give us an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us a movement-image” (Deleuze 1989, 2). In cinema, it is the endless continuity of movement that describes the image, not the other way

around. Deleuze names various developments and techniques to argue for this position. For example, the advent of the mobile camera, the ability to synthesize disparate shots via montage, or cinema's ability to capture any given moment (against a privileged series of divided instants). To consider cinema only as a series of successive shots is an overly simplistic perspective. In cinema, through these various techniques movement is no longer subordinate to anything except the camera itself. In contrast, in the theatre, movement is still subordinate to various bodies (of the actors or set pieces) (Deleuze 1989, 178). The camera uniquely allows the artwork itself - rather than the spectator - to move around a stationary body. This capability becomes even more interesting when we examine scenes where the camera moves fluidly through barriers like windows or walls, or offers an elevated viewpoint, presenting perspectives generally unavailable to the human eye. Cinema thus gives us the dynamic flow of movement, and later also of time, which we will see in the time-image. The difference between movement-image and time-image depends on different ways in which time is expressed, indirect or direct, as the following section will explain.

### **Metaphors of Time vs. Metaphors of Movement**

The last section touched upon cinema producing real movement. Through subtracting forms of movement, by use of various vehicles and techniques, cinema's essence has truly become movement. This is not an abstraction, it is movement emancipated. Movement here refers to change, interactions, and disruptions, as opposed to a closed set of traversed space, where all is given (Deleuze 1986, 8-10). For example, cinema has the ability to highlight a particular scene while simultaneously suggesting the existence of multiple unseen spaces, what in cinema is known as the "out-of-field" (Deleuze 1986, 16). This stands in contrast to conceptions of movement whereby all the factors are accounted for. Nevertheless, despite the emancipatory nature of the movement-image, a dominant feature of overarching logic persists. Pre-war cinema

largely conformed to traditional narrative structures. The cinema of the movement-image shows us time in a very condensed form. Events often transpire over days, months or even decades, and we perceive all this in a 2-hour runtime. Deleuze attributes our ability to experience this false sense of time to the “sensory-motor schema”, which coordinates our perceptions and actions, ensuring events are selected and coordinated into functional sequences (Deleuze 1989, 40). This schema guides our interaction with cinema, leading us to interpret narratives through a moral framework and logical common sense (Deleuze 1989, 2-3). Classical narrative structures follow a set pattern: (1) establishing the situation; (2) a crisis occurring; and (3) a decisive response restoring the *status quo* (Deleuze 1989, 127-128). This renders objects and settings subordinate to a functional reality, strictly determined by the demands of the situation. It also makes the passing of time subordinate to the characters and actions their movement through space. Objects and time never appear directly, on their own terms.

In contrast, the time-image provides a direct representation of objects and time. Post-war cinema, for example, depicted city backgrounds ravaged by bombing, losing their functional purpose and thus authentically representing objects and settings. Deleuze noted that pre-war cinema, through the movement-image, served as an ideological apparatus in the events that led up to the Second World War (Deleuze 1989, 164). Again, this ideological function could only exist because of how objects and settings were put into a subordinate relation to a narrative. In post-war cinema, action makes way for waiting and exhaustion, thus introducing a new dimension of time as duration (concrete duration rather than abstract time). This affected the mind’s movements instead of extending movements into space, *i.e.* call for action. The logic of pre-war cinema collapsed under the reality of the Second World War, leading to a self-consciousness rooted in an awareness of its own clichés (Deleuze 1989, 4). The failure of a once-coherent logical conception gave rise to doubt, leading to the misery of experiencing a lack of significant movement. As a result, spatial metaphors of

movement ceased to make sense, leaving only temporal metaphors relevant. Time now appearing in its pure state, in a pure optical and sound situation, gave rise to movements of the mind and new spiritual depths. This became the “cinema of the seer, and no longer of the agent [*de voyant, non plus d’actant*]” (Deleuze 1989, 126).

To sum up, the movement-image is not inherently inferior to the time-image. Although cinema adhering to the movement-image still achieves significant success today, Deleuze argues it no longer represents the forefront of cinematic progression, which now resides in the time-image<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, modern cinema confronts us with modern problems, making the movement-image less equipped. One such issue, as Deleuze notes, is the loss of faith or belief in the world after the Second World War (Deleuze 1989, XI). The movement-image, presenting a distinct good-versus-evil conflict, subtly encourages viewers to align with the good as the only morally right decision. Furthermore, the movement-image presumes a natural connection between man and the world, wherein our actions take primacy and therefore mesh fluently with our surroundings. These approaches provide a clear sense of meaning to our lives. However, after World War Two, these meanings were recognized as illusions. Deleuze notes: “The nature of the cinematographic illusion has often been considered. Restoring our belief in the world — this is the power of modern cinema (when it stops being bad)” (Deleuze 1989, 172). He suggests that the world has increasingly come to be seen as a bad film, composed of many *clichés*. This entails a network of conceptual reflexes, in which there is continually the risk of falling back into a prevailing overarching logic (Deleuze 1989, 180-188). In the cinema of the time-image (when good), questions about what is the right thing to do, as well as questions as to the meaning of things, remain ambiguous. In this context, there is no risk of reverting to repetitive behaviour or logical continuity. The question remains: how, through the time-image, do we restore our faith or belief in the world and again create significant movements?

## Faith or Belief in Cinema

The previous section showed that the cinema of the time-image enabled new spiritual depths whereby the focus shifted from enacting movements in the world to creating movements in the mind. Herein, logic gives way to ambiguity. However, we are left questioning what kind of faith or belief cinema shows us we are in need of. In *Cinema I*, Deleuze speaks of “the repetition of faith” as “undoing the cycles of time”, “by virtue of a creative instant of time” (Deleuze 1986, 132-133). This mirrors Kierkegaard’s writings on the moment, containing the capacity to show a semblance of the infinite as opposed to a logical finiteness. It is through Deleuze’s later remarks with which we are able to encounter time-images. He describes this as a shift from horizontal to vertical (Deleuze 2020, seminar 22)<sup>9</sup>. The movement-image follows events linearly and relies on logical, common-sense connections, while the time-image captures the intensity of a singular event and emphasizes difference and ambiguity (Deleuze 2020, seminar 21). When events cannot be connected easily, they are ordered by subjective perspectives, reflecting various modes of existence (Deleuze 2020, seminar 21). Morally, the movement-image judges actions and persons based on universal values of right and wrong. In contrast, the time-image trusts that persons or actions judge themselves (Deleuze 2020, seminar 22). For example, instead of judging a Nazi collaborator or the act of collaboration based on its inherent wrongness, we assess it by the full weight of their mode of existence. This approach immerses us in the event itself rather than merely passing by. The time-image shifts the focus from knowledge to points of view entailing modes of existence. This leads to a thinking and choosing that opposes universal knowledge. It involves rediscovering a deeper ground of faith or belief that precedes it (Deleuze 2020, seminar 22)<sup>10</sup>. This prompts the question: what are the implications of this form of thinking and choosing?

Deleuze praises that cinema is sometimes negatively viewed as merely a passive engagement, as he argues it confronts us with perceptions, affects, and sensations that are not our own. The

cinema of the time-image goes even further, revealing what cannot be thought: the spiritually problematic, the impossibility and powerlessness of thought and choice (Deleuze 1989, 166). Deleuze argues that true thinking begins when we start to think the unthinkable, noting: “As Kierkegaard says, ‘the profound movements of the soul disarm psychology [the psyche]’, precisely because they do not come from within” (Deleuze 1989, 175)<sup>11</sup>. Encountering the unknown, the unthinkable prompts us to think, which requires faith or belief in the incommensurable, in that which cannot simply be measured or compared (Deleuze 1989, 175,178). Furthermore, cinema, similar to Kierkegaard’s use of pseudonyms, presents various modes of existence (Deleuze 1989, 77). Deleuze, however, sees a more fundamental mode of existence: that of choosing to choose. He notes: “As Kierkegaard says, again in a formula all his own: ‘There is never a solution, there are only decisions [*Il n’y a jamais de solution, il n’y a que des décisions*]’” (Deleuze 2020, seminar 21)<sup>12</sup>. The cinema of the time-image does not provide solutions, it only leaves us with ambiguities. Yet, it offers something more, by presenting choices where before there were seen none. Deleuze advocates choosing “for all times” rather than “once and for all”. Hereby, one does not merely repeat a particular mode of existence but looks to enable a mode of existence that allows choice to remain open. In both thinking and choosing, the goal becomes to see, to be watchful of, the continual process of change (outside of any logical continuity). This opens up the possibility - by virtue of a creative instant of time - of a significant movement to occur.

To conclude, the cinema of the time-image does not claim to show us a true world. Instead, it is defined by ambiguities, irrationalities, and uncertainties, representing a radical openness rather than a given world (Deleuze 1989, 179-180)<sup>13</sup>. This aligns with Deleuze’s statement in *Cinema II*: “The question is no longer: does cinema give us the illusion of the world? But: how does cinema restore our belief in the world?” (Deleuze 1989, 181-182). Cinematic faith or belief involves renouncing an illusory world in favour of believing in one’s inner movements. While we easily accept that

objects extend beyond our body and our perception of them, we struggle to make the same conclusion when it comes to states that exist beyond our consciousness (Deleuze 2020, seminar 22). This highlights the opposition between movement-image and time-image. It underscores the transition from the inherent logic and common sense, with which we perceive external physical movements, to the illogic ambiguous movements often associated with the mind. The cinema of the time-image reveals “higher determinations of thought and choice, deeper than any link with the world” (Deleuze 1989, 178). The time-image confronts us with characters whose problems are too big to solve through reason or logic. Here, the erasure of the unity of man and the world is desired in favour of a break which now leaves us with only a faith or belief. We do not retake the world for itself, for a new illusion to take its place, but for us. Paradoxically, this leads to a way of being in the world more true to reality. From the beginning, Deleuze shows us the importance of looking at movements, increasingly seen as movements of the mind or spirit. This entails a faith or belief in the ability of movements in our mind to significantly impact our lives. Deleuze thus mirrors Kierkegaard’s writings on creating significant movements, while also expanding on it by underscoring the significant role that cinema can have in facilitating these.

#### FINAL REMARKS

Part I showed various positions on the metaphysics of movement concerning its physical possibility and its relation to knowledge or truth of the world. Here, Kierkegaard increasingly emphasized a movement of the interior or the mind. This entailed a shift towards personal freedom, away from logical conceptions of exterior movement and behaviour. We have furthermore established that repetition occurs in “the moment”, and therefore entails grasping the continual process of change. Doubt and faith, in turn, reflected the dialectical relationship between immanence and transcendence. Both repetition and faith involve attempts at obtaining

transcendence, thereby enabling moments of freedom that go beyond the purely logical and immanent understanding of the world, as seen within doubt. As clarified through the analogy of love, repetition and faith require a continual renewal to keep the object. It is through this reading we find a reappraisal of Kierkegaard in Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes. Repetition and faith are no longer seen as occurring "once and for all", but only have meaning precisely when interpreted, as occurring "for all times".

Part II demonstrated that Kierkegaard's repetition and faith have become vital elements for Deleuze to confront the pre-war cinema, that of the movement-image. This cinema, through various techniques, entails an emancipation from Greek and modern metaphysics on movement, yet is still burdened by a logical conception of the world. In the movement-image, time, objects and setting are made subordinate to a functional reality that prioritizes action. The time-image, in contrast, shows inaction and, therefore, provides us with time, objects and settings existing on their own terms. Here, we see cinema reaching new spiritual depths not seen before. This shift marks the transition to a cinema of the seer. It refrains from providing solutions, instead fostering a mode of thinking and choosing that reveals new possibilities where before there were seen none. It thus engages with a more originary approach to existential questions. The cinema of the time-image highlights our need for faith or belief in these interior movements, contrasting with the illusory coherence observed in the movement-image. This, in turn, prompts us to create movements of the mind that could ultimately impact our lives.

In summary, the theme of movement has served as a unifying thread in this article, proving to be highly productive. Kierkegaard's repetitional faith provides a means for individuals to transcend their inherent limitations, moving beyond themselves towards a movement truer to reality. Both Kierkegaard and Deleuze stress that repetitional faith involves an affirmation and inhabitation of the world for themselves, rather than succumbing to conceptual or representational illusions. The post-war disillusionment and the

centuries-old dichotomy between movement and image or Idea are not seen as problems but as developments that have led to a truer relation with the world. This article highlighted Kierkegaard's significance in Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes, raising important questions about the role of transcendence in Deleuze's primarily immanent philosophy and the potential for freedom in our actions.

## NOTES

1. Kierkegaard uses the term "category" to emphasize that repetition is not a mere abstract, intellectual idea, but a fundamental category of human experience. It pertains to how individuals experience and interpret their lives. For more on this see Eriksen (2012, 11).
2. The reading of repetition as occurring "once and for all" can be given weight through Abraham killing Isaac in fear and trembling, the thunderstorm and job in repetition, or even the conversion of Saul/Paul on his road to Damascus in concluding unscientific postscript. In these a one-off occurrence on first sight does seem to occur, bringing back a stable object, *i.e.* God. However, Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of the ordeal in and of itself over the attainability of anything stable. See for example: "Job's greatness, ... is not ... that he said: The Lord gave, and the Lord took away; ... something he ... did not repeat later. Rather, Job's significance is that the disputes at the boundaries of faith are fought out in him, that the colossal revolt of the wild and aggressive powers of passion is presented here" (Kierkegaard 1983, 210-211). Adding to that: "ordeal is a temporary category" (Kierkegaard 1983, 212). Repetition likewise, entails a temporary (and temporal) category.
3. Omitted from this quotation is the fact that Constantius initially places recollection on an equal footing with repetition. However, for various reasons, recollection is no longer sufficient for modern people. For example, consider the following quote: "The Greek mentality was in one sense happy, but if this happiness ceased, recollection manifested itself as freedom's consolation; only in recollection and by moving backwards into it did freedom possess its eternal life. The modern view, on the other hand, must seek freedom forward, so that here eternity opens up for him as the true repetition forward" (Kierkegaard 1983, 317). To achieve happiness, modern individuals must take the risk of moving forward and seek happiness in this way.
4. This task, the student Climacus in *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* sets out as reminiscent of René Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* and particularly Hegel's

reading of said text. Further discussion on this topic can be found in Kupś (2022).

5. I write here “Kierkegaard”, as he wrote *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* in the third person, rather than under the pseudonym of Climacus as in *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. This is similar to *Repetition*, where although there is in fact a pseudonym, the author is mainly concerned with a personage simply called: “Young Man” (actually *Menneske* in Danish, meaning “human being”). *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* remained unpublished and therefore has no mention of any pseudonym author. Take note that where *Repetition* is essentially a book about a young man going through relationship difficulties (a theme not much touched upon in this article, except when it comes to a repetitional love, later on), *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* is about a young man going through the difficulties of a stultifying academic milieu.
6. Note that the pseudonym Constantin Constantius, depicted as a man of science, contrasts with the character known as the Young Man in Kierkegaard's *Repetition*. The Young Man, despite striving for transcendence through reading the story of Job, achieves only poetic blissfulness. Both characters lack the authority to define true transcendence yet consider it essential for a genuine repetition to occur. Johannes Climacus, although a more religious figure, is also questionable as an authority in this debate due to his Socratic nature. He renounces his Christianity to discover what it truly means to be a Christian, emphasizing faith in God rather than merely adhering to the Church's teachings. However, he remains more of a humourist than a truly religious person.
7. Note that the shift from pre- to post-war cinema is not a clear historical break, as for Deleuze it rather emphasizes how certain periods have different methods of expression. Thus, we are talking here about two different understandings of how cinema is expressed, of which the Second World War was indeed a turning point.
8. In *Deleuze Reframed: A Guide for the Arts Students*, Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones effectively elucidate the influence of the movement-image and time-image on 21st-century cinema. For instance, Chapter 6, “Time (and) Travel in Television” pages 107 to 127, demonstrates how Hollywood has since integrated the time-image, resulting in a hybrid form where the movement-image coexists with elements of the time-image. Despite this integration, cinema characterized exclusively by the time-image persists as a niche predominantly within the realm of minor cinema.
9. Deleuze emphasizes the significance of the intersection between the horizontal and vertical planes, aligning with Kierkegaard's idea of remaining within immanence while striving for transcendence.

10. Kierkegaard was a Christian, yet he never exclaimed Christianity was the true religion, merely that since he chose to become a Christian, it became the truth for him. The mode of existence is more important than the truth value of a propositional statement, that Christianity is the true religion. Ultimately, it is not a matter of whether God exists, it is a matter of which attitude or mode of existence one takes towards a deity (Kierkegaard 1992, 234). This is emphasized by Deleuze concerning his concept of faith or belief, in which it is no longer important if we are Christian or atheist, we are either under it or outside of it. The only thing relevant is the choice of the mode of existence one takes towards the existence of a deity (Deleuze 1989, 177).
11. Deleuze does not cite this passage in either the English or the original French print. Justo places it in the introduction of *The Concept of Anxiety*, “where sin completely escapes the scientific systematic approach of psychology”. In *Tome II*. One could perhaps also point to his journals, reading: “by being psychologically pursued so far that it vanishes for psychology as transcendent, as a religious movement by virtue of the absurd, which commences when a person has come to the border of the wondrous”. Underscored by “Your Const. Const.” (Constantin Constantius, the pseudonym author of *Repetition*) in Pap. IV B 120 n.d., 1843. Note that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century use of the word psychology, means something different from the modern use, it is more in line with what we today would call “psyche”.
12. The source of this quote from Kierkegaard remains unknown. It likely originates from *The Concept of Anxiety* or *Fear and trembling*.
13. Deleuze remarks: “It is a whole transformation of belief. It was already a great turning point in philosophy, from Pascal to Nietzsche: to replace the model of knowledge with belief. But belief replaces knowledge only when it becomes belief in this world, as it is” (Deleuze 1989, 172). Deleuze mentions the turn that authors such as Pascal, Nietzsche, and also Kierkegaard, were able to bring about to replace the model of knowledge with belief. One can derive the relevance of Kierkegaard from the accompanying footnote: “In the history of philosophy, the substitution of belief for knowledge takes place in authors of whom some are still believers, while others carry out an atheistic conversion. Hence the existence of real couples: Pascal-Hume, Kant-Fichte, Kierkegaard-Nietzsche, Le-Quier-Renouvier. But, even with the believers, belief is not now directed towards another world, it is directed to this world: faith according to Kierkegaard, or even Pascal, restores man and the world to us” (Deleuze 1989, 311). This model of knowledge refers back to Plato’s concept of recollection or *anamnesis*. This concerns a way of knowledge acquisition that Kierkegaard in *Repetition* tries to oppose. Recollection or *anamnesis*, is by Deleuze remarked upon by the terms “the ideal of knowledge” or “the Socratic ideal”. These terms concern a fixed

knowledge as opposed to a belief continually coming into being, and it is the latter that Deleuze describes as being able to ‘restore man and the world’ (Deleuze 1989, 172).

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RECYCLING THE FAIRY  
IN ANGELA CARTER'S *THE BLOODY CHAMBER*

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**Abstract.** Angela Carter's rewriting of fairy tales is a backlash to the patriarchal folkloric heritage. Though her writings are firmly grounded in the original tales, Carter gathers the textual remnants to rebuild postmodern feminist plots that pay tribute to her heroines, who have been misrepresented and victimized in the earliest male narratives. Whether in her collection of short stories: *The Bloody Chamber*, or other works, Carter re-reads a plethora of well-known traditional tales to probe beneath their latent patriarchal motif. The thematic transformations she brings to plots are meant to unveil the position of women as portrayed by male writers and to foreground a feminist postmodern revision of these fairy tales instead. Following a comparative approach, the study of Carter's fairy tales showcases her feminist postmodern modifications of the bygone patriarchal texts, though still based on the original plot. To take the example of *Beauty and The Beast*, Carter writes and rewrites it with different plots and characters in her book: *The Bloody Chamber*. Her primary focus while reworking Madame Leprince de Beaumont's *Beauty and The Beast* is to reveal the prevailing unjust gender relations and to show the patriarchal atrocity committed against females, while strengthening her heroines in contradistinction to the original folktales that have marginalized and victimized female characters. The issue of women's position and gender relations are at the heart of Carter's feminist project of fairy tale recycling. Both *The Courtship of Mr Lyon* and *The Tiger's Bride* unveil the writer's postmodern feminist attempts to deconstruct the initial tale by displaying the male role in undermining the female position, meanwhile empowering the latter. Besides, the way how Carter mingles traditional folkloric narratives with her postmodern feminist agenda yields a revolutionary text featuring long-established fairy tales rewritten from a feminist lens.

**Keywords:** Angela Carter, fairy tales, feminism, postmodernism, recycling, patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of writing fairy tales<sup>1</sup> was first introduced by the French writer Charles Perrault and the German Brother Grimms, who inscribed written versions of traditional oral stories. With the advent of postmodern literature and the feminist revolution, new feminist attempts to rewrite fairy tales have emerged within the literary world to rewrite phallogocentric stories from a feminist lens that seeks to alter the image of women, stigmatized as victims of patriarchal reign. Various feminist writers have embarked on retelling stories, neatly chosen from the fairy tales heritage, and endeavoured to reformulate, correct, and present them as postmodern ones. Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Marina Warner are among the feminist writers who have been interested in the rewriting of children's literature, seeking to highlight other levels of the stories, purposefully ignored by male writers. Margaret Atwood claims: "It wasn't our outer lives that Grimms' tales addressed; it was our inner ones. These stories have survived as stories, over so many centuries and in so many variations, because they do make such an appeal to the inner life - you could say 'the dreaming self' and not be far wrong, because they are both the stuff of nightmare and magical thinking" (qtd. in Winding 2017, 40). The patriarchal fairy tales' endings do not always meet our expectations and dreams and result in many questions kept unanswered within children's psyches. This very idea is stressed out by the African American writer Bell Hooks, as she avers: "Fairy tales were the refuge of my troubled childhood (...). Despite all the messages contained in them about being a dutiful daughter, a good girl, which I internalized" (Hooks 2012, 178). The influence of fairy tales on our childhood life and behaviour has been important, though they unfold various gendered regulations. Within this vein, this article attempts to study Angela Carter's rewriting of fairy tales' remnants to build a feminist postmodern text, rich in bygone intertexts, modified to ally the feminist spirit and the postmodern age. In his article "Angela Carter and the Literary Mache", Benson discusses

Carter's use of intertextuality in her collection of short stories: *The Bloody Chamber*. He avers that the "reason for viewing *The Bloody Chamber* as paradigmatic is that it stages the processes of intertextuality in the distilled form" (1998, 27). The rewritten stories are overwhelmed with bygone intertexts meant to reveal the ideological discrepancy between the texts and their reformulated versions. One appealing text in this collection of short stories is *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*, which draws from multiple traditional fairy tales of writers who anchored female passivity within their texts as natural. Carter challenges this ideology by rewriting the story, revealing the male role in defining the undermined female status and empowering her female heroine, who subverts the traditional narrative, to determine her own destiny. Textual remnants are used and abused by Carter to deconstruct a whole set of patriarchal ideologies that worked to foreground unbalanced gender relations, based on males' favouritism and superiority over females. As such, my work will target two main goals: sketching the fairytales' intertextual remnants in *The Courtship of Mr Lyon* and *The Tiger's Bride*, meanwhile studying Carter's feminist postmodern rewriting to deconstruct the omnipresent masculine doctrine which guides the earliest story. The concept of *intertextuality* was first used by Julia Kristeva between 1966 and 1974 to denote the fact that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. (...) Intertextuality means, for us, textual interaction produced within the text itself. The apprehending subject understands the concept of intertextuality as an indicator of how the text reads history and locates itself in it" (Juvan 2008, 13). Carter's rewriting of fairy tales discloses her dependence on bygone intertexts seeking the deconstruction of the latter's ideological intent while retelling postmodern feminist discourse.

#### A. REVISITING *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* IN *THE COURTSHIP OF MR LYON*

Explicit and implicit intertextual allusions are embedded within the feminist postmodern version of the story, with a conspicuous

tendency to reveal the patriarchal abhorrent depiction of females as sexual objects. Despite “their extravagant sexism and ideological orientations, Carter seems to be moderate in her rewriting of these tales. Instead of rejecting them, she *reclaimed them for feminism*” (De la Rochère 2010, 133). The story of *The Courtship of Mr Lyon* is based on Madame Leprince de Beaumont’s *Beauty and The Beast*, translated by Carter and edited in 1982 for her volume *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales*. The very same fairy tale is rewritten twice by Carter under the titles of *The Courtship of Mr Lyon* and *The Tiger’s Bride*, both within the same collection of stories labelled *The Bloody Chamber*. This particular tale unfolds the tension between canonical literature and postmodern literary innovation, textual imitation and feminist variation. Carter’s “text relies heavily on intertextuality and pastiche<sup>2</sup> to claim its sense of belonging and simultaneously on anachronism and travesty to advertise its difference” (Vanrigh 1998, 117). The writer relies heavily on the original plot, though alluding in certain narrative instances to *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* as secondary intertexts. A salient feature in Carter’s rewriting is her oscillation between the original text and the reproduced one to highlight ideological differences between them. Hence, Carter’s recycling of fairy tales “is an interplay of repetition, imitation and difference” (Vanrigh 1998, 116). Allusions to the original text are omnipresent, though the narrative is modified to stress the difference of the feminist text. What distinguishes Carter’s fairy tale retelling from other feminist writers is her multiple intertextual allusions to various hypo-texts to the point of being accused of reinforcing the phallogocentric ideology. To study *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*, we notice the writer’s deployment of copious intertextual remnants that compete to the surface of the feminist text, though the prominent one is *Beauty and The Beast*. The story begins with the description of the setting which reminds the reader of *Snow White* and *Cinderella*. “Outside her kitchen window, the hedgerow glistened as if the snow possessed a light of its own (...). This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same inner light so you would have thought she, too, was made all of snow, pauses in her

chores in the mean kitchen to look out at the country road” (Carter 2008, 144). Carter makes recourse to explicit quotations as intertexts taken from the source text, “emphasizing [their] presence as a hypotext to [her] hypertext yielding thus, ‘double textuality’” (qtd. in Martinez 1996, 280) as a distinctive feature of her rewritten version. What’s noticeable is the coexistence of copious intertextual fairy tale remnants surfacing in the text to reveal the latter’s metafictional nature. The physical characterization of the female character matches Snow White’s, especially with the reference to her snow-like delicate white skin. The spatial setting, however, brings to mind Cinderella’s tiring house chores and miserable conditions. Hence, exploring *The Courtship of Mr Lyon* as readers, childhood memories of various tales cross our minds. The feminist postmodern intertextual reliance on copious intertexts is meant to deconstruct the phallogentric writings that have spread the idea of female victimization under the patriarchal reign. The principle of literary originality is debunked, too, through the coexistence of multiple intertexts, none of them original, work to yield a recycled feminist postmodern text.

Carter voices her heroines and empowers them to draw their own paths and destinies rather than being controlled by male power, as is the case with the original fairy tale. Though, the fictional plot and characters mirror the original text, the change in the level of characterization is noticeable and, subsequently, affects the events of the story. Carter’s ideological, textual and narratorial modifications are deep and succeed in triggering the readers’ interrogations by opening the text to many interpretations of the original source materials. Carter’s account of the fairy tale brings to mind various possible hypotexts. Her description of the beast with his “head of a lion” and “golden hair of great paws” (Carter 2008, 148), for example, differs from Beaumont’s portrayal of a mere monster, similar to various previous literary works, notably like the one created by Victor’s in Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* and not a lion as the postmodern text describes. However, it is worth mentioning the parallel between Carter’s lion and the leonine mask, Jean

Cocteau designed for Jean Marais in his screen adaptation of *Beauty and The Beast* (Vanrigh 1998, 118). The writer's inspiration from the film is clear to the reader through her reference to the lion's shape. Hence, Cocteau's film makes part of the intertext as well. "Pastiche and intertextuality speak for imitation, while textual intrusion, anachronism and reversal speak for difference" (Vanrigh 1998, 118-19). The postmodern text exhibits certain imitations together with some twisting of events and reversals of the heroines' destinies. The fact of deploying contemporary textual references within the story jolts the reader to consider its postmodern facets. Words such as "telephones, a twenty-four-hour rescue service, a taxi, a slow train" (Carter 2008,145), all work to pull the reader far away from the original into acknowledging Carter's feminist postmodern style. At this level, comparing both versions of the fairy tale seems to be a necessary step to grasp the writer's ideological messages.

Dissimilarities at the level of characterization are also noticeable and urge study. Carter's female heroine is more daring, courageous and determined than Beaumont's passive, bashful and weak beauty. Besides, the selflessness and naivety of the original beauty are "replaced by the thoughtfulness and narcissistic egoism of Carter's beauty, oblivious of her promise" (Vanrigh 1998, 118) to visit the lion before the end of winter. Carter's beauty rejoices at her father's newly recuperated wealth and enjoys the "resplendent hotel[s]; the opera, theatres, a whole new wardrobe for his darling so she could step out on his arm to parties, to receptions, to restaurants, life was as she had never known it" (Carter 2008, 130). Her visit to the beast's palace is meant to recuperate her father's properties and save her material interests.

The narrative fluctuates between postmodernity and tradition to yield a postmodern hypertext aiming to stress gender equality instead of patriarchal dominance, as is the case with the original tale. Ironic gender reversals are displayed in Carter's version of the fairy tale. "Carter's *Beauty* is initially made to serve coffee to the beast on their first evening together in the best tradition of the woman, to her well-disguised dismay, she found her host, seated beside the fire

with a tray of coffee at his elbow from which she must pour” (Vanrigh 1998, 149). This modification at the level of the plot is very significant since it empowers the heroine to impose her female subjectivity by taking over a powerful woman to a submissive silent male monster. “He forced himself to master his shyness, which was that of a wild creature, and so she contrived to master her own -to such effect that soon she was chattering away to him as if she had known him all her life” (Carter 2008, 149). Carter’s monster and Beauty heroine sever with the bygone rigid gender relations and differ, conspicuously, from Beaumont’s traditional characters. The story unfolds a new male character who cuts with the traditional patriarchal one and a revolutionary heroine who cannot fit into the category of submissive females. Both characters stand for the feminist postmodern new woman and new man. Contrary to Beaumont’s beauty, Carter’s is talkative. “Small talk had never, at the best of times, been Beauty’s forte” (Carter 2008, 149). She voices herself and liberates her inner self by dominating the conversation. The writer’s intent through this modified version is to foreground her new woman who, in opposition to Beaumont’s beauty, does not abide by patriarchal rules. In opposition to the submissive female who is silenced during the patriarchal era, Carter’s new Beauty is insurrectionary and aims for gender equality. She seems to be sexually aware compared with Beaumont’s innocent female character. “These strange companions were suddenly overcome with embarrassment to find themselves together, alone, in that room in the depths of the winter’s night” (Carter 2008, 149). The sexual emancipation of the new woman is stressed out *via* her daring beauty who fulfils the beast’s desire willingly. “She flung herself upon him, so that the iron bedstead groaned, and covered his poor paws with kisses (...). When her lips touched the meat-hook claws, they drew back into pads and she saw how he had always kept his fists clenched but now, painfully, tentatively, at last began to stretch his fingers” (Carter 2008, 153). The differences between both female characters are made clear since Beaumont’s heroine is presented as an innocent girl with no sexual awareness, contrary to Carter’s

beauty who defies the patriarchal delineated sexual codes. Beauty, in Carter's story, is portrayed as a daring woman who metamorphoses the beast into a human being. She reveals her sexual emancipation, equal to the Beast's before transforming him from a bestial creature to a handsome man. Carter's use of intertextuality is constructive in that she rewrites a postmodern fairy tale from the remnants of traditional children's stories and, deconstructive at the same time, takes into consideration her subversion of the patriarchal ideology embedded within the original one. Hence, the fact of referring back to intertextual remnants is deployed as a double-edged weapon to attain her feminist agenda; as she asserts: I'm writing "a book of stories about fairy stories" (Carter 1983, 72). Her intertextual reliance on Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* is meant to revisit the tale from a feminist perspective rather than enhancing the original internalized ideology. Her project of rewriting it twice is in itself a revolutionary self-narrative deconstruction, in that beauty: the heroine of the *Courtship of Mr Lyon* is not the same as Beauty in *The Tiger's Bride*, though both versions bare the textual traces of Beaumont's story.

The writer is conscious of the literary textual and metafictional features of fairy tales and tends to enhance them while embarking on her feminist project of patriarchal deconstruction. Still, the patriarchal objectification of beauty is omnipresent despite the writer's efforts to emancipate her heroine by debunking the internalized image of the violent male monster. Carter's handling of *Beauty and the Beast*, at this level, is criticized, for instance, by Patricia Duncker because of the partial failure to completely deconstruct the patriarchal fairy tale elements like domesticity and the objectification of the female body (qtd. in Snowden 1997, 169). A more moderate view is provided by Lucie Amitt, who "insists that Carter's work should not be dismissed as anti-feminist. Instead, she suggests that Carter's work deals with the complexities of female desire and sexuality within patriarchal contexts" (Amitt 1997, 169). This view restricts Carter's success to entirely debunking the original fairy tale's patriarchal background.

B. *THE TIGER'S BRIDE: A FEMINIST POSTMODERN DECONSTRUCTION OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*

Part of the writer's deconstruction project is revealed through her rewriting of the same story from two different perspectives. *The Tiger's Bride* works to deconstruct both Beaumont's original story and *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*, highlighting the way ideology governs literary texts. In the first, Carter presents a totally different character of Beauty, who is aware of the patriarchal commodification of females. The story starts with Beauty's words: "My father lost me to the beast at cards" (Carter 2008, 147), which signifies her consciousness of being objectified in a typical patriarchal world. This beginning alludes to many intertexts, mainly *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Snow White* as explicit ones, in addition to the main intertext of *Beauty and The Beast*. The reader is invited to compare and contrast his/her childhood fairy tales' memories with Carter's postmodern modified story to grasp her feminist revision of gender relations. Much like Snow White, the heroine is as beautiful as her dead mother. She informs the reader: "Since I could toddle, always the pretty one, with my glossy, nut-brown curls, my rosy cheeks. And born on Christmas Day - her 'Christmas rose', my English nurse called me. The peasants said: 'The living image of her mother', crossing themselves out of respect for the dead. My mother did not blossom long" (Carter 2008, 148). Suddenly, the narrative twists into another fairy tale, reminding the reader of its purely intertextual nature. This brings to mind Kristeva's view that any literary text is a mere "intersection of textual surfaces [and] each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts), where at least one other word (text) can be read" (1980, 65-66). Though the writer re-introduces the same intertexts as in *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*, still this version defies the traditional norms of fairy tale writing, mainly through the heroine's maturation process and deconstruction of the long-established patriarchal power.

The oscillation between the bygone fairy atmosphere and modern daily life contexts strikes the story's intertextual

postmodern tendency. One salient feature of Carter's intertextual reference to her own rewritten version of *Bluebeard's Castle* is her emphasis on the beast's strong scent much like Bluebeard's. The presence of both males is characterized by their intense scent. As Beauty wonders in *The Tiger's Bride*: "My senses were increasingly troubled by the fuddling perfume of Milord (...). He must bathe himself in scent, soak his shirts and underline in it" (Carter 2008, 148). At this level, we come across a conspicuous literary overlapping between *Bluebeard's Castle* and *The Tiger's Bride*, explained by the writer's heavy reliance on multiple textual remnants, recycled to yield a mosaic postmodern feminist story. Both tales "first draw out and condense the gendered ideologies at the heart of the [fairy tale] and then critically reimagine the phallogocentric systems of power and privilege that determine and define their beastly subjects" (Webb 2017, 320). The feminist reformulations of the phallogocentric literary heritage bear, indeed, purely ideological purposes working, subtly, within the folds of the narrative to alter the reader's internalized view of fairy tales and subvert the latter's culturally created patriarchal supremacy over submissive females. Hence, one should decode the ideological level of feminist postmodern rewritten fairy tales for the sake of making the difference between the multiple textual versions.

Carter's writing has always been ideologically self-reflective, guiding the reader to unravel her feminist message. In *The Tiger's Bride*, for instance, the heroine seems to be mature and conscious of the cultural nonsensical nature of fairy tales, though still an inexperienced adolescent female. In this context, she cogitates: "Old wives' tales, nursery fears! I knew well enough the reason for the trepidation I cosily titillated with superstitious marvels of my childhood on the day my childhood ended. For now, my own skin was my sole capital in the world and today I'd make my first investment" (Carter 2008, 150). The heroine severs completely with Beauty in *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*, as well as with Beaumont's heroine who stands as an emblem of female innocence and passivity. *The Tiger's Bride* represents Carter's best model of the new woman,

aware of her sexual objectification and who embarks on deconstructing the traditional dichotomy between males and females by achieving her aim for gender equality. Henceforth, as is the case with other books written by Carter, heroines end by achieving the writer's feminist postmodern project. One important characteristic of Carter's rewriting of this particular fairy tale is the continuation between both versions of the story. *The Tiger's Bride* is a more mature, determined and revolutionary version of *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*'s heroine. Part of the writer's project of female subjectivity acquisition process is to reveal the heroine's subjugation to patriarchy prior to her insurrectionary growth that culminates with her status as the new woman equal to the new man. According to Makinen: "Carter's tales do not simply 'rewrite' the old tales by fixing roles of active sexuality for their female protagonists - they 're-write' them by playing with and upon (if not preying upon) the earlier misogynistic version" (Makinen 1992, 5). The uneven gender relations are deconstructed and the previously taken-for-granted powerful male is undermined to be superseded by the new man. In *The Tiger's Bride*, Carter slightly preserves the plot of Madame de Beaumont while introducing a huge textual transformation that fits her deconstructive feminist pedagogical project. To refer to Marina Warner's words, Carter's attempt to subvert the internalized cultural precepts about female sexuality and gender is defined as the "suspect whiff of femininity [in fairy tales]" (qtd. in Snowden 2010, 160). What's appealing to the reader is the mixture of copious intertexts within a dominant innovative feminist one, which results in debunking the ideology embedded within the original text while liberating the postmodern one from the crippling patriarchal paradigm.

In contradistinction to Beauty in *The Courtship of Mr Lyon* - who eagerly rejoins her father and succumbs to her objectification, the tiger's bride wilfully shuns her paternal abode and chooses the tiger's. In Madame de Beaumont's story, Beauty accepts to marry the beast by the end, stating: "It is too bad he is so ugly, for he is so kind" (De Beaumont 1999, 38). In the case of *The Courtship of Mr*

*Lyon* and *The Tiger's Bride*, the physical description of the beast, though alluding implicitly to the original beast of Madame de Beaumont, differs from it in many ways. Carter's heroine sarcastically describes the tiger as follows: "Oh, yes, a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect, uncanny. He wears a wig, too, false hair tied at the nape with a bow, a wig of the kind you see in old-fashioned portraits. (...) He is a carnival figure made of papier mâché and crêpe hair; and yet he has the devil's knack at cards" (Carter 2008, 150). To Beauty's dismay, the beast is not the same creature as her nurse's account during her childhood. The emphasis on the mask is conveyed as an omnipresent intertext between the film fairy tale and Carter's rewritten versions. In Carter's case, intertexts draw the reader's attention to contrast and compare the different texts, whereby to grasp the feminist pedagogical gendered message. The artificial nature of the beast is highlighted to reflect the origin of fairy tales, which are culturally constructed to enhance the gap between females and males. The ironic use of "carnival figure" and "papier mâché" is meant to mirror the illusionary nature of the beast; the representative of the patriarchal institution within the story.

Carter's parodic depiction of the beast provokes laughter rather than fear and aims to subvert the phallogocentric writings. In this context, critic Hermione Lee identifies Carter with "a feminism which employs anti-patriarchal satire, Gothic fantasy, and the subversive rewriting of familiar myths and stories, to embody alternative, utopian recommendations for human behaviour" (qtd. in Snowden 2010, 162). Carter's fairy tales tend to provide a more natural and logical narrative that takes into consideration the specificities of human beings whether females or males without any discrimination. She engages "in the demythologizing business" (Carter 1983, 74) by disclosing the political, cultural and gendered mythic orientations of the original texts and substituting them with more transparent and neutral narratives.

Not only does the father treat his only daughter as a bargain

object and offers her to the tiger, but the latter too exercises on her innocent female body his male bestial gaze<sup>3</sup> and denies her female subjectivity. All that he aspires for through her imprisonment is to watch her virgin body. “My master’s sole desire is to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress and that only for the one time after which she will be returned to her father undamaged with bankers’ ordered for the sum which he lost to my master at cards and also a number of fine presents such as furs, jewels and horses” (Carter 2008, 153).

The objectification of the female body is at stake and is explicitly discussed. The writer criticizes male voyeurism *via* the beast’s character, who seems to be obsessed with discovering the heroine’s body. Despite the omnipresent intertextual remnants within the postmodern version of the fairy tale, the writer’s patriarchal deconstructive intent is still at work. The heroine’s response to the tiger’s request is to laugh. “I could scarcely believe my ears. I left out a raucous guffaw; no young lady laughs like that! my old nurse used to remonstrate. But I did. And do. At the clamour of my heartless mirth, (...) I felt that I owed it to him to make my reply in as exquisite a tuscan as I could master” (Carter 2008, 153). The nurse’s warning conveys a subtle criticism of the traditional woman’s model, who is forbidden to laugh as a way of abiding with the patriarchal inflicted female moral codes. The young lady does not adhere to the category of passive females and reveals her revolutionary nature as the new woman, who is empowered enough to metamorphose the beast from the patriarchal typical male to a more tolerant new man.

Her firm determination stirs the beast’s emotions to the extent of shedding tears. “How pleased I was to see I struck the beast to the heart! For, after a baker’s dozen heartbeats, one single tear swelled, glittering, at the corner of the masked eye. A tear! A tear, I hoped, of shame” (Carter 2008, 154). Madame de Beaumont’s beast has never witnessed a metamorphosis similar to Carter’s beast who goes through a passage from bestiality to humanity. The new woman succeeds in transforming him from the mythic patriarchal image to a postmodern new man who, honestly, considers gender

equality by unmasking himself to beauty after her refusal of his request. He obliges her to see his true animalistic face without a mask. Carter's gender reversal is made clear through the fact of unclothing the monster instead of Beauty. The writer ironically puts the monster under the female gaze rather than submitting her to his voyeurism. It must be taken into account that Beaumont's original story shows a tight paternal bond between Beauty and her father, contrary to Carter's rewritten version, in which Beauty mocks her father's regret and lamentation and ends by staying with the beast rather than joining him. Regarding these differences at the level of Beauty's characterization, it should be highlighted that they make part of the writer's deconstruction of patriarchy. Carter, deliberately, distinguishes the tiger's bride from the other two previous heroines who passively surrender to their destiny and male ascendancy. She transforms the beast into a more humane creature who feels remorse for his desire for "the sight of the young lady's skin that no man has seen before" (Carter 1979, 153).

The metamorphosis of the beast into a kind fellow and the emergence of Beauty's animal side are metaphoric illustrations that symbolize the bestial side of human beings regardless of their gendered inclinations. As such, the feminist postmodern fairy tale challenges preconceived notions about traditional male storytelling. Aidan Day explains that Carter "uses the image of animals to signify a libido that has been culturally repressed in some women and which needs recognizing and articulating in order that they may define autonomous subject positions for themselves. A recognition of the materiality of the flesh is not the same as attributing particular essences of the flesh" (1995, 147). Carter reverses the fairy tale's mainstream narrative, which emphasizes the beast's transformation into a human being, by revealing Beauty's animalistic level as a natural human instinct. The girl, freely, takes off her clothes and indulges in experiencing her female sexuality as an independent subject, regardless of her father's patriarchal authority. Though the beast allows her freedom to return to her father, she spurns his decision and prefers to send back a dressed mechanical puppet,

instead, to play the role of the obedient passive daughter. The puppet also represents her previous passive female status in society as an emotionless, objectified and guided obedient daughter. Beauty decides to “dress her [maid] in [her] own clothes, wind her up, send her back to perform the part of [her] father’s daughter” (Carter 2008, 155). It can be deduced that Carter deploys the puppet as another pertinent intertext from Hoffman’s *The Sandman*, referring back to the puppet Olympia<sup>4</sup> as an object of male gaze and control. Being deprived of her free will, the puppet - as a mechanical object - complies with her master’s orders. Beauty severs her role in society as subjugated to male power and voyeurism by liberating her instincts and previously limited sexuality. The heroine of *The Tiger’s Bride* develops smoothly from one level of female identity to another while unclothing her female body. She undergoes a self-metamorphosis from being clothed to uncovering her skin. Meanwhile, the Beast - the representative of the new man - licks “skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs” (2008, 167).

Beauty’s metamorphosis into an animal, as well, embodies her liberation from the crippling patriarchal prison. Her newly born fur symbolizes her animal side, which has been repressed by the social codes within her parental abode. Her removed skins stand for the dogmatic ideological precepts surrounding her innocent female body and sexuality. Emancipating her sexuality, she expresses: “I felt I was at liberty for the first time in my life” (Carter 2008, 167). The heroine frees herself from restrained moral norms imposed on her adolescent body. At this level, her decision to stay with the beast is not imposed, as is the case with the other two female characters, since she defies the beast’s order as well as her father’s. Beauty goes through a process of maturity from the obedient daughter who conforms with the patriarchal tenets to a revolutionary new woman, exhibiting her animalistic desires, equally to the beast.

Though the writer intentionally overburdens her story with copious intertexts, borrowed from various sources, she still clings to her feminist project of patriarchal deconstruction that yields the

birth of the new woman and man, symbolized by the tiger and Beauty in her second rewritten version of *Beauty and the Beast*.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above analysis has traced back to Carter's feminist postmodern rewriting of Madame le Prince de Beaumont's fairy tale *Beauty and The Beast*. What inspires Carter to embark on this literary project is the patriarchal spirit dominating the original story. Being well-known for her feminist appeal for patriarchal deconstruction, gender equality, and female sexual emancipation, she transmits her beliefs into her stories, though preserving various traditional fairy tales' intertexts. As mentioned above, her attempt to write two successive versions of *Beauty and the Beast* is meant to show the self-deconstructive nature of literary narratives despite the fact that she keeps various bygone intertextual remnants, meant to be recycled within her postmodern feminist deconstructive fairy tale. To start with *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*, Carter strives to deconstruct the male ideology embedded within Beaumont's fairy tale by strengthening her heroine who does not match the original beauty. Despite prevalent intertexts, the narrative transformations and differences at the level of characterization distinguish Carter's deconstructive message from Madame Leprince de Beaumont's story, which aims to reinforce patriarchal mythic ideology. Conveying the intertextual nature of all literary texts, and debunking a whole set of internalized patriarchal ideologies are Carter's intents through her rewriting of traditional fairy tales. Through her deconstruction of the past literary heritage, she embarks on building new female and male status, based on balanced gender relations rather than the ascendancy of males over females, as has always been the case in the phallogentric mainstream literature. Her deconstructive plan, all along the fairy tale, though intelligible, has been limited since Carter's beauty falls into the trap of patriarchy by accepting her commodification and succumbing to her father's authority. This,

certainly, led many critics to condemn the writer's attachment to phallogocentric writing and her acceptance of patriarchal dominance, despite her efforts to convey the opposite through her revisited fairy tale.

In *The Tiger's Bride*, Carter brings drastic changes in the story by twisting the narrative, designing postmodern characters who fit her models of the new woman and new man and ends by attaining her planned feminist deconstructive project. Right from the beginning, Beauty is depicted as mature enough to be aware of her sexual objectification, despite her young age. In contradistinction to other previous *Beauties* who cling to their fathers, the tiger's bride bears a grudge against her father who loses her to the beast to save his material interests. She is described as Carter's archetype of the new woman, who succeeds in taming the beast and imbuing him with humanity. She defies his prior desire to fix her virgin body under his male gaze and treat her as a bargain object between him and her father. Instead, she metamorphoses him into a tolerant creature by imposing her female will. The heroine liberates her sexual instincts and chooses to stay with the beast rather than join her father. Carter succeeds in conveying female sexual freedom by liberating Beauty's desires and depicting the beast's gender reversal. Although copious fairy tale' intertexts are deployed, the story is still presented as purely innovative, bearing Carter's feminist deconstructivist plan. Carter's reformulations of fairy tales in general, whether by Beaumont, Brother Grimms or Charles Perrault, rely heavily on implicit and explicit textual remnants oriented to write new postmodern fairy tales, guided by feminist spirit, and similarly to deconstruct the inherent patriarchal ideologies omnipresent in the original texts.

## NOTES

1. Fairy tales represent a shared experience of a certain culture and have been collected and recorded in order to pass wisdom, history and moral lessons to children (...). Gradually, fairy tales began being considered dangerous by religious and political groups and thus, with the rise of the middle-class 17th century Europe and North America, they were altered and adapted in order

- to strengthen the dominance of religious and political systems. This is when moral codes were installed in fairy tales written by François Fénelon, Sarah Fielding, Madame Le prince de Beaumont and later Charles Perrault, Madame d'Aulnoy and Brothers Grimm (Zipes 2006, 11).
2. Pastiche: “During most of the nineteenth century the literary pastiche developed in France was viewed by critics in the wake of Marmontel's negative assessment of pastiche as an imitation of a superior model copied primarily by adopting its weaknesses. It is finally Proust's *Pastiches et mélanges*, written at the beginning of the century and published in 1919 that yields the important redefinition of the status of the genre relevant for criticism today. For Proust, according to Denis Hollier, the pastiche is not so much writing but reading—pastiche is the ideal form of creative critical activity, as *Auseinandersetzung*, the coming to grips of a writer with the works of revered authors. The Proustian pastiche is seen by Hollier as constituting the intertextual play that is literature” (Hoesterey, 496)
  3. “Gazing as a concept was popularised by the French psychoanalyst Jacques. According to Lacan, gazing makes an individual conscious of his/her appearance, often to the extent of anxiety and shame. The gaze, as argued by Lacan, is presented to us in the form of a strange contingency which in turn generates unrealistic anxiety. It surprises and disturbs the individual subjected to the gaze and often reduces him/her to a feeling of shame. In other words, an individual subjected to someone's gaze (whether real or imaginary) turns him/her into a self-conscious being, thereby losing a degree of autonomy upon realising that he or she is being viewed” (Rai 50).
  4. In Hoffmann's book *The Sandman*, Dr Coppelius manufactures Professor Spalanzani's puppet-daughter as a blind female in order to tighten the patriarchal grip on her female body.

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TAKING SHAKESPEARE OUT OF THE DOCK.  
AN ALTERNATIVE READING AND METHOD OF TEACHING  
SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO* IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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**Abstract.** Taking Shakespeare's *Othello* as a case study, this paper proposes a novel method of reading and teaching traditional and canonical literary texts. *Othello* has been interpreted by critics in a highly conservative way so that it has been seen as endorsing existing racial hierarchies, but never as questioning or destabilising them. This research offers an alternative reading of *Othello* by showing how Shakespeare's dramatic strategy rebutted racism and subverted the racist outlook, arguing that the playwright intentionally reverses the central roles of the play by turning Iago, the white Venetian, into the villain and Othello, the Moor and stereotyped villain, into the noble hero. The paper also proposes an innovative teaching method for Shakespeare's play(s) by incorporating technology and modern media. In proposing these novel methods in reading and teaching *Othello*, the paper attempts to demonstrate the relevance and the literary value of Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to help teachers motivate their learners through a combination of effective and engaging teaching approaches.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, Othello, racism, teaching methods, technology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's *Othello* has been interpreted by critics in a highly conservative way so that it has been seen as endorsing existing racial hierarchies, but never as questioning or destabilising them. This research offers an alternative reading of *Othello* by showing how Shakespeare's dramatic strategy rebutted racism and subverted the racist outlook arguing that the playwright, intentionally reverses the central roles of the play by turning Iago, the white Venetian, into

the villain and Othello, the Moor and stereotyped villain, into the noble hero.

Shakespeare also has been taught in a “traditional way”, which is demotivating for students. Today, a large number of teachers continue to teach Shakespeare using traditional methods such as asking students to read the play at home, and then come to class, either to discuss the content or spoon-feed them by telling them what different passages mean. A better approach, this paper argues, would be one that uses technology-based methods; this approach would help students increase their abilities to understand, interpret, and discuss Shakespeare.

## 2. AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF SHAKESPEARE’S *OTHELLO*

The racial issues, which are at the heart of Shakespeare’s *Othello* are clear from the opening scenes of the play. Racist comments come from the Venetian characters, namely Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio. Roderigo, for instance, refers to Othello as “the thick lips” (1.1. 66 - 67). This racist portrayal denotes Othello’s blackness and foreignness. In their provocation of Brabantio, by informing him about Desdemona’s marriage to an elopement with Othello, Iago and Roderigo use extremely unpleasant animalistic sexual imagery. Iago suggests to Brabantio that “an old black ram/ Is tupping your white ewe” (1.1.88-9). Othello’s and Desdemona’s marriage is depicted as a mating of two animals. Othello’s race is connected, through the use of metaphor, with rampant sexuality, blackness and evil.

As far as the social and historical context of the play is concerned, Bristol’s pioneering work on the social function of carnival and theatre is illuminating in this context. Bristol’s reading of *Othello* sheds light on its cultural context. He defined *charivari* and its function saying:

If certain history plays can be read as rites of ‘uncrowning’ then Othello might be read as a rite of ‘unmarrying’. The specific organizing principle operative

here is the social custom, common throughout early modern Europe, of charivari. The abusive language, the noisy clamour under Brabantio's window, and the menace of violence in the opening scene of the play link the improvisations of Iago with the codes of carnivalesque disturbance or charivari organized in protest over marriage of the play's central characters (...). Charivari was a practice of noisy festive abuse in which a community enacted its specific objection to inappropriate marriage and more generally exercised widespread surveillance of sexuality (Bristol 1990, 3).

Bristol's comments on the *charivari* scene in *Othello* have shed light on the play's impact on its intended audience and helped the reader to remember the historical, social, and cultural context in which it was written. He also put the different views of race relations that the play examines in their social context. The *charivari* scene does not only draw attention to the concerned individuals but also to sexuality and social stereotypes. Shakespeare's text reveals the racial attitudes that were current in his day and which, I think, are still valid today.

Owens and Goodman argued that "it is precisely the emphasis on race within the play that keeps it 'current' and makes it a popular choice for contemporary study and performance, often in experimental productions that set out to 're-view' the attitudes of the play in a modern context" (2004, 107). A.C. Bradley and F.R. Leavis are two critics who differ in their analysis of *Othello*'s character. Leavis is anti-Othello, he saw him as responsible for his own downfall. It is not "external evil" that is responsible, and Iago is not to blame wholly (1952). However, Bradley is pro-Othello, he sees Iago as the driving force and manipulator not only of the *charivari* scene but also of more subtle ideas and events (1992). Dubey claimed that,

(...) if we take into account the fact that Bradley considers Iago to be more deserving of his attention than Othello, because he devotes an entire chapter to Iago whereas he divides one chapter among the rest of the characters, then that could well reflect the colonialist or racist mind of a Western critic rather than the colonialist designs of Shakespeare (2011, 19-20).

Dubey argued that “the Western mind has gone to the extent of making the play equally the play of which Iago is the protagonist” (2011, 20). Leavis argued that Othello’s “self-idealisation” and “self-dramatization” led to his “blindness” and “obtuse and brutal egotism” and described his “lack of self-knowledge” as “humiliating and disastrous” (1952, 62). Most Western critics tend to throw Othello into the margins of Shakespeare’s play in order to leave the centre of the stage for the white villain Iago. The question that one should raise here is whether Shakespeare did want Othello to be at the centre of his play or whether he too, like most Western critics, wanted to relegate him to the margins?

Western critics seem to fail to understand Shakespeare’s refutation of racism in *Othello*. Shakespeare seems to sympathise and identify with Othello and portrays Iago as a Machiavellian schemer and manipulator, a sinister villain and the representative of racist prejudice. The modern critics’ “attitudes towards Othello unfortunately echo the old racist view that is the very target of the play’s dramatic movement” (Al Dabbagh 2011,17). Shakespeare refutes racism and subverts the racist outlook when he intentionally reverses the main roles of the play by making Iago, the white Venetian, the villain; Othello, the stereotyped Moor, the noble hero, and by casting Iago as no more than a recipient of the negative characteristics usually attributed to the stereotyped African, namely sexual obsession, pusillanimity, perfidiousness, racism and envy. Andreas, commenting on Iago’s machinations, contended that “it is wrong to interpret Iago as motiveless, that Iago is clearly motivated by racism and hatred, and that his character is representative of the views of Western society at large for its predisposition to the periodic, ritual slaughter of marginal and aboriginal groups and all whites -especially women – who consort with them” (1992, 43). The fact that Shakespeare transforms Iago into the “reflecting mirror of racist prejudice is the essential source of the magnificent achievement of this play” (Al Dabbagh 2011, 19). He seems to follow a strategy of reversal of Stereotypes. Othello’s superiority is emphasised in the play. By making Desdemona fall in love with

Othello and portraying Iago as the Machiavellian villain, Roderigo as the typical rich debauched character, and Emilia and Cassio as frail and flawed characters, Shakespeare seems to challenge all theories of racial superiority.

Othello's nobility, superiority, pride, self-confidence, and high-mindedness are highlighted from the very early scenes of the play:

I fetch my life and being  
From men of royal siege, and my demerits  
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune  
As this that I have reached. For know, Iago,  
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,  
I would not my unhoused free condition  
Put into circumscription and confine  
For the seas' worth  
(1.2, 21-28)

Shakespeare gives us a faithful representation of the racial issues during the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries. Othello, a black character, becomes no more than a recipient of the negative traits the white self projects onto him.

One of the key aspects of European self-projection in literature is its representation of the other, which is interpreted by way of stereotypic reproduction. The stereotypic representation is based on processes of Othering, which are fundamental in colonisation. In the words of Spivak, "othering is the process by which imperial discourse creates its others" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 188). The othering of Othello in Shakespeare's play and his construction as savage and inferior by the Venetian characters Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio, depends upon what Jan Mohamed terms the Manichean Allegory, in which a binary discursive opposition between races is produced. The term "Manicheanism" is adopted from the "Manichean allegory of the third century A.D, according to which Satan was represented as co-eternal with God, an equivalent opposition to God. This implication, which relates that the two realms of spirit and matter are always and eternally separate and could never be linked, implies

an extreme form of structure” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 149). In the field of postcolonial studies, “Manicheanism is a term for the binary structure of imperial ideology”.

Jan Mohammed has used the uncompromisingly dualistic aspect of the concept to describe the process by which imperial discourse polarises the society, culture and very being of the coloniser and colonised into the Manichean categories of good and evil” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 149-50). The Manichean Allegory, Jan Mohamed argued, “is the central trope of imperialism that converts racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference” (1985, 80). The relationship between the dominant and the subordinate culture is characterised as one of ineradicable opposition. Even though the opposing entities of the allegory change “good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilisation and savagery, rationality and sensuality, self and other, subject and object - they are always predicated upon the assumption of the superiority of white self and the inferiority of the native” (1985, 82). Said questioned the objectivity of the knowledge of the Orient. He argued that such stereotypical representation of the other by the white cannot be in any way objective; because it is produced by human beings who are embedded in colonial history and relationship. In labelling, fixing and denoting the other, the strategies of what Said dubbed Orientalism, the self-constructs asymmetrical and unequal relations between the cultural position of the European and that of the other. The West and the Orient are symmetrical, but the Orient is marked, stereotyped and dehumanized, while the West is not. This has proved to be one of the most efficient devices for the dehumanization of the other (1995).

Ryan argued that Shakespeare’s play *Othello* is a very moving tragedy because:

The destruction of Othello and Desdemona lays bare the barbarity of a culture whose preconceptions about race and gender cannot allow a love like theirs to survive and flourish. The modern significance and value of the play are rooted in this revelation. In loving and marrying each other, Othello and Desdemona instinctively act according to principles of racial equality and

sexual freedom which are far from generally accepted and practised in our own day, let alone in Shakespeare's. As a result, they find unleashed on them, through Iago, the fury of a society whose foundations are rocked by the mere fact of their relationship (Ryan 2002, 83-4).

Ryan eulogised Othello's and Desdemona's free thinking because they married despite social impediments. *Othello*, whether it questions or confirms the principles of racial and social relationships governing the world of Shakespeare and our own, is considered canonical and relevant today.

The race conflict has become more prevalent and it has affected many people across the world. Black people are still being targeted and singled out on the basis of race. For example, in a recent survey done by the Pew Research Center Horowitz, Brown and Cox found out that "more than 150 years after the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolished slavery in the United States, most U.S. adults say the legacy of slavery continues to have an impact on the position of black people in American society today" (2019, 4). In his article "White Masks in Tunisia", Guesmi lays bare the racism faced by black Tunisian citizens and black immigrants in Tunisia. He argues that

(...) the banalisation of a racial problem in Tunisia is occurring in the shadow of an unfortunate far-reaching misconception among Tunisians that blacks are of an inferior race. Black Tunisians and sub-Saharan immigrants alike are often socially stigmatised and called such derogatory names as wossif (slave) or kahlouch (similar to the n-word). Scenes of blatant anti-black racism include teachers' bullying against black students, street abuse against sub-Saharan immigrants, and police discrimination against the black minority (Guesmi 2017).

Fanon asserted in *Black Skin, White Masks* that whiteness has become a symbol of purity, justice, and truth. It has become the epitome of self-realisation (1986). Shakespeare's *Othello* is very largely concerned with the racial problem. In considering the contemporary relevance of the racial issue discussed in this paper, I argue that Shakespeare's *Othello* is re-canonized for different audiences by being reproduced on different stages. The different

popular performances and the relevance and universality of the issues raised in the play have certainly contributed to its enduring status.

### 3. CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES AND ATTITUDES THROUGH LANGUAGE

This section focuses on the power of language in Shakespeare's *Othello* and how it is creatively used to construct the characters' identities and shape their attitudes. Iago's use of language shapes his racist attitudes towards Othello. There are concrete examples where Iago uses animal imagery and metaphors to dehumanise him. Through manipulative use, Iago has managed to deceive most of the characters in the play. The imagery and metaphors he uses reflect his racist attitudes toward Othello as a black person and an outsider. This is meant to demonstrate that the racist attitudes of Iago are reflected in the language he uses.

The play is a demonstration of the power of Shakespeare's words and his creative use of language. His characters' identities are constructed through language. While examining Shakespeare's poetics, I found out that he relies heavily on what Owens and Goodman call "verbal suggestiveness". The opening scenes of the play "contain an amazing variety of poetic language and expression, ranging from magnificently formal, elaborately patterned speeches to fast-moving, idiomatic, 'everyday' dialogue" (Owens and Goodman 2004, 108). Shakespeare uses the traditional form of blank verse, which consists of unrhymed iambic pentameters to achieve specific effects. His creativity is reflected in the idiomatic expressions he creates for his characters. For instance, the language Othello and Iago use shows how Shakespeare creates his characters as well as the theme of opposition which is at the core of the play.

In Act I, Scenes 2 and 3, Othello's speeches reveal much about his character. His calm authority in his public presence is revealed when he says: "keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (1.2. 59). Owens and Goodman contend that Othello "could

simply have said “put by your weapons”, or words to that effect, but, instead, Shakespeare gives him this more poetic line.” The fact that swords are ‘bright’ may suggest that “they are ‘unused’ and that the famous soldier, Othello, is mildly contemptuous of these lesser mortals, whose swords have not been stained” (Owens and Goodman 2004, 108).

Through poetic language, Othello defends his elopement with Desdemona and expresses his desire to be with her; if he does not speak persuasively, the “bloody book of law” (1.3.68) may deprive him of his wife. Othello’s rhetorical power is acknowledged by Desdemona, who is seduced by his storytelling. The Duke’s comments on Othello’s language and stories reflect the power of the latter’s language, which allows him to win the heart and mind of Desdemona: “This tale would win my daughter too” (1.3.171). Othello’s and Desdemona’s shared speech patterns reveal their mutual affection and harmony; they are “well tun’d” as Iago expresses (2.1.198) at this point. Othello uses poetic language not only to speak of his love but also to speak of his glory and achievements, thus constructing himself as a great military man.

When Iago starts to manipulate and poison Othello’s mind, the latter’s stately style begins to break down. At this stage, Othello’s words convey his agitation:

Lie with her, lie on her? We say lie on her,  
when they belie her! Lie with her, zounds!, that’s  
fulsome! – Handkerchief! confessions! handkerchief!  
– To confess and be hanged for his labour! First, to be  
hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature  
would not invest herself in such shadowing passion  
without some instruction. It is not words that shakes  
me thus. Pish! Noses, ears and lips. Is’t possible?  
Confess? handkerchief! O devil! (4.1.33–40)

The lexis and syntax in Othello’s speech reveal his fractured sense of the self. The transformation of Othello from a state of power to that of weakness is conveyed through language. Previously, Othello

used the first and third person to speak about himself, his nobility, and his heroism. However, when he begins to feel insecure, he uses the pronouns “we”, “they”, “his”, “I”, and “me”. The use of questions conveys his insecurity too.

Othello’s measured verse turns into disjointed prose, which reflects his transformation from a state of power to that of fragility. What controls Othello now is passion rather than reason. He starts using oaths “zounds!” which are associated with Iago. “Pish! Noses, ears and lips. Is’t possible? / Confess? handkerchief? O devil!” (4.1.39-40). These lines convey Othello’s degeneration. Desdemona later says, “I understand a fury in your words / But not the words” (4.2.32–3). By this point, he miscomprehends everything she says:

Desdemona: Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?

Othello: Was this fair paper, this most goodly book

Made to write ‘whore’ upon? ... What, committed!

Committed! O thou public commoner!

(4.2.70–73)

Finally, Othello’s inability to understand Desdemona’s honesty led to her murder. When he realises the truth, he regains his elaborate poetic speeches at the end of Act 5. His final speech, “the base Indian” and “the circumcised dog” (5.2.346 -353), points towards the “bloody period” of Othello’s death (5.2.356).

Iago’s power stems from his use of language too. His speech oscillates between prose and verse, according to his different purposes and audiences. He uses asides which convey his cunning and Machiavellian nature. His soliloquies, which reveal his inward feelings and thoughts, strengthen his power. They also convey information for dramatic effect. Shakespeare’s use of figurative language is another significant part of the linguistic power of the play. Light and dark imagery is creatively used in the play to portray the internal qualities of his characters and to draw attention to racism in Elizabethan England. Light and dark are juxtaposed in the Duke’s declaration to Brabantio, that: “if virtue no delighted beauty lack / your son-in-law is far more fair than black” (1.3.287-288).

Black is associated with evil and sin. These stereotypes are linked to black people, simply because of their skin colour. The statement of the Duke is ironic because although Othello is black, he is truthful and his soul is good. The juxtaposition of black and white colours becomes symbolic within the play.

There are repeated racial images which Iago uses to portray Othello. These racial animalistic sexual images would have been the dominant thinking of the Elizabethan audience. Aubrey claimed that blacks were seen as “strange creatures from outside the boundaries of the known world” in Shakespeare’s time (1993, 222). Othello is constructed as a monster. Act One, Scene One of the play abounds with dark and animalistic sexual imagery of him. This suggests that the dramatist is preparing “his readers for the entrance of something not human” (Rose 2008, 26). Wilson pointed out that “Shakespeare was well aware of racial tension in England and included this tension in the play” (2004, 2).

Lakoff and Johnson contended that “metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language”. However, they found “that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (1981, 4). Abuzahra and Salahat, in their analysis of Iago’s speeches, found out that his “use of animal metaphors in *Othello* can be categorised and linked cognitively to his mind and how he thinks of other characters, like Othello Desdemona, Cassio, in animalistic terms and how he describes their actions in comparison to animal behaviours” (2018, 188-89). Iago’s view of race and gender are communicated through metaphors, animalistic sexual imagery and rhetorical devices. Iago is able to manipulate Othello, Roderigo, Cassio, Emilia, Desdemona and her father and to achieve his Machiavellian goals through his linguistic skills.

In Act 1, Scene 1, Iago, in trying to provoke Brabantio by informing him about his daughter’s secret marriage and elopement

with Othello and describes the latter as “an old black ram tuppung (...) the white ewe” Desdemona (1.1.89-90). Abuzahra and Salahat explained that the word “ram” is defined “as a metaphor used to express an over-sexed man or a lecher” (2018, 189). Roderigo depicts Othello as a “lascivious Moor” (1.1.125). Vitkus argued that the “alleged sexual excesses of the Muslims were linked to those of the Moors or black Africans, who are frequently described in the Western tradition as a people naturally given to promiscuity” (1997, 159). Othello is also described as a thief by Iago: “Awake ho, Brabantio! Thieves, thieves! Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags! Thieves, thieves” (1.1.79-82). The “white ewe” is used metaphorically to portray Desdemona as a female sheep among a gang of thieves. Iago, in his attempt to incite Desdemona’s father and knowing that violent words can incite violent actions, uses animalistic imagery which means that Desdemona is now in the hands of the lascivious thief Othello.

Iago informs Brabantio that his daughter is now “covered with a Barbary horse” which is another animal metaphor meant to dehumanise Othello and ignite Desdemona’s father’s rage (1.1.111). If Brabantio doesn’t thwart Othello’s and Desdemona’s marriage, he will have “coursers for cousins, and jennets for Germans” (1.1.113). Jennets are defined as “female donkeys” and “small Spanish horses” (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* 2019). Iago is trying to intensify the anxieties of Brabantio about miscegenation. This threat is the play’s hidden nightmare, which cannot be overcome by Othello’s service to the Venetian state or his arguments about virtue.

#### 4. TEACHING SHAKESPEARE THROUGH INTEGRATING MODERN MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

It is the argument of this paper that Shakespeare’s plays have great relevance for students today. From my own experience as a teacher of English literature, I believe that traditional English works, such

as those of Shakespeare, expose students to language that is vital to their development as readers and writers of Standard English. Many critics and scholars, like Mellor, Patterson and Paquette argue that Shakespeare's works are still relevant today and their relevance emanates from the timelessness and universality of the essential human concerns they address such as love, power, jealousy, hatred, envy, friendship, dis/honesty, anger, sex, violence, war, gender roles, politics, racism, and colonialism. Shakespeare's plays raise important moral and ethical questions, such as conscience and responsibility, which students can explore and learn from. However, the question is how to make Shakespeare relevant and accessible to twenty-first-century students?

Currently, many university teachers should address the problem of lack of motivation and achievement in the traditional classroom. Students' resistance to reading is the major problem faced by teachers of English. Today, many students are very reluctant to read especially traditional texts, which are considered irrelevant to their lives, boring, outdated, and too hard to understand (Tabers-Kwak & Kauffman 2002, 69). Some teachers believe that teaching Shakespeare today is an obsolete idea and hence they suggest removing the traditional canonical texts from the English curriculum in favour of students' selected curriculum. They think that this will increase students' interest and, thereby, achievement (Milburn 2002, 75). However, as Arpajian-Jolley argued, the implementation of students' selected reading will not necessarily increase their interest in reading or improve their academic performance. For Arpajian-Jolley "the best way to interest seniors in Shakespeare's work, or any classic literature, is to show how relevant it is to modern life" (Arpajian-Jolley 2009, 73).

Kettle asserted that literature is relevant to life and, in his assertion, he put his finger on the root of the canon debate. He argued that "it is impossible to evaluate literature in the abstract. A book is neither produced nor read in a vacuum and the very word 'value' involves right away criteria which are not just 'literary'. Literature is a part of life and can be judged only by its relevance to

life. Life is not static but moving and changing” (Kettle 1983, 12). According to him, the value and importance of literature emanate not only from its artistic merit, or its author’s status, but also from the pleasure of reading, the new ideas the characters and situations conjure, and the fresh insights and perceptions about life it opens up. Kettle reminded us that because life keeps changing, it follows that literature as well as our ideas about its value, relevance, and canonical status keep changing too. He refers to life as “changing”, and, for this reason, he considers plays as the closest genre to life because of their performance, the changing scenes, the speech, and the chronotypes they involve. This confirms the idea that literature is changing and alive, which is of particular relevance to this study of Shakespeare’s *Othello*.

The students’ exposure to ideas and language available in canonical literature can be beneficial and fruitful. Of these canonical texts, Shakespeare’s works are among the most frequently required and consistently taught in the English Departments in the world. However, because Shakespeare’s works are among the most frequently resisted by university students who find his works incomprehensible and his ideas inaccessible, this paper proposes that teachers change their methods to bring new relevance to the traditional canon and render them accessible for students rather than abandon the use of difficult, canonised texts. We propose, therefore, the integration of technology and modern media in the teaching of literature in general, and traditional texts in particular, to effectively engage students in the timely, culturally relevant, and integrated study of the works of Shakespeare.

I contend that the incorporation of technology in the teaching of literature will increase students’ engagement, learning, and achievement. Teachers should strive to make canonical texts accessible and relevant. An effective use of technology is a noteworthy way to make Shakespeare accessible and relevant to students. Technology is the best way to bridge the gap between the bard’s works and students with literacy skills. Baines argues that new technologies, which allow rapid exchange of information, and the

emphasis on oral and visual media, have rendered traditional teaching methods both limiting and academically inadequate in the eyes of students today (Baines 1997, 194). Therefore, today's students need a visually stimulating and fast-paced learning environment, which will encourage them to develop and acquire different skills that are needed and applicable in the modern world.

The incorporation of modern media and technologies in the teaching of literary texts will help students connect what they learn with their lives outside of the classroom. The integration of these modern technologies is also useful for teachers. For example, they can create slideshow presentations on different technologies that could be used in the teaching of *Othello* or any other traditional texts. YouTube, for instance, contains many videos and productions of Shakespeare's works, which vary in interpretation of the texts, quality, and cultural adaptation. There are also several social media sites and blogs where students can comment and discuss any literary texts online, whether inside or outside of the classroom.

Teachers can blend old and new methods to bridge the gap between what students know and what they have yet to learn. Technology-based teaching methods are beneficial and motivating for students today. In this era of technology and rapid exchange of information, students need new and innovative methods and teachers can use modern media and technologies to motivate their students and meet the requirements of the new age. Even older teachers who may not/cannot use technology, need to be trained in the newest social media platforms, video-based websites and others to meet the new demands. In the case of teaching Shakespeare or any other traditional or contemporary literary texts, students deserve to be allowed to enjoy his plays through a combination of the most effective and engaging teaching methods.

In order to successfully engage students and motivate them to learn today, teachers should make classical literature accessible and relevant to their lives. The use of modern media and technology includes modern film adaptations to engage students in the study of traditional literature. This inclusion reflects the way students today

produce, receive, and seek new information.

Hett argues that the use of internet-based research and applicable websites as part of literary study is central to classroom technology and media integration (Hett 2002, 94). For instance, there are many online free sources such as the online *Folger Shakespeare Library*, that teachers can use to provide students with a plethora of information and possible research topics. There are also many audio-visual materials in the form of podcasts and YouTube videos. This paper suggests that teachers should use both guided and independent online research activities to grab students' interest in the subject matter and promote inquiry. Teachers can also include appropriate, pre-existing websites, in traditional literary study.

Bowman and Pieters believe that “technology supports content, critical, and creative thinking” and that “information literacy requires students to conduct searches, evaluate, and create new ideas” (Bowman and Pieters 2002, 89). Therefore, technology helps teachers create an environment in which students are fully motivated and engaged in higher-order thinking skills. Teachers can use modern adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. For example, Jordan Peele's film *Get Out* can be used to learn the intertextual connections between the movie and Shakespeare's *Othello*, which share clear thematic and narrative patterns. Moreover, teachers can use Wiki software, which is another technological tool with tremendous potential for authentic learning. Wikis often display visual materials such as pictures, text and streaming videos and they provide links to many other websites which offer historical, social contexts, and critical essays. Wikis “work effectively to connect students outside of academic discourse with each other” (Farabaugh 2007, 45). Teachers should not resist technology; they can use it for the benefit of their students.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have proposed an alternative reading of Shakespeare's *Othello*. A reading which refutes most of the critics'

conservative interpretation of the play's racial theme. The paper showed that Shakespeare does not endorse the existing racial hierarchies of his time, but attempts to question and destabilise them. Shakespeare's dramatic strategy rebutted racism and subverted the racist outlook by reversing the central roles of the play and turning Iago, the white Venetian, into the villain and Othello, the Moor and stereotyped villain, into the noble hero. Also, the paper examined the power of Shakespeare's language in shaping the characters' selves and their attitudes. The topical issue of race and racism, as well as the creative use of language, have contributed to the re-canonisation and relevance of Shakespeare's *Othello* today. Whether Shakespeare's *Othello* succeeds in challenging the principles of social and racial relationship governing his world and our own or whether it is divided against itself, questioning and consolidating the *status quo* on different levels will remain open to debate.

Shakespeare's durability is often attributed to his language. The paper focused mainly on how the metaphors and animal imagery used by Iago reflect his racist attitudes towards Othello. However, the unique qualities of Shakespeare's language do not stem only from metaphors and animal imagery but also from rhymes, repetitions, puns, rhetorical questions, and many other figures of speech and variations which are creatively used and combined to make the reading and experience of the story deeply satisfying.

In addition, the paper proposed an alternative method of teaching Shakespeare's plays and traditional literature in general. The integration of modern media and technology in the classroom today has a tremendous potential for authentic learning and its implementation is highly required to meet the needs of today's learners. The paper attempted to deconstruct the wrong assumptions about reading and teaching Shakespeare in the twenty-first century. Shakespeare's works are still relevant and they can be made accessible to students through technology. Therefore, the paper attempts to take Shakespeare out of the dock. Literature should not be neglected by students and future technocrats; they should know its value and practical uses. This is the only way to

respond to the needs of our society and prevent the supposed death of this discipline.

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THE IMPACT OF GENDER ROLES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE  
DIVINE FEMININE IN HINDUISM WITH REFERENCE TO  
NAVADURGĀ AND DAŚĀ MAHĀVIDYĀ

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to analyse the contrasting representations of the Divine Feminine in Hinduism as Navadurgā (the nine forms of Durgā) and Daśa Mahāvidyā (the ten forms of Kālī) - the contrast being justified by the attribution of conventional gender roles. The former has been a more popular representation of the Goddess, whereas the latter has been shoved into the dark esoteric realm of Hinduism, which largely lies under tantric rituals. The popularity of Navadurgā has been widespread primarily for its representation of the Goddess in a conventional frame, where her appearance is that of a domestic deity, a symbol of fertility and piety, conforming to a certain tradition. Mahāvidyā, on the contrary, represent a version of the feminine cosmic powers which have an independent identity - one which transcends the boundaries of a male-centric mode of existence, as they are associated with sexual dominance and destruction, and remain independent of male intervention. Both Navadurgā and Mahāvidyā enfold the prospect of exhibiting immense power and possess the potential to create and destroy. However, it is only the former that has gained acceptance in the popular imagination while the latter still struggles to be discovered and comprehended.

**Keywords:** divine feminine, mythology, Hinduism, Navadurgā, Mahāvidyā, gender, gender roles

## INTRODUCTION

The Divine Feminine in Hinduism, according to the Śāktā philosophy, is considered to be the controller of the cosmos. Mandakranta Bose mentions *Devī Sukta*, a hymn in the *Rig Veda*, which “declares her as the power that holds together ‘all existence’, whose reign stretches beyond earth and heaven” (Bose 2018, 2). The

major sects of Hinduism, alongside Śāktism, include Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism (centring on Śiva and Viṣṇu respectively). The form of the Goddess or Devī is paradoxical and has been viewed as both calm and fierce. Her forms and incarnations often depict her dual nature - some in adherence to the standard gender roles and some in complete contrast. While her existence as Gaurī, Lakshmī, Saraswatī or Durgā focuses on her adherence to gender roles; (tantric) forms of Kālī like Dhumāvātī, Bhairavī and Chinnamastā are far from the standard notions of feminine disposition. The worship of the Goddess, therefore, often experiences a divide in its popular reception and engagement. The fierce forms of the Divine Feminine are often restricted to the forbidden Tantric rituals as they are perceived as highly uncontrolled and somewhat dangerous manifestations of the Devī. The Goddesses who are, on the other hand, related to fertility and adhere to domestic boundaries continue to enjoy an elevated status among practising Hindus. This paper aims to evaluate the dual nature of the Goddess, as her depiction oscillates between being a creator to a destroyer; a domesticated wife to a wild and sexually dominating figure. In order to create a distinction between these two roles, the paper seeks to classify the forms of the Goddess as those which are incarnations or forms of Durgā (the *Navadurgā*) and those of Kālī (the *Daśa Mahāvidyā*). The former is used as an example to represent those forms of the Goddess which are placed within conventional gender roles, while the latter represents those forms which contain uncurbed and malevolent energy, which is largely destructive and stands in opposition to these roles. The chief difference between the perception of these forms is based on one's adherence to patriarchal norms and the other's aversion to them.

A rather interesting take on this patriarchal bias can be uncovered upon analysing the creation process of Durgā and Kālī. On the one hand, Durgā is created by male deities to carry out the task of slaying the buffalo demon Mahiśāsura; but their efforts in doing so are rendered futile. However, despite being assigned this violent task, her appearance (both in texts as well as in her iconographic

representation in temples and paintings) has the strains of a married householder as she is adorned with conventional feminine clothes and accessories - a depiction which seems to preserve her identity of a married woman. Kālī, on the other hand, is created out of Durgā herself and is, therefore, a product of a consciousness that belongs solely to a woman's mind. *Devī Mahātmya* describes the birth of Kālī as emerging "from [Durgā's] forehead looking terrible with a frown came out Kālī with frightful face and with sword and noose in hand" (Devīmahātmayam 1998, 233). She is further described as holding "a wonderful skull-headed weapon *Khatwanga* in her hands" and "she had a gaping mouth and looked fearful with her wagging tongue. Her eyes were blood red and her terrible roars reached the skies" (234). Her appearance itself indicates independence from any traditional male bondage as she exists in nakedness, and defies all traditional notions of a mother, a wife or a householder. It must, however, be noted that both Durgā and Kālī are intertwined in a complementary existence; as Laura Amazzone remarks in her book *Goddess Durga and Sacred Female Power*, "Durgā is the calm centre of a torrential storm, while Kālī is the howling wind and pelting rains" (Amazzone 2010, 199).

As far as the origin of the two sets of forms of these two Goddesses is concerned, there are several overlapping myths and tales which have primarily been passed on as oral folklore. However, some of them have scriptural backing as well (for instance *Devī Mahātmya* and some of the Tantras), which date as far back as the 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E. On the one hand, *Navadurgā* - namely Śailaputrī, Brahmācarīṇī, Candraghanṭā, Kushmāṇḍā, Skandamatā, Kātyāyanī, Kālṛātri, Mahāgaurī and Siddhidhātri - are said to be the representations of nine *yonis* (female organs of generation), which depict the stages of Goddess' life. On the other, *Daśa Mahāvidyā* are said to have originated from the body of Satī when she was enraged at Śiva for not consenting her to attend the *yajna* (a ritual performed before a sacred fire) at her father Dakśa's place. The ten fierce forms of the Goddess - namely Kālī, Tārā, Tripurā Sundarī or Sodaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Dhumāvati, Bagalāmukhī,

Mātangi and Kamalā - had blocked Śiva's path from the ten directions until he gave in to Satī's demand. Satī, in fact, is said to have assumed a terrible form, like Kālī, when she was enraged. Anway Mukhopadhyay mentions in his book *The Goddess in Hindu Tantric Traditions: Devi as Corpse*, "Satī-as-Kālī is the wife of Śiva, but she also retains her independent status and is able to challenge the dictates of both Śiva and Dakṣa" (Mukhopadhyay 2018, 52). The *Devi Bhāgavatapurāṇa* presents another origin story stating that these ten fierce forms of the Goddess "came out of the body of the Devī" as "the principal Śaktis (incarnate forces)" while she was fighting a demon called Durgama (*Śrī Devi Bhāgavatam* 1921-22, 522).

Navadurgā are worshipped during the festival of *Navrātri* as a mode of celebrating the established ideals of womanhood and the power attributed to the female sex as a result of her capacity to procreate. On performing the *Navrātri puṇjā*, "those who are desirous of learning, riches, or sons will get them all" (*Śrī Devi Bhāgavatam* 1921-22, 182). However, the Mahāvidyā have no ritualistic *puṇjā* that is conducted on a large scale across the Hindu community; their worship mostly remains restricted only within the esoteric Tantric tradition, where most of the rituals associated with their worship are looked upon as malign or dark in the traditional sense (with some exceptions). Much of the reason for this bias may not be too difficult to decipher, as the origin myth itself suggests that *Mahāvidyā* are a product of a stubborn and dominating disposition whereas *Navadurgā* are the representation of Goddesses who might exhibit violent characteristics, but not outright rebellious ones.

This paper, therefore, argues that the association of Kālī and her Tantric forms with the idea of "forbidden" is largely a result of the fact that these Goddesses have established their identities beyond the assigned gender role of a wife or a mother. Sexual dominance, particularly, becomes the most active threat in the evaluation of any religious feminine figure. While some of Mahāvidyā, such as Sodaśī or Bhuvaneśwari, may exhibit the strains of conventional feminine beauty or appearance, they still do not have any explicit association with a male consort. This independent identity sets them apart from

the usual idea of observing the Goddess as Śiva's consort. Navadurgā, on the contrary, receive immense popularity in various parts of India and Nepal as they remain within the socially acceptable range of gender roles assigned to women.

#### ROLE AND DISPOSITION OF THE GODDESS

The worship of the Divine Feminine - or the Devī - in Hindu thought, is primarily a product of granting supremacy to the female sex by virtue of their ability to procreate. However, the Śākta sect has envisioned the Goddess as one who fulfils all three cosmic duties, as she holds the capacity to create, nurture and destroy life in the world. She becomes a figure like Viśnu - as David Kinsley writes in his article "The Portrait of the Goddess in the *Devi Mahatmya*" - "the cosmic policeman" (Kinsley 1998, 498). The Goddess in her guise of Durgā, or Kālī, fulfils the role of mother-turned-destroyer as she slays all that is unwanted in this world. However, in her nine variations or sub-forms of Durgā, she is often only related to fulfilling the role of a daughter or a mother such as in her manifestation as Śailputri and Skandamātā, whereas in her ten tantric forms of Kālī, she often only fulfils the role of a destroyer in her manifestation as Bhairavī or Chinnamastā. While the former indicates her benign nature as that of a creator and caregiver, the latter explores her destructive potential. Kinsley states that these tantric forms are a meaningful manifestation of the Goddess as "sudden and tragic death, natural catastrophe, sickness, and old age are part of *samsara*" (Kinsley 502). The other forms, in both cases, depict her intermediary nature as a protector. It is, however, the inclination towards destruction and the aversion to conventional gender roles in her Tantric forms which have led to its unpopular notion of being dangerously unfeminine. Her warrior-like spirit embodied in the forms of Durgā (even in the fiercest form such as Kālratrī) is, however, not perceived to be too dangerous as her

overall existence still remains under the control of her male counterpart and her destructive spirit is only temporary.

The epithets using, which the Goddess has been addressed in *Devī Mahātmya*, may be analysed to evaluate her disposition. The epithet Ambikā (representing the Goddess in her gentle, compassionate and maternal form) is used 25 times, whereas the epithet Caṇḍikā (representing the Goddess in her fierce form) is used 29 times (Coburn 1984, 94). It becomes quite evident, then, that the Devī, while fulfilling her role of the one who rids the world of evil, is consumed with fury. However, popular consciousness tends to worship the Goddess primarily in her maternal existence as Ambikā, with only occasional reference to her form as Caṇḍikā. It is noteworthy that the epithet Caṇḍikā has no history of its own as it has never been used in any text prior to *Devī Mahātmya* (Coburn 1984, 95). The lack of its occurrence in the past may hint towards the fact that the representation of the Divine Feminine was granted destructive powers only in the post-Vedic age.

However, despite this attempt, the Devī continues to retain a more sought-after status as Ambikā than as Caṇḍikā in common households. It may then be inferred that despite scriptural evidence for her volatile and fierce nature, the anthropological development of her identity becomes consciously selective and ends up choosing her lesser violent aspect.

A noteworthy fact that may be invoked during the exercise of determining the nature of Devī's contradictory disposition is her characteristic “masculine” roar as Durgā when she first steps onto the battlefield. According to *Devī Mahātmya*, the Goddess “roared again and again with a terrible voice” (*Devīmahātamayam* 1998, 109). It goes on to say that “the whole sky was filled with her terrible roaring sound” and “by her unending and great roar occurred a great echo. All the worlds shook, and all the oceans also trembled” (110). A roar of this kind goes on to assert the hint of masculinity that was embodied in the Goddess as she took the onus of ridding the world of evil. It could, perhaps, then be observed that the projection of

the Goddess within the usual boundaries of femininity is a deliberate attempt to cover up her physical strength as it may be seen as a threat to the patriarchal system. C. Mackenzie Brown, in his book *The Triumph of the Goddess: The Canonical Models and Theological Visions of the Devi Bhagavata Purana*, points out that, in both *Devi Mahātmya* and *Devi Bhāgavata*, the Goddess is related to male deities “not as consort, but as Śakti” (Brown 1990, 125). However, this relationship is most often not viewed as a unique bond in itself, but is usually perceived to be as one created out of marriage, and therefore builds itself upon the pillars of conventional masculinity and femininity.

#### RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GODDESS

Menstruation becomes a rather significant issue while discussing the attribution of significance to the female sex. Goddess worship in Hindu thought has often considered the Devī, like other mortal females, to undergo a period of menorrhoea during which most temples or religious sites remain closed. Places such as the Kāmākhya Devī temple in Guwahati, as it is a predominant site for Tantric worshippers, celebrate the Goddess’ menstrual flow and witness the mass gathering of devotees who visit the temple and collect pieces of blood-stained cloth from the temple premises as a holy blessing generated from the Goddess herself. The *Devi Gītā* states about this place that “it is the best of hallowed places in this earthly realm” because it is here “where every month the Goddess herself resides during her menses” (*The Song of the Goddess* 2002, 105).

The stain on the cloth, however, comes from the water of the river Brahmaputra which turns red (due to a high content of iron-rich sediments) for about three days every year during the month of June (Lekshmi). Laura Amazzone remarks that the Kaula, Śakta and Tantric cultures see a menstruating woman as one who is “in her highest power” (Amazzone 2010, 213) and is equated with the Goddess herself. Mahāvīdyā, in their Tantric mode of worship, have assigned immense significance to menstrual blood as it is the very

sap of all existence. Mātangi, for instance, as David Kinsley writes in his book *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, is a Goddess who indeed “prefers pollution and who requires her devotees to be in a state of pollution when they offer her polluted substances, such as menstrual blood” (Kinsley 1998, 7). However, despite this assertion of significance, nearly all of the bhakti-influenced Hindu traditions associate menstrual blood with impurity. The Goddesses who are worshipped outside of the Tantric cult - such as Durgā and her forms, Lakṣmī, or Gaurī - do not have any elaborate rites or rituals pertaining to menstruation and, in fact, do not encourage menstruating women to remain a part of any customary ritual or *Pūjā* (the act of worship). The aversion towards menstrual blood may also be seen as an impact of Western thoughts, which pervaded through the Indian consciousness several centuries ago, as it is rather odd “that a Goddess who demands bloody sacrifice for her propitiation will leave her vehicle at the first sign of blood” (Amazzone 2010, 97).

Another aspect which may be analysed in determining the position occupied by these two sets of Goddesses is the method of their worship. It has already been established that Mahāvidyā are worshipped using Tantric practices, mostly following *Vāmachara* (left-handed path). Navadurgā, on the other hand, are worshipped with adherence to rituals that have evolved out of centuries of following bhakti practices. They are worshipped during the time of *Navrātri*, which occurs four times a year - *Caitra Navrātri*, *Śarada Navrātri*, *Aśāḍha Navrātri* and the *Māgha Gupt Navrātri*. Each of the nine days of the *Navrātri* is assigned to a specific form of the Navadurgā. The rituals associated with it are primarily focused on emphasising the fertility of the female sex, which leads to procreation.

Hillary Peter Rodrigues mentions, in her book *Ritual Worship of the Great Goddess: The Liturgy of the Durga Puja*, with interpretations that the sacred jar (*ghaṭa*) - which is worshipped during the *Navrātri* as the embodiment of the Devī - is one which “resembles a squatting

or pregnant woman clad in a saree” (Rodrigues 2003, 262). The *ghaṭa* is surrounded by grains which “sprout over the course of the puja, embodies the fertile capacity of the creation to generate life” (*Ibid.*). During the days of worship, it is only young girls who have not reached menarche, married women and post-menopausal women who enjoy a higher status. Rodrigues mentions that post-menopausal women enjoy an elevated status because they become incapable “of endangering life” as their “sexual energy no longer needs to be placed under any controlling influence” (Rodrigues 2003, 302). Unmarried women, menstruating women and widows are most often not accommodated within the ritual practices pertaining to Navadurgā. Those who are “born of widows, or of women unmarried are always to be avoided in this *pūjā*” (*Śrī Devī Bhāgavatam* 192-22, 182).

On the contrary, the Tantric modes of worship grant primacy to menstruating women and the female Tantric deities themselves often have little to no affiliation with a male counterpart. The significance assigned to blood and other bodily fluids including semen becomes one of the most prominent reasons for rejecting the worship of Mahāvīdyā in popular practice, as it causes a sense of repulsion and disgust. Bhairavī, in the *Śakta-Prāmoda* for instance, is called “She Who is Fond of Semen and Menstrual Blood” and “She Who is Worshipped by those Who Worship with Semen” (Kinsley 1998, 172). While it is quite evident that both forms of worship of the Divine Feminine emphasise the procreative potential of the Devī, it may be observed that it is only its symbolic representation in the form of a *ghaṭa*, or the sprouting grains, which fit the contemporary Hindu imagination comfortably.

#### TEMPERAMENT OF THE GODDESS

The temperament of various incarnations of the Goddess has often been divided into two broad categories - malevolent and benevolent. Tracy Pintchman writes in *Cosmological, Devotional, and Social*

*Perspectives on the Hindu Goddess* that the malevolent forms are those who are unmarried; whereas the benevolent forms are the ones who are tied in a marital bond. The grounds of this distinction, then, become self-explanatory as the Goddesses with an independent identity establish themselves to be in contrast to the designated social order. These independent Goddesses, such as Dhumāvati or Chinnamastā, are considered to possess “unreleased sexual energy and violence” (Pintchman 2018, 26). They tend to take “charge of their own sexual agency” (*Idem*, 24) and, are, therefore viewed as being endowed with danger. The benevolent forms of the Goddess, on the other hand, are “generally married and subservient to their husbands” (*Idem*, 25) and are hence perceived to be “high-ranking” (*Idem*, 25). The hot-tempered unmarried or widowed Goddesses are, on the contrary, perceived as “low-ranking” (*Idem*, 25). One might then argue that a figure like Brahmācariṇī (one of the forms of the Navadurgā) is not married in her iconographic description but yet remains within the category of benevolence. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that, during her phase of adopting this guise, her primary motive was to persuade Śiva to marry her. Thus, here too, it is perhaps the intention of marriage which saves her from being ostracised for her unmarried status.

The figure of the Goddess as depicted in *Devī Mahātmya* is not explicitly mentioned to be placed within a marital contract with any male deity. She is simply perceived to be a manifestation of the divine cosmic energy, which has been invoked in order to rid the world of evil-doers. The Devī, in both *Devī Mahātmya* as well as in *Devī Bhāgavatapurāna*, is however not a malevolent representation of feminine energy despite the absence of the specification of her marital status. In the former, she is simply introduced by Brahmā as he says, “You alone sustain this universe, you alone create this universe, and you protect it. And at the end of this cycle you alone devour the same” (*Devī Mahātmyam* 1998, 82); the latter states “She is the Will-force of the Supreme Self. She is the First Creatrix of the world” (*Śrī Devī Bhāgavatam* 1921-22, 74). Both descriptions depict the independent existence of the Goddess. In modern and pre-

modern representations, however, there may be found traces of a growing misogynist imagination, as the Goddess even in her fierce demon-killing form tends to embody the guise of a woman married according to Hindu customs as she is always represented with vermillion, painted feet, bangles, and clad in a red attire (typically adorned by Hindu women during their wedding) among other elements of embellishment. The deliberate association of conventional femininity with the Goddess is most prominently traced in the contemporary worship of Kālī, or even Tārā. Kālī, as is mentioned in the *Devī Mahātmya*, emerges out of Durgā's own mind while she is fighting the demon Raktabīj. Primarily depicted as bloodthirsty and naked, uncontrolled and fierce, Kālī, however, is subjected to complete domesticity in her modern depiction as she is treated like any other benevolent female deity - a married householder. Adorned with vermillion, draped in a saree, her fierce tongue often reduced from a symbol of frenzied anger to a gesture of being ashamed - Kālī's iconography undergoes a massive shift. While her weapons and garland of skulls have remained intact in her modern depictions, her nakedness and ferocity are completely altered to a comfortable and acceptable display of feminine conduct. One of Kālī's Tantric forms, Tārā too is often subject to a similar treatment where her aggressive nature is negated (which could also impact her worship in the Tibetan Buddhist culture) and, instead, a more conventional representation of her prowess is projected. For instance, most of her bloodthirsty and violent nature is overshadowed by the depiction of "her large breasts and swollen belly as suggesting that she represents the first impulse toward creation and individuation" (Kinsley 1998, 105).

#### SEXUAL DEPENDENCE/INDEPENDENCE OF THE GODDESS

Mahavidyā and their significance stems primarily from Tantric literature, where they occupy a subjugating position. David Kinsley writes that several forms of Mahavidyā have Śiva as their spouse but

“he is subordinate to them” (Kinsley 1998, 62) as they dominate him sexually. This fact may be interpreted as yet another reason for the peripheral position of these Goddesses as they defy the basic norm of the submissive behaviour that is expected out of women in sexual terms. Further, one may analyse Kinsley’s argument of the subordinate spouse as being one of the most significant premises upon which the threat associated with these Goddesses is placed. While remaining may result in the containment of unreleased sexual energy, the idea of actively engaging in unmarried dominant sexual behaviour over the male counterpart becomes a difficult reality to sink into the minds of those practising patriarchally sanitised rites and rituals.

The iconographic representation of the Tantric Goddesses often depicts them sitting atop their male partner while remaining engaged in a sexual act - a position which evidently suggests dominance. For instance, Tripurā Sundarī is often “shown astride Śiva in sexual intercourse” (Kinsley 1998, 11). Chinnamastā stands “on the copulating bodies of Goddess Rati and her husband Kāma, the God of sexual lust” and sometimes she is also depicted “astride Śiva, copulating with him as he lies beneath her (*Idem*, 11). These kinds of depictions have retained themselves in temple paintings and illustrations but are not a part of popular depiction. Further, according to the origin myth of *Daśa Mahāvidyā*, Satī goes on to remind Śiva of their status as primordial *Prakṛti* and Primordial *Puruśa* and “she appears to imply that it is her choice of Śiva as her beloved *puruśa* which made him the *Param Puruśa*” (Mukhopadhyay 2018, 138). This becomes a rather significant aspect in the establishment of Śiva as *śava* (corpse) in the absence of Śakti; and implies that it is indeed the Devī’s energy- both sexual and non-sexual - which fulfils the basic conditions of the existence of her male counterpart.

David Frawley writes, in his book *Tantric Yoga and the Wisdom Goddesses*, that the forms of Mahāvidyā “are often disturbing, and they are not meant to be merely pleasant. They are meant to shock the mind into awakening” (Frawley 1994, 60). Much of this shock is

simply a result of the independent and powerful depiction of these Goddesses as it challenges the conventions of female domesticity. The portrayal of Durgā too, according to commentators like Laura Amazzone, has a strain of independence as she argues that her weapons symbolise self-reliance, confidence, determination and passion. She is, as a matter of fact, indeed invoked by the helpless male deities who are rendered powerless at the hands of the growing evil in the world. However, one may argue that the various forms of Durgā fail to establish a completely independent identity as their existence is most often viewed as one which compliments the male Gods and not as something which allows itself to take complete responsibility for her actions. She is *assigned* a cosmic duty *by* the male creators of the cosmos in order to ease their efforts in its preservation. Unlike Kālī, Durgā's battles are focused on providing "a model of expressing anger toward injustice in a constructive rather than destructive manner" (Amazzone 2010, 25). However, the distinction between constructive and destructive anger is itself a manifestation of a bias, which is a product of gendered convention.

#### ADHERENCE TO CONVENTIONS AND TRADITIONS

The traditional life cycle of a woman is most often defined by her relation to her male superiors - first a daughter (guided by a paternal figure), then a wife (dominated by a husband) and finally a mother (dependent on a son). These roles, which are expected to be fulfilled by a woman through the course of her life, are manifested in the nine forms of Durga, or the Navadurgā - perhaps the most prominent factor resulting in their admiration and approval from the male supremacist version of contemporary Hinduism. Even while forms of the Navadurgā such as Kushmāṇḍā are credited with the divine duty of the creation of the universe with her lotus-like smile which "dispelled the darkness"; it must be noted that her role has been defined as one which *helps* Vishnu to dispel the darkness and not as a completely independent endeavour (Navratri 2020, 4th

Day). Thus, her role remains subordinate to male deities despite the immense potential of creation that she exhibits. Kālī's forms, on the other hand, are most often depicted as Divine Creators themselves. Bhuvaneśvarī, for instance, is mentioned to have enlightened the *Tridevas* (Brahma, Viśnu and Śiva) or the Holy Trinity of Hinduism in figuring out the design of the universe. The *Devī Bhāgavatapurāṇa* states that it is “by her rays that the three worlds are pervaded” (*Śrī Devī Bhāgavatam* 1921-22, 556). It also states that she is “the Prime Force of Nature” and “the Creatrix of the whole world” (*Idem*, 212). Her “gracious glance enables Brahmā, Viśnu and Maheś to do their respective works creating, preserving and destroying the universe” (*Idem*, 559).

She, therefore, establishes herself as a figure who participates with an equal (or perhaps greater) sense of authority in the creation process of the world alongside male deities. As David Frawley has remarked, “the Daśa Mahavidyā reveal the inner workings of both universe and psyche” (Frawley 1994, 60). Therefore, the role of these Goddesses ends up superseding the functions of male deities, and their existence then goes on to potentially manifest as a rather odd idea to be accepted easily by a collective thought which is largely governed by a fixed notion of tradition.

As far as the projection of conventional femininity is concerned, another interesting aspect that may be looked at is the manner in which the display of the tongue in the iconography of the Goddesses operates. While Kālī is most commonly projected with a protruding tongue while placing her foot upon Śiva's chest, it is noteworthy that this episode finds no mention in the ancient Śāktā texts like *Devī Mahātmya* or *Devī Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. Kālī's tongue lolls simply due to her bloodthirsty and enraged disposition while she is in a demon-slaying frenzy. The manipulation of this phenomenon into believing that the tongue depicts her shame or embarrassment is completely absent in the *Purāṇas* or even the Tantras. It is to cater to the male-centric thought that the entire idea of being subjugated by the husband in order to be restored to normalcy has been

formulated. It is an attempt to build a conscious statement that a woman ought to be ashamed and must be subjected to ostracism as a consequence of stepping over her boundaries - much like Sita's doom in the *Rāmāyaṇa* after she crosses the *Lakṣmaṇa-Rekhā* (an invisible line drawn for her safety by Lakṣmaṇa). The fact that the tongue representing shame is indeed a later interpolation may further be concretised by taking into consideration Tārā's iconographic details. Her tongue, too, is protruded out and she too stands upon a corpse; however, this corpse though "often discernible as Śiva, but [is] sometimes said to be an anonymous corpse. Sometimes [the corpse] is being consumed in a cremation fire" (Kinsley 1998, 100). The tongue, then, becomes a rather complex symbol which seems to have very little to do with shame and a lot to do with ferocity and wrath. The tongue has also been viewed as a symbol of eroticism by Herman Tull in his article "Kali's Tongue: Shame, Disgust, and the Rejection of Blood and Violence in Vedic and Hindu Thought". The Goddess's eroticism is yet another taboo in the post-*purāṇic* Hindu discourse and, thus, the association of her tongue with an apologetic gesture is more pronounced and easily accepted than its obvious connection with disgust, seduction and fury. Further, one must also note the depiction of Kālaratri (one of the Navadurgā) - "her terrible black appearance, when beheld, increases the terror even of the Daityas (demons)" (*Śrī Devī Bhāgavatam* 1921-22, 343). Her iconography is a lot like Kālī, with dishevelled hair and dark complexion (in fact, her name is often used interchangeably with Kālī) - yet, her tongue never hangs out in any representation. In fact, Kālaratri's portrayal does not indicate any kind of nakedness unlike Kālī - yet another instance of depicting the violent form of the Goddess under the garb of socially approved sophistication. This difference between Kālaratri and the other fierce forms of Devi, such as Kālī or Tārā, then, might emerge out of the fact that Navadurgā serve as an ideal model of conduct for women and, even its fiercest form, must adhere to a basic feminine disposition.

CONSEQUENCES OF WORSHIPPING THE GODDESS

The nature of blessings that one seeks from these forms of the Goddesses is also a significant ground for drawing a comparison between their common perceptions. Upon reading *Devī Mahātmya*, the reader repeatedly comes across the prayer in which one prays to the Goddess to grant “a fine form, fame and victory and destroy [his or her] enemies” (*Devīmahātmyam* 1998, 2). The destruction of enemies here is never made to sound negative. However, in the worship of the *Mahāvidyā*, one comes across Bagalāmukhī who is known for paralysing and stunning one’s enemies; and her worship is almost always perceived to be a product of malign intentions. In her iconographic depiction, she is seen pulling out the tongue of a demon with her left hand, which becomes a symbolic representation of her ability to stun her enemies into silence. However, while the prayer for the destruction of enemies is projected as a constructive activity in the case of Durgā, it is considered to be a vengeful and destructive activity in the case of Bagalāmukhī.

The reason behind this disparity may once again be located within the method of worship of the Goddess: while Durgā is worshipped using conventional Vedic and Puranic rituals, Bagalāmukhī’s ritual worship includes sexual yogic practices as directed in the Tantras. Kinsley argues in his book that individuals who engage with *Mahāvidyā* get to “liberate their consciousness”, and this becomes possible by “subverting, mocking, or rejecting conventional social norms” (Kinsley 1998, 251). However, this understanding remains absent in the large-scale worship of the Goddess at well-known religious sites, as Tantric practices are generally rejected in mainstream bhakti rituals.

In order to derive the highest level of benefit for oneself as a devotee of the Divine Feminine, the Tantric culture predominantly suggests sacrifice. This sacrifice ranges from animals to humans, to one’s own body or self-sacrifice. It is suggested, especially in *Vāmacara*, that the results of the worship of the Devī set the soul free and enable one to fulfil the true role of a *sādhaka* (adept) by

uniting and becoming one with Divinity. As Kinsley points out, “at some Goddess temples, daily sacrifices are made, usually of goats and chickens” and the animal’s head is “cut off and offered to the image of the Goddess, often on a platter” (Kinsley 1998, 151). In the worship of the non-Tantric Goddesses, however, there has been a considerable change in terms of the concept of sacrifice. A few cultures cut open a vermilion-smearred gourd as a symbolic sacrifice, but nothing beyond that is either expected or propagated in the name of attaining salvation. Brian K. Smith and Wendy Doniger have remarked upon the substitution of animal sacrifice with non-animal elements in “Sacrifice and Substitution: Ritual Mystification and Mythical Demystification”. They suggest that contemporary Hinduism perceives “offerings of rice and barley (...) to be *better* than those of animals because they avoid the sin of killing” (Smith and Doniger 1989, 208). The sense of civilised comfort in the mode of worship of the latter becomes the primary reason for its wide acceptance. The former, on the contrary, projects itself as a rather hazardous and disturbing practice in the name of devotion and, hence, not as prevalent.

While almost all branches of the Śakta tradition have the concept of sacrifice associated with them, it is only the Tantric culture that has continued to propagate the idea of the sacrifice of animals as well as humans as a means of achieving complete union with the Divine Feminine. Therefore, despite the fact that the primary agenda in the worship of any Goddess is to seek spiritual contentment and overcome one’s vexation, the mode of generating the desired results is starkly different in the various strains of Śakti worship. The Tantric Goddesses rely heavily upon the willingness of the adept to participate not only with his mind but also his body, whereas other Goddess cults, such as those where people worship Durgā, rely less upon the physical aspects of engagement and more upon the conventions and traditions which are usually devoid of any association with sexual practices or self-sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to establish the impact of gender roles upon the popular perception of the Divine Feminine in Hinduism by categorising the forms of the Goddess into two broad groups—the Navadurgā - or the nine forms of Durgā - and *Daśa Mahāvidyā* - or the ten forms of Kālī. While the former usually depicts the Goddess in her violent demon-slaying form, the overarching attributes of the Devī remain within the boundaries of gender roles; the latter, on the contrary, depicts her in all forms - destructive and procreative - yet her perception seems to tilt towards being malevolent, which stems out of her dominating identity. Through this division, this paper has analysed the impact of her relationship with a male counterpart, usually in the form of a spouse, and her dependence on, or independence from such a bond. It is the level of her adherence to conventions of femininity that has played a major role in creating a social perception of her existence in various forms.

As pointed out, the reason for the dismissal of sexually dominant or independent Goddesses primarily stems from their uncontrolled and violent nature. They are considered to be “anti-role models for Hindu women in India” (Pintchman 2018, 34). While this paper has not remarked upon Goddesses who lie beyond the two aforementioned categories, such as Lakśmi and Saraswatī, it may in any case be suggested that their representation has been placed in the realm of acceptance, as their disposition lies within the boundaries of traditional feminine conduct. It is only the supremely destructive forms of the Goddess such as Kālī, Dhūmāvātī, Chinnamastā, Bhairavī and Bagalamukhī who remain outside the circle of a prescribed gender role.

This paper has also argued that there has been a constant effort by patriarchal thought to alter the ferocity of the Goddess in her wrathful depiction, such as Kālī or Tārā. The nakedness of Kālī has gradually been covered under cultural markers and her fierce tongue has been converted from a sign of wrath and disgust to a sign of

shame. Much of these alterations, quite evidently, emerge from a misogynist viewpoint which chooses not to perpetuate such unfeminine traits of the Devī into the popular consciousness lest it become a challenge to the existing male dominance. Her lack of domesticity and subordination in her Tantric manifestations has been the leading cause of the dismissal of these forms from the widely followed Hindu thought. However, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued, in *Moving Devi*, that Tantra too does not really allow “for women’s sexual agency” as “in the yantra-inspired activities, the actual women representing [the Devī] are the affectless receivers of foreplay” (Spivak 2001, 148).

There lies immense scope for further exploration of the possibilities of rejection that is faced by the Tantric Goddesses; and also in analysing the actual representation of Durgā and her forms, that is, in determining whether or not they are actually as placed within gendered boundaries or is it merely an illusion. It was suggested above that ancient Śakta texts like the *Devī Mahātmya* and *Devī Bhāgavatapurāṇa* have represented the Goddess not only as an independent entity but also as one who exhibits rather masculine traits as she proceeds to kill demons on the battlefield. Despite such explicit details, her later depiction has converted her entirely into a stereotypically feminine being who is, in fact, quite evidently engaged in a marital bond with Śiva. There is significant potential for excavating more information into the evolving perception of the Goddess in her dual nature. By examining the anthropological factors throughout the history of Śāktism, a deeper understanding and greater clarity can be achieved.

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ISRAEL'S ETHNOCRATIC DYNAMICS.  
A SETTLER COLONIALIST LENS ON APARTHEID-LIKE POLICIES  
AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF PALESTINIAN ARABS

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**Abstract.** Marginalization and hostility towards minority populations, often manifested as discrimination, have been recurring themes in historical conflicts, with the Israeli-Palestinian case being no exception. While drawing parallels to South African apartheid is common among critics, this study seeks to illuminate Israel's distinct ethnocentric framework where the establishment as an exclusively Jewish state has led to preferential treatment for Jewish citizens and systematic marginalization of Palestinian residents. Notably, the utilization of over 60 laws favouring Jewish ethnic supremacy represents a direct challenge to international conventions against racial discrimination.

By employing qualitative analysis of archival data and reports from Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations such as Al Haq, B'Tselem, and Adala, in conjunction with primary documents including the Rome Statute, the Apartheid Convention, and relevant international laws, this study aims to unravel Israel's ethnocentric system within the framework of settler colonialism, providing a comprehensive understanding of its implications and consequences.

**Keywords:** apartheid, marginalization, Palestinians, settler colonialism, Zionism

## INTRODUCTION

The inception of Israel as a homeland for the global Jewish community in 1948 brought relief to the Jewish diaspora, marking a historic milestone. Nevertheless, this defining moment harboured tragedy for the Palestinian Arabs residing in areas under Israeli control, leading to enduring conflict and disparity. In the aftermath of Israel's establishment, Palestinian Arabs, viewed as potential

threats, were relegated to a second-class status, and subjected to discriminatory state policies and practices (Kadman 1).

The complexity of the status of Arab citizens in Israel, constituting approximately 25% of the population, remains a pivotal matter (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics). Notably, the pervasiveness of discriminatory legislation directed towards Arab citizens, exemplified by over 35 proposed discriminatory bills in 2009 under a right-wing government (Ghanim 18), followed by escalated discriminatory policies in 2013 under the Likud coalition (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), has exacerbated inequality, marginalization, and subjugation within the population.

Fayez Sayegh, a Palestinian scholar, introduced a racial theory of Zionist settler colonization in 1965, arguing that Zionism should be regarded as “racial elimination”, and not simply as a form of European colonialism driven by racial domination. According to Sayegh, Zionist ideology holds Jews to be a distinct race and people, leading to three consequent corollaries: racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness, and racial supremacy (Sayegh 22). Zionist settlers were noted to have adopted and transcended the lethal principles of apartheid taught by other discriminatory regimes in settler states across Asia and Africa.

Resolution 3379, condemning Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination, was successfully passed at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1975, spearheaded by Sayegh during the Decade Against Racism. However, this resolution was rescinded in 1991 following the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s agreement to further the peace process with Israel. Critics argue that the Oslo Accords’ ghettoized sovereignty model contributed to the obfuscation of Israel’s Zionist settler-colonial agenda and Jewish supremacy, providing a false equivalency between a nuclear-powered state and a stateless, dispossessed nation without basic resources or autonomy.

Fragmentation imposed by Israel has divided the Palestinian nation regionally and transnationally across the Gaza Strip, West

Bank, Israel, and a global diaspora. In the aftermath of the Intifada of Unity in 2021, the Palestinian national struggle for liberation from Israel's exclusive jurisdiction over all lands and peoples from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River regained global attention. Embracing a blended legal framework, Israel has pursued a settler-colonial project to garner the greatest amount of land with the least Palestinian presence, employing civil, military, and administrative law alongside systemic warfare.

In December 2019, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination began reviewing a Palestinian complaint alleging that Israel's policies in the West Bank constituted apartheid. This was followed by reports from Israeli human rights organizations Yesh Din in July 2020 and B'Tselem in January 2021, both of which concluded that the criteria for labelling the Israeli regime as apartheid had been met. B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad stated, "Israel should not be seen as a democratic state with a temporary occupation; rather, it forms a unified system spanning from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and we must acknowledge this complete reality as apartheid" (B'Tselem). Subsequently, in April 2021, Human Rights Watch accused Israel of apartheid and called for the prosecution of Israeli officials under international law.

The Apartheid Convention and the Rome Statute are two international treaties that recognize apartheid as a crime against humanity. The Apartheid Convention specifically defines the crime in Article II as "inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them" (International Convention). Similarly, the Rome Statute's definition in Article 7 states: "inhumane acts (...) committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime" (Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court). The United Nations Commission on Human

Rights notes that while the primary focus of the Convention is on southern Africa, its implementation is broad, reflecting the shared concern for recognizing and addressing apartheid wherever it takes place.

In Afrikaans, which has roots in Dutch, the term apartheid translates to “separation”. This term denotes segregating individuals through “a set of policies and practices of legal discrimination, political exclusion, and social marginalization, based on racial, national, or ethnic origins” (Pappé 73). This concept, “apartheid”, gained traction in academic and activist literature during the 1980s and 1990s.

Edward Said’s work *The Question of Palestine* highlights similarities between Zionism and Western colonialist ideals in the treatment of Arabs, particularly Palestinians. For instance, Said discusses how Israelis, as Western colonialists in a perceived backward region, hold certain beliefs about Arabs and their “nomadic” habits (Said, 1979, p. 37). Edward Said’s work on culture and imperialism is a significant contribution to the understanding of the impact of settler colonialism on indigenous peoples. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said contends that imperialism, particularly settler colonialism, not only exerts control over land and resources but also imposes its cultural norms, values, and ways of life on native populations. This cultural imposition serves to marginalize and undermine the indigenous cultures and identities, perpetuating a form of intellectual and cultural domination.

In the 1990s, historian Patrick Wolfe from Australia came up with the concept of settler colonialism. He said it’s not just about when settlers arrived, but how they took over the land by getting rid of the native people. It’s different from traditional colonialism, which focused more on using the native population for their benefit. Wolfe said that even after the frontier closed, settler colonialism continued, and that it still happens today. He even said that Israel is an example of modern settler colonialism. Some other experts have questioned Wolfe’s idea, saying that many situations involve both getting rid of the native population and using them for gain.

The idea of settler colonialism centres around the lasting settlement and uprooting of native communities by settlers. This has played a consequential role in the histories of North America, as well as other countries such as Australia and South Africa. Lorenzo Veracini, an Associate Professor of History at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, has authored multiple books including *Israel and Settler Society* (2006), *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (2010), *The Settler Colonial Present* (2015), and *The World Turned Inside Out* (2021). Numerous scholars and activists contend that the formation of Israel and its subsequent expansion into the occupied territories of Palestine can be interpreted through the lens of settler colonialism. This approach posits that by integrating the colonial settlers into the existing population, they are regarded as the authentic inhabitants of the land, thereby displacing the original inhabitants who previously occupied it.

The racial nature of Israel's settler colonialism and its apartheid-like modalities in the treatment of Palestinians have been underlined as interlinked phenomena, bolstering the Jewish nationals' spatial and temporal dominance and systematically oppressing Palestinians to maintain it. Critics emphasize that the determinant factor in the conflict lies in the extreme maldistribution of power and the international community's role in applying necessary pressure to dismantle Israel's racist regime.

The existing landscape raises pertinent questions about the efficacy of international law in safeguarding the individual and collective rights of indigenous minorities, particularly in the context of Palestinian Arabs. While international law enshrines the entitlement of Indigenous minorities to preserve their distinct culture, language, and religion within the framework of individual and collective citizenship rights, the Israeli government's denial of their classification as an "Indigenous minority" in favour of privileging Jewish identity challenges the efficacy and enforcement of international legal standards.

This study does not seek to provide a comprehensive review of human rights violations against Palestinians because human rights

organizations have extensively documented such issues over the years. Instead, it emphasizes the lack of literature addressing the applicability of the apartheid framework to the overall experience of the Palestinian people under Zionist settler colonialism.

This study aims to thoroughly analyze the historical and current context of Israel’s ethnocratic dynamics, particularly regarding discriminatory policies against Palestinian Arabs. It seeks to explore the legal, social, and human rights consequences of Israel’s governance and its treatment of indigenous minorities, addressing existing literature gaps and offering insights that could influence perceptions of Israeli policies and governance. Additionally, the research intends to critically assess how international law addresses the rights of indigenous minorities within the framework of settler colonialism to unravel the complexities of Israel’s ethnocratic system. The research employs a qualitative analysis of archival data and reports from Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations, including Al Haq, B’Tselem, and Adala, to ensure objectivity, while also analyzing primary documents such as the Rome Statute, the Apartheid Convention, and relevant international laws.

#### ISRAELI APARTHEID AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

The term “apartheid” refers to a system of policies and practices that promote legal discrimination, political exclusion, and social marginalization based on racial, national, or ethnic origins. Notably, Ilan Pappé, in his book, *The Many Faces of Apartheid*, argues that Israel adopted some of the tools and mechanisms used by the South African Apartheid regime. It is noteworthy that both Israel and the Apartheid government in South Africa were established in the same year, 1948. Furthermore, both countries exhibit significant economic power imbalances, with Black South Africans and Palestinian people facing severe economic hardships. However, while black labour was necessary and respected in some ways in

South Africa, Israel does not depend on Palestinian labour to function. As a result, Palestinians may be viewed as dispensable.

The term “apartheid” has become used by widely respected human rights organizations. For instance, on April 27, 2021, Human Rights Watch, one of the world’s credible rights groups, released an extensive report concluding that Israel is an apartheid state. A similar conclusion has been reached by B’tselem, a leading Israeli rights group, in its report, entitled “A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: this is Apartheid.” These two recent documents have assisted the vast literature classifying Israel as such. Apartheid is a crime against humanity that involves brutal acts against a racial group such as murder, persecution, torture, elimination, or enslavement. These behaviours are the product of a systematized regime of systematic oppression and dominance by one racial group over another.

It is essential to highlight that Israel exemplifies settler colonialism. Unlike colonialism, settler colonialism prioritizes the land itself rather than the surplus value derived from combining native labour with it. As stated by Wolfe (1999), “The primary goal of settler-colonization is the land itself, rather than the surplus value derived from combining native labour with it” (p. 163).

The Oslo Agreements signed between 1993 and 1995 made it easier for Israel to establish an apartheid state against the Palestinians. According to Pappé, the Oslo Accords did not benefit the Palestinian people; instead, they rendered them subservient to Israeli authority, as shown in the following chart released by

*Aljazeera Labs.*



Furthermore, international law was not used to oppose Israeli Apartheid since Israeli law was superior in this case. As a result, Israel maintains control over the occupied regions. It is noteworthy that

Israel is considered a sovereign state with absolute authority over everything within its recognized boundaries. Therefore, whatever occurs is beyond the control of the international community (Tilley 2015, 2).

#### INTERNATIONAL LAW TO MINORITY GROUPS

The concept of safeguarding human rights can be traced back to the seventeenth century, specifically to the 1763 Treaty of Paris. This treaty was signed between France, Spain, and Great Britain, and it granted protection to religious minorities of Roman Catholics in Canadian territories ceded by France. The notion of protecting human rights gained further momentum in the aftermath of the atrocities committed during World War II. Since then, international law has been enriched with declarations that recognize individual and collective rights, which enable people to live with dignity. However, these declarations are not accompanied by enforceable legal obligations for states, making them “soft international law.” Moreover, international law lacks a precise definition of the term “minority.” Although widely accepted definitions, such as Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, exist, they are ambiguous. The article suggests that the individuals who are to be protected are those who collectively share a culture, religion, and language that are distinct from the majority. Nonetheless, an agreement on defining national minorities has not been achieved at either the international or domestic level, which some states exploit to claim that they have no minorities. As a result, legal measures are necessary to safeguard the collective rights of minority groups.

Collective rights, unlike individual rights, apply to group differentiation within a state. They are essential for protecting the unique identity of indigenous minorities from the pressures exerted by the majority. In other words, indigenous minorities are often marginalized because ruling states tend to view them as a potential threat to their legitimacy. As a result, these minorities are forced to

remain subjugated or expelled, as is the case with the Arab minority living in Israel.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is the result of international efforts to secure the rights of minorities, indigenous people, and caste groups. It requires states to use legislation to eradicate racial discrimination and to put an end to inequality. Moreover, the UN Declaration on Minority Rights emphasizes the need to preserve and protect minority cultures to ensure social, cultural, economic, and political equality.

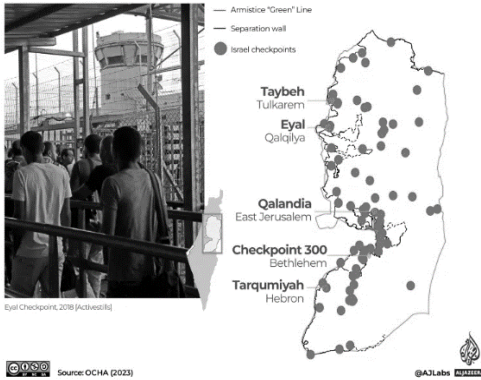
In addition to the global system of the United Nations, there are several mechanisms for protecting minorities, such as the joint efforts of the Council of Europe, the limited activities of the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Commission for Democracy Through Law, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. These international instruments promote equality and non-discrimination through a range of impressive rules. However, their effectiveness in protecting minorities is uncertain, particularly when examining the status of indigenous minorities living in states that claim to be democratic despite being involved in ethnic conflicts.

#### PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

Over the past decades, a series of discriminatory laws and policies have operated to subjugate Arab citizens of Israel, solidifying their status as second-class citizens. The mistreatment of this vulnerable minority and the persistent human rights violations have led to the characterization of Israel as an “apartheid” state.

The term “apartheid” is indeed contentious, commonly associated with the discriminatory system of segregation between whites and blacks in South Africa. However, in this context, it is deliberately used to bring attention to the unequal treatment of Arabs residing in Israel. For instance, within Jerusalem, most Israeli

and Arab neighbourhoods are segregated. Furthermore, beyond Jerusalem, the dividing wall and the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip isolate Arab communities not only from the Jewish population but also from the outside world, unmistakably echoing an apartheid regime, as demonstrated in the following chart on Israeli checkpoints:



In Israel, being a citizen doesn't necessarily mean being part of the national identity (Zreik 2008). Even though the Zionist state was created specifically for the Jewish people, it claims to be a democracy. However, Israeli citizenship is based more on ethno-

nationality (being Jewish or not) rather than just on citizenship, resulting in rights being determined by factors beyond citizenship. Palestinian citizens in Israel see their citizenship as colonial, tied to institutional discrimination, vulnerability, and control. From their perspective, citizenship mainly implies accepting the state's authority in exchange for basic services (Zreik, 140). Critics argue that the 1980 law declaring Jerusalem as the capital of a Jewish nation-state and the law of return were deliberate moves to ensure ethnic superiority.

The aggressive land laws aimed at transferring land from Palestinian ownership to the authority of the Zionist state serve to prevent the return of Palestinian refugees to their land or properties. To legitimize this forceful displacement, Israel enacted several complementary laws, including The Absentees' Property Law, The State Property Law, and The Land Acquisition Law. Through these laws, the Israeli military was able to demolish over 80 per cent of Palestinian towns and villages, resulting in the Israeli state owning

more than 93 per cent of the land, while Palestinian Arab citizens have ownership of only about 3 per cent. Even this minimal portion is not secure, as the Israeli state could find legal grounds to transfer it under its control, exemplified by the Right to Residency law, which is mirrored in the following chart proposed by Human Rights Watch:



According to AIHaq, which is a human rights organization, Palestinians who have a “permanent” residency status to live in Jerusalem do not have an inherent right of entry, it is rather a revocable privilege. For example, since 1967 more than

15000 Palestinians from East Jerusalem have had their residency rights revoked. Most revocations were justified by the claim that Jerusalem wasn’t their “centre of life.” In other words, Palestinians who stayed away from Jerusalem for a while can lose their right to residency. However, the truth, according to Human Rights Watch, is that revocations are used to punish Palestinians as the Interior Minister revokes the residency status of any Palestinian who is considered a threat. Such policies do not apply to Jewish citizens, as shown in the table below, which is based on information from Human Rights Watch’s 2021 report:

<b>Jewish Americans born in the US</b>	<b>Palestinian Refugee Born in Lebanon</b>
-Can visit Israel and most of the West Bank and can find programs that may fund the trip.	-Is barred from entry to Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza.
-Can move to live in Israel because of being Jewish. The 1950 Law of Return can guarantee will afford him/ her a free flight.	-Is barred from returning and denied residency rights, even if he/ she has family living there.

<p>-Is entitled to automatic citizenship even if he/ she has never set foot in Israel before, due to the 1952 Citizenship Law.</p>	<p>-Is ineligible if his/her family became refugees between 1947 and 1949, even if they had lived there for generations before.</p>
<p>-Can pass along legal status and even citizenship to his/ her spouse (except if they’re Palestinian from the OPT or several Arab countries).</p>	<p>-He/She has no legal status and cannot gain one, even by marrying a citizen or resident of Israel.</p>

The Nakba Law, enacted in 2011, restricts the free political expression of the Arab community, hindering their ability to collectively express and preserve their shared historical memory. Palestinians traditionally describe the date of the creation of the Zionist state as the “Nakba”, which means the worst or most massive catastrophe because of the disaster experienced by more than 700,000 Palestinians who were expelled. The Nakba Law gives authority to the Finance Minister to reduce funding to any institution that mourns the establishment of Israel. Therefore, this law hampers the ability of Arab educational, cultural, and political organizations to collectively express and preserve their shared historical memory. Similarly, the Anti-Boycott Law violates the rights of Arabs to express their political views peacefully without using violence.

The Sectarian Representation Law, passed in 2014, reclassifies Christian citizens as non-Arab, employing the divisive “divide and rule” strategy. This legislation illustrates the formal separation between Christians and Muslim Arabs, deepening inequalities and isolating Muslim Arabs, potentially fueling continuous chaos in the region. Sponsor of the law and leader of the Lukud Party Yariv Levin explained that Christians are the allies of Jews and their counterweight to the Muslims and they deserve recognition and separate representation (The Jerusalem Post). As a result, they shouldn’t be called Arabs even if they share the same culture, language, and history. As it was explained by the director of public policy for the Abraham Fund, Aya Ben Amos, this legislation is the first formal separation between Christians and Muslim Arabs.

These examples of discriminatory legislation provide insight into the interconnected dynamics of Israeli apartheid and settler colonialism, highlighting the institutionalized discrimination and erasure of Palestinian identity and culture within the legal framework of Israel. These aforementioned instances elucidate only a fraction of the discriminatory manifestations within Israeli law against marginalized groups. A comprehensive account of the remaining apartheid laws, which are either currently operational or in the process of enactment, would require extensive research.

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has characterized itself in its declaration of independence as a Jewish and democratic state. However, to maintain its Jewishness, Israel has avoided every commitment to the principles of democracy. Israel is an ethnocracy since it has a bias in favour of one ethnic group and grants that group privileges. For instance, the “Bill of Rights of Israel” excludes specific rights to equality, deepening discrimination against the Arab minority. This characterization is not only unrepresentative but also undemocratic, particularly when a significant portion of the population is not Jewish. Therefore, the major aim of such inhuman practices is to dominate, as highlighted in the following chart released by Human Rights Watch:



The Arab community in Israel constitutes a minority compared to the Jewish majority. This non-dominant group has a different culture, religion, language, and ethnicity. However, before the establishment of the Zionist state in 1948, they used to constitute the majority and they represented the indigenous people of

that land. This historical context is critical as international law provides specific protections for indigenous minorities. Thus, Arab citizens of Israel should have been acknowledged as sovereign people, entitled to self-determination and autonomy as recognized in the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights in Article 4.

Prominent human rights activists and organizations, including the Mossawa Center and Adala, advocate for the recognition and promotion of indigenous rights for Palestinian Arabs in Israel to foster peace and stability in the region, especially given the history of discriminatory policies, underscoring the broader context of settler colonialism.

#### THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF ISRAELI APARTHEID AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

Several countries, including Australia, the United States, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada, have experienced settler colonialism, which led to the displacement of indigenous populations and the replacement of their symbols with those of the settlers. In the case of Israel, this erasure of Palestinian identity and culture is comparable to the treatment of indigenous cultures in the United States and Australia.

Apartheid, in the context of settler colonialism, encompasses various discriminatory strategies employed against Palestinians, forming a distinct form of colonialism. Settler colonialism, unlike traditional colonialism, operates within the boundaries of a settler political entity, prioritizing the acquisition and control of land over the utilization of Indigenous labour.

Israel's classification as an apartheid state aligns with the objectives of settler colonialism, aiming to erase the identity of the native population while assimilating the colonialists as the new natives. This process leads to the progressive disappearance of indigenous and exogenous groups through various methods such as

extermination, expulsion, imprisonment, containment, and assimilation.

The institutional framework in the context of apartheid as a strategy of settler colonialism in Israel encompasses the legal, political, and socio-economic systems that perpetuate differential treatment between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. This framework is characterized by a set of laws, policies, and practices that prioritize the rights and resources of Israeli Jews while marginalizing Palestinians.

Understanding apartheid as a strategy of settler colonialism in Israel involves considering the notion of separation, exemplified by laws designed to treat Israeli Jews and Palestinians differently. Key legislation, such as the Law of Return and the Nation-State law and the provision of separate education systems for Palestinians and Jews, underscores the disparities in resource allocation and support for education, effectively illustrating the impact of settler colonialism in Israel.

The institutional framework also encompasses the broader societal and economic structures that sustain differential treatment and segregation. It influences housing policies, employment opportunities, access to healthcare, and other essential services, perpetuating disparities between the two communities. One aspect of socio-economic marginalization is disparities in access to resources and opportunities. Palestinian communities in Israel often face challenges in land ownership, employment, and economic development. This can be attributed to historical land confiscation, discriminatory housing policies, and unequal access to economic resources, which have contributed to entrenched socio-economic disparities. Furthermore, restrictions on freedom of movement, limitations on trade and commerce, and challenges in obtaining building permits contribute to the socio-economic marginalization of Palestinians. These factors hinder economic development and perpetuate dependence, contributing to the broader cycle of marginalization, as summed up in the following table:

<b>Citizen of Israel Born in an Israeli Town</b>	<b>Palestinian Citizen of Israel Born in Unrecognized Bedouin Village</b>
-Israel recognizes his community and actively nurtures the development of Jewish communities.	-Israel does not recognize 35 Palestinian Bedouin communities, making it impossible for 90.000 or so residents to live lawfully in their homes.
-Can access basic services without any obstacles due to billions of shekels Israel has invested in major infrastructure projects to attract Jewish residents to the area.	-Israel refuses to connect his unrecognized village to national electricity or water grids or provide basic services like paved roads, sewage systems, and schools.
-Israel continues to make more and more land available to Jewish communities to encourage them to stay and raise their family there.	-Israel seeks to concentrate Bedouins in government-planned townships. As a resident of an unrecognized village, they live under constant threat of home demolition.
-Can move to a big city or other towns across Israel.	-Jewish towns have admissions committees that have power by law to exclude Palestinian citizens.
-Can build a home since Israel has allocated large swaths of the West Bank to settlements, where plans have been approved to build thousands of homes.	-It’s virtually impossible to build a home because 60% of the West Bank is under exclusive Israeli control (Area C) and may have the home demolished rather than get a permit to build.
-Can drive on roads designed to bypass Palestinian communities.	-Even with a rarely issued Israeli permit, they’ll face checkpoints, causing delay and humiliation.

In conclusion, the comparison between the treatment of Israeli citizens born in recognized towns and Palestinian citizens born in unrecognized Bedouin villages vividly illustrates the deep-seated disparities, institutionalized marginalization, and unequal access to resources and opportunities. This stark contrast emphasizes the pervasive impact of discriminatory policies and practices on the lives of Palestinians, highlighting the urgent need for a comprehensive and equitable approach to addressing these systemic challenges within Israeli society.

## ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK

Two British academics, Hilary Rose and Steven Rose, proposed an academic boycott of Israel in 2002, citing the academic and cultural boycotts imposed on apartheid South Africa as a model for opposing Israeli policy. The initiative inspired Omar Barghouti, founder of the Boycott Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement, to title the third chapter of his book, *The South Africa Strategy for Palestine*. Also, former President Jimmy Carter's 2006 book, *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid*, introduces the apartheid parallel. Similarly, Professor Noam Chomsky suggests, in an interview, that "Israel's actions in Palestine are much worse than apartheid in South Africa". This description goes hand in hand with the findings of the Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé, that have exposed the oppressive Zionist policies against Palestinians and classified them as ethnic cleansing.

Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) began in 2004 in Toronto and is currently celebrated in 25 locations throughout the world, including Palestine and South Africa. IAW was organized with titles such as "60 Years of Nakba: End Israeli Apartheid" (Hartman 2010). The apartheid analysis, presented during IAW, has played a significant role in increasing awareness and distributing information about Zionism, the Palestinian liberation fight, and its parallels with the South African anti-Apartheid movement. As a symbolic gesture, the introductory talk of IAW was delivered in Soweto, South Africa.

South Africans have spoken out in support of the BDS campaign. A pertinent description of the analogy between the two movements was offered by Desmond Tutu who wrote:

The solution is more likely to come from that nonviolent toolbox we developed in South Africa in the 1980s, to persuade the government of the necessity of altering its policies. The reason these tools – boycott, sanctions and divestment – ultimately proved effective was because they had a critical mass of support, both inside and outside the country (Tutu 2021).

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's direct comparison of Israel's treatment of Palestinians to apartheid South Africa found widespread approval, except from Zionists who charged him with anti-Semitism, even after his death. This South African support has benefited the campaign's popularity in other countries that have played a key role in supporting solidarity activities against apartheid South Africa.

Palestinian intellectuals in exile, such as Edward Said, and social justice groups, such as BDS, have succeeded in branding Zionism as apartheid, colonialism, and ethnic cleansing. With this accomplishment in mind, Israeli Intelligence Officer Einat Wilf claims that Israel's present battle is being fought with words and ideas rather than missiles and weaponry (Wilf 2014).

During Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), awareness of Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights is raised on an annual basis. Student activists choose when and what causes to focus on. IAW initiatives include information sessions, the recreation of apartheid walls, and other events to educate and raise awareness of Israel's settler-colonial practices among students. IAW enables the Palestinian liberation movement to network and build relationships with other campaigns against racism, injustice, and discrimination (BDS).

IAW has organized activities in many locations across the world, making it harder for Israel to conceal or whitewash its apartheid tactics. The IAW helped the emergence of the BDS movement and the extension of the Palestinian liberation struggle, particularly with the advent of the digital media era. As a result, the ability to narrate is no longer restricted to institutionalized elites; rather, it has been available to regular people, notably BDS activists and dispersed organizations without the money and capacity to effect social change.

This comparison to apartheid South Africa has contributed to weakening the myth that Israel is a democratic and special state. Consideration of Israel as an oppressive system of settler colonialism can be viewed as a triumph of social justice movements,

including the BDS. The direct participation of South African activists has been critical in growing civil society support for the BDS campaign, particularly among student groups. By framing Israel within the context of settler colonialism and apartheid, these efforts aim to dismantle oppressive systems and promote equality and justice for the Palestinian people.

## CONCLUSION

Though Israel purports to be a democracy, its treatment of its population has been deeply influenced by ethnicity, leading to its evolution into an ethnocracy. This transformation is due to Zionist colonialism, which prioritizes “racial elimination” to secure property with minimal Palestinian presence, often consolidating them in small areas through civil law, military law, administrative law, and efforts such as systematic warfare in Gaza.

Apartheid in Israel is a direct consequence of Zionist settler colonialism, resulting in Palestinian displacement, settlement installation, and a marked increase in privileges for Jewish communities at the expense of increasing discrimination against Palestinians over time. This discrimination is not only perpetuated through societal hostilities but also through the continuous enactment of laws that obstruct the Palestinians’ ability to lead a normal life. The need to expose such systemic discrimination and a state that privileges one community at the expense of marginalizing others is an urgent humanitarian call, not to be misconstrued as anti-Semitism.

There is a pressing humanitarian need to recognize Palestinian Arabs in Israel as an “indigenous minority”, affording them the right to self-determination. The recent enactment of discriminatory laws against the Arab minority by the Zionist state calls for urgent international attention to address violations that impede the peace and stability of the entire region. Objective criteria for the recognition of minority status, independent of state influence, are

crucial to address state passivity towards minorities and uphold international law.

This call emphasizes the potential for optimism in the robust alliances that brought apartheid to an end in South Africa, serving as a model for a seemingly hopeless situation. The pressure for the abolition of apartheid must be applied by the international community to eliminate the systemic discrimination in Israel. Palestinians will persist in their fight for independence, seeking a future of shared liberty rather than exclusive sovereignty and eternal dominance.

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EXPLORING THE UNSEEN.  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE OF ASEXUAL INDIVIDUALS  
AMIDST THE HYPERSEXUALIZED FABRIC OF SOCIETY AND  
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

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**Abstract.** This paper examines the psychological terrain inhabited by asexual individuals amidst the pervasive hypersexualization of contemporary society. Asexuality, characterized by a persistent lack of sexual attraction, stands in stark contrast to social norms that equate sexual activity with fulfilment and acceptance. The paper explores the challenges faced by asexual individuals, including internal conflicts, social pressure, and misconceptions. It delves into the dissonance between expectations and personal identity, highlighting the impact on self-identity, self-esteem, and intimate relationships. Throughout the exploration, the paper emphasizes the importance of coping mechanisms and support systems for asexual individuals. From seeking solace in supportive communities to engaging in therapy and advocating for education, these mechanisms empower asexual individuals to navigate a sexualized world authentically. The conclusion emphasizes the need for greater social recognition and inclusivity towards asexual individuals. By challenging misconceptions, fostering understanding, and promoting acceptance, society can create an environment where every individual's sexual orientation is valued and respected. Ultimately, this paper serves as both an exploration and a call to action. It sheds light on the challenges faced by asexual individuals and advocates for a more empathetic and inclusive society. Through collective efforts, we can create a world where every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation, can thrive authentically and without fear of judgment or stigma.

**Keywords:** asexuality, hypersexualization, psychological landscape, social expectations, intimate relationships, coping mechanisms, support systems, self-identity, misconceptions, inclusivity

## INTRODUCTION

In a world saturated with sexual imagery and expectations, the psychological landscape of asexual individuals remains largely unexplored. Amidst the hypersexualized fabric of modern society, where intimacy is often equated with sexual activity, asexual individuals navigate a complex terrain of internal conflict, societal pressure, and misconceptions (Dawson et al. 2016, 350). This paper embarks on a journey to unravel the intricacies of this psychological landscape, delving into the challenges faced by asexual individuals and the coping mechanisms they employ within the context of intimate relationships. Asexuality, defined by a persistent lack of sexual attraction towards any gender, stands as a distinct orientation amidst a societal narrative that valorizes sexual engagement as a pinnacle of personal fulfilment (Hooff 2015, 2). This narrative, propagated by media, advertising, and social norms, permeates collective consciousness, shaping expectations and interpersonal dynamics (Gupta 2016, 3). Yet, for asexual individuals, this narrative often clashes with their intrinsic identities, leading to a dissonance that reverberates through their self-identity and relationships. The thesis of this exploration is clear: to understand the psychological challenges faced by asexual individuals amidst a hypersexualized society and to illuminate the coping mechanisms they employ, particularly in navigating physical intimacy within relationships. This entails a deep dive into the internal conflicts, self-identity struggles, and external perceptions that shape their lived experiences. Throughout this paper, we will examine the social expectations of sexual activity as normative behaviour and the contrasting reality faced by asexual individuals. We will explore the psychological impact of this disparity, delving into issues of self-esteem, internal conflict, and external misconceptions. Furthermore, we will dissect the unique challenges asexual individuals encounter in romantic relationships, emphasizing the importance of communication, boundary-setting, and mutual understanding. Amidst these challenges, we will also illuminate the vital role of coping mechanisms and support systems in assisting asexual individuals to

navigate the complexities of a sexualized world. From seeking supportive communities and resources to engaging in therapy and advocating for education, these mechanisms serve as beacons of resilience and empowerment. Ultimately, this paper is a call to action for greater understanding, acceptance, and inclusivity within society. By recognizing and valuing the diverse spectrum of human sexuality, including asexuality, we can pave the way towards a world where every individual is free to live authentically, without the burden of societal expectations or misconceptions. Through this exploration, we embark on a journey towards a more empathetic and inclusive society, where every identity is celebrated within the rich framework of human experience.

### **Definition of Asexuality**

Asexuality is a sexual orientation characterized by a persistent lack of sexual attraction toward any gender (Brunning & Mckeever 2020, 2). Unlike celibacy, which is a choice to abstain from sexual activity, asexuality is an intrinsic part of an individual's identity (Scherrer 2008, 626). Asexual people may have romantic feelings that are not accompanied by sexual desire, and they can form deep emotional connections without the need for sexual intimacy (Rothblum et al. 2018, 14). This orientation is part of the broader spectrum of human sexuality and is distinct from other sexual orientations that involve sexual attraction.

### **Prevalence of Sexual Imagery and Expectations in Modern Society**

The saturation of sexual imagery in modern society is not merely a cultural phenomenon but a psychological directive that shapes individual and collective consciousness. Media and advertising, as the vanguards of this imagery, propagate a narrative that equates sexual activity with personal fulfilment and social acceptance (Gupta 2015, 139). This omnipresent narrative engenders social expectations that regard sexual engagement as a normative milestone, inadvertently creating a dichotomy with asexual

identities. The prevalence of such imagery and expectations not only influences interpersonal dynamics but also insidiously pressures individuals to align with a hypersexualized paradigm (Grinde 2021, 6). For asexual individuals, this can result in a dissonance between social expectations and personal inclinations, necessitating a nuanced understanding of the psychological landscape they navigate.

### **Thesis Statement**

Exploring the psychological challenges and coping mechanisms of asexual individuals in a sexualized world, particularly in the context of physical intimacy within relationships.

In a society where sexual imagery and expectations are pervasive, asexual individuals often navigate a complex psychological terrain. The thesis of this exploration is to understand the psychological challenges faced by asexual individuals amidst the hypersexualized fabric of society and to examine their coping mechanisms, particularly in the context of physical intimacy within relationships. Asexuality, defined as the lack of sexual attraction towards others, stands in stark contrast to the sexual norms perpetuated by media and advertising. This dichotomy can lead to internal conflicts for asexual individuals as they grapple with societal pressures to conform to a norm that does not resonate with their personal identity. The psychological impact of such a dissonance is multifaceted, affecting self-identity and self-esteem. Asexual individuals may experience a sense of isolation or alienation, compounded by external perceptions and misconceptions about asexuality, which often equate a lack of sexual interest with a lack of emotional depth or human connection. Navigating physical intimacy in relationships poses unique challenges for asexual individuals. The expectation of sexual activity as an integral part of romantic relationships can create tension and misunderstanding. It is crucial for asexual individuals to engage in open communication and boundary-setting with their partners to foster a relationship

dynamic that respects their orientation. Consent and mutual understanding become paramount in these scenarios, ensuring that both partners feel comfortable and valued. Coping mechanisms and support systems play a vital role in assisting asexual individuals to live authentically in a sexualized world. Seeking supportive communities and resources can provide a sense of belonging and validation. Therapy and counselling can offer strategies for dealing with societal pressures and enhancing self-acceptance. Furthermore, education is instrumental in fostering understanding and acceptance, both for asexual individuals and the broader society. Recognizing the psychological challenges faced by asexual individuals is essential for a more inclusive society. It is a call to action for all to cultivate an environment where diverse sexual identities, including asexuality, are respected and valued. The journey towards inclusivity involves not only acknowledging the existence of asexuality but also embracing the rich forms of human experiences it represents.

## THE SEXUALIZED WORLD

### **Overview of Sexualization in Media and Advertising**

The media landscape is saturated with sexual content, serving as a barometer for societal norms and expectations. This sexualization is not merely incidental; it is a deliberate strategy employed by advertisers to capture attention and drive consumer behaviour. The ubiquity of sexual imagery in advertising campaigns, television shows, movies, and online platforms underscores a pervasive message: that sexuality is a commodity, an ideal to be aspired to, and a standard by which individuals are measured (Ward 2016, 562). For asexual individuals who experience no sexual attraction, this relentless barrage of sexual content can be alienating. The contrast between their personal experiences and the hypersexualized media environment underscores a societal expectation of sexual engagement as a normative behaviour. This disparity can engender

feelings of exclusion and invisibility, as asexual identities are rarely represented or acknowledged in mainstream media narratives (Colborne 2018, 10). The implications of this disconnect are profound, influencing not only self-perception but also the dynamics of intimate relationships. Asexual individuals must navigate a world where sexual desirability and activity are often prerequisites for social acceptance and romantic involvement. The challenge, then, is to reconcile an asexual identity with a society that equates sexual activity with normalcy, success, and fulfilment.

### **Social Expectations of Sexual Activity as a Norm**

Social expectations of sexual activity as a norm are deeply ingrained within the cultural ethos, perpetuating the notion that sexual engagement is a universal human experience. This normative stance is reinforced through various societal channels, including education, legislation, and media, which collectively propagate the idea that sexual activity is a fundamental aspect of adult life. Such expectations are not merely passive cultural artefacts but are actively promoted, suggesting that a fulfilling life is synonymous with sexual activity (Tolman & McClelland 2011, 248). For individuals who identify as asexual, this societal norm presents a profound challenge. Asexuality, characterized by an absence of sexual attraction, diverges from the expected sexual narrative. The presumption of universal sexual desire marginalizes asexual individuals, often leading to their invisibility or pathologization within the societal discourse (Conley-Fonda & Leisher 2018, 4). The pressure to conform to sexual norms can result in internalized stigma, social isolation, and strained interpersonal relationships for those who do not experience sexual attraction (Mittal et al. 2012, 979). The dissonance between societal expectations and asexual identity necessitates a critical examination of the ways in which sexual norms are constructed and the impact they have on diverse sexual orientations. Recognizing and respecting asexual identities requires a shift in social attitudes, moving towards a more inclusive understanding of human sexuality that acknowledges and values the spectrum of sexual experiences.

### **The Contrast Between Social Norms and Asexual Identity**

The social fabric, woven with threads of sexual norms, often presents a contrasting backdrop for individuals identifying as asexual. Asexuality exists in stark contrast to the prevalent societal narrative that equates sexual activity with normalcy and fulfilment. This dichotomy can lead to dissonance for asexual individuals, who may find themselves at odds with the pervasive sexual expectations (Steelman & Hertlein 2016, 89). The contrast is not merely a personal struggle but a social issue that highlights the need for a broader understanding of sexual diversity. Asexual individuals often face misconceptions and stereotypes that can lead to exclusion and discrimination. The social portrayal of sexual activity as an inherent part of human existence marginalizes those who do not experience sexual attraction, rendering their identity invisible or misunderstood (MacInnis & Hodson 2012, 728). This contrast underscores the importance of inclusivity and the recognition of asexuality as a valid sexual orientation. It calls for a reevaluation of societal norms and an acknowledgement of the spectrum of human sexuality. By embracing such diversity, society can move towards a more accepting and supportive environment for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON ASEXUAL INDIVIDUALS

### **Internal Conflict and Pressure to Conform and the Struggle with Self-Identity and Self-Esteem**

In the context of a hypersexualized society, asexual individuals often face an internal conflict stemming from the pressure to conform to prevailing sexual norms. This pressure is not merely a social whisper but a resounding echo throughout various facets of life, from media representation to interpersonal relationships (Vares 2021, 8). The expectation to experience and act upon sexual attraction is deeply embedded in the cultural narrative, creating dissonance for those who do not share these experiences. The internal struggle is

multifaceted, involving a tug-of-war between one's authentic self and the persona society expects one to display. Asexual individuals may find themselves questioning their own validity in the face of pervasive sexual expectations, leading to profound psychological turmoil (Gupta 2015). This pressure to conform can manifest in attempts to mimic sexual interest, resulting in discomfort and distress, or in withdrawal from social and romantic engagements to avoid expected sexual interactions. The psychological toll of this conflict can be significant, impacting self-identity and self-esteem (Garcia et al. 2012, 168). The social emphasis on sexual desirability as a measure of worth can lead to feelings of inadequacy and alienation for those who do not experience sexual attraction (Swami et al. 2019, 4). The constant bombardment of sexualized media and the rarity of asexual representation contribute to a sense of invisibility and marginalization. This can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and contribute to a negative self-image. However, the struggle with self-identity and self-esteem is not insurmountable. Asexual individuals often develop resilience and find strength in communities that affirm their identity. Supportive networks, both online and offline, provide spaces where asexual individuals can connect with others who share similar experiences. These communities play a crucial role in fostering self-acceptance and pride in one's asexual identity (Robbins et al. 2015, 757). The struggle with self-identity and self-esteem is a central psychological challenge for asexual individuals in a hypersexualized society. Recognizing and addressing this struggle is imperative for the well-being of asexual individuals and for the advancement of a society that values diverse sexual orientations. It is a call to action for inclusivity, understanding, and the celebration of all identities within the rich picture of human sexuality.

### **The Impact of External Perceptions and Misconceptions About Asexuality**

The social understanding of asexuality is often fraught with misconceptions and external perceptions that can have profound

psychological impacts on individuals who identify as asexual. Asexuality diverges from the common societal narrative that equates a fulfilling life with sexual activity. This divergence can lead to misunderstandings and stereotypes, which contribute to the stigmatization and pathologization of asexual identities (Steelman & Hertlein 2016, 89). Misconceptions about asexuality may include the belief that it is a disorder, a phase, or a choice, rather than a valid sexual orientation. Such perceptions can invalidate the experiences of asexual individuals, leading to feelings of isolation and invisibility (Mollet 2020, 195). The impact of these external perceptions is not limited to personal distress; it can also lead to discrimination and exclusion in various social settings, including the workplace, healthcare, and within the family unit. The psychological toll of navigating a world that largely misunderstands or overlooks asexuality can be significant. Asexual individuals may face questions about their capacity for love, their desire for relationships, or their overall well-being, which can exacerbate feelings of alienation (Yule et al. 2013, 146). The lack of representation in media and popular culture further compounds this issue, as it perpetuates the invisibility of asexual identities and hinders the development of a supportive and informed community (Houdenove et al. 2013, 27). To mitigate these impacts, it is crucial to challenge and correct the misconceptions about asexuality through education and advocacy. Creating spaces for open dialogue, increasing visibility through representation, and promoting research on asexuality can foster a more inclusive and understanding society. By acknowledging and respecting the spectrum of human sexuality, we can work towards a world where asexual individuals are recognized and valued, free from the burden of external misconceptions and societal prejudice.

#### NAVIGATING PHYSICAL INTIMACY IN RELATIONSHIPS

##### **Challenges in Romantic Relationships for Asexual Individuals**

In the intricate dance of romantic relationships, asexual individuals often face unique challenges that stem from the discord between

societal norms of sexual activity and their own lack of sexual attraction. The expectation of sexual intimacy as an integral component of romantic partnerships can create a chasm between asexual individuals and their partners, leading to misunderstandings and emotional distress (Dawson et al. 2016, 358). The crux of the issue lies in the pervasive belief that romantic love is inextricably linked to sexual desire - a belief that does not hold true for those who identify as asexual. This can lead to pressure on asexual individuals to engage in sexual activities despite their lack of desire, solely to meet their partner's expectations or to adhere to societal standards. Such situations can result in feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and a sense of living inauthentically (Gupta 2016, 12). Moreover, the potential for partners to misconstrue asexuality as a lack of affection or commitment can further complicate relationship dynamics, necessitating clear communication and understanding. Asexual individuals may find themselves in the position of having to constantly explain and validate their orientation, which can be emotionally taxing and detrimental to self-esteem (Scherrer 2010, 64). Addressing these challenges requires a paradigm shift in the perception of romantic relationships, recognizing that intimacy can manifest in myriad forms beyond the physical (Laurenceau et al. 1998, 1248). It calls for a broader dialogue on the spectrum of human sexuality, where asexual identities are acknowledged and respected within the context of romantic love.

### **Communication and Boundary-Setting with Partners**

Effective communication and boundary-setting are critical components in the dynamics of romantic relationships, particularly for asexual individuals. These practices serve as foundational elements that facilitate mutual understanding and respect between partners, especially when navigating the complexities of physical intimacy. Communication is the conduit through which partners can share their feelings, expectations, and concerns. For asexual individuals, it is essential to articulate their orientation and how it influences their preferences for physical intimacy. Open dialogue

allows for the exploration of each partner's needs and the co-creation of a relationship that honours both individuals' comfort levels. It is through this exchange that misconceptions can be clarified, and a deeper emotional connection can be fostered. Boundary-setting is equally important, as it defines the limits and expectations within the relationship. Asexual individuals may establish boundaries regarding physical contact, ensuring that their personal space and autonomy are respected. It is a process of negotiation, where both partners actively participate in setting terms that are agreeable and comfortable for each party. The importance of consent cannot be overstated. Consent is an ongoing, affirmative agreement that must be present in all aspects of a relationship, including physical intimacy. It is a dynamic process that requires continuous check-ins and can be withdrawn at any time. Mutual understanding of consent ensures that both partners feel safe and valued and that their boundaries are upheld (Harris et al. 2023, 578). Communication and boundary-setting are not just strategies for navigating physical intimacy; they are vital practices that uphold the dignity and autonomy of each partner. For asexual individuals, these tools are indispensable in creating romantic relationships that are fulfilling and respectful of their orientation. As society progresses towards greater inclusivity, the principles of communication, boundary-setting, and consent become ever more crucial in fostering healthy and equitable relationships for all.

### **The Importance of Consent and Mutual Understanding**

Consent and mutual understanding are pivotal in the context of intimate relationships, especially for asexual individuals navigating the complexities of physical intimacy. These concepts are not static but dynamic processes that require ongoing communication and respect for each partner's boundaries and comfort levels. Consent is the explicit and enthusiastic agreement to engage in specific forms of intimacy. It is an essential component of all relationships, ensuring that any physical interaction is mutually desired and respected. For asexual individuals, who may experience varying

levels of comfort with physical intimacy, consent becomes even more crucial. It allows them to establish and maintain their boundaries, ensuring that their autonomy and preferences are honoured. Mutual understanding is the empathetic recognition of each partner's feelings and desires. It involves a deep appreciation of the other's perspective and an acknowledgement of the diversity of sexual orientations, including asexuality. Mutual understanding fosters a supportive environment where individuals can express their needs without fear of judgment or coercion. In relationships involving asexual individuals, consent and mutual understanding can help navigate the potential mismatch in desires for physical intimacy. They allow for the creation of a relationship dynamic that is fulfilling for both partners, regardless of their sexual orientation. These principles are not only foundational for the well-being of individuals in the relationship but also serve as a model for a more inclusive and understanding society. The importance of consent and mutual understanding cannot be overstated. They are the cornerstones of healthy relationships and are particularly significant in the context of asexual individuals. By embracing these values, society can move towards greater inclusivity, where all forms of intimacy are recognized and respected, and where every individual's boundaries are upheld with dignity and care.

## DISCUSSION

The pervasive presence of asexuality in this research resonates deeply. Society often paints sexuality in such a broad brushstroke that asexuality, with its lack of sexual attraction, gets relegated to the margins. This limited understanding leads to a multitude of challenges for asexual individuals.

Firstly, the misconception that asexuality is a choice or a phase needs to be actively dismantled. Asexuality is a valid sexual orientation, and attempts to "fix" it are not only insensitive but also futile. Partners of asexual individuals should cultivate understanding and open communication. Intimacy can encompass a wide range of

expressions, and a fulfilling relationship can exist without a focus on sexual acts.

Open conversation is crucial. Asexuality deserves a place at the forefront of LGBTQIA+ discussions. By increasing visibility and fostering dialogue, we can challenge the media's hypersexualized narrative. Sexuality on television and in films is often sensationalized and exaggerated, and it should not be the sole reference point for real-life experiences.

We cannot escape the sexualized nature of our society, but we can choose not to be dictated by it. Asexual individuals, just like everyone else, deserve to define their own sexual compass. The LGBTQIA+ spectrum itself is not monolithic, and asexuality deserves recognition as a distinct and valid orientation.

Finally, the internal struggle of "being enough" in a relationship for asexual individuals is a significant hurdle. It's vital to address this fear and promote the message that asexuality is a complete and fulfilling way to exist. Healthy relationships are built on open communication, mutual respect, and a shared understanding of desires and needs, not on adhering to social expectations of sexual frequency.

This research serves as a springboard for further exploration and wider acceptance of asexuality. By fostering understanding and dismantling misconceptions, we can create a world where all sexualities, including asexuality, are valued and celebrated.

#### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

##### **Seeking Supportive Communities and Resources**

In the quest for psychological well-being, asexual individuals often seek supportive communities and resources as a refuge from the hypersexualized norms of society. These communities provide a sanctuary where asexuality is understood and celebrated, offering a contrast to the often-alienating mainstream narrative (Chasin 2013, 421). Within these spaces, individuals can share experiences, find camaraderie, and access information that affirms their identity. The

value of such resources lies in their ability to counteract the isolation that asexual individuals may feel. Online forums, social media groups, and local meetups serve as platforms for connection and exchange, fostering a sense of belonging and validation. Moreover, these communities can act as a collective voice, advocating for the visibility and recognition of asexuality in broader society. Access to accurate and comprehensive resources is also crucial. Educational materials, literature, and counselling services tailored to asexual individuals can provide guidance and support. These resources not only assist asexual individuals in navigating their own experiences but also educate others, promoting a more inclusive understanding of the diverse spectrum of human sexuality. In essence, supportive communities and resources are indispensable for the empowerment of asexual individuals. They play a pivotal role in nurturing self-acceptance, fostering resilience, and advocating for societal change.

### **Therapy and Counselling for Navigating a Sexualized Society**

Therapy and counselling play a crucial role in assisting asexual individuals to navigate the complexities of a sexualized society. These professional services provide a confidential and supportive environment where asexual individuals can explore their feelings, experiences, and challenges without judgment. Therapists can help asexual clients understand and affirm their sexual orientation, cope with societal pressures, and address any internal conflicts related to asexuality. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), for instance, can be particularly effective in challenging negative thought patterns and promoting self-acceptance. Counselling offers a space for couples, where one or both partners are asexual, to communicate openly about their needs and expectations. It can facilitate discussions on physical intimacy, helping partners establish boundaries and find mutually satisfying ways to express affection. For asexual individuals, constantly encountering sexualized media, advertising, and social expectations can be overwhelming. Therapy can provide strategies to manage this inundation, such as developing critical media literacy skills to deconstruct and analyse the sexual content

they are exposed to (Brown 2002, 44). Asexual individuals may face unique mental health challenges due to the lack of understanding and acceptance of their orientation. Therapists can offer support for issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress that may arise from these social challenges. Therapy and counselling are invaluable resources for asexual individuals, offering guidance and support as they navigate a society that often does not recognize or validate their experiences. These services not only contribute to the well-being of asexual individuals but also play a part in educating society and promoting a more inclusive understanding of the diverse spectrum of sexuality.

### **The Role of Education in Fostering Understanding and Acceptance**

Education is a powerful tool in fostering understanding and acceptance of asexual identities within the hypersexualized fabric of society. It serves as a bridge between ignorance and awareness, challenging misconceptions and broadening perspectives on the diverse spectrum of human sexuality. Incorporating comprehensive sex education in academic curricula that includes information about asexuality can dispel myths and provide a more nuanced understanding of sexual orientation. This education should start early, be age-appropriate, and continue through higher levels of learning (Shindel 2015, 1520). Educating healthcare providers, counsellors, and educators about asexuality is crucial. These professionals are often the first point of contact for individuals seeking guidance or support, and their understanding of asexuality can significantly impact the quality of care and advice provided. Utilizing media and public platforms to disseminate information about asexuality can reach a wider audience. Campaigns can highlight personal narratives, scientific research, and educational resources to normalize asexuality as a valid sexual orientation. Educational institutions should implement policies that recognize and support asexual students. This includes anti-discrimination policies, support groups, and resources that cater to the unique

needs of asexual individuals. Education plays a critical role in transforming societal attitudes towards asexuality. By promoting understanding and acceptance through various educational avenues, society can create an environment where asexual individuals are recognized, respected, and free from the psychological burdens imposed by a sexualized world. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a society that values diversity in all its forms, where every individual has the opportunity to live authentically and without prejudice.

#### EXPANDING THE UNDERSTANDING OF INTIMACY IN RELATIONSHIPS

In the contemporary discourse on relationships, it is crucial to acknowledge the existence and validity of various relationship models that do not prioritize sexual intimacy. Companionship-based partnerships, for instance, are predicated on the premise that intimacy can be multifaceted, encompassing emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic dimensions, rather than being confined to the physical aspect alone. Research indicates that romantic and sexual desires are not inextricably linked, as nearly 75% of asexual individuals report experiencing romantic attractions devoid of sexual desires. This finding underscores the diversity of relationship experiences and the need for a broader understanding of intimacy. Furthermore, the concept of intimacy extends beyond the confines of romantic relationships, as it can manifest in various forms such as emotional intimacy, which involves a deep emotional connection, intellectual intimacy, which is based on shared ideas and stimulating discussions, and experiential intimacy, which arises from shared activities and experiences. The spectrum of intimacy is thus woven from various threads of human connection. It is essential to recognize and educate about them to promote a more inclusive and comprehensive view of relationships. By doing so, we not only validate the experiences of those who do not conform to traditional sexual-centric relationship models but also enrich our collective understanding of the myriad ways in which humans can connect,

bond, and thrive together in partnerships. The recognition of comprehensive relationship models is a step towards a more inclusive society where all forms of intimacy are acknowledged and celebrated. It is a call to move beyond the narrow confines of physical intimacy and to embrace the full spectrum of human connection.

## CONCLUSION

The exploration of the psychological landscape of asexual individuals amidst the hypersexualized fabric of society unveils a complex interplay of internal struggles, social pressures, and coping mechanisms. Through our journey, we have uncovered the profound challenges faced by asexual individuals, from navigating internal conflicts to grappling with external perceptions and misconceptions. Central to our discussion has been the stark dichotomy between societal expectations of sexual activity as normative behaviour and the lived experiences of asexual individuals, who often find themselves at odds with prevailing norms. This dissonance permeates through various facets of life, influencing self-identity, self-esteem, and the dynamics of intimate relationships. However, amidst these challenges, we have also illuminated the resilience and empowerment of asexual individuals, exemplified through their utilization of coping mechanisms and support systems. From seeking solace in supportive communities to engaging in therapy and advocating for education, asexual individuals carve out spaces of understanding and acceptance within a sexualized world. This paper serves not only as an exploration of the psychological landscape of asexual individuals but also as a call to action for greater social recognition and inclusivity. By challenging misconceptions, fostering understanding, and promoting acceptance, we can create an environment where asexual individuals are valued and respected for their unique identities. As we move forward, let us continue to cultivate empathy, compassion,

and inclusivity within society, recognizing the richness and diversity of human sexuality. Through our collective efforts, we can pave the way towards a world where every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation, can thrive authentically and without fear of judgment or stigma.

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AI-DRIVEN BUILDING ARCHITECTURE.  
ETHICS, SUSTAINABILITY AND OPTIMIZATION

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**Abstract.** The architectural sector is seeing a boom in the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), motivated by its promise to improve sustainability and building efficiency. However, there is a scarcity of studies on ethical problems in AI-driven architectural methods. Data for this study were acquired from practising architects using a mixed methods approach that included questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed an increased understanding of AI's potential but also prompted worries about its ability to replace human creativity and talent. The research also emphasized the need to carefully consider ethical concerns such as prejudice, transparency, and responsibility. Respondents were also concerned that AI might exacerbate current biases in the industry, notably regarding gender, race, and socioeconomic status. The research indicates that the incorporation of AI in the process of designing and building can enhance sustainability and building performance optimization in the architectural domain, regardless of these limitations. Architects can use the issues highlighted in the study to incorporate AI into their practice, ensuring ethical standards in technological advancements.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence (AI), architecture, ethics, sustainability, building performance optimization

## INTRODUCTION

AI is playing an increasing role in architectural design, integrating artificial intelligence methods in design, analysis, and fabrication (Wei 2019). AI, machine learning, and the Internet are more and

more being used in building architecture to increase efficiency, grid flexibility, and occupant well-being (Ntafalias 2022). AI technology in smart buildings is growing, offering benefits such as energy consumption reduction, improved automation control and reliability, and enhanced safety and comfort for occupants (Panchalingam & Chan 2019). Artificial intelligence is integrated to create self-learning buildings that can adapt to future challenges, thereby contributing to a more sustainable world (Maksoud et al. 2022). AI in architectural design may create new jobs and replace existing ones, but it requires specialized field diversity and controlled flexibility for success (Lin & Xu 2021).

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

##### **AI, Sustainability and Building Performance Optimization**

Artificial intelligence-enabled smart buildings can potentially contribute to sustainable cities by reducing energy consumption costs and improving occupants' comfort, productivity, and safety (Sleem & Elhenawy 2023). AI-based decision support systems are primarily focused on early-stage project prediction, with economic sustainability being the most considered goal, although environmental and social goals are receiving increasing attention (Smith & Wong 2022). AI's integration into urban services can potentially enhance the sustainability of cities, but policymakers, planners, and citizens must make informed decisions about its adoption (Yigitcanlar & Cugurullo 2020): multi-zone optimization of high-rise buildings using artificial intelligence for sustainable metropolises (Ekici et al. 2021) AI is increasingly being used in the design process to save labour, accelerate implementation, and optimize building performance for construction, prefabrication, and energy efficiency (Furmanek 2021). Artificial intelligence, specifically machine learning, is being used to optimize energy performance in buildings through a rapid energy performance estimation engine (Seyedzadeh et al. 2020, 17). Advanced analytics

methods can be deployed in real-time or near-real-time to analyse the Building Automation System (BAS) data for building performance optimization (Misić et al. 2020, 2-4). Artificial intelligence algorithms, including hybrid neural networks and decision trees, can effectively enhance the accuracy of objective functions used in building energy prediction and optimization problems (Banihashemi et al. 2017). AI, specifically the Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) model, is effective in optimizing the strength, energy, and cost of building materials in construction management engineering (Ronghui & Liangrong 2021). Artificial intelligence, specifically machine learning methods, has been employed to forecast building energy consumption and efficiency (Tabrizchi et al. 2019, 1). AI techniques, such as the Firefly and Genetic Algorithms, are being used for optimizing energy consumption and maximizing user comfort in smart buildings (Wahid et al. 2019, 5, 6, 22). AI control systems and cloud-building energy and environment monitoring systems can improve building management, equipment, and system optimization and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Bumpei & Yashiro 2019, 12). Boosted regression trees, an artificial intelligence technique, are used to accurately predict the level of comfort in office buildings, providing substantially superior predictive performance (Sajjadian et al. 2018, 8, 1).

### **AI, Ethics and Architecture**

Since using AI technologies might have unintended consequences, we should think about the ethical ramifications (Sciarretta et al. 2022, 66, 71). Tzachor et al. (2020, 2) emphasize the need for robust ethics and risk assessment processes when deploying AI technologies rapidly, which can be extrapolated to other fields, including architecture. Regona et al. (2022, 2) identify significant challenges, including ethical considerations, associated with integrating AI into the construction industry. While not explicitly addressing these ethical issues, the research highlights the complexities of implementing AI technologies in this sector, such as data acquisition, labour constraints, and site variability, which

implicitly raise ethical questions concerning safety and optimal utilization. Shazly et al. (2020, 2, 3) discuss how the use of AI in building architecture presents ethical questions about data collection, applications, and conversion to commodities across the life cycle of data. An ethical framework ensures human control in building architecture while maximizing the promise of AI and minimizing the hazards (Taddeo and Floridi 2018, 2, 3). Green (2018, 2) listed a number of ethical issues with integrating AI technology, including reliance, rights, moral automation, robot awareness, evil and good uses, bias, unemployment, socioeconomic injustice, and spiritual and social psychological repercussions. AI deployment can be ethically justified using design techniques in algorithms, data sets, and applications, even in sensitive applications like national security (Carter 2022, 2, 5, 9).

## METHODOLOGY

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study investigates the ethical implications of AI adoption in architecture. Architects and members of the construction sector participated in an online survey, and architects, artificial intelligence experts, and sustainability consultants participated in semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data. Correlations, trends, and patterns are found through analysis. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the triangulation approach offers a thorough understanding of AI deployment and perspectives. The research draws attention to the particular moral issues architects and other building construction stakeholders encounter in technology-powered contemporary practice.

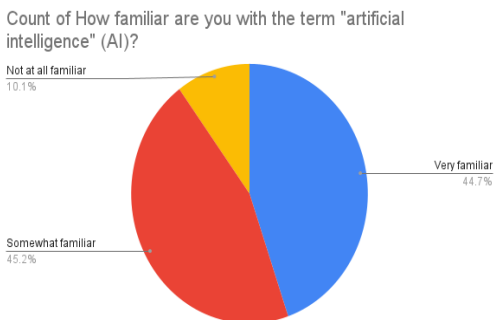
## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### **Demography**

A total of 1011 out of 1500 questionnaires were completed, with a response rate of almost 67%. The data for this study were gathered

from a sample of 1011 people working in the Nigerian construction business. Respondents were picked using a non-probability convenience sampling approach. The poll was sent electronically to industry experts such as architects, engineers, and contractors. The survey data shows men as a substantial majority of respondents (81.8%), while women were merely 18.2%. Some participants were under 25 years old (10.1%), but the biggest group fell between 31 to 35 accounting for 40.1%. This is closely followed by those who fall within the age bracket of 26-30, which makes up 34.9% of all respondents. As such, it seems that most professionals are in their early to mid-career stages and few are experienced beyond twenty years. Respondents' education level was high, with postgraduate degree holders dominating at 60% and only 35% having bachelor's degrees. For instance, this research also highlights potential barriers to entry into the profession facing younger architects as well as an increasing absence of women and older professionals even though they do not represent all architects practicing in Nigeria. However, it should be noted that these findings may be biased due to potential limitations associated with self-reported surveys.

## RESULTS

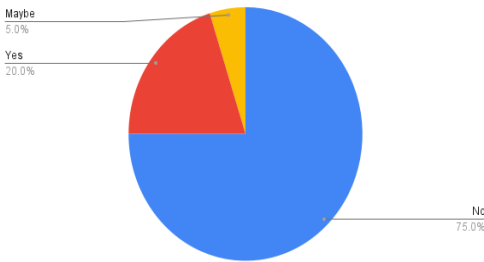


**Fig. 1:** Respondents' familiarity with Artificial Intelligence.

As per the graph, 10.1% of participants are completely ignorant of the term "artificial intelligence" (AI), whereas 44.7% and 45.2% of them have some knowledge of it. This demonstrates how artificial intelligence's reputation is growing quickly despite the fact

that it is still young and evolving. The study's findings indicate that people's ability to identify intelligence increases with age and educational attainment. Increased interest in technology has also been linked to cognitive decline, according to research. All things considered, the data indicates that artificial intelligence (AI) is a quickly taking off trend that is becoming more and more popular, particularly among youth and tech aficionados.

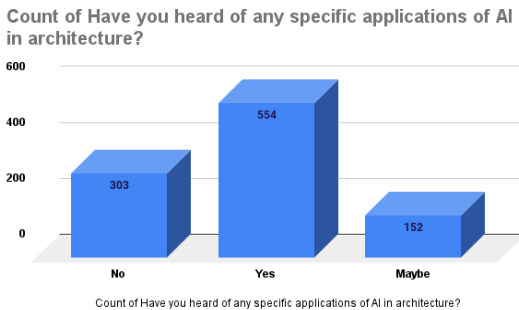
Count of Have you attended any training or workshops on the application of AI in architecture?



**Fig. 2.** Respondents' attendance at training/technical workshops on Artificial Intelligence and Architecture.

75% of respondents said they had not attended a skills development session or workshop, with "No" being the most common response. 20% of survey respondents said they had attended an AI development workshop or training, with a "yes" answer being the second most popular option. 5% of survey respondents said they were considering attending an AI development training or workshop, with "maybe" being the least likely option. Research shows that there is an urgent need for architects to be trained in these skills. This seems logical because artificial intelligence is still a very young field. However, it should not be forgotten that artificial intelligence has the power to change the planning, construction and operation of buildings. Architects and other partners must therefore develop knowledge and skills necessary for the fair and responsible use of intellectual skills.

The survey results showed that 554 out of 554 participants had at least heard of the use of skills in construction. Of a particular app, a small percentage (303 people) are not aware of that app. The number 152 suggests they may have heard of some specific practices. This demonstrates awareness of the potential of AI to



improve the design, optimization and sustainability of the built environment. A number of AI devices have been used for architectural projects as reported by the respondents.

**Fig. 3.** Respondents' familiarity with Artificial Intelligence applications in Architecture.

Some of the most popular ones are:

Coolhom: A design-focused 3D smart tool used to optimize building designs.

Midjourney: An AI platform that generates real-life images from texts.

Bing Image Generator: This search engine is designed specifically to generate visual content.

Other than these tools, architects also use other AI-based solutions to improve their design work, and notable options are:

Autodesk Generative Design Tools: Uses AI to explore different design alternatives given certain parameters.

Rhino.ai: Uses AI for 3D modelling, analysis, and visualization.

Archilogic: It makes 3D models and interactive floor plans from 2D drawings.

Autodesk Construction Cloud: Employs artificial intelligence (AI) for project management planning and coordination purposes.

Karamba: uses artificial intelligence (AI) to perform structural optimization and analysis.

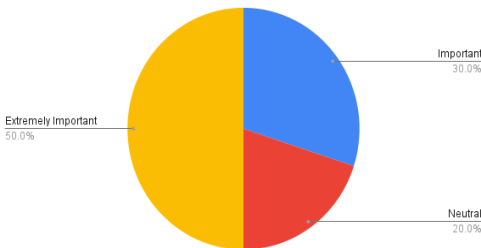
ANSYS: provides AI-powered simulation and analysis capabilities for structural engineering.

IES VE: incorporates Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the building performance simulation and energy analysis activities it performs.

Survey results show that the most positive attitudes towards the potential impact of AI are in the following areas: architecture, understanding its role in streamlining workflows, automating repetitive tasks, streamlining production, and aiding conceptualization and user communication. However, artificial intelligence also has great potential in the field, such as fulfilling the needs of architects or creating unique models and designs.

There are however concerns about financial risk and reliance on wisdom, leading to the possibility of laziness. Ethical issues and the fear that architects will become careless and lazy due to the pooling of expertise are recurring themes. Overall, analysis of the responses shows that a balanced approach is needed to reap the benefits of AI while tracking its progress.

Count of To what extent do you believe ethical considerations are important in the use of AI in architecture?

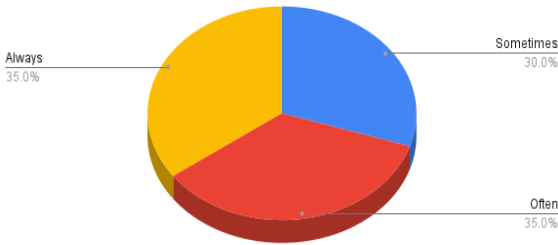


**Fig 4.** Respondents' perspective on the importance of ethical considerations in the integration of Artificial Intelligence in Architecture.

The research raises ethical questions about the use of artificial intelligence in architectural design. Some claim that artificial intelligence (AI) may be used to prevent panic in real estate education, while others are concerned that AI would provide uninteresting, unsophisticated and useless models. The necessity to restrict human participation in design and decision-making processes is stressed. The report advises against depending on the same AI algorithms over the world since this might lead to a lack of architectural change. The study also underlines the necessity to

recognize creative inspiration and the value of human aid in the design process.

Count of How often do you incorporate sustainability principles in your architectural designs?

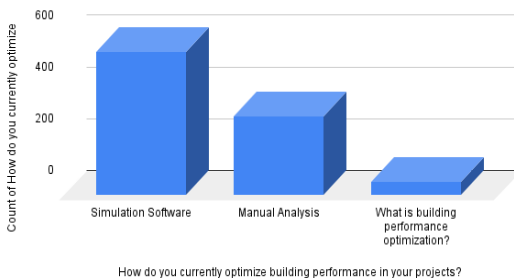


**Fig 5.** Respondents' frequency of application of sustainability principles in Architectural Design.

The survey responses suggest a range of perspectives on how AI can contribute to sustainable architectural practices. Some respondents express uncertainty or doubt about AI's ability to grasp environmental design problems effectively. However, there is a prevalent acknowledgement that AI can enhance sustainable practices by providing access to data, automating model checking against sustainability principles, optimizing resource use, and offering insights for better analysis of conditions related to sustainability. The idea that AI algorithms can generate numerous design variations, allowing architects to choose the most sustainable and efficient options, is highlighted.

The survey responses suggest a range of perspectives on how AI can contribute to sustainable architectural practices.

Count of How do you currently optimize building performance in your projects?



**Fig 6.** Respondents' level/method of optimizing building performance.

Architects encounter a number of challenges when it comes to achieving sustainability and

building performance optimization, including the sourcing and pricing of sustainable materials, knowledge and competence in contemporary environmental technology, time restrictions, project limits, and the availability of sustainable materials. AI may solve these difficulties by automating repetitive operations, improving designs for sustainability and performance, and allowing for design simulation and automation. AI can mimic building performance in terms of energy consumption, carbon emissions, and occupant comfort, allowing architects to make more informed decisions and guarantee that structures fulfil sustainability targets. It may also offer sustainable materials that suit project needs and budgets, as well as analyse massive volumes of data on buildings and their performance to find patterns and areas for improvement.

AI can produce novel concepts for sustainable and high-performance buildings, challenging conventional wisdom and exploring new possibilities. It may assist architects in closing knowledge gaps by giving access to a variety of information about sustainable building materials, technology, and design solutions *via* AI-powered databases, knowledge graphs, and expert systems. AI may also assist architects locate resources for learning about sustainability and building performance optimization, such as training courses, workshops and conferences, as well as link them with specialists in these domains. Furthermore, AI can mimic and automate zoning rules, building ordinances, and floodplain restrictions, providing greater knowledge of how different regulations affect building design and performance, which may help guide policy choices and enhance urban environmental sustainability.

Data, cybersecurity, and programming are some of the issues that AI encounters when used to optimize building performance. Input accuracy, confusing information, data privacy, and upkeep are all major challenges. AI systems may also disregard human control and preferences, emphasizing the importance of striking a balance between efficiency and human touch. A dearth of trained experts may impede the deployment and maintenance of AI-powered

systems. Cost and accessibility are other important considerations. The initial cost of installing AI-powered systems might be considerable, possibly impacting some businesses or organizations. Access to electricity, computer capacity, and connection may restrict the usage of AI in specific places or buildings.

Technology-related ethical issues in architectural projects are not uncommon. Examples include designing for the future and attaining transcendent design in building. It is out-of-date to make irrelevant designs that do not take into account the context and demands of the present. This raises moral questions regarding the architect's duty to offer designs that are responsive, sustainable, and relevant. The quest for inventive and aesthetically beautiful designs must coexist with financial and practical limits in order to achieve a transcendent design in building. A comprehensive approach to problem-solving that takes into account aesthetics, functionality, and environmental effects was stressed by respondents. They also emphasized the significance of lifelong learning and expert advice in order to successfully negotiate moral conundrums, underscoring the necessity of a comprehensive approach to design and advancement.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study highlighted the necessity for a balance between ethical considerations and human touch as it examined the possible advantages and hazards of AI in architecture. AI can speed up sustainable practices by automating, optimizing, and gaining access to data. Regarding AI's ability to improve building performance, respondents were cautiously optimistic. Before AI is extensively used in the field, there are obstacles that must be overcome. Although there are many ethical conundrums with the use of technology in architectural projects, these problems may be solved in a way that upholds moral standards. The study suggests eliminating prejudices against the use of AI in performance

optimization and sustainability. Architects may overcome their initial reluctance and promote inquiry by receiving education and being aware of the AI potential. Training and skill development can help the shift go more smoothly and boost confidence while integrating AI. Building confidence and promoting broader acceptance may be achieved by showcasing the efficacy of AI applications in architecture through successful case studies. A defined set of rules for the moral application of AI in design might help allay worries about accountability, transparency, and bias. A more controllable transition can be achieved by implementing integration in phases to reduce disturbances. Software engineers, AI specialists, and architects working together can make it easier to create AI solutions that are specifically suited to the requirements of the architectural sector.

The report suggests doing a larger-scale study to get more representative data from a diverse group of architects. It also proposes looking at AI's present use in architecture to uncover potential applications and problems. A framework for ethical AI use in architecture should be created to overcome bias, transparency, and accountability challenges. Collaboration among architects, AI specialists, and software developers helps speed up the creation of AI solutions adapted to the architectural industry's requirements. A collection of successful AI implementation case studies may highlight the practical benefits of AI while also encouraging wider use. These guidelines are intended to guarantee that the findings are generalizable and relevant to the larger architectural community.

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