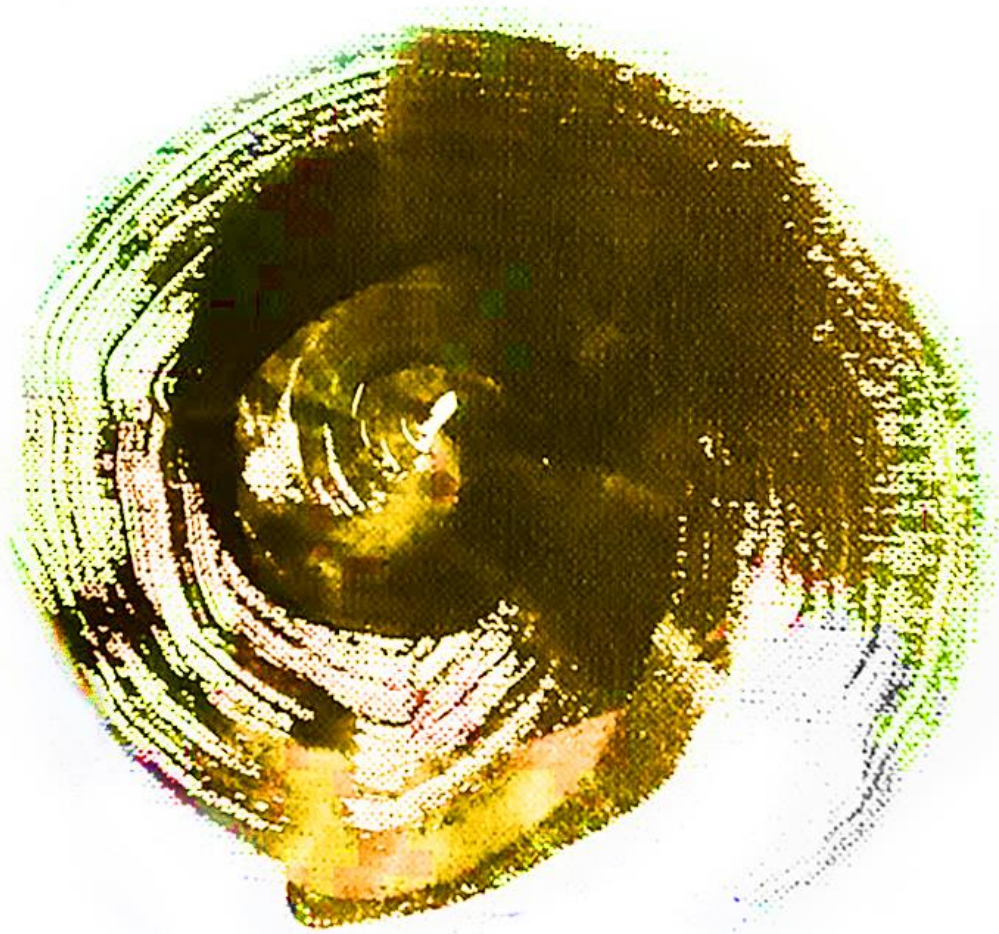


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Varia Issue

*To the victims of the global coronavirus pandemic and the medics and
researchers who fought to contain it...*

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Editorial

Introduction

The selection in this varia issue includes six articles from the areas literary criticism, cultural studies, political science, and philosophy. Thematically they fit nicely into the scope of interest of the journal *Global Conversations*, which spreads over humanities, social sciences, interdisciplinary and other relevant research addressing issues of global cultural exchange and conversation in a broadest sense.

The opening pair of articles dwell on challenges of cultural intermixing and coexistence in volatile times. Catherine MacMillan approaches Louis de Bernières' novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* for a revisit of the concept of the Other via Derrida's vocabulary of *hospitality* and *autoimmunity*. Set against the background of the Italian and German occupations of the Greek island of Cephalonia during the second World War, the novel involves characters from all warring sides in various relations of friendship, love, and enmity amidst most precarious of political circumstances. Following de Bernières' subtle depiction of friendships between putative political enemies and enmities between putative political friends – such as Corelli's friendship with Dr. Iannis and love with Pelagia, (for whom Corelli is an occupier), which are juxtaposed with enmities among Nazi soldiers, as well as with the brutality of the Greek resistance group ELAS towards the local population and fellow communists – MacMillan unveils the binary opposition of friendship and enmity as deeply shattered. For his part, Stefan Stefanov focuses on challenges for the coexistence of different forms of creativity and art posed by the currently predominant cultural attitudes and copyrighting regulations. Tracing the root of the problem to the dominance of the concepts of “originality,” “genius author,” and “uniqueness” firmly fixated in both aesthetic valuation and copyright legislation since the 18th century, he points to the emergence of the “remix author” who appears on the creative stage as working in a situation of tight cultural and legal constraints. In support of the *remix art*, Stefanov advances the view that reusing works of others allows a wider range of possibilities for creativity and that an “environmentalist” approach endorsing “recycling” art can flourish upon the removal of the existent obstacles to it, noting positively recent changes in attitudes and legislation as more adequate to the nature of creativity.

The second pair of articles address issues of politics in national and global affairs that have become particularly pressing in recent years. Eric C. Hendriks-Kim draws attention to certain Western political attitudes toward People's Republic of China, which regard it as the mightiest deviation from the liberal political model and call for “liberation” of the Chinese people from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The author terms this approach *neo-Napoleonism* associating it with Napoleon's expansionist politics of “soldier of freedom” fighting against Ancien Régime, and tracing it in the American foreign policy under Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Pointing that mainland China's theoretical response to this approach

sees the harmonious *Tianxia* tradition as a civilizational guard against aggressive ideologies from the West, and that the relationship between CCP and Chinese people is rather complex, Hendriks-Kim suggests that this ideological debate is far from over, especially as the current Chinese political system is a modern revolutionist replacement of Ancien Régime on its own. For his part, Davide Orsitto focuses on the popular support for the communitarian critique of political liberalism, which sees the latter as placing emphasis on human rights to the detriment of the values of trust and belonging to community. He backs up his investigation with empirical data attesting to changes in the public attitudes towards both communitarianism and liberalism in the four largest European countries – France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom – for the last half a century. Based on the empirical findings, Orsitto signals that while there have been different trends in the fluctuation of the public attitudes to these two political value systems during this period, the overall tendency is towards a greater support for communitarian society that advances the values of trust and belonging, and towards a lesser support for individualistic values.

The final pair of articles are philosophical in focus exploring the interminglings of *logos*, non-conceptual experience, and philosophy. J. Jeremy Wisnewski focuses on the relation between *logos* and non-conceptual experience searching for answers on whether the latter could be investigated without being “colonized” by the former; that is, outside the realm of the founding presumption of the Western philosophical tradition that the language of reason is adequate to reality. He brings the relevance of the Indic meditative practice of *samādhi* as a way to a non-conceptual experience unmediated by *logos*, while also comparatively exploring the possibility for the former to found knowledge independently of the latter, making in the process numerous allusions to well-known Western viewpoints. While Wisnewski asserted that he could find no argument for privileging *samādhi* over *logos*, the same applies also the other way around, thus suggesting that Western philosophers still need to address their unfounded presumption of privileging *logos* over experience on its own. The final article explores the role and place of philosophy in our contemporary world issuing primarily from the work of Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault. Based on Habermas’ view of modernity, which situates the role of philosophy as mediating interpreter in the exchange of *expert knowledge* between and within the levels of theoretical culture and *practical application*, the role of philosophy is ultimately specified as *competence*, in distinction from expertise. Then, in a supplementary fashion, based on Foucault’s investigations on the so-called “technologies of the self” practiced within “the art of living” of Antiquity and Middle Ages, the role of philosophy is identified along the principles of *self-knowledge* and *self-care* also as *art of self-creation*.

We hope you enjoy these articles and find there something for yourself. Thank you for your time!

Rossen Roussev

Literature and Remix

**HOSTILITY, HOSPITALITY AND AUTOIMMUNITY
IN DE BERNIÈRES' *CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN***

Catherine MacMillan

Abstract

The article explores Louis de Bernières' novel Captain Corelli's Mandolin from the perspective of Derrida's concepts of hospitality and autoimmunity. In Derrida's work, the concepts of unconditional hospitality and autoimmunity overlap in their focus on openness to the Other, which constitutes both a threat and an opportunity, while destabilizing the binary opposition between friendship and enmity. This paper claims that the novel, which is set mainly during and following the Italian and Nazi occupations of the Greek island of Cephalonia in World War II, also deals with such themes, questioning and deconstructing the division between friendship and enmity. This is particularly evident, for instance, in the love story between the Italian soldier Captain Corelli and the local girl Pelagia; there are, however, many other incidences of friendship between political enemies and enmity between supposed political friends in the novel. In this regard, this paper focuses on four episodes/events in the novel which, read through Derrida's concepts of hospitality and/or autoimmunity, destabilize the binary opposition between friendship and enmity: the history of Cephalonia as depicted in Dr. Iannis' 'A Personal History of Cephallonia', Captain Corelli's relationship with his 'hosts' Pelagia and her father Dr. Iannis, the story of 'The Good Nazi' Günter Weber who is forced to shoot his Italian friends and, finally, the disastrous takeover of the island by the Communist Greek resistance group ELAS.

1. Introduction

British author Louis de Bernières' 1994 novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* is set primarily on the Greek island of Cephalonia, an 'island seemingly accursed and destined forever to be part of someone else's game'.¹ The events in the novel take place mostly during the Second World War and its aftermath, when the island is occupied first by the Italians, then the Nazis and eventually, following the departure of the Nazis, by ELAS, the Greek Communist resistance.

¹ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 361-362.

In this context, the novel focuses on the love story that develops between a local girl, Pelagia, and a mandolin-playing Italian soldier, Captain Antonio Corelli, who is billeted with her and her father, Dr. Iannis. Indeed, as Sheppard argues, the novel is 'normally and exclusively read as a love story'.²

In addition to love, however, war is an important theme of the novel: the story of the Second World War is told from the perspectives of multiple characters, including those of the soldiers Mandras (Pelagia's fiancé) and Carlo Guercio, a closet homosexual Italian soldier who, eventually, sacrifices his own life to save that of Captain Corelli. In addition, the story is also recounted from the points of view of those who make (and break) history, including, among others, Mussolini, whose "fateful attempt to restore the Roman empire is presented in the novel as a tragic farce and a farcical tragedy,"³ and the dictator Metaxas,⁴ who tried to resist Mussolini's ultimatum.

Indeed, then, the themes of love and war overlap in the novel, which depicts the love, hospitality and friendship that can flourish even across the borders of political enmity. However, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* also portrays hostility and aggression amongst those who are, supposedly, political friends; the Greek resistance group ELAS, for instance, terrorizes the very islanders whom it is supposed to protect from the fascist occupying forces. Like Derrida, then, de Bernières challenges the idea that friendship and enmity are mutually exclusive opposites.⁵

Thus, the novel not only explores the themes of hospitality and hostility, enmity and friendship as they relate to the borders between states; it also arguably questions the semantic borders between these binary oppositions: as Sheppard argues, "Within this kind of historical context, things turn into their opposite at every level."⁶ In this sense, the themes of the novel arguably resonate with Derrida's deconstructive project, and, more specifically, with his work on hospitality and autoimmunity.

The word hospitality, as Derrida notes, "carries its own contradiction incorporated into it"; it is "parasitized by its opposite, 'hostility', the undesirable guest which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body."⁷ Hospitality, then, derives from the Latin *hospes*, meaning 'host, guest or stranger' which itself derives from *hostis*, which originally meant a stranger, and came to refer to an enemy, or 'hostile' stranger (*hostilis*).⁸ This etymology thus hints at the

² Richard Sheppard, "Savagery, Salvage, Salves and Salvation: The Historico-Theological Debate of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*," *Journal of European Studies* xxxii (2002), p. 51.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 52

⁴ It should be emphasized here that, despite the popularity of the novel, it generated a considerable amount of controversy particularly among Cephalonian veterans and survivors of the *Acqui* division. Among other issues, such criticism has focused on an arguably idealized and romanticized depiction of Metaxas and of the Italian soldiers, and an overly harsh portrayal of the Greek resistance. See, for instance Seumas Milne, "Greek Myth", *The Guardian*, 29 July 1997.

⁵ Antonio Calcagno, *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events and their Time*. (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 46

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷ Jacques Derrida, "Hostipitality," *Angelaki* 5, no.3 (2000), pp. 3-18.

⁸ John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 110.

interchangeable status of host and guest, as well as at how the concept of hospitality is apparently intertwined with that of hostility.⁹

For Derrida, as explored further below, hospitality is ideally *unconditional*; thus, the Other must be welcomed no matter who they are, and they should be accepted *as they are*, without being expected to adapt to the rules or conditions of the host. Thus, unconditional hospitality implies a risk, as the (uninvited) guest may turn out to be a destructive enemy. However, the absolute openness to the Other in unconditional hospitality is also, potentially, an opportunity as the stranger may also be someone who brings friendship and renewal. In this sense, unconditional hospitality can be compared to Derrida's concept of *autoimmunity*, which he describes as "that strange behavior where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, 'itself' works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself against its own immunity."¹⁰ Thus, as in unconditional hospitality, in autoimmunity the border between self and other disintegrates; the openness to the Other that this implies can be understood as both a threat and a promise.

In this context, following a brief discussion of Derrida's concepts of hospitality and autoimmunity, the paper focuses on four episodes/events from *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* in order to explore the inseparability of hostility and hospitality, and that of friendship and enmity in the novel. Firstly, Cephallonia's long history of invasion and occupation, through a discussion of Dr. Iannis' *A Personal History of Cephallonia*, is examined through the lens of (auto)immunity and unconditional hospitality. The interwoven theme of hospitality and hostility is then discussed in the context of Captain Corelli as (uninvited) guest in Dr. Iannis' home. Following this, the theme of friendship and enmity is explored in the story of Günter Weber, the 'Good Nazi', who is eventually forced to shoot his Italian 'friends'. Finally, the collapse of the distinction between friend and enemy implied in the takeover of the island by the (supposed) anti-Nazi Greek resistance group ELAS, perhaps the most destructive of all the island's occupations, is explored from the perspective of autoimmunity.

2. Derrida on Hospitality and Autoimmunity: The Risk of Welcoming the Other

2a. Hospitality

For Derrida, hospitality is ideally unconditional, involving welcoming the Other without even asking questions about his or her identity or origins; this can be contrasted with conditional hospitality, which is restricted and regulated by the state, and grounded in law.¹¹ Conditional hospitality, then, requires the guest to adapt to the cultural norms of the host; it implies that the host maintains control over the guest, and can be understood in terms of closed borders and nationalism.¹²

However, for Derrida, true hospitality is unconditional; it involves welcoming whoever, or whatever, may be in need of that hospitality, and relinquishing claims to property

⁹ Ana Maria Manzananas Calvo and Jesús Benito Sánchez, *Hospitality in American Literature and Culture: Spaces, Bodies, Borders* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 5.

¹⁰ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 100.

¹¹ Marguerite La Caze, "Terrorism and Trauma: Negotiating Derridean 'Autoimmunity'," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (2011), p. 614.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, translated by Anne Dufourmantelle (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 135

and ownership. Thus, unconditional hospitality involves openness to the stranger, whoever he or she may be:

a foreigner, an immigrant, an uninvited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female.¹³

According to Derrida, then, the Other must be welcomed no matter what the circumstances and without questioning or even knowing their identity:

I have to – and that's an unconditional injunction – I have to welcome the Other whoever he or she is unconditionally, without asking for a document, a name, a context or a passport. That is the very first opening of my relation to the Other; to open my space, my home – my house, my language, my culture, my nation, my state and myself.¹⁴

Thus, in contrast to conditional hospitality, which limits the Other's stay as a visitor, demands that they act in certain ways, and recognizes the sovereignty of the host,¹⁵ unconditional hospitality does not require the guest to assimilate or to adapt to the host's rules. As Derrida argues, then, "hospitality should be neither assimilation, acculturation, nor simply the occupation of my space by the Other."¹⁶

Unconditional hospitality therefore potentially leaves us open to abuse, as we can never be sure "whether the one we are welcoming into our home is a friend or an enemy, someone who will help us or harm us, aid us or destroy us"¹⁷: it can thus be compared to a Trojan horse, as "what seems promising could contain your enemy."¹⁸ As Derrida emphasizes, then, unconditional hospitality implies a risk: "I have to accept if I offer unconditional hospitality that the Other may ruin my own space or impose his or her own culture or his or her own language"¹⁹; indeed, there is a risk of them "initiating a revolution, stealing everything, or killing everyone. That is the risk of pure hospitality and pure gift, because a gift might be terrible too."²⁰ Emphasizing the common root shared by host/guest (*hôte*) and hostage, Derrida argues that, in unconditional hospitality, "The one inviting becomes almost the hostage of the one invited, of the guest, the hostage of the one he receives, the one who keeps him at home."²¹

In this context, Derrida emphasizes that an important *aporia* exists at the heart of the concept of hospitality. This *aporia* results from the opposition of "*The* law (of hospitality), in its universal singularity, to a plurality that is ... a number of laws that distribute their history

¹³ Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, "Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida," 1997.

<http://www.dariarothmayr.com/pdfs/assignments/Politics%20and%20Friendship.pdf>

¹⁵ Marguerite La Caze, "Terrorism and Trauma," p. 615.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, "Politics and Friendship."

¹⁷ Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 32.

¹⁸ Judith Still, *Derrida and Hospitality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 128.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, "Politics and Friendship."

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility," p. 71.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 9.

and their anthropological geography differently.” In this sense, “*The law is above the laws. It is thus illegal, transgressive, outside the law.*”²²

Unconditional hospitality is, then, seemingly impossible, as it involves the host completely relinquishing control over the guest, and thus over his own space:

For there to be hospitality there must be a door. But if there is a door, there is no longer hospitality. There is no hospitable house. There is no house without doors and windows. But as soon as there are a door and windows, it means that someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality. There must be a threshold. But if there is a threshold, there is no longer hospitality.²³

As the passage above suggests, for Derrida such unconditionality is fundamental to the concept of hospitality itself; however, this is a two-way dependence as “*the unconditional law of hospitality needs the laws, it requires them*” in order to become “effective, concrete, determined.”²⁴

Thus, unconditional hospitality will always be haunted by conditional hospitality, and *vice versa*: “We will always be threatened by this dilemma between, on the one hand, One of them can always corrupt the other, and this capacity for perversion remains irreducible. It *must* remain so.”²⁵

In this sense, referring to his concept of autoimmunity, which will be further discussed in the following section, Derrida argues that these contradictions result in hospitality *auto-immunizing* itself:

Hospitality is a self-contradictory concept and experience which can only self-destruct – put otherwise produce itself as impossible, only be possible on the condition of its impossibility – or protect itself from itself, auto-immunize itself in some way, which is to say, deconstruct itself – precisely in being put into practice.²⁶

2b. Autoimmunity

Derrida’s concept of autoimmunity was developed throughout the last decade of his life,²⁷ and, as Inge Mutsaers points out, he “uses the notion of autoimmunity in different ways.”²⁸ Indeed, he proposes that the logic of autoimmunity, which is a medical term, albeit one whose roots

²² Ibid., p. 79.

²³ Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” p. 14.

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 79.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 135.

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” pp. 4-5.

²⁷ Derrida’s first use of the concept of autoimmunity dates to the 1990s, in *Spectres of Marx* (1994), *Politics of Friendship* (1997) and *Faith and Knowledge*. However, it arguably becomes central to his philosophy following the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, most notably in an interview with Giovanna Borradori (2003), and, subsequently in *Rogues* (2005). In these works, Derrida applied his concept of autoimmunity to a variety of contexts, including religion and science and, perhaps most famously, in his analyses of reactions to terrorist attacks and of democracy.

²⁸ Inge Mutsaers, *Immunological Discourse in Political Philosophy: Immunisation and its Discontents* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 103.

were originally political, can be extended to “life in general.”²⁹ Generally speaking, there are two major, and intertwined, implications to Derrida’s version of autoimmunity. Firstly, it is self-destructive; it is a “quasi-suicidal” drive³⁰ which “amounts to the self’s attacking its own organs, tissues and processes, including the very immune system which was to have protected it and its identity.”³¹ Secondly, as in absolute hospitality, the destruction of the immune system³² leaves the self open to the intrusion of the Other.³³ Thus, according to the logic of autoimmunity,

the greatest threat of terror comes from within, in that destruction of the immune system which allows the relatively strict border between one’s self and the outside to collapse, not because of an external enemy’s attack but as a result of internal corruption.³⁴

As La Caze points out, autoimmunity can be understood in terms of the integral protections found at the level of state or community and even at the level of the psyche³⁵: in effect, it destroys the integrity of all these sovereign forms. In *Specters of Marx*, for example, Derrida explains that,

the living ego is auto-immune. To protect its life, to constitute itself as unique living ego ... it must ... take the immune defenses apparently meant for the non-ego, the enemy, the opposite, the adversary and direct them at once for itself and against itself.³⁶

Thus, for Derrida, whether at the state, community or psychic level, autoimmunity is, fundamentally, a relationship between self and other; however, it also deconstructs the traditional opposition between self and non-self,³⁷ so that the relation “is neither one of exteriority nor one of simple opposition or contradiction.”³⁸

²⁹ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 187.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³¹ Michael Lewis, “Of (Auto) Immune Life: Derrida, Esposito, Agamben,” in *Medicine and Society, New Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*, ed. Darian Meacham (New York: Springer, 2015), p. 216.

³² Derrida’s definition contrasts with the actual medical definition of autoimmune disease, which results not from the destruction of the immune system by the body, but rather from the destruction of the bodily tissues by its own immune system. Indeed, as Timár (2014), for instance, has argued, Derrida’s definition of autoimmunity seems, rather, closer to the body’s response to infection by the AIDS virus which, as Timár points out, stands in a somewhat spectral relationship to autoimmune disease. See Andrea Timár, “Derrida and the Immune System,” *Et al: Critical Theory Online*, 2015, <http://etal.hu/en/archive/terrorism-and-aesthetics-2015/derrida-and-the-immune-system>

³³ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 123.

³⁴ Michael Lewis, “Of (Auto) Immune Life: Derrida, Esposito, Agamben,” p. 219.

³⁵ Marguerite La Caze, “Terrorism and Trauma,” p. 606.

³⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, translated by Peggy Kamouf (London: Routledge, 1994), p., 177.

³⁷ Andrew Johnson. *Viral Politics: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Auto-Immunity and the Political Philosophy of Carl Schmitt* (Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010), p. 12.

³⁸ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 114.

In a similar vein, autoimmunity also deconstructs the oppositional structure between friend and enemy; indeed “One function of the concept of autoimmunity is to act as a third term between the classical opposition between friend and foe.” In this sense, it can be understood as a “characteristically deconstructive move aimed at displacing the traditional metaphysical tendency to rely on irreducible pairs.”³⁹

In fact, as Johnson argues, Derrida’s deconstruction of Carl Schmitt’s friend-enemy dichotomy in *Politics of Friendship* can also be understood in terms of autoimmunity.⁴⁰ For Schmitt, as Derrida points out, the distinction between friend and enemy is the foundation of politics itself; notably, in Schmitt’s theory, enemy is the privileged term of the two; friendship is defined in relation to enmity. However, as Derrida argues elsewhere, the breakdown of the clear distinction between friend and enemy leads the way to autoimmunity.⁴¹

One would then have the time of a world without friends, the time of a world without enemies. The imminence of a self-destruction by the infinite development of a madness of self-immunity.⁴²

As has already been touched upon, autoimmunity is intimately bound up with the concept of hospitality⁴³ in that both involve an openness to the outside which implies risk. As Michael Naas explains,

If autoimmunity describes the way in which an organism, an individual, a family, or a nation, compromises its own forces of self-affirmation so as to become open and vulnerable to its outside, then autoimmunity is always a kind of hospitality – the welcoming of an event that might well change the very identity of the self, of the *autos*, the welcoming of an event that may thus bring good or ill, that may invite a remedy or a poison, a friend or a foe. To be open to the event, to offer hospitality, it is essential *not to know* in advance what is what or who is who.⁴⁴

Thus, immunity can be likened to conditional hospitality where we are able to assert and defend our sovereignty and thus to protect ourselves from the potential excesses of the Other. In contrast, although autoimmunity is not entirely equivalent to unconditional hospitality,⁴⁵ both share the feature of receptivity or susceptibility to the unexpected.⁴⁶ In this way, then, autoimmunity, like unconditional hospitality, is imbued with both risk and promise⁴⁷; it is “a double bind of threat and chance, not alternatively or by turns promise and/or threat but threat *in* the promise itself.”⁴⁸ As Derrida argues, autoimmunity,

³⁹ Ibid., p. 152

⁴⁰ Andrew Johnson, *Viral Politics*, p.33.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 76.

⁴³ Andrea Timár, “Derrida and the Immune System,” *Et al: Critical Theory Online* (2015), p. 4, <http://etal.hu/en/archive/terrorism-and-aesthetics-2015/derrida-and-the-immune-system/>

⁴⁴ Michael Naas (2009) *Derrida from Now On*, p. 32.

⁴⁵ Marguerite La Caze explains that unconditional hospitality “is a complete defencelessness in the face of the Other,” while autoimmunity implies “an eroding of our defences through our own decisions to protect ourselves.” See “Terrorism and Trauma,” p. 115.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 615.

⁴⁷ Andrea Timár, “Derrida and the Immune System,” p. 5.

⁴⁸ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 82.

is not an absolute ill or evil. It enables an exposure to the other, to *what* and *who* comes – which means that it must remain incalculable. Without autoimmunity, with absolute immunity, nothing would ever happen or arrive; we would no longer wait, await, or expect, no longer expect another, or expect any event.⁴⁹

On this basis, for Derrida, autoimmunity, despite the risk it entails, appears to be vital for the health of any community:⁵⁰ it is thus “both self-protecting and self-destroying, at once remedy and poison.”⁵¹ In this context, then, according to Naas, both deconstruction as hospitality and deconstruction as autoimmunity help explain,

Not only how we live, how we remain open to the future and to a renewal of life in the future, how we remain open to innovation and invention through the reception of others, but how we die, how we inevitably turn against ourselves, against the very principles that constitute and sustain ourselves and our identities.⁵²

3. Hospitality and Autoimmunity in Four Episodes from Captain Corelli's Mandolin

In his *A Personal History of Cephallonia*, Dr. Iannis describes the island's long history of invasion and domination by various imperial forces, including the Romans, the Venetians, the Ottomans and the British. Its openness to outsiders, its lack of immunity and sovereignty, have arguably long obliged the island to an attitude of unconditional hospitality towards these frequently destructive strangers:

Because the island is a jewel it has since the time of Odysseus been the plaything of the great, the powerful, the plutocratic, and the odious ... There began a long and lamentable history of its being passed from hand to hand as a gift, at the same time as it was repeatedly being raided by corsairs from all the many corners of the malversated Mediterranean Sea ... From the time of the Romans, the only prize for us was survival.⁵³

In this sense, unconditional hospitality can perhaps be enforced; Derrida suggests that “the distinction between invitation and visitation may be the distinction between conditional hospitality (invitation) and unconditional hospitality.” In this context, a visitation can even be an invasion; as Derrida notes,

if I accept the coming of the other, the arriving [arrivance] of the other who could come at any moment without asking my opinion and who could come with the best or worst of intentions: a visitation could be an invasion by the worst. Unconditional hospitality must remain open without horizon of expectation, without anticipation, to any surprise visitation.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁵⁰ In this context, Derrida gives the example of immune-depressants, which prevent the body from rejecting organ transplants; these drugs act against the body's own immunity to something from the outside.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁵² Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, p. 33.

⁵³ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, p. 341.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” p. 17.

Judith Still also appears to understand Derrida's conception of unconditional hospitality as, potentially, a hospitality which is, in some cases, enforced; she notes that "the dangers of welcoming guests might be illustrated by the fate of Native Americans or that of the indigenous peoples of many formerly colonized peoples."⁵⁵

However, while the invasions certainly brought their share of death and destruction to the islanders, they also played an important part in shaping the culture of Cephalonia. The six-hundred-year Venetian occupation, for instance, gave the island a distinctly Italian flavor, influencing its architecture, which, as Doctor Iannis notes, is "highly conducive to a civilized and sociable private life." The occupation also influenced the dialect of the island, rendering it "replete with Italian words and manners of speech," while "the educated and the aristocracy," including Doctor Iannis and Pelagia, speak Italian as a second language.⁵⁶ Overall, then, as the Doctor continues, the Venetian occupation left the islanders with "a European rather than an eastern outlook on life," with a considerably freer attitude towards women than elsewhere in Greece. Indeed, Dr. Iannis evaluates the Venetian occupation in relatively positive terms; while the islanders were glad to see the Venetians' departure, there was far worse to come:

they were undoubtedly, along with the British, the most significant force that shaped our history and culture; we found their rule tolerable and occasionally amusing ... Above all, they had the inestimable merit of not being Turks.⁵⁷

In this context, the Venetians left the island with a culture that is arguably hybrid; Golban, for instance, argues that the identity of Dr. Iannis himself can be understood in terms of hybridity as he "represents a clear case of 'dislocation' of the self, his position in relation to the notion of 'the Greek' or 'the Italian' describing a situation of inexorable ambiguity."⁵⁸

The double-edged risk of opening to the Other is, however, perhaps most notably illustrated in Dr. Iannis' depiction of the British occupation of the island, which, he argues, was both beneficial and devastating:

The British were worse than the Turks for some of the time, and the best of all of them for the rest ... It teaches us that to be associated with the British is to be offered the choice of one of two bags tied at the neck with string. One contains a viper, and the other a bag of gold.⁵⁹

In this context, despite some thieving on the part of the occupying soldiers, the 1941-1943 Italian occupation of Cephalonia was a relatively benign one; according to Dr. Iannis, the islanders even came to feel affection for their Italian oppressors. Indeed, following the devastating Nazi occupation of 1943, the Doctor remembers the Italian invaders with nostalgia:

⁵⁵ Judith Still, *Derrida and Hospitality*, p. 267.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵⁸ Tatiana Golban, "Reconstructing the Ancient Mythemes: Thematic Enclosure of Dr. Iannis as a Postmodern Odysseus in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*". *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 54, no. 2(2014), 347.

⁵⁹ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, 177-178.

Now there were no more Italians working amid the vines beside the farmers in order to escape the boredom of garrison life ... there were no more tenor voices to send snatches of Neapolitan song and sentimental aria out across the pine of the mountains.⁶⁰

In contrast to the Italians, whose attempts to cover up their misdemeanors at least “disclosed that they knew that what they did was wrong,”⁶¹ the Nazi occupation is portrayed as a brutal one, which the doctor records as “the direst time of all.”⁶² The German soldiers’ attitude to the islanders, in Dr. Iannis’ account, was a callous one; they frequently beat up the islanders regardless of their age, destroyed their houses, and stole their possessions:

It was amusing and appropriate to humiliate the negroids whose culture was so paltry. Casually they let the people starve, and made the sign of thumbs up when Greek coffins passed over the stones to tombs.⁶³

In the context of the Italian occupation, Dr. Iannis and his daughter, Pelagia, are introduced to the Italian soldier Captain Corelli when they are ordered to host him for the duration of the occupation. Although Corelli is imposed on them, the hospitality that Dr. Iannis and Pelagia offer him, despite his status as an enemy soldier, and despite wartime food shortages, appears at first sight to be unconditional, with Pelagia even giving up her bed for the Captain. Thus, although Captain Corelli’s stay is enforced on the Doctor and Pelagia, they grant him access to their living space as though he were a valued guest. For the Doctor, however, such hospitality is a point of honor, something which he does not neglect to point out to Captain Corelli:

Kyria Pelagia will bring water, some coffee, and some mezedakia to eat. You will find that we do not lack hospitality. It is our tradition, Captain, to be hospitable even to those who do not merit it. It is a question of honor, a motive which you might find somewhat foreign and unfamiliar.⁶⁴

Indeed, the father and daughter, who both speak Italian as a second language, even adapt themselves linguistically to their new guest, speaking to him in his own language rather than forcing him to attempt to communicate in Greek. Notably, for Derrida, language is a vital component of hospitality; as he argues, the requirement to speak in a foreign language is “usually the first violence to which foreigners are subjected.”⁶⁵ Hence, Dr. Iannis and Pelagia’s willingness to communicate with Corelli in Italian is arguably an indicator of unconditional hospitality.

However, at least at first, their hospitality is also heavily tinged with hostility, hospitality’s ‘parasitic double’.⁶⁶ In their (understandable) hostility to Captain Corelli, then, the

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 438.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 439.

⁶² Ibid., p. 439

⁶³ Ibid., p.439

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 205.

⁶⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 68.

⁶⁶ Ana Maria Manzananas Calvo and Benito Sánchez, *Hospitality in American Literature and Culture*, p. 4.

Doctor and Pelagia attempt to imbue their hospitality with resistance to the Italian occupation of the island. Indeed, their hospitality is arguably offered in a spirit of hostility in that its goal appears to be that of making the Captain feel guilty and inferior, as in the following extract: offering Corelli dinner, Dr. Iannis explains that, "This is Cephalonian meat pie [...] except that thanks to your people, it doesn't have any meat in it."⁶⁷

Given Corelli's pleasant and playful nature, however, their hostility is usually of itself playful, although it sometimes seems almost to border on cruelty, and is generally expressed in misleading the Captain and/or playing practical jokes on him. One of the more humorous examples of Dr. Iannis' gentle torture of Captain Corelli is when he teaches him some Greek swearwords, misinforming him that they are greetings.⁶⁸ Pelagia also attempts to imitate her father's treatment of Corelli, trying to treat him "as badly as she could." In the following passage her behavior towards Corelli can perhaps be described, in Derrida's terms, as hostipitable:

If she served him food she would set the plate before him with a great clatter that sent the contents of the bowl splashing and overflowing, and if by any chance it did spill onto his uniform, she would fetch a damp clout, omit to wring it out, and smear the soup or stew in a wide circle about his tunic, all the time apologizing cynically for the terrible mess.⁶⁹

Golban reads the relationship of hostility/hospitality between Dr. Iannis and Captain Corelli in terms of the Cyclops episode of the *Odyssey*, where the Cyclops Polyphemus "is both the oppressor and the host of the island and cave, while Odysseus is a guest and later an oppressed subject in the cave."⁷⁰ However, for Golban, this relationship is reversed in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* in that here it is the Odysseus figure Dr. Iannis who is the host, and Corelli, the Polyphemus figure, who is the (victimized) guest: "the doctor/hero is the host on the island and a Master in his house, while the invader Captain Corelli/Cyclops (who is supposed to dominate the doctor's space), becomes victimized in the house."⁷¹

Meanwhile, Pelagia has lost contact with her fiancé, Mandras, since he left for the front, as she comprehends that their relationship, at least from her perspective, had been based on physical attraction only. Thus, if Mandras can be read as a postmodern Odysseus figure,⁷² Pelagia is arguably a failed Penelope, a comparison that is further entrenched by her unsuccessful attempt to crochet a cover for their marriage bed which she is constantly forced to unpick.⁷³ Unlike Odysseus, however, when Mandras returns, he finds that his beloved greets him not with love but with "despair, unbearable excitement, guilt, pity, revulsion."⁷⁴ Here, then, Corelli can perhaps be compared to Penelope's suitors; in contrast to the suitors, however,

⁶⁷ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, pp. 236-237.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁷⁰ Tatiana Golban, "Reconstructing the Ancient Mythemes," p. 353.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁷² Tatiana Golban, "Reconstructing the Odysseus Myth: The Postmodern Condition in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 23, no.5 (2014), pp. 2497-2512.

⁷³ Emily A. McDermott, "Every Man's an Odysseus: An Analysis of the Nostos-Theme in Corelli's *Mandolin*," *Classical and Modern Literature* 20, no. 2(2000), p. 22.

⁷⁴ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, p. 130.

whom Penelope tries to keep at bay and who are killed by Odysseus upon his return, Corelli eventually displaces Mandras in Pelagia's affections.

Corelli's love for Pelagia, then, is eventually reciprocated; Corelli's virtuosity on the mandolin and his composition of *Pelagia's March* arguably play an important role in this. The Doctor, too, also grows fond of Corelli, even entrusting him with "his most precious treasure – his daughter Pelagia – a fact which can be considered as a supreme form of hospitality."⁷⁵ However, while Corelli turns out to be, quite unexpectedly, a friendly guest, he remains a political enemy, at least until the overthrow of Mussolini and the subsequent Nazi invasion of the island. Thus, while accepting Corelli as a potential son-in-law, Dr. Iannis remains deeply concerned about the difficulties that Pelagia would face in a marriage with Corelli who is, after all, a member of the occupying army. As he counsels Pelagia,

Technically the captain is an enemy. Can you conceive the torment that would be inflicted upon you by others when they judge that you have renounced the love of a patriotic Greek, in favor of an invader, an oppressor? You will be called a collaborator, a Fascist's whore and a thousand things besides ...⁷⁶

In other words, the Doctor implies, Pelagia would be left with the choice of remaining on her island, where she would be treated as an enemy Other, or emigrating to a strange land, Italy, where she would be at the mercy of her new hosts, and be required to adapt to their culture, to their rules of hospitality.⁷⁷

As is further discussed in the following section, the friendship between Pelagia/Dr. Iannis and Corelli thus apparently deconstructs the binary opposition between friend and enemy, as put forward by Carl Schmitt. As Derrida notes, Schmitt argues that 'the political' is characterized by the distinction between friend and enemy;⁷⁸ for Schmitt, the concept of enmity is dominant in this regard as "the meaning of 'friend' is only determined within the oppositional distinction 'friend-enemy'."⁷⁹

Thus, as Derrida emphasizes, "one has a feeling that the very sphere of the public emerges with the figure of the enemy" in Schmitt's work.⁸⁰ However, for Schmitt, the enemy in politics is always the *public* enemy; i.e. the *hostis*, rather than the *inimicus*, with whom we have a personal relationship of enmity. Here, Derrida notes that Schmitt's argument flounders as we can wage war on and destroy our friend while continuing to love him:

The friend (*amicus*) can be an enemy (*hostis*). I can be hostile towards my friend, I can be hostile towards him publicly and, conversely, I can, in privacy, love my enemy. From this, everything would follow, in orderly, regular fashion, from the distinction between public and private. Another way of saying that at every point where this border is threatened, fragile, porous, contestable ... the Schmittian discourse collapses.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Tatiana Golban, "Reconstructing the Ancient Mythemes," p. 357.

⁷⁶ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, p. 344.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁷⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 373.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

In this sense, for Derrida “friend and enemy are not mutually exclusive opposites.”⁸² Similarly, as has already been suggested in the case of Corelli’s friendship with Pelagia and Dr. Iannis, de Bernières also highlights this semantic slippage between (private) friend and (public) enemy in *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin*. Perhaps the most notable example of this the novel, however, is the story of Günter Weber, ‘The Good Nazi’, who is required to shoot his Italian friends.⁸³

While relations between the German and Italian soldiers garrisoned on the island were “superficially friendly and co-operative,” there was, in reality, no love lost between them, with the Nazi soldiers regarding the Italians as “racially inferior negroids,” and the Italians perplexed by the Nazis’ “cult of death,” their “iron discipline, their irrational and irritating uniformity of views and conversation, and their incomprehensible passion for hegemony.”⁸⁴ However, Captain Corelli, along with his opera club and a group of Italian military whores, does befriend one young Nazi soldier, Günter Weber, whom they encounter sunbathing on a local beach in a desperate attempt to become blond.⁸⁵ Despite the political differences between them, Corelli and Weber strike up a friendship, with the latter, despite his inability to sing, even joining Corelli’s opera club.

Following the fall of Mussolini and the subsequent Nazi occupation of the island, however, Weber and the Italian soldiers become political enemies as Weber, despite his protests, is ordered to shoot his Italian friends. However, threatened with being shot by firing squad himself, and reminded that the Italian soldiers will be shot by someone else in any case, Weber reluctantly agrees to participate in the massacre. Before the shooting, however, he begs forgiveness from his (former) friends:

‘Antonio, I am very sorry, I tried’...

‘I am sure you did, Günter. I know how it goes...’

Weber’s face trembled with suppressed tears and desperation, and at last he said suddenly, ‘Forgive me.’

Carlo sneered, ‘You will never be forgiven.’ But Corelli put his hand up to silence his friend, and said quietly, ‘Günter, I forgive you. If I do not, who will’.⁸⁶

In addition, the binary opposition between friend and enemy, as well as that between self and other, is also deconstructed in the episode in the novel, which depicts, in the context of the Greek Civil War, the takeover of the island by ELAS, the Communist Greek People’s Liberation Army, following the departure of the Nazis. Arguably, this can be understood in the context of an autoimmune logic: indeed, as Johnson argues, civil war is autoimmunity.⁸⁷ Derrida himself emphasizes the autoimmune nature of civil war, and the complete breakdown of the division of friend and enemy it entails, even leading people to go against their own allies as well as against the “principal, declared enemy” in a “quasi-domestic confrontation.” Indeed,

⁸² Antonio Calcagno, *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events and their Time*, p. 46

⁸³ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin*, p. 239.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

⁸⁷ Andrew Johnson, *Viral Politics*, p. 36

for Derrida “In all wars, all civil wars, all partisan wars or wars for liberation, the inevitable escalation leads one to go after one’s rival partners no less than one’s so-called principal adversary.”⁸⁸

ELAS, the military wing of the EAM, with connections to the Greek Communist party,⁸⁹ had supposedly formed a part of the resistance against the fascist occupations; however, despite the brutality of the Nazi occupation, it is ELAS itself which arguably constitutes the greatest threat to life on the island. ELAS, according to de Bernières, had learned much from their former oppressors:

From a safe distance, they had watched the Nazis for years, and were well versed in all the arts of atrocity and oppression. Hitler would have been proud of such assiduous pupils. Their secret police (OPLA) identified all Venizelists and Royalists, and marked them down for Fascists.⁹⁰

Like an immune system gone haywire, then, ELAS, apparently formed to protect Greece from fascist/Nazi rule, turns against the very people it was supposed to protect. In this way, the autoimmune entity turns on itself, and “must then come to resemble [its] enemies, to corrupt itself and threaten itself in order to protect itself against their threats.”⁹¹

Having left home for a second time following his rejection by Pelagia, Mandras joins a small group of *andartes*, or guerrillas, who were “driven by something from the very depth of the soul, something that commanded them to rid their land of strangers or die in the attempt.”⁹² Mandras and his comrades are, however, forced at gunpoint to join ELAS when they are attacked by a group of its members.⁹³ However, they appear almost relieved to be taken under ELAS’ wing; as Mandras notes,

It was good to have found a leader who might know what ought to be done. It had been demoralizing to wander like Odysseus from place to place, far from home, improvising a resistance that never seemed to amount to anything.⁹⁴

Far from being directed against the Nazis, however, the ruthlessness of ELAS is primarily focused on EDES, a rival resistance group and, perhaps especially, on the ordinary inhabitants of the island, the very people whom it was supposed to protect. Notably, following the departure of the Germans, ELAS “imposed themselves on the people with the aid of British arms” and “irreparably blighted” the lives of the islanders. Mandras’ very first mission, for instance, is to brutally murder an old man, vaguely reminiscent of Dr. Iannis, whose “crime” was to take a bottle of whiskey from supplies dropped by the British.⁹⁵ Mandras’ time with

⁸⁸ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 112.

⁸⁹ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, p. 229.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

⁹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 40.

⁹² Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, p. 228.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

ELAS, then, eventually corrupts him completely, turning him into a man capable not only of stealing from the starving, but of cold-blooded murder and rape.

As has been emphasized above, the division between friend and enemy collapses completely in civil war; despite their supposedly Communist ideology, ELAS appears to have no qualms in attacking fellow Communists. After beating up Pelagia, ELAS drag Dr. Iannis away on suspicion of being a bourgeois fascist; his friend Kokolios' Communist beliefs do not, however, protect him from sharing the Doctor's fate:

When Kokolios emerged from his house to defend the doctor, he too was carried away, even though he was a Communist. By his actions, he had betrayed the impurity of his faith, and he was supported on the arm of the monarchist Stamatis as all three were herded to the docks for transportation.⁹⁶

Indeed, Golban⁹⁷ argues that Dr. Iannis' own psyche, which had remained intact through the Italian and Nazi occupations, itself undergoes an autoimmune destruction as a result of his experiences at the hands of ELAS, which leave him "speechless and emotionally paralyzed":

He would hear the cries of villagers as their houses burned, the screams of live castration and extracted eyes, and the crackle of shots as stragglers were executed, and he would witness over and over again Stamatis and Kokolios, the monarchist and the Communist, the very image of Greece itself, dying in each other's arms...⁹⁸

Mandras is also, ultimately, destroyed by his experiences with ELAS, as well as by his earlier wartime experiences and by Pelagia's rejection. Returning home after three years with ELAS, he attempts to rape Pelagia, accusing her of being a "traitor slut."⁹⁹ Shot in the collarbone by Pelagia, he is then forced out of the house at gunpoint by his mother Drosoula.¹⁰⁰ Returning to the sea, where he had spent many happy hours as a fisherman in his pre-war life, Mandras decides to commit suicide, rendering him a victim of war as well as a war criminal:

It did not occur to him that he was a statistic, one more life warped and ruined by a war, a tarnished hero destined for the void. He was aware of nothing but a vanishment of paradise, an optimism that had turned to dust and ash, a joy that had once shone brighter than the summer sun, but now had disappeared and melted in the black light and frigid heart of massacre and cumulative remorse.¹⁰¹

As Derrida argues, then, "Autoimmunity is always more or less suicidal, but more seriously still, it threatens always to rob suicide itself from its meaning and supposed integrity" as "it consists not only in committing suicide but in compromising sui- or self-referentiality, the self or sui- of suicide itself."¹⁰² In this sense, Mandras' suicide can also perhaps be

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 444.

⁹⁷ Tatiana Golban, "Reconstructing the Ancient Mythemes," p. 361.

⁹⁸ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, p. 445.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 449.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 451.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 451.

¹⁰² Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 44.

understood in terms of autoimmunity, in which the integrity of self-identity itself is threatened; he has merely become a statistic.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, de Bernières' Cephalonia is an island which, attractive yet vulnerable, has long been forced into an attitude of openness, of unconditional hospitality towards the Other. In this sense, the wartime invasions of the island by the Italians and then the Nazis are just the latest in the island's long history of domination by outsiders, conquests which, for better or worse, have shaped the island's culture. In this context, then, the binary oppositions between hostility and hospitality, friendship and enmity are constantly challenged in the novel, as unconditional hospitality brings friends as well as enemies, love as well as war and devastation. Thus, political enemies, such as Captain Corelli and Dr. Iannis, become friends or even, as in the case of Pelagia and Corelli, lovers. In other cases, friendships, such as that between Weber and the Italian soldiers of the *Acqui* division, become overwhelmed by political enmity, with tragic results. Finally, in the takeover of the island by ELAS, the distinction between friend and enemy collapses in a nightmare of autoimmunity.

The horrors of the civil war destroy the previously patriotic Pelagia's pride in her Greek identity to the point where she "pretended to herself that she was Italian."¹⁰³ Ironically, it later turns out that Corelli, also motivated by shame in his national identity, moved to Athens and became a Greek citizen instead of returning to Italy after the war:

After the war all the facts came out. Abyssinia, Libya, persecution of Jews, atrocities, untried political prisoners by the thousand, everything. I was ashamed of being an invader. I was so ashamed that I didn't want to be Italian any more.¹⁰⁴

Tragically, the relationship between Corelli and Pelagia is not revived until their old age; although Corelli secretly visits the island regularly, leaving what Pelagia perceives as ghostly traces, he never approaches her as, seeing her with her (adopted) daughter, he assumes she has got married. Thus, neither Pelagia nor Antonio ever marry; Corelli later tells Pelagia, "You were always my Beatrice, my Laura. I thought, who wants second best?",¹⁰⁵ while Pelagia confesses that she feels like an "unfinished poem."¹⁰⁶

Corelli is, however, eventually reunited with an ageing and querulous Pelagia through her grandson, Iannis, whom Corelli encounters playing Antonia, his beloved mandolin. Meanwhile, Cephalonia is already subject to a new influx of outsiders; these new and benign 'invaders' are tourists who bring a new wave of prosperity to the islanders. Pelagia, however, cannot escape from the trauma of her past in her dealings with the tourists who fill her taverna; while she enjoys speaking Italian with the Italian customers, who remind her of Corelli and her long-departed Italian friends, her hospitality towards her German guests is, despite her best intentions, heavily tinted with hostility. As she explains to Corelli,

¹⁰³ Louis de Bernières, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, pp. 462-463.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

I still have trouble being pleasant to Germans. I keep wanting to blame them for what their grandfathers did. They're so polite and the girls are so pretty. Such good mothers. I feel guilty for wanting to kick them.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 523.

REMIX TO RECYCLE: AN “ENVIRONMENTALIST” APPROACH TO REUSING WORKS

Stefan Stefanov

Abstract

The technological advancement in the realm of communications and cultural exchange, along with the facilitation of artistic creativity and publication, which it affords, has contributed to a major shift in our understanding of the governing principles of culture. While largely obliterating the distinctions between high and low culture, and between producer and consumer of culture, the shift in question has demolished the publication hierarchy of previous centuries by exposing the concepts of “genius author,” “originality,” and “uniqueness” as unsustainable. Alternatively, it has ushered in the “remix author,” endeavoring to validate the reuse of existing works as an equal creative principle. Still, an artist or participant in the cultural exchange, who ventures into this new realm of creativity, faces a fundamental problem – the copyright framework that has, in more recent times, become little more than a money-making machine, which interferes inadequately with furthering knowledge and creative expression. This has resulted in a cultural environment which can be seen as “polluted” by regulations. By analogy with industrial practices, the remedial course this paper stipulates is one of endorsing “recycling” as a practical solution, which removes the obstacles that corporate interests have placed on the way of the new remix creativity. This approach of creative reuse of existing works is proposed as being both “environmentally-friendly” and a long-due acknowledgement of the nature of creativity. It shows that creativity has been previously veiled and thus hindered by a notion of “originality,” first introduced with the eighteenth-century’s romantic concept of authorship and then enshrined in an extensive copyright legislation. The inhibitory effects of the status quo of regulations and the indicated path toward a “healing” change are indicated by examples.

Introduction

A notable portion of new productions in cinematography, released in the past couple of decades, are reworkings of familiar stories: from interpretations of Shakespeare, to versions of fairy tales, to different readings of Biblical stories, to subversive adaptations of Ancient Greek myths. A similar observation can be made about music as well, where many new productions are covers

or remixes of earlier works. While audiences and critics will generally be divided in their opinions with regard to the “faithfulness-to-the-source” criterion, a no less significant aspect of such reworkings needs to be addressed: the relationship between “recycling” culture, on the one hand, and its “sustainability,” on the other. In what follows, I propose a peculiar “environmentalist” approach to the issue of reusing narratives, themes, and elements thereof in contemporary artistic productions. This strategy of comparing cultural with industrial production aims to show that adopting the ecological norms of the latter will foster and ensure a more viable, fair, and emancipatory model of cultural creativity. To show why this is necessary, I will first offer an overview of what conditioned the present “polluted” state of popular culture, supported by examples of its detrimental effects on both the consumption and a recycling reinvention of art. I will then discuss a new model of culture that can be properly called “greener,” as well as a culture of inclusion and participation, which can legitimately replace the one that is currently dominant but can be shown to be a culture of exclusion, exclusiveness, and overregulation. Finally, I will discuss two recent legal developments that can be seen both as milestones and as a promise for the eventual embrace of the creative reuse of works as a legitimate, natural, and sustainable mode of artistic expression, which has been also immensely facilitated and made immediately possible by the fast-developing technology of the twenty-first century.

Reuse vs. Originality

From the vantagepoint of a contemporary ecological thinking, recycling is integral to environmental protection: along with waste recovery, it helps reduce the negative impact that economy and industry have on nature. Today, the reuse of discarded products and materials toward a more sustainable development of human civilization is mandated by laws and regulations; the failure to salvage or reutilize such products and materials is condemned and penalized. But in the realm of culture in general and in artistic production in particular, the situation is very much the opposite – it is the reuse of (material from) existing works that is being vilified and punished by the law, unless of course the right to such reuse is purchased. In my view, this leads to the gradual exhaustion (through restricted access) of creative resources and provides for an unsustainable model of popular culture. The latter may appear to be thriving because of large profits but is unfeasible in the long run because the copyright legislation that regulates it serves much less for furthering creativity than for enriching those “possessing” the cultural products. The copyright industry is geared predominantly toward the consumption of culture and, while seemingly not inhibiting recreative artistic endeavor, it discourages many aspiring artists, especially little known and new on the horizon, by levying fees for the lawful reuse of material from existing works that are well beyond their means.

This state of affairs is conditioned by the present-day consumerist society, where cultural artefacts and works of art are largely objectified as commodities and are frequently in demand not only for their aesthetic but also for their exchange value. The exchange value of art is principally determined by its uniqueness and originality – the more abundant it is in terms of available copies, the lesser its value. In the cases of mass-production and availability, the first releases of a new music record or the first screenings of a new film, for example, tend to sell for more than their subsequent issues or showings. The same applies to rare print publications,

copies, tapes, and so on – the more unique they are, the higher their price. Thus, it is not so much the direct gratification value of a work of art (the beauty of the painting, music piece, text), as its *exceptionality* that determines its economic worth, although arguably the psychological link between the singularity of an object (an artwork) and the pleasure derived from it plays its part as well.

This is owed to a model of perceiving creativity and authorship as *extraordinary* activities requiring *unique* talent and skills traditionally associated with the idea of artistic genius, nowadays firmly rooted in the definition of the term “artist.” Conceived in the eighteenth century, this model is built around the shift in meaning of the concepts of “art” and “artist”, which prior to that commonly meant “skill” and “skilled person,” respectively, to dismiss the sense of acquired or taught aptitude and defy the requirements of the compound model of writing with regard to form and suitable theme,¹ in favor of an intrinsic quality possessed by the genius author. The meaning of “genius” also changed from “characteristic disposition” to “exalted special ability”² – one who could “[act] creatively under laws of its own origination.”³ This model, often referred to as “the genius author,” is the result of the professionalization of writing and the commodification of art as elements of the industrialized society,⁴ to which the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is often seen as a reaction. Romanticism was the response of certain poets and thinkers who refused to accept that the quality of art is to be assessed in terms of popular taste. Instead, they saw art as a “superior reality” whose merit could not be properly esteemed, in the words of Sir Egerton Brydges, “by the multitude of readers that an author can attract,” for “[w]ill the uncultivated mind admire what delights the cultivated?”⁵

Two general categories of art were conceived in the eighteenth century, which drew a division line between works based on the “originality” criterion: “organic” versus “manufactured” works, where the former “grow” spontaneously, and the latter “are made” under the dictation of learning.⁶ Consequently, a clear pattern of denunciation of the previous model of writing-as-craftsmanship was installed with the help of both lawyers and poets (the earliest lawsuit on ownership of work and originality being the 1741 Alexander Pope vs. publisher Edmund Curll), and eventually came to serve as the benchmark for quality poetry and art in general, as opposed to the reuse of pre-existing themes or materials as a second-rate work.

This model developed and became firmly established during the nineteenth century, then came to dominance and continued to prevail (outside of academic circles) during the

¹ Martha Woodmansee, “The Genius and the Copyright,” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Special Issue: The Printed Word in the Eighteenth Century (Summer, 1984), p. 427.

² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), p. 47.

³ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Coleridge’s Lectures on Shakespeare and Some Other Poets and Dramatists* (London: J.M.Dent & Son; New York: E.P.Dutton & Co, 1907), p. 46; Archive.org, <https://archive.org/stream/coleridgesessays00cole#page/n7/mode/2up>.

⁴ Martha Woodmansee discusses this at length in “On the Author Effect: Recovering Collectivity,” *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal*, Vol. 10:279 (1991), pp. 279-292, and “The genius and the copyright: economic and legal conditions of the emergence of the ‘author,’” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Special Issue: The Printed Word in the Eighteenth Century (Summer, 1984), pp. 425-448.

⁵ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950*, p. 38.

⁶ Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*, edited by Edith J. Morley, 1918 (Cornell University Library, 2009), §43, §105–§115.

twentieth century and into the new millennium. In this way, uniqueness and originality became – and still largely are – the prime selling points of art, which in turn became a commodity having a price tag attached to it. For protection of the “genius” element of art, that which made it distinctive, copyright legislation was put in place, whose fundamental purpose was to encourage learning and creativity by safeguarding the creator’s interest and effort for a limited period of time, which was to allow for the artist and/or publisher to make sufficient earnings, before releasing the protected idea into the public domain for use by others.⁷ Production and distribution times significantly shortening as industrialization progressed, and sales turnover considerably expanding over the years, it was not unreasonable to expect that the better a given artwork sells, the sooner it would be released into the public domain, especially once certain profit levels were reached.

However, a trend remarkably converse to such expectations was observed as the time span of copyright protection repeatedly increased over the years – from the initial 14 years⁸ to the current “life of the author” plus 50 or 70 years (where copyright duration is based on the author’s death), or 50 or 70 years from publication (where this duration is based on publication and creation dates). As a result, in today’s rapidly developing world, it is virtually impossible for an artist to borrow from a copyrighted work, or to use the entire work to produce a new version of it, without first having to conduct negotiations with and pay substantial fees to its copyright holders, who these days are rarely individuals but most commonly corporate entities. Nowadays, copyright protection – and, more importantly, prosecution for infringement – extends to areas one can find it hard to conceive reasonable. An apt example is the case, one of many, described by Lawrence Lessig, in which a mother made a 29-second home video of her toddler son dancing in their living room to the “barely discernible” beat of a song by Prince “playing on a radio somewhere in the background.”⁹ Soon after uploading the video to YouTube for her parents to see, Universal Music Group representatives ordered removal of the video and then threatened the mother with a \$150,000 fine for violating their copyright property in Prince’s song (the ensuing legal battle lasted from 2007 until 2017 and ended in a settlement).¹⁰ In a similar vein, a two-decade-long legal saga came to an end in 2019 when the British band The Verve were given back the rights to their second-biggest hit “Bittersweet Symphony” in a generous gesture by the Rolling Stones, who had been collecting all the revenues made from selling the song since 1997. For their part, The Verve had been found guilty of sampling a portion from the orchestral cover of the 1965 Rolling Stones’ song “The Last Time” by the Andrew Oldham Orchestra (not even the actual song but a *cover version* of it) that was longer than the five-note sample, whose rights they had duly secured in exchange for 50% of the revenue “Bittersweet Symphony” would bring. Over this, The Verve lost 100% of the song’s earnings for a period of twenty-two years, until Mick Jagger and Keith Richards transferred the rights back to the band in what The Verve’s Richard Ashcroft called “a fantastic”

⁷ *Statute of Anne, April 10, 1710*, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/anne_1710.asp.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), p. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–4.

and “life-affirming development.”¹¹ Ironically, “The Last Time” had been copied “from a 1955 gospel track by the Staple Singers, called ‘This May Be the Last Time’, which itself was based on some traditional gospel songs”¹² – but the Rolling Stones never paid any royalties for it as the copyright law was different in 1965. Another example of artwork reuse raising eyebrows is attested by Andy Warhol’s demand that Terry Gilliam pay him (which he did to avoid a law suit) for showing briefly in the background of a scene from *12 Monkeys* one of Warhol’s xeroxed copies of Da Vinci’s *Last Supper*. I will mention just one more instance among numerous others, which is quite striking and all the same indicative: Walt Disney’s irreciprocal gratis reuse of characters and plots from fairytales from the public domain, as well as from the works of authors such as J. M. Barrie (*Peter Pan*) or Rudyard Kipling (*The Jungle Book*). Listing no less than thirty-two stories that have been freely sampled by Disney and thus contributed to the creation of his both artistic works and media empire, a publication by the On the Commons website ends up with an unambiguous and very indicative statement:

Stories that the Disney Corporation has In Turn Contributed to the Public Domain (Which Are Not Legally Available for Anyone Else to Build Upon Because Copyright Limits Keep Being Extended to Keep Mickey Mouse locked up in Disney’s Castle):
NONE!¹³

The DJ and Remix Culture

Reuse of pre-existing material to create a new work has gradually become a fundamental principle of creativity since the time of the first photomontages, and since the deejays and selectors of Jamaica discovered that they could vary the existing music recordings by manipulating the turntable and equalizers, as well as by overlaying it with vocalizations of beats and chanting. Later on, as the budding craft of turntablism was exported to New York in the early 1970s, a Jamaican-American teenager discovered that he could isolate and quickly repeat short beat sections from jazz/funk records, thus inventing the popular hip-hop style.¹⁴ As Van Dorston notes, by employing affordable equipment, the emerging figure of the hip-hop DJ “could selectively take any sound and leave behind the posing rock star hero attitudes provided by corporate rock, toss aside the leads [and] re-edit other people’s texts and call them their own.”¹⁵ This constituted an emancipatory act, an act of enabling social groups previously excluded from the music-making elite to produce music.¹⁶ In less than 20 years, the practice of

¹¹Mark Savage, “The Bitter Sweet Symphony dispute is over” (BBC.com, May 23, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-48380600>.

¹²Mike Masnick, “A True Story of ‘Copyright Piracy’: Why the Verve Will Only Start Getting Royalties Now for Bittersweet Symphony” (TechDirt.com, May 25, 2019), <https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20190525/00140242276/true-story-copyright-piracy-why-verve-will-only-start-getting-royalties-now-bittersweet-symphony.shtml>.

¹³On the Commons team, “How Disney Raids the Public Domain and gives nothing back in return because Mickey Mouse is locked up under copyright in the castle” (On the Commons, 2013), <https://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/how-disney-raids-public-domain>.

¹⁴Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved my Life* (New York: Grover Press, 2000), p. 226.

¹⁵A. S. Van Dorston, “Postmodernist Music: The Culture of “Cool” Vs. Commodity: Shop as Usual... and Avoid Panic Buying” (Fast and Bulbous, 1990), <http://fastnbulbous.com/postmodernist-music-the-culture-of-cool-vs-commodity-shop-as-usual-and-avoid-panic-buying/>.

¹⁶Ibid.

appropriating from existing music recordings completely subverted the traditional notions of music making and of the “form” of music in general, serving, among other things, as basis for two of the world’s currently most popular music styles: hip-hop/rap and electronic music (with the host of all sub-genres they include).

In this way, the DJ, working in a club, constructing musical progressions (also known as “sets”) from pre-recorded compositions, or using sophisticated digital/computer equipment to sample fragments of pre-existing music to re-mix with newly generated sounds, became established as performer and composer. As Brewster and Broughton write in their detailed study of the rise of DJ culture, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*,

a DJ is an improvisational musician. It just happens that in place of notes he has songs, in place of piano keys or guitar strings he has records. And just like a musician, the DJ’s skill lies in how these are chosen and put together. Think of a DJing performance in a compressed time-frame and it might help. Where a guitarist can impress an audience by playing a 30-second improvised sequence of chords and notes, what a DJ does takes a lot longer – a DJ needs to be judged on a two or three-hour narrative of records. And there are now so many records available, and so many mixes of most songs, that a DJ’s records are fully analogous to the notes of an instrument. [...] The DJ is a musical editor, a *metamusician*, he makes music out of other music.¹⁷

Remix and its underlying principles of appropriation and recontextualisation – cut/copy & paste, to use the popular computer terminology – are today widely employed beyond the domain of music, with the most obvious manifestation in digital text being blogging and in video/film being mashups. The principles of remixing are less conspicuously manifested in a large share of works but in the beginning of the twenty-first century, a very significant part of new works in all spheres of art are remakes, revisits, reproductions of familiar narratives, plots, and themes. Such art products have amounted to a culture that is largely fashioned around building upon the works of others, the reuse rather than the production of new, “original,” “unique” material, which was the main characteristic of nineteenth-twentieth century artistic creativity. This kind of culture has been dubbed Remix culture: “a society that allows and encourages derivative works by combining or editing existing materials to produce a new product.”¹⁸

Lessig, to whom we attribute the coinage of the Remix culture concept, envisages as desirable such a society which will no longer restrict and prohibit but will foster creative efforts at remixing by integrating, modifying, and expanding on works with copyright holders. To this end, in 2001, he founded the Creative Commons, a non-profit organization whose main function is to develop, support, and steward legal and technical infrastructure that maximizes digital creativity, sharing, and innovation¹⁹ – a service offered entirely for free to users. And yet, in order for the ideas and principles informing the Remix culture to become a mainstream philosophy of creativity in the Western and West-influenced societies, a more substantial shift in the paradigm of thinking about art is necessary. We need to stop thinking of works that are

¹⁷ Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved my Life*, pp. 19–20.

¹⁸ Kirby Ferguson, “Everything is a Remix” (Everything is a Remix, 2011, 2015), <http://everythingisaremix.info/watch-the-series/>.

¹⁹ Creative Commons, “Our Mission,” <http://oer2go.org/mods/en-boundless/creativecommons.org/about/mission-and-vision/index.html>.

created using pre-existing material – be they themes, plots, ideas, images, scenes, or melodies – as inferior; and equally, we need to remove the legal obstacles that still stand on their way.

Such a change will be possible in the conditions of a complete overhaul of our understanding of the supporting media of the arts, which before the advent of the era of digital storage and transfer were strictly dependent on materials that are, by nature, unalterable: canvas, paper, tape, stone, or metal. Unlike the pre-digital artworks, which formed the backbone of a read-only culture, “works are [now] created in a continuous flow, without aspiring to become immutable objects, always subject to the possibility of being modified.”²⁰ Such works enable a read/write culture²¹ and make it possible for the users to create art as easily as they consume it.

In the first decades of the new millennium, we already have a plethora of materially bound works, as more novels, stories, poems, songs, melodies, photographs, videos, and films were produced in the second half of the twentieth century than in the entire history of arts before. This excess, occurring in the conditions of an artistic culture tightly regulated by copyright legislation continuously amended to accommodate corporate interests at the expense of individual interests, can no longer be perceived one-sidedly, as welfare, but must also be assessed for its impairing effect on creativity. The “environmentalist” approach to the question of reusing existing materials in the arts promised in the beginning demands from us that we consider the present situation from the position of people who are inundated with commodified art, which we can only consume, and if we want to give expression to our inspired creative impulses, we are required to pay amounts of money that are beyond the means of the vast majority us. In a manner of speaking, we must ransom out what many believe should be a universal right but has been curtailed by corporations and institutions governed by pecuniary interests, unless we want to face and suffer penal actions. Lessig writes that the current copyright legislation, inadequate as it is to deal with the twenty-first century’s remix creativity, can only accomplish one thing, namely, to condemn entire new generations as criminals:

In a world in which technology begs all of us to create and spread creative work differently from how it was created and spread before, what kind of moral platform will sustain our kids, when their ordinary behavior is deemed criminal? Who will they become? What other crimes will to them seem natural?²²

Or, as Adolfo Estalella writes,

They are two paradigms of culture that are completely at odds with each other. One simply sees culture as a commercial object from which it can extract full financial benefits. The other sees it as a space for open participation, in which users can participate by constantly re-creating works, thus participating in the remix culture.²³

²⁰ Adolfo Estalella, “From Remix Culture to Collective Creation,” in *Creación e Inteligencia Colectiva* (Asociación Cultural Comenzemos Empezemos, Instituto Andaluz de la Juventud, Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, Festival zemos98, 2005), <http://www.zemos98.org/festivales/zemos987/pack/pdf/adolfoestalellaeng.pdf>.

²¹ The terms read-only (RO) culture and read/write (RW) culture were coined by Lawrence Lessig in analogy to computer file properties and modification rights. (*Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*, p. 28).

²² Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*, p. xviii.

²³ Adolfo Estalella, “From Remix Culture to Collective Creation,” p. 189.

Prior to the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, it was precisely the continuous reuse of plots and the reshaping of narratives that drove culture's recreation and evolution. The spread of the printing culture from the fifteenth century onwards, a period which Thomas Pettitt refers to as the Gutenberg Parenthesis, changed the game all along. Whereas the pre-parenthetical period was an era of a predominantly oral culture characterized by being "re-creative, collective, con-textual, unstable, traditional," centered around "performance," the Gutenberg Parenthesis became an epoch of artwork that is "original, individual, autonomous, stable, canonical."²⁴ In order to sustain itself, the culture of printed text, whose center is "composition," required and established strict regulations governing ownership, privileges, and rights. But they no longer reflect the reality of twenty-first century post-parenthetical culture, which Pettitt describes as thriving by "sampling, remixing, borrowing, reshaping, appropriating, recontextualizing."²⁵ The culture of the twenty-first century increasingly gravitates around the remix, which largely draws on the creative reuse of already existing artworks. Thus, whereas the Gutenberg Parenthesis was a time of containment, the new epoch of Remix culture appears to be a time of conjunction.²⁶

It is extremely important to realize that unless culture in general and the arts in particular are left unimpeded in their natural flow of recreation – which is possible through recycling what has been produced and what is available – the tendency of exhaustion, of loss of meaning, and of becoming increasingly superficial of not only the objects of art but also of our entire socio-cultural and individual existence will only aggravate further. We ought to see culture as an environment which has been polluted by the numerous unrecyclable artefacts piled in heaps, an environment which desperately needs recycling to be able to flourish. In this regard, in the subtitle of his book *Free Culture*, Lessig makes an unambiguous statement on the culprit of the current situation: the "big media uses technology and the law to lock down culture and control creativity."²⁷

I see a promising sign of healing from the "containment" of the Gutenberg Parenthesis in an announcement from June 2014 that the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences of the United States (NARAS), the organization behind the Grammy Awards, amended its rules and regulations to permit musical compositions featuring samples and interpolations of pre-existing songs to participate in *all* Grammy Award song writing categories, including Song of the Year. Such musical compositions were previously allowed *only* in the Best Rap Song category. Commenting on the NARAS decision, contributing writer for a number of music and culture magazines Andrew Parks writes for *Wondering Sound* that while "this probably won't erase their reputation of being woefully behind the times", it stands for a ground-breaking

²⁴ Thomas Pettitt, "Before the Gutenberg Parenthesis: Elizabethan-American Compatibilities," in *Media in Transition 5: Creativity, Ownership and Collaboration in the Digital Age, Plenary 1: "Folk Cultures and Digital Cultures"* (MIT, 2007), http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/legacy/mit5/papers/pettitt_plenary_gutenberg.pdf

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Thomas Pettitt, "The Gutenberg Parenthesis: Oral Tradition and Digital Technologies" (MIT, 2010), <https://commforum.mit.edu/the-gutenberg-parenthesis-oral-tradition-and-digital-technologies-29e1a4fde271>.

²⁷ Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How the Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).

recognition of “an influential, valid form of expression that’s been around since the “80s.”²⁸ This signals the reinstating of the remix to its proper position, of which Lessig writes,

We begin with some creative work, work which some author produced by mixing bits of culture and his own creativity together. That work is then remixed by others, through the addition of other creative work, or even through simple criticism of that work. This is remix. And in this sense, life is remix. In this sense, culture is remix. Knowledge is remix. Politics is remix. Remix is how we create. Remix is how we recreate. Remix is how we are human, and how we as humans make culture.²⁹

Another recent development which is worth mentioning furthers the recognition of the remix and its principles as art proper in the strictly formal and mandatory definitions of the legal domain. The Federal Supreme Finance Court (FSFC) of Germany ruled in the end of October 2020 that turntables, CD players, and mixing consoles can be treated as musical instruments and, likewise, DJs as musicians:

The DJs not only play sound carriers from other sources, but also perform their own new pieces of music by using instruments in the broader sense to create sequences of sounds with their own character.³⁰

The ruling was made in light of the current economic crisis impacting German business (and the world) as a consequence of country-wide lockdowns to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, along with the legislation and regulations adopted to help businesses, including the clubbing and nightlife business, survive. Recognizing that works created by reusing material from pre-existing works should be treated on par with “original” works (regardless of how problematic the concept of originality may be) and that DJs and remixers are artists is a clear indication of the direction in which popular culture is going: abandoning the “genius” author fallacy and restoring Remix as *the* way “we as humans make culture.”³¹

Conclusion

Remix culture is an undeniable fact that has been enabled by readily available, affordable, and user-friendly digital technology. Texts, songs, videos, and films are being produced now, some thirty years after the personal computer became ubiquitous, at an unprecedented speed and in previously inconceivable volumes. The automatic protection of copyrights that has been in effect for the past forty years, along with the excessively narrow allowance for the free reuse of fragments of existing works, and the unaffordable fees payable for the lawful reuse and the

²⁸ Andrew Parks, “Grammy Board Finally Recognizes Sampling as a Form of Songwriting” (Wondering Sound, 2014), <http://www.wonderingsound.com/news/grammy-board-finally-recognizes-sampling-form-songwriting/> (archived copy available at: <https://archive.vn/2fKbu>).

²⁹ Lawrence Lessig, “(Re)creativity: How Creativity Lives,” in Porsdam, Helle (ed.), *Copyright and Other Fairy Tales: Hans Christian Andersen and the Commodification of Creativity* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 16.

³⁰ Damion Pell, “Germany has just declared that techno is music and the DJ is a musician” (Decoded Magazine, October 30, 2020), <https://www.decodedmagazine.com/germany-has-just-declared-that-techno-is-music-and-the-dj-is-a-musician/>.

³¹ Lawrence Lessig, “(Re)creativity: How Creativity Lives,” p. 16.

legal services required for arranging it, have had an inhibitive effect on culture’s natural course of progression. The legal framework controlling the access to and the reuse of works is the product of the idea that the author draws inspiration solely from what enables them to claim exclusive ownership of their creative output – all conceived and developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While the “genius author” concept has been proven untenable in academic circles, its reign in popular culture remains largely undisputed. This has provided for a disparaging attitude toward “unoriginal” artists who sample, borrow, and reuse existing artworks. It has also enabled an array of preposterous demands for compensation for borrowing from works that would have been quickly dismissed had the current copyright law not been as exacting. In my view, it is an unambiguous ramification of this state of affairs that our cultural environment is a dangerously polluted and urgently needs remedial measures if we want to see our artists and culture as a whole thriving. I see no more feasible a solution than the facilitation and encouragement of recycling of cultural products. This is *not* a novel idea, as I incidentally discovered while researching one of the examples given here. In the conclusion to their comics-based discussion of copyright and “how it’s supposed to work,” Aoki, Boyle, and Jenkins write,

The ecological idea really works. What we need here is sustainable development. We’ve learned that development must be balanced with environmental protection. In the cultural realm, we need to have a similar balance between what is owned and what is free for everyone to use... a cultural environmentalism.³²

It can only be regrettable that to this day all that we have is the recognition that songs made using samples and interpolations should be treated as equal to any other musical composition, and that DJs are creative musicians and producers, too. It seems the emancipation of creative work still has a long way to go.

³² Keith Aoki, James Boyle, Jennifer Jenkins, *Bound by Law?* (Duke University Press, 2008), p. 64.

Neo-Napoleonism and the Politics of Trust

POMPEO'S NEO-NAPOLEONISM AND THE CCP RÉGIME

Eric C. Hendriks-Kim

“Liberal opinions will rule the universe. They will become the faith, the religion, the morality of all nations; and ... this memorable era will be inseparably connected with my name.”¹

—Napoleon Bonaparte

Abstract

The People's Republic of China arguably represents the world's most politically significant deviation from the liberal democratic model. Anglo-American foreign policy discussions frequently express frustration at China's defiance of liberal democratic norms, especially in recent years, as the China debate re-ideologized. Under Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, the White House rebranded the technology-oriented Trade War as a world-spanning ideological struggle between the US-led “Free World” and “the Beijing regime.” Pompeo's suggestion that the Chinese people should be liberated from an evil regime echoes not only American neo-conservatism but also, ultimately, the anti-regime-ism of the French Revolution. The overthrow of the Ancien Régime—from which the contemporary ‘regime’ semantic derives—is the paradigmatic modern regime change. Since Napoleon exported this regime change and styled himself “the first soldier” of liberty's global propagation, one may call the liberationist strand in modern political idealism ‘Napoleonic’. ‘Napoleonic’ criticisms of China's political system treat it as an ‘ancien régime’ standing in the way of liberty's global march. Pompeo's suggestions of bringing regime change to China seem so unserious, however, that it might be better understood as a hyper-real simulacrum of Napoleonism. Such Neo-Napoleonic rhetoric seeks to delegitimize China's political leadership, sketching a dichotomy between the ‘evil’ Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the ‘good’ Chinese people. This moral dichotomization may seem sympathetic and humanistic as it exonerates ‘the people’, yet it, in fact, serves to justify and encourage unrestrained ideological aggression against the CCP by

¹ Comte Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné Las Cases, *Memoirs of the Life, Exile, and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, Vol. II, translated from French by W.J. Widdleton (Auckland, NZ: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2013[1855]), Chapter: “Politics: The State of Europe.”

painting it as a target isolable from the rest of Chinese society. In response, mainland-Chinese political theorists often conceptualize the West's ideological aggression as the civilizational antithesis of China's supposedly harmonious Tianxia tradition. However, this overdrawn civilizational dualism is complicated by the fact that the CCP, ironically, also comes out of the anti-regime-ist modern revolutionary tradition.

The modern West's constitutive revolutionary hostility to the Ancien Régime echoes through the centuries. I propose to call this tradition of aggressively idealistic, liberationist anti-regime-ism: 'Napoleonic'. A contemporary reincarnation of this Napoleonic idealism appears in an ideological hostility to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Many Anglosphere intellectuals and politicians deem the CCP-led People's Republic of China (PRC) – which is perhaps presently the world's most politically significant and outspoken deviation from liberal-democratic normativity – an 'ancien régime' standing in the way of liberty's global march.

The long-standing controversy around China's regime deviation from liberal democracy has flared up as part of the recent Sino-American or Sino-Anglosphere conflict. In its intensified form, this conflict, which unfolds in both diplomacy and intellectual and academic spheres, probably goes back to 2017. It has various complexly interrelated causes, the relative weights of which can be disputed. Among these causes are less ideological ones, such as the economic power struggle between China and the US and the dramatically increased Western anxieties about Chinese information technologies.² Other factors were China's increased authoritarianism during the 2010s; the 2017-exposure of Muslims' mass internment in Xinjiang, which complicates defenses of the Chinese government's legitimacy in Western public spheres; and the corona pandemic.³ One result of the conflict's intensification was the rise (or revival) of a hyper-idealistic, neo-conservative and Cold War-like discourse vis-à-vis the PRC in geopolitical discussions in the Anglosphere (and to a lesser extent in the EU).⁴

This essay will first touch upon the aggressive liberationist idealism claimed and, indeed, epitomized by Napoleon. Second, it will show how some reincarnation of this idealistic imagining is at work in the speeches of US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. Third, it will analyze the specific vehicle through which this discourse legitimizes and maximizes its

² Kaiser Kuo, "Fear of a Red Tech Planet: Why the U.S. is Suddenly Afraid of Chinese Innovation," *SupChina blog*, October 13, 2020, <https://supchina.com/2020/10/13/fear-of-a-red-tech-planet-why-the-u-s-is-suddenly-afraid-of-chinese-innovation/>

³ Dali L. Yang, "The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Estrangement of US-China Relations," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2020), pp. 7–31.

⁴ The European Commission for the first time branded China "a systemic rival" in its report *European Commission and HR/VP contribution to the European Council: EU-China – A strategic outlook*, March 12, 2020, p. 1. Also, Dr. Janka Oertel, director of the Asia Programme of the European Council on International Relations, suggested that China may have an "interest in destroying the European Union." She added that China currently "attempts to divide Europeans during the crisis, along with its fierce and openly hostile rhetoric targeting the capacity of Western democracy." Those are rather bold statements for any scholar or diplomat to make, let alone in the absence of evidence or further elaboration. See Janka Oertel, "China, Europe, and Covid-19 Headwinds," a commentary article on the website of the European Council on International Relations from July 20, 2020, https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_china_europe_and_covid_19_headwinds/

ideological aggression. This vehicle is the overdrawn moral dichotomization of ‘the evil regime’ and ‘the good people’. Last, this essay will compare the ‘Napoleonic’ label with the image of a ‘new Roman Empire’, which is invoked by contemporary Chinese political theorists such as Zhao Tingyang and Jiang Shigong to typify the West’s imperialistic idealism.

Napoleonic idealism

Imagining a possible world that, in some respects, is better than the one that currently exists is what allows us to envision improvement. In this sense, idealism is indispensable, creative, and quintessentially human. But idealism is also unavoidably aggressive. In any idealism, there is inherent aggression, no matter how subtle. The idealist slams an *idea* against an existing, evolved, complex reality which she swears to eliminate and overwrite. Admittedly, many forms of idealism are modest in scope. An idealism can be ethical and even merely personal, as in the case when one thinks: “I am not the person who I want to be, and will try to destroy my bad habits!” In that case, all the ‘violence’ of one’s idealism is directed against one’s existing habits, not against other people. Yet, if an idealism is political, targeting a change in society’s organization, then particular people or groups or even entire societal orders may appear to stand in the way of the right idea’s realization. Those ‘obstacles’ must be denounced, pressured, and reformed – or cast aside or overthrown.

Arguably no strand of political idealism has been as politically ambitious and influential – and violently destructive on a global scale – as that which finds its ultimate source in the French Revolution. The Revolution enabled us to imagine the possibility of a society-wide, culturally transformative ‘regime change’. In fact, the contemporary usage of the word ‘regime’ derives from polemics against the French Ancien Régime. Its original referent – the first object of ‘regime change’ – was the system of aristocratic, clerical, city, and university privileges that the revolutionaries abolished. Hence, it is a legacy of the Revolution that we call supposedly unenlightened, authoritarian political systems: ‘regimes’. Take the ‘Assad regime’, the ‘Apartheid regime’, the ‘Nazi regime’, etcetera: we implicitly (and unconsciously) associate such political systems with France’s Ancien Régime.

However, the continuity is not merely linguistic, for the Revolution lives on in our political imagination. We keep discovering new (kinds of) ancien régimes to overthrow. After Louis XVI’s execution, the Girondists wanted to export the Revolution to the rest of Europe. A decade later, the Napoleonic Code began overwriting the Continent’s ancien régime order. For the next half-century, liberal and liberal-democratic revolutions spread globally. Simultaneously, Marxists expanded the Revolution’s goal to include full equality in the economic realm, turning capitalism into an ‘ancien régime’ to be overthrown. And recently, American activists have discovered an ‘ancien régime’ in America’s ethnic stratification.⁵ Groups like BLM have reintroduced the concept of *privilège*;⁶ it is just that now ‘whites’, rather

⁵ See for example: Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020).

⁶ The word “privilege” derives from the Latin *privus* and *legum* and means “private law.” Under Europe’s ancien régime, the privilege system included tax exemptions for aristocrats and clerics, as well as self-determination rights for universities, monastic orders, free cities, and guilds. In France, during the night of August 4, 1789, the French revolutionaries of the National Constituent Assembly officially abolished all privileges. Little did they know that one day future activists would identify a range of new privileges, including ‘white privilege’.

than aristocrats or clerics, are deemed to be the bearers of an oppressive system of privilege. In each of these outbursts of modern political idealism, there is an echo of the French original.

This modern (Western) political idealism, which forever seeks to liberate people from ever new ‘ancien régimes’, can also manifest itself as an ideologically aggressive universalism in the domain of foreign policy. If one supposes that ‘the people’ must be ‘liberated’ in every country on earth, and that a few ‘leading states’ already show the way, it would be hard to tolerate substantial politico-ideological diversity on the world stage. And it would be tempting to dream of pushing all ‘illegitimate regimes’ off the map.

We may call such a geopolitical and political-philosophical idealism ‘Napoleonic’ because Napoleon embodied the intertwining of liberal idealism with expansionist imperialism. He was indeed the great founder of the modern, foreign exported ‘regime change’. Two centuries before the neo-conservative Bush administration ordered the Iraq invasion in the name of *Liberté* and *Égalité*, Napoleon rode through Europe under the banner of freedom and equality, ‘nation-building’ all over the Continent. The Emperor was a neo-con *pur sang*, *avant la lettre*. In his Saint Helena memoirs, he styled himself the “first soldier” of liberty and prophesized the global hegemony of the liberal ideas:

Liberal ideas flourish in Great Britain, they enlighten America, and they are nationalized in France; and this may be called the tripod whence issues the light of the world! Liberal opinions will rule the universe. They will become the faith, the religion, the morality of all nations; and, in spite of all that may be advanced to the contrary, this memorable era will be inseparably connected with my name; for, after all, it cannot be denied that I kindled the torch and consecrated the principles; and now persecution renders me quite their Messiah. Friends and foes, all must acknowledge me to be their first soldier, their grand representative. Thus even when I shall be no more, I shall still continue to be the leading star of the nations...⁷

This Napoleonic imagining continues to inform and reemerge in strands of Western geopolitical and political-philosophical thought. At present, its arguably most prominent object of (frustrated) idealism, and its biggest stumbling block and target is the CCP-led PRC. Reemerging with some frequency in Western discussions about China is the background assumption, thesis, or prophesy that the CCP’s PRC *must fall*, eventually, perhaps inevitably. “There has been,” as Xi Jinping complains, “no end to the different flavors of [Western] ‘China collapse’ theory.”⁸ The CCP must fall because it is unfree, authoritarian, and ‘on the wrong side of history’. That is, it is yet another ‘ancien régime’ standing in the way of a fully liberal-democratic – indeed ‘liberated’ – world. In response, the post-Maoist Chinese government officially presents itself as the tolerant one. In the words of Foreign Minister Wang Yi: “We are not interested in [the] rivalry of systems, or ideological confrontation with any country.

⁷ Comte Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné Las Cases, *Memoirs of the Life, Exile, and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, Chapter: “Politics: The State of Europe.”

⁸ Jinping Xi, “Uphold and Develop Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,” translated from Mandarin by Tanner Greer, *Palladium*, May 31, 2019, <https://palladiummag.com/2019/05/31/xi-jinping-in-translation-chinas-guiding-ideology/>

Likewise, we hope that the U.S. will respect China's social system and the Chinese people's choice, and give up its failed interventionism."⁹

The irony of Western imaginings of the CCP as an 'ancien régime' is that the CCP is itself a revolutionary party drawing on a branch (the Leninist–Stalinist one) of the Western revolutionary tradition. Accordingly, the Party has always, and especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), styled itself the revolutionary eliminator of the remnants of China's feudal ancien régime (though the Republic of China and the late Qing arguably have a stronger claim to that title¹⁰). Also, the CCP continues to assert that instead of being in the rear, its socialism makes it the world's avant-garde. As Xi stated in 2013: "[C]apitalism is bound to die out and socialism is bound to win. This is an inevitable trend in social and historical development."¹¹ Thus, to the extent to which CCP ideologues have an equivalent 'missionary' zeal to their Western liberal-democratic counterparts (a subject of dispute, which I will touch upon below), we continue to face competing Napoleonisms.

However, the preoccupation of Western and Chinese intellectuals and politicians with this ideological opposition – and with the putative dawning demise or damning divergence of the other side – ebbs and flows. Over the last three years, but especially since the beginning of the 2020-coronavirus crisis, suggestions, predictions, and legitimizations of regime change in China – together with expressed frustrations over the CCP's continued defiance of the Western liberal democratic norms – have again moved to the forefront of the Western, and especially Anglo-American, foreign policy discussions. Illustrative in this regard is the recently intensified ideologization of the Trump administration's approach to China.

Pompeo's regime change talk

This summer, the Trump administration and right-wing intellectual America had a particularly (neo-)Napoleonic moment. When the American presidential elections emerged on the horizon, and China's popularity among the Western citizens plummeted to an all-time low,¹² American foreign policy rhetoric took an 'idealistic' turn. Most theatrical were Steve Bannon, the former White House adviser, and anti-CCP businessperson Guo Wengui. In front of the Statue of Liberty, they launched the lobby group The New Federal State of China, whose stated aim is the overthrow of the CCP. Meanwhile, the White House's course shift produced a serious trend break in its foreign policy. After three years of spewing America First rhetoric and couching the Sino-American Trade War in economic terms, the Trump administration suddenly sought

⁹ Wang Yi, "Full Text: Wang Yi's Interview on Current State of China-U.S. relations," *CGTN*, August 6, 2020, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-08-06/Full-text-Wang-Yi-s-interview-on-current-China-U-S-relations-SJ8tae0mIw/index.html>

¹⁰ See Frank Dikötter, *The Age of Openness: China Before Mao* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), p. 15.

¹¹ Jinping Xi, "Uphold and Develop Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," translated from Mandarin by Tanner Greer, *Palladium*, May 31, 2019, <https://palladiummag.com/2019/05/31/xi-jinping-in-translation-chinas-guiding-ideology/>

¹² Pew Research Center, "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries," October 6, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries/>

to reclaim the leadership of the “Free World,” calling upon allies to stand up to the Chinese government on ideological grounds.

The policy paper “United States Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China”¹³ broadened a conflict over primarily economic power to the domain of ultimate values. It proclaims that “Americans have more reason than ever to understand the nature of the regime in Beijing and the threats it poses to American economic interests, security, and values.”¹⁴ The paper sketches a world-ideological conflict, asserting that the “CCP promotes globally a value proposition that challenges the bedrock American belief in the inalienable right of every person to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”¹⁵

Further promoting this revision was a series of speeches, by Robert O’Brien, Christopher Wray, and William Barr on, respectively, June 24th, July 7th, and July 16th, which culminated, on July 23th, in Secretary of State Michael Pompeo’s speech “The Communist China and the Free World’s Future.” Pompeo also made his position known in his November 10th speech titled “The Promise of America,” in which he proclaims that “the fight is between authoritarianism, barbarism on one side and freedom on the other.”¹⁶

Pompeo suggests that America could and should strive to change China’s political regime: “We, the freedom-loving nations of the world, must induce China to change.”¹⁷ His paean to regime change may be echoing the neoconservative rhetoric of the Bush-era, but in contrast to the Bush administration – which not only called for regime change in Ba’athist Iraq but actually executed it through military means – Pompeo’s denunciation of the CCP is merely a performance of assertiveness for the domestic audience. He did not seem to have a plan for furthering its overthrow; instead, he appeared to address the domestic audience within an election season. His speech moves within Baudrillardian hyperreality. If Napoleon was the “first soldier” and “grand representative” of the universalization of liberalism, Pompeo might be seen as its latest simulator and great poser. His call for regime change in China is a simulacrum of Napoleonic idealism; in this sense, we can qualify it as ‘neo-Napoleonic’.

Two features of Pompeo’s discourse escalate its ideological and aggressive character. The first is Pompeo’s consistent reference to ‘the CCP’ or ‘the Beijing regime’ instead of ‘the Chinese government’, which has the effect of foregrounding the ideological differences. This terminological choice is striking. As America’s highest diplomat, Pompeo does not deal directly with the CCP; he meets with China’s governmental officials who, though doubling as Party members under the party-state structure, speak to him in their role as representatives of the government, and not of the party. This may seem a trivial distinction, but as former French

¹³ National Security Council, *United States Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China*, Report, May 26, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/united-states-strategic-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Michael R. Pompeo, “The Promise of America,” Speech, Ronald Reagan Institute, Washington, D.C., November 10, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/the-promise-of-america/>

¹⁷ Michael R. Pompeo, “Communist China and the Free World’s Future,” Speech, Yorba Linda, California, July 23, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/communist-china-and-the-free-worlds-future/>

diplomat Gérard Araud commented: “This use of CCP ... substitutes ideological rivalry – which is unbridgeable – for diplomacy.”¹⁸

The second escalating feature, which I will deconstruct in the next section, is the CCP-delegitimizing dichotomy of Party and people. Pompeo sharply distinguishes between the evil CCP and the good Chinese people: “We must also engage and empower the Chinese people – a dynamic, freedom-loving people who are completely distinct from the Chinese Communist Party.” The latter he calls: “this Marxist-Leninist monster.”¹⁹ In his narrative, Chinese people appear as secretly wishing their liberation from the Party’s communist authoritarianism, a wish at least in part inspired by the American-led Free World:

I grew up and served my time in the Army during the Cold War. And if there is one thing I learned, communists almost always lie. The biggest lie that they tell is to think that they speak for 1.4 billion people who are surveilled, oppressed, and scared to speak out.²⁰

Central in Pompeo’s perspective is the moral claim that, by being against the CCP, the American government is on the side of the Chinese people. As he asserted in an interview on Fox News: “We continue to seek a better life for the people of China. It’s important to us. It’s personal for me too as a man of faith. I’m hopeful that we together will be able to achieve better outcomes for religious minorities inside of China.”²¹ In another interview, when asked what he considered his “greatest accomplishment at the State Department,” Pompeo answered: “[W]orking on religious freedom. We have fundamentally reordered the world’s attention to the challenges presented by the Chinese Communist Party, but we’ve done good things for the people of China.”²²

Yet, complicating this moral claim and the White House’s ideological-humanitarian rebranding of its conflict with China was a revelation by the former security advisor John Bolton. In his memoirs, which appeared on the same days as Pompeo’s speech (July 23), Bolton reports that Trump had told Xi in 2019 that he was fine with the anti-Muslim crackdown in Xinjiang.²³ The US was indeed the only major Western country not to join the 22 nation-states that together, on July 8, 2019, declared their opposition to Muslims’ mass incarcerations in Xinjiang (even though the US joined similar declarations at later moments). That the White House had not led the international human rights criticism on Xinjiang, but had, to the contrary, joined late in the game after having taken the opposite position in the form of Trump’s off-the-record consent, conflicted with Pompeo’s post hoc claim to international human rights leadership.

¹⁸ Gérard Araud, Tweet, July 23, 2020, <https://twitter.com/GerardAraud/status/1286196242226257920>

¹⁹ Michael R. Pompeo, “The Promise of America.”

²⁰ Michael R. Pompeo, “Communist China and the Free World’s Future.”

²¹ Michael R. Pompeo, “Secretary Michael R. Pompeo with Amy Kellogg of FOX News,” Interview, *Fox News*, October 1, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-with-amy-kellogg-of-fox-news/>

²² Michael R. Pompeo, “Secretary Michael R. Pompeo with Tony Perkins of Washington Watch with Tony Perkins.” Interview, November 10, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-with-tony-perkins-of-washington-watch-with-tony-perkins-3/>

²³ John Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), p. 312.

Explaining the apparent lack of consistency in the White House's China policy under Trump, political scientist Andrew Nathan points to a combination of incompetence and ideological divisions,

The dirty little secret is that the administration has no strategy. It is a snake pit of competing policy entrepreneurs, most of whom understand little about China or world affairs. For many, domestic politics is the key consideration.²⁴

Nathan argues that Pompeo is part of a newly emerged dominant faction that interprets the Sino-American conflict in terms of a world-spanning battle over “ultimate values” and ideological domination. This new faction's ideological and ideologizing interpretation differs from that of Trump, who narrowly frames the conflict as an economic competition (in the beginning, ‘making a deal’ had been his key phrase). Also, it differs from the vision of Peter Navarro, the Director of Trade and Manufacturing Policy, “who apparently dreams of dividing the world into two economic and technological blocs.”²⁵ Pompeo's ideological faction, Nathan argues, is deeply wrong in assuming that China wants to export its political model:

[An] apparently now dominant faction consists of people like Mike Pompeo, Mike Pence, Steve Bannon (out of the administration but still influential), and Newt Gingrich (also influential), who appear seriously to believe, as Gingrich put it, that China poses ‘the greatest threat to us since the British Empire in the seventeen-seventies, much greater than Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union’. This group has turned the competition into a life-and-death struggle over ultimate values. They seem to believe that China wants to extend its political model to the rest of the world, including America. This is a deep misunderstanding of Chinese strategy, which is assertive, helpful to authoritarians, and in many ways dangerous, but not ideologically ambitious.²⁶

Sinologists and China-oriented political scientists disagree, as mentioned, on just how ideologically ambitious the Chinese party-state really is.²⁷ The question of the extent and the

²⁴ Andrew Nathan, In: “What Now? A ChinaFile Conversation,” *China File*, August 5, 2020, <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/what-now>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For example, contrary to Nathan's assessment, Clive Hamilton and Mareike Ohlberg warn in their book *Hidden Hand* (2020) that “The Chinese Communist Party is determined to reshape the world in its image.” In his previous work, Hamilton, who works at Australian National University, even described Beijing as “Australia's enemy.” (*Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia* (San Francisco: Hardie Grant, 2018), Conclusion).

More carefully, but strikingly, the European Commission for the first time explicitly labeled China “a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance.” (*European Commission and HR/VP contribution to the European Council: EU-China – A strategic outlook*, Report, March 12, 2020, p. 1).

Indeed, the Chinese political system's intellectual proponents often claim that it is a legitimate and even superior alternative to liberal democracy. Still, because such claims tend to be formulated against the background of, and as a counter to, Western ideological pressure, one can often also read them as primarily defensive, which creates ambivalence. An example would be this strong yet seemingly defensive statement by the CCP-supporting geopolitical analyst Andy Mok in an op-ed on a Chinese state media website: “Many around the world, especially in the United States, are still trapped in a benighted, primitive and perniciously toxic superstition that, of all the available choices, a democratic free market system is the best and most moral form of government. But ... more and more people around the world are coming to see China as the true shining city on a hill.” (Andy Mok, “Latest 5-Year Plan shows benevolence of China's system,” Op-ed, *CGTN*, November 2, 2020,

nature of the Chinese government's international ambitions in this regard lies far beyond both the scope of this essay and my knowledge – although the answer would, indeed, bear on the prudence of 'defending democracy' through hardline containment and decoupling policies vis-à-vis the PRC. Instead, I will analyze the central rhetorical simplification by means of which hawkish or idealistic Anglo-American politicians, pundits, and intellectuals rebuke and delegitimize the CCP's leadership of China, namely, the moral dichotomization of Party and Chinese people.

Dichotomizing Party and people

The sharp Party-people dichotomy – which Pompeo puts forward in a crude form, but which, as illustrated below, is widely employed by hawkishly idealistic China pundits and public intellectuals in the wider Anglosphere – allows the critic to condemn the CCP without implicating hundreds of millions of Chinese people. Of course, there is much sense in avoiding stigmatization; it would be mistaken and unethical to blame individual Chinese for an entire political system. One should not take one's grievances with the CCP out on any Chinese individual, nor consider a whole people as tainted due to political differences.

On the other hand, radically divorcing the object of criticism from its cultural and societal embedding licenses the critic to denounce it in full. The reasoning is that there could be no harm in condemning, even demonizing, the CCP since one has clarified that the CCP does not represent or reflect the character of great masses of Chinese people. Therefore, the dichotomous conception, which superficially appears merely to reflect a sympathetic humanistic concern for empathetic interpersonal communication, is, in fact, also a vehicle for maximizing idealistic aggression.

In his essay "The Communist Party of China and the Idea of 'Evil,'" sinologist Kerry Brown depicts the Party-people dichotomy, which he subsequently dismisses as simplistic and patronizing, as follows:

The Communist Party is evil. Chinese people are good. They are oppressed, downtrodden. It is easy to progress beyond this to the heroic statement that we, outside of China, with our enlightened ways are those who will be key in delivering this salvation. We are on our way. Freedom is nigh. The neatness of this approach is attractive. Binary, black and white systems are always easy to engage with. It also evades some of the pointier, more complex issues. We have located the single source of the problem – the evil Communist Party. Once that is out of the way, everything will be plain sailing.²⁸

More nuanced variants of this dichotomous construct frequently appear in scholarly and intellectual discourse. Most directly, the dichotomy serves to preempt the accusation of stigmatizing ordinary Chinese people. The political scientist and public intellectual Andreas Fulda explains, "[W]ild accusations of racism are the key context to understand and appreciate why many non-Chinese discourse participants go to great length to distinguish between the

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-11-02/Why-China-s-five-year-plans-work--V5Gn4iu5vW/index.html>).

²⁸ Kerry Brown, "The Communist Party of China and the Idea of 'Evil,'" *Oxford Political Review*, April 24, 2020, <https://oxfordpoliticalreview.com/2020/04/24/china-series-1/>

political regime and Chinese citizens in their critique of the political situation in mainland China.”²⁹

Additionally, in scholarly and intellectual discourse, as in Pompeo’s speech, the dichotomy suggests that the CCP is at least partly illegitimate. Tellingly, Fulda, who employs and defends the dichotomy, adds to his explanation that despite having a “constituency of supporters,” the CCP, like “other autocratic regimes, e.g., in Syria and Iran,” lacks “political legitimacy”; or “at least the CCP doesn’t have democratic legitimacy.”³⁰ It is not a coincidence that upholders of the dichotomous conception often reject the CCP’s legitimacy; the dichotomy is the very form of delegitimizing criticism.

Finally, upholders of the dichotomy also attach to it a moral weight as a means to exonerating ‘the people’. For example, journalist Tanner Brown (not to be confused with Kerry Brown) warns that without it, one would have to “extend the moral accountability” to “some hundred million people.” According to him, one would have to consider all those people to be “in opposition to universal suffrage [and] in support of concentration camps and mock trials.”³¹ Since it would be immoral to cast such a negative light on so many people, it would seem to follow that we must treat the Party (or the Party’s elite) as located in a separate moral universe. Relatedly, dichotomy-upholders insist that we should abstain from the blanket term ‘China’ as much as possible because it could lower awareness of the need to treat the Chinese people differently – and better – than we do their government. There are the CCP and its leadership, which should be criticized, pressured, and negotiated with, and “the Chinese public, which [American] policymakers should respect in word and deed,”³² as historian Pamela Kyle Crossley of Dartmouth College argues.

However, as sinologist Kerry Brown explains, “a neat division between Party and population” is untenable because “the Party is part of society, and its [ninety million] members are, unsurprisingly, more often than not typical Chinese people.”³³ Thus, though one obviously should not conflate the categories of the CCP and the general Chinese population, their relationship is, as Brown puts it, “complex.” It is also to be noted that the CCP’s governing style and claim to legitimacy creatively interact with various critical Chinese political and political-philosophical traditions. Granted, China’s governance could be fundamentally better and freer. Providing indications of this are the Republic of China on Taiwan and phases of openness in China’s modern history.³⁴ Nonetheless, political China cannot be cleanly separated from ‘the people’ and the rest of society.

²⁹ Andreas Fulda in a twitter response to Kerry Brown’s article “The Communist Party of China and the Idea of ‘Evil’,” April 24, 2020, <https://twitter.com/AMFChina/status/1253699200631652352>

³⁰ Ibid., <https://twitter.com/AMFChina/status/1253699204536549377>

³¹ Tanner Brown, Comment on Kerry Brown, “The Communist Party of China and the Idea of ‘Evil’.” *Oxford Political Review*, April 24, 2020, <https://oxfordpoliticalreview.com/2020/04/24/china-series-1/>

³² Pamela Kyle Crossley, In: “What Now? A ChinaFile Conversation,” *China File*, August 5, 2020, <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/what-now>

³³ Kerry Brown, “The Communist Party of China and the Idea of ‘Evil’.”

³⁴ In the above cited book *The Age of Openness: China Before Mao* (2008), Frank Dikötter develops the claim that the Republican Era (before the Japanese invasion of 1937) had been surprisingly cosmopolitan and forward-looking. The republican government oversaw the modernization of the state apparatus and the legal system, and introduced mass education.

It follows, then, that the CCP is not a boxing sack that one can punch with trade sanctions or decoupling policies without thereby also hurting the ‘real China’ or the ordinary Chinese people. The same counts for its denunciations. Kerry Brown recommends moderation and nuance: “[I]f you want to start deploying language like ‘evil’ about the Party, then you are going to have to start labeling a good number of Chinese people that way too. Party members are Chinese people, after all – not some separate species!”³⁵ The dichotomous discourse, which, by contrast, pictures the CCP as an isolatable target, legitimizes a maximization of ideological aggression and potentially obscures its effects on real groups and individuals.

Or is it ‘Roman’?

Of course, the mainland’s political theorists are all too aware of the discussed ideological pressure because it targets ideologies that they either hold or are otherwise profoundly familiar with. They often describe Western intellectuals’ aggressively universalizing idealism, not as Napoleonic, but as *Roman*. Jiang Shigong, for example, claims that American geopolitics aims to create a “new Roman Empire” on a global scale. He argues that “American liberals” wage “a new Cold War” against China out of a “deep-felt resentment” with the fact that “the CCP leadership and socialist system with Chinese characteristics became a stumbling block in the United States’ construction of a ‘New Roman Empire’ for the entire world.”³⁶ His colleague at Peking University, Zhao Tingyang, has constructed an entire philosophical framework around the conceptional opposition between the ‘Roman’ and ‘Tianxia’. He claims that, “The world order has two traditions: imperialism invented by the Romans and the Tianxia system invented by China.”³⁷

‘Tianxia’ means ‘*all under heaven*’. It is an ancient Chinese concept that varyingly denoted the emperor’s complete territory, the civilized world, or the entire world. Both Jiang and Zhao believe that Tianxia has existed for millennia, not only as a word covering a changing semantic field but also as an imagined order and political practice. They claim that from these, a model for a culturally all-inclusive world universalism can be extrapolated, one in which there is “harmony without [world-regional ideological] assimilation” (*hé ér bùtóng*). Zhao claims that the Tianxia ideal – “a concept of perpetual peace based on non-exclusion” – transcends the different cultures and political systems and is *not* “the universalization of Chinese values.”³⁸ Still, he also argues that “China [is] an epitome of Tianxia,” that it has carried the “Tianxia spirit” from the ancient times to the present, and that it has been, in effect, “a ‘world-structured’ country.”³⁹

³⁵ Kerry Brown, “The Communist Party of China and the Idea of ‘Evil’.”

³⁶ Jiang Shigong, “Zhōng ‘měi guānjiàn shí nián’: ‘Xīn luómǎ dìguó’ yǔ ‘xīn de wěidà dòuzhēng’.” Guancha website, May 9, 2020. Quote: “Yóu cǐ, zài tāmen de luójí zhōng, jiàng zhōngguó gòngchǎndǎng de língdǎo hé zhōngguó tèsè shèhuì zhǔyì zhìdù kàn zuò měiguó jiàngòu ‘xīn luómǎ dìguó’ tǒngzhì shí jiè de bànjǎoshí.” (https://www.guancha.cn/QiangShiGong/2020_09_05_564144.shtml).

³⁷ Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining a Philosophy for World Governance*, translated from Mandarin by Liqing Tao (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2019). p. 11; cf. p. 58.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 89. Cf. Régis Debray and Zhao Tingyang, “Tianxia: All Under Heaven.” *Noema*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.noemamag.com/tianxia-all-under-heaven/>

³⁹ Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining a Philosophy for World Governance*, pp. 38-39.

According to Zhao, a future world order inspired by the ideal of Tianxia would be domination-free, while allowing for much cultural diversity under a gently harmonizing federalist world government informed mainly by New Confucian and Buddhist values. In contrast, on the same view, any neo-Roman imperialism wants to universalize its values – liberal democracy, individualism, the formal diplomatic equality between nation-states, and a liberal understanding of human rights – by pushing the ideological others off the map. Crudely put, Zhao and other Tianxia theorists suggest that in a Tianxia-led world, China and other non-liberal democracies would coexist harmoniously with liberal democracies; whereas in a ‘Roman’-structured world one ideological block would impose an intolerant hegemony.

But why is such an isomorphic ideological pressure called ‘Roman’? What about it is specifically Roman? After all, there have been many empires in history, and the historical Roman Empire consisted of a complex, locally diversified governance landscape, not a regime-uniformized plane. In the Chinese political theoretical literature, many auteurs are vague about what makes Western universalism ‘Roman’, apart from some underspecified characterizations, such as its penchant for ‘domination’.

In what follows, I will attempt to reconstruct the meaning of the term in this mainland Chinese discourse critical of Western ideological pressure. I discern four reasons for the ‘Roman’ framing. First, ‘Rome’ carries common associations. The word ‘imperialism’ derives from the Latin ‘imperium’. In European history, many rulers dreamt of reviving Rome. And over two centuries, non-Western critics of the West’s liberal and liberationist idealism have repeatedly associated this idealism with imperialism and the Roman Empire.⁴⁰ For example, Ottoman political activist Ali Suavi (1839–1878) wrote: “Just look how those Frenchmen talk pretentiously about freedom and equality, all the while seeking world domination like Caesar.”⁴¹ Since the Second World War, with the rise of the United States to the status of a world power, the Rome-America analogy took precedence. The image of a Pax Americana fits nicely to Washington’s political architecture, which is neo-classical, with the American Founding Fathers drawing extensively on Roman political conceptions.

A second, more specific reason for the mainland theorists to associate America with Rome might be their Marxist-Leninist training. In 1917, Lenin theorized that the last stage of capitalism takes the form of imperialism.⁴² This theoretical framework, which closely associates capitalism and imperialism, makes it tempting to conceive of the capitalist US as an empire.

Third, Zhao mentions in passing the influence of Hardt and Negri’s work *Empire*.⁴³ The book indeed argues that the present world order, which it calls ‘Empire’, ultimately derives

⁴⁰ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

⁴¹ Ali Suavi, “Democracy: Government by the People, Equality,” in Charles Kurzman (ed.), *Modernist Islam, 1840–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1870]), p. 142.

⁴² Vladimir I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2010).

⁴³ Zhao Tingyang, “All-Under-Heaven and Methodological Relationism: An Old Story and New World Peace,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Thought: Debates and Perspectives*, in Fred Dallmayr and Zhao Tingyang (eds.) (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), p. 133.

from a Roman legacy. And very indicatively, this legacy's "universal notion of right" is seen there as "form[ing] the core of the Empire."⁴⁴

Fourth, there is Rome's religious connotation. Zhao argues that the new Roman imperialism is informed, not just by ancient Roman and modern European imperialism, but also by "the Christian ideology of cultural universalism." The latter "creat[es] the paradox of launching wars in the name of making peace and destroying liberty in the name of defending human rights."⁴⁵ Indeed, Christianity, like its Islamic brother, has strong universalistic pretensions. The faith is for everyone, for as Saint Paul proclaims in Galatians (3:28): "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This fits the 'Rome' imagery of the Catholic Church, which indeed means 'universal church' and has its headquarter in Rome. Thus, 'Rome' can symbolize both the 'hard power' and the idealistic dimension of the Western political universalism.

If one were to adopt this imagery, one would subsume 'Napoleonic idealism' under the broader and older 'Roman spirit' belonging to and associated with Western civilization in general. However, this perspective has various shortcomings, one of which is that it could lead to essentialized and reified conceptions of the Western and Chinese civilizations. Zhao and Jiang employ a dualistic scheme in which, crudely put, the Roman stands for a dominating West, whereas Tianxia is seen as the global application of the supposed Chinese appreciation for harmony. Zhao writes: "While both envision a universal world order, the imperial system seeks to conquer and achieve a dominating rule, while the Tianxia system, on the other hand, tries to construct a sharable system."⁴⁶ Critics argue that Zhao turns Tianxia into a "utopian world order"⁴⁷ that corresponds neither to something that exists in present-day China, nor to some Chinese golden age in ancient history. This essay lacks the space to delve into that discussion.⁴⁸ But if Tianxia cannot signify the essence of a historical Chinese-civilizational approach to universalism and diversity, then its pair concept of the essentially Roman West might be untenable too.

It is arguably a strength of the '(neo-)Napoleonic' framing that it does not imply any civilizational dualism. Instead of positing a divide between two age-old civilizations, each with its unique tradition of universalistic thought, the 'Napoleonic' framing is more open-ended. Though undoubtedly deriving historically from Christian and Roman-legal traditions of universalism, Napoleonic liberationist universalism has influenced – and perhaps has become a permanent component of – Chinese political thought. Admittedly, the Chinese and Western political-philosophical landscapes do differ fundamentally. Comparative philosopher Thomas Metzger argues that the Neo-Confucian epistemological and ontological assumptions that

⁴⁴ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 198.

⁴⁵ Zhao Tingyang, "All-Under-Heaven and Methodological Relationism," p. 133.

⁴⁶ Zhao Tingyang, *Redefining a Philosophy for World Governance*, translated from Mandarin by Liqing Tao (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2019), p. 3.

⁴⁷ Chishen Chang and Kuan-Hsing Chen, "Tracking Tianxia: On Intellectual Self-Positioning," in Ban Wang (ed.), *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 274.

⁴⁸ On the topic, see Ban Wang (ed.), *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); as well as Zhiping Liang, "Xiāngxiàng 'tiānxià': Dāngdài zhōngguó de yìshí xíngtài jiāngòu," *Sixiang*, Vol. 36 (Dec. 2018), pp. 71–177.

dominate contemporary Chinese political thought cause its utopian idealism to diverge from the (liberal) American political-philosophical mainstream.⁴⁹ This divergence falls outside the scope of this essay. But even if it implies that present-day Chinese political thought lacks a strong universalistic-liberationist strand, branding the latter as entirely non-Chinese and putting it in some disjunctive 'Roman' category would sit awkwardly with the CCP's history. After all, the CCP itself stands in the modern revolutionary tradition. Through its foundational Maoist ideology and Leninist party-state apparatus, the party is connected to a long, global, and historically traceable chain of revolutions and liberationist imaginings that find their ultimate source in the French Revolution.

In conclusion, despite the Revolution's global legacy, currently there is still no single liberal or liberationist ideology that 'rules the universe'. Instead, the co-existence of significantly different regime forms persists, in part because the revolutionary tradition branched out into competing avant-garde ideologies, creating a liberal-democratic and a communist block. Neo-Napoleonic hawks like Pompeo style themselves as the avant-garde of liberty's global march, but the reality of global regime-pluralism is not likely to give in any time soon. Therefore, any realistic diplomacy or activist engagement must acknowledge that the regime pluralism is here to stay for the foreseeable future and that declaring the other side's political system fundamentally illegitimate does not benefit constructive international communication.

⁴⁹ Thomas Metzger, *A Cloud Across the Pacific: Essays on the Clash Between Chinese and Western Political Theories Today* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2005), pp. 1–184.

IDENTIFYING THE POLITICS OF TRUST AND BELONGING IN NOWADAYS' DEMOCRACIES: A STUDY OF THE PUBLIC CONSENSUS IN FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Davide Orsitto

Abstract

Recent voices among the communitarian thinkers led by Adam Seligman and David Montgomery have formulated a new version of the communitarian critique, highlighting the downsides of Western political systems centered on human rights. The communitarian critique in all its facets never seems to extinguish its emotional appeal, but it would remain to a large extent inchoate if it is not backed up by empirical evidence showing popular support for its arguments in a significant number of countries. In its theoretical part, the paper reviews literature concerning the communitarian critiques of liberalism. In its empirical part, the paper discusses the fluctuation between liberal and communitarian policy-making in the agendas of the most important political parties in France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In the process, it presents indicators that reflect the values embedded in individualism and communitarianism upon analyzing data from the Manifesto Project database. It then weighs the scores of these indicators in the voting patterns of the main political parties in these four countries within the past half-century. The empirical results show an overall downward trajectory towards more communitarian policy-making, which has also opened a debate on the role of the welfare state in the framework of the communitarian argument.

In the post-cold war world of the 21st century, the liberal democracy has become the most advertised frame of political systems to such an extent that Francis Fukuyama was able to easily argue that the political history of the humankind was at the zenith of its path and that henceforth the world order would find an asymptotic long-term equilibrium.¹ The expected convergence towards liberal democracy in the Western hemisphere also meant that individualism was believed to attain the status of an unquestionable and prevailing value all over the world in the form of human rights. The latter rights are claim-rights that protect the individual human beings

¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), pp. 3-7.

as such from the state and demand from the latter the positive obligation to fulfill the integral needs of each member of the society.

Recently, voices among the communitarian thinkers spearheaded by Adam Seligman and David Montgomery rebut the aura of optimism surrounding the liberal order and argue that political systems centering on human rights may end up in a tragedy.² On their view, half a century of human rights advocacy has seemingly promulgated an unstable democratic system that is prone to degenerate into autocracies, populism, and demagoguery. Individual rights have proliferated at the expense of any sense of shared belonging, which can be seen as a primary ontological necessity of the human beings as social animals, as opposed to the liberal philosophical conception of an unencumbered self.³

The communitarian critique in all its facets seems to never exhaust its emotional appeal, but it would remain largely inchoate if no empirical checks are operated to indicate whether its arguments concur with a shared discomfort found in the democratic societies. The specific question that interests me here is To what extent is the communitarian critique a view shared by a significant majority of European Union citizens? In the first part of the paper, I address this quandary by reviewing the literature concerning the communitarian critique of individualism, giving special emphasis on Seligman and Montgomery's critique of human rights. In the second part, I analyze empirical evidence of the voting patterns of citizens of the European Union, particularly in France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom, using data from the Manifesto Project database.⁴ Although the United Kingdom recently left the European Union, it remains a very important country to study, especially in terms of understanding the voting metrics relating to the Brexit watershed event. To respond to policy demands, in the paper I will also try to set up reliable and comparable measures for all the analyzed states, which will open perspectives for further studies on the role of the welfare state in the framework of the communitarian argument.

1. The Nuanced Conception of Liberty

Liberalism, rather than a one-sided, unambiguous political doctrine, is an array of discourses that prioritize the concept of liberty over other theorized values. It is a corpus of multi-faceted arguments, classical and contemporary, with a manifest proclivity towards freedom as the main normative societal pillar.⁵ This definition does not encompass the essence of liberalism, which lies in the axiomatic premise of what the value of liberty is. In this regard, Benjamin Constant argued that from the dawn of humanity up to the French Revolution, freedom existed as a

² Adam B. Seligman and David W. Montgomery, "The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and the Loss of Belonging," *Society*, Vol. 56 (2019), pp. 1-2.

³ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 70.

⁴ Andrea Volkens et al., *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR), Version 2020a* (Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, 2020).

⁵ Gerald Gaus et al., "Liberalism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edward N. Zalta, 2020), retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/liberalism/>

concept ascribed to the whole, or to the community.⁶ He calls the liberty attached to collectivity the liberty of the ancients, consisting in the right to collectively decide the functions of the government, brought together in the public space, in order to make decisions regarding foreign policy, home affairs, voting legislation, and deliberation. This kind of liberty implies a total subjection of the individual to the whole, and has been very indicatively defined as holistic.⁷

After the French Revolution in 1789, there was a significant paradigm shift in the Western understanding of liberty. It was a result of a re-focusing from the aggregate entity that was free to the individual-monads that composed it: the liberty of the moderns was in its essence a liberty of the individual human beings. The individuals were henceforth free to speak up their minds without censorship, could not be exiled, and were not only free from government interference in private life but were also protected from the violation of that right by other individuals.⁸ Luis Dumont would refine and nuance the concepts of holistic and individual liberty arguing that each of them can apply to different social classes within the same societies. He would also trace the birth of the individualism that underlies our liberal values today back to the first Christian traditions which would gradually build up to overthrow the old, hierarchy-based, tribalist values of collectivity.⁹ Constant and Dumont, who were inspired by John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, and the classical liberal tradition, helped develop the various strains of liberal thinking that form the basis of today's conception of liberty. The contemporary individualist conception of liberty was further shaped by Isaiah Berlin (in his *Two Concepts of Liberty*) and John Rawls (in his *Political Liberalism*). For us, of particular importance here will be the powerful distinction that Berlin draws between *negative liberty*, or individuals' rights to be free of constraint imposed by other people or institutions, and *positive liberty* – the state which emancipates the individual, empowers her action, and enables her to achieve her willed goals.¹⁰

The review of the prominent thinkers who laid down the basics of the modern-day political sense of liberty is necessary for understanding the contemporary American liberalism, which I will refer to in this paper to elaborate on my claims. As Michael Walzer has it, liberalism is enacted in a society through the theoretical acceptance of four mobilities: geographic free movement, social mobility, material mobility, and political mobility.¹¹ The conception of the individual as free to move geographically, reach a desired place across the socio-economic ladder, achieve or break institutional and personal relationship, choose a political leader or adhere to a party is at the basis of today's notion of human rights. A liberal society thus upholds the four freedoms as claim-rights of the individuals; moreover, as Rawls

⁶ Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns," *Political Writings* (London: Cambridge University press, 1819), pp. 1-2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹ Luis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 23-26.

¹⁰ Joshua Cherniss and Henry Hardy, "Isaiah Berlin," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edward N. Zalta, 2020).

¹¹ Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Capitalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1990), pp. 6-23.

argues, it grounds democracy and pluralism in the toleration of difference of opinions as a necessary condition for upholding the society's liberty.¹²

1.1 The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism

Communitarianism is not a school of thought or an alternative political paradigm to liberalism *per se*, unlike communism, state socialism, or fascism. It is an approach that emphasizes the importance of individuals' social relations and interactions that create a collectivity. At the same time, it offers a powerful critique of liberalism.¹³ Collectivities, according to this stance, sometimes need to be prioritized over the individual in policy making, especially in stewarding global communities and tackling global threats. Furthermore, communitarians' claim to debunk what appears to be the universal imposition of political individualism in the form of human rights, which on their view is neither morally nor politically correct, as the forms of life and traditions of particular collectivities vary considerably from context to context.¹⁴

There are three main communitarian critiques of liberalism that are particularly significant. The first one is rooted in Karl Marx's *German Ideology* and holds that the liberal political theory is a product of particular liberal social practice and that it universalizes its discourse to obscure all other possibilities. In this way, Western societies have created a civil context, in which the individual citizen believes to be absolutely free and unencumbered from obligations to community but is actually deprived of his or her belonging to a group and its traditions.¹⁵ By implementing their liberal freedoms, Western societies have deprived their human members of their communities of reference, common heritage, and stories, and have thus reduced them to fragments, such that each of them is a stranger to the others.¹⁶ Arguing that liberalism puts forward the ideal of the Promethean humanity – the dogmatic and relentless trust in science, progress, and individuality – communitarians contend that the liberal view of historical process is an illusion. The blind faith in reason has brought about a disenchantment and irreversible losses of the sense of community and of a shared social universe.¹⁷

The second communitarian critique of liberalism is famously known as the critique of the *unencumbered self*. It highlights the point that the liberal political philosophy tacitly assumes an impoverished concept of the human self. To make its own case, neoliberalism claims that a common standard respect of freedoms ought to be applied to every human being, regardless of traditions and mores. It hails the act of dismissing thousands of years of accumulated knowledge and common heritage as an act of liberation of the unencumbered

¹² Ibid., p. 16.

¹³ Daniel Bell, "Communitarianism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edward N. Zalta, 2020); Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, p. 71; Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Individualism, the Validation of Faith, and the Social Nature of Religion in Modernity," in Richard K. Fenn (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion* (London: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 161-175.

¹⁴ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, pp. 23–38.

¹⁵ Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Capitalism," pp. 6-23.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁷ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, p. 69.

individual, who is now ready to evolve. In this way, the liberal theory thoroughly misrepresents the real life and the phenomenology of human existence,¹⁸ as it rests on a version of the Hobbesian assumption that views human connections as mere market friendships based on an expected reciprocity and hinging on a narrowly defined self-interest.¹⁹ Conversely, against the self-perpetuating hypnotic discourse of liberalism, communitarians argue that being engaged in social interaction and communities of reference is in the very nature of the human enterprise. The unencumbered human being, cut loose from nearly all social bonds, is only a mythical, lonely figure completely disengaged with reality, as much as the Promethean ideal cherished in the liberal narrative. Finally, according to this critique, the remarkable divide between the everyday need for communal experience and the liberal ideology engenders in the individual a deep psychological problem which is a direct consequence of isolation and hinders innovation.²⁰

1.2 The Tragedy of the Human Rights: Communities of Trust against Societies of Confidence

A third, recently released communitarian critique of liberalism is formulated by Seligman and Montgomery, who argue that the liberal moral institution of human rights as prioritized over natural or constitutional rights has played a silent role in the current rise of authoritarian and antiliberal leaders.²¹ Ever since the bipolar system of the cold war collapsed along with the Berlin Wall, liberalism has been getting a ground on the international arena, but while universalizing the Western values as undeniable virtues, it has also neglected other meaningful human necessities and moral worldviews, which anchor the dimension of belonging into the sense of human identity.²² The argument thus points to the socio-cultural processes involved in the formation of the human identities: communities play a pivotal role in framing the sense of belonging, which is the backbone of cognitive action, as well as of one's worldview and ability to engage with the world and others.

Echoing Nietzsche, Seligman and Montgomery claim that the conception of human rights has (1) institutionalized a situation in which the notion of God, the archetypical common good, is abolished via secularism; (2) fostered the idea of the morally autonomous individual; and (3) pushed towards the protection of different sets of individual rights, rather than of a collective idea of the common good. Consequently, the tendency to safeguard the conception of human rights has given a rise to a community of strangers with no common moral values, which is held together by the judicial system, with justice conceived as the highest virtue. Thus, the peculiar deficit ensuing from the existential alienation of the individual from her kindred has brought about a latent, sublimated longing for community, which finds an expression in a greater sense of national, regional, or religious belonging. It is to be noted here that as human

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁰ Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Capitalism," pp. 10-11.

²¹ Adam B. Seligman and David W. Montgomery, "The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and the Loss of Belonging," pp. 203-204.

²² Ibid., p. 205.

rights by themselves provide no sense of belonging, no sentiment of a shared community or special bonds, they can be enacted uniformly only by bureaucratic organizations and welfare agencies. This however has brought up an unfortunate effect – the remarkable rift between an abstract regime of claim rights and what Seligman and Montgomery call a “community of mutual care and shared belonging.”²³

From this viewpoint, the proposed concept of belonging appears as the very antithesis of human alienation. Communities of trust feature shared dispositions and morality, feelings of solidarity and common experience, familiarity and peace, as well as a sense of security spurring from the idea of sameness. For their part, human-rights-centered societies cannot be further from the idea of trust or belonging: they foster multicultural values and diverse moral beliefs that are upheld via bureaucratic legal institutions, thus tacitly equating the idea of the other as a danger, which in turn requires security. The rise of right-wing populist movements seems an inevitable corollary of this analysis: xenophobia, identity politics, and group supremacy are instruments that can easily canalize a degenerate and disoriented longing for trust and belonging. The challenge here then is how to virtuously cultivate the claims to belonging to a community without building walls and exercising violence during the assimilation of refugees and migrants, without promoting racist and ethnocentric policies of segregation, which entail authoritarianism and apartheid.²⁴

Seligman and Montgomery end their case by urging us to take belonging seriously in policies – such as development projects, awareness campaigns, and political undertakings – towards seeing difference as a resource, rather than a trigger for security.²⁵ These authors however do not go in-depth with a policy advise or a slightest indication over which institution should be tasked with making belonging the central societal framework. Now, having set the background of the individualism-communitarianism debate, I will proceed with a discussion of the extent to which the broad issues raised by the communitarian critiques are reflected in the voting pattern of three European Founding Member States with the addition of the United Kingdom.

II. Methodology and Data Analysis

For a good sense of whether the communitarian critique matches the wishes, the desires, and the visions of a significant portion of the contemporary democratic societies, I shall search through the data of the comparative manifesto project.²⁶ The Manifesto covers the most insightful and updated resources used in the mainstream research literature, which synthesize the ideological stances of more than a thousand political parties on a number of policy areas, as published in their manifestos in more than 50 countries between 1945 and 2020. More specifically, the manifesto project indicates the share of the manifestos of the political parties in a specific policy area in terms of the number of sentences devoted to it. Thus, a value of x in

²³ Ibid., pp. 206-207.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 207-208.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 208.

²⁶ Andrea Volkens et al, *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR), Version 2020a*.

one of the variables indicates that x percent of the sentences in the party's manifesto represented in that row were assigned to a policy category by an expert coder.²⁷ The data in the Manifesto are indicative for the stances of the various parties in terms of key policy areas, examples of which may be welfare extension and retrenchment, tendency towards military spending or peacefulness, preference for traditional or progressive values et cetera.²⁸ The indicated policy areas are listed in numbers and coded in terms of variables, which cover the key positions of the political parties on the most important issues.²⁹

I have operationalized the citizens' demand for individualist or communitarian policies across the chosen countries for the period from 1990 to 2020 by composing the indicators of *Individualism and Holism Demand* for each election in the countries of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The two metrics are meant to complement the Rile Index of the Manifesto Project, which assembles various policy demands into a measure for the right-left divide on an ideological level. I have thus defined individualism as a set of liberal values setting forth the predominance of the interest of the individuals and non-state organizations (supranational, sub-national) over the nation state, corporations, religious institutions and trade unions, herewith understood as the archetypal collective institutions. The metric *Individualism Demand* is composed by the sum of the frequencies of words in party manifestos that coded positive for: (a) support for the European Union, desirability of increasing the Union's competences and erosion of state sovereignty; (b) favorable mentions of federalism or decentralization of political and economic power; (c) necessity for administrative efficiency, such as cutting down on civil service; (d) the importance of the modernization of industry, technology, and science; (e) limiting state expenditure on education; (f) unfavorable mentions of patriotism and nationalism; (g) opposition to traditional or religious moral values, with support for divorce, abortion, separation for church and state; (h) freedom and human rights, featuring favorable mentions of importance of personal freedoms, the idea of individualism; (i) mentions fostering multiculturalism and ethnic heterogeneity; (j) negative stance towards trade unions and labor groups. Upon summing up the frequencies of the listed policy areas, I have multiplied the score of the share of the votes that each party won in parliament to obtain a weighed score accounting for the public demand for individualist policy areas.

As an antithesis to individualism, I have created the *Holism Demand* index, which is formed by the sum total of frequencies of policy areas that imply a preference for a collective welfare over that of the individual. The collectivity reference may vary according to the political narrative, including over policy areas such as the environment and the preservation of global commons, the safeguarding state sovereignty, as well as the protection of vulnerable groups and religious institutions. The variables chosen for this index are: (a) negative references to international cooperation and/or ones favoring national independence and autarky; (b)

²⁷ Thomas König et al., "Estimating Party Positions Across Countries and Time – A Dynamic Latent Variable Model for Manifesto Data," *Political Analysis* (2013), pp. 468–491.

²⁸ Will Lowe, Kenneth Benoit, Slava Mikhaylov, and Michael Laver, "Scaling Policy Preferences from Coded Political Texts," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2011), pp. 123–155.

²⁹ Andrea Volkens et al, *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR), Version 2020a*.

Euroscepticism; (c) positive attitude towards corporations and government; (d) positive stance for Keynesian demand management, such as increase in aggregate demand and investment in public infrastructures; (e) support for anti-growth policies, such as ones in line with environmentalist claims against productive growth; (f) favorable mentions of environmental protection, including on the preservation of natural resources, the protection of animal and plant rights; (g) favorable mentions of traditional morality, that includes censorship for immoral behavior, maintenance of the traditional family, and support for religious institutions; (h) support for equality, special protection for vulnerable groups, and fair redistribution of resources; (i) negative references to multiculturalism, appeals to cultural homogeneity in society; (j) support for the agricultural sector and farming communities.³⁰ The *Holism Demand index* is aggregated as a mirror image of the *Individualism Demand index*, featuring an equal number of control variables, which are summed up into one score for each political party over time, then multiplied by the share of the vote that the party received in each election. To calculate a comparative score, I have summed up the two scores of all the parties weighed by the vote share for each election, so as to obtain the overall preference towards individualism and holism. I have finally drawn the difference between the obtained scores of *Individualism Demand* and *Holism Demand* that a specific country featured in parliament at each election point. In this way, a graph is created whereby scores above zero reflect the relative propensity towards individualism that the majority of a population has voted for in a country, whereas scores below zero show the relative preference towards communitarian policies. The graphs containing the findings are displayed in the Appendix at the end of the article.

III. Analyzing Comparative Voter Preferences for Individualism and Holism

As Figure 1 shows, the four countries examined in the period 1970-2020 display an overall shift in the trend of public consensus towards communitarian policy making – the parties that have a greater voter share over time show a tendency toward supporting the communitarian arguments that compose the *Holism Demand Index*. Italy is an interesting example of change in the ideological resource of its political parties, scoring highly individualist with both peaks and troughs (in fact the absolute maximum of the function) between 1972 and 2008; then dropping more than thirty-five percentage points of its support for individualism from 2008 to 2013. Figure 2 offers a specific picture of how the Italian parties range in terms of both individualism and holism on the different elections, as well as an explanation on the shift from individualism to holism. After 2008, the preference for holism emerges with an increase in the voter share of the Five-Star Movement (coded in yellow under the label special party) and Lega Nord (coded in brown as nationalist party). For the same period, the main democratic parties (the left leaning Partito Democratico and Liberi e Uguali, as well as the conservative Forza Italia) also converge to lower scores for individualism, hypothetically attempting to compete with the populist parties as the voters turn to the latter.

For its part, France features as the most holist-scoring country over time, starting from a total of 4% in holism in the 1972 elections, reaching a relative maximum of 1% individualist in 1986, and then an absolute minimum of 13 points in holism in 1997, before going back to

³⁰ Ibid.

lower holist values along the lines of its present-day communitarianism. The graph in Figure 4 also shows a lasting tendency toward holism in almost all of the key French parties, of which the highest-scoring are the nationalists of Front National, the socialists of France Insoumise, and the French Communist Party. The absolute minimum of 13 points in holism is due to the strong performance of Front National reaching 14% of the voter share, the strong ideological score of France Insoumise, and the overall holist attitudes of the other parties in the country. After a brief interval of positive individualism under the Fillon cabinet in 2007, the score goes back to the holist mean trend values towards the present.

Next, Figures 1 and 3 indicate, as intuitively expected, that the United Kingdom has on average a preference for individualist political stances, reaching a positive peak of 13 points in this regard in 1983 under the continuing Thatcher government. After 1992, the country embarks on a negative-sloping trajectory towards milder levels of individualism, reaching a local trough in 2001 and 2005 under the Blair leadership. A higher score of individualism characterizes the first Cameron government in 2010, and as Brexit is discussed and becomes closer within his second cabinet, the country turns holist, scoring two percentage points in holism for the first time. Interestingly, as Theresa May assumes office with a mandate for government in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, the parliament assumes an individualist score of 8 points, whereas as Boris Johnson is elected in office in 2019 to replace May, the United Kingdom turns holist once again. The ideological change that generates the negative sloping trend towards holistic features is mainly produced by the Conservatives, which adopted less individualistic stances in 2015 and 2019, as well as by UKIP, whose high score in the communitarian arguments significantly affects the curve.

Finally, Figures 1 and 5 showing Germany's trajectory prove interesting to read. In the German case, the aggregated data from 1970 to 1990 belong to the Federal Republic of Germany, which after that incorporated under international law the German Democratic Republic within its continuous legal identity. In the examined timespan, the Federal Republic of Germany shows a sinusoidal trend, reaching the highest individualist score of 17 under the Helmut Schmidt chancellorship in 1976. Then, the trend embarks on a negative slope in the reunification period, reaching the highest score in holism under chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1990. After that, the country climbs up along individualist preferences, reaching a local maximum under the first Angela Merkel cabinet in 2002. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, and throughout the European sovereign debt crisis of 2012, the Merkel cabinets turned more holist as a consequence of the deep change in the public preferences induced by the economic depression. These changes are detectable in Figure 4, which sheds light on how the most important German parties advanced their ideological stance over time. The CDU and the Free Democratic Party have always maintained an individualist stance, whereas the more left-leaning parties of Die Linke, the Greens, and SPD have proven more versatile.

Overall, the findings show over time a long-term tendency of the public attitudes towards communitarian policies, namely Eurosceptic, national corporatist, and protectionist stances. This might be explained by the intense period of stagnation and depression following to the financial crisis and the later period of Brexit. Sensing a change in public preferences, the major political parties in Europe have adopted an inward-looking re-orientation, which

currently appears to be deepening. Italy shows a greater volatility in the scores, turning from one of the most proactive European Union and globalization supporter to being more Eurosceptic and less multiculturalist. Further studies can be conducted to extend the analysis of these composed scores to all EU member states, or to an in-depth analysis of the industrialized countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A further next step could also be to include a score of the countries' political ideologies in terms of their right/left narratives and create – along with the individualism-holism – a four-dimensional axis to achieve a better picture of the trends in the public attitudes. It is finally interesting to note that, *prima facie*, the countries that are well-known for their high score in the democracy indexes (such as those of Freedom House) show a steady orientation of their public attitudes towards a return to the community. Seligman and Montgomery's insight thus seems to be attested by an initial empirical analysis, although the small sample can only have a statistical value of limited significance.

IV. Conclusion

This paper first offers a review of the key points and the various nuances of liberalism, including the policies of individualism, which are a substantial part of it. It then outlines the three main communitarian critiques of liberalism, drawing on Seligman and Montgomery's argument of the perceived lack of trust and belonging in societies where individual differences are highlighted and upheld by law while the need of security is paramount. The paper further gives a preliminary answer to the question of the correlation between Seligman and Montgomery's intuition and the empirical voting patterns of the electorate of the three largest EU founding states and the United Kingdom. The findings from the four countries, which can be expanded further on by statistically significant studies concerning a larger pool of countries, show that, over time, a remarkable public sentiment has taken a shape towards communitarian policies and at the expense of liberalism. This tendency has given a rise to Euroscepticism, corporatism, a growing urgency to act on the climate change, and a push towards Keynesian economic policy, all of which can be detected even in countries with great individualist traditions, such as Germany and UK. The findings reflect the growing share of positive public attitudes towards the politics of trust and belonging to a community, which the preceding liberal policy making may have precipitated. As a shift towards higher levels of communitarianism is detected, further econometric studies could determine what would be the main watershed events that engender this change. It would be also interesting to find out whether the politics of belonging described by Seligman and Montgomery can be channeled through the institutionalization of a stronger welfare state. It is indeed clear that what Albena Azmanova³¹ defines as a broad societal agreement on social rights under the ticket of welfare state is, so far, the only componential entity of the contemporary democratic societies that is capable of catering to the politics of belonging as advanced by the communitarians.

³¹ Albena Azmanova, *Capitalism on Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

APPENDIX

Figure 1: Individualism-Holism Policy Demand Score

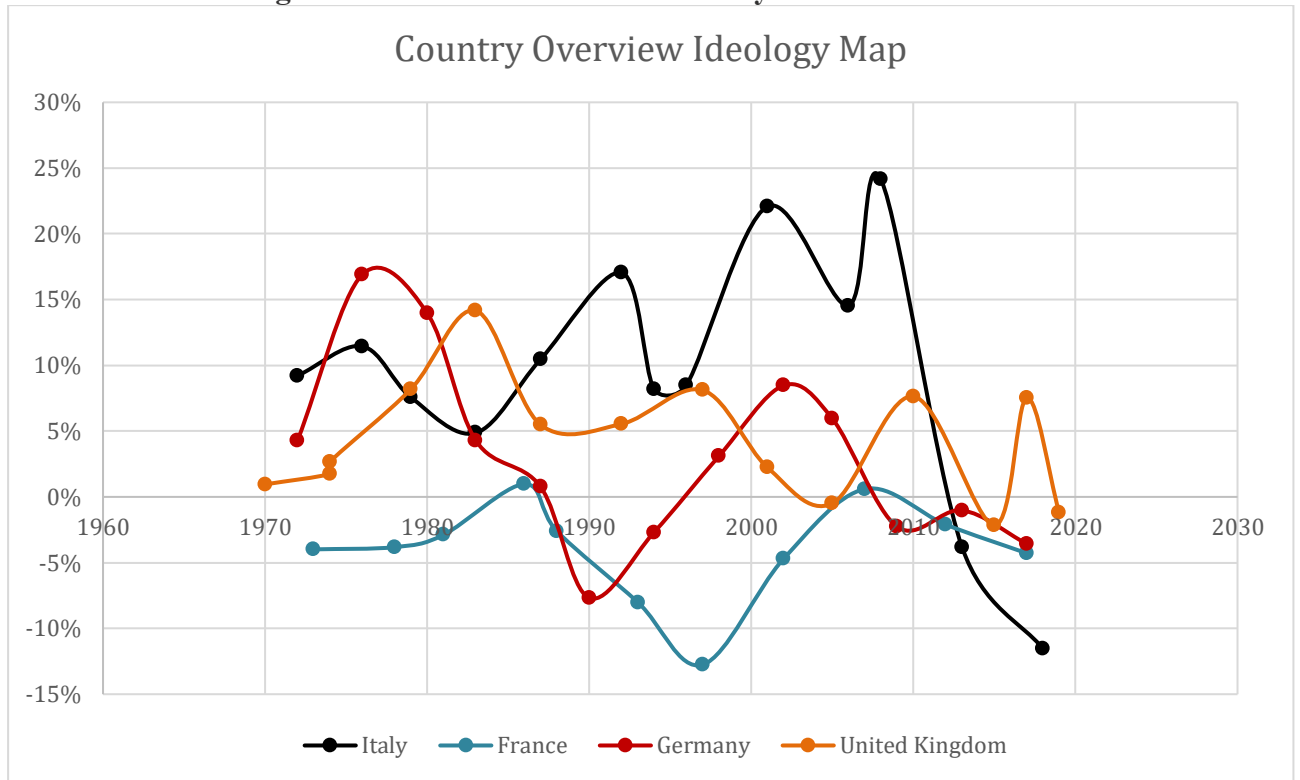


Figure 2: Ideological Map of Most Popular Italian Political Parties

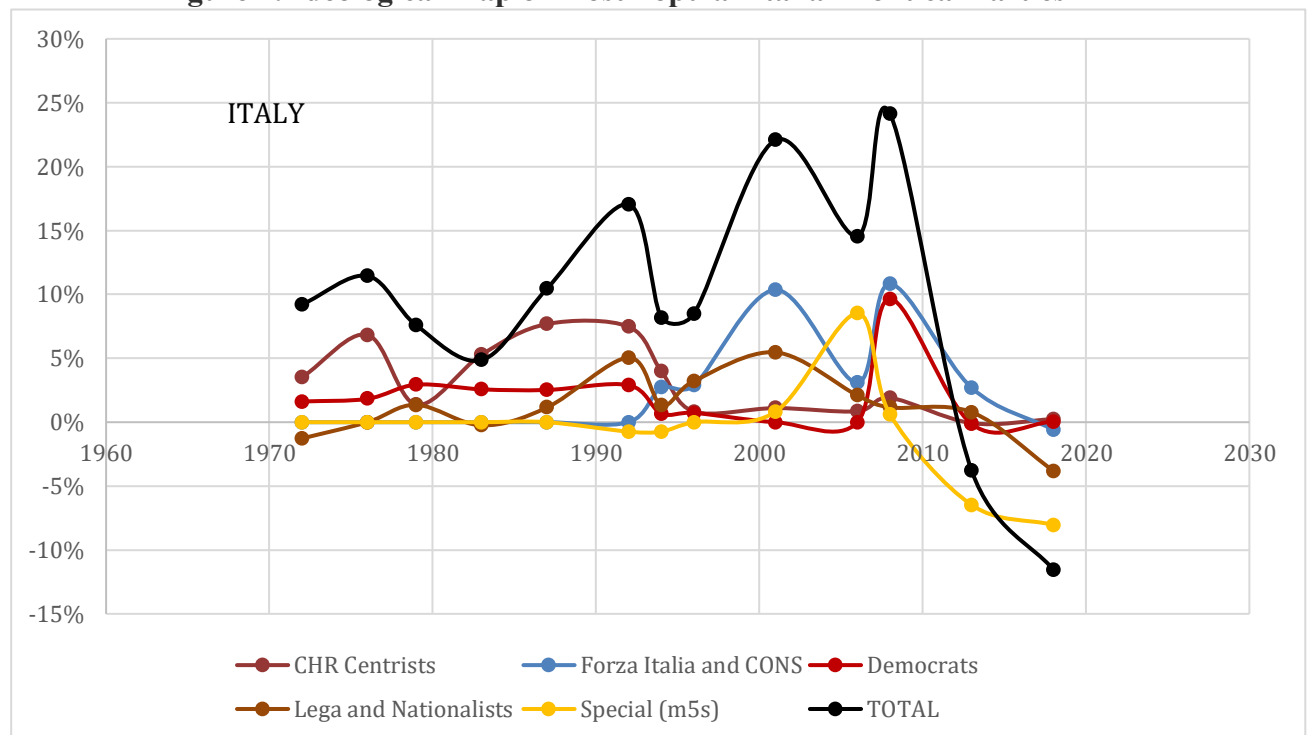


Figure 3: Ideological Map of the Most Popular British Political Parties

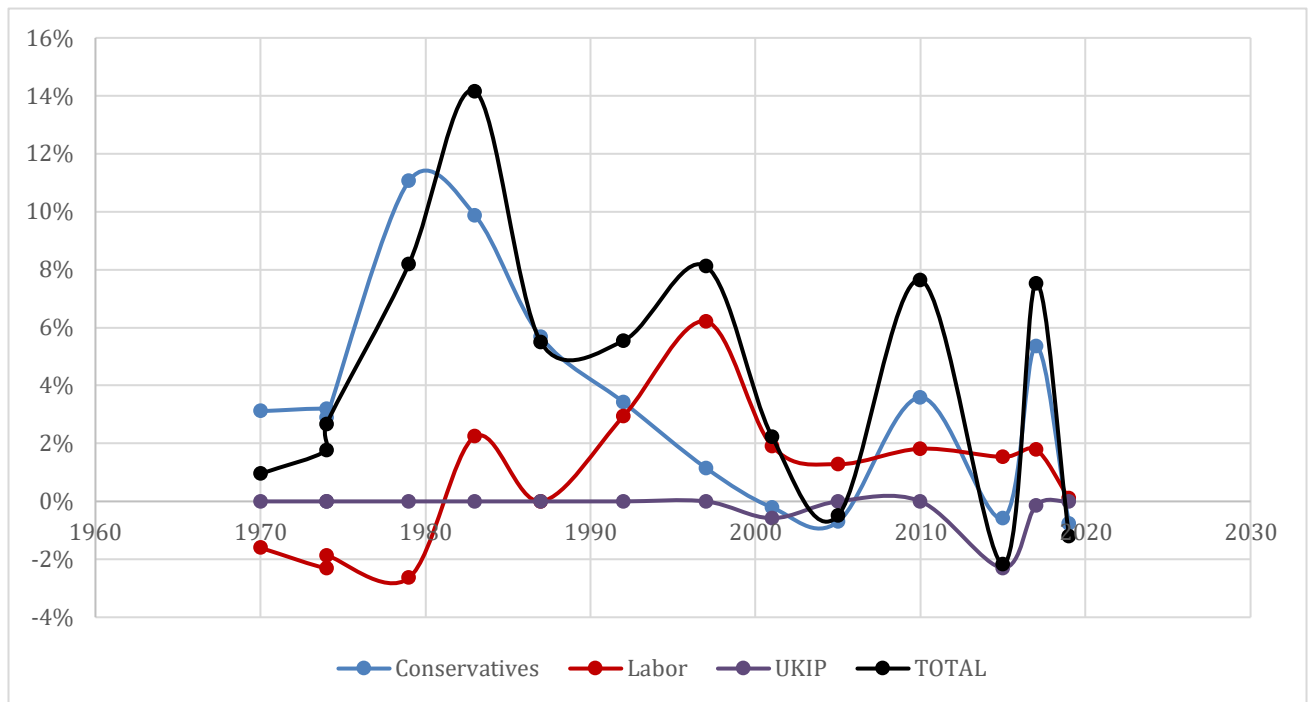


Figure 4: Ideology Map of the Most Popular French Political Parties

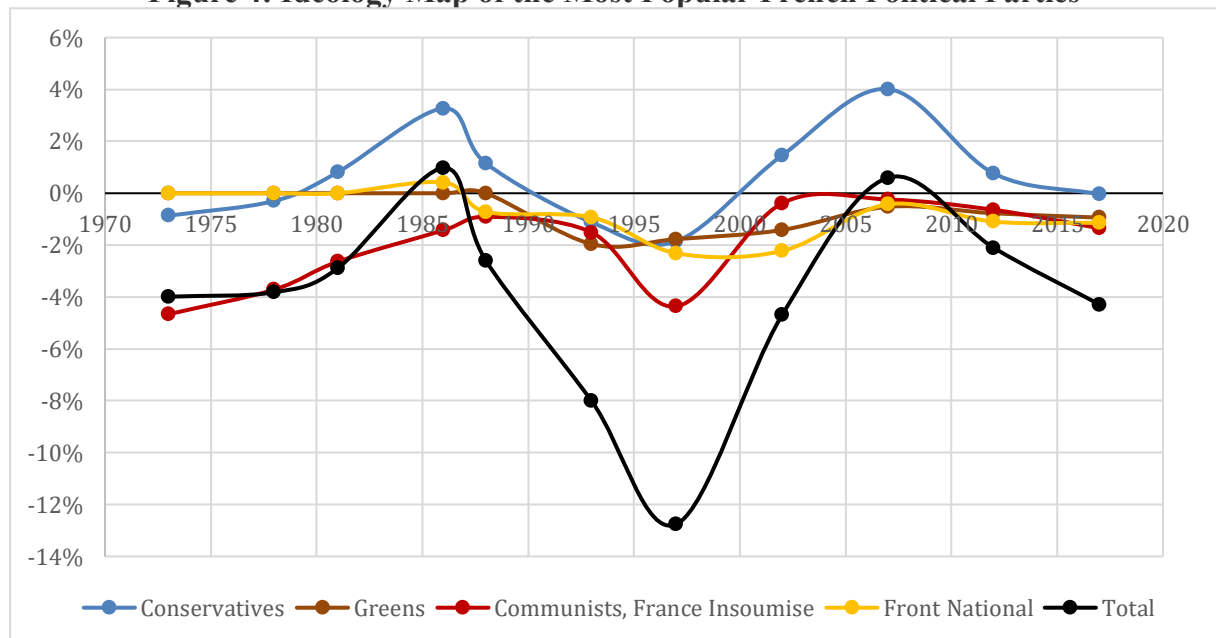
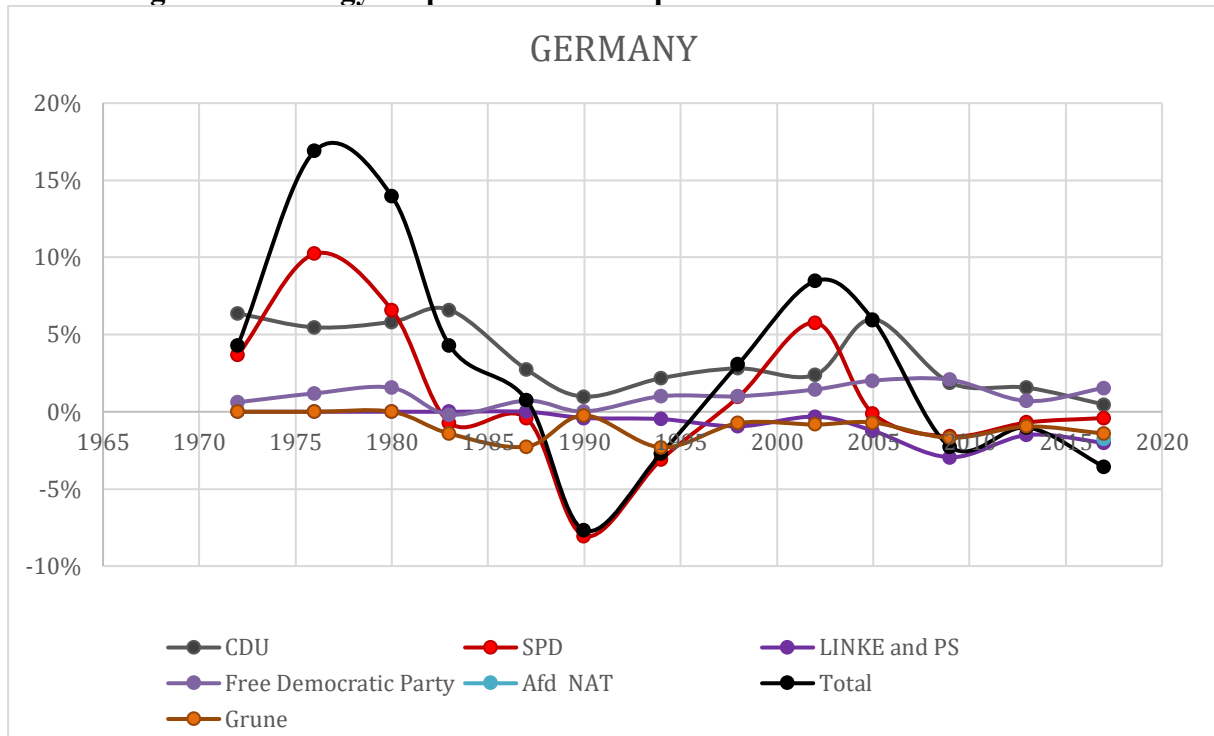


Figure 5: Ideology Map of the Most Important German Political Parties



Logos, Non-Conceptual Experience, and Philosophy

**LOGOS AND NON-CONCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE:
OR, WHY PHILOSOPHERS SHOULD CARE ABOUT MEDITATION**

J. Jeremy Wisnewski

Abstract

Philosophy in the West, by and large, has been an attempt to show that the language of reason (logos) is adequate to reality – that it can accomplish what experience alone cannot. Indeed, this is the central presupposition of philosophical analysis as it is usually carried out. The question I would like to address is this one: By what rights do we maintain this presupposition? What would it mean to take experience itself seriously, without allowing logos to colonize it? The philosophical traditions of the West have not in general taken this question as seriously as it deserves. For when we set aside the demands of logos, we likewise set aside the assumption that reality itself must be unified, static, and immediately answerable to conceptual description. The question thus becomes: What ways might we investigate reality without assuming the immediate legitimacy of reason, language, and conceptual distinctions? In what follows, I will defend the relevance of meditation (and meditative states) to exploring these philosophical questions.

Key Words: *Samadhi, Phenomenology of Meditation, Non-dual Consciousness, non-conceptual experience*

§1. Introduction

It is an astonishing fact that most people claim not to believe their experience. When one asks the standard questions about what is real, the stock answers are returned: matter is real, or sub-atomic particles, or energy. When one presses for more, the list of laws may well be rounded-out: natural selection, diminishing marginal utility, confirmation bias, supply and demand. When one turns away from the scientifically-minded metaphysicians, toward the more devout, answers are surprisingly similar: God is real, or God's love, or sin. In both cases, we see a rather strange tendency: definitions of the real turn away from immediate experience and toward some *explanation* of immediate experience that shows why it cannot be basic. 'God made the world, which enabled my experience' is not all that structurally different from the claim that 'atoms

create the world, which enabled my experience'.¹ Both claims involve, fundamentally, the idea that ordinary experience is not itself adequate to the phenomena of reality – there must be some ‘deeper’ or ‘more profound’ thing in virtue of which we can make sense of what is, after all, immediately before our eyes.

Of course, an irony pervades the turn away from experience. For any account of what is fundamentally real, one will *inevitably* appeal to a certain *kind* of experience in order to justify the thing being discussed: the physicist and chemist will focus on the set of experiences surrounding repeatable experimentation and scientific method. The theist will appeal to the immediacy of religious experience, or the experience of faith, or encountering the world in the mode of wonder; the philosopher might appeal to the normativity felt in the reach of argumentation. The irony is not subtle: one must appeal to *something* to show that regular experience is not to be regarded as fundamental – and appeals to anything will, of necessity, involve some mode of *experience*.

And so the philosophical dog must chase its tail. One requires a *reason* for claiming that one mode of experience is better – more veridical – than another. Already, however, the appeal to reason runs *against* the appeal to experience: reasoning is never concerned with the immediacy of an experience. Its very *modus operandi* is to move beyond itself – to hypothesize things that are not present to explain things that are, or to deduce things that are not present from those things that are. Reason is, like language, essentially ek-static²: to infer something from another thing is *by definition* to move from what is immediate to what is not. In this respect, neither reason nor language more generally can be true to the immediacy of experience – to utilize reason is to declare that a particular experience is not adequately intelligible on its own merits.

Philosophy in the West, by and large, has been an attempt to show that the language of reason (*logos*) is adequate to reality – that it can accomplish what experience alone cannot. Indeed, this is the central presupposition of philosophical analysis as it is usually carried out. The question I would like to address is this one: by what rights do we maintain this presupposition? What would it mean to take experience itself seriously, without allowing *logos* to colonize it? The philosophical traditions of the West have not in general taken this question as seriously as it deserves. For when we set aside the demands of *logos*, we likewise set aside the assumption that reality itself must be unified, static, and immediately answerable to conceptual description. The question thus becomes: In what ways might we investigate reality *without* assuming the immediate legitimacy of reason, language, and conceptual distinctions?

The argument I will make in reply to these questions is this:

1. We should take experience seriously. Experience is the only possible foundation for our understanding of the world, as it is only through experience that the world is disclosed to us.

¹ Of course, there are *non-structural* differences between the claims.

² That is, it is essentially outside of itself. I borrow the term from Division II of Martin Heidegger’s, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1962).

2. There are distinct modes of experience, some conceptual and others not. There is, however, no *a priori* ground for privileging conceptual modes of experience over non-conceptual ones.³ To put this otherwise: *logos* is not more primordial than unmediated experience.
3. One form of non-conceptual (unmediated) experience is found in the state of *Samādhi* (concentration), a well-documented mode of experience discussed and analyzed in various Indic philosophical traditions, often in association with forms of meditation such as *samatha* and *vipassana bhavana* and their various descendants.

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4. Therefore, we should take *Samādhi* seriously as a mode of investigation into experience as it is given.

There are undoubtedly a set of initial objections that present themselves. First, one might claim that we *should not* take experience seriously, at least until we have sorted out its relationship to the world. This roughly Cartesian objection, of course, is a confused one: it suggests we can both pose and answer such questions in a way that *does not* take experience seriously to begin with. Second, one might claim that there *are* a priori reasons for privileging certain modes of experience – particularly those that have been structured by *logos*. As we will see (§2, below), a defense of this view faces significant – perhaps insurmountable – challenges. Third, one might deny that there is such a thing as unmediated experience. Moreover, even if there is such a thing, one might deny that it has any relevance to our metaphysical questions. I regard the existence of non-conceptual experience as an essentially empirical question. Whether or not such states are relevant to metaphysical questions is itself a metaphysical question. I see no benefit in deciding the issue by fiat. I would offer essentially the same response to one who denied the relevance of *Samādhi* (or the meditative practices that cultivate it) more generally.⁴

In what follows, I will defend the relevance of *Samādhi* (and meditation⁵) to philosophical questions against these (and other) objections. I will utilize thinkers where appropriate – William James and Nishida Kitaro loom large in what follows, as will the phenomenologists, albeit mostly implicitly – but I do not intend what follows to be a scholarly inquiry into any one thinker’s particular view (or views) of an issue. I refer to such

³ Though there is an *explanation* for the privileging of *logos* – an explanation that has to do with the very nature of conceptual argumentation: it favors what can be articulated precisely.

⁴ This objection might take several forms: one might set meditation aside as a merely religious practice, and thereby claim it to be inappropriate to proper philosophical reflection. One might claim that there is simply no means by which to approach meditative states in a properly scientific way, and hence what is disclosed within such states is in a fundamental way closed off from those who do not experience them. As will become clear, I think such objections ultimately presuppose the superiority of *logos*, and hence beg the question against other modes of experience.

⁵ There is no single Sanskrit word that gets translated as ‘meditation.’ The terms *yoga*, *bhavana*, and *dhyana* can all be so translated. There are likewise a diversity of practices captured by each of these terms. When I refer to ‘meditation’ generally, I have in mind *samatha bhavana* and *vipassana bhavana*. *Samatha bhavana* is sometimes described as the practice that develops *samādhi*, eventually allowing the practice of *vipassana* (insight). In other cases, however, *samādhi* is said to develop *with vipassana*. For an accessible discussion of the controversies surrounding the Pali sources, see Richard Shankman, *The Experience of Samādhi* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2008).

philosophers' views only as a means to actively address the question at stake. My aim is *not* to establish that all philosophers ought to be cultivating *Samādhi*. My aim, rather, is to provide an argument that such modes of experience cannot simply be ignored by those interested in the core questions of metaphysics.

§2 *Logos*

The core question of philosophy, in some ways, is whether or not one can articulate the structure of things in a way that makes them intelligible – that *reveals* or *uncovers* a latent structure already present. In certain respects, the debates between rationalists and empiricists from the 17th-century onwards have been debates about what tools would best be suited to uncovering this structure.⁶ On the one hand, appeals to things like clear and distinct ideas, combined with the laws of thought they allegedly justify, were offered up as a means to reconcile the world of experience with the world of thought. In brief, the world of thought was to be made master of the world of experience – deciding in advance what elements of experience could be grounded in the categories of rational activity. The world of experience was made handmaiden to the world of thought.⁷

On the other hand, appeals to immediate experience, supplemented by a reasoning that would be used to make the most general sense of this experience, emerged to counter the claim that thought ought to have any proprietary say over experience. Thus Berkeley was willing to defend the idea that ‘matter’ was in effect a simple abstraction forced on experience by thought. If thought is to play second-fiddle to experience, however, such abstractions can be simply jettisoned.⁸

Both approaches, strangely enough, presuppose the same thing: namely, that there is a structure to be captured by the relative rankings of reason and experience. The issue is *not* whether the world has a structure, but rather how to get *at* that structure – what might be the surest guide. In this respect, the importance of experience was *still* in some ways subordinated to reason, even in empiricism. As everyone knows, the sense-data theory of perception says almost nothing about what experience is *like*. Instead, it *explains* experience in terms of logically-derived sensory ‘atoms.’ In this respect, even the empiricist theory gives pride of place to rationality: rationality is what will determine how to understand experience, and thus the laws of thought, now a tool to organize and explain experience, still wind up trumping it. The rationalists and the empiricists, for whatever their differences, still share a basic orientation

⁶ One might also read the debates over the primacy of either the universal or particular in just these terms: as a debate about how best to fulfill the demands of *logos* – a debate that of necessity presupposes the legitimacy of *logos*' demands. The textbook disagreement between Plato and Aristotle (i.e. is the particular or the universal more ‘real’?) is fundamentally a disagreement about how best to express the *logos* of things. The relation of the particular to *logos* in Aristotle is obviously very complicated (as is the relation of the universal to *logos* in Plato) – and the textbook reading certainly misses much.

⁷ Again, this is in no way unique to the philosophical efforts of the 17th-century. In some ways, Aristotle's problem with Plato is precisely this one: Plato makes the thought more basic than the thing. In some ways, Aristotle wants to reverse this, but the notion of ‘thing’ that Aristotle ultimately defends in his treatment of the particular (what Aristotle calls ‘primary substance’) still seems to be ultimately a function of our capacity to discriminate things in accordance with *logos*.

⁸ Moreover, this mirrors the Aristotelian reply to Plato: a form apart from a thing is simply an abstraction.

towards *logos*. Methodologically, reason still gives all marching orders. In the empiricist camp, however, reason is constrained to organize what is given in experience – but it may do so by whatever means necessary – including, crucially, explaining experience in terms foreign to experience itself.⁹

In certain respects, then, run-of-the-mill empiricism is just not empirical enough to *actually* take experience seriously. In its modern form, such empiricism is essentially an apology for the scientific method – and it is only the scientific method that really counts. Standard empiricism presupposes, above all else, that the world has an intelligible structure, and that this structure can be limned with language. But this is, after all, really a presupposition. *Must* the world have a structure? Our urge is to say ‘yes’, and then to appeal to the standard panoply of philosophical positions: Plato’s forms, Hume’s impressions, Kant’s pure intuitions and the categories. Might it not be the case that the structure we find in the world is but the structure of the language we think and speak? What if, rather than simply assuming that the world must have some pre-defined structure that we access *through* experience, we were to allow experience to speak for itself? What if we *did not* immediately assume that experience was in fact translatable into expository and assertoric language?

The Greek term *logos* captures one form of world-disclosure. It is the kind of disclosure that occurs when we read a compelling description of a thing – something that makes a thing stand out as intelligible in a system of concepts that enable us to navigate the world. ‘*Logos*’ has the sense both of reason and of language in general – and this is precisely the way I should like to understand it. It is a kind of conceptual order that we are capable of bringing to bear on our experience – and which, it must be admitted, can come to constitute our natural attitude about the events around us. To explain an experience is precisely to articulate that experience in conceptual terms – terms that both collect the event and display it to those with whom we share a language.¹⁰

Implicit in *logos* is a sense of order – that things stand a particular way, that they are organized and conceptually available to us.¹¹ *Logos*, as I am using the term here, discloses the

⁹ Aristotle is an interesting case here – and he may in fact be an exception. In *Categories*, the ultimacy of the particular is best expressed demonstratively: “*that*.” Is a demonstrative pronoun ‘foreign to experience’? It seems like a stretch to say so. Aristotle’s view comes closer to one that would allow experience to speak for itself, at any rate, than Plato’s written view does. Of course, any claims about Plato’s thought must be tempered with a recognition of Plato’s views on the inability of written language to adequately express truth. See, in particular, *Phaedrus* and the 7th letter.

¹⁰ On Gadamer’s view, this is also what’s required to *understand* an experience. In this respect, *logos* and understanding are intimately linked. To give up on *logos* altogether would be to give up on understanding. For my own part, I am inclined to distinguish *kinds* of understanding – the conceptual and the non-conceptual. I am open to the idea that the conceptual can *elucidate* the non-conceptual, but this is a rather weaker claim than saying that conceptualization is *required* for understanding. Unfortunately, I do not currently have the space to consider Gadamer’s view with the thoroughness it deserves. In brief, I contend that Gadamer thinks *logos* is a prerequisite for any understanding *rather than an element within an instance of understanding*. I think this is compatible with the existence of non-conceptual experiences that can be understood. To put this another way: it is impossible to realize the cessation of subject/object duality without first experiencing subject/object duality. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd Revised Edition (New York: Continuum Press, 2004).

¹¹ In many ways, the history of philosophy is a history of excavating the structure of *logos* (and, occasionally, its limitations).

world as a set of discrete entities, having or failing to have particular properties.¹² The a priori structure of *logos* is crucial to understanding what it is that is actually disclosed *within logos*. Every language – every *logos* – consists in a set of distinctions along with rules for arranging, hierarchically even, these sets of distinctions.¹³

The logic of *logos* was, in many respects, first systematically treated by Aristotle in the *Categories*. The categories, at bottom, present a taxonomy of kinds of being – of the ways in which things can be said to be. Something can be an animal, but it can also be red, or sad, or here, or tomorrow, and so on. The arrangement of possible predications into types organizes the implicit structure of *logos* – into the ways in which it can gather and display the world. Implicit within this set of distinctions, however, are rules for how such distinctions can be organized. Four rules are worth mentioning explicitly: identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle, and the principle of sufficient reason.¹⁴ These are *not* empirical rules derived from long-term work with concepts in a language. They are, rather, the very condition for the possibility of an expository and explanatory language at all. If non-contradiction does not hold, for example, then no predication actually manages to *assert* anything. To say that ‘s is p’ in the absence of non-contradiction is *not* to say that ‘s is not ~p.’ In other words, saying that ‘s is p’ doesn’t *exclude* any other possibilities. But the function of predication *just is* to preclude other possibilities – if s is p, then it’s impossible for it also to be ~p. Excluded middle follows directly from non-contradiction by DeMorgan’s Law, and something like the Principle of Sufficient Reason can be derived from this in a few short steps.¹⁵

Logos, then, has a structure. It consists in making exclusive distinctions between things, and then mapping the relations between such things in possible predicates, according to basic logical principles. Some of these principles (Identity, Sufficient Reason, Excluded Middle, and Non-Contradiction) are more basic than others.

§3 *Why Logos Can Not Be Automatically Privileged*

The ground of knowledge has, in one way or another, always been claimed to be experience. The rationalists, as Husserl so skillfully shows in the *Crisis*, ultimately took for granted the legitimacy of the experiences made possible by the mathematization of nature – namely, the

¹² As I am using the term, *logos* is thus intimately connected to excavating the structure of what Heidegger calls presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) in *Being and Time*.

¹³ On this view, a concept is just such a set of distinctions – ‘this, not that or that.’

¹⁴ Aristotle identifies non-contradiction as *the* fundamental principle of human thought in his *Metaphysics*, where he formulates the principle several times: “It is impossible for anyone to believe the same thing to be and not be.” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 2nd Revised Edition, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), IV.3.1005b23-24). “The same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect.” (Ibid., IV.3.1005b19-20.) “The most indisputable of all beliefs is that contradictory statements are not at the same time true.” (Ibid., IV.6.1011b13-14.)

¹⁵ Excluded middle follows because $\sim(p \ \& \ \sim p)$ is logically equivalent to $(p \vee \sim p)$ [DeMorgan]. One can derive a form of the principle of sufficient reason as follows: if p is given, $p \vee \sim q$ follows (rule of addition). If $(p \vee \sim q)$, we then have, via commutativity, double negation, and material implication, $q \rightarrow p$. This entails that, for any p, there is some q that, if it obtains, will guarantee p. (Of course, the derivation of the principle of sufficient reason from excluded middle is a logic trick. On the ground, we accept these principles well before we have ever shown that they can be derived.)

experience of structural-mathematical *precision* when modeling nature.¹⁶ The empiricists, as the name obviously suggests, took the *very same* experience of logical precision as a model for trying to provide the *logic* of empirical perception. As is well known, this resulted in an account of experience that had relatively little to do with experience – ideas, sense-data, secondary qualities were presented as a means of modeling experience only to come, via the power of conceptual thinking, to replace the very thing they aimed to describe. In an astonishing turnabout in modern philosophy, the primacy of experience, in both empiricist and rationalist camps, gives way to its unavailability: each model for experience blinds us to *experience itself*.

If we take seriously the claim, implicit in the history of philosophy, that knowledge must be grounded in experience, we find ourselves yet again needing to return to that basic ground: to what is encountered in living experience. To do this, of course, it is not sufficient to simply grab hold of our favorite models and then apply them, for in a very real sense the experience we aim to conceptualize is at least sometimes not in itself conceptual (a point I hope to demonstrate below).

In fact, the dialectic of rationalism and empiricism, as well as its alleged overcoming in Kant's logical reconstruction of experience, displays the way in which *logos* undermines our capacity to see experience for what it is. The move to analysis is *always* a move *away* from the object of experience: any account of *x* must involve terms *other than x*. Indeed, reason, explanation, *logos*, analysis – this entire family of concepts is essentially ek-statical and mediated: To reason about *x*, or to explain *x*, or to analyze *x*, requires *abandoning* *x* as self-sufficient. This is evidenced by the obvious fact that all explanations need to appeal to something *other than* the thing being explained, all arguments move away from what is immediate to what is inferred if they bother with the immediate at all, and all analysis appeals to more than is present in an immediate experience.¹⁷

The idea that *logos* is inadequate to experience has been championed in divergent philosophical schools,¹⁸ but it is an idea that remains at the periphery of mainstream philosophical work as it is routinely carried out today. Indeed, on the face of it both philosophy and the sciences more generally are necessarily hostile to the notion that *logos* is insufficient to what it describes. All of the discursive sciences (*logoi*) seem rather to *require* that the adequacy of *logos* – and *logos* itself, as I am using the term – involve a move from the unmediated to the mediated.¹⁹

¹⁶ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

¹⁷ This move is what James calls the 'Psychologist's Fallacy.' See William James, *Principles of Psychology, Two Volumes* (New York: Dover Publications 1950). It is also what Wittgenstein refers to as a 'grammatical illusion.' See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). For an illuminating discussion of the connection between these two ideas, see Russell Goodman's impressive *Wittgenstein and William James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁸ This view can be found in Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), in William James, *Writings, 1902-1910*, (New Work: The Library of America, 1988), in Nishida Kitaro, *An Inquiry Into the Good*, translated by Masao Abe and C. Ives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) and in the later work of Martin Heidegger, see for example, Martin Heidegger, *The Event [Ereignis]*, translated by Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ This is true even when *logos* is concerned with itself.

In disputing the exclusive authority of *logos*, I do not intend thereby to say that every experience is as good as every other. I only intend to dispute that *logos* is the *only* way to investigate philosophical questions. As nearly everyone concedes, not all experiences are identical. There are hallucinations, religious visions, contemplations, scenic vistas, disappointments, frustrations, movie-goings, proof-completions, and so much more. The major objection to taking experience as such seriously follows directly from these considerations. One might well insist that only *veridical* experience should count, and then note that it is reason that enables us to distinguish the veridical from the non-veridical. In this respect, then, *logos* must take precedence over experience (or, more precisely, those experiences structured by *logos* should trump those *not* structured by *logos*).

Implicit in this objection, of course, is the presumed legitimacy of *logos*: the objection does not establish that *logos* can distinguish between the veridical and the non-veridical; it simply asserts it. If we *knew* that reason was sufficient to make such distinctions, no one could possibly disagree with the claim that *logos* ought to trump other forms of experience, given that these were known to be non-veridical. But the entire issue at stake is precisely whether or not the distinction between *logos*-experience and non-*logos* experience tracks the difference between the veridical and the non-veridical. To establish that these distinctions are in fact the same would require demonstrating that *logos* itself was justifiably regarded as truth-tracking – and not just truth-tracking, but *exclusively* truth-tracking. If other forms of experience could also be shown to be truth-tracking, in other words, we would have no basis for our exclusive reliance on *logos*. If *logos* itself *cannot* be shown to be truth-tracking – if it inevitably involves the presupposition of its own legitimacy – we likewise have no convincing reason to limit our trust in experience to a trust in the discriminations of conceptual thinking.

Is an exclusive focus on *logos* justified? The question is perhaps more vexing than it initially appears. The question itself, in one respect, presupposes the legitimacy of the very thing it asks after. For whatever the faults of positivism, this much seems right: questions are only legitimate if they are (in principle at least) answerable. To ask about the *legitimacy* of our presupposition that reason and language are adequate to the description of reality – be it physical, metaphysical, or moral reality – is already to speak in the language of reasons. To demonstrate the legitimacy of reason would be, presumably, to offer *reasons for* the presuppositions that could perform a legitimating function. But this is precisely what is at issue: we want to know if reason *can* be legitimate, and addressing this question seems to require that we use the very thing we are trying to assess.

The point can be made with a simple illustration of the circular thinking required: imagine an argument designed to show that arguments are legitimate. Any such argument – it really doesn't matter the form – will necessarily rely on the presupposition that arguments have normative force. If it did not rely on this presupposition, one could never take a conclusion to have been warranted by the premises leading to it. If we do make the presupposition, then the argument cannot be said to have *established* the legitimacy of reasons so much as illustrated it. But this entails that an argument aimed to justify reason will be no better at achieving its task than any argument: for us to take the argument seriously, we must already be committed to the legitimacy of argument. And this entails something rather serious for philosophers: reason is

and must be ungrounded. There is nothing outside of reason itself that ever *could* justify reason.²⁰

This is not a problem that has been lost on philosophers, of course. From Kant's project of using reason to discover reason's limitations to the Habermasian attempt to ground reason in the structure of language-use, philosophers have attempted to show that, although reason cannot justify itself, we can nevertheless rest easy – reason *must* be taken for granted, for its foundation is built into our linguistic endeavors. Alternatively, some argue that we are justified in accepting reason's legitimacy given what we have accomplished through its use.

As I hope is obvious, none of these three attempts are ultimately successful:

1. Kant's claim that we can discover the limitations of reason *with reason itself* has been criticized from a number of different perspectives. Kant himself saw, in the antinomies, that reason necessarily tried to exceed itself.²¹ Later, Tanabe Hajime, with some help from Hegel, more powerfully argued that if reason was inadequate, it could not possibly be trusted to determine its own limits.²² The very admission that reason has limits suggests that we should not trust it to discover and demarcate those limitations. (Indeed, Tanabe saw Kant's critical philosophy as yet more subject-centered hubris requiring *metanoesis* (Japanese: *zange*)).²³
2. Habermas's claim that reason was grounded in those discursive rules implicit in all of language-use faces similar self-referential difficulties: by offering the attempt to 'discursively redeem' reason by an analysis of the legitimacy conditions of assertoric speech-acts, Habermas essentially tries to *evade* the question of the legitimacy of reason.²⁴ An assertoric speech act, by definition, is one that is capable of being judged true or false in terms of the evidence available. One might well concede that Habermas has got the structure of assertoric language right without thereby conceding that reason is sufficient for determining the structure of the world, or of experience. Habermas' theory of communicative action essentially *restates* the claim that reason is self-legitimizing. For those who worry that reason is not adequate to experience, claiming that language legitimates reason is rather similar to claiming that the existence of bachelors legitimates the existence of unmarried men. Language itself (at least

²⁰ Compare the character Elizabeth Costello in J.M. Coetzee's work: "For, seen from the outside, from a being alien to it, reason is simply a vast tautology. Of course reason will validate reason as the first principle of the universe – what else should it do? Dethrone itself? Reasoning systems, as systems of totality, do not have that power. If there were a position from which reason could attack and dethrone itself, reason would already have occupied that position; otherwise it would not be total." (J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 25).

²¹ See, of course, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²² See Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, translated by Tekeuchi Yoshinori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

²³ This is a dominant theme in Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, where Tanabe laments his earlier infatuation with Kant's critical philosophy in light of his own actions on behalf of imperial Japan during World War II.

²⁴ See, for example, Jürgen Habermas *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol 1*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

assertoric language) presupposes the structure of reason, and hence cannot be used to *justify* that structure.

3. The instrumentalist defense of reason fares no better. If the legitimacy of reason can be inferred from what we are able to accomplish with reason, two points of response can be made: first, even the astonishing success of reason would only justify the claim that reason is instrumentally true, not that it *actually* captured the structure of experience or of the world.²⁵ Second, reason in fact seems ill-equipped in multiple domains. For any experience that is non-conceptual, reason will be unable to capture the phenomena in question.

In my view, these quick arguments provide at the very least some antecedent plausibility for the claim that, if there *are* non-conceptual modes of experience, then these experiences have just as much *prima facie* legitimacy as do those experiences structured by *logos*. While I think the claim that we should take *all* experience seriously – even what *logos* demands we call ‘unreal’ – can be plausibly defended,²⁶ I will limit myself to those experiences that we can characterize as non-conceptual. In particular, I am interested in the experience of *samādhi*. Before discussing this ‘one-pointedness of mind,’ however, it will be useful to get clearer on the notion of the non-conceptual I am employing.

§4 The non-conceptual

What is the notion of ‘experience’ that escapes the net of *logos*? The sort of thing in question here can be found in several places. The beginnings of this idea are clearly articulated, for example, in William James’ *Principles*, as well as some later papers on radical empiricism.²⁷ It is also present in Nishida Kitaro, of the Kyoto School, who first came across the idea of ‘pure experience’, treated conceptually, in James’ work.²⁸ (Nishida undoubtedly came across this experientially in his study of Zen).²⁹

As early as *The Principles of Psychology*, William James was already calling into question the idea that consciousness was best captured in terms of a knowing ego intentionally directed toward the world. The evidence for this ‘egological’ view, according to James, was simply not present *within* experience. Or, to put the point more precisely, the idea of a knowing ego grasping experiential content could only capture certain kinds of consciousness:

²⁵ This form of argument parallels Arthur Fine’s arguments against scientific realism: Fine notes that the success of science is only evidence for the claim that it is *instrumentally* true, not that it is true *tout court*. See Arthur Fine, “The Natural Ontological Attitude” *Noûs* 18 (1984), pp. 51-65.

For a comparison of Fine’s views on the realism/antirealism debate with Heidegger’s similar views, see my “Heidegger, Arthur Fine, and the Natural Ontological Attitude,” *Prolegomena* 12 (2013).

²⁶ This claim *has* been defended, in different ways, by numerous philosophers, as we will see.

²⁷ See “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?” and “A World of Pure Experience,” both in William James, *Writings, 1902-1910*.

²⁸ See his *An Inquiry into the Good*. Carter makes the plausible claim that the notion of ‘pure experience’ is present throughout Nishida’s writing, even when he later turns his attention to the core idea of ‘topos.’ See Robert Carter, *The Kyoto School* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013).

²⁹ See Michiko Yusa, *Zen and Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitaro* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

But this *condition* of the experience is not one of the things experienced at the moment; this knowing is not immediately known. It is only known in subsequent reflection. Instead, then, of the stream of thought being one of *con*-sciousness...it might be better called a stream of *Sciouness* pure and simple, thinking objects of some of which it makes what it calls a 'Me,' and only aware of its 'pure' Self in an abstract, hypothetic or conceptual way.³⁰

On James' view in *Principles*, the root of our core idea of the self comes, ultimately, from motor intentionality – from the fact that we *move* in the world. The idea of a centrally located 'agent' is one that we *feel*, and that forces itself upon us when we reflect on things like the nature of conscious experience. What is fascinating about this account, then, is that the very idea of a self is an idea found in reflection upon experience rather than in experience itself. This means that any account of experience that invokes a model of a knowing ego set over against a content of awareness will necessarily *depart* from experience as it is immediately given, and will do so precisely *because* of the demands placed upon us by the structure of thought itself (*logos*).

As James was well aware, when we come to the idea of a 'self' in our reflections, the idea that we consider is necessarily different from the activity of consideration itself. While it is true that a thought-content has no reality apart from the act of thinking that produces it, and that thinking has no reality apart from the particular thought-content it thinks, it is still the case that one cannot simply identify the thought-content with the activity of thinking. This is so for relatively familiar reasons: the activity of consciousness – despite always being tied to an intentional object – acts as a *condition for* being aware of the thought-content in question. What kind of condition is this? If James is right, it is a *logical* condition – a condition of *logos*. If we are to account for consciousness in terms of the categories of logic, we will need to postulate, as a transcendental condition of experience, a *subject* of experience. What I find innovative about James' treatment here, however, is his flat-out refusal to assume that logical conditions are also metaphysical conditions. Accepting that, in the realm of *logos*, we must *postulate* a subject as a condition for the possibility of experience does not entail that there are such subjects. Moreover, granting that *logos* demands a subject does not entail that we must *accept* this demand in our account of experience.

In this respect, perhaps strangely, James is far more radical than Kant. As is well known, Kant too thought of the subject as a necessary *theoretical* postulate, but recognized that only the empirical ego was accessible to any acting agent. Thus, in Kant, the subject becomes a transcendental requirement for experience, but one that we can never really know. For James, a recognition that something is a necessary postulate of thought is sufficient to show that we need not necessarily postulate it. To put this less cryptically: as soon as we recognize a compulsion to postulate something in addition to what is immediately given in experience, that compulsion can be seen for what it is: an urge rather than a necessity. For someone like Kant, responding to the urge is required to bring a systematic philosophy to fruition; for James, seeing the urge is enough to give up on the prospect of a systematic philosophy all together.

In later writings, the initial notion of 'sciousness' comes to play a much more central role in James' thinking:

³⁰ Willian James, *The Princiles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), Vol. I, p. 304.

the stream of thinking...is only a careless name for what, when scrutinized, reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of my breathing. The 'I think' which Kant said must be able to accompany all my objects, is the 'I breathe' which actually does accompany them...breath, which was ever the original of spirit, breath moving outwards, between the glottis and the nostrils, is, I am persuaded, the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness. *That entity is fictitious, while thoughts in the concrete are fully real. But thoughts in the concrete are made of the same stuff as things are.*³¹

The idea of consciousness emerges out of reflection on experience, *not* out of experience. In the act of experience, there is no thing called 'consciousness' that is experienced: consciousness is exhausted by its object. In this respect, Sartre is right: consciousness is what it is not, and it is not what it is.³² The thought being thought is real enough – present – but there is not a 'thing' *to which* it is present. Consciousness, in other words, is nothing other than the simply-being-present-of-the-intentional.³³ Indeed, this is the fundamental truth of intentionality itself: consciousness without an object simply *does not exist*.³⁴ Consciousness without directedness is unintelligible. It follows that consciousness is, well, *nothing* – at least when we construe it as something other than an event, or a relation, or an occurrence.

To take experience seriously, then, we must take this mode of experience seriously. We have chased out one conception of the world by developing scientific thinking and powerful conceptual maps. We have been hounded by what Husserl calls, at one point, the 'ghosts of logic.'³⁵ What happens when we turn our attention to this 'nothing', rather than simply allowing the rules of *logos* to determine what we *must say* about the logical 'structure' of experience? And how can we turn our attention to such experience – how can we deliberately access the non-conceptual experiential bedrock?

§5 Why meditation should be taken seriously: *Samādhi*

In Indic and other Asian philosophical traditions, it is widely recognized that one can develop certain perceptual and experiential capacities in such a way that they are *more* disclosive than they would otherwise be.³⁶ This is the essential role played by vipassana meditation and its descendants. Within these meditative traditions, various modes of conscious awareness are distinguished. A central experiential state involves intense levels of 'concentration' (*samādhi*). This mode provides us with one access point to the notion of non-conceptual experience.³⁷ In states of *samādhi*, many of the standard assumptions we utilize to organize our experience are

³¹ William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 37.

³² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel Barnes (New York: Harper Collins Press, 1993).

³³ For an interesting take on how this relates to some forms of meditation, see Wolfgang Fasching, "Consciousness, Self-consciousness, and Meditation," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 7 (2008), pp. 462-483.

³⁴ We are misled to the extent that we take talk of an 'object' here – one set over against a 'subject' – to be referential. It is simply convenient. As T.S. Eliot once remarked: I have to use language to talk.

³⁵ See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

³⁶ This notion is likewise at the core of Aristotle's account of *phronesis* as a form of perception. See in particular *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 4, collected in J.L. Ackrill, ed., *A New Aristotle Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

³⁷ Or what is called, in some literatures, 'non-conceptual content'.

in fact called into question. The most significant of these are subject/object duality, on the one hand, and the very idea of structure, on the other.

Saying these things are ‘called into question,’ however, is a bit misleading. It is *not* the case that while one is in a state of *samādhi*, one therein *raises* a question about what one is experiencing. In a certain respect, the instant one raises a question, one is no longer in the absorptive states of *samādhi*. Questions themselves take one out of the immediate experiential present – they indicate an absence in the field of the present – something that is sought.³⁸ In *samādhi*, there is nothing that is ‘sought after.’ There is not even an experiential self that *could* raise a question about itself, let alone about what was being experienced. In this respect, raising such questions is always retrospective: one thinks back on the state of experience one was immersed in, and then attempts to characterize it utilizing the very concepts that were, within said experience, set aside. The issue of how to characterize *samādhi* is thus a complicated one. In one respect, any characterization must be inadequate, as it will be couched within a set of concepts that are foreign to the experience itself; *samādhi* is *essentially* non-conceptual.³⁹ Nevertheless, given that we are navigating discursive waters, some sort of characterizations must be used. The trick, as the old Zen proverb has it, is not to mistake the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself.

Samādhi, it should be noted, does not really pick out a *single* state of awareness. It is commonly distinguished into several different levels.⁴⁰ For our purposes, it will be sufficient to pick out the basic features of *samādhi* without reference to its various modes or levels. The aim of doing this is to articulate a mode of experience that is non-conceptual, and that can be cultivated.

The most general rendering of the term *samādhi* is ‘concentration’ or ‘unification.’ A common metaphor used to describe *samādhi* is ‘one-pointedness of mind’ [Sanskrit: *cittass’ ekaggata*], or ‘unification of mind.’⁴¹ As Shankman characterizes it: “*samādhi* entails the unifying of the mind in a steady, undistracted awareness” (4).⁴² This is accomplished through *practice*, and can be developed well beyond what someone is initially capable of:

Fixed concentration is cultivated, concentration on a fixed object so intense that awareness of no other experience can arise, resulting in one-pointed focus and states of tranquility and peace where all experience of changing physical and mental activity ceases. Subtle states of steady, undistracted

³⁸ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Section 2.

³⁹ This is the case because concepts inherently imply subject/object duality. To utilize a concept, at least in regular assertoric language, is to specify a thing *other than* oneself – even when the concept is ‘self.’ This is a point that has been made by numerous philosophers, not the least of whom are Nishida Kitaro and Nishitani Keiji. Gadamer also makes the point when he claims, in *Truth and Method*, that intelligible assertion depends on a distance between what is said and who is saying it (See, e.g., 442).

⁴⁰ For an account of the treatment of *samādhi* in the Pali texts, see Richard Shankman, *The Experience of Samadhi* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2008).

⁴¹ The etymology of the term “is derived from the Pali prefix *sam*, meaning ‘together,’ and the root *dha*, meaning to ‘to put’ or ‘place’” (Shankman, 3). The sense of the term thus involves something like unification, or a ‘placing together.’

⁴² Richard Shankman, *The Experience of Samadhi* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2008).

awareness can ultimately be achieved, but awareness of changing phenomena is lost as the mind is fixed or absorbed into its meditation object and mental activity becomes still.⁴³

In *samādhi*, then, we see something like the disappearance of subject/object duality: the object of awareness and the act of awareness are no longer experientially distinguished. No judgments are made. The self that we pre-reflectively regard as a necessary partner in the perceptual act recedes into oblivion. There is no ‘naming’ of the object of our awareness – there is simply awareness. The state picked out by the term *samādhi* is thus an instance of what Nishida Kitaro, following William James, calls ‘pure experience’: “When one directly experiences one’s own state of consciousness, there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and object are completely unified.”⁴⁴ This *is not* the same as the cool contemplation of some object in thought. “The present of pure experience is not the present in thought, for once one thinks about the present, it is no longer present.”⁴⁵ In other words, the addition of any conceptual labels to one’s immediate experience essentially moves one’s attention away *from* that experience and *toward* the labels one is utilizing: “when one makes judgments about it, it ceases to be pure experience.”⁴⁶ This is so because “pure experience coincides with the sphere of attention.”⁴⁷ Both the general notion of *samādhi* and Nishida’s notion of pure experience (which I read as encompassing *samādhi*) provide us with examples of one type of non-conceptual experience.⁴⁸

There are those who would claim that all experience is conceptual. I deny this claim, but regard the matter as essentially an empirical one. It *is* true that experience is *informed by* concepts in many ways – concepts organize both the perception of the workaday world as well as our descriptions of it. Nevertheless, there are states of consciousness – ways of relating to intentional objects – that essentially break down the distinction between the intentional object and the consciousness that is aware of it. To put this another way: there are states of consciousness in which any awareness of ‘I’ is completely recessed – in which the content and the act of consciousness are identical.

The Zen tradition sometimes characterizes this in terms of ‘just sitting.’ The practice of *vipassana bhavana* anchors itself in breathing – just breathing. In the state of *samādhi*, there is not an object of consciousness (the act of breathing) set over against a subject engaged in that activity (the ego, or self, or *atman*). Instead, there is pure activity: just breathing.

It should be admitted immediately that our descriptions of such experience seem to insist on attributing the activity to an agent – if there is pain, it must belong to someone; if there is breathing, there must be an organism doing it; if there are thoughts, there must be a thinker. Such descriptions may, in the end, be true. What is important for our purposes here, however, is to see that these claims are the results of *inference*. They are not immediately present in the experience itself. We *infer* that there is a ‘self’ that experiences the pain, or does the breathing,

⁴³ Ibid, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Nishida Kitaro, *An Inquiry into the Good*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁸ There are of course other forms of non-conceptual experience. Indeed, much absorptive experience strikes me as non-conceptual in ways similar to the sense articulated above. The difference between *Samādhi* and other non-conceptual experiences is an important issue, but not one I have time to explore here.

or thinks the thought. If we stick to what is present in experience, we find no such thing – or, perhaps better, we find no such thing that is permanent.

Can there be pain without someone experiencing it? If pain is intrinsically phenomenological, one will be tempted to say ‘no’ here. But, again, it really depends on how we parse the question. Let us grant that pain is intrinsically phenomenological: whenever there is pain, there is awareness of pain. This is *not* the equivalent, however, of saying that there must be someone who is *being aware of pain* whenever there is pain.

There is no reason to deny that we *think* about pain in terms of subjects and intentional objects. That much is certainly true. But to say that we think of x in a certain way is not yet to demonstrate that x is in fact really captured in this way of thinking about it, nor is it to demonstrate any kind of metaphysical necessity.

In *samādhi*, pain is just pain. It is not my pain.⁴⁹ Awareness fuses with its object in such a way that there is really no experiential distinction to be made. Interestingly, this changes the very way pain is encountered within experience: it is no longer something to be avoided. It is just pain.

The example of pain is a telling one for the larger point I want to make here. It is very easy – completely natural, in fact, to think that any pain I feel must be *my* pain. And yet the experience of *samādhi* calls this into question in a fundamental way: pain is simply pain, there is no ‘me’ apart from the awareness of pain: what I call ‘me’ is exhausted when we simply describe the experience: ‘there is being aware of pain now.’⁵⁰ Nothing else is required by the experience, though thinking longs to build up a conceptual structure around this experience – to note subjects and objects, to engage in the language of substance.

If *samādhi* involves the fusion of subject and object – the unity of consciousness and its object – then there is at least one experience that suggests that the entire edifice upon which we have built science, philosophy, and the discursive sciences (*logoi*) more generally is inherently problematic. It suggests that the discursive sciences (*logoi*) will only ever be able to gesture toward certain modes of experience. This also suggests an explanation for the routine rejection of some modes of experience by the sciences: the assertoric, propositional nature of scientific discovery (as currently conceived) fundamentally limits what science itself can legitimately investigate (namely, only those things with propositional or conceptual structure). The instant something can be put into words only inexactly (or metaphorically), it ceases to be regarded as falling within the domain of ‘science.’⁵¹

When I say that the discursive sciences (*logoi*) are ‘problematic,’ I mean that we should not assume that the experiences corresponding to (and issuing in) science, philosophy, and subject/object thinking are self-justifying. I do *not* mean that these things are false. Taking experience seriously requires us to take seriously even common sense experience – and it is obviously true that sometimes we do experience things like the idea of a self, or of cause and effect, or of straightforward distinctions among objects. This must be taken seriously, but it

⁴⁹ For a wonderfully written account of how one comes to realize, in meditative states, that pain is not personal, see Tim Parks, *Teach Us to Sit Still* (New York: Rodale Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ Or even: “It’s like this right now.”

⁵¹ I think a plausible case can be made that *all* language is metaphorical. I do not mean to suggest otherwise with my remarks. My above point should be read in terms of what we self-consciously *regard* as metaphor.

cannot be the final word. It cannot be the final word precisely because there are other modes of experience that reveal things in a fundamentally different way.⁵²

If we compare these modes of experience in the realm of *logos*, the results are given before we even get them: *logos* demands structure – and this structure is usually given in terms of subjects and objects, substances and their predicates. It is in the nature of *logos* to account for things in these terms. It is precisely for this reason, however, that *logos* is not a sure guide to the organization of every possible experience – *logos* gathers the world in one way: by sorting it into categories, by making distinctions. It is true that many *different* distinctions can be made – and that there are many ways of organizing things conceptually – but this is itself further evidence of the point: *logos* thrives on distinctions. Indeed, reasoning and language-use more generally exist precisely as sets of distinctions and the relations between them. To demand that experience conform to *logos* is thus to rule out the possibility that the world is itself unstructured. More specifically, it is to rule out the possibility that subject/object duality is inadequate to certain kinds of experience.

§6 *Some implications for philosophical problems*

Nothing I have argued so far in any way indicates that non-conceptual experience should be *privileged* over conceptual experience. Indeed, the view I have been articulating is at least compatible with the claim that, after investigation, we will *decide* that the structure of *logos* is the one worth pursuing. My primary contention here has only been that we ought not dismiss non-conceptual experience prior to its investigation – that we ought not presume the superiority of *logos* simply by fiat.

I have tried to make the case that a commitment to experience is in general a hallmark of inquiry, that this commitment has too regularly been read as simply a commitment to conceptual experience, and that there is no compelling *a priori* reason to privilege such experience. Indeed, a focus on *non-conceptual* experience seems to support a particular *type* of answer to the traditional questions of metaphysics in much the same way that a focus on conceptual experience does. The obvious relevance of things like *samādhi* for those interested in the questions of metaphysics, broadly construed, is that such experiences seem to challenge standard assumptions in an immediate and direct way. If experiential states like *samādhi* are taken seriously, then, as a source of experiential evidence – something that seems to be demanded even by *logos* – we might well expect a different set of responses to some standard philosophical questions. By way of conclusion, I'd like to suggest some of the possible implications of regarding *samādhi* and similar experiential states as fundamental ones – that is, as states that disclose things in a primordial way. While there is much that might be said to elaborate the claims I will make, my current intention is only to highlight the general shape of such responses.

1. Privileging *samādhi* suggests that language is essentially metaphorical, despite the fact that in the workaday world it may be perfectly adequate to its task. If the unification of mind present in *samādhi* is regarded as reality-disclosing, then any description of that

⁵² Hence, openness to the non-conceptual seems to involve a kind of ontological pluralism, as William James certainly knew.

reality will rely on distinctions that either function well or do not function well for the tasks at hand. Language, then, will enable us to articulate particular conventional truths, but it will only ever be able to indicate the metaphysical structure of things through sets of metaphors – metaphors that will mark distinctions that must ultimately be real only conventionally.⁵³

2. *Samādhi* likewise suggests the priority of the particular over the universal. After all, in the state of *samādhi* one is completely absorbed in the particular. The instant the universal intervenes, we are functioning at the level of *logos* – at the level of conceptual thinking, attaching predicates to subjects. Given that this is mediated experience, it is in certain respects metaphysically derivative (at least from a point of view that privileges non-dual experience). This means that universals are likely best construed as abstractions, and particulars are best regarded as metaphysically fundamental.
3. *Samādhi* likewise seems to suggest the superiority of an event ontology as opposed to a substance ontology. The very notion of a substance is, for reasons just given, connected to the idea of enduring things to which particular predicates attach. This language is inescapably fraught with subject/object duality, and tied, perhaps inextricably, to the notion that universals will best capture the reality of a thing. In *samādhi*, however, experience cannot adequately be described in these terms: it is always immediate, fluid, and particular.
4. Our standard philosophical positions in metaphysics are structured in a way that ignores the reality of non-dual experience. To recognize such experience will involve the recognition that positions like realism and antirealism are in some ways both *false* and in some ways both *true* (if language is metaphorical, and we can distinguish between ‘conventional truth’ and ‘ultimate truth,’ then both realism and antirealism fail to capture the nature of things at one level of analysis, while managing to capture it at another).
5. Our attitude toward the law of non-contradiction may be forced to change. Such laws do not actually describe some aspects of reality – i.e. non-dual experience. This means that the limits of language *may not be* the limits of the world. It also means that we may need to take deviant logics more seriously, both traditional dialectical logic, as found in folks like Hegel, Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani, and more formal logics that deny certain axioms of traditional logic (specifically: the law of non-contradiction).
6. An ability to stop doing philosophy when we want to, to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle, etc. also seems to follow from the recognition of *samādhi* (or other non-conceptual experiences) as potentially reality-disclosing. After all, if our philosophical debates all occur at the level of the conceptual – at the level of *logos* and the conventional reality we share simply in virtue of sharing a common language – we will always have recourse to the non-conceptual when we want to step away from such disputes.

⁵³ The phrase ‘conventionally real’ should not be read to mean ‘less real.’ Things routinely regarded as merely conventionally real (marriage, the rules of games, etc) are not *therefore* less real, despite having an ontological status we regard as different from what we conventionally call ‘non-conventional reality.’

7. *Samādhi*, given what has so far been said, will also allow us to see many disputes in philosophy (and perhaps all of them) precisely as disputes about metaphors – about what set of metaphors will most fruitfully allow us to describe the world given the interests we have. This seems to indicate that a pragmatic conception of belief-acceptance will likely be the best epistemological stance at the level of *logos*.

§8 Concluding Remarks

Perhaps the days of systematic philosophy are over. They are certainly on the wane. If we ever hope to return to fundamental questions, however, it seems to me that the *logos*-driven traditions of Greco-European philosophy must address the presumptive privileging of *Logos* that has characterized its multi-faceted history. I have tried to provide an argument that this is a question worth examining, and that the answers we get will depend in part on the openness with which we approach the question of experience.

PHILOSOPHY AS COMPETENCE AND ART OF SELF-CREATION: BRINGING HABERMAS AND FOUCAULT TOGETHER

Rossen I. Roussev

Abstract

In the perspective of the notion of modernity advanced by Jürgen Habermas, the dynamics of our contemporary world can be identified along the terms of expert knowledge, critical thought, and practical application. While a high-quality expertise is necessary for the solution of any challenging particular problem, an additional type of knowledge associated with critical thinking is indispensable for its adequate application in practice. In line with Habermas' view of the role of philosophy in modernity as a "mediator" between the spheres of theory and practice, we can identify this additional knowledge as being in its nature philosophical. Furthermore, in distinction from the knowledge of the specialized expertise, this philosophical knowledge can be described as having the character of competence. In this sense, I maintain that thinking critically consists in utilizing philosophical competence, alongside expert knowledge, in solving particular problems. I link this notion of modernity with Michel Foucault's investigations on what he calls "technologies of the self." Foucault has traced various forms of self-care and self-knowledge, and has indicated their importance in "the art of living" (tekhne tou biou) from Antiquity onwards. He has emphasized their productive relationship in self-cultivation and social life adding a voice to Nietzsche's concern that the modern Westerners have neglected the "great and rare art" of self-creation for the sake of self-knowledge. In my view, this Foucauldian sense of the art of living as self-creation can supplement the Habermasean notion of the mediating role of philosophy in modernity, as they can be both seen as forming distinctive aspects of what was termed philosophical competence. I maintain that in the general case one's philosophical competence is essentially self-knowledge powered by one's background of humanistic knowledge and that – in a line with a long tradition of thought – it is a subject of cultivation and active self-creation.

The present paper¹ is an attempt to put into perspective the role and place of philosophy in the dynamics of our contemporary world. Today it passes for a cliché that this dynamics is startling

¹ The idea of this article was first discussed at the international academic seminar *Modern Philosophy and Politics in Continental Europe* at the China Center for Comparative Politics and Economics in Beijing, PR China, on December 15, 2009. It was then presented in a more developed form at the international conference *The Affect of*

by its breadth, pace, and complexity of relations along which it unfolds. What seems to be overlooked, though, is that despite the fact that the contemporary scientific-technological culture has greatly facilitated the bulk of activities associated with the human condition, our time has not relented in posing challenges to our both socio-cultural and individual existence – and in various ways. In this sense, the question of “the art of living” attains a distinctive contemporary flavor of both existential unavoidability and epistemic insufficiency. It demands time and again to be addressed in its most general and basic form: How can we cope with the challenges of our time in the best and most promising ways?

Being at once philosophical and trivial, this question may at first seem to be the unlikely candidate to guide us in situating philosophy in our contemporary world. However, its philosophical triviality allows it to be asked and actualized equally well on both socio-cultural and individual level. In this way, our investigative perspective will seek to make compatible and incorporate the modern and postmodern perspectives, by transposing its subject-matter within both of them inclusively; that is, with view to the whole in terms of universalistic metanarrativity, as much as with view to the plurality of unique singularities.² Thus, being metaphilosophical in focus, our investigation will aim at specifying the socio-cultural presence of philosophy, as well as its presence in the life of the single individual.

With regard to the question we asked, a most preliminary answer would be that if we have a sufficient knowledge of the challenges of our time and if we know how to use that knowledge, we would be able to cope with them optimally well. Such an answer, however, remains very general and in need of elaboration in more specific terms. Here I shall endeavor to secure them by drawing primarily on the thought of Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault, two thinkers whose investigators most commonly see in opposition to one another³ but sometimes also as compatible and complementary.⁴ For the purpose of this paper, I shall

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² On the differentiation modern-postmodern in this sense, see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1984), especially pp. xxiii-xxvff, 27-37ff, 46ff, 59ff, 79ff; cf. *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), pp. 7-9ff, 49-63ff, 75ff, 97ff.

³ Samantha Ashenden and David Owen, *Foucault contra Habermas: Recasting the Dialogue between Genealogy and Critical Theory* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1999); David Ingram, “Foucault and Habermas,” in Gary Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Bent Flyvbjerg, “Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (June 1998), pp. 210-233; Stephen Kemmis, “Foucault, Habermas and Evaluation,” *Curriculum Studies*, Volume 1, No. 1 (1993), pp. 35-54; John Brocklesby and Stephen Cummings, “Foucault Plays Habermas: An Alternative Philosophical Underpinning for Critical Systems Thinking,” *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, Volume 47 (1996), pp. 741-754; Annemiek Richters, “Modernity-Postmodernity Controversies: Habermas and Foucault,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 5 (1988), pp. 611-643; Thomas L. Dumm, “The Politics of Post-Modern Aesthetics: Habermas Contra Foucault,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (May 1988), pp. 209-228; Thomas Biebricher, *Selbstkritik der Moderne: Foucault und Habermas im Vergleich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2005).

⁴ Jessica J. Kulynych, “Performing Politics: Foucault, Habermas, and Postmodern Participation,” *Polity*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 1997), pp. 315-346; Amy Allen, “Discourse, Power, and Subjectivation: The Foucault/Habermas Debate Reconsidered,” *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2009), pp. 1-28; Nancy S. Love, “Foucault & Habermas on Discourse and Democracy,” *Polity*, Vol. 22, No.2 (Winter 1989), 269-293; Ehrhard Bahr, “In

position myself into the latter group and shall seek to identify in the philosophical outlooks of these two thinkers connecting points of compatibility and complementarity. I shall thus sideline the so-called Habermas-Foucault debate on issues such as modernity, rationality, knowledge, and power.

I shall elaborate on the first part of our preliminary answer, which concerns the knowledge of the dynamics of our time and of the challenges it poses, using Habermas' discussion of modernity, in whose perspective this dynamics can be apprehended in the terms of *expert knowledge*, *critical thought*, and *practical application*. While I shall address its second part, which concerns the human capacity to use that knowledge, drawing mainly on Foucault's investigations on what he calls "technologies of the self," in which the "art of living" can be apperceived in the terms of *self-knowledge*, *self-care*, and *self-creation*.

Thus, the exposition of this paper will move along two main steps: the first will be to delineate a working specification of the meaning of the term "modernity" and to situate the role and place of philosophy within its structure; the second will be to lay down the indispensability and pertinence of "the art of living" to the single individual in the postmodern human condition.

1. Situating Philosophy in Modernity: Philosophy as Competence

In the contemporary philosophy and socio-cultural theory, the term "modernity" is used very broadly, most typically in reference to the socio-cultural world and its most general characteristics as identifiable within the eponymous period in the history of the West. The beginning and the putative end of that period have been a subject of debate, but the term standing for it has been involved in setting the general frame, horizon, or context of understanding for a good many discussions in contemporary philosophy and cultural theory, including the one of its delimiting sister term "postmodernity." Here, I shall not delve into the differentiation of these two terms, which has been very convincingly conveyed by Jean-François Lyotard amongst others.⁵ I shall instead speak of "our contemporary world with its most general characteristics" in the broadest sense, as spreading over and encompassing the senses of both of them, even if to a varied extent, with "our" here understood as including both "socio-cultural" and "individual." I acknowledge that the concept of "modernity" as understood

Defense of Enlightenment: Foucault and Habermas," *German Studies Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Feb., 1988), pp. 97-109; Matthew King, "Clarifying the Foucault – Habermas Debate: Morality, Ethics, and 'Normative Foundations'," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 287-314; Christian Lavagno, *Rekonstruktion der Moderne: eine Studie zu Habermas und Foucault* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003).

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996), especially pp. 3ff, 83ff; cf. *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), SS. 11ff, 104ff; Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (eds.), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997); Anthony Giddens, "Modernism and Post-Modernism," *New German Critique*, No. 22, Special Issue on Modernism (Winter, 1981), pp. 15-18; Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), especially pp. 1-10, 45-53; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991), especially pp. 10ff, 327ff; Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Modernity* (Malden, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), especially pp. 1-18; Okwui Enwezor, Nancy Condee, Terry Smith (eds.), *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2009).

in the last century already included the sense of “our contemporary world with its most general characteristics,” which was consequently passed by extension to that of “post-modernity.” Thus, while “our world” has certainly changed overtime, much of what characterizes modernity has in all actuality come to characterize post-modernity as well, including such socio-cultural features as: division of labor; politically democratic (even if also some totalitarian) societies; predominantly market economies; interdependence between theory and practice (knowledge-economy); national, ethnic, cultural, and spiritual plurality; intensive cultural and intercultural exchange; global integrations and polarizations; concerns for human rights, social justice, and environmental safety, among still others. In this sense, the term “modernity” appears so general that any attempt at making it more specific risks ending up with an arbitrary characterization that may falter when related to particular contexts of its usage, more often than we wish. This surely poses a challenge to our metaphilosophical task of situating philosophy in our contemporary world as a peculiar blend of features of both modernity and post-modernity. Nevertheless, some of the features of modernity identifiable in Habermas’ perspective on it can specify its meaning to an extent that will serve the purpose of this paper sufficiently.

Habermas has paid a great deal of attention to the notion of “modernity” throughout his works, including in his magnum opus, *The Theory of Communicative Action*,⁶ and has contributed to and inspired the debates on it, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. It will not be an exaggeration to call that notion substantive for his socio-cultural and metaphilosophical perspectives, as they appear to be elaborated on and specified by way of its critical analysis and reconstruction. He sees the beginning of modernity in the Enlightenment and in the work of Kant in particular,⁷ whereas his reconstructive analysis of Max Weber’s view of rationalization and disenchantment of the Western religious consciousness⁸ forms the basis of his own concept of it.

According to Habermas, “modernity” is characterized by “division of labor,” marked by an increasing “compartmentalization” along the lines of professional specialization of various domains, subfields, vocations, and activities.⁹ He identifies two distinctive levels of

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, translated by Thomas McCarthy, *Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); *Vol. 2. Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987). Cf. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns: Band I: Handlungsrationality und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung; Band II: Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1981). Jürgen Habermas, “Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter,” *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1990); cf. Jürgen Habermas, “Die Philosophie als Platzhalter und Interpret,” *Moralbewusstsein und kommunikatives Handeln* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983); Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge MA; London, England: MIT Press, 1992); cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988).

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, p. 260; cf. *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*, S. 306.

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, pp. 148ff, and especially 230-242; *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns: Band I: Handlungsrationality und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung*, SS. 225ff, 317-331.

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, “Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter,” pp. 13-14, 17-8; cf. “Die Philosophie als Platzhalter und Interpret,” SS. 20-21, 25.

modernity – the level of “expert cultures” and the one of “everyday communication.”¹⁰ The former, which includes “science, technology, law and morality,”¹¹ is the level of theory and produces what he calls *expert knowledge*; the latter is that of *practical application* of the expertise produced on the level of culture. Thus, every area of knowledge on the level of culture works in its own specialized compartment to produce the expertise that serves certain specialized practices on the level of everyday communication.

In this grand stage of exchange of expertise between and along the levels of theoretical culture and everyday practice of modernity, the main actors are the humans in their specific roles of problem-solvers. Armed with *expert knowledge* produced on the level of culture they solve problems on the level of everyday communication by way of its *practical application*. Every problem solver, working in a particular compartment of modernity, needs to acquire the expertise associated with specific problems arising in his or her specialized occupation in order to be able to solve such problems in practice. In this sense, the acquisition of *expert knowledge* and its *practical application* are two necessary conditions for successful problem solving, with which no problem solver can dispense. The question that arises now is Is there anything else that one needs to know in order to be successful in solving problems in practice? Or, to put it otherwise, Does an adequate transfer of expertise from the level of culture to that of everyday communication require any additional knowledge? Or What else, if anything, a problem solver needs to know in order to successfully complete the transition of expert knowledge from theory to practice?

We can find an answer to this question in some of Habermas’ further analyses of the structure of modernity. According to him, there are certain “problems of mediation” that arise in the exchange of expertise in modernity, both among the different fields on the level of culture, and between the levels of culture and everyday communication, for which these fields do not have sufficient expertise.¹² Because these problems arise despite the fact that the expert fields have already divided and appropriated all issues that can be reasonably addressed in particular areas of investigation, Habermas maintains that they are to remain in the scope of philosophy as their most legitimate “interpreter,” one that – throughout its long tradition – has acquired an “eye trained on the topic of rationality.”¹³ Thus, for Habermas, although philosophy – in the course of its history – has given up its traditional metaphysical aspirations and its claim to a principal status among the other areas of knowledge, it still has a role to play in addressing the problems of mediation arising in the exchange of expertise in modernity – the role of *mediating interpreter*. With regard to philosophy’s relation to the scientific areas of knowledge, he writes,

Once it renounces its claim to be a first science or an encyclopedia, philosophy can maintain its status within the scientific system neither by assimilating itself to particular exemplary sciences nor by exclusively distancing itself from science in general. Philosophy has to implicate itself in the

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 17-8; cf. SS. 25.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, p. 39; *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze*, S. 46.

¹² Jürgen Habermas, “Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter,” pp.17-18; cf. “Die Philosophie als Platzhalter und Interpret,” S. 25.

¹³ Ibid., pp.17-18; cf. S. 25. See also Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, pp. 38-39; cf. *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze*, S. 45-46.

fallibilistic self-understanding and procedural rationality of the empirical sciences; it may not lay claim to a privileged access to truth, or to a method, an object realm, or even just a style of intuition that is specifically its own. Only thus can philosophy contribute its best to a nonexclusive division of labor, namely, its persistent tenacity in posing questions universalistically, and its procedure of rationally reconstructing the intuitive pretheoretical knowledge of competently speaking, acting, and judging subjects yet in such a way that Platonic anamnesis sheds its nondiscursive character. This dowry recommends philosophy as an indispensable partner in the collaboration of those who are concerned with a theory of rationality.¹⁴

In this its role, philosophy has given up its claims ‘to be a first science’ and to have ‘a privileged access to truth, or to a method’, but this does not mean that it has to ‘assimilate itself to a particular science’, or to ‘distance itself from science in general’. It means only that philosophy needs to adopt a ‘fallibilistic self-understanding and the procedural rationality of the empirical sciences’, in terms of which it can help reaching understanding by ‘posing questions universalistically’ and ‘rationally reconstructing the intuitive pretheoretical knowledge of competently speaking, acting, and judging subjects’. And as it appears, it is only its ‘dowry’, gathered in its long history, that entitles philosophy to this mediating role, which makes of it ‘an indispensable partner’ in the exchange of expert knowledge in the structure of modernity.

Yet, for Habermas, not only does philosophy have a role to play with regard the expert areas of knowledge on the level of culture. Its mediating role extends also to the ‘lifeworld’ and everyday communication:

In everyday communication, cognitive interpretations, moral expectations, expressions, and evaluations cannot help overlapping and interpenetrating. Reaching understanding in the lifeworld requires a cultural tradition that ranges across the whole spectrum, not just the fruits of science and technology. As far as philosophy is concerned, it might do well to refurbish its link with the totality by taking on the role of interpreter on behalf of the lifeworld. It might then be able to help set in motion the interplay between the cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-expressive dimensions that has come to a standstill today like a tangled mobile.¹⁵

On the level of everyday communication, philosophy’s focus is on the intermixture of ‘cognitive interpretations, moral expectations, expressions, and evaluations’. Here too, its goal is that of ‘reaching understanding’, but again the expertise of ‘science and technology’ will not suffice for its achieving. What is needed is a broader all-encompassing knowledge – ‘a cultural tradition that ranges across the whole spectrum’ – which can serve as a common ground for and thus ensure an adequate cross-communication. For Habermas, philosophy’s capacity is well-versed in this regard because of its traditional focus on and ‘link with the totality’. Thus, philosophy is well-qualified and could enter ‘the role of interpreter on behalf of the lifeworld’ in order to mediate, interpret, and thus ensure a smooth exchange between its ‘cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-expressive dimensions’.

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, pp. 38-39; cf. *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze*, S. 45-46.

¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter,” pp.18-19; cf. “Die Philosophie als Platzhalter und Interpret,” SS. 25-26.

In this way, Habermas situates philosophy in the structure of modernity by assigning to it a role that the expert cultures (science and technology, ethics and law, aesthetics and art) cannot play on their own. This is the role of *mediating interpreter* which facilitates the exchange of expertise within and between modernity's compartmentalized levels of culture and everyday communication. What falls into the scope of philosophy in particular are the so-called 'problems of mediation', which arise in the due transfer of *expert knowledge* between the specialized compartments in the grand division of labor of modernity, where this transfer is essentially the *practical application* of that knowledge.

Here I shall elaborate a bit further on the character of the role of philosophy assigned by Habermas, by drawing attention to one of its aspects, which is attestable and identifiable in tackling the 'problems of mediation' and is closely related to their status. What I have in mind is that, whereas within the grand picture of exchange of expertise in modernity these problems can be seen as problems of communication, in the sense in which we think of them as remaining in the scope of philosophy, we can also think of them as *philosophical problems* which the problem solvers face in their various applications of expert knowledge in practice.¹⁶ Traditionally, the philosophical problems have been characterized as being of epistemic or cognitive nature, as they concern the acquisition, retention, actualization, and application of knowledge. Such problems have already been signaled in various areas of theoretical and practical endeavor, including education¹⁷ and social policy,¹⁸ and it seems indeed legitimate to think that one can search for knowledge on them in the philosophical tradition. But if philosophy is to have the capacity to tackle such problems, as Habermas suggests, it will have to supplement the expertise of science with a knowledge that is of a different kind. To distinguish the character of this knowledge from that of the scientific expertise, here we designate it with the term *competence*.

The term played a key role in Habermas' earlier work in which he develops his theory of communicative competence – basically his own socio-cultural perspective on language and communication,¹⁹ developed in relation to Noam Chomsky's concept of linguistic

¹⁶ Rossen Roussev, "Philosophy and the Transition from Theory to Practice: A Response to Recent Concerns for Critical Thinking," *Telos*, No. 148 (Fall 2009), pp. 91-92.

¹⁷ Martin V. Covington, "Strategic Thinking and the Fear of Failure," in *Thinking and Learning Skills*, Judith W. Segal, Susan F. Chipman, and Robert Glaser (eds.) (Hillside NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1985); Jack Lochhead, "Teaching Analytic Reasoning Skills Through Pair Problem Solving", *Thinking and Learning Skills*, Judith W. Segal, Susan F. Chipman, and Robert Glaser (eds.) (Hillside NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1985); Richard Paul, *Critical Thinking: What Every Person Needs to Survive in a Rapidly Changing World*, (Rohner Park, CA: Sonoma State University, 1990); Mathew Lipman, "Thinking Skills Fostered by Philosophy for Children," in *Thinking and Learning Skills*, E Judith W. Segal, Susan F. Chipman, and Robert Glaser (eds.) (Hillside NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1985); Matlin, M.W., *Cognition*, (Geneseo NY: Harcourt Brace Publishers, 1994).

¹⁸ W. T. Jones, *The Sciences and the Humanities: Conflict and Reconciliation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 5ff.

¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse*. Suhrkamp (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968); "Towards Theory of Communicative Competence" and "On systematically distorted communication," both in *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 1-4 (1970), respectively pp. 360-375 and pp. 205-218; "Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik," in *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik: Theorie-Diskussion*, mit Beiträgen von Karl-Otto Apel, Claus v. Bormann, Rüdiger Bubner, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans-Joachim Giegel, Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971); Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie. Was leistet die Systemforschung?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971).

competence,²⁰ the speech act theory developed by John Austin and John Searle,²¹ and the latter work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Summing up the view he advances there, Thomas McCarthy writes,

Habermas argues that our ability to communicate has a universal core-basic structures and fundamental rules that all subjects master in learning to speak a language. Communicative competence is not just a matter of being able to produce grammatical sentences. In speaking we relate to the world about us, to other subjects, to our own intentions, feelings, and desires.²²

We can note here that this Habermas' sense of competence with regard to speaking language includes an access to a universalistic, common-to-all-speakers basis, which ensures the possibility for reaching understanding. This basis, however, is not merely grammatical, as it also involves a sense of relation of the speaker to oneself, other speakers, and the world.

This sense of competence is also retained in his later work, notably in his theory of communicative action, where he uses the term quite extensively in various statements and expressions, which more or less convey implicitly the aspect of philosophy I designated above.²³ Here I will draw particular attention to a few of his usages which most directly point to that aspect. On one occasion, when he writes that "the social scientist has to draw on a competence and a knowledge that he has intuitively at his disposal as a layman,"²⁴ Habermas associates 'competence' with knowledge and ability available to every person. In another statement where he defines "personality" he says that "competences ... make a subject capable of speaking and acting, [and] put him in a position to take part in processes of reaching understanding and thereby to assert his own identity."²⁵ Elsewhere he speaks of the "general competences of knowing, speaking, and acting" and of "a preponderance of competence (of

²⁰ Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965).

²¹ John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

²² Thomas McCarthy, "Translator's Introduction," in Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I*, p. x.

²³ For instance, in *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I*, he uses expressions as 'reflective competence' (p. 2), 'competent speaker(s)' (pp. 25, 138, 286)/15, 30, 135 'competence to speak and act' (p. 112), 'interpretive competence' (pp. 118, 130), 'judgmental competence' (pp. 119, 135), 'action through competences and motives' (p. 174), 'general competency' (p. 261), 'theory of competence' (p. 328), 'competence to represent' (p. 366), 'cognitive competence' (p. 384); in *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. II*, expressions as again 'competent speakers' (pp. 15, 30, 135), 'competence to follow a rule' (pp. 17, 18, 19, 22), 'competence to judge/decide' (pp. 18, 19/269), 'competence for rule-governed behavior' (p. 18), 'competence for role behavior' (pp. 31, 32), 'interactive competence' (p. 40), 'competences for speech and interaction' (p. 43), 'competences for communicative action' (p. 91), 'competently acting reference persons' (p. 137), 'generalized competences for action' (p. 141), 'formal competences' (p. 146), 'competence to act' (p. 171), 'competence to carry out decisions' (p. 180), 'competence for purposive-rational choice' (p. 212), 'acquired competences' (p. 225), 'competences developed through socialization' (p. 255), competence of "initiates;" of experts in matters of knowledge or of morality 276, 'sovereign exercise of competence' (p. 308), 'legal competence' (p. 309), 'professional competence' (p. 363), 'social competence' (p. 399).

²⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I*, p. 112.

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. II*, p. 138.

knowledge, moral-practical insight, persuasive power, or autonomy).”²⁶ Whereas characterizing his own theory of communicative action, Habermas says that it “describes structures of action and structures of mutual understanding that are found in the intuitive knowledge of competent members of modern societies.”²⁷

If we are to sum up the sense-associations made in these examples, ‘competence’ relates to knowledge, ability, scientist, layman, capacity for speech and action, personality, identity, intuition, moral-practical insight, persuasive power, or autonomy, membership in society. In other Habermas’ usages we find it as reflective, interpretative, cognitive, formal, interactive, judgmental, generalized. Within this broad semantic range of its usage, the sense of ‘competence’ is most aptly delimited as knowledge and ability. As knowledge it is a very general sense of one’s relation to oneself and to the world, which thus has the transcending universalistic character of a common basis for understanding, but which also remains indeterminate and thus very different from expertise. As an ability, it involves the capacity for or the power to utilize that knowledge in terms of reflection, cognition, speech, and action, which is at the disposal for every human person from scientist to layman.

Here I shall use this sense of competence to further specify Habermas’ notion of philosophy as mediating interpreter. I would like to link the knowledge-aspect of competence to the knowledge of philosophy, different as it is from that of expertise, and its ability-aspect to the role which Habermas envisions for philosophy in modernity. Understood in this way, *philosophy becomes a competence* having the aspects of a general universalistic knowledge and the ability to utilize that knowledge, which constitute its capacity to play its mediating role in the grand division of labor of modernity. Philosophical competence is thus an indispensable aspect of any thinking that applies expertise to solve problems, whereas every problem solver, in addition to their being a certain expert, needs to be also a philosopher.

In this sense, we can identify the *philosophical competence* as the *third condition* necessary for the successful transfer of expertise from the level of culture to that of everyday communication. Along with *expert knowledge* and its *practical application*, it makes this transfer possible; whereas its actual utilization in problem solving aiming to ensure that transfer is exercised as a reflective *critical thought*. Thus, we can complete the picture of situating philosophy in modernity within our perspective here: in the grand division of labor of the different areas of knowledge and practice, the role of *philosophy* now reappears as *competence*; whereas the *philosophical competence* ultimately manifests itself as *critical thinking* which brings *expert knowledge* from the level of theoretical culture to that of *practical application*.

2. *The Self and the Art of Living: Philosophy as Self-creation*

Habermas’ notion of the mediating role of philosophy in modernity – a role whose manifestation we specified as critical thought and competence – can be linked with Foucault’s investigations on what he calls “technologies of the self.”²⁸ Although Habermas has voiced his

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 250, 276.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 383.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. I*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997); cf. “Les techniques de soi,” *Dits et Ecrits (1954-1988)*, tome IV (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994), pp. 783-813.

critical objections to postmodernism, including to the philosophical perspective of Foucault as strongly associated with it,²⁹ for our purpose here it will suffice to find a point of compatibility that would allow for an alignment of the perspectives of the two thinkers in complementarity. At the same time, even as we sideline the modernity-postmodernity debate in situating philosophy in our contemporary world, our re-focusing on the status of the self will very much resemble what Lyotard has characterized as key shift of attention between modernity and postmodernity – from legitimating holistic metanarratives to incommensurable unique singularities.³⁰ This is precisely what we want to emphasize here by associating the perspectives of Habermas and Foucault together – that judging about the philosophy’s role in the life of the individual from the viewpoint of metanarrative is different from one from a vantage point that is recognizably unique and incommensurable. Elsewhere we have indicated the need of a broader background of humanistic knowledge, which is in an important sense *self-knowledge*, as a prerequisite for critical philosophical thinking on individual level.³¹ Now we will endeavor to apperceive that need with view to the unique singularity of the individual, in which it manifests itself as individual’s own concern with *self-knowledge* and *self-creation*.

Foucault has traced various forms of *self-care* and *self-knowledge*, and has indicated their importance in the “art of living” (*tekhne tou biou*) from Antiquity onwards. His research has been very much anthropological – what he calls “hermeneutics of the self” – and has focused on practices of late Antiquity and early Christianity, which have been indicative of self’s basic motivation for self-knowledge. While he found that self-knowledge was largely associated with self-cultivation and socialization, a key observation that he makes is that for much of the Antiquity these practices place self-knowledge as part of a more fundamental concern – that of “the care of the self.” In the Greco-Roman culture, the motto of the Delphic temple, *gnothi seauton* or “Know yourself”, was the principle of self-knowledge, and was subordinated to *epimeleisthai sautou*, “to be concerned, to take care of yourself,” which was the principle of self-care.³² Foucault regards the relationship between these two principles as underlying the Ancient “art of living,” but he also emphasizes the changes in their statuses in that art throughout the history of Western culture.

He finds the first indicative discussions of the relation of the two principles in Plato’s *Apology and Alcibiades I*. In the *Apology*, Socrates advises his co-citizens to “concern yourselves with yourselves,” which for him meant to be concerned with “wisdom, truth, and the perfection of the soul,” pointing also that it is “his mission” and service to the city to remind

²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project,” in Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (eds.), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 53; cf. “Die Moderne- ein unvollendetes Projekt,” *Kleine Politische Schriften*, I-IV (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981), S. 460; Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, pp. 53, 97, 239ff; cf. *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*, SS. 67, 129, 280ff.

³⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, pp. xxiii-xxvff, 27-37ff, 46ff, 59ff, 79ff; cf. *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, pp. 7-9ff, 49-63ff, 75ff, 97ff.

³¹ Rossen Roussev, “Philosophy and the Transition from Theory to Practice: A Response to Recent Concerns for Critical Thinking,” especially pp. 93-96, 104ff.

³² Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. I*, p. 226; cf. “Les techniques de soi,” *Dits et Ecrits (1954-1988)*, tome IV, pp. 786-787.

them about that.³³ In *Alcibiades*, the discussion of the two principles is more detailed, spreading over the relations of the care of oneself with political and erotic life, with self-cultivation and pedagogy, with the knowledge of oneself, and with the love of wisdom in relation to one's master. As Foucault sees it, the care of the self is the driving force in all these relations but its relation with the knowledge of oneself is pivotal. An important observation that he makes in this regard is that, unlike most of the thinkers of the Hellenistic and imperial periods, Plato gives priority to the second principle, a priority which found its way through modernity – firmly binding the care of the self to the knowledge of oneself.³⁴ Either way, we can note here that the two principle form a productive relationship which – regardless of how it has been construed in the cultural traditions – functions as a formative power in the “art of living” and manifests itself as *art of self-creation*.

In the Ancient and early Christian cultures, the care of oneself remained a principle “for social and personal conduct and for the art of life,” and thus most fundamentally motivated the use of what Foucault calls “technologies of the self.”³⁵ These “technologies”, each a matrix of practical reason,” are different kinds and “permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”³⁶ To clarify the sense of this term and its relation to the art of living as self-creation, we need to draw attention to a common element that all technologies of the self share, which is designated with the Greek word *askesis*. As Foucault writes,

No technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; nor can the art of living, the *tekhne tou biou*, be learned without an *askesis* that should be understood as a training of the self by oneself. This was one of the traditional principles to which the Pythagoreans, the Socratics, the Cynics had long attached a great importance.³⁷

Meaning ‘exercise’, ‘practice’, and ‘work’, *askesis* was an important aspect of the life and culture of the ancient Greeks ultimately amounting to a value system. It played a part in individual's cultivation and socialization likely in not such a drastic but more routine way than its modern-day image of anachronistic self-denial suggests. What is important for Foucault and for us here is that its key sense of a ‘training of the self by oneself’ bears on the relevance of self-knowledge for the ‘art of living’. More particularly, as it broadly applies to various of the citizens’ daily activities, *askesis*, the ‘training of the self by oneself’, provides for individual's self-cultivation and self-creation by use of truth and knowledge, including self-knowledge.

Askesis in this sense applies to a number of cultural practices of Antiquity and early Christianity that address the ‘concern and relationship of the self with oneself’ and thus function as ‘technologies of the self’. Foucault finds notable examples of it in the Stoic ascetic practices,

³³ Ibid., pp. 226-227; cf. p. 787.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 228-231; cf. 789-792.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 225-226; cf. pp. 785-786.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 225; cf. p. 785.

³⁷ Michel Foucault, “Self Writing,” *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 1*, p. 208; cf. “L'écriture de soi,” *Dits et Ecrits (1954-1988)*, tome IV, pp. 417.

which include self-training and self-deprivation in the anticipation of difficult life circumstances,³⁸ as well as in the Christian monastic confessional practices, which include examination of the purity of one's own thoughts in the end of every day, or public confession (exomologesis) of sins and sinful thoughts.³⁹ As cases in point on the role of *askesis* in the art of living, here I shall draw attention to two practices of purposive writing and reading that Foucault discusses in this regard – those of maintaining diary notebooks *hupomnemata* and epistolary *correspondence*. They are specific technologies of the self that are indicative of a special discursively mediated 'concern and relationship of the self with oneself' and thus of a more immediately identifiable use of self-knowledge in the art of living as self-creation.

Hupomnemata, which could refer to "account books, public registers, or individual notebooks serving as memory aids," were used to record "quotes, ... extracts from books, examples, and actions that one had witnessed or read about, reflections or reasonings that one had heard or that had come to mind" that later on served as a food for "rereading and meditation."⁴⁰ As Foucault writes,

Inside a culture strongly stamped by traditionality, by the recognized value of the already-said, by the recurrence of discourse, by "citational" practice under the seal of antiquity and authority, there developed an ethic quite explicitly oriented by concern for the self toward objectives defined as: withdrawing into oneself, getting in touch with oneself, living with oneself, relying on oneself, benefiting from and enjoying oneself. Such is the aim of the *hupomnemata*: to make one's recollection of the fragmentary logos, transmitted through teaching, listening, or reading, a means of establishing a relationship of oneself with oneself, a relationship as adequate and accomplished as possible.⁴¹

Hupomnemata in this sense stand for a form of writing which is very much constitutive of the person in one's own life. It involves discourse and knowledge to fuel one's thinking in one's day to day activities. It helps one 'get in touch with oneself' and make what one does bear on oneself. It is a form of self-writing expressive of one's concern with oneself and knowledge of oneself. It is 'a means of establishing a relationship of oneself with oneself', which is utilized in one's care of oneself.

The practice of reading is involved in the use of *hupomnemata* but it also plays a role of a technology of self on its own in general. Like *hupomnemata*, it invokes the resource of the cultural tradition to bear on one's life but it can go further and be practiced for its own sake. Foucault's reference to a Seneca advice is particularly indicative in this regard: while reading is necessary to "arm oneself by oneself with the principles of reason that are indispensable for self-conduct," when overdone one is "liable to spread oneself across different thoughts, and to forget oneself"; it is thus better to "have alternate recourse" of reading and writing, and to "blend one with the other."⁴² Apparently, what Seneca's advice aims is to preserve the relation of the self to oneself in one's life; in excessive reading that relation could be lost, and then what one does no longer bear on oneself – one no longer knows oneself, one 'forgets oneself'. Hence,

³⁸ Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," pp. 238ff; pp. 799ff.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 242ff; 804ff.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, "Self Writing," p. 209; cf. p. 418.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 211; cf. pp. 419-420.

⁴² Ibid., p. 211; cf. p. 420.

one needs to balance and ‘blend’ reading with writing. In this sense, for Foucault, the alternate reading-writing technology produces an embodied appropriation of the truth that preserves one’s concern with oneself in one’s life intact; it can thus serve as a “principle of rational action” for the individual, which helps “constitute one’s own soul” and “form an identity.”⁴³

A technology of the self that is exemplary for an alternate reading and writing is *correspondence*. For Foucault, correspondence is not just “a training of oneself by means of writing,” nor simply aiming at “counsel and aid”; it is also “a certain way of manifesting oneself to oneself and to others,” or “an objectification of the soul.”⁴⁴ It allows for a certain examination of one’s self, which can be done by writer and reader alike, as well as by other potential observers. It re-assures oneself that one maintains one’s inner dispositions; that is, one’s relation to oneself, which is thus attested as if by an ‘inner god’:

Through the missive, one opens oneself to the gaze of others and puts the correspondent in the place of the inner god. It is a way of giving ourselves to that gaze about which we must tell ourselves that it is plunging into the depths of our heart (*in pectus intimum introspicere*) at the moment we are thinking.⁴⁵

In this way, correspondence assumes the role of a self-formative technique for the individual, be they in the position of writer or reader. It deploys discourse, knowledge, and truth in a way similar to the one *hupomnemata* does to uphold the concern of the self with oneself throughout one’s life. The difference with *hupomnemata* is that correspondence is additionally characterized by an anticipated concordance with other individuals. The letters by Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, which Foucault gives as examples, convey descriptions and discussions, often very detailed, of various events of higher and lesser significance taking place in the life of the single individual. They point to the manner and considerations by which these events are appropriated in one’s life; that is, within the concern of the self with oneself, and constitute at once training, cultivating, and examining oneself. Correspondence thus reappears as a technique of one’s continuous self-discovery, self-affirmation, and self-creation along the lasting concern of the self with oneself.

While both *hupomnemata* and *correspondence* may utilize mundane, advisory, moralistic, consoling or other content, they present us with the specific manner in which one’s way of thinking mediates one’s actions within one’s concern with oneself throughout one’s life. Foucault’s discussion of the *technologies of the self* shows that the manner of thinking in question utilizes *self-knowledge* and is rooted in *self-care*. These two principles, which we inherit from Antiquity, come along in a relationship that has been frequently revised throughout the history of culture, (as in the above-mentioned Stoic ascetic and Christian confessional practices). However, regardless of the manner of its construction, the relationship in question is indispensable for the art of living and needs to be maintained continuously. It is thus the core and the moving force of the *art of self-creation* as the condition for self’s relation to an ever changing world.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 213-214; cf. pp. 422-423.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 216-217; cf. pp. 425-426.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 217; cf. p. 426.

Foucault's investigations on the art of living fit easily within the perspective of our investigation on the role of philosophy in our contemporary world. In the concern of the self with oneself – in re-focusing on oneself – the self withdraws from the world to make oneself a unique object of knowledge. This knowledge, which is essentially self-knowledge and unique on its own, is utilized in one's relation to the world by way of thinking. For its part, this thinking is essentially a philosophical thinking, and at once critical and creative thinking. It is the thinking of a concerned self-knowing self, which only thus relates to the world in a manner most fitting. Overall, Foucault's investigations have focused more on practices than on 'expertise' and have indicated that what is important for the single individual in bridging the levels of their world are the principles of *self-knowledge* and *self-care* in the unity of *self-creation*.

In conclusion

In this paper we endeavored to situate the role and place of philosophy in our contemporary world with the help of the work of Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault. Issuing from Habermas' notion of modernity we apprehended the dynamics of our contemporary world in the terms *expert knowledge*, *critical thought*, and *practical application*. In Habermas' view, the role of philosophy in modernity is one of a *mediating interpreter*, which facilitates the transfer of *expert knowledge* from the level of theoretical culture to its *practical application* on the level of everyday communication. We elaborated further on this philosophy's role to identify the peculiar character of *philosophy as competence* – an additional kind of knowledge-capacity which supplements the *expertise* to make its exchange between the levels of theoretical culture and everyday practice possible. In this sense, we affirmed the *philosophical competence* as an indispensable asset for all problem solvers in the grand division of labor of our contemporary world pointing that its utilization is exercised as *critical thought*.

Whereas Habermas' notion of modernity helped us situate philosophy in an socio-cultural perspective, we used some of Foucault's investigations to focus attention on its role in the life of the particular individual. Foucault's analyses of various "technologies of the self" practiced primarily in Western Antiquity and early Middle Ages uncovered *self-knowledge* and *self-care* as fundamental principles of what back then was considered "the art of living." Identifying *self-care* as the more fundamental principle driven by one's concern with oneself, Foucault emphasizes its inseparability from that of *self-knowledge* for purposes of self-cultivation and socialization. In this sense, the unity of the two principles, as maintained within "the art of living," can be seen as powering one's continuous *self-creation* which – utilizing *self-knowledge* within *self-care* by way of reflective thinking – affirms one's relation with oneself and with the world. And similarly, the thinking of *self-creation*, at once critical and creative, can be seen as being in its essence philosophical and as effectively mediating one's knowledge in practice.

Drawing on Habermas and Foucault, our investigation identifies the role and place of philosophy in our contemporary world at once as *competence* and *self-creation*. Though initially associated with different philosophical perspectives, these two senses of philosophy are complimentary and convergent, and ultimately overlap, as each of them is an inevitable aspect of the other. The *philosophical competence*, as critical thought, always utilizes *self-*

knowledge in self-care, which is effectively *self-creation* – at the very least as a successful problem solver. *Self-creation*, as drawing on *self-knowledge* in self-care, is always reflectively mediated by critical and creative thinking, which is essentially a *philosophical competence* utilizing a general sense of one's relation to oneself and to the world.

Elsewhere we have indicated that in the general case one's *philosophical competence* cannot be separated from one's background of *humanistic knowledge*, which is a knowledge of *humanity*, of *humanities*, as well as *self-knowledge*.⁴⁶ In this sense, one's utilization of that competence; that is, one's self-creation, or otherwise put, one's critical and creative thinking, is ultimately dependent on *knowledge of the self as human person*. Philosophers may not be surprised by this assertion, for they know that the human self in its capacity of knowing subject has been the central motif of the philosophy of modernity, as much as in its capacity of a particular living subject it has become a focal point for the postmodern philosophy. Either way; that is, in the perspective of our contemporary world, the guiding maxim of the human self remains the same: it needs to know itself to be able to manage itself, apply itself, care of itself, or – otherwise put – create itself, both theoretically and practically.

In relevance to it, we sum up, Habermas has pointed to the rationalistic training of philosophy; whereas Foucault has signaled its capacity for creativity within “the art of living.” On a final note, as Foucault has pointed that the modern time has given precedence to self-knowledge over self-care to the detriment of the art of self-creation, he has also added his voice to that of Nietzsche's who calls for integration of art and reason in the creation of one's own person:

One thing is needful. – To "give style" to one's character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. . . . In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Rossen Roussev, “Philosophy and the Transition from Theory to Practice: A Response to Recent Concerns for Critical Thinking,” pp. 93ff.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), §290, p. 232; cf. *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft. La gaya scienza* Berlin: Edition Holzinger, 2016), §290, S. 161.

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