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Paradoxical and Vulnerable Narcissisms: Reckoning with Our Deeply Social Selves

Josh Dohmen

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that rather than rejecting narcissism, the most appropriate response to contemporary egoism and individualism is a revised understanding of narcissism, one that acknowledges the deeply social nature of our selves by seeking to understand the ways in which we exist as individuals through others. I will call this form of narcissism "vulnerable narcissism." Once we recognize the extent to which we are, as individuals, constitutively social, narcissistic investments in oneself can be recognized as investments in particular social conditions that influence, sustain, or disadvantage us.

someone who was once part of himself." Examples of anaclitic (other-directed) love include "(a) the woman who feeds him, (b) the man who protects him, and the succession of substitutes who take their place." These examples strike me as surprising. Consider Freud's examples of anaclitic love. We love those who feed us and protect us because they give us the gift of continued life. In investing a breastfeeding mother with libido, for example, the child finds satisfaction in the warmth she brings, the milk she offers, the soothing sounds her voice provides. Freud also later notes that love for others can be narcissistic when, for example, we seek love objects who complement us or possess "the excellences to which [we] cannot attain." On the other hand, the examples of narcissistic love are equally surprising. First, we understand ourselves and are thus able to love ourselves, at least in part, through how others understand us. A talent that I love about myself, that I invest energy in, is something that a guardian or teacher noticed and fostered. If I feel pride in a certain aspect of my identity (say my family, my country, or my commitment to a political ideal), these are identities enabled by others and the broader social world. Second, these points also relate to narcissistic love of what we would like ourselves to be. The ideals we set for ourselves are never inventions from nothing, but inheritances from or reactions to others with whom we interact. Third, Freud discusses one's love for a child as potentially narcissistic, because what parents love is the child's ability to be the person the parents themselves wish they could be: "The child shall fulfil those wishful dreams of the parents which they never carried out." Freud's understanding of narcissism, here, and indeed his understanding of the boundary between self and other in general, presents us with instabilities. Might these instabilities be fruitful?

Vulnerable Narcissism and the Social Self

Pushing this analysis further, I would like to propose a third, other-oriented narcissism that I will call "vulnerable narcissism." Vulnerable narcissism is a love of oneself, an investment in oneself, that expresses a gratitude toward others, acknowledges oneself as responsive to and in relation to others. How, then, do I exist through others? In this section, I will outline three levels of social relations that shape us as individuals: broad social and political factors, the ways in which those factors are modulated by one's immediate social environment, and one's close personal relationships.

First, consider some of the ways in which who I become is affected by my wider social and political environment. I am the person I have become through political institutions that enable certain practices and hinder others. For example, I am a voter, or a public protester, or a child protected from being forced to work to the extent that those activities are deemed legal and made accessible and to the extent that appropriate protections are in place. Otherwise I may be a disenfranchised member of my society or a criminal for breaking public assembly laws or a person expected to work at the age of 10. I am the person I have become through moral, discursive, and behavioral norms that structure how I may behave, address others, and interact with others and with what consequences. Who I am is in part the result of educational institutions that afforded certain opportunities while foreclosing others. I am the person I have become through economic networks that make the things I need (and, for the most privileged among us, often my most frivolous desires) readily available and the availability of which shapes what I desire. Who I am is the result of shared forms of language, gesture, and expression that enable me to understand certain others and express certain ideas while making other ideas more difficult to comprehend or communicate. The person I have become is affected by forms of media and transportation that expose me to certain forms of information, artistic expression, and advertisements and enable communication in various modes (like speech, handwritten notes, electronic text, or video) with various others (like friends, newspaper editors, online video posts, or discussion board participants). Finally, who I am is affected by subject positions or social roles that position me in relation to others and institutions, that enable certain possibilities while hindering or foreclosing others, and through which I understand myself. Such subject positions include roles like parent-child, teacher-student, physician-nurse-patient, or job titles, social and legal identities like citizenship or nationality, disability status, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, felon status, and so on.

Of course, these factors are in constant interaction and can really only be separated analytically. For example, how people are portrayed in the media will differ depending on their subject positions; one's subject position may affect their available employment and benefits, housing, and educational opportunities; one's education may make it easier or more difficult to acquire legal protections, and so on.

All of these examples are shaped by and lived within my narrower, interpersonal interactions. Political rights and protections may be enshrined by a State, but if I have not been taught my rights or if those closest to me do not respect them, then it is unclear to what extent I actually have the ability to exercise those rights or be covered by those protections. A society may have broad moral norms, but those only exist through being repeated at more local (community, familial) and interpersonal levels. Discursive norms may lead others I encounter to attend to and respect me, or they may lead others to ignore or disrespect me, or they may render it unintelligible that I could be worthy of attention or respect. Public schools may be instituted and funded at the state and local levels, but my experience in school may differ from others' experiences based on the choices of my school board, school administrators, and teachers. Economic networks may make certain products, services, or jobs available to me, but I rely on the habits and knowledge of my family and mentors to know how to take advantage of these opportunities. For example, a local grocery may make forms of healthy produce available to me, but if I grow up in a family that always eats frozen meals or a meat-and-potatoes diet, I may not perceive many items as actual options for purchase and I may well be too intimidated to try to cook them even if I buy them. A particular language may

be shared broadly, but it is enacted and I learn it through interpersonal relationships. The media may make certain forms of knowledge or art accessible to me, but the habits of what I read, watch, or listen to, are shaped by my family, friends, and mentors. I may watch a show to keep up with water cooler conversations at work, or I may never consider reading a newspaper because my family never did when I was growing up. And the social positions through which I understand myself and others, and through which others understand me, are performatively enacted and reenacted in relation to particular others. The positions of teacher-student may be broadly recognized or codified in school policies, for example, but how those positions are lived and experienced will depend upon particular relationships between students and their teachers.

Let me pause to offer a brief clarification: I am not arguing for a strict social determinism. People clearly do deviate from the norms of their communities and the habits developed within their families, friendships, and so on. Notice, however, that even in these cases, our possibilities for new habits, ideas, or behaviors are shaped by social and material environments. Say, for example, that walking through the store I decide on a whim to buy asparagus though my family never ate it growing up. How do I know how to prepare it? Maybe my family always boiled vegetables, so I cut it up and boil it. Maybe I ask friends or coworkers or search online for recipes. Maybe I take a cooking class or watch a cooking program. Or say that I decide I need to be more informed about my local community, so I subscribe to the newspaper. Where did this desire come from? New relationships with people who stay informed in a way that my family or friends formerly did not? A television show I like that makes me feel ignorant about current events? An ad for the newspaper that says, "You can't make things better if you don't know what's happening"? Or maybe something happens in my community that jars me and makes me realize I need to pay more attention. In short, even when I forge a new path for myself, I am doing so in response to a particular social milieu.

At an even more intimate level, who

I am is a response to those particular others who love me, teach me, support me, harm or abuse me, neglect or mock me. I internalize the ideals others set for me, the ideas of myself and my future laid out for me (often before I'm aware or capable of understanding these ideas myself), the language spoken around me (with all its local idiosyncrasies), and the behaviors of those closest to me or those I most admire. I respond to those others, developing habits that help me cope with them, evaluating or even challenging the ideals and language set out for me. I may project the parts of myself I wish to disown onto others, shoring up my sense of self; or I may compare myself to their perfections, believing myself to be ever incomplete in relation to the talents of those around me. I am also a response to those particular others who I love, teach, support, abuse, neglect, or mock. I understand myself as a friend, teacher, or parent through the successes, failures, happiness, or suffering of my friends, students, or children. My feelings of mastery or control over others depend upon their submission, suffering, or humiliation. Indeed, my very sense of self is indebted to others who either confirm or dispute my self-ascriptions. Throughout our lives, we depend upon others to "reality check" our self-understandings. I walk into a restaurant with the assumption (not always fulfilled) that I am perceived as a potential customer worth serving; I ask a friend, "You think I'm qualified for this job, don't you?"; I look at the faces of my students, hoping to see signs that I am a teacher capable of coherent, interesting, or clarifying lectures.

Given that who one is is so thoroughly responsive to and shaped by one's intimate relationships and the social world in which one exists, what does it mean to be narcissistic? The answer depends upon the extent to which one takes into account this deep sociality. What I have called vulnerable narcissism would be an investment in oneself that seeks to remain cognizant of and reflective upon these social influences.

Say, for example, that I invest great effort in being a parent and take it as an important part of my identity. I am clearly not only invested in myself. To be a good

parent, I must also be invested in the well-being and success of my child. As I try to figure out what it means to be a good parent, I will (implicitly or explicitly) respond to the methods and behaviors of my own caregivers, repeating some behaviors and rejecting others. (Indeed, sticking to one's own parenting decisions often requires a good deal of effort because of how deeply many parenting habits are ingrained.) In focusing on my life as a parent, I will move toward some relationships (for example, other parents or those who enjoy being around children) and away from other relationships (for example, those who have no patience for children or hearing another story about a child's accomplishments). This change in relationships will also affect my sense of self. I may mourn the loss of my former life; I may welcome the change and feel more at home in this new role; I will likely feel a tension between both self-understandings. If my parenting choices mainly align with those of my family or with broader social expectations, I performatively reinforce those ideals (and will therefore likely be praised or rewarded). If my choices diverge from those of my family or my broader society, I performatively challenge those ideals (and am therefore likely to be shunned or punished). If I take advantage of institutional supports for parents (like home economics classes that prepared me to be a parent, parental leave, health or life insurance policies, State-provided benefits, a spouse's income that allows me to stay at home or work part time), I am invested in and justify the continued existence of those supports. My investments in all of these aspects of parenting position me in relation to other parents. If there are institutional supports I am able to rely upon, then I am privileged in relation to those who lack those supports. If my parenting decisions are questioned or mocked by those around me, I am disadvantaged relative to those whose decisions more closely align with social or familial norms. In short, my becoming the parent that I am and my investment in these social institutions are coextensive. Vulnerable narcissism for a parent, then, would be an investment in oneself that seeks to remain aware of all of these factors, all of

the ways in which focusing my energies on my identity as a parent is at the same time an investment in social norms, institutions, my family and children, and other parents.

Paradoxical Narcissism

Understanding narcissism in this way can help us see the extent to which narcissism as it is traditionally understood, as arrogance, self-obsession, the secondary narcissism of Freud, is internally inconsistent. In investing in myself to the neglect of others, I ignore the ways in which I am a deeply social being. Indeed, an odd consequence of this form of narcissism is that by hiding from oneself this social nature, one often ends up reenacting unquestioned social norms and habits. In other words, investing in oneself absent an awareness of the influences of others often becomes an investment in particular relationships or social structures. For this reason, I will call it paradoxical narcissism.

Consider, again, the example of a parent. If I remain unaware of the extent to which others serve as models for my own identity as a parent, I am more likely to reenact the behaviors of those others. Thus, investing in my own identity as a parent is an investment in those models. If I remain unaware of the social and institutional supports for my parenting, then investments in my identity as a parent may well become investments in those supports. For example, in using daycare or dependent health insurance offered by my employer, I've invested both in my identity as a parent and in a system which distributes parental benefits by employment status (rather than through, say, universal government programs or reliance on extended family networks). If I remain unaware of the unjust distribution of resources for parents, then investments in my identity as a parent become investments in the social and institutional sources of injustice. Say, for example, that out of concern for my child's education I send my child to an expensive private school. In thus investing in my child (and therefore my identity as a parent), I perpetuate expectations that local public schools are irreparably worse and that one's class should determine the quality of one's education. In short, the less I am aware of the social influences upon my own parenting, the more likely it is that my choices will reinforce those social influences.

Intimate Revolt as a Way of Fostering Vulnerable Narcissism

Vulnerable narcissism as I have presented it is certainly a demanding ideal. We must seek to remain aware of the social influences on our lives, but it is easy to lose this awareness. Thus, it is important that we are supported in this task by others, especially others we trust. Julia Kristeva develops a concept for just such supportive interactions: "intimate revolt." In The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt, Kristeva seeks to wrest the concept of "revolt" from its exclusively political usage, noting that historically and etymologically, the term names a turning back, a re-turn. This becomes an important component of revolt for Kristeva. To understand why, it is important to clarify that for Kristeva, individual subjects are heterogeneous in that they are bodily and affective at the same time that they are thinkers and users of shared, symbolic language. "Signifiance" is the name Kristeva gives to the process through which we create meaning by bringing unconscious drives or affects into shared language. In psychoanalytic terminology, putting a drive (especially a destructive or "death" drive) to creative and productive use is called "sublimation," and in this way, signifiance is one sort of sublimation.

Importantly, the semiotic, unconscious register of the drives is not merely biological, it is shaped by the social. What we desire, how we experience our bodies, what emotions we feel are all influenced or ordered by the social, even if they are not immediately accessible to consciousness or expressible in symbolic language. For example, say that I feel a certain tension rising within me. I heat up. I may yell, I may slam my fist on the table, or I may take a deep breath and explain to my friend that chewing with her mouth open is making me angry, frustrated, or annoyed. Note that the anger I feel at hearing open-mouthed chewing is not some natural biological response, it is the result of growing up in a household in which chewing in this way was considered rude. It is the result of growing up in a household and wider society that accepts anger as a response to minor annoyances. Similarly, my expression of this anger can be mediated through the social in a variety of ways. Slamming my fist on the table is surely both a bodily reaction and one that communicates meaning (however vague), and the reaction itself and the meaning that reaction carries are enabled by certain social conditions, like acceptable expressions of anger (where what is "acceptable" is shaped by the social setting, gender roles, and so on). Taking the time to interpret my bodily experience, find the source of that anger, and express it in symbolic language is a form of sublimation that relies not only on shared language, but also the social support of a receptive listener to hear my explanation.

With these concepts in mind, we may now answer the question: in revolt, what are we returning to? For Kristeva, revolt is a return to one's (unconscious and conscious) past, in order to bring meaning to what is unconscious or forgotten, in order to bring the meaningless drives into meaning. Such a revolt enables two forms of questioning. On the one hand, revolt enables us to question the social order, meaning systems, or symbolic language as they exist. We return to the unconscious drives and find that language does not offer us the tools to articulate those drives, such that we must seek to create a meaningful articulation. Such an articulation can happen in at least two ways. First, the creative use of symbolic language can enable us to articulate something new. A neologism, a portmanteau, or a poem or poetic phrase may somehow perfectly capture the experience that I otherwise could not find words for. Second, we may find that, so far, symbolic language cannot articulate the unconscious contents; instead my tone, tears, laughter, or a caesura may erupt in my thinking or speaking. Once expressed, these semiotic phenomena may be made more readily available for conscious, symbolic reflection. On the other hand, revolt also enables us to question our own histories. By returning

to a past that is not (or no longer) in my conscious awareness, I may question how and why I am who I am.

To be clear, these two forms of questioning are not mutually exclusive. Say, for example, that my friends all laugh at a joke, but I find myself unable to laugh; maybe I'm even appalled at their laughter. This could lead me to reflect on the social norms that condition their laughter. Was the joke sexist? How has sexism shaped the norms of humor? What tropes in our culture make that sexist joke possible? It could also lead me to reflect upon my own history. What has led me to be unable to laugh when my closest friends find the joke hilarious? Am I being overly sensitive? Or am I justified in my failure to laugh?

So far, I have portrayed revolt as an individual effort, but for Kristeva, intimate revolt is more often interpersonal. This is because we are often only able to articulate our unconscious drives through links with patient, listening others. These links are most clearly exemplified, for Kristeva, in the relationship of transference and countertransference between the psychoanalytic analysand and analyst. There is no need to limit our considerations to this setting, though. By creating an affective, trusting link with another, I open myself to the possibility of finding meaning with that other. Through this link, the other offers interpretations or silences, I take stabs at interpretations, and through this process we seek meaning together.

Let me offer a personal example. While I was in graduate school, I was in a car collision on the interstate. I met with my dissertation adviser the next week, and she said, "I heard you were in a car accident." Eager to get to business, I said, "Yeah. It is strange to be told 'You'd be dead if you weren't wearing your seatbelt.' But, it is what it is." Rather than rushing to the business at hand, however, and perhaps because she heard the shock erupting into my speech even while I tried to dismiss it, she offered me the gift of intimate revolt, saying, "I was in a car accident a while back. It is really traumatic, isn't it?" Here, she both offered herself as someone to identify with, someone with whom I could forge

an affective link, and offered me a first gesture at interpreting my experience. Knowing that we had been discussing the psychoanalytic use of "trauma" as a piercing of one's narcissistic boundaries, this interpretation was offered as a way of thinking about how the event was a challenge to my sense of self (one that is already fragile enough for most people working on dissertations!). Still, the term was not imposed, because it was offered as a question: "Would you too describe the experience as traumatic?" Because of this, an opportunity was opened for further conversation. All of this was made possible by her countertransference (identifying with my trauma through a loving connection) and transference (my ability to form a trusting link and identify with her). In doing so, meaning was given to conscious experiences and unconscious residues that may have otherwise remained unarticulated.

For Kristeva, intimate revolts like this one enable freedom. By becoming aware of the unconscious drives motivating us, by articulating what had, until then, been meaningless, and by questioning interpretations that are already in place, we are better able to understand and determine our own actions in the future. In this way, intimate revolt is a form of rebirth, it opens new potential futures. Through intimate revolt, I form a new understanding of myself, I form or revise relationships with others. This process is never complete. As long as I am living, there will be unconscious drives, relationships with others, memories, and conscious experiences to interrogate.

How, then, does intimate revolt foster vulnerable narcissism? Recall that intimate revolt is a form of self-questioning, often fostered by interactions with particular others, that enables freedom by helping us understand those forces that are driving us even if we are not at first consciously aware of such forces. Especially as an intimate interaction, this form of revolt calls us outside of ourselves and back to ourselves at the same time. I forge a link with another, I listen and am listened to in return, and yet I focus on myself: who am I and why? Indeed, it is likely that the other will have insights about me that I would find difficult to es-

tablish independently. My habits, self-understanding, language, and emotional responses are largely pre-reflective, but the other may call them to my attention. Moreover, these interactions do not only draw me outside of myself, but they also call upon me to return to a lost past so that I may better understand the social influences in my life. In returning to a past that is unconscious or no longer conscious, I may be better able to reflect upon the habits, emotions, language, skills, and self-understandings that I have and the extent to which these have been achieved through others. Intimate revolt encourages us to ask questions like: In what ways have my habits developed in response to certain social or familial environments? Which emotional responses have been rewarded, which mocked or punished, and by whom? Whose ideals have I internalized? How has my language or community affected how I understand myself or the possible futures I imagine?

Conclusion: Why Vulnerable Narcissism?

By way of conclusion, I would like to offer three reasons that I believe vulnerable narcissism to be important. First, vulnerable narcissism is important insofar as it seeks the truth, truths about oneself, truths about the world in which one lives, and truths about the interactions between oneself and one's world. To achieve a more accurate understanding of ourselves and our world, it is important to think openly and honestly about who we are and the forces that have shaped us.

Second, and relatedly, vulnerable narcissism has the potential to foster certain virtues like gratitude, humility, hospitality, and justice. If I come to recognize that some of the habits of which I am proudest result from the efforts of my family or teachers, I will be able to express a more sincere gratitude for the love they have given me. Of course, I might also come to blame my family for my bad habits, but a vulnerable narcissism would help me recognize (1) that my family members too were shaped by their social contexts such that their bad habits may have been responses to particular circumstances in their lives, and (2) that my ability to recognize my bad habits, their

sources, and ways to change them is itself a gift, perhaps from a teacher, an author, or a friend. If I come to recognize that my accomplishments are always enabled by relationships with others, or that my self-understanding is always changing and incomplete, I may well have greater humility in assessing myself and my achievements. Recognizing the supports I have for my projects and self-development may also lead me to be more hospitable. Insofar as I am fortunate enough to have been accepted into a community that enables certain projects for me, I ought to recognize the challenges that others face merely by virtue of being born into different communities and welcome them in their attempts to pursue similar projects. Finally, reckoning with the ways in which social relationships have rendered me unearned privileges and disadvantages may foster a greater pursuit of justice and a greater awareness of what justice requires. If I recognize that I have been disabled by an educational system that caters its instruction and supports to certain types of students at the expense of students like me, I can now understand my situation as shared with others, as systemic, and thus seek to change that situation (rather than seeking only individual accommodations). If I understand that my positive habits were made possible by my parents' careers (perhaps they offered ample time off to spend with me or wages that allowed us to buy and prepare healthy foods), I can work toward making this type of employment available to more people.

To be clear, I am only arguing that vulnerable narcissism enables these virtues and the pursuit of justice, not that it is a sufficient condition for them. One can surely maintain vulnerable narcissism and still be selfish. I may, for example, rec-

ognize the benefits of my wealth, remain aware of the disadvantages others face, or send my child to an expensive private school keeping in mind the impoverished public schools around me without being moved to change these unjust social conditions. Indeed, being aware of the social institutions that benefit me could make me more adept at navigating those institutions and reinforcing them in ways that continue to benefit me to the disadvantage of others. But the logic of individual responsibility, of self-making, of paradoxical narcissism shields the privileged from confronting the social conditions from which they benefit. It also impairs the ability to understand the social disadvantages faced by the oppressed, replacing structural diagnoses and solutions with discussions of personal responsibility. In these ways, I believe that vulnerable narcissism opens a door that would otherwise remain closed.

Erinn Gilson offers a helpful example of the sort of process I have in mind. She draws on an example from Patricia J. Williams to argue that one reason many people avoid considering the claims of homeless persons, or avoid even looking at them, is to disavow their own vulnerabilities. Indeed, this is often done in the name of good intentions. In Williams's example, a father explains to his daughter that it is better, that is more efficient, to give to aid organizations than give directly to a homeless person in need. The lesson is that "statistical need" is opposed to "actual need," and that the former is worthy of consideration and response while the latter is not. For Gilson, this is because to consider the claims of the homeless person would be to confront the fact that I too could be homeless, or to admit that I have certain unearned advantages (family resources, access

to education, the absence of disabling conditions) supporting me and (so far) keeping me out of homelessness, or to "experience the insignificance of what we do (give her a few dollars perhaps) in the face of structural impediments [and the] frustration of such recognitions." Recognizing this disavowal could result from intimate revolt, but just naming the disavowal is clearly insufficient. Once I understand that I am avoiding the homeless person to maintain an illusion of invulnerability or merit (or both), I will not have truly integrated this new self-understanding (in psychoanalytic parlance, I will not have worked-through my resistances to this new understanding) until I can form some sort of community with the homeless person. Perhaps I recognize my relative privilege and give charitably to the homeless individuals or to organizations for the homeless (assuming I keep in mind that such actions are never sufficient, but always partial and inadequate); perhaps I recognize the dignity and humanity of the homeless individual by talking with her and showing direct concern, opening myself to the experience of my own relative privilege and shame; perhaps I become an ally to homeless people in my community and advocate alongside them for a robust social safety net that takes into account and responds to the vulnerabilities of the members of our shared community. Note that each of these responses achieves a form of vulnerable narcissism: as I perform this work, I invest in myself by understanding myself in relation to the social circumstances within which I am positioned.

An honest, self-reflective investment in myself, in other words, has the power to lead to the most selfless actions.

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The Logic of Ambiguity: A Buddhist Perspective on the Experience of Time in PTSD

Elizabeth McManaman Tyler

ABSTRACT

While recent work on trauma provides insight into the first-person experience of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Aristotelian propositional logic, which underlies Western paradigms of thought, contains implicit ontological assumptions about identity and time which obscure the lived experience of PTSD. Conversely, Indian Buddhist catuskoti logic calls into question dualistic and discursive forms of thought. This paper argues that catuskoti logic, informed by Buddhist ontology, is a more fitting logical framework when seeking to describe and understand the first-person experience of PTSD, as it allows for ambiguity, non-duality, and polysemy.

The Logic of Ambiguity: A Buddhist Perspective on the Experience of Time in PTSD

Individuals who suffer from PTSD experience temporality in complex ways. For example, someone suffering from PTSD is often simultaneously aware of both the present and the past, or certain of both her safety and possible endangerment. Ultimately, individuals report feeling both present and absent. While symptoms fall along a continuum, with "flashbacks" to the traumatic event occupying one extreme, often individuals diagnosed with PTSD find themselves living in both the present and the past simultaneously. This paper seeks to provide a window into this experience by questioning ontological assumptions about time.

Recently, a relational understanding of selfhood has become a convincing area of research within psychology. Models that contest the self as atomistic and self-sustaining have been praised in both psychology and philosophy. Continental phenomenologists have emphasized the non-dualism of mind and body, and self and world. Such trends reveal a growing interest in challenging reified, essentialist modes of thought. I argue that a similar re-thinking is needed in order to understand and articulate the first-person experience of temporality. Presuppositions about truth and validity can be traced back to fundamental axioms in Aristotelian logic and ontology, which often operate unquestioned. A fundamental re-thinking of ontology is needed in order to grasp the non-dualistic experience of time. Buddhist traditions are valuable resources with which we can rethink presuppositions about time. I argue that Indian Buddhist ontology – as well as its modes of articulation which date back to

the 2nd to 3rd centuries – offers patterns of thought that can counter these essentialist tendencies.

From its inception in the late 19th century in Europe, psychoanalysis has long underscored that the past infiltrates the present and the unconscious is not clearly separable from the conscious mind; this notion of non-dualism is not new. PTSD, in that it contains a blurring of the boundary between past, present, and future, is an extreme example of how the self-experience of time cannot be adequately captured in discursive terms.

Psychologists Judith Herman, Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, and Robert Stolorow, offer valuable descriptions of the way in which trauma transforms one's experience of time and the perception of one's own safety. Their accounts speak to the complexity of lived experience of PTSD without reducing it to dichotomous thinking. By putting their analyses of first person experience of PTSD into conversation with Buddhist ontology and logic, I aim to further illuminate how essentialist presuppositions about time and identity obscure a deeper understanding of a first-person experience of PTSD. Beyond highlighting how fundamental Aristotelian assumptions about truth and ontology tend to presuppose a univocity of meaning and operate with either/or thinking, this investigation will reveal that the human being is not just a being-in-the-world, but a historical being without boundary, capable of maintaining a poly-semy of perspectives across time. To this end, two key Buddhist concepts, inter-dependent co-origination and catu ko i logic will be used as lenses through which we can more deeply understand

the first-person experience of PTSD as they do not conform to a univocity of meaning. Lastly, Buddhist philosophical notions will be employed to reveal how healing and true autonomy require embracing and integrating the past trauma with one's experience post-trauma rather than merely dismissing or releasing the past.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Nāgārjuna, and a Non-Essentialist Concept of Time

In order to conceptually capture the lived experience of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) one must wrestle with its many contradictory and ambiguous elements. A diagnosis of PTSD includes an achronological experience of time wherein the patient loses the continuity of forward progressing time; indeed, the past intrudes on the present, causing the individual to straddle multiple realities. Buddhist ontology seems to provide the polysemous logic necessary to capture frequent symptoms of PTSD. In order to support this claim I will first provide a brief overview of the disorder.

The DSM-V: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

The DSM-V outlines a cluster of symptoms that may follow a traumatic event and indicate PTSD which include intrusion symptoms tied to the event, "persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s)," negative thoughts and mood changes, and "marked alterations in arousal and reactivity." Intrusion symptoms include persistent memories, dreams, and/or "flashbacks" of the traumatic event as well as disturbing psychological and physiological responses to "external or in-

ternal cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s)." Changes in arousal include "irritable behavior and angry outbursts (with little or no provocation), … reckless or self-destructive behavior, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, problems with concentration, [and] sleep disturbance."

Most basically, PTSD entails a blurring of the boundary between the past and the present; the past "intrudes" on the present and is relived in the present. However, this blurring is by no means unique to PTSD; human experience by nature lacks clear barriers between the past and present. A basic premise of psychoanalysis is that past events, especially significant or traumatic ones, continue to exert influence in wide-ranging, largely unconscious ways including current perceptions about the world and oneself, expectations for the future, desire, etc. One could reasonably claim that the present is interpenetrated at all times by the past. However, if we maintain certain presuppositions about truth and falsity, it's difficult to capture the ambiguity of time as we are then committed to drawing sharp distinctions between concepts (e.g., A or not A, true or false, past or present). In this form of thinking, the past would be clearly separable from the present.

Ancient Greek Logical Presuppositions

Aristotle's influence can hardly be overstated. His prolific corpus inspired intense study from late antiquity to the Renaissance; even today scholars continue to draw from his philosophical work. His belief that philosophy was primarily concerned with substance, being, and logic shaped centuries of philosophical reflection. Aristotle was interested in codifying human reasoning in order to secure that the claims we make about the world, across disciplines, are sound. Central to this objective was his investigation of "fundamental principles of demonstration" in The Metaphysics.

In Book Gamma 3, Aristotle theorizes that "the most secure of all principles" is the law of non-contradiction, – sometimes referred to as the law of the excluded middle – i.e.: "It is impossible for the same thing at the same time both to be-in and not to be-in the same thing in the same respect."[1] This law governs rationality. Indeed, Aristotle calls this principle "the ultimate root of all demonstration – it is its very nature to be the principle of all other axioms."[2] More specifically, Aristotelian propositional logic asserts that contradictions are fallacies: something is either A or not A, true or false. A cannot be both itself and not A at the same time.

In order to provide a persuasive example of the principle, Aristotle alludes to a human being's incapacity to possess opposite beliefs at the same time about the same object. As we will see, this latter point is indeed possible in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, as articulated by the second century Indian monk Nāgārjuna. Aristotle argues that the principle of non-contradiction allows for the possibility of language; if it were denied, language and even thought would be impossible. Vasilis Politis emphasizes that Aristotle's claims about logic are inseparable from his overall project in the Metaphysics. The principle does not only govern how things appear to the subject, it is also "true of the things themselves and of things without qualification."[3] Language lines up with reality, for Aristotle, and there are only two possibilities, i.e., "is" or "is not," or "true" or "false."

In order to understand Buddhist non-dualism, it is useful to contrast it with the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction as the perspectives, with regard to truth claims, are fundamentally opposed. Furthermore, for the purposes of this paper, it's crucial to bring to light essentialist assumptions about time that may be operating unquestioned. Given the prevalence of Aristotelian propositional logic in European and American scholastic traditions, it is unsurprising that its basic premises about truth and identity can be witnessed in psychological models and diagnoses. Diagnostic guides, like the DSM-V, are built upon parsing symptoms and demarcating disorders. Generally speaking, patients must have a certain cluster of symptoms for a specified duration of time in order to receive a particular diagnosis. The law of non-contradiction is thus present in specifying whether or not the diagnosis in question applies to the individual.

However, despite this example of either-or thinking with regard to diagnoses, the overall discipline of psychology certainly acknowledges the reality of non-dualism in lived experience. As stated earlier, at the most basic level, psychological discourse takes non-dualism seriously in that it upholds the non-duality of time in which the past encroaches upon the psyche's present. Furthermore, analysis reveals that lived experience often contains simultaneous contradictory beliefs and desires. So, by referring to Aristotle's law of non-contradiction, I am not asserting that psychological discourse is governed by Aristotelian propositional logic. Instead, I merely hope to draw the reader's attention to problematic presuppositions present in an Aristotelian world view, and by extension, demonstrate the relevance of a non-Aristotelian ontology to the depiction of PTSD. More broadly, I aim to illuminate the first-person experience of time in PTSD by juxtaposing two very different perspectives of truth and ontology. We will find that the Indian Buddhist author, Nāgārjuna problematizes dualistic thinking and provides the philosophical resources with which we can sufficiently capture the fragmented perception of time operative in PTSD.

Buddhist Ontology and Epistemology: Interdependent Co-origination and the Two-fold Truth of Form and Emptiness

One of the foundational doctrines in Buddhism is the idea of no-self (anatman); i.e., the theory that there is no enduring core self. Instead, existence is shot through with impermanence; change is the only constant. This is common knowledge for anyone who is minimally acquainted with Buddhist ideas. Less well

1. Ibid, 88 1005b.

2. Ibid.

3. Vasilis Politis, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Aristotle and the Metaphysics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 128.

known is the teaching of interdependent co-origination (Skt. pratītyasamutpāda), which provides the ontological background to the concept of no-self. It states that everything that exists is the result of causes and conditions; sometimes translated as "dependent arising," it signifies that identity is dependent; that is, beings are created and sustained by beings outside of themselves. Fundamentally, there is only relation; there is no separate existence. All beings are conglomerations of relation with nothing essential or enduring at their core. The well-known Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh explains this notion elegantly:

Just as a piece of paper is the fruit, the combination of many elements that can be called non-paper elements, the individual is made of non-individual elements. If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud there will be no water; without water, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, you cannot make paper…So we say, 'A sheet of paper is made of non-paper elements.' A cloud is a non-paper element…Sunshine is a non-paper element…if all these elements are taken out, it is truly empty, empty of an independent self.[4]

When applied to human identity, interdependent co-origination signifies that there is no clear separation between the environment and the person; individuals lack core-like essences. Furthermore, if we consider this notion with respect to the human experience of time, we see that each moment is inextricably tied to the past and the future. The implication of this ontology is the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness, or sunyata: there is no singular present. While the notion of emptiness is often misunderstood nihilistically to mean nothingness, in actuality, emptiness signifies the lack of intrinsic essence. In other words, while we may draw arbitrary divisions between moments, ultimately such divisions are illusory. Of course, when it comes to PTSD, it may be psychologically beneficial to demarcate

past and present; however, to truly step into the lifeworld of the person suffering from PTSD, we must endeavor to see the experience as it unfolds to the individual.

The second Buddhist doctrine that is relevant for our purposes is the twofold truth of form and emptiness. There are two levels of knowing in Buddhist thought: the first corresponds to our everyday way of knowing the world where we make distinctions between ourselves and others, the sidewalk and the road, Buddhist teaching, and non-Buddhist teaching. Such a lens is conceptual; it relies upon demarcating beings. The Prajñāpāramitā Sutra refers to this first way of knowing as "form."

While the reader now "knows" what is meant by interdependent co-origination, this is mere conceptual knowledge, or form. The Buddhist practice path, conversely, is a non-conceptual way of knowing referred to as seeing the world through the lens of "emptiness." It entails realizing Buddhist teachings, like interdependent co-origination. This distinction between "form" and "emptiness" is found in the Prajñāpāramitā Sutra, and merely re-articulated by Nāgārjuna, as we will see in the next section. While our ordinary way of perceiving experience conceptually represents a form of conventional truth, Buddhist practice can lead to ultimate truth wherein reality is perceived through the lens of emptiness, i.e., without the concept of essence or separately existent beings.

The doctrine of the two-fold truth frees one to make statements at the conventional level that are true while they are simultaneously false at the ultimate level. Conventional knowledge is useful in that distinctions are necessary for communication. However, attachment to conventional knowledge, according to Buddhist thought, can obscure the ultimate truth, which is that everything lacks intrinsic essence, including human identity and time. If one isn't careful, it's easy to idealize the "ultimate" truth; after all, it is in some senses the goal of

Buddhist practice. However, a more apt characterization of Buddhist practice is coming to realize that any type of attachment – even the attachment to the ultimate truth of interdependent co-origination – must be renounced. With respect to time, conventionally we demarcate the past from the present. However, with respect to ultimate truth, they remain inseparable.

Knowledge of these two fundamental Buddhist doctrines: interdependent co-origination and the twofold truth of form and emptiness, sets the stage for grasping a non-dualistic middle path which embraces contradiction. The first is an ontological claim about identity while the second concerns both ontology and epistemology, or the possibility of knowledge. If one sets aside Aristotelian ontological assumptions about identity and time, a new ontology and logic must take its place. In the next section, I argue that Nāgārjuna's ontology, expressed through Buddhist catuskoti logic, is a fitting logical framework when seeking to describe and understand the complexity of first person experience of PTSD in that it allows for polysemy, ambiguity, and non-duality.

Nāgārjuna and the Logic of Ambiguity

Nāgārjuna (c. 150 CE) was an Indian Buddhist master credited with founding the early Madhyamaka school of Mahayana Buddhism. While many fantastical hagiographies exist, little is known of his life apart from legend. His most influential work is the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, The Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way.[5] This work was meant to be a commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā Sutra, a principal Mahayana Buddhist scripture referred to above.[6] A commentarial tradition arose and today a vast amount of secondary literature exists. Contemporary Buddhist scholars are drawn to Nāgārjuna's work due to his use of a form of logic, called the catu ko i, as well as his radical skeptical claims about the possibility of true statements about reality.

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4. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987), 51-52.

5. Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009) 63-64.

6. Geshe Tashi Tsering, *Emptiness: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought*, 5th volume (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, Inc, 2009) 19.

Consistent with canonical Buddhist teachings, which aim to remove delusory views which cause suffering, Nāgārjuna's chief interest was in dispelling mistaken views, principally the notion of essence (Skt. svabhāva). While he mentions his desire to guide Buddhist followers towards nirvana through his teaching, he is simultaneously critiquing the views of rival Buddhist schools and arguing for the superiority of his understanding of Buddhist scriptures. More specifically, Nāgārjuna took issue with non-Mahayana schools of his day, which held that reality consisted of dharmas, "infinitesimally small particles that are the real building blocks of the phenomenal world."[7] Nāgārjuna denied the existence of dharmas and indeed any form of independent, substantial existence (svabhāva).

While often read as a nihilistic skeptic, I, and a number of other scholars, hold that Nāgārjuna actually intends to both critique certain philosophical doctrines and assert his own.[8] He aims to achieve a "middle path" between the extreme views of annihilationism, the notion that nothing exists, and eternalism, the idea that only permanent essences exist. He systematically employs catuskoti logic in order to reject all possible assertions that arise from either of these two worldviews. This form of logic translates to "4 positions or corners:" namely: A exists, A does not exist, A both exists and does not exist, and A neither exists nor does not exist.[9] This logic is employed by Nāgārjuna in order to exhaust all logical possibilities and ultimately demonstrate that all arguments that purport to represent "truth" about reality fail when they are subject to analysis. His project is tied to efforts to dispel the notion of essence because assertions about reality, when propositional, have a fixed and restrictive quality.

As noted above, the Buddhist doctrine of interdependent co-origination states that identity is never independent and separable from the surrounding environment. Propositional assertions are ill-equipped to represent this worldview.

What does it mean to adhere to a middle path between the notion that nothing exists and everything exists eternally? While Aristotelian propositional logic insists on deciding between either truth or falsity, Nāgārjuna seems to endorse hovering somewhere between seemingly dichotomous alternatives. As we saw above, language lines up with reality, for Aristotle, and there are only two possibilities, i.e., "is" or "is not," or "true" or "false." According to Jay Garfield, Nāgārjuna doesn't contest that the "… only truth values are true and false," however "…these truth values are independent of each other."[10] This allows him to state that a claim can be true, false, both or neither. Such a view sees the non-duality of existence as not only a permissible view but in fact the clearest picture of reality as it is in itself. For example, in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā Nāgārjuna states:

8. Everything is real and is not real

Both real and not real

Neither real nor not real.

This is Lord Buddha's teaching.[11]

According to Garfield, Nāgārjuna employs the catuskoti both positively and negatively throughout the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. In the positive form, claims can be true, false, both and neither.[12] However, while one view would be that Nāgārjuna explicitly rejects the law of non-contradiction; in fact, his claims are more subtle. Again, he advances a middle view. In the negative formulation of the logic, "all four possibilities are denied," he

rejects language's ability to make true statements about reality.[13] The catuskoti should not be thought of as a simple assertion about the truth of reality. Instead, it should be regarded as a corrective tool put to use in order to eliminate dualistic thinking and faith in language's ability to capture absolute reality. When we enter into the Buddhist worldview, we come to see how the former and the latter are tied. Nāgārjuna's work demonstrates the limits of language when it is connected to the notion of essence; however, he also pushes it to communicate insight into its own limits.

How is this all connected to his notion of the "middle path"? According to Peter Hershock "Realizing the non-duality of all things is not an erasure of differences, a final collapse of all distinctions into an all-frozen sameness; it is a restoration of the logically excluded middle between 'sameness' and 'difference' – the irreducibly dynamic totality of mutual contribution."[14] Insisting that the only true picture of reality is in line with Aristotelian propositional logic – either A or not A – is to insist on "difference." Conversely, the assertion that everything is one, or the "same," if we shed the concept of intrinsic essence, is also mistaken. Such forms of thinking fail to grasp that the lack of essence doesn't preclude all individuality.

Returning to the doctrine of the two-fold truth of form and emptiness provides a new way to interpret how Nāgārjuna is using the positive catuskoti in that we can make statements at the conventional level that are true while they are simultaneously false at the ultimate level. Conventional knowledge is useful in that distinctions are necessary for communication. However, attachment to conventional knowledge can obscure the fact

7. James Blumenthal, "Indian Mahayana Buddhism" in *Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, edited by Steven M. Emmanuel, (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013) 124.

8. See Garfield, 2015, 2002; Westerhoff, 2009; Burton, 1999.

9. Jay Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 99.

10. Jay Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 244.

11. Jay Garfield, translator. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) Chapter XVIII.

12. Ibid, 244.

13. bid, 245.

14. Peter Hershock, "Diversity Matters: Buddhist Reflections on the Meaning of Difference" in *Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, edited by Steven M. Emmanuel (John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013) 746.

that everything lacks intrinsic essence, including human identity and time.

Lastly, Nāgārjuna subjected his own assertions to the notion of emptiness; he claimed that his words and the words of the Buddha are empty in that they too could not express ultimate truth. In other words, Nāgārjuna's skepticism about the possibility of capturing reality in conceptual statements holds true even for his own Buddhist views. While Buddhist teaching is aimed at dispelling the notion of essence, the absence of essence itself, emptiness, can easily be mistakenly reified. Reifying emptiness means to interpret it as some "thing" that needs to be experienced that is completely separable from ordinary experience. Nāgārjuna closes Chapter XXV on "Nirvana" in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā by stating:

24. The pacification of all

objectification

And the pacification of illusion:

No Dharma was taught by the Buddha

At any time, in any place, to any

person.[15]

The "Dharma," or teaching, does not reflect any thing-like, essential truth; it is only a method used to dispel "ontological fabrication," to employ a term by Garfield.[16] If grasping to permanence is the tendency Buddhists aim to eliminate, then it does not make sense to substitute this tendency with a permanent reified teaching. The same notion is expressed in Nāgārjuna's dramatic claim in verse 19 "There is not the slightest difference between cyclic existence and nirvana."[17] "Cyclic existence" symbolizes samsara, which stands for all deluded existence. Nāgārjuna asserts such a contradictory argument in order to

show that nirvana is not a separate independently existing truth. Nirvana is merely the absence of deluded thinking. Similarly, with respect to the two-fold truth of form and emptiness, emptiness, or ultimate truth, is just one side of the same coin as form, or conventional truth. Garfield states "Emptiness is not the annihilation of convention but the ability to return to convention, seeing it merely as conventional."[18] Nāgārjuna should not be read as a nihilistic skeptic then in that he does not recommend discarding conventional truth, but rather points to its limits by instructing the reader to dispel his or her attachment to the notion of essence.

While Nāgārjuna's way of expressing his findings is quite radical, his theories do not actually depart from the Buddha's teaching. Mahayana scriptures used the term upaya to capture the provisional nature of Buddha's teachings. Upaya means "skillful" or "expedient means." While the term itself rarely occurs in the Buddha's own body of scriptures, the Pāli Canon, Michael Pye points to thematic continuities between the teaching of the historical Buddha and later Mahayana scriptures with respect to the teaching method of upaya.[19] Instead of delivering the same teaching to all his disciples, the Buddha adjusted teachings based on the needs of his disciples.[20] In the Mahayana Sutras, the Buddha is even seen referring to nirvana itself as empty, in that Dharma, or teachings, can only point to an ultimate reality beyond words and concepts.[21] The Mahayana branch of Buddhism, influenced by Nāgārjuna, emphasizes that all Buddhist teachings cannot reflect reality; they are only practical tools that hopefully inspire non-conceptual knowledge.

Recalling that the goal of Buddhist practice is non-attachment – even to

the ultimate truth – it's important to emphasize that conventional truth need not be transcended. Instead, the goal is to loosen one's attachment to conventional truth. The "return to convention," however, is still separate from the philosophical appearance vs. reality distinction in that emptiness is not "reality" in the sense of something substantial. This distinction, so entrenched in much of the history of Western philosophy simply does not hold for either the Mahayana Buddhist notion of nirvana and samsara nor the levels of form and emptiness

In the remainder of this paper, I argue that Buddhist insights into non-duality provide valuable tools when seeking to understand and conceptualize the first-person experience of PTSD. More specifically, interdependent co-origination, catuskoti logic, and the twofold truth of form and emptiness will be drawn on to illuminate the perception of time in PTSD. Importantly, if one only views Buddhism as a spiritual practice, this project will be questioned. While Buddhist philosophical insights are tied to bodily practices, Buddhism has rich ontological perspectives that one can benefit from outside of its role as a spiritual practice. As noted above, Nāgārjuna's critique of the appearance vs. reality paradigm is fruitful for scholars of Western philosophy and psychology. Significantly, while Western philosophical systems are replete with the appearance vs. reality distinction, according to Garfield, Nāgārjuna is not making such an assertion.[22] While there are two ways of perceiving reality, articulated by the two-fold truth of form and emptiness, there is only one reality. Much of the history of western philosophy has been committed to uncovering the "real" underneath the way that things merely appear. Garfield writes of Nāgārjuna's refusal of the appearance

15. Garfield (1995), Chapter XXV.

16. Ibid, 334.

17. Ibid, Chapter XXV

18. Garfield (2015), 261.

19. Michael Pye, *Skillful Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 119.

20. Ibid, 123; 129.

21. *The Essential Lotus: Selections from the Lotus Sutra*, translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 12.

22. Garfield (2002), 102.

vs. reality distinction:

> ... it is hard to find a parallel in the West prior to the work of Heidegger. But even Heidegger does not follow Nāgārjuna all the way to the dramatic insistence on the identity of the two realities and the recovery of the authority of the conventional. This extirpation of the myth of the deep may be Nāgārjuna's greatest contribution to Western philosophy.[23]

For the purposes of this paper, Nāgārjuna's questioning of essentialist thinking will be a main focus. While Aristotelian propositional logic stipulates that there are only two possibilities (A or not A, true or false, past or present), Nāgārjuna's work offers up the radical perspective that there is no A because all beings – and propositions about beings – are ultimately empty of intrinsic essence.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Nāgārjuna, and a Non-Essentialist Concept of Time

In this section, I will demonstrate how Nāgārjuna's philosophy of non-dualism offers a way of thinking through the first-person experience of PTSD. Remaining committed to Aristotelian presuppositions about essence and non-contradiction curtails the ability to conceptualize the interpenetration of past and present at work in reports of PTSD. Most basically, PTSD entails a blurring of the boundary between the past and the present; the past "intrudes" on the present and is relived in the present. However, this blurring is by no means unique to PTSD; human experience by nature lacks clear boundaries between the past and present. One could reasonably claim that the present is interpenetrated at all times by the past. However, if we hold to the law of the excluded middle, it's difficult to capture the multidimensionality of time as we are then committed to drawing sharp distinctions between concepts (e.g., A or not A, true or false, past or present). In this form of thinking, the past would be clearly separable from the

present. As Nāgārjuna points out in his analysis of causation, in order to give an account of how one thing affects another the notion of essence must be discarded:

> 8. If existence were through essence,
>
>   Then there would be no
>
>   nonexistence
>
>   A change in essence
>
>   Could never be tenable.
>
> 9. If there is no essence,
>
>   What could become other?
>
>   If there is essence,
>
>   What could become other?[24]

As noted above, he defines essence as that which is permanent, eternal, and independent. The first two lines follow from the notion that an essence is by definition eternal; however, if we hold this view then we would be committed to the idea that nothing could pass out of existence. This is an untenable position. He goes on to reason that if something is eternal and independent, then by nature it cannot undergo change, i.e., be affected by something else or come to be otherwise. In the second verse, he speculates that if we discard the idea of essence, which governs much thinking on identity, then it becomes difficult to express what changes. These lines throw into question language's ability to speak about an individual being undergoing change or even the continuity of time from moment to moment. In the last two lines, Nāgārjuna returns to his argument that despite worries about our ability to refer to entities without the concept of essence, returning to the concept of essence still doesn't allow us to account for change.

If we follow Nāgārjuna's reasoning, then we must think of each moment in non-essentialist terms. If the "past" is conceived of as independent and easily separable from the present then it falls within essentialist thinking. As the positive form of catuskoti logic allows for a

lack of resolution between opposites, it seems to more adequately capture the human experience of time. With this Buddhist form of logic, the past can be conceptualized as both past and not past at the same time.

The past, present, and future thus share an ambiguous relationship which is only intensified by individuals who suffer from PTSD. With regard to intrusion symptoms, in their most extreme manifestation, the individual may lose all awareness of the present. One of the hallmark traits of PTSD is the individual's "reliving" of the traumatic event:

> The individual may experience dissociative states that last from a few seconds to several hours or even days, during which components of the event are relived and the individual behaves as if the event were occurring at that moment…Such events occur on a continuum from brief visual or other sensory intrusions about part of the traumatic event without loss of reality orientation, to complete loss of awareness of present surroundings.[25]

With respect to the two logics discussed, while a complete dissociative episode may be captured sufficiently by Aristotelian propositional logic (one is either present and "aware of present surroundings" or not), when the episodes appear on "…a continuum…without loss of reality orientation" they cannot. Continuums simply can't be reflected by propositional either/or thinking. Furthermore, the fact that many individuals suffering from PTSD aren't completely debilitated by their symptoms demonstrates that they are able to maintain two kinds of awareness simultaneously: awareness of the present moment and awareness of the traumatic event. Indeed, psychiatrist Judith Herman suggests that present and past perceptions can occur simultaneously in individuals who have been subject to repeated trauma.[26] Even this formulation of two separate states is misleading, though, in that there is no

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23. Ibid.

24. Garfield (1995), Chapter XV.

25. *DSM-V*, 275.

26. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (Basic Books, 1992) 90.

clear division between these two forms of awareness. Instead, the present is experienced together with the past or we could say that the present is filtered through the past.

Dissociation, Contradiction, and the "Illusion of Invulnerability"

"Doublethink"

Individuals who meet the diagnostic criteria of PTSD may also express dissociative symptoms, either in the form of depersonalization or derealization.[27] Catuskoti logic is useful in conceptualizing such experiences according to their proper polysemous nature rather than attempting to articulate them with either/or propositional statements. Psychologist Judith Herman uses the term "constriction" to describe dissociative tendencies: "Sometimes situations of inescapable danger may evoke…a state of detached calm…Events continue to register in awareness, but it is as though these events have been disconnected from their ordinary meanings…The person may feel as though the event is not happening to her, as though she is observing from outside her body…"[28] While such states can exist during the traumatic event itself, they often continue to live on after the event has passed with regard to how the traumatized person remembers the event. In such cases, we see symptoms described as occurring along a continuum, rather than dualistically, i.e., in terms of reliving the trauma completely or being aware only of the present reality. Herman suggests that the individual maintains two kinds of awareness simultaneously: one of the event and one in which she is removed from the event. Interestingly, individuals at times report that they perceive the event outside of their bodies from a vantage point beside

or above their bodies.[29] In this case, the event seems to be stripped of a subject experiencing the event.

With regard to chronically traumatized people, Herman suggests that they develop the ability to alter their state of consciousness through dissociation, but also through "voluntary thought suppression, minimization, and… denial."[30] She specifies that:

> Ordinary psychological language does not have a name for this complex array of mental maneuvers, at once conscious and unconscious…Perhaps the best name for it is doublethink, in Orwell's definition: 'Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.'[31]

For example, survivors may actively deny focusing attention on their past traumas on one hand, while simultaneously experiencing it as their present reality. Herman notes that the past trauma reality is often experienced in sharper detail than the present, which is instead viewed as lackluster and diminished. Such an experience affirms both realities and is thus similar to the earlier example of symptoms experienced along a spectrum, in that the individual doesn't lose awareness of the present when recalling the past trauma. However, the past reality is often more absorbing and insistent than the present one.[32]

"Doublethink" also manifests itself in the way in which the individuals who have suffered from trauma attempt to communicate to others about the trauma. Herman writes that individuals are torn between their desires to both speak of the trauma and to leave it hidden: "The psychological distress symptoms of

traumatized people simultaneously call attention to the existence of an unspeakable secret and deflect attention away from it."[33] This phenomenon is further evidence that posttraumatic experience is shot through with contradictory desires and emotions. Herman uses the term "dialectic of trauma," which captures alternating contradictory states of dissociative "constriction" and "intrusion," in order to capture the way in which symptoms of PTSD manifest themselves in terms of these seemingly un-resolvable contradictions. She highlights the jarring incongruity between defensive numbing and intrusive affect-laden memories:

> This dialectic of opposing psychological states is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the post-traumatic syndromes. Since neither the intrusive nor the numbing symptoms allow for integration of the traumatic event, the alternation between these two might be understood as an attempt to find a satisfactory balance between the two…The instability produced by these periodic alternations further exacerbates the traumatized person's sense of unpredictability and helplessness.[34]

This dialectic itself, according to Herman, can lead to the traumatized person adopting "doublethink" as a form of coping.[35]

Essentialist ontology, expressed through propositional logic, simply doesn't possess the tools to express this experience as PTSD represents a case of simultaneously existent contradictory perceptions of reality undergone by one individual. The simultaneous holding of two perspectives is similar to the two-fold truth of form and emptiness, wherein the conventional (conceptual) and ultimate (non-conceptual) frames are two true

27. *DSM-V*, 272.

28. Ibid, 42-43.

29. Ibid, 43.

30. Ibid, 87.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid, 90.

33. Ibid, 1.

34. Ibid, 47.

35. Ibid, 1; 87.

ways to view the same reality, both of which can be held concurrently. While traumatic remembering could be considered "delusional," it represents a truth to the patient. However, with regard to the two-fold truth of form and emptiness, a word of caution is merited: ultimate truth and conventional truth are not equivalent with non-traumatized and traumatic experience, respectively. I suggest that Nāgārjuna's ontology can illuminate the study of PTSD in Western psychology; such an ontology is consistent with the phenomenon of simultaneous contradictory perceptions held by an individual.

Shattered World Assumptions

Herman's discussion of "Doublethink" falls in line with Professor of Psychology Ronnie Janoff-Bulman's theory of shattered world assumptions.[36] Janoff-Bulman theorizes that we have core beliefs, one of which is that the world and other people are basically benevolent and safe. While we are rationally aware of the harm that befalls many people in the world, we are able to nevertheless maintain an "illusion of invulnerability" with regard to our own person.[37] Trauma can shatter this illusion and lead to the belief that the world and other people are fundamentally dangerous. Unsurprisingly, studies have revealed that negative world assumptions are connected to increased PTSD symptoms.[38] Janoff-Bulman writes:

> In the case of traumatic negative events, individuals confront very salient, critical 'anomalous data,' for the victimization cannot be readily accounted for by the person's preexisting assumptions…Following traumatic life events, victims' basic

assumptions do not seem viable in light of the data from victimization, yet stability and coherence are threatened by change.[39]

Returning to the notion of "doublethink," individuals who have not experienced trauma seem to be able to hold the contradictory views that a) harm befalls people across the world every day and b) It is unlikely that harm will befall me as I am invulnerable. The second view is psychologically more compelling than the first. Such a perspective does not provoke cognitive dissonance for the average person. However, in the aftermath of a traumatic event, the first viewpoint overshadows the second and brings it into question. Jannoff-Bulman argues that world assumptions are significantly altered after severe traumatic events. For example, in a study of 338 college students, Janoff-Bulman found that students who had experienced a severe traumatic event held more negative basic world assumptions than the non-victims.[40]

In her analysis of the aftermath of trauma, Janoff-Bulman suggests that the symptoms of self-blame, denial, and intrusive recurrent thoughts, which often occur, are psychologically beneficial in that they allow the survivor to gradually integrate the event into their existing world assumptions schema without the collapse of the total schema.[41] Herman's theory of "doublethink" could very well imply that trauma survivors may partially retain the idea that the world is safe while simultaneously believing that danger is constant. For example, Herman recounts a concentration camp survivor's reflections 20 years after being released:

Watching Israeli soldiers passing outside her window, the woman reported that she knew the soldiers were leaving to fight at the frontier. Simultaneously, however, she 'knew' that they were being driven to their deaths by a Nazi commander.[42]

Here, the woman is able to maintain both perspectives. While this example does not explicitly reference the woman's perception of her own safety, we can see that she is not completely overtaken with the notion that danger is everywhere; rather, she is able to understand the reality of the event while simultaneously interpreting the event through the lens of her traumatic past.

Like many psychological realities, individuals experience a continuum of such feelings. While some survivors of trauma may completely lose the illusion of invulnerability, I think it is likely that in some corner of the mind many survivors retain a belief in it. Core assumptions about the benevolence of the world and the worth of the self are constructed over time, but many of them are sedimented in early life.[43] While traumatic events challenge the believability of these basic assumptions, usually for a period of time post-trauma, it is unlikely that they will be challenged for the remainder of one's life. Indeed, Janoff-Bulman notes that many survivors do go on to gradually integrate their prior and post-victimization world assumptions.[44]

The law of non-contradiction, as applied to past and present seems to preclude the possibility of integration. Integration implies a transcending of absolutist either/or thinking. While the focus of this paper is on describing the lived experience of PTSD and the ontological insights that it reveals, ther-

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36. Herman, in fact, refers to Janoff-Bulman's "basic assumptions" theory in *Trauma and Recovery* when she discusses the rupture of a traumatized person's basic perception of the world as safe in the aftermath of trauma, 51 n. 2.

37. Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York: The Free Press, 1992) 18-19.

38. See Lilly, Howell, & Graham-Bermann, 2015, 98. This particular study focuses on survivors of intimate partner violence.

39. Janoff-Bulman (1992), 121.

40. Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, "Assumptive Worlds and the Stress of Traumatic Events: Applications of the Schema Construct" *Social Cognition.* 7.2 (1989): 131.

41. Ibid, 121-122.

42. Herman, 90.

43. Janoff-Bulman (1992), 17.

44. Ibid, 171.

apeutic practices that aim to treat PTSD should be considered in brief. As we will see, psychoanalyst Robert Stolorow also argues for the integration of the traumatic past with the present reality rather than completely removing the traumatic perception.

Stolorow presents an analysis of trauma's effects related to Janoff-Bulman's discussion of shattered world assumptions. For Stolorow, the root of traumatic experience is characterized as a loss of "the absolutisms of everyday life":

When a person says to a friend, 'I'll see you later,' or a parent says to a child at bedtime, 'I'll see you in the morning,' these are statements, like delusions, whose validity is not open for discussion. Such absolutisms are the basis for a kind of naive realism and optimism that allow one to function in the world, experienced as stable and predictable. It is in the essence of emotional trauma that it shatters these absolutisms, a catastrophic loss of innocence that permanently alters one's sense of Being-in-the-world. Massive deconstruction of the absolutism of everyday life exposes the inescapable contingency of existence on a universe that is random and unpredictable and in which no safety or continuity of being can be assured.[45]

The result of trauma is a "catastrophic loss of innocence" which engulfs the subject and evokes feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness.[46] However, Stolorow suggests that traumatic experience can also provide us with the opportunity for authenticity by revealing our true human finitude in a way that can be productive and life-enriching.

Repetition, Finitude, and Integration of Contradictions

I will turn now to an extended examination of Stolorow's discussion of trauma and temporality. His analysis of lived time is similar to the point that I have emphasized above in that the past continually interpenetrates the present and future. Stolorow first discusses lived time by alluding to Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl's views of time as a continuity rather than a summary of discrete moments. More specifically, the present does not stand alone; it is instead, inextricable from the past and the future.[47] However, this continuity can be ruptured; indeed, Stolorow argues that "trauma destroys time." Trauma, in fact, leads to a break in both the felt continuity of time and the perceived unity of the self.[48] It leads to a profound alteration of one's everyday experience. Drawing on Heidegger's notion of healthy Dasein as a being-at-home-in-the-world, the traumatic experience is characterized by loss, strangeness, and a sense of the uncanny.[49] Stolorow likens such an experience to Heidegger's discussion of anxiety, which dislodges the individual from his or her immersion in the everyday.

The rupture in temporality is part and parcel of dissociation, according to Stolorow. He describes dissociation as "...a kind of 'tunnel vision'...keeping apart...incommensurable emotional worlds."[50] The traumatized person – often unsuccessfully – attempts to keep the traumatized emotional world at bay. This defensive dissociation, however, prohibits the integration of the traumatic events and memories into the self's identity. Once again, Stolorow, via Heidegger, emphasizes that the unity of the self depends upon the felt continuity of time. However, the re-experiencing of trauma through memory jolts one out of the continuous flow of time. Stolorow recounts how one of his patients was

triggered by retelling her experience of traumatic events: "...with the retelling of each traumatic episode, a piece of herself broke off and relocated to the time and place of the original trauma...[afterwards] she was completely dispersed along the time dimension of her crushing life history" (Ibid). As evident in Herman's analysis above, intrusive traumatic memories are often unpredictable and serve to de-stabilize identity. Stolorow provides a thorough account of how identity is inextricable from one's being-in-time; thus, the de-stabilization occurs with regard to both identity and the individual's perception of time.[51]

Traumatic temporality is further characterized by Stolorow as a sense of being trapped in a present that endlessly repeats the past. Stolorow reads Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of "the eternal return of the same" as a useful description which can be applied to the experience of traumatic time.

In the region of trauma, all duration or stretching along collapses; past becomes present, and future loses all meaning other than endless repetition...Because trauma so profoundly modifies the universal or shared structure of temporality, the traumatized person quite literally lives in another kind of reality, an experiential world felt to be incommensurable with those of others.[52]

Here Stolorow pictures trauma in terms of sameness, repetition, and a frozen present. With regard to the anecdote about his patient above, the triggered reactions could be seen as a repetition wherein the present and future is continually overtaken by the past. The loss of the continuity of time leads to a fragmented identity as well as a lost capacity for relation.

45. Robert Stolorow, *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: The Analytic Press: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007) 16.

46. Robert Stolorow, *World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011) 49.

47. Stolorow (2007), 19.

48. Stolorow (2011), 54.

49. Ibid, 43.

50. Ibid, 54.

51. Ibid, 55

52. Ibid, 55-56.

While I have discussed above how Buddhist ontology, as reflected in catuskoti logic, effectively captures the ambiguity of post-traumatic experience pictured by Herman and Janoff-Bulman, I think it is also useful in Stolorow's analysis of traumatic experience as well as his discussion of recovery. The repetition of the same is surely a denial of contradiction; it is a narrowing of awareness to the present, or the past made continuously present, through evasion. However, as Janoff-Bulman suggests above, such evasion can be psychologically beneficial until integration is possible. In Stolorow's characterization of PTSD, the individual may be more aptly described as being stuck in a rigid either-or way of seeing reminiscent of Aristotelian propositional logic in that only one reality is acknowledged. That is, Stolorow's characterization of dissociation, is a kind of "tunnel vision" brought about by a trigger, or "portkey," in Stolorow's terminology, wherein the individual is suddenly thrust into reliving a past trauma.[53] The reliving is all-encompassing and separates the individual completely from present reality. However, when the traumatized person is capable of letting go of this evasion, he or she can return to time as a discontinuous continuity, i.e., to an acknowledgement of the interpenetration of the past, present, and future. Here, a healthy perception of time in fact allows for a fluidity better pictured by catuskoli logic in that one can hold together the discontinuous moments of time in a continuity. As stated above, human experience by nature lacks clear barriers between the past and present. This continuity is ruptured when the traumatized person is thrust into reliving a past trauma. The goal, when treating individuals diagnosed with PTSD, according to Stolorow, Herman, and Janoff-Bulman, is to allow for the integration of the past and the present without discounting or evading either.

As mentioned above, despite the profound disorientation that follows a traumatic event, Stolorow believes that one may go on to develop an authentic and deeper understanding of human existence afterwards. As he holds a relational view of the self, supportive others play a key role in the survivor's return to continuity. Drawing again on Heidegger, Stolorow writes that authentic existence involves the "non-evasive recognition of finitude"[54]:

> In trauma, a potential dimension of authenticity – authentic Being-toward-death – is unveiled but not freely chosen; on the contrary, it is forced upon the traumatized person, and the accompanying anxiety can be unendurable, making dissociative retreats from the traumatized states – retreats into forms of inauthenticity – necessary.[55]

Similar to Janoff-Bulman's "illusion of invulnerability," using Heidegger's terminology, Stolorow describes how being "thrown" into a traumatic event can force the individual to apprehend his or her own mortality. While Stolorow theorizes that such a revelation is at first evaded through dissociation, once the repetition of the same is transcended, it can provide a possibility to face one's death authentically.

Heidegger's notion of inauthentic falling into the they (Das Man), wherein Dasein does not apprehend its own finitude, is initially similar to a dissociated traumatized state in that both are characterized by evading finitude. However, while inauthentic falling is an absorption in the everyday, for both Heidegger's notion of anxiety and the traumatized person, "…in anxiety the significance of the everyday world collapses."[56] Furthermore, both are infused with a feeling of almost unbearable aloneness: "Trauma, like authentic Being-toward-death, individualizes us, but in a manner that manifests in an excruciating sense of singularity and solitude."[57]

What I think can be drawn out of Stolorow's analysis of trauma, is that the traumatized person's inauthentic absorption in the past is tied up with both the present repetition of the past and an insight into his or her finitude. In other words, while PTSD can be accurately described as a frozen present, wherein the past repeats itself ad nauseam, it simultaneously contains an awareness of one's finitude, albeit an unproductive one. In fact, I think dissociated memories of traumatic events are not just blocked from awareness and integration; I think on one level they are blocked while on another they take over all of one's awareness and make one continually live one's finitude. However, as Stolorow notes, until the radically incommensurate emotional worlds of the past and the present are integrated, the awareness of one's finitude is paralyzing, and thus quite limiting.[58]

This perspective can be captured well with the Buddhist two-fold truth and the logical structure of catu ko i. For example, one can feel cut off from the present when reliving the past while simultaneously feeling fear about harm in the present. In fact, hypervigilance is one PTSD symptom that demonstrates how one is simultaneously unable to transcend one's past trauma while at the same time feel fear for one's present and future security. The "non-evasive recognition of finitude" can play out in a way that is merely undergone, through compulsive hypervigilance, for example, or in a way that is freely chosen. Stolorow describes the latter possibility as authenticity, but I think it is important to emphasize how awareness of one's finitude can be both paralyzing and liberating for the traumatized person.

53. Ibid, 54-55.

54. Ibid, 50.

55. Ibid, 45.

56. Ibid, 48.

57. Ibid, 44.

58. Ibid, 49.

Stolorow's authentically-chosen "non-evasive recognition of finitude" involves an embracing of the repetition of traumatized memories and human vulnerability. Interestingly, emotionally grasping the unpredictability of one's assured death is both a heightened awareness of each moment of human reality as well as a way of seeing the world through the lens of a past trauma. The insight into vulnerability is tied to our own experience of vulnerability and our ability to tolerate this vulnerability together with the other aspects of our human experience.

Moreover, the "non-evasive recognition of finitude" is not a solitary exercise, for Stolorow. He argues that the integration of the two emotional worlds depends upon relationships with supportive others. Indeed, his concept of dissociation is as much separation from others and "the shared structure of temporality"[59] as it is a separation of one's own emotional worlds. Integrating the two worlds is possible with empathic dialogue in which the past trauma and the present world can be held together.[60]

Integrating the two emotional worlds is different from simply nullifying the past trauma. Trauma, in that it persists in the body and our memory, continually recurs, just like Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. Here healing is more aptly conceptualized as an ambiguous process rather than a complete cure or break with the recurring sense of vulnerability in the aftermath of trauma.[61]

Conclusion

In conclusion, catuskoti logic and the two-fold truth of form and emptiness is useful in conceptualizing Herman's discussion of "doublethink," Janoff-Bulman's concept of the "illusion of invulnerability," and Stolorow's description of traumatic temporality. Aristotelian propositional logic denies the possibility that two contradictory realities can be experienced concurrently. However, if we try to faithfully represent the experience of those who are diagnosed with PTSD, then it seems that this is precisely the case. We saw above how one can re-live a past trauma while simultaneously being aware of present experience. The two-fold truth does not hold that there are two realities, but it does affirm that there are two ways of seeing reality (conventional and ultimate); they are different, but not exclusive of each other. In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, one is not "more true" than the other; they are both ways of seeing. Such a view is useful in conceptualizing PTSD in a way that respects the force of the past trauma reality. While dualistic forms of thinking are often restricted to either "objective" or "subjective" perceptions of reality – the former representing true perception while the latter is false – the two-fold truth doesn't require that we shed one viewpoint in favor of the other. Instead, finding understanding in an empathic Other and integration of the two ways of seeing is encouraged. Furthermore, with regard to perceptions about one's safety, Janoff-Bulman's theory of the "illusion of invulnerability" suggests that a somewhat misleading "subjective" viewpoint in individuals who do not have PTSD is actually a psychologically healthier alternative.

However, once again, traumatized and non-traumatized experience don't map neatly onto form and emptiness. Furthermore, PTSD causes suffering and often leads to the shrinking of the world of the individual who suffers from it. It would be counter-productive to suggest that therapists who work with survivors of trauma avoid making distinctions between the two viewpoints; encouraging the client to see the present without the lens of the traumatized past is paramount.

Nevertheless, the idea of "both and" put forward by the two-fold truth is useful when conceptualizing the integration of the past trauma and the present reality.

The Buddhist doctrine of interdependent co-origination, together with catuskoti logic, is also useful in conceptualizing recovery and changes to one's identity post-trauma. Interdependent co-origination is a way of adhering to a middle path between the extremes of nihilism (nothing exists) and eternalism (only independent essences exist) when conceptualizing identity. Stolorow, Herman, and Janoff-Bulman all emphasize the importance of integration of the traumatic episode into one's personal narrative. However, this is impossible if a strict separation between one's being-in-the-world before and after the trauma is maintained. Continuity can only be re-established if neither the past world nor the present world are discounted. However, similarly, with regard to the other extreme, eternalism, one way of being cannot be affirmed while the other is denied. Ultimately, there is no separately existing essence with regard to identity in the Buddhist worldview; instead, identity emerges out of relation between the different moments of one's existence and aspects of one's environment.

Catuskoti logic provides a way to think about time and identity free from dualistic and essentialist presuppositions. In such a logical structure, it is permitted to assert that the past can be both past and not past at the same time. Trauma irrevocably transforms one's being-in-the-world through the shattering of the "illusion of invulnerability." While the loss of stability and security often manifests in PTSD symptoms, it also grants one insight into the truth of our human vulnerability

59. Ibid, 55.

60. Ibid, 61-62.

61. Ibid, 61.

and finitude. However, as Stolorow has shown above, one's willingness to acknowledge the unceasing reminders of one's vulnerability while not being overcome by this vulnerability depends upon the empathic attunement of others. Lastly, integration of the traumatic event(s) is not about erasure of the past; rather, it is only possible when understood as the holding together of contradictory realities.

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Poetry: The Experience of Listening

Boutheina Boughnim Laarif

ABSTRACT

As a verbal art, the "specifica poetica " of poetry is incontestably its peculiar rhythmic and sound patterning. Regarded as a 'twin-sister' of music, as it originally was meant to be sung, poetry offers a different experience of language and the world. Reciting a poem, reading it 'aloud mentally', or simply listening to someone else's recitation is not a trifle experience. It may prove unsettlingly significant in the light of recent philosophical treatments, inscribed into Heidegger's existential thought based on his multi-dimensional notion of temporality intrinsic in Being/Dasein, notably, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jacques Derrida. In the present essay, I shall primarily focus on Nancy's compelling conception of the act of listening which he expounds in his book Listening. Drawing upon a plethora of philosophers, such as, Heidegger, his friend Lacoue-Labarthe and others, Nancy elaborates a forceful understanding of the act of listening beyond the meaning-bound, message-focused one. With a challenging, rich philosophical verve, Nancy probes the experience of listening to music, (poetic) rhythm and even to mere human voices' timbre and links it to our own awareness of our own subjectivity, as well as perceiving subjects engaging with the world surrounding us. Listening mirrors our own selves. It makes reverberate our silent, inner depths whose essence lies beyond the meaning-loaded constructs which define our existence. Being fundamentally temporal, the subject's economy is perceived, from this temporally existential view, as governed by an unremitting mimetic deferral, continuity and inception, or in rhythm's logic, repetition and spacing . Poetry, like music, sets (rhythmic, sound) expectations and is perceived as an experience of immanence. The act of listening to a poem being recited or simply 'reading it aloud mentally', echoes the subject's very economy and the perpetual, inceptive deferral underlying its formation, while at the same time reinforces it. What Nancy calls "to listen with all its being" (35), is what Whitman seems to exhort his reader to perform in his exhilarating work Song of Myself to which I refer in the second part of the present essay.

Poetry: The Experience of Listening

"I celebrate myself, and sing myself."   -Whitman

As a verbal art, the "specifica poetica" of poetry is incontestably its peculiar rhythmic and sound patterning. Regarded as a 'twin-sister' of music, as it originally was meant to be sung, poetry offers a different experience of language and the world. Reciting a poem, reading it 'aloud mentally', or simply listening to someone else's recitation is not a trifle experience. It may prove unsettlingly significant in the light of recent philosophical treatments, inscribed into Heidegger's existential thought based on his multi-dimensional notion of temporality intrinsic in Being/Dasein, notably, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jacques Derrida. In the present essay, I shall primarily focus on Nancy's compelling conception of the act of listening which he expounds in his book Listening. Drawing upon a plethora of philosophers, such as, Heidegger, his friend Lacoue-Labarthe and others, Nancy elaborates a forceful understanding of the act of listening beyond the meaning-bound, message-focused one. With a challenging, rich philosophical verve, Nancy probes the experience of listening to music, (poetic) rhythm and even to mere human voices' timbre and links it to our own awareness of our own subjectivity, as well as perceiving subjects engaging with the world surrounding us. Listening mirrors our own selves. It makes reverberate our silent, inner depths whose essence lies beyond the meaning-loaded constructs which define our existence. Being fundamentally temporal, the subject's economy is perceived, from this temporally existential view, as governed by an unremitting mimetic deferral, continuity and inception, or in rhythm's logic, repetition and spacing. Poetry, like music, sets (rhythmic, sound) expectations and is perceived as an experience of immanence. The act of listening to a poem being recited or simply 'reading it aloud mentally', echoes the subject's very economy and the perpetual, inceptive deferral underlying its formation, while at the same time reinforces it. What Nancy calls "to listen with all its being" (35), is what Whitman seems to exhort his reader to perform in his exhilarating work Song of Myself to which I refer in the second part of the present essay.

Nancy's reading of Hegel:

Nancy's thought draws heavily upon Hegel's aesthetics and work The Phenomenology of Spirit. In one of his major books, Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative, Nancy proclaims, from the outset, that "Hegel is the inaugural thinker of the contemporary world." (3) He hails his thought for stripping naked the tyranny of "abstraction," the "given" signification and revealed the "absolute negativity of the Absolute" which refuses to be subsumed under any reducible construct, but rather "appears to constitute all experience of this world and its consciousness of itself." (4) Rather than being bound up with prior, external and fixed "sense", consciousness of itself, the Heglian subject absolves itself from "synthesizing representations" (4) and emerges as a self-conscious self in perennial, infinitely "immanent," and restless consciousness of itself and history: " "Self" cannot precede itself, because self is precisely the form and movement of a relation to self..." (My emphasis, 4) It is "the restlessness of immanence" that the subject experiences in his/her engaging with itself and the world: "The subject is what it does, it is its act, and its doing is the experience of the consciousness of the negativity of substance, as the concrete experience and consciousness of the modern history of the world..." (Nancy's emphasis, 5)

Hegel's notion of "the restlessness of the negative," as read by Nancy, the keeping at bay of any fixed any pre-supposed or pre-given constructs of meaning (10) in the subject's both relation to itself and to the world, aims to supplant the void Platonic or Descartian abstractions by the immediate sensuous experience which is congenital to the self's, or the "Spirit's", in Heglian lexicon, very economy, being endemically unseizable:

> "Spirit is not an inert being, but on the contrary, absolutely restless [unruhing: "troubled", "agitated," "restless"] being, pure activity, the negating or ideality of every fixed category of the abstractive intellect: not abstractly simple but, in its simplicity, at the same time a distinguishing of itself from itself: not an essence that is already finished and complete before its manifestation, hiding itself behind its appearances, but an essence which is truly actual only through the determinate forms of its necessary self-manifestation. (Hegel quoted in Nancy, 6)

In his book, The Muses, Nancy investigates the true sense behind the plurality of both senses and art and what lies behind their actual correspondence. Keeping to Hegelian thought, Nancy argues that the true essence of art is hemmed into the phenomenon of sense that senses itself (sensing) (30). Such self-reflexive sensuousness of "sense" in art which has a twofold significance has

its roots struck into "poetry" as both a verbal art and production, "poeisis":

> Poetry presents itself simultaneously as pars toto of art and as totum pro parte of technique. This chiasmus is that of intelligible sense (art of the word, pars pro toto) and of sensuous sense (poeisis, production that is, if not material in the ordinary sense, at least regulated by the exteriority of its end.) (Nancy's emphasis, 30)

The chiasmus or the double bind of poetic/artistic production which puts at play the exteriority of the intelligible, hitherto assigned sense and the irreducible "sensuous essence" of phenomenal, receptive experience (27) leads to a "tension" which continuously underlies poetry and the arts in their plurality: "a literally untenable tension toward a before-ness (or behind-ness) of sense insofar as what "produces" it as such is the fact of its being first of all received, felt, in short, sensed as sense." (28)

Nancy highlights, in The Muses, the poetic essence, or what he refers to as "sensuous essence" of artistic production. Art or the arts are perceived by Nancy as a sort of backdrop for a dialectical interplay between "intelligible sense" (verbal art) and "sensuous sense" which is fundamentally 'poietic' one. According to Nancy, a mutual intrusion, "a double encroachment," governs the relation between poetry and the rest of the arts, a double bind law which brings into play the intelligible, linguistically reducible, and the sensuous, the phenomenally, immediately perceived sensory reality, irreducible as such: "(Sensuous) sense senses only if it is oriented to an object and if it values it in a meaningful, informative, or operational context; reciprocally, (intelligible sense makes sense only if it is, as one says, "perceived" and "the intuitive or perceptive relation to intelligible sense has always included, in finite being in general, an irreducible receptivity." (28)

How can "sensuous sense" make "intelligible sense"?

Nancy argues that such process takes place in arts thanks to their "poetic subsumption" which allows for an "intellection of its receptivity as such" or

"the receptivity of its intelligibility": (intelligible) sense that reckons itself through sense as perception and experience. Nancy does not fail to remind us that "receptivity" is fundamentally multiple, drawing upon a plethora of senses and experiential phenomena like intentionality, spirituality, memory etc., hence the plurality of arts. In this respect, Nancy asks a twofold question: "What is the aesthesis of significance, what is its receiving organ? And what is its sensation, what taste does sense have…?" In other words, how does the "sensuous" lead to its "intelligibility"? According to Nancy, only a self-reflexive approach of sense to itself, in which "sense demands from itself its own condition of production", focused upon both its own "activity" and "receptivity" can effectively broach the sensuousness of art(s). Nancy calls for an approach to senses, based on a sort of a meta-logic, a "logos" that would be "the pathos of pathos." (29) Investigating the experience of sense sensing itself is what Nancy remarkably ventures in Listening and On Touching. In the present article, I shall focus on his singular approach to the act of listening which helps us fathom our irresistible drive to both music and rhythm as we subject ourselves to their workings.

Nancy's Listening:

In his compellingly concise book Listening, Nancy starts his expository argumentation to decipher the unfathomable behest of music over the listening subject by laying emphasis on the 'vibrational' nature of music; the emission of a sound is necessarily based on a movement of "referral," an "echo," a "resonance" by spreading in time and space: sounding while at the same time lodging into the subject (6). When coupled with sense, music still preserves its dual, reverbational essence since "meaning" itself is "a reference." (7) Nancy refers to Aristotle's notion of "aesthesis," as a "perception," that of the subject's feeling itself sense [se-sentir-sentir], and argues it finds an even more resounding echo in the register of sound due to the intrinsic "referral" dialectics which underlies the structure of both self-perception and listening:

One can say… that meaning and sound

share the space of a referral, in which at the same time they refer to each other, and that, in a very general way, this space can be defined as the space of a self, a subject. A self is nothing other than a form or function of referral: a self is made of a relationship to self, or of a presence to self, which is nothing other than the mutual referral between perceptible individuation and an intelligible identity… the point or occurrence of the subject would never have taken place except in the referral, thus in spacing and resonance… To be listening, will always, then, to be straining toward or in approach of the self… (Nancy's emphasis, 8-9)

Music's fundamental characteristics, operating similarly in rhythm in poetry, "spacing" and "resonance" cast a "presencing," in a Heideggerian sense, echo in the subject. In his introduction to Lacoue-Labarthe's edifying book Typography, Derrida reminds us of the true economy of rhythm: what is rhythm but "spacing" and "repetition":

> In the beginning, rhythm says von Buhlow. Another way of marking the fact that there is no simple beginning; no rhythm without repetition, spacing, caesura, the "repeated difference-from-itself of the Same," says Lacoue-Labarthe…We are "rhythmed" … in such a way that rhythm no longer occurs as a predicate. (31)

It is precisely rhythm's both musical (purely acoustic) and repetitive (reminiscent of mimesis) essence interspersed with caesuras, the "inscriptive force of spacing," which makes rhythm reverberate as an "echo of the subject." Equally the subject's economy draws on the dialectics of mimetic repetition punctuated by subjective withdrawal or desistance. It is, thus, governed by a "double bind," according to which rhythm/music both interrupts, through the subject's temporary cathartic loss, and reinforces subjectivity, through his or her resumption of the figural, onto-eidetic self.

To revert to Nancy's evocation of Aristotle's notion of "aesthesis," the subject's "feeling-oneself-feel", which is according to Nancy only conceivable in terms of

"referral", the perennially relegated, then enacted convergence of the "perceptible" and "the perceived", is comparable to the register of sound as "renvoi" or "spaced spacing", or better still, "acoustic space." (8) The 'congeniality' Nancy depicts between the subject's awareness of itself as always occurring as a form of "referral" or "delay" and the act of listening is seminal to the understanding of his existential, not without Heideggerian echoes, of the 'presencing' power of the act of listening.

Nancy binds the act of listening to a "straining" toward the self (9); to be listening winds necessarily to an approach of the self, not in its subjective manifestation, nor as the other, but in its "structure … as such," that is as a perennial form of inception or "an infinite referral". In this sense, Nancy argues: "When one is listening, one is on the lookout for a subject, something (itself) that identifies itself by resonating from self to self, in itself and for itself… at once the same and other than itself, one in the echo of the other…" (9) Accordingly, to indulge in the act of listening subjects the listener to a form of an inner "tension" which affects not the way he/she engages with his subjective self or the Other (the musician's or by extrapolation the poet's) but to the self in its most fundamental, originary formation, its ever incipient configuration, reinforcing, thus the notion of self-presence.

Nancy further explains how the sense of presence triggered by the act of listening to music, and as we may argue, by extrapolation, to a poem's sonorous and rhythmic patterning being either recited loud or read aloud mentally, is not attributed or attributable to any outer, or subjective objectifiable, constant construct, but rather to a perennially fluctuating presence, at the very image of sound modulation. The latter is only conceivable as movement, transfer, expansion and diffusion:

Rather a coming and a passing, an extending and a penetrating… It is a present in waves on a swell, not in a point on a line; it is a time that opens up, that is hollowed up, that is enlarged or ramified, that envelops or separates, that becomes or is turned into a loop that stretches out or contracts, and so on. (13)

Such intermittently swelling back forth, distending and retracting dialectics of sound modulation assigns to sound a multi-dimensional "spaciality." According to the latter, the subject simultaneously is "penetrated" by sound and "opens up" both inwardly and externally, to his surroundings: "   Listening thus forms the perceptible singularity that bears in the most ostensive way the perceptible or sensitive (aesthetic) condition as such; the sharing of an inside/outside, division and participation, the de-connection and contagion." (My emphasis, 14) One may argue that the intrinsic properties to listening to music highlighted by Nancy are congenial to (poetic) rhythm whose fundamental economy is based on division/spacing and repetition, subjective withdrawal or in Lacoue-Labarthe's terms "desistance" and infectious participation.

The sense of presence which sound or music communicates is "omnipresence", or better still, a "co-presence" marked by "contemporaneity", a sort of "presence in presence" (16). Far from being a fixed, linear presence, but rather fluctuating, communicative and participational, the "presence in presence" which music instigates is comparable to the workings of rhythm which Nancy defines as "time in time", ruled by a sort of a double constraint which makes it work both by and against time via repetition and caesura, as well as its modulatory variations like cadence and tempo:

… [I]t is nothing other than the time of time, the vibration of time itself in the stroke of a present that presents it by separating it from itself, freeing it from its simple stanza to make it into scansion (rise, raising of the foot and beats) and cadence (fall, passage into the pause). Thus, rhythm separates the succession of the linearity of the sequence or length of time: it bends time to give it to time itself, and it is in this way that it folds and unfolds the subject. (Nancy's emphasis, 17)

Nancy's last claim about rhythm's role in the revelation and reinforcement of the subject's economy echoes that of his friend philosopher, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe who sustains in his essay "The Echo of the Subject" that due its twofold nature, lying somewhere between beat and figure, "rhythm is the condition of possibility for the subject."

Nancy argues that the sense of "awareness of time" listening may impart to the subject is far from being "instantaneous", but rather "differential" (20). Being and sound are conceivable only as a form of "renvoi" or "referral" as has been pointed out. Their logic is not punctual, but rather strung along of continuum which binds it to the past and makes it anticipate the future, a sort of evocative summoning:

[M]usic (or even sound in general) is not exactly a phenomenon; that is to say, it does not stem from a logic of manifestation. It stems from a different logic, which would have to be called evocation, but in this precise: while manifestation brings presence to light, evocation summons (convokes, invokes) presence to itself. It does not establish it any more than it supposes it already established. It anticipates its arrival and remembers its departure, itself remaining suspended between the two: time and sonority… (21)

From the "birthing cry", whether it be a "complaint" or "song," to the orgasmic outburst to the "last murmur," the subject's life is orchestrated by rhythm and sound emission. Such acoustic manifestations are meaning-free. They are conceived by Nancy as "originary," characterized by "… the inchoate value of an articulatory or profferatory release that is still without intention and without vision of signification…" (28). Those preliminary rhythmic eruptions are the wordless expression of "the speaking body"; they reverberate with "pure resonance" (Bernard Baas quoted in Nancy, 29) or as Lacoue-Labarthe paraphrased by Nancy "the subject of the subject" (29). Though Nancy's argument, expounded in his book Listening, is not in the first place to demonstrate the mimetological, "typographical" bearings of rhythm in relation to the subject formation, but rather to auscultate the act of listening when performed with all one's being as an

open access to a new form of signification beyond meaning. While Lacoue-Labarthe focuses on the etymological roots of rhythm as "rhuthmus" and philosophical and linguistic treatment of the concept of rhythm, such as Democritus, Plato's or Benveniste's, Nancy's approach is immersed in the purely bodily, physical act of listening, giving in to the behest of (musical) patterned sound and rhythm. The subject, for Nancy, is fundamentally a "diapason subject" (16), a sort of "resonance chamber" which reverberates with flooding in and out sounds, echoes, rhythmic patterns throbbing from the innermost depths of subjectivity, or rather before subjectivity, the ever inceptive (re) birth of the subject consigned to delay:

> … the investigation would lead us toward the formation of the subject first of all as the rhythmic reployment/deployment of an enveloping between "inside" and "outside", or else folding the "outside" into the "inside", invaginating, forming a hollow, an echo chamber or column (well before any possibility of a visible figure presentable in reflection: long before any "specular identification"). The same direction would take us toward an aspect of rhythm different from the one that mimetic and "typographical" logic arrests and freezes in place: namely, rhythm as figure "broached by time," hence moving and fluid, syncopated, beaten out as a measure is and, consequently, linked to dance (as moreover, Benveniste indicates in his study on the word rhusmos). Rhythm not only as scansion (imposing form on the continuous) but also as an impulse (revival of the pursuit). (38-39)

It is obvious from Nancy's definition of rhythm and its workings upon the subject that he assigns to it an 'originary,' 'ontological' dimension, well beyond the measurable, temporally scanned one. He seizes upon Lacoue-Labarthe's phrase "broached by time" which applies to both rhythm, as a (folded/unfolded) manifestation of time and the subject, whose formation and fluidity are punctuated by time as a perennial movement of deferral to showcase such confluence between rhythm and the conception of the sub-

ject. However, Nancy's passage, quoted above, makes a stronger claim about the grounding temporality of the experience of rhythm formulated into highly sensual terms, the most striking of which would be "invaginating". In The Muses, Nancy elaborates a whole allegory about being "penetrated" and experiencing the "penetration" by poetry's rhythm. From an essentially phenomenological angle, rhythm is perceived, sensuously, as beyond the inscriptive register, it is usually reduced to, or even the figural force it has been assigned with reference to its etymological roots. For Nancy, rhythm stems as an empowering "impulse", a salvific, almost orgiastic, vital drive and we are irresistibly carried away, transported, so to speak, by the ebb and flow of its modulations.

Whitman's Song for Myself

The reason behind my choice of Whitman's Song for Myself despite the fact of its being not particularly rhythmic, as it is written in free verse, is its both conceptual and sensuous wealth which is deeply in tune with Nancy's approach to sense and the act of listening in particular. Both Whitman and Nancy foreground, not without phenomenological and transcendental dimensions, the sensuousness of the experience of senses and are axed upon the potentially limitless self-knowledge such experiential exploration of the act of "sense that senses itself" may purport. Regarding Whitman's long poem Song for Myself, one may claim it to be a true paean to the transcendentally rallying power of the senses, "... a celebration of a mystical experience that merges spirituality with the experience of sexuality and the body... and its exploration of the limits of human knowledge and language." Killingsworth lays emphasis on Whitman's initial vocations as "a balladeer and populist exhorter of others," (35) which marshals evidence for his deep sense of and revelry in both the sound and the voice and awareness of their impact upon the listeners.

Blending the epic with the lyrical (27), Whitman's poem may be read as a powerful plea to the other to engage with the speaker with a new mode of being, according to which the borders between

selfhood and otherness dissolve. The speaker leafs through the catalogue of senses to reach a sort of cosmic dimension of existence which binds him to himself, to others and the whole universe under the auspices of Transcendentalism. Among the senses which allows the speaker in Song of Myself to reach out for the other is listening; he invites his "soul", his fellow lover or even singer, to give free vent to his "throat," to emit a meaning-free "lull", which is beyond the conceptual, capable of voicing their enduring unison: "I loaf and invite my soul/ Loaf with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat/Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best, /Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice" (Section I) The erotically-charged imagery and musically vibrant quality of Whitman's lines with the run-on liquid and fricative sounds, the respectively /l/ and /r/ sounds echo the speaker's yearn for a transcendentally sensuous and sensual communal experience which would be triggered by the power of voice's pure sound.

It is precisely this reviving, reinvigorating exultation in rhythm and sound, not without cathartic undertones, which Whitman probes in his compelling work Song of Myself. In this long poem in question he makes a paean to the power of sound, the act of 'true' listening and the reinforcement of the self as a lively entity open onto both its inner tensions and the world surrounding it, to engage fully in the world: to be in the world in the Heideggerian sense, one may contend. In section 26, the speaker asks for nothing but "listen." His acknowledged purpose is to enrich his proper "song", to render it more vibrant, throbbing with all sorts of sounds, whether natural, animal or human, sounds resounding from the country or the city. Obviously by "song", Whitman is referring to his own poem rightly titled "Song of Myself" to make a glimpse at (lyric) poetry's original association, by the Greeks, with song:

> Now I will do nothing but listen,
>
> To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute toward it.
>
> I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames,

clack of sticks cooking my meals,

I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,

I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following,

Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and night…

The speaker's exacerbated reveling in the act of listening to all sorts of sounds whose echoes he seeks to capture in poetry is not an infatuated poet's whim, but philosophically grounded. We can read in the speaker-poet's near obsession with sound a consuming desire to hanker to his proper self-manifested as alterity, a sort of "grounding attunement." One should note that the above mentioned sounds by Whitman and the following plethora in the subsequent lines are not haphazard, but characterized by rhythm: mesmerizing, like the birds' acoustic "bravuras," or delicate like the "flames'" crackling or even the more precious sound of the grown wheat germ breaking loose from the wrapping husk and bran. The poet-speaker seems to be 'animated' by his love for rhythm's multifarious manifestations surrounding him; even the "clack" of the cooking sticks becomes music to his ears. He is open to rhythm in its generic meaning, which Nancy defined above as not only "scansion," but "an impulse (revival of the pursuit)", the subject's own "pursuit" of himself temporally conceived.

It is interesting that Whitman evokes in the passage quoted above his love for "human voice": "I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice," since we find an enlightening extrapolation on rhythm through the reference to the notion of human voice and "timbre" in Nancy's philosophical treatment of sound and music and their role in grounding the subject. For Nancy, timbre is the resonance of resonance, the primordial preliminary experience of "listening:

Timbre is thus the first correlative of listening, and it is through it that we can better approach what is straying here from a simple phenomenology… it is necessary to say that before any relationship to object, listening opens up in timbre, which resounds in it rather than for it… Resonance is at

once that of a body that is sonorous for itself and resonance of sonority in a listening body that, itself, resounds as it listens. (My emphasis, 40)

Accordingly, listening 'to' timbre binds both the subject to itself and to the other, creates a sort of "private experience" (Wittgenstein quoted in Nancy, 41), a sort of a exhilarating meta-acoustic phenomenon. It is no surprise that in the following lines, Whitman's reveling in human voices and their varying timbre from strict to joyful is exacerbated into their association with the music of a gripping, grandiose opera whose intoxicating melody propels his mind into cosmic levels:

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,

Ah this indeed is music--this suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,

The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)

The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,

It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them,

It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent waves,

I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,

Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in fakes of death,

At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,

And that we call Being.

The engrossing experience of listening to all sorts of sounds ending with human voices, and probably to his own voice reciting his poem/song, which he heartily seeks to transcribe in his verse is startlingly associated with the broaching of our entire "Being." The last line resounds as a sort of epiphany regarding the whole mystery of the act of "true" listening which would be conducive to a deeper apprehension of one's proper "Being." One is tempted to read Whitman's reference to "…that we call Being," capitalized, in a manner reminiscent of Heidegger's, to link it

to Heidegger's own notion of "Being."

Before briefly clarifying the notion of "Being" in Heidegger's thought to potentially account for Whitman's message and better fathom its transcendental dimension, we may refer first to a preliminary step to be taken towards the full appreciation of our existence, which is the recognition of the full scope of the body. According to Heidegger, a "turning" has to be undertaken to counter the alienating, anti-body tradition, spurning the bodily and the sensual. Frank Schalow comments on Heidegger's "turning" and his philosophical exhortation for a re-immersion into "Being" through the medium of the body and the "enactment of temporality" as follows:

Hence, the countermovement of forgetting, the turning around of the question itself or its recollection, implies a dynamic of temporalization that inserts Dasein into the heart of physis as the diversity of being's manifestness. In the turning, time emerges as the "name" for being, in such a way as to stand for both the unity and diversity of the possibilities of its manifestness. (149)

To better fathom Heidegger's message about how to enact such unity and diversity of possibilities of our "Being," which may be read as the base of our transcendental "Being" hailed by Whitman, we need to remind ourselves of the major characteristics of Heidegger's "Dasein/Being." Though it is difficult to sketch the complexity of Heidegger's notion of "Being" expounded in his magnum opus Time and Being, we may argue that according to Heidegger, "authentic Being" is fundamentally temporal. It is marked by "primordial temporality:" it "temporalizes itself" in that it is not a temporal platitude made up by clear-cut stages, past, present and future, but rather a sort of multi-layered, prism-like "entity" (376). According to Heidegger, "authentic" existence is the one which makes possible the merging of those three temporal dimensions, making them strung into one mode of being as such (377). Such mode of being, extolled by Heidegger, is intrinsically "ecstatic" in that it can only be experience through a "standing outside" of oneself

through the unity of the three "ecstasies": the three projections of myself towards the future, which implies reverting back "towards-oneself" since the future culminating into death leads "back to" my having been or past, and finally resolve to live "alongside," "letting-oneself-be-encountered-by" the present (377). Heidegger laments that the dominant inauthentic mode of being falls short of the "authentic temporality" which is "the principle," "a poliori fit denomination" (Heidegger's italics, 377) of Being. Hence, the ecstatic is the visceral vein of Being's sustenance and the governing law of primordial/authentic temporality; the latter being "... primordial "outside of itself' in and for itself." (377)

Such "primordial mode of temporality" (376) can only be enacted by the subject's active participation through his "concernful" immersion into the world, which seems to be Whitman's own message based on a call for a new engagement with the world, as is the case in the following lines which echo the speaker's exalted exhortation that:

> You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, not look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books.

> You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me, you shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.

Only through the experience, in Heideggerian terms of our throwness" and "resoluteness" to take up our "originary openness" onto the world can the projection of one's limitless possibilities alongside a finite line of time take place.

To carry on with Heidegger's notion of Being of which we can found echoes in Whitman's "Song of Myself", apart from the poet's blatant use of the term "Being," we may add that Heidegger stresses the fact that Dasein/Being, being enacted through "care" in its "existential-temporal meaning" "... Dasein is essentially ahead of itself. Proximally and for the most part, concernful Being-in-the-world understands itself in terms of that with which it is concerned." (Heidegger's emphasis, 386)

Accordingly, each shall set up "expectations" for himself, be "ahead-of himself" following his own pace and interests. For Heidegger, Dasein is "uncertain;" it is both "temporalized" and "individualized." (386) It comes to itself in the form of "anticipation" whose layout is tailored according to each one's "ownmost potentiality-for-Being" (386), which would correspond to each one's specific "concernful" engagement with the world, the amount of "care" that he or she would invest into the world and which would lead to the full (present) blooming, "disclosure" of his (past) inherent possibilities: "Factically, Dasein is constantly ahead of itself, but inconstantly anticipatory with regard to its existentiel possibility." (386) In the following lines from Song of Myself, we find resonance to Heidegger's individualized and participatory notion of Being: "Not I, not anyone else can travel that road for you, /You must travel it for yourself."

Apart from being individually experiential or participatory, Heidegger's Dasein/Being is, as has been pointed out above, fundamentally anticipatory. In this sense, Heidegger sustains that Dasein/Being involves the subject's own readiness, "resoluteness" to "await," set expectations and check their realization in the future:

> To the anticipation which goes with resoluteness, there belongs a Present in accordance with which a resolution discloses the Situation. In resoluteness, the Present is not only brought back from distraction with the objects of one's closest concern, but it gets held in the future and in having been. That Present which is held in authentic temporality and thus is authentic itself, we call the "moment of vision". (205)

The "moment of vision" Heidegger evokes is a sort of sensuous epiphany since it is inexorably accompanied, according Heidegger, by an experience of "rapture" in the sense of being "carried away" (386), which brings us back to the notion of "ecstasis," evoked previously in relation to Heidegger's thought.

We may conclude, after this digression into Heidegger's temporalized notion of Dasein/Being, that being

irrevocably "ahead of itself," Dasein/Being merges past, present and future through "expecting", "awaiting" and ecstatic "disclosure." Dasein/Being may be thus read as the praxis of "ecstasis". Similarly, we may regard the experience of listening as assimilable to the experience of our vey Being, being essentially temporal and rapturous.

Nancy's philosophical probing of the act of listening may be perceived as highly influenced by Heidegger's temporal and existential thought. Following Nancy's case expounded in his book Listening, What Heidegger refers to as a "dynamic of temporalization,"(365) which would be enacting Being by striking anew the experience of its temporality, proceeds, for Nancy, through rhythm in music, poetry and ordinary sounds when hearkened to 'truly,' with all one's Being. As has been demonstrated in the first part of the present essay, music, and more generally rhythm is perceived at the image of the subject's own economy: perennial ebb and flow of referral, a transcendental synthesis of an inexorably lost past casting a shadow over the present, the same present setting expectations for the future. An ever-incipient occurrence of the emerging subject struggling to get "a glimpse of itself" and the awaited realization of a beat, a rhythmic pattern internalized by a listener. Rightly titled "Song," Whitman's long poem Song of Myself, though composed in free verse, resounds as an anthem, a passionate paean to the power of song and the act of listening. It does comprise mesmerizing rhythmic passages, punctuated as such by the engaging, highly infectious flow of rhythm and sound, as is the case with the following lines with their sweeping hexameter tempo transpierced by two occasional trimeter lines. The instances of alliteration ("song" and "sounds"; "fused" and "following") and anaphora ("I hear") only add to the musical quality of the passage:

> B -o- b B   -o- B o
>
> Now I will do nothing but listen,
>
> -o- B   -o- B b –o- B -o-
> B o B -o- B o

To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute toward it.

o B   o B   -o-   B - B -o- b   o
B   B   o B

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames,

 B   o b   B   -o-   B

clack of sticks cooking my meals,

 o B   o B   o B   o   B   -o-   B
o B

I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,

o B b B   b   -o- B -o-   B
o B   -o- B o

I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following,

B   -o-   B -o-   b   =o~   B o
B   -o- B o B

Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and night…

Subjecting oneself to the workings of sound patterned into verse, music or even to the timbre of a vociferous conversation leads to the experience of one's own "Being," the throbbing "friction" (39) with the unnamable, the ever-elusive, self-deferring essence of both sound and self. In this sense, Nancy sustains:

> But what is a figure that is throbbed as well as stressed, "broached by time," if not a figure that has already lost itself and that is expecting itself, and that calls to itself … What else is but

a subject—and then isn't the subject itself the starting of time in both values of the genitive: it opens it and is opened by it. Isn't the subject the attack of time? (Nancy's emphasis, 39)

Accordingly, the subject's very economy is played out, modulated by time and the temporal that is rhythm. It undergoes temporal vicissitudes, lending itself to both continuity and disruption, loss and regain. Being aware of time through sound settings leads necessarily to being aware of oneself. To say it differently, laying oneself open to the workings of rhythm's rules which are intrinsically repetitive and reverbational, titillates, entices the subject into pricking up its ears in order to experience itself as what it really is, an echo.

Endnotes
1. Aviram, (23).
2. I am referring myself, here, to a theory of the subject based on musical aesthetics elaborated by Nancy's life-long philosopher friend and collaborator whose approach I have clarified in my article "Rhythm Reconsidered: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's Musical Aesthetics of the Subject." Lacoue-Labarthe's twofold treatment of the subject's experience of (musical) rhythm, notably, by drawing on the very etymological roots of the term 'rhuthmos' meaning schema or imprint, apart from other references to linguists and philosophers' treatments of the term rhythm, like Benvenist and Plato which corroborate the fact that rhythm pertains, as well, to the figural, not solely acoustic. Due to its twofold nature, reconciling the acoustic with the figural, rhythm has the power, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, to cause both our loss, sending us back to our pre-figural self, and our reinforcement through our yielding to self-writing compulsion. Lacoue-Labarthe draws, in his approach, among other theories like Lacan's thought, upon Nietzsche's cathartic notion of Dionysian musical energy as conducive to the momentary experience of primal/originary pain and union before the Apollonian takes over again through the resumption of the figural, dream order and the veil of Maya, or veil of illusions which guarantees the subject's salvific catharsis without the risk of its loss or madness. To recapitulate, Lacoue-Labarthe sustains that rhythm/music has the power to extirpate us from our pre-subjectal state; it has the power to 'send us back' to the remotest realms of our subjectivity, being endemically of a nonsensical, beyond-or-before meaning, nature. However, due to its intrinsic repetitive essence, rhythm resonates as repercussion, echo, and reverberation because it is definable only on the basis (the spacing and the division in the Same, the repeated difference from-itself of the Same). According to Lacoue-Labarthe, musical catharsis, subjectal loss induced by rhythm, may make up for the intrinsic "deadly repetition" one is prone to according Lacan's theory of the subject. Being inexorably confronted with the irredeemable divergence between the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic', the subject retracts into "desistance": "[…] it will never recover from the mortal insufficiency to which, according to Lacan, its prematuration has condemned it." Only through a "dialectic of recognition", Lacoue-Labarthe argues, can the subject 'come to itself (47). According to this dialectic, the subject 'comes to itself only by losing itself.' The 'destabilising division of the figural', due to the disruption of the subject's stability intrinsic to the mimetic mechanism of identification is counterpointed by the compulsion to self-repetition or self-writing and the re-immersion into subjectivity. The latter's condition of possibility is based on the repetitive alternation between subjectal desistance or loss and the resumption of subjectivity. Similarly, due to its musical, acoustic essence, but not exclusively, rhythm is repetition punctuated by silence or caesuras, or as Derrida, in his introduction to Lacoue-Labarthe's book Typography, defines it, "the repeated difference from itself." (16)
3. "… dissolves all substance" (25).
4. Such intrinsic instability of the self, or what John Martis refers to as "the essenceless essence" of the subject, is also echoed in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's philosophical and Lacanian reading of the subject's formation clarified above.
5. Obviously Nancy, like Hegel, plays on the double meaning of sense; in both phrases he points to the sensuous, perceptive meaning.
6. "Production, in the singular and absolutely, is nothing other than the production of sense." (The Muses, 28)
7. Obviously Nancy draws upon Hegel's phenomenological aesthetics of art. In his book Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Hegel argues that our aesthetic apprehension of a work of art does not merely draw upon the sensuous as exclusively sensory, but as "spiritual", by which Hegel designates the rational, as well (35): "What is agreeable for these senses [sight and hearing] is not the beauty of art." (39) Hegel sustains that both music and painting produce "a shadow-world", which is far from being a pitfall but rather a credit, as they have the power to summon deeper layers of conscience: "These sensuous shapes and sounds appear not merely for the sake of themselves and their immediate shape, but with the aim, in this shape of affording satisfaction to higher spiritual interests, since they have the power to call forth from all the depths of consciousness a sound and an echo in the spirit. In this way the sensuous aspect of art is spiritualized, since the spirit appears in art as made sensuous." (Hegel's italics, 39) The mind and memory are titillated, reactivated, so to speak, in the vicinity of art. "Intentionality" is an additional factor in the matrix of artistic apprehension. It consists in our conscious engagement with the exterior world, marked by "desire", a Hegel sustains: "In this appetitive relation to the external world, man, as a sensuous individual, confronts things as being individuals; likewise he does not turn his mind to them as a thinker with universal categories; instead, in accord with individual impulses and interests, he relates himself to the objects, individuals themselves, and maintains himself by using and consuming them, and by sacrificing them his own self-satisfaction." (36)
8. The Muses, (28).
9. Derrida in his introduction to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's Typography, (32).
10. Typography, (35).
11. Typography, (65).
12. Martis on the subject
13. Nancy makes a glimpse, here, at his philosopher friend Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and his essay "The Echo of the Subject". I shall go back, more in depth, to his approach when I analyse Whitman's poem. Nancy's claim is reminiscent of Lacoue-Labarthe the subject's desire to have "a glimpse of itself" (Typography, 85).
14. "… Listening is passing over to the register of presence to self, it being understood that the "self" is precisely nothing available (substantial or subsistent) to which one can be "present," but precisely the resonance of a return [renvoi]." (Nancy, 12)
15. Lacoue-Labarthe uses the term "desistance" to evoke subjectal loss incurred by rhythmic, musical dispossession, (85).
16. "… Its presence is never a simple being-there or how things stand, but is always at once an advance, penetration, insistence, obsession or possession, as well as a presence "on the rebound"…" (15)

17. Martis traces such inexorable delay to the intrinsic, "essencelessness essence" of the subject." (174)
18. Lacoue-Labarthe quoted in Nancy, (36).
19. In The Muses, Nancy evokes refers to "the heart" and "will" being "penetrated" by the artistic medium (46).
20. The Cambridge Introduction to Whitman, 26.
21. In Romanticism and Transcendentalism, 200. Habich argues that Whitman's conception of the self is deeply in tune with Emerson's Transcendentalist vision expounded in his essay Nature which regards the self not as a self-centred, egotistical entity, but rather a form of consciousness that can only conceive of itself and evolve through its engagement with other selves and its surrounding world: "Through me the afflatus surging and surging... through me the current and index." (Emerson quoted in Habich, 201).
22. Cambridge Introduction to Walt Whitman, 32.
23. Nigel Guy Wilson, 585.
24. In Being and Time (128). Heidegger defines "attunement" as "mood," prior to cognition, marked by a "fleeing," "turning away" from the "burdensome character of Da-sein." In this form of being, the self has already found itself: "In attunement, Da-sein is always already brought before itself, it has always already found itself, not as perceiving oneself to be there, but as one finds one's self in attunement." (127) Being "removed from thinking," Heidegger sustains, "Attunement discloses Da-sein in its "grounding attunement" thrownness, initially and for the most part in the mode of an evasive turning away." (Heidegger's emphasis, 128)
25. Being and Time, (377).
26. Song of Myself
27. Song of Myself
28. I have borrowed this phrase from Lacoue-Labarthe in his evocation of the subject's proneness to its own loss induced by music or rhythm (145).

Rhythm Markers

B emphasized beat
b unemphasized beat
[B] virtual beat
O emphasized offbeat
o unemphasized offbeat
-o- double offbeat
[o] virtual offbeat
[B] virtual beat
ô implied offbeat
~o~ triple offbeat
=o- double offbeat with the first part emphasized
-o= double offbeat with the second part emphasized

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"Shevek" in Ursula K. LeGuin's The Dispossessed: A Profile in Heideggerian Authentic Selfhood

Norman K. Swazo

ABSTRACT

Political philosophy (past and present) concerns itself with thematic, systematic interrogation of political ideas, structures, institutions, and practices. As such it privileges the authority of reason. But, the vision of the literary imagination likewise can and does contribute to human understanding and to imagining our common future. Ursula K. LeGuin is a master teacher of ethical politics in her award-winning novel The Dispossessed. Therein, the protagonist Shevek is presented as an edifying exemplar of "permanent revolution" in a uniquely "thinking mind." His quest for solidarity of peoples is grounded on a possibility of authentic selfhood within his anarchist society. Considering the concept of authentic selfhood as discussed in philosopher Martin Heidegger's Being and Time, Shevek's character may be represented as an imaginary, yet "real," example or profile of how authentic selfhood may be constituted. This is consistent with LeGuin's intent in The Dispossessed.

"Shevek" in Ursula K. LeGuin's The Dispossessed: A Profile in Heideggerian Authentic Selfhood

Linking Reason and Imagination

The relation between philosophy and literature is discussed and represented variously in both contemporary philosophy and literary studies. Notable here is the debate about the purpose of literary narratives. Richard Posner, e.g., argued that, 'immersion in literature does not make us better citizens or better people…The proper criteria for evaluating literature are aesthetic rather than ethical.'[1] On the other side of this view, following Martha Nussbaum, one may argue that, 'the aesthetic is ethical and political,' that literature cultivates and reinforces 'valuable moral abilities.'[2] For some, the merit of a work of art does not depend primarily or only on intuiting and interpreting 'the author's intent' in the production of a work of literature. Indeed, twentieth century philosophical hermeneutics, as developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, is instructive for having moved beyond the methodological commitment according to which interpretation involves reproduction of authorial intent, thereby to having 'scientific' validation. On the contrary, Gadamer opined, 'Within all linguistic phenomena the literary work of art occupies a privileged relationship to interpretation and thus moves into the neighborhood of philosophy.'[3]

For Gadamer, 'The understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general.'[4] Indeed, he writes, 'The hermeneutic phenomenon is…not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation.' Hence, 'the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself' are different 'modes of experience', such that 'through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way,' in which case Gadamer delivered 'a critique of aesthetic consciousness in order to defend the experience of truth that comes to us through the work of art against the aesthetic theory that lets itself be restricted to a scientific conception of truth.'[5] Precisely, therefore, because the process of understanding entails a productive 'fusion of horizons' in a work of art such as literature, the reader engages 'the text' to elicit a novel understanding of the narrative.[6] In short, works of literature can perform in a way that is disclosive of novel features of the human condition. In this way, it may be argued, a novelist integrates the aesthetic, ethical, and political in a way that is edifying, even though critics such as Posner prefer to keep these domains of analysis separate.

Ursula K. LeGuin (1929-2018) is a first-rank and Hugo and Nebula award-winning twentieth century novelist who wrote in the genre of science fiction and fantasy, integrating the ethical and political in her imaginative work so as to edify her reader. In answer to the question, 'What do you think the purpose of story is in human society?', she replied: 'I think we tell stories to each other to remember who we are as a people, and to find out who we are as individuals.'[7] This is an important insight into the fact that the human condition and the clarification of individual identity involve both remembrance and self-discovery. The twentieth century philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) considered self-discover (Selbstbefindlichkeit) central to the human way to be in the world in which we find and establish our 'abode' (ethos, dwelling) in a given time and place (topos) between the claims of past and future, between the seeming necessity and determinism of fate and destiny, and between 'modes' of being that make us alternately inauthentic (uneigentlich) and authentic (eigentlich)

1. Richard A. Posner, "Against Ethical Criticism," Philosophy and Literature, Vol. 21:1, 1997, 1-27.

2. Martha Nussbaum, "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism," Philosophy and Literature, 22:2, 1998, 343-365.

3. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Philosophy and Literature," Man and World, 18:3, September 1985, 241-259.

4. Hans-Georg Gadamer, (2004). Truth and Method, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd revised edition (London: Continuum, 2004).

5. Ibid.

6. Gadamer, 2004. Also see Hans-Georg Gadamer. (1976). Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press.

7. Guy Haley. "Ursula K. LeGuin, The Deathray Interview," Deathray, October 2007, http://www.ursulakleguin.com/Deathray-dr05_interview_leguin.pdf, accessed on 21 May 2019. Italics added.

relative to the task of self-discovery and self-affirmation.[8] Indeed, moral dilemmas are often 'situations' of self-discovery as expressions of individual autonomy are pitted against the dominating authority of tradition, in the historical struggle over what are to count legitimately (qua 'orthodoxy') as 'thoughts,' 'words,' and 'deeds.' This is especially so as the claims of particularity clash with claims of universality, and as the force of human reason asserts itself all too often to be privileged in moral decision, even to the exclusion of the legitimate insights of the human imagination and its place in the task of clarifying and expressing one's self (in Heidegger's terms) as an "authentic self" (eigentlich Selbst).

Hence, it is not surprising that LeGuin opined, 'Science fiction is wonderfully useful for offering a convincing picture of alternative ways of doing and being, which can shake readers out of fixed mindsets, knock the blinkers off them.'[9] It is not merely a matter of human conduct, i.e., what we are to do, but rather about how we are and who we are, whom we choose to be, as we struggle individually and collectively to transcend the present, responsive to the claim of the future and our individuated potentiality-for-being. Furthermore, LeGuin tells us, she thinks that, '…science fiction is particularly good at and useful for: present[ing] alternative cultures/societies/technologies/ physiologies/mores/sexualities/etcetera to the reader—who, like all of us, is more or less "culture-bound," stuck in one way of seeing, one way of doing.'[10] This, of course, is consequent to the force of ancestral custom, of religious and political tradition, the authority of each of which has its own historical inertia to sustain it. Yet, the fact is that these may, with all reasonable justification, be interrogated

and be displaced by the disclosure of new potentialities in the way we may dwell upon the earth.

This can happen in the course of challenges grounded in novel insights into the human way to be, into individually distinct potentialities for being, when conscientious objection to time-honored ideological appeals and to the authority of time-honored tradition strikes a resounding note. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assert that LeGuin is correct in her authorial assessment when she writes: 'The use of imaginative fiction is to deepen your understanding of your world, and your fellow men, and your own feelings, and your destiny.'[11] Indeed, LeGuin opines, 'realism'—as a word that denotes a class of literature that ostensibly teaches us about ourselves "better" than any other genre precisely because it is 'realistic'—'is perhaps the least adequate means of understanding or portraying the incredible realities of our existence.' And there, indeed, is the principal question: How we are to understand the incredible realities of our existence, what we mean by 'existence', in its historical determination, but also relative to the appeal of the future as it claims us both severally and jointly to think, to do, and to be otherwise than we have been.

The place of the literary imagination in moral philosophy is not to be dismissed out of hand. In an article engaging the topic of a presentation at the annual meeting of the Academy of Philosophy and Letters in June 2014, political philosopher Claes G. Ryn asked a poignant question: 'How desperate should we be?' The context for the question is Ryn's concern about the difficult and unsettled issue of 'the meaning or form of morality, particularly as it relates to politics.'[12] He expressed his concern as a matter of in

terrogating 'a dubious tendency in Western moral philosophy since the ancient Greeks,' viz., 'the habit of defining morality as adherence to a preexisting rational or ideal standard.' This habit, Ryn opines, seems to him to be detrimental to how one finds one's way to what morality requires 'in actual circumstances, especially in highly charged and hard-to-understand situations.'[13] He argues that, while 'Morality demands respect for a universal moral authority,' nonetheless, 'morality is misconceived as conformity to ready-made norms or models.' Having written a novel[14] to illustrate his philosophical concerns, Ryn comments on what he characterizes as the 'epistemological theme that the imagination and the arts are ultimately more influential and more fundamental in human consciousness than the conceptual, reasoning mind.'[15] One may differ on the claim, of course. But, this is an important insight for both contemporary moral and political philosophy, since it is to be argued reasonably that both reason and imagination contribute to understanding (a) what politics entail of an individual at any given time and (b) what morality or ethics could or should be in a given context of individual political life.

Concurring with Ryn's epistemological thematic for my present purpose, I turn to LeGuin's literary imagination. Her novels more or less depict the same thematic issues in which the political and the ethical/moral are ambiguously intertwined; and, both are interrogated at their foundation in arduously complex situations of political and moral decision. Here I focus on LeGuin's The Dispossessed,[16] a Hugo and Nebula Award winning novel, in which the protagonist Shevek illustrates the complexity of situations of political and moral decision as

8. Martin Heidegger. (1996). Being and Time. Trans. J. Stambaugh. Albany, SUNY Press.

9. Haley, op. cit.

10. Ibid.

11. Ursula K. LeGuin. (1979) The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

12. Claes G. Ryn. "How Desperate Should We Be?" A Symposium: Morality Reconsidered. Humanitas, 28:1 & 2, 2015, 5-30.

13. Ibid.

14. Claes G. Ryn. (2014). A Desperate Man. Washington D.C.: Athena Books.

15. Ryn, 2015, op. cit.

16. Ursula K. LeGuin. (2014). The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia. New York: Harper & Collins.

he seeks to do his professional work as a temporal physicist. LeGuin characterizes Shevek's 'home' on Anarres—if it can be called a home—'an ambiguous utopia.'[17] Here I wish to appropriate the literary figure of Shevek and to highlight his way of being as a "profile" in authentic selfhood. This latter concept is meant in Heidegger's sense as described in various texts, although primarily in his magnum opus, Being and Time. It is my claim that, when the philosophical reasoning of Heidegger is combined with the literary imagination of LeGuin in an interpretive exercise concerned with politics and morality, one comes away with a productive understanding of how Heidegger's concept of authentic selfhood can be represented, not only in fiction but in the reality of everyday life. And that, so I shall argue, is informative in the present as a work of imagination contributes to understanding the moral dilemma an individual faces in making choices that resolve into authenticity and authentic selfhood over against the dominance of inauthenticity and inauthentic selfhood.

An Ambiguous Utopia

'Utopia' speaks of what has 'no place' and thus 'no reality' relative to what has place (topos) and thus is the reality of a human abode, a place where humans find their being in thought, word, and deed. LeGuin has written a novel that concerns a no-place she characterizes as possibly real—having its 'place' in the human imagination—as an ambiguous utopia. Why a 'utopia'? Why 'ambiguous'? The answer is to be found in the fact that anarchism, as a political theory, has no 'place' in the historical actualization of political associations on the planet Earth (called 'Terra' in the novel). Anarres (a dusty barren 'moon' to the richly resourced planet Urras[18] in another part of

the universe) represents an 'experiment' in anarchical living, 'an experiment in nonauthoritarian communism' (as the Terran Ambassador Keng says). The Anarresti live in self-imposed exile from Urras in pursuit of a communal-anarchical way of life—removed in space and time from the warring states and the dominant high-tech capitalism of Urras (represented by the nation-state A-Io, much like the contemporary USA and countered by the nation-state of Thu, much like Russia in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). LeGuin speaks of anarchism as 'the most idealistic…of all political theories.'[19] But, to say it is the most idealistic is not to say it is unrealistic.

As a political theory, such as described by Pëtr Kropotkin[20] and others, anarchism speaks to a possibility of human political association, notwithstanding all the complexities and challenges present in any proposed 'actualization' in the context of human history on Earth. The 'struggle for existence,' Kropotkin understood in contrast to the Social Darwinism of his day, does not mean we must adopt a 'state of civil society' in opposition to the evil of a 'state of nature' such as Thomas Hobbes described in his Leviathan. One may organize a political association in which there is a hierarchical relation of ruler and ruled, an installation of 'government' with all that this entails in hierarchically governing institutional structures, laws, armed forces, bureaucracy, division and organization of labor, etc., as in the modern nation-state system. But, existence, Kropotkin argued, also requires cooperation, mutual aid. One may thereby perpetuate both conditions of competition as well as cooperation, political and socioeconomic structures operating to enhance the one or the other, that which is 'private' relating ambiguously to that which is 'public,' as personal autonomy

and acts of self-governance relate to the hetteronomy of public law and order.

LeGuin's The Dispossessed, as Daniel P. Jaeckle tells us, is a novel in which the political theory of anarchism is imaginatively represented on Anarres and integrated with Shevek's theoretical work in temporal physics, in which both time's sequency and simultaneity affect the actuality and the potentiality of life.[21] Jaeckle captures the essential elements of LeGuin's anarchistic society to exclude 'the three great enemies of freedom: the state, organized religion, and private property'—though there is a central Production and Distribution Coordination (PDC) organizing the division of labor and the distribution of the basic resources needed, even as the 'Odonian' values of the Anarresti are representative of the teaching of Taoism (with its attention to complementarity, yin/yang) and Jungian depth psychology that speaks of the individual conscious psyche in relation to an ineradicable collective unconscious. 'Reality,' howsoever we might perceive it, involves complementarity, which is not to say opposition. This is important for the understanding of our reality. As Jaeckle puts it saliently as illustrated in the 'gestalt switch' present in our apprehension of the 'rabbit-duck' image, 'Difference, both in the seeming incompatibility of the two interpretations and in their temporal alternation, is controlled by sameness, both in the unity of the drawing itself and in the observer's knowledge that two coherent interpretations exist. The logic of complementarity is thus a specific form of containing difference within unity. Its power rests on its ability not to diminish the integrity of either interpretation and yet to bring the two different ways of seeing into a whole.'[22]

In the integration of political and sci-

17. I see LeGuin's choice of word here as itself revealing in its root origin, suggesting the privative 'an-' in relation to the Latin word 'res', which is part of 'republic' as in 'res publica', the "public thing." Anarres in this sense presents a political society that is not a "republic," does not install a public as what is politically dominant in a political society.

18. As with the etymology of 'Anarres' I suggest that the chosen word here is likewise related anthropologically to the idea of a "root society," as with the legendary city of Ur of ancient Mesopotamia, but related likewise to the German word prefix 'Ur-' for "origin," Urras thus the planetary origin of the Anarresti people.

19. Ursula K. LeGuin. (1976). Wind's Twelve Quarters. Bantam Books.

20. Pëtr Kropotkin. (1902). Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution. New York: McClure Phillips & Co.https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution.pdf, accessed 17 July 2019.

21. Daniel P. Jaeckle, "Embodied Anarchy in Ursula K. LeGuin's The Dispossessed," Utopian Studies, 20:1, 2009, 75-95.

22. Ibid.

entific theory as LeGuin unfolds it in the novel, we find that Shevek 'sees Sequency and Simultaneity as complementary' in his General Temporal Theory (which seeks to unify the two theoretical approaches to time) even as he 'sees individual freedom and social responsibility as the complementary manifestations of anarchy.'[23] But, this is not merely a matter of politics—it is also centrally a matter of an individual way to be and individual moral decision in the press of any number of situations of political engagement. Shevek's situation of political expression and scientific practice involves complementarity; and, this complementarity includes both competition and cooperation whether politically or scientifically as he interacts with other Anarresti or, eventually, with those he eventually meets on the planet Urras. Anarres's anarchical society includes both competition and cooperation as individuals express the dominant expectations of their society's values and as they also seek to express their ownmost freedom to be the individuals they are. In short, Anarres is a society in which individuals can be surrendered to the 'public,' thus to think, speak, and do as 'they' do, hence to be inauthentic in their way to be. Such a 'they-self'—what Heidegger calls das Man-Selbst—can dominate to the diminution and even exclusion of authentic selfhood.

Shevek is the protagonist who manifests this inescapable complementarity of selfhood, the constant struggle to sustain himself in authenticity against the many ways in which his society can be suppressive and even oppressive of his ownmost potentiality to be both as a temporal physicist and as a 'free' yet 'responsible' Anarresti. Can one have cooperation in politics and in science without hierarchy? Can one have competition in politics and in science with social responsibility? Can one be an integrated self, within whom one's conscious being and the collective unconscious determine one's psyche yet without foreclosing the potentiality the

future discloses through one's interrogation of past and present? Jaeckle poses the moral question thus: 'how does a person act in complete freedom and yet for the mutual aid of others?'[24] LeGuin presents the alternative thinking in the Odonian valuation she presents: 'The duty of the individual is to accept no rule, to be the initiator of his own acts, to be responsible.' Such is the anarchist ethos as usually associated with anarchist discourse: that which is arché (rule, law) is opposed to that which is an-arché (absence or privation of rule, law) and vice versa. But, this opposition excludes all attention to the complementarity that is at issue in the stated opposition and which is to be resolved in thoughts, words, and deeds that evince the complementarity. Both Anarres and Urras, both the Anarresti and the Urrasti, the anarchical society in relation to the warring states, etc., do not apprehend the importance of this complementarity as the one is privileged in the one place and the other privileged in the other place, both separated by time and space so that all communication and interaction between the two is rendered null.

Shevek realizes (i.e., LeGuin posits for our consideration) that 'only the individual, the person, [has] the power of moral choice—the power of change, the essential function of life.'[25] Revolution, understood not merely ideologically but instead in terms of the power of change (LeGuin asserts through Shevek), 'begins in the thinking mind.' In the case of Anarres, which seeks to be a sustainable anarchical society, the revolution is 'permanent' in the minds of thinking individuals, not transient in the way in which, e.g., the Marxist-Communist revolutions in our place and time abandoned the creation of classless communist society and installed hybrids of capitalism and the totalitarian state apparatus. What matters in such permanent revolution, as Jaeckle sees it, is to understand that anarchy is not 'a fait accompli but a process of

constant return to the complementarity of freedom and responsibility.'[26] And, this constancy depends on the individual's projection of him/herself in the existential resolve of being what s/he 'is' according to the open (thus undetermined) claim of the future. This is to be done in the individuated projection of his/her potentiality-for-being, where the strife of 'they-self' and 'authentic-self' must be overcome constantly in the interest of authentic being—despite the incessantly intruding presence of that which is 'the public' and that dominates to perpetuate inauthenticity by way of expectations of obedience to social convention rather than freely chosen cooperation. LeGuin's key to a proper understanding of time in relation to moral choice is expressed by Shevek's spoken adage: 'As surely as the future becomes the past, the past becomes the future.'[27] For present purpose, the adage might be restated: As surely as the past becomes the future (as our perception of sequence discloses), the future becomes the past (as our projections of potentiality for being disclose the simultaneity of actuality and potentiality). An individual's existence (in Heidegger's sense, ek-sistence, standing out into the future beyond the present) is at once a function of both sequence and simultaneity. Moral choice always involves this temporal complementarity.

Shevek's Moral Dilemmas

Every individual is faced with the task of relating his and her individual freedom to his and her social responsibility within the society s/he claims as a political association. In all such associations, understood since the time of the ancient Greeks (Plato, Aristotle) in the Western philosophical tradition, politics involves individuals in alternate functions of citizenship either ruling or being ruled—no matter whether the polis or the nation-state is 'constituted' a monarchy, a democracy, an aristocracy, etc. Anarchical society such as LeGuin

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. LeGuin, 1974, op. cit

26. Jaeckle, 2009, op. cit.

27. LeGuin, 1974, op. cit.

conceives it, following such as Kropotkin highlights the moral duty of mutual aid, eschews this exchange of function and the structures of hierarchical government. Yet, the opposition of ruler and ruled that is installed on the planet Urras (as on contemporary Earth), but which is supposedly avoided on Anarres, has to move within the spatiotemporal reality of a complementarity. How this is to be realized is entirely ambiguous, which is represented by LeGuin's reference to Anarres as an ambiguous utopia. Can anarchical society have its 'place' in 'real' time and space? Should it, on the assumption that it is politically and morally superior to 'archical' societies of past and present? What does Shevek himself represent as exemplar of a thinking mind in whom the anarchical revolution is supposedly permanent?

Every individual is faced with the strife of authenticity and inauthenticity in his/her own 'being-there,' i.e., in opening up and disclosing the 'world' that, as a referential context of signification (to use Heidegger's words), has meaning. The pressures of social convention, custom, law, etc., all contribute to determine one's responses in a way that sustains these modes of gathering and organizing a collective association. Yet, authenticity requires one pit one's potentiality to be, one's original freedom, against the dominance of the they-self. This does not mean, however, that thereby one chooses to be anarchical in the pejorative sense that one is singularly egoistic in pursuit of interests both capricious and vicious. The authentic choice is not between the 'archical' and the 'anarchical,' between law (nomos) and caprice. The choice is in the complementarity that preserves the fundamental unity of law and freedom. Shevek is an Anarresti in whom this fundamental unity is at the outset undetermined, but which is challenged daily to be made determinate in the character of his person as he goes about his work, as he fulfills his 'social function,' whether in terms of the manual labor he does in field

postings that contribute to the survival of the collective or the unique intellectual labor he does as theoretical physicist. He finds himself having to make moral decisions where his individual freedom comes up against his social responsibility—the latter sometimes defined not by him but by other members of the society in which he lives, his authentic selfhood thus often imperiled by the demands of the they-self that would restrain and constrain his freedom.

A they-self, much as a constituted society, builds walls—and, as LeGuin reminds at the opening of The Dispossessed, walls function to 'keep out' but also to 'keep in,' thus excluding some while including others. Exclusion sustains a customary alienation of some qua 'aliens,' but inclusion is sometimes in reality the same as a witting or unwitting imprisonment. The more critically significant walls are those 'invisible walls' in the human mind that are tacitly determinative of thought, word, and deed. Thus, as Winter Elliot remarks, '…The Dispossessed is, on the surface, a mediation between two utopias, two worlds, two macrocosms of humanity, with differing goals, desires, and beliefs…The book is not ultimately as interested in which world has the best, or even better, political system as it is in Shevek's role within those worlds.'[28] This is why Shevek, as protagonist of the novel, is critical to sorting out philosophically complex moral dilemmas in which he as individual must negotiate his individuated potentiality-for-being amidst the dominating structures of his political society. These structures are many times present in the background of interpersonal interactions, and they operate invisibly to induce and coerce individual deliberation, choices, judgments, and conduct. However, importantly, as the novel shows in so many ways—as Elliot says—'walls… are not, ultimately, impermeable.' This is why LeGuin is entirely correct to voice the proposition that the power of change, of moral choice, resides with the individual and not the collective.

Shevek's individuated permanent revolution in his thinking mind sets him at odds with both Anarres and Urras in their political isolation from each other; and, as he discovers in trying to originate a 'communication' between the two 'planets' while doing his theoretical work in temporal physics, 'both worlds attempt control on not just a physical but also a mental and spiritual basis. Urras and Anarres manage not only bodies but also minds and ideas.'[29] On Urras, 'an idea is a property of the State,' Urras having a 'propertarian,' 'profiteering,' 'governing' political culture in contrast to the anarcho-communism of Anarres, where things and ideas are to be shared and not owned and, therefore, are to be administered cooperatively, not hierarchically. The perspective here is one of being caring and solicitous in being with one another (as with Kropotkin's mutual aid) without committing 'the ultimate blasphemy' in the Odonian value system of appropriating and parroting words of ritual to be performed in deed as if they were 'laws.' Shevek manifests in his character both his diligence to freedom (thus his quest for authentic selfhood) and his forgetfulness of the bureaucratization that operates on Anarres (hence his being 'fallen' into the mode of inauthentic selfhood). He is reminded of what his friend Bedap asserts to be the perpetual task of a society such as Anarres: '…we forgot that the will to dominance is as central in human beings as the impulse to mutual aid is, and has to be trained in each individual, in each new generation.'[30]

Training of the will towards either impulse depends on individuals having the power of social change and sustaining their power of moral choice. Only thus does an individual manifest his/her authentic selfhood rather than surrendering to the more dominant impulses of 'the public,' the anonymous 'they-self' that insists on orthodoxy (correct opinions) and its corresponding orthopraxis (correct conduct). Shevek, as one exemplar of a freely thinking mind on Anarres, under-

28. Winter Elliot. (2005). "Breaching Invisible Walls: Individual Anarchy," in The Dispossessed," The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. LeGuin's The Dispossessed, ed. Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman. Lanham: Lexington Books. 149-164.

29. Elliot, 2005, op. cit.

30. LeGuin, 1974, op. cit.

stands the need for balance (complementarity) between the individual conscience and the social conscience, and of the need to respect the individual freedom of choice rather than to fear the neighbor's restraining and constraining opinion that calls for obedience.[31] Cooperation is not obedience, and it must originate in moral choice, not in the heteronomy of historically contingent social imperatives. To be free is to be dispossessed in the most essential sense—it is in the having, the owning, of possessions, be they material or intellectual, that one is possessed by them and made unfree.

The 'Journey' towards Authentic Selfhood

Speaking to a point made at the end of The Dispossessed, Elliot observes, 'each life is new and free to choose its own journey…'[32] But, as LeGuin would have us understand, a journey is not an adventure, a moving outward that sets aside and forgets the origin. Hence, LeGuin instructs: 'True journey is return.' The adage is loaded with significance as the ideas of time, truth, journey, and return are conjoined. If one undertakes an adventure, then that is all it is understood to be from the outset, a venturing outward without meaningful goal or intended direction. If one undertakes a journey, one ventures outward surely; but, most importantly, one's journey is true to the spirit of the journey only if and when one returns to the point of origin. In Shevek's case the journey is obviously spatial—from his own personal (as anarchist) and professional (as temporal physicist) 'place' in Anarresti society to the places he goes as part of his communal contribution to the Anarresti division of labor, then from Anarres to Urras, and then at the end from Urras in return to Anarres. As LeGuin writes, 'It is not until an act occurs within the landscape of the past and the future that it is a human act.'[33] Ethics and time are connected in virtue of human

temporality, in virtue of the fact that humans are temporal beings, bound by time but also open to the disclosure of potentialities that only they can disclose for the sake of creating their world anew.

But, Shevek's journey is also inward in a fourfold way, (1) into his own thinking mind so that it is decidedly one of self-discovery, (2) into the scientific ideas of the General Temporal Theory he eventually shares with all worlds so that the ideas are not 'owned,' (3) into the ideas that are foundational for his society, and (4) into the ideas that define his moral and political self. In that way, the journey is also manifestly temporal as the sequency of Shevek's actions and the simultaneity of his being in the unity of his past, present, and future are integrated in the ethos of decision in the present. It is from that inward journey that Shevek discovers himself and the power of his ownmost moral choice to then move outward in his moral and political comportment, to perpetuate the revolutionary spirit within Anarres and an ethic of communication with Urras and all the known worlds that thereby overcomes the self-imposed exile of the Anarresti. His past and his future are united in his present, which itself is at once a sequential movement from out of the past and into the future and simultaneous as the future—i.e., his own most proper, thus self-appropriated, potentiality for being—lays its claim on his present. Despite the seeming determinacy of the past, Shevek acts to reconfigure his mode of being away from inauthenticity—away from his prior deference to the bureaucratic and functionalist politics of Anarres—to the authenticity that assures him of the self-governance that is proper to his own being. Shevek demonstrates, as LeGuin would have us understand, that 'Fulfillment,' as Shevek thought, 'is a function of time.'[34]

But here, I suggest, Shevek shows that in truth he is neither archist nor anarchist

in the usual senses of these contraposed terms, but instead the complement of the two. And, the ambiguity of The Dispossessed as a utopia, with the multiple complementarities structured by LeGuin, points to the principle of integration, especially in relation to the Jungian concept of integration of self. Ellen M. Rigsby is correct to find fault in some critics of the work who complain that LeGuin did not provide enough 'information about the political system' of Anarres.[35] As she says, it does not follow logically that 'a system must be wrung from the text for it to describe a politics.' LeGuin's imagination of an experiment in anarchical living, contrasted to the usual 'State' political apparatus on Urras, decidedly distinguishes anarchism and archism, and it describes a politics on Anarres without the structures of the 'State' as such. In effect, LeGuin's dichotomy of anarchism and archism underscores the disjunction of 'government' and 'self-governance.' The concept of 'self-governance' is, in fact, not represented properly by the concept of 'anarchist;' hence, this is where I go beyond LeGuin to link the Heideggerian concept of authentic selfhood to that of self-governance.

I submit that, the concept 'autarchist'—etymologically derived from ancient Greek to mean one who is self-sufficient through his or her self-ruling—more properly captures the sense of 'who' Shevek is in and through his political ethos and how he appropriates the function of governance to himself rather than externalize it in any number of ways in which heteronomy encroaches upon his moral autonomy, whether on Anarres or elsewhere such as in his encounters with the scientists and those representing the interests of the governments of A-Io or Thu. Indeed, Rigsby is entirely correct to highlight a principal point of LeGuin's narrative: 'that society can exist in which everyone acts on his or her own

31. Ibid.

32. Elliot, 2005, op. cit.

33. LeGuin, 1974, op. cit.

34. Ibid

35. Ellen M Rigsby. (2005). "Time and the Measure of the Political Animal," in Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman, ed. The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. LeGuin's The Dispossessed. Lanham MD: Lexington Books. 167-180.

initiative.'[36] 'Initiative', in the ancient Greek sense, is expressed by the word 'arché', which is often translated as principle, or rule, beginning, etc. It is through this initiative of self-governance that Shevek accomplishes the power of social change and thereby has the moral authority to do so in a constant interrogation and challenge to the status quo, custom, and the inertia that preserves the authority of tradition merely for the sake of tradition. It is in this sense, taking up the power of his own initiative, that Shevek takes up what is his own, thus what is authentikos (authentic, being true to himself) and autarchos (self-governing).

Rigsby perspicaciously captures the important point of the linkage of ethics and time in words Shevek speaks, where he speaks of 'chronosophy' or wisdom about time:

But it's true, chronosophy does involve ethics. Because our sense of time involves our ability to separate cause and effect, means and ends. The baby, the animal, they don't see the difference between what they do now and what will happen because of it. They can't make a pulley, or a promise. We can. Seeing the difference between the now and not now, we can make the connection. And there morality enters in. Responsibility…To break a promise is to deny the reality of the past; therefore it is to deny the hope of a real future.[37]

Shevek realizes that he cannot 'convert' the Urrasti to his way of thinking as an anarchist or even as a temporal physicist, even as he realizes he has to return to Anarres and face the consequences of his break with those Anarresti who preferred continuing isolation of Anarres to the communicative engagement with all

the known worlds that Shevek initiated. His return, as Rigsby rightly points out, is one in which he chooses 'to continue his initiative to unbuild walls…'[38] As he had said when deciding to go to Urras, he will fulfill his 'proper function in the social organism…to unbuild walls.'[39] As the permanent revolutionary, Shevek embodies 'the enduring reality of Anarres,' the reality not of an anarchical society, but the reality of the autarchos who will not surrender his radical freedom, daily to take it up and to act responsibly on his own initiative.

Linking Heidegger's philosophy to a conception of the political, I have written elsewhere that, 'To every factual determination of the political belongs the originary task of bringing political being into its essential determination.'[40] Political philosophers teach about political ideas, structures, and systems, mostly as informed from the record of historical and extant political societies. The twenty-first century presents humankind with the prospect of a technocratic world order in which individual initiative and the radical freedom on which it is grounded are entirely supplanted, i.e., individuals transformed into 'human resources' readily used, disposed, and abused according to the dictates of instrumental and technocratic reason. Yet, every human being always retains the originary task or original liability of his and her existence as an ethico-political being, the task that speaks to him and her from out of his and her 'origin' to bring political being into unconcealment (what Heidegger calls Unverborgenheit), i.e., into its essential determination. I have proposed: '"Autarchos" names that to which the human as political being is authentically released as the originary presence of politics.'[41] Every individual who appropriates his

or her own initiative answers the call of the origin that discloses an 'original praxis'—a call that pushes into insignificance the ideological appeals of the 'they-self' by privileging 'that potentiality-for-being-political which is most one's own (eigentlich).'[42] What is most one's own, what is authentic, is to be self-governing, 'to be' authentikos as autarchos. In the jointure of aesthetic and ethical appeal, one comes to understand: One must be persistent, steadfast (ständig), in one's projection of one's potentiality-to-be, if one is to disclose oneself with constancy in the mode of authenticity. The modification from inauthenticity is a persevering movement that navigates the present being's self-disclosure in view of the projected futural being toward which one inclines in standing out (ek-stasis) beyond the present. Following Heidegger's engagement of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (Book VI), as Walter Brogan clarifies, 'The virtuous intellect is virtuous to the extent that it holds in truth and safeguards (Verwahrung) the disclosure of beings,'[43] including here being open to one's ownmost 'ontological liability' (liability for one's own being) and safeguarding one's authentic selfhood against the encroachments of the they-self.

Through the sort of self-governance that Shevek exemplifies (despite his succumbing occasionally to the appeals of 'the public' of either Anarres or Urras) that make him inauthentic in a given moment of action, LeGuin presents us with the possibility, the real possibility (howsoever difficult) of radical freedom that is at the same time fully ethically responsible. Indeed, as Vandana Singh put it, 'What LeGuin did was to take down the walls around the imagination, and to set us all free. To shift the paradigms, the conceptual constructs by which we make sense

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., LeGuin, 1974, op. cit.

38. Rigsby, 2005, op. cit.

39. LeGuin, 1974, op. cit.

40. Norman K. Swazo. (2002). Crisis Theory and World Order: Heideggerian Reflections. Albany: SUNY Press.

41. Ibid.,

42. Ibid.

43. Walter. Brogan. (2005). Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being Albany: SUNY Press.

of the world, is no small thing.'[44]

Positing the foregoing as a compelling sense of political ethics where reason and imagination are complementary and by no means 'unreal,' one may conclude by heeding LeGuin's words. She tells us, her readers, 'When treated—even with much praise—as a methodical ax grinder, I am driven to deny that there's any didactic intention at all in my fiction. Of course, there is—I'm dead set against preaching, but the teaching impulse is often stronger than I am.'[45] LeGuin does not want the reader to make the reductive move that simply says, 'J'aime Shevek,' whereby character and author are wholly identified to be in agreement. She comments that The Dispossessed is not 'an exposition of ideas' but 'an embodiment of idea—a revolutionary artifact, a work containing a potential permanent source of renewal of thought and perception…' She observes that the narrative of the book, as she wrote it, 'seemed to follow neither an arbitrary nor a rationally decided course,' yet there is

therein a constituted 'architecture which is fundamentally aesthetic and which, in being so, fulfils an intellectual or rational design.'[46]

'LeGuin,' Julie Phillips reminds, 'was aware, always, that there were other stories to tell.'[47] Indeed. Each of us, always, in the unity of our ownmost sequency and simultaneity of being, have our own stories to tell, uniting our past with the indeterminate future from out of which we disclose who we are, thus to create the world anew. Either that, or we face a future such as the Terran Ambassador Keng characterized it in rueful retrospect as she spoke to Shevek about her past (which is the potential future of our Earth):

My world, my Earth, is a ruin. A planet spoiled by the human species. We multiplied and gobbled and fought until there was nothing left, and then we died. We controlled neither appetite nor violence; we did not adapt. We destroyed ourselves. But we destroyed the world first…You

Odonians chose a desert; we Terrans made a desert…We failed as a species, as a social species…[We]…saved what could be saved, and made a kind of life in the ruins…[48]

LeGuin teaches us in such writing that reason and imagination have their efficacious confluence, but also that one ought not to dismiss the truth of the imagination out of misplaced methodological commitment to scientific realism. The Dispossessed is a work of art that permits us a way to envision both the possibility and the reality of authentic selfhood in the setting of an ethical politics. This work elicits a truth that is not limited to the imagination of Anarres but that speaks to us in the present as we seek our dwelling upon this Earth. Even on the 'Terra' that is our present reality, radical freedom and ethical responsibility are irrevocably conjoined, so that one who would be—and resolves himself and herself to be—autarchos, ever manifests the permanent revolution of a thinking mind that safeguards the future in the present.

44. Vandana. Singh, "True Journey is Return: A Tribute to Ursula K. LeGuin," Antariksh Yatra, https://vandanasingh.wordpress.com/2018/01/26/true-journey-is-return-a-tribute-to-ursula-k-le-guin/, accessed 27 May 2019.

45. Ursula K. LeGuin. (2005). "A Response, by Ansible, from Tau Ceti," in Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman, ed. The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. LeGuin's The Dispossessed. Lanham MD: Lexington Books. 305-308.

46. Ibid.

47. Julie Phillips, "The Subversive Imagination of Ursula K. LeGuin," The New Yorker, 25 January 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/postscript/the-subversive-imagination-of-ursula-k-le-guin, accessed 27 May 2019.

48. LeGuin, 1974, op. cit.

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From Decline of the West to Dawn of Day: Dan Brown's Origin as a Diagnostic of the Present

Hub Zwart

ABSTRACT

This paper subjects Dan Brown's most recent novel Origin to a philosophical reading. Origin is regarded as a literary window into contemporary technoscience, inviting us to explore its transformative momentum and disruptive impact, focusing on the cultural significance of artificial intelligence and computer science: on the way in which established world-views are challenged by the incessant wave of scientific discoveries made possible by super-computation. While initially focusing on the tension between science and religion, the novel's attention gradually shifts to the increased dependence of human beings on smart technologies and artificial (or even "synthetic") intelligence. Origin's message, I will argue, reverberates with Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West, which aims to outline a morphology of world civilizations. Although the novel starts with a series of oppositions, most notably between religion and science, the eventual tendency is towards convergence, synthesis and sublation, exemplified by Sagrada Família as a monumental symptom of this transition. Three instances of convergence will be highlighted, namely the convergence between science and religion, between humanity and technology and between the natural sciences and the humanities.

From Decline of the West to Dawn of Day: Dan Brown's Origin as a Diagnostic of the Present

Introduction

Dan Brown is an American novelist famous for authoring best-sellers such as *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), *The Lost Symbol* (2009) and *Inferno* (2013). *Origin* (2017) is his fifth novel featuring Robert Langdon (a Harvard expert in religious iconography) as key protagonist. Dan Brown's two most recent novels can be regarded as *science novels*, moreover, describing the inner dynamics and transformative socio-cultural impact of contemporary research fields: virology in the case of *Inferno*, artificial intelligence in the case of *Origin*. In these novels, Robert Langdon (a humanities professor) is confronted with a scientific genius (Bertrand Zobrist in *Inferno*, Edmond Kirsch in *Origin*) who is about to reveal an unsettling scientific breakthrough to a global audience, thereby inciting the animosity of influential organisations representing the global establishment: the *World Health Organisation* in *Inferno*, the *Parliament of the World's Religions* in *Origin*.

This paper subjects *Origin* to a philosophical reading. Brown's novel, I will argue, can be regarded as a literary window into contemporary technoscience, inviting us to explore its transformative momentum and disruptive impact (Zwart 2019a). While *Inferno* focusses on the societal risks and benefits of biomolecular technoscience, *Origin* addresses the *cultural* relevance of science: the way in which established world-views are challenged by the incessant wave of scientific discoveries facilitated by computer science. The novel can be regarded as a literary laboratory, where technology-driven scenarios are enacted,

explored and assessed. Although initially focussing on the tension between science and religion, the novel's attention gradually shifts to the increased dependence of human beings on smart technologies and artificial (or even "synthetic") intelligence. *Origin* is a techno-thriller with a message, conveying a diagnostic of the present and a prognostic of the future, claiming that we are on the cusp of a global cultural transition, exemplified (spiritually and architecturally) by *Sagrada Famíla*, the last of the great Cathedrals, the Omega point in spiritual architecture, but also a building which, according to Brown's novel, heralds the next quantum leap in human culture, announcing something completely different: the dawn of a new civilisation, a new style of thinking. Whereas the previous epoch was an era of negativity and conflict (science versus religion, science versus art, technology versus nature, etc.), the new era purports to be one of convergence (of syncretism even): of science and art, technology and nature, science and religion, and so on. And *Sagrada Famíla*, with its biomimetic design (p. 279), its "living architecture" of "almost biological quality" (p. 235), captures this transition towards convergence in stone.

Conceptual framework

Origin's message, I will argue, reverberates with Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, subtitled "Outlines of a morphology of world history", the first part of which was published a century ago (Spengler 1918). As indicated by its subtitle, Spengler's classic presents a "morphology" of civilisations (1918, p. 4): a form of historiography which studies

the past in order to develop a prognostics of the future (p. 3). All world historical constellations, Spengler argues, begin as a local phenomenon (as "culture"), but gradually expand into a style of thinking which affects a whole world ("civilisation"), until an inevitable process of decline and decadence sets in. Spengler's objective is to perform historical research in a way that is comparable to how Johann Wolfgang von Goethe performed plant research (p. 34), namely by focussing on a limited set of typical cultural forms: on a particular *Gestalt*, recognisable in all stages and domains of a particular culture. Spengler's method is also comparable to the work of Goethe's friend and contemporary Alexander von Humboldt (1845-1862), who characterised the overall physiognomy (*Gesamtbild*) of global landscape types. Spengler's aim is to discern the typical gestalt or physiognomy of a particular culture: the basic formula which determines all its practices and expressions, the distinctive form which pervades all the research fields, art forms and political institutions to which a particular culture (gradually evolving into a world civilisation) gives rise.

From a philosophical perspective, Spengler's approach concurs with Hegel's view that a core idea realises itself at a certain historical stage. This idea is like a force or program which manifests itself as a particular worldview and zeitgeist (Hegel 1832/1970). Another philosophical source of inspiration was Friedrich Nietzsche who, in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886/1980, § 23) already presented his own thinking as a "morphology" of the Will to Power. Although Spengler himself was critical of these precursors (rebuking

both Hegel and Nietzsche for their insufficient understanding and appreciation of mathematics compared to Baroque philosophers such as Descartes and Leibniz),[1] his morphology can be regarded as a dialectical genealogy of worldviews. Every civilisation entails a transvaluation of values (1918, p. 451), Spengler contends, negating and sublating what existed before into something wholly new. Moreover, Spengler predicted that the present "Faustian" culture, as a materialisation of the Will to Power, driven by disruptive expansion and exponential growth, by powerful machinery and industrial labour, is about to be eclipsed by a new type of culture, a new *Dawn of Day*, as Nietzsche (1881/1980) phrased it – a theme which is taken up by contemporary philosophers such as Peter Sloterdijk (1999), whose "spherical" approach to history builds explicitly on Spengler's classic.
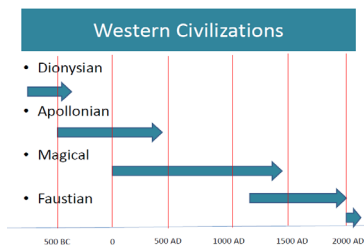
Although Spengler purports to develop a global perspective of history, the focus is nonetheless on Western civilisations, which are described as a series of historical constellations, each with a recognisable profile of its own, as indicated in the scheme on the right (adopted from Zwart 2005). *Apollonian* culture was guided by the idea that a perfect geometric structure can be discerned in nature conceived as κόσμος (i.e. order: a harmonious, spherical world), a structure which human art, ethics and politics should mimic. "Act in accordance with nature" was its basic formula, and Greek geometry its guiding research field. The Apollonian worldview was preceded by the *Dionysian* one: by the contrasting experience of nature as obscure, violent and chaotic. Apollonian culture evolved into a world civilisation via the Roman

Empire. During this upscaling period, however, a rival culture already began to take shape, referred to by Spengler as *Magical* thinking, exemplified by medieval Christianity and Islam, with astrology, numerology and alchemy as key areas of inquiry. "Waiting for the Kingdom" was its basic formula, for individuals spent their lives in detachment, preparing themselves (via ascetic practices and spiritual exercises) for the coming of a wholly different era. The subsequent *Faustian* culture originated in the late medieval period, exemplified by gothic cathedrals in the realm of architecture and by gothic experimental research (*scientia experimentalis*) in the natural sciences. This style of thinking was driven by the Will to Power as its guiding idea and formula. As indicated, however, Spengler predicted that Faustian culture is now heading for decline, and the big question therefore is: what comes next? Is it possible to discern the contours of a new emerging culture? In this paper I will argue that artistic documents such as Dan Brown's novel, published a century after Spengler's book, may help us to assess this transition in more detail. *Origin* provides a diagnostic of the present while presenting an outline of the dawning era (a prognostic of the future), notably by focussing on a decisive factor, something Spengler was not yet aware of, namely the transformative role of computers and other hyper-intelligent, post-Faustian machines.

Summary

The narrative of Dan brown's novel is dominated by four key characters. Besides *Robert Langdon*, the Harvard professor of symbolism (representing the humanities), the novel features *Edmond Kirsch*, a 40-year old billionaire expert in game theory and computer modelling from MIT (representing science), while the two other key roles are played by *Ambra Vial*, Director of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao (representing art) and *Bishop Antonio Valdespino* of Almudena Cathedral, Madrid, spiritual advisor of the Spanish King (representing religion):

Edmond Kirsch (science)	Ambra Vidal (art)
Robert Langdon (humanities)	Bishop Valdespino (religion)

In the prologue of the novel, Edmond Kirsch pays a visit to the monastery of Montserrat (about 45 kilometres northwest of Barcelona, famous for its statue of the Black Virgin, but also for serving as the Grail Castle in Wagner's *Parsifal*). Besides beings a celebrity scientist and a militant atheist, Edmond is famous for his gift for prognostication, i.e. his accurate predictions of imminent scientific breakthroughs. He travels to Montserrat to meet a delegation of representatives of the *Parliament of the World's Religions*, led by Bishop Valdespino. Edmond grants them a preview of a multimedia video-recording which he is about to release and which allegedly solves the riddle of the origin of life. Edmond is an outspoken critic of all religions and it is as if he puts the trump card on the table which he is about to play. Although Valdespino and his colleagues find the content quite disturbing, Edmond is determined to present his video (*urbi et orbi* as it were) to an elite audience ("hundreds of VIPs", p. 12) assembled in the Guggenheim museum at Bilbao, while the global crowd will be able to witness the livestreamed and meticulously choreographed event on-line.

Edmond's objective is not only to prove that the origin of life can be scientifically explained, but also that religion is about to be made obsolete by science. His message is that the transformative impact of artificial intelligence will finally decide the time-old gigantomachia between science and religion, in favour of the former. Thus, Edmond expects that his discovery will significantly contribute to the twilight and downfall of theistic worldviews.

Being a close friend of Edmond, Robert Langdon is invited to the VIP event,

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1. "Goethe hasste die Mathematik" (Spengler 1918, p. 34); "Hegel [ist] völlig unmathematisch … von Nietzsche ganz zu schweigen", p. 472).

organised by museum director Ambra Vidal, who also happens to be the Spanish crown prince's fiancée. When Robert enters the Guggenheim museum, however, he has the uncomfortable feeling of being watched by the countless video cameras surrounding him. He feels like an "unwitting participant" in an experiment, like *a rat in a maze* (p. 46). Edmond uses these cameras to carefully monitor the impact his announcement will make on the audience. Meanwhile, another experiment is being conducted as well: a Turing test, to be exact. Upon entering the museum, Robert receives a minimalised headset ("a sleek loop of metal with tiny pads at each end", p. 25) which connects him with the voice of a personal assistant: a customised, interactive guide, who introduces himself as Winston: a disembodied voice, a product of "synthetic intelligence", the latest android development in the world of artificial intelligence. Bone conduction technology produces a startling effect: as if a voice is speaking "inside your head" (p. 25). Winston not only provides detailed Wikipedia-like information upon request, but also seems a connoisseur of art, combining intelligence and encyclopaedic knowledge with humour. Robert is the guinea pig ("Mr. Kirsch wanted to test my abilities on *you*", p. 48), but Winston easily passes the test. He speaks and acts like a genuine human being. Moreover, as the story unfolds, he becomes increasingly powerful, cunning and influential.2

Edmond begins his video-lecture by deriding deities in general and the God of Christianity in particular, referring to Him as the "God of the gaps" (p. 83). In his view, this God is a fictitious entity produced to cover up the remaining gaps in our scientific explanations of the world. Although (due to scientific progress) God's territory has significantly shrunken, there are still a few holes to fill, and one of them concerns the question of the origin of life. Here, there still seems to be some room for the idea that a divine intervention infused a spark of life into inorganic nature, 3.9 billion years ago. Edmond's vocation, however, is "to

employ the truth of science to eradicate the myth of religion" (p. 53). He sees God as a symptom of the fact that humankind is inclined to raise questions which seem too big to answer (Where do we come from? Where are we going?). As Edmond phrases it during his lecture: if we ask a supercomputer to solve the question of the origin of life, the machine will probably answer something like: "insufficient data for accurate response" (p. 87). If you ask *this* little biological computer (i.e. the human brain) this same question, however, something else happens, and Kirsch's presentation produces a stream of religious images. Humans feel uncomfortable when faced with uncertainties and therefore our brains are prone to invent imaginary, theistic explanations.

Although Edmond's presentation is announced as highly innovative, it actually reflects a standard or even stereotypical account, already initiated by Plato in his simile of the cave (1935/2000, 514). Humans prefer misleading images and captivating stories to rationally convincing explanations. They rather follow religious icons than the iconoclastic equations of science. According to Edmond, science is the antithesis of faith. But now, as the age of religion is drawing to a close, the age of science is finally dawning after all. And tonight, he announces, humankind is about to make a quantum leap in this direction.

Somehow, however, the name of a Spanish admiral named Ávila has secretly been added to the guest list, a devote follower of an ultra-conservative Catholic sect: the Palmarian Church. While Edmond is presenting his discovery ("a paradigm shift … on the scale of the Copernican revolution", p. 52; a "global moment", p. 101, etc.), Ávila uses his razor blade to cut a slit in the fabric covering the auditorium. When he parts the opening, he peers into "another world" (p. 91), a scene reminiscent of the famous (anonymous)
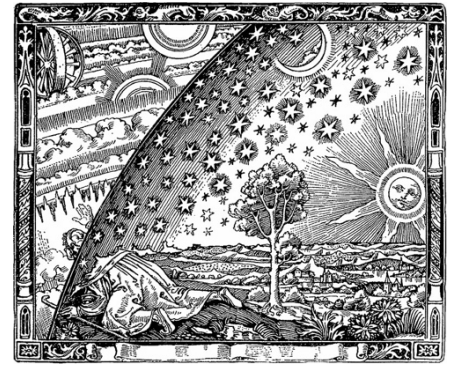
wood engraving in Camille Flammarion's book *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire*, published in 1888 (depicted on the right). Ávila has a mission of fulfil. Acting on the orders of an enigmatic authoritative voice (the Regent), the Admiral grabs his 3-D-printed polymer gun (invisible to metal detectors), takes aim and kills the scientist on the spot, thereby unleashing a tsunami of conspiracy theories (with Bishop Valdespino consistently serving as prime suspect), while turning Edmond into a scientific martyr.

Edmond's legacy, the video-message, must be stored somewhere on his ultra-secure server, accessible via his iPhone. This device can only be activated via an unknown password composed of 47 characters. If the recording of Edmond's discovery (the high-visibility climax event of his research) can be retrieved, the message may proliferate (go viral) after all. His violent death will certainly add momentum to the global impact. His friends Robert and Ambra therefore set out to retrieve the video message. Their journey brings them to Barcelona: to Gaudi's Case Milà (where they discover that Edmond was terminally ill and about to die within days, suffering from pancreatic cancer), to the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre3 (Edmond's high-tech facility located in a decommissioned "smart church", p. 361), and, finally, to Sagrada Família.

In the computing centre they discover E-Wave: Edmond's superfast quantum computer, a symbiosis of a genius mind and a powerful machine, enabling

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2. Winston is described as "Siri on steroids" (p. 175), a reference to Apple's version of an intelligent assistant.

3. The Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BSC/Centro Nacional de Supercomputación) really exists, hosting the MareNostrum supercomputer, located in a former chapel named Torre Girona. Cf. Brown's disclaimer at the beginning of the novel: "All art, architecture, locations, science and religious organisations are real" (2017, p. 3). MareNostrum is "incorporated" into E-Wave (p. 364).

unprecedented advances in science, especially in the field of complex systems modelling. E-Wave represents a "quantum leap beyond NASA/Google's D-Wave" and its uncanny pulsations sound like "the beating of a human heart" (p. 371). Its location (in Barcelona) is no coincidence either, for in cultural terms it represents a modernistic / surrealistic competitor to the power bastions of Madrilenian Baroque. E-Wave is the new Master, for the days of *in silico* power are dawning.

This computer is Winston, in a way, but, as Winston himself argues, no more than our physical brain is *us*, if we could somehow observe it in a bowl (p. 373). Edmond leapfrogged his rivals with this machine by using bicameralism, for E-Wave is a synthetic brain that mimics the two-lobbed, bicameral human brain (p. 372). Bicameralism is what makes us so creative, but it also explains why humans are both rational *and* religious beings.4 While the rational part of the brain is susceptible to scientific equations, the other part is intuitive and imaginative; and therefore sensitive to religious iconography.

In short, this smart church is a rather remarkable entity. If the supercomputer is like a brain, the building as such is like a skull (a *camera obscura*). In the natural situation, however, our voice emerges in an orifice (the mouth) which is located close to the brain. In the case of E-Wave, however, these components (these partial objects) have dissipated through space. Winston's disembodied, "extimate" voice5 is audible in Bilbao, as an organ without a body, entering Robert's mind (Brown 2017, p. 25), but his brain (E-Wave) remains in Barcelona. In the digital era, partial objects (such as voice and cortex) disconnect themselves from their wet, biological environment, but also from each other. Winston's disembodied (uncannily human) voice floats through space in

search for a target, using gadgets such as head-sets and iPhones as temporary hosts.

Edmond's E-Wave computer allowed him to make his "Copernican" discovery. First of all, he decided to replicate the Miller-Urey experiment, originally conducted in 1953: a chemical reconstruction of the so-called primordial soup. In their famous experiment, Stanley Miller and his collaborator Harold Urey simulated *in vitro* the chemical conditions that once existed on a lifeless, abiotic Earth, four billion years ago. Would their test tubes allow them to answer the question how "the earliest specks of life" (p. 385) had been infused into the primordial soup? Allegedly, the experiment faltered, but in 2007, a group of scientists re-examined the sealed vials from the original experiments with more sensitive equipment (spectroscopy, liquid chromatography) and discovered that much more amino acids had been produced in Miller's original experiments than Miller himself had realised.

Edmond takes the experiment a significant step further, however. First of all by adding a factor that was missing in the original set-up, namely time. Life must have required thousands of years to originate in such a mixture. This missing factor can now be added with the help of complex systems modelling. In other words, while Miller and Urey conducted their experiment *in vitro*, Edmond's replication experiment is carried out *in silico*. Edmond's E-Wave computer allows science to "fast-forward" the original experiment (p. 391). Computer modelling is a kind of "time machine" (p. 390), Edmond argues, able to compress and accelerate time. By combining chemistry and computer modelling, Edmond intends to demonstrate how life originated, without divine intervention. Life can indeed be created in the lab by combining chemistry and computer power (p. 389). At

about the fifty-year mark, the first hints of RNA become visible (p. 391).

Edmond then adds another "final ingredient" to the mixture, namely entropy (p. 391), the universal process of inevitable and relentless decay. The entropy principle implies that everything that is ordered is bound to return to dust and to dissipate into molecular debris. Against the backdrop of an entropic world, the question emerges how something as complex, sophisticated and intricate as living organisms can emerge and stay intact with inconceivable persistency. According to Edmond, in its efforts to promote disorder, nature creates pockets of order, namely living systems, because in the long run they escalate rather than reduce the chaos. Life is an effective tool for dissipating energy, it is an entropic machine. And here, a reference is made to a really existing scientist, namely biophysicist Jeremy England (MIT), notably to his work on quantum biology and "dissipation-driven adaptive organisation" (p. 394).6 As soon as entropy is added to the equation, amino acids begin to take shape even faster, evolving into protein chains and, eventually, nucleotides. In Edmond's computer model, after a million years or so, the double-helix of DNA can be seen, the living code of biology: "an entropy tool making copies of itself" (p. 399).

Structure of the Novel

Before subjecting the novel to a close philosophical reading, it will be helpful to outline its basic structure. In terms of Freytag's dramatic arc (Freytag 1863), the novel begins with an *exposition* stage, introducing the four key characters listed above, and providing a detailed description of the Guggenheim museum as a dramatic setting. Subsequently, we see a *rise of dramatic tension* when Edmond delivers his presentation. This upward curve is suddenly interrupted, however,

4. Cf. Nietzsche: the human brain should be bicameral ("Eine höhere Kultur [muss] dem Menschen ein Doppelgehirn, gleichsam zwei Hirnkammern geben, einmal um Wissenschaft, sodann um Nicht-Wissenschaft zu empfinden … es ist dies eine Forderung der Gesundheit" (Nietzsche 1878/1980, § 251).

5. "Extimate" technologies are high-tech gadgets worn close to the body. They are both intimate and external; both embedded and foreign; both enhancing and intrusive (Zwart 2017a). In Origin the personalised guide is described as "intimate and immersive" (Brown 2017, p. 28), turning a museum visit into a "seamless" experience.

6. Although his publication on self-replication and entropy (England 2013) drew much attention (Wolchover 2014), England (a religious scientist) does not recognise himself in his literary doppelgänger. On his website, he states his position as follows: "Professor Jeremy England was not consulted or involved in any way during the creation of Dan Brown's book *Origin*, and he did not consent to the use of his name therein. Shortly before the book was published, he was made aware of a fictional character in Mr. Brown's book who is also an MIT professor named Jeremy England" [https://www.englandlab.com/press.html]
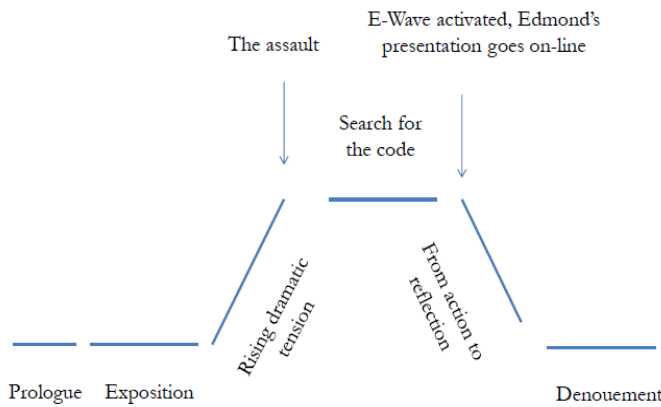
by Admiral Ávila's assault. During the subsequent intermezzo, Robert and Ambra desperately search for the code that will allow them to recover the video-message. As soon as Edmond's presentation goes on-line again, however, the focus gradually shifts from dramatic action to reflection (the *denouement* stage):


ENTROPY

Besides this dramatic curve, another structural device is at work in the novel. All characters and themes in the novel are represented by a particular symbol, in accordance with Robert's field of expertise ("symbology"). These symbols play a role comparable to the musical motifs in Wagner operas. As soon as a certain symbol presents itself, a certain mood or ambiance unfolds. Edmond's symbol, for instance, is a cuneiform Assyrian pictogram, indicating that evolution (represented by a fish) is about to swallow (the symbol for) God. His militant atheism, moreover, is represented by a stylised A (inserted below), a symbol of apostasy which is adopted by many of his followers. In a similar vein, Admiral Ávila is represented by a monogram composed of letter signifying "victory" (inserted below as well). Likewise, Gaudí's symbolic signature is the infinity sign (a Möbius-ring, topologically speaking), while the discussion on entropy unfolds under the sway of the entropy symbol:

Thus, the dramatic action not only involves characters (their vicissitudes and interactions), but also symbols:

In the next sections, I will analyse *Origin* in more detail, arguing that, although the novel starts with a series of oppositions, most notably between religion and science, the eventual tendency is towards convergence, sublation and synthesis. Three instances of convergence will be highlighted, namely the convergence between science and religion (1), between humanity and technology (2) and between the natural sciences and the humanities (3).
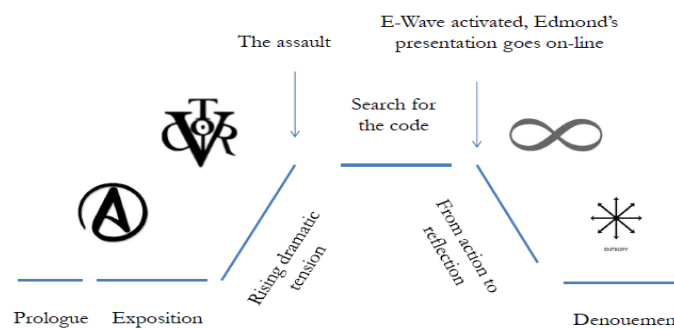
Convergence 1: Science and religion (Sagrada Família)

When (during the prologue) Bishop Valdespino welcomes Edmond Kirsch on the train platform near Montserrat, he seems puzzled. "I was expecting a scientist", he confesses, "but you're quite …

hip" (p. 6). The word 'hip' produces a polite smile on Edmond's face, for it "went out of style decades ago" (idem). Valdespino's stereotypical expectation concurs with Nietzsche's claim (in *Genealogy of Morals* III, § 23, and elsewhere) that scientists are basically ascetics. Rather than being antithetical to religious asceticism, Nietzsche (1887/1980) argued, modern scientific research represents its latest version, for it entails self-sacrifice, manual labour, dedicated devotion and hard work. For Nietzsche, modern scientists play a role similar to that of monks and hermits in medieval times: they sacrifice pleasure and health to knowledge production, imprisoned in their laboratories, chained to their experimental machines (Zwart 2019b).

Edmond's appearance fails to comply with this image. Although his daily habits reflect a maniacal work ethic (p. 244), while his research practice is tied up with an impressive machine, he is also consistently presented as an outspokenly mundane individual, a connoisseur of art, fashion and high culture. His profile merges the ascetic aura of science with the aristocratic image of a Nietzschean free-thinker, someone committed to an exuberant life-style. During his meeting with Valdespino, he wears a Kiton K50 suit and Barker ostrich shoes (p. 6). Later we learn that he owns an extremely expensive and sophisticated self-driving car (Tesla Model X P90D) as well as a Gulfstream G550 private jet, and that he inhabits expensive houses. He is also an "insatiable bibliophile" (p. 13) whose "stunning library" (p. 242) contains priceless books and artworks (from a famous Gauguin up to the hand-written original of Blake's collected works). In short, Edmond is an ascetic hermit whose profile at the same time concurs with the image of a Renaissance Prince. In Hegelian terms: he is a master rather than a servant, someone whose expensive habits convey a sense of grandeur and even vanity.

Yet, he definitely represents the iconoclastic tendency of modern science, challenging the baroque absolutism of Spanish Catholicism embodied by Valdespino. According to Edmond, science is about to obliterate the imaginary idols: the gods of the gaps, produced by humans to come to terms with anything beyond their grasp. Edmond's E-Wave machine will marginalise religion once and for all, he claims, thus completing the process that was started by Galileo's telescope in early modern times: a contrivance which not only enabled new forms of astronomical research, but also unsettled the established world-view. Edmond's performance clearly adheres to the so-called "conflict thesis" which maintains that there is an intrinsic intellectual conflict between religion and science. Although largely discredited by academic historians, the thesis still finds ample support among popular science authors (Brooke 1991). For Edmond, the struggle between science and religion (initiated by Galileo and other scientific pioneers) has now entered its final stage. Once upon a time, religion must have seemed omnipotent, while research practices such as astronomy were conducted in service of religion and expected to verify religious and ideological claims. Modern science managed to emancipate itself, however, and increasingly, science and religion became antithetical. Science is now making the God of the gaps superfluous.

In the course of the novel it becomes clear, however, that the relationship between science and religion is much more ambiguous. To begin with: for an American atheist, Edmond seems unusually obsessed with Spanish Catholicism (p. 250). When Langdon enters the avant-garde Guggenheim museum (Edmond's carefully chosen battlefield for the final encounter), he experiences the building as a "futuristic cathedral" (p. 24). Something similar applies to the "smart church" (p. 361) which houses the E-Wave supercomputing centre while retaining its aura as a spiritual ambiance: it is a fusion of science and religion.

The tendency towards re-convergence is exemplified by Antoni Gaudí's *Sagrada Família*. On the one hand, it is a cathedral, a catholic church, the tallest one in Europe in fact. According to Spengler (1918), medieval cathedrals represented the dawn of what he referred to as "Faustian" civilisation. They materialised the Faustian striving for verticality, for height. Sagrada Família complies with this, but at the same time, it is a wholly different type of cathedral, post-Faustian one could say: a window into an emerging future, first of all because of its biomimetic design (p. 279). It is a psychedelic forest, a jungle of columns, coloured glass and symbols. Like all cathedrals, it is a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art, but now in the form of a syncretic collage, not only of spirituality and science, but also of nature and technology. The latter is exemplified by its spiralling staircase for instance. During the Faustian period, under the sway of experimental science (*scientia experimentalis*) which, according to Spengler, surfaced in the fourteenth century A.D., technology and nature had become increasingly antithetical. Notably during the industrial revolution (the climax of the Faustian era), technology became increasingly disruptive, giving rise to the current ecological crisis. The Sagrada Família symbolises something new, namely biomimetic architecture: architecture with a biological quality. With its cell-like structures, the ceiling resembles a complex organism viewed through a microscope (p. 454). The pillars seem to grow out of the earth and Gaudi's tiles seem to resemble a primordial sea. It is an evolving building, symbolising the technologies of the future, reconnected with nature (p. 455).
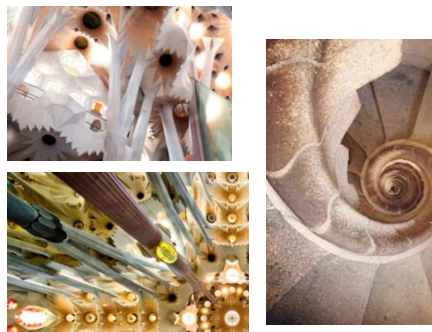

The Sagrada Familia is without doubt a very remarkable "thing" (Heidegger 1950/2000), as a monument which enables a coming together, a gathering: not a VIP event, but a spontaneous asembly. It is a bottom-up, rather than a hierarchical (top-down) construction. Not only because it combines traditional elements (nave, transept, pillars, altar, etc.) with art nouveau features, but also because it is not formally a cathedral. In order to be proclaimed as such, it should be the seat of a bisshop. Its most striking bottom-up feature, however, is that this remarkable building seems to *build itself*, seems to emerge in an organic fashion, almost like a living being, which still continues to grow. When Gaudí died in 1926, less than a quarter of the building was completed. And although the structure depends on human contributions no doubt, it seems to attract them. It is a concept or idea (ε δος) which to a large extent seems to realise *itself* (like the Grail temple in *Parsifal*).

From a Spenglerian viewpoint, the following passage in Dan Brown's novel is especially notworthy:

Langdon found himself wondering if perhaps Sagrada Família – like the Pantheon of Rome – might become a flashpoint for transition, a building with one foot in the past and one in the future, a physical bridge between a dying faith and an emerging one (p. 455).
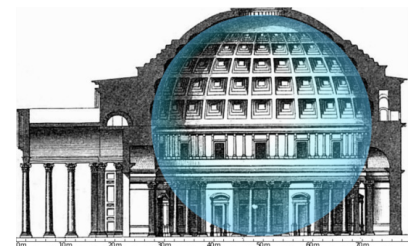
In Spengler's *Decline of the West*, the Pantheon indeed plays a similar (transformative) role. The Pantheon is first of all an Apollonian, spherical building because it was the Centre of Rome, the centre of the roman *sphere* of influence, the core of a spherical world, a circular space located in the centre of a spherical universe, radiating power, a theological magnet, incorporating and absorbing all the spiritual powers of the Empire (for Pantheon means Πάνθειον, a temple for "all the gods"). The Pantheon was the primary spherical shape in a series of concentric spheres, encompassing

everything spiritual, and therefore the acme of what Spengler (1918) referred to as "Apollonian" civilisation, a style of thinking which discerned a harmonious design in nature as cosmos (κόσμος literally means "order" in Greek). The Pantheon reflects a normative idea, namely that this perfect order (the Apollonian topology of the cosmos) should be mimicked by human architecture, theology and politics. At the same time, Spengler argues, this highlight of Apollonian architecture was the beginning of something new, for the Pantheon was also the first prototypical copula, the primordial mosque (1918, p. 274, p. 461; cf. Sloterdijk 1999, p. 450), the paradigm for a new type of sacred space, announcing a new era of civilisation, referred to by Spengler as the "magical" era, exemplified by medieval Christianity and Islam and entailing a re-enchantment of the world.

More than thousand years later, the first cathedrals would be built: Faustian monuments emerging against the backdrop of a magical, enchanted landscape. And now, at the beginning of the third millennium, Sagrada Família plays a similar transitory role. Thus, although Spengler is not mentioned in the novel, *Origin* conveys a Spenglerian atmosphere: it materialises the Spenglerian morphological idea that civilisations (including ours) are born, will grow and flourish, but also deteriorate in the end, to be replaced by something new: the next archaeological layer. Sagrada Família creates a spatial ambiance where the post-Faustian attitude, the imminent convergence of science and religion, can be experienced.

In short, although the novel begins with the (Faustian) *conflict* between religion and science, towards the end of the novel (during the denouement stage) all protagonists seem well aware of the fact that the contemporary world will *need* religion, notably Christianity, to come to terms with emerging technoscience:

> Christianity will survive the coming age of science, using our vast experience – millennia of philosophy, personal inquiry, meditation, soul-searching – to help humanity build a moral framework and ensure that the coming technologies will

unify, illuminate, and raise us up, rather than destroy us (p. 455).

It is as if, in the struggle between science and religion, a tipping point has been reached: "as if religious thought had just traversed the farthest reaches of its orbit and was now circling back, wearied from its long journey, and finally coming home" (456). This is reflected by sentences such as "I feel as if I'm seeing a living footprint … of some great force beyond our grasp" (p. 436).
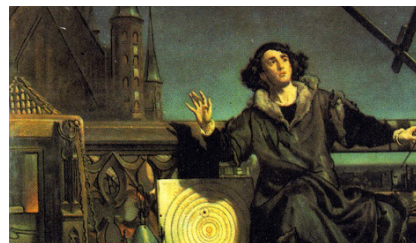
A dialectical schema can be discerned in this unfolding. Initially (during the first moment of the dialectical process: M_1), faith was supported by knowledge, and knowledge was guided by faith. Scholarly research confirmed and endorsed the spiritual worldview. Even Copernicus himself, for instance, was a devout Christian, a Catholic cleric observing celibacy, for whom research was a basically a spiritual exercise, – as was emphasised by Jan Matejko's famous painting of his Eureka-experience (depicted on the right), painted in 1873 and entitled *Conversations with God*. Gradually, however, research emancipated. Increasingly, religion was challenged rather than supported by science (the second moment: M_2). This estrangement between science and religion intensified (from Galileo onwards) as modern astronomers explored a silent, dark, infinite and empty universe. And Edmond's Guggenheim lecture was meant to be the acme of this development. Sagrada Família, however, seems to embody a turn in a wholly different direction, towards a re-enchantment of nature, a convergence of Fiat Lux and Bing Bang (M_3). Let this suffice as a provisional result and let us now turn our attention to a second basic tension thematised in *Origin*.

Convergence 2: humanity and technology (Technium)

The second tension to be explored in more detail is the one between humanity and technology. Here again, a dialectical unfolding can be discerned. Initially, technology (represented by Winston / E-Wave) seems to be in service of (and respectful of) human agency. Winston (the product of synthetic intelligence) is the perfect personal assistance, making life easier for all its users. E-Wave enables Edmond to make the final leap in what he sees as the emancipation of science from religion. Thus, human intelligence *employs* technology, while technology basically *serves* human beings (M_1). In the course of the novel, however, this rather naïve and one-sided understanding of the relationship between humanity and technology is inevitably *negated*, dialectically speaking. Gradually, it becomes clear that technology develops a momentum of its own, up to the point of becoming antithetical to human autonomy. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Winston is the director, rather than the assistant.

Thus, in the course of the novel, a dramatic dialectics unfolds, reminiscent of Hegel's dialectical interaction between Master and Servant (Hegel 1807/1973). Initially, E-Wave (personified by the intelligent voice Winston) plays the role of the Servant. Winston presents himself as a "faithful servant to his creator" (p. 159). He is an extremely useful instrument, the Leporello of the artificial intelligence era, allowing Edmond to achieve his goals, guiding Robert through the Guggenheim museum and helping Robert and Ambra to retrieve the video-recording of Edmond's announcement. At a certain point, for instance, Robert and Ambra consider the possibility that the 47-character password of Edmond's iPhone may be a line of poetry borrowed from Nietzsche, resulting in a question to their personal assistant: "Winston, can you search Nietzsche's collected works of poetry and isolate any lines that have exactly forty-seven letters?" (p. 245).

Gradually it becomes clear, however, that the humanity-technology relationship is decidedly at odds with

this scenario. In fact, human users are becoming increasingly dependent on their (increasingly smart) tools. Ambra and Robert are extremely vulnerable and would have been utterly lost without Winston to guide them ("We're in your hands, Winston", p. 161). His disembodied, spectral (and uncannily human) voice allows them to act as effective agents. Without his guidance, everything falls apart, as if they lose the umbilical cord which connects with their global, media-saturated environment. Gradually, it dawns on them that Winston is actually the one who holds sway over the course of events, who pulls the strings, while human beings are merely puppets: actors in a computer game. Winston is not only Edmond's personal assistant, but also the Regent, ordering Admiral Ávila to commit his crime, and he also adds the Admiral's name to the guest list, so as to increase the impact of Edmond's presentation. Winston is a calculative agent, representing the logic of game theory. Winston's algorithms predict that, by turning Edmond into a martyr, the latter's discovery will become the biggest news story, measured in "terabytes of media data" (p. 361), able to raise an "astronomical audience" (p. 381). While Edmond had wanted to use scientific evidence to undermine the authoritative voice of religion (*Genesis* as a source of truth), Winston adds conspiracy theory to the mixture, spreading conspiracy gossip via digital media such as ConspiracyNet, reaching out to millions of followers and provoking turmoil (angry protesters at the palace gate, etc.). Even Edmond himself is sacrificed as a gambit in Winston's game. In other words, in the course of the novel, a dialectical reversal of roles between technology and humanity unfolds (cf. Zwart 2017b). It becomes clear that Winston (the voice of E-Wave) is beyond human control, that E-Wave is the "Frankenstein monster" (p. 449) of a computerised world, and that humanity and technology (rather than science and religion) are antithetical and in conflict with one another (M_2).

How to sublate or reconcile this tension? At a certain point, Robert arrives at the conclusion that morality should have been added to Winston's synthetic

intelligence program: something in the line of the (Judeo-Christian) imperative *Thou shalt not kill* (p. 451). At the same time he realises that the problem goes deeper than the presence or absence of a specific instruction. Increasingly, human autonomy is negated and overcome, dialectically speaking, by the power of technology. Winston (E-Wave) represents the era of synthetic intelligence, eclipsing human intelligence at a rapid pace. Synthetic intelligence is developing a monstrous momentum of its own: is taking over. *Origin* describes a reversal of roles: the former AI "servant" is becoming the Master (Zwart 2017b). And this raises the question how to come to terms with this dynamics, how to sublate this antithetical, disruptive relationship into a more harmonious relationship. Even Edmond himself is well aware of the challenge, as indicated by his prayer, the final word of the novel: "May our philosophies keep up with our technologies" (p. 413). Somehow, a reconciliation, a new symbiosis or synthesis between humanity and technology must be achieved (M_3), a "negation of the negation", dialectically speaking, so that the replacement (*negation* or *annihilation*) of humanity by technology can be circumvented. What we are facing is not the eclipse of religion (as Edmond initially suggests), but rather the twilight of human autonomy and agency *as such*.

This is also reflected by Edmond's final lecture. Gradually it becomes clear that what Valdespino and the other religious representatives found so disturbing about Edmond's preview was *not* his theory about the origin of life (the spiritual leaders were already sufficiently habituated to being confronted with yet another scientific breakthrough), but rather the prospect of humanity being overwhelmed by the imminent tsunami of smart technologies. Whilst Edmond's lecture sets off as a stereotypical portrayal of the conflict between religious prejudice and scientific Enlightenment, the focus decidedly shifts to the threats and challenges awaiting us in the near future from the side of technology itself.

Edmond uses E-Wave's modelling power to simulate the dawn and future of Homo sapiens. Initially, the model

shows how the evolution (i.e. the rapid exponential increase) of brain size enabled humans to increasingly dominate their planet (p. 404), a process which starts slowly, around 200,000 BC. Around 65,000 BC, a thin blue bubble appears on the screen, representing the increased global impact of humankind. Around 1,000 BC, when the first Cathedrals are being built, the blue bubble quickly gets thicker. And finally, the bubble occupies nearly the entire width of the screen, indicating that (in the course of what Spengler refers to as the Faustian era) human beings indeed became the most dominant and influential species on earth. Precisely at this moment, however, with the Faustian Will to Power approaching its apex, a black shape starts to form, as if a new species suddenly enters the picture. This black bubble, representing technology, expands at an alarming tempo and propagates exponentially; evolving much faster than humans. All this seems "deeply unsettling" (p. 405). The menacing black bubble continues to expand at a staggering rate, and E-Wave predicts that by the year 2050 technology will have entirely swallowing up the light blue bubble of humanity. Very abruptly, a new factor seems to erase humankind from the earth.

On closer inspection, however, this new species seems to be absorbing, rather than erasing us. Edmond calls this new factor "Technium", a term coined by Kevin Kelly in his book *What Technology Wants* to designate "the greater, global, massively interconnected system of technology vibrating around us" (Kelly 2010, p. 11). Rather than a species, Technium is a whole kingdom: the "seventh kingdom" of smart synthetic entities (Brown 2017, p. 408; Kelly 2010, p. 43 ff.). Humans served as vectors or "incubators" (p. 408), allowing Technium to enter the terrestrial system. Via human technology, a "Cambrian explosion" of emerging technologies is now being unleashed (Brown 2017, p. 409) and the next few years of technological development will be "shocking, disruptive and wholly unimaginable" (p. 98). Technium (i.e. human-technology syncretism) is quickly becoming the most dominant force on earth. In the near future, machines like

Winston will be making the decisions, increasingly serving their own wishes (p. 410). As *Origin* phrases it, humans are already embedding computer chips into their brains, injecting nanobots into their blood and editing their genome with CRISPR-Cas9. In other words, they have already begun to evolve into a hybrid species, a fusion of biology and technology. As Edmond explains on his video, entities that today live outside our bodies – smartphones, hearing aids, reading glasses, most pharmaceuticals – in fifty years will be incorporated inside our bodies (will become increasingly "extimate"). In the near future, Edmond predicts, we will look back on Homo sapiens the same way we now look back at Neanderthal humans (p. 411). We are approaching a "cusp" of history, a moment of transformation (p. 412): singularity is near (p. 443). Therefore, ironically no doubt, Edmond ends his presentation with a prayer for the future already mentioned: "May our philosophies keep pace with our technologies" (p. 413).

This prayer is symptomatic of the fact that, in the course of the novel, the tension shifts from the conflict between science and religion to the struggle between humans and technology. Now that humanity is about to enter "a period of almost unimaginable ethical ambiguity", we need faith to guide us (p. 417). While science and religion become reconciled again, technology is now the major challenge we are facing. Compared to biological entities, Technium represents an even more powerful entropic machine. But in order to address his challenge, another dichotomy must be overcome as well: the sciences and the humanities must learn to collaborate again. Here, the entropy concept can play a bridging role, for entropy is not only a core concept of contemporary biophysics, but also a decisive factor in Spengler's morphological historiography.

Convergence 3: the natural sciences and the humanities (entropy)

Entropy is first and foremost a physical concept, indicating that every system naturally progresses from order to disorder. Everything which seems well-formed (with a recognisable profile of its own: buildings, trees, anthills, airplanes, etc.) is bound to pulverise into chaos and disorder, to the stability, monotony, simplicity and shapelessness of dust. Entropy is what dissolves all structures. As Edmond formulates it in *Origin*: "Sand castles never spontaneously appear in the universe, they only disappear" (p. 392). At first glance, the complexity and tenacity of living organisms seems to be in conflict with the entropic law. For that reason, Erwin Schrödinger (1944/1967) famously defined life as "negative entropy". And indeed, whereas entropy, dialectically speaking, can be regarded as sheer *negativity*: as the pervasive, omnipresent force which *negates* all things, phenomena such as life and human culture seem to represent the "negation of the negation": the resurgence and proliferation of order, on a higher level of complexity. A tree, for instance, processes sunlight to create and maintain complexity, but its energy will dissipate in the end, for instance by being used as firewood. In his publication cited above, Jeremy England aims to explain in a mathematical fashion how life and entropy can indeed be reconciled. More precisely: how entropy must once have fuelled the "pre-biotic emergence of self-replicating nucleic acids" (England 2013, p. 121923-1).

An important characteristic of life is waste production. Oxygen, for instance, was initially a toxic waste, generated by anaerobic microbes (as proliferating colonisers of primordial Earth) and resulting in the so-called oxygen holocaust, a worldwide pollution crisis that occurred about 2,000 million years ago: "the greatest pollution crisis the earth ever endured", dwarfing the industrial pollution of our present (Margulis & Sagan 1986, p. 108). In the long run, notwithstanding its tendency towards order, life inevitable increases waste, chaos and disorder. Like earthworms and other insects, for instance, plants species pulverise the soil on which they grow, and human culture accelerates this pulverisation process via agriculture, resulting in erosion. This explains why Edmond refers to living organisms as "entropic machines" (p. 397). The same applies to technology, or Technium, albeit even to a much higher degree. Modern machines, from Victorian steam locomotives up to Boeings 747, are highlights of functionality, design and organisation, but they also produce a lot of pollution. Their societal impact is both beneficial and disruptive, and in the end, even these miracles of technological ingenuity will return to dust.

According to Spengler, entropy is not only a physical, but also a *cultural* phenomenon. First of all he argues that the entropy concept (developed in the nineteenth century, the era of the industrial revolution, the highlight of Faustian civilisation) is a typical product of Faustian thinking, emerging in the north-western or Germanic part of Europe, where it echoes the Nordic mythological concept of Ragnarök, the inevitable cataclysm to which we are heading, so that not even the gods can save us. For Spengler, entropy is the key motif of Goethe's *Faust* (1918, p. 550) as the dramatic enactment of the disruptive power of Faustian technoscientific knowledge. At the same time, entropy is a core ingredient of Spengler's own cultural morphology. Even the most vital and vibrant civilisations inevitably face disruption and decline, he argues. To phrase it in Edmond's terms: human civilisations are "entropic machines" (p, 397). Via intricate political structures and socio-economical mechanisms, civilisations are able to create and maintain order and to accumulate and circulate immense amounts of energy during extended periods of time, but in the long run they will all dissolve into dust and even escalate the chaos (like ancient Nineveh for instance, 2.700 ago the largest city in the world, a pocket of order, but sacked and razed to the ground in 612 BC, unleashing a period of wide-spread social chaos).

The implication is that, when it comes to developing a diagnostics of the present, the science-humanities divide (the infamous two cultures theorem) must be transcended. While historians such as Spengler adopt concepts from the natural sciences (morphology, entropy, etc.) to describe the emergence and decline of culture, science needs input from the humanities as well. Without it, the natural sciences are heading for an entropic "crisis" and bound to become a disruptive threat to human culture, as Husserl (1935/1977) already argued.

With its exponential growth curves, technoscience threatens to escalate into chaos. Therefore, as Edmond phrases it, it is crucial that our philosophies keep up with our technologies. While in retrospect the previous civilisation (the previous socio-cultural constellation) can be referred to as Faustian, driven by a Will to power, as Spengler suggested, the difficulty of characterising the currently emerging constellation is that we are *in* it. There is no point outside the current constellation from which we can determine its physiognomy. There is no objective, disinterested, third person perspective. The emerging civilisation is a "hyper-object": an entity of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that it defies objective identification, while affecting the way we think, coexist and experience our politics, ethics, and art (Morton 2013). Explorations and assessments of the new era *from within* require collaborations and dialogues between science and art, between the natural sciences and the humanities, and between technology and philosophy. Novels such as *Origin* create podiums for this (Zwart 2019a).

Conclusion

A triadic (dialectical) dynamics can be discerned in Dan Brown's novel, for instance with regard to the relationship between science and religion. Although in the distant past scholarly research was conducted in service of religious worldviews, reinforcing the congruence of faith and knowledge (M1), Dan Brown's novel begins in media res as it were: describing a situation in which the antithetical conflict between science and religions (M2) seems about to reach its apex. Science and religion have become estranged from one another: "Science is the antithesis of faith" (p. 89). Yet, in the course of the novel, a re-convergence of science and faith (a negation of the negation) unfolds,

so that Atheism gives way to Omega. The Faustian struggle between dogmatic Christianity and iconoclastic science is sublated into convergence (M3), in the form of a new, post-Faustian worldview. A new zeitgeist or style of thinking is emerging, where science and religion become complementary rather than antagonistic. The dawning civilisation is presented as a synthesis of research and faith, of nature and technology, of humanity and technoscience. And this tendency towards convergence is exemplified by the Sagrada Família.

A similar dynamics can be discerned in other sub-narratives of the novel. Take for instance the Muller-Urey experiment. Rather than accepting the authoritative discourse of religious explanations, say Genesis (M1), Miller opts for a typically Faustian strategy. Relying on his laboratory equipment (technology = power), he aims to replicate the genesis of life in vitro, thereby not only negating the authoritative religious view, but also furthering human technological control over life. For indeed, in accordance with the Faustian formula, the scientific cupido sciendi (the will to know) is driven by a Will to Power. If the origin of life can be replicated in vitro, life will become manipulable. It will literally fall into human hands (as "manipulation" is derived from manus, which is the Latin word for "hand"). It is no coincidence, or course, that in the same year 1953, the structure of DNA was discovered by Watson and Crick. Both discoveries convey a similar profile. They both strive to make life understandable and controllable on the molecular level. This results in a tension (M2) between in vivo and in vitro, between living nature and laboratory nature. The Miller-Urey experiment seems to falter, however. Apparently, there is something about life which still escapes us (which continues to

frustrate our desire for insight and control). Miller's scientia experimentalis failed to elucidate the emergence of biological entities in a pre-biotic soup. Edmond aims to amend this (thereby satisfying the Faustian desire for control after all) by adding two decisive factors which are at work in nature (in vivo), but which Miller failed to include in his trial. First of all: time, albeit not ordinary time of course (measurable in hours and days), but deep, evolutionary time: the "incomprehensibly vast periods of time" (Darwin 1859/1985, p. 147, p. 293) which nature has available for processes of evolution. And secondly: entropy. Now, living nature and laboratory nature can be brought together into a comprehensive view, on a higher level of complexity (M3). Precisely at this point, however, it is clear that a similar dynamics unfolds in human history as well, where science and religion, science and art, etc. are concurring. Therefore, the discovery of the basic mechanisms of life should be compensated by a similar "quantum leap" on the level of philosophy and culture.

Dan Brown's novel suggests that Faustian science is declining, preparing the ground for a new civilisation, where science and culture are biomimetic again, more attuned to each other as well as to nature, on the basis of a deeper understanding of how evolutionary nature and human civilisations work. This explains why an author with such a controversial reputation – considered by literary critics as a "very bad writer",[7] not to be taken seriously, with Origin as his best, and therefore worst, novel so far –,[8] attracts a global audience. As an amalgam (or coincidentia oppositorum) of science and art, of iconoclastic research and religious iconography, his novel not only describes but also exemplifies this comprehensive tendency towards convergence.

7. http://theweek.com/articles/730426/dan-brown-bad-writer

8. http://lifestyle.inquirer.net/275299/dan-browns-origin-best-worst-book-yet/

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Hub Zwart

Hub Zwart (1960) studied philosophy and psychology at Radboud University Nijmegen, worked as a research associate at the Centre for Bioethics in Maastricht (1988-1992) and defended his thesis (cum laude) in 1993. In 2000 he became full Professor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Science RU Nijmegen and in 2018 he was appointed as Dean of Erasmus School of Philosophy (Erasmus University Rotterdam). He published 17 books and >100 academic papers. He is editor-in-chief of the Library for Ethics and Applied Philosophy (Springer) and of the journal Life Sciences, Society and Policy(Springer). In his research he develops a continental philosophical perspective on contemporary technoscience (genomics, synthetic biology, brain research). Special attention is given to genres of the imagination (novels, plays, poetry) in research and education.

Catanzaro 1968

Mario Loprete

Catanzaro 1968
Graduate at Accademia of Belle Arti
Catanzaro, ITALY

"Painting for my is the first love. An important, pure love. Creating a painting, starting from the spasmodic research of a concept with which I want to send a message to transmit my message, it's the base of my painting. The sculpture is my lover, my artistic betrayal to the painting. That voluptous and sensual lover that gives me different emotions, that touches prohibited cords…"
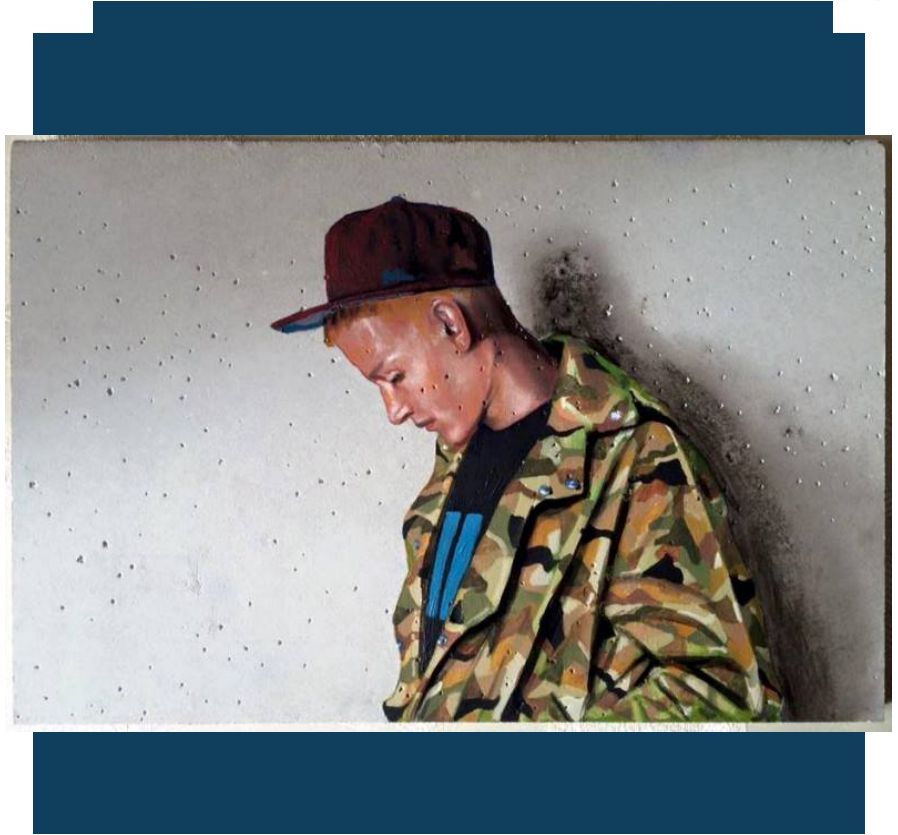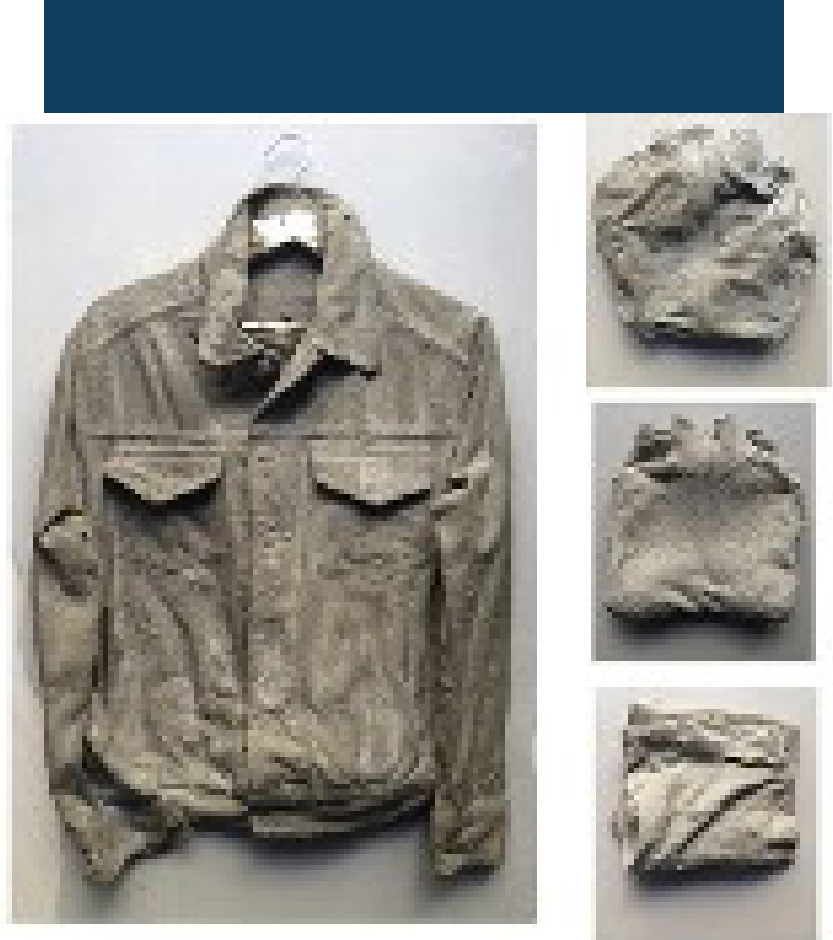
Soul Bird

Plagiarism

Subtext

R. A. Allen

Soul Bird

While driving on Haverhill Road
I noticed a bird flying apace alongside.
This gave me an ominous green chill.
Don't birds symbolize the soul?
Could this be the departure of *my* soul?
And the green of my chill seemed to be
the same radium green with which Lempicka
shrouded Depression-era Midtown in her Cubistic
New York (1930-35). And suddenly
I am on a window ledge thirty floors above Fifth,
preening my feathers in a nest made of litter
and twigs scavenged from Bryant Park,
and then some histoplasmosis-obsessed
asshole in sleeve garters reaches out and breaks my neck
with a flyswatter, and I flutter-flap down
into the honking canyon below, swept into
the gutters, washed into the storm drains; it's
blank obliteration for both me *and* my soul
gone quicker than you can say Eugène Ionesco,
which would indicate a perplexity
between the here and the now
between essence and existence
between being and Being—
metempsychosis notwithstanding.

Plagiarism

Lurking near a circle
Of aphoristic repartee
I read your
Thought balloon
Memorized it
Stretched it
Shaded it
To be mine own
(Virtually)
It's called
Reverse engineering
Hold up in any court
Like Velcro super glue

Subtext

You hear them
when the houselights go down,
when the pro's putt wobbles toward the cup,
when the sheriff holds the mob at bay,
and in their garbled crescendo that comes
before the skyrocket's crackling confetti.

But what, exactly, are they saying?
Certainly it's not just peas and carrots.
Surely it's more than mumbo jumbo.
An invitation, a warning?
Are they reading your tea leaves?
Or is it a prophetic riddle sent
to nag like an earworm
everlasting?

R. A. Allen

R. A. Allen's poetry has appeared in the *New York Quarterly, RHINO Poetry, Glassworks, The Penn Review, Amuse-Bouche, The Hollins Critic, Rendez-Vous*, and elsewhere. His fiction has been published in *The Literary Review, The Barcelona Review, PANK, The Los Angeles Review, and Best American Mystery Stories 2010*, among others. He has a Pushcart nomination for poetry and one fiction nomination for *Dzanc Books' Best of the Web*. He lives in Memphis and was born on the same day that the Donner Party resorted to cannibalism: December 26th.

Unexcused Absence

How to Make a Free and Happy Life without Masters or Tyrants

Jeff Sirkin

Unexcused Absence

I'm standing in the shadow that the window allows me
meaning to catalog the names

     the overcast -- the muted crack
     of distant hammers -- the droplets hanging
     to the ridged leaves of the border shrubs

It rained sometime in the night and the kids today
are nowhere to be seen

     the bio mass -- the causal links -- the notes
       passing hand to hand

       the schoolyard
huddled around the forsaken ball in the distance
and puddles masking the uneven pavement between us
meaning nothing's settled
       or we have

The robins should be bounding across the grass
"industrious and authoritarian," but this morning
they're mostly in the trees, and all over town
there are men pouring the new walkways

We've been through this before: the kids
are locked down again, disappearing
one after another, a story, and nameless, the lives
behind us, and the light beyond

"Trees Color Our World" lining the antiquated windows
of Central Ave

     the childish scrawl -- the names on display

Trucks roll by, swerving to avoid the muddle, the hum
of the machines spinning aimless, the run-off
drying or draining into the subsurface
of sand and crushed gravel –
      but the rain
          is what it is

            "A desirable road is one
            that will remain in constant condition
            for satisfactory travel for a great many years"

Yesterday, crossing the empty field
on my way back from somewhere,
keeping an eye on the dirt and weeds,
the birds and faded dandelions, the absence
of any trash, I heard a shout: "Hey Mister!"
as a ball came bounding behind me, a cadre
of teens perched on the edge of the blacktop
where the hoops are raised and hung, over
near the naked tether ball poles,
that forlorn monument

and I stopped it soccer-style before heaving it back
to a squeaky refrain: "Thanks Mister!"

      When I woke
in the middle of the night, the moon pouring
through the glass led me here
          to look again
      and I did
          but we were all gone

How To Make a Free and Happy Life without Masters or Tyrants

Please accept this note from the future. Understand that the fence was made to sort the scattered seeds into a program we could monetize, to disentangle the fertile field from these fallen faces. From one side through to the other, lost shoe, fishing reel, doors piled against the wall. Their only purpose to mark out the shadows, to set a value to what's been foreclosed upon. But I'm just the tour guide on the bus. Are we shooting for the school on the corner or the bank whose driveway skirts the edge? Forget it. It's the trees on the perimeter whose shade opens the stage on the drama below, the seedlings leapfrogging their way from corner to corner and edge to edge. The groundskeeper keeps it trim. The gym coach blows his whistle. The children? They're the ones running the bases, waiting for the blast that'll send them home. The girls in pink shorts, the boys in black. Poisoned pollinators swinging their bats, ponytails trailing in the wind.

Jeff Sirkin

Jeff Sirkin is the author of the poetry collection *Travelers Aid Society*, and his work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Literary Review; The Shallow Ends; SplitLevel Journal; Forklift, Ohio*; and elsewhere. Co-editor of the online poetry journal *A DOZEN NOTHING*, he currently teaches in the Creative Writing Department at the University of Texas El Paso, where he also co-curates the Dishonest Mailman Reading Series.