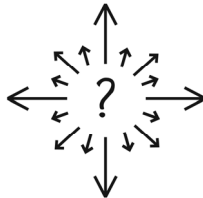


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I. BOOK REVIEWS

***Mass Conversions to Christianity and Islam, 800–1100*, ed. Tsvetelin Stepanov and Osman Karatay, 2024, Palgrave Macmillan, 352 pp., €106.99, ISBN: 9783031344282**

Iliya Metchkov (RHM Sofia)

This collection of twelve articles covers almost all cases of collective state conversions to Abrahamic religions in Euro-Asia from the ninth century to the beginning of the twelfth. The title delineates a unique cultural-historical phenomenon – the conversion of a significant number of pagan peoples, influenced by their already converted neighbors. In the long term, this process proved irreversible and shaped the forms of medieval Christian and Islamic civilizations, and still define the character of these vast regions today.

Nine leading European scholars contribute articles dedicated to conversions in Europe, three Turkish scholars focus on Asia. The European specialists have decades of experience, and their articles present their present perspectives on long-studied problems, reflecting individual research specifics and styles suited to their chosen themes and methodologies. Some articles are overviews and more general in nature, others are more specific. Several texts analyze medieval written sources and are related to the disclosure of mental structures (culture, way of thinking). Overall, the articles deal with reconstructing the history of events before and during the conversions, clarifying the factors and peculiarities of individual cases. A notable weakness is the choice not to cite written sources.

The extensive introduction by the editors, Osman Karatay and Tsvetelin Stepanov, is impressive. It provides a thorough geopolitical analysis of the process of *monotheization* in East and West and broaches the field of medieval anthropology and social psychology. They highlight two main waves (stages) in the spread of Christianity and Islam. The first occurs in the civilization accepting the monotheistic faith. The

legacy of the Christianized Western Roman Empire passes to the new barbarian peoples that came into its orbit. The northwestern borders of the Frankish state at the beginning of the seventh century delineated the limit of Christian expansion for two centuries. This period of *stagnancy* is valid for Byzantium too. The Franks first needed to conquer and convert the Saxons. Only with the strengthening of the Eastern Frankish (German) kingdom and the (later) creation of the Holy Roman Empire of the Ottonians did the Christianization of the West and Central Europe enter its second wave. The newly Christianized Germans became the conduit for their pagan neighbors on the same geographical latitude. A similar pattern of interaction, in which “like attracts and is understood through like” (an ancient principle), is also found in the spread of Islam. Initially, the Arabs did not share a common language with the Turkic tribes. Islamized Iranians, who consolidated in the Central Asian state created by the Samanid dynasty, later carried out a transmissive conversion with their Turkic neighbors.

Additionally, a key condition for successful mass conversion on the so-called country level was the presence of “central policy making mechanisms.” This means that the “barbarians” must have already organized themselves into early states.¹ It is no coincidence that most attempts by Byzantium and the Papacy to impose Christianity on societies at a pre-state level ended in failure. Christianized representatives of tribal elites were soon isolated from their own people. This demonstration of a collective consciousness and mental resistance against the new religions, and the imperial states representing them, is explained by the fear of losing freedom.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, for the first time in the history of Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe, comprehensive growth in terms of progress and evolution was observed. These societies experienced the development of various aspects of life, among them population increases, the growth of agricultural production, the growing density of settlement and communication networks, the development of early urbanization, and the expansion of territorial communities composed of middle owners. Pagan Slavic tribes consolidated into early states, surrounded by more developed southern and western Christian neighbors,

¹ Tsvetelin Stepanov and Osman Karatay, eds. *Mass Conversions to Christianity and Islam, 800–1100* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 9.

united by theocratic ideological constructs, equipped with a systematic apparatus of governance, and a network of Christian institutions with literate specialists.² In the west, Germans exerted both military and missionary pressure. In the continent's grand geopolitical game, every type of state soon became involved in a system of foreign political alliances. Official Christianization became inevitable. There was always a strong political motivation.

In turn, Christianization gave rulers who adopted it an advantage in the struggle for power, as in the case of Hungarian Grand Prince Geza, who consolidated the settling Magyars at the end of the tenth century.³ The medieval European cultural model of Christianity offers stabilizing know-how in the development of political and social integration processes. Morals and relations are regulated and refined by Christian ethics. Gradually, new types of Christian societies and elites formed. As Vladimir Gradev points out in the concluding article of the collection, "Monotheisation is a process in which quick, sudden conversions coexist with slow and gradual changes, and all this alongside and together with the long lifespan of pagan beliefs and practices. The spread of Christianity, for instance, continued everywhere for decades and even longer."⁴ Society quickly stratifies, the morality of the ruling classes was exposed to public criticism, and heretical and social movements arose. However, as suggested, the dynamics of the numerous aspects of conversion processes are not the focus of this collection. That would have made for an enormous volume.

In "Great Moravia: The Uneasy Beginnings of Slavic Christendom," the versatile Bulgarian medievalist Alexander Nikolov presents a detailed political history of Central European Slavs over four centuries. The Moravian mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius is described in detail. Nikolov provides a classical reconstruction of the complex dynamic events in Central Europe, driven by the Western Franks, the Papacy, and Byzantium.

The fecund Bulgarian historian Ts. Stepanov determines the relationship between "the real historical facts" about St. Tsar Boris-Michael of Bulgaria (852–889; † 907) and Bulgarian texts. In sources deriving from both "high" culture and so-called "low" culture, representations of

² See Tsvetelin Stepanov, *Evolution of the Bulgar Statehood, 4th - 9th Centuries*. Sofia [in Bulgarian], 26-43.

³ *Mass Conversions to Christianity and Islam, 800–1100*, 138.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 328.

the ruler are extremely rare. In the official version of the Synodic of Tzar Boril (1211), he is presented simply as the ruler who baptized his people and even as the first Bulgarian ruler. Stepanov wonders why this is. In the apocryphal literature of the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries, there are writings that offer fantastic information about a ruler called Michael. Some scholars search this for folklore nuclei from real historical memory. Stepanov is inclined to think that the image of Tsar Michael repeats the clichés of St. Michael the Archangel, including the iconographic versions of his depiction.⁵

In her contribution, “The Christianisation of the Kingdom of Hungary,” the well-known Hungarian historian Nora Berend critically examines domestic Hungarian written sources, which provide abundant data on the history, including the pre-Christian period. Some seem to contain genuine nuclei of folklore memory. Berend’s conclusions offer only slight encouragement. Since these sources offer extremely varied and contradictory accounts of the conversion – the main actors, the armed uprisings, and the state of society before, during, and in the two centuries following 1002 – it is practically impossible to extract reliable information from them.⁶ The structure and content of the texts is subordinated to different narrative lines presenting the victory of Christianity and the legitimation of the authorities, strongly influenced by literary fiction and familiar clichés in their portrayal of pagan otherness. This makes many of the questions traditionally dealt with by Hungarian national historiography irrelevant.

“Who Converted the Poles?” asks the authoritative Polish historian Przemysław Urbańczyk. A deeply rooted Polish historiographic tradition offers a very clear answer: baptism happened in 966 by the decision of Prince Mieszko I. But “the discussion still continued by scholars who point to numerous uncertainties stemming from unclear historical sources and archaeological evidence.”⁷ Urbańczyk points out that for the approximately three decades following that symbolic date, there is at present no knowledge whatsoever of any material traces of Christianity’s expansion. Like other late Christianized countries (e.g. Sweden, Hungary), Poland “faced prolonged periods of dual faith.” In many places, like Bohemia, “various pagan traditions were observed not only

⁵ Ibid., 201.

⁶ Ibid., 153.

⁷ Ibid., 101.

by simple peasants but also by members of the political elites.”⁸ Urbańczyk presents a complex hypothesis, suggesting the Great Moravian descent of Mieszko I’s ancestors. Their ruling house was traditionally Christian. They brought “know-how to organise a new political and administrative system in the area where no previous complex organisations had existed,” but they did not care about baptizing the people. It was Mieszko’s son Bolesław Chrobry (992–1025) who really launched the process of extensive and intensive evangelization.

The history of Latin missions to Eastern Europe is a research target of the established and prolific English researcher Ian Wood. The second half of the tenth century and the first decade of the eleventh witnessed a major revival in missionary activity, especially in Eastern and Northern Europe. This period witnessed missions to the Danes, the Hungarians, the Rus, the Pechenegs and the Prussians. This history is dominated by two figures, Adalbert of Prague and Bruno of Querfurt. Their wide-ranging missions depended on imperial, secular, and papal interests. Bruno fully adheres to his ideal of monastic humility and practices missions in the early Christian spirit, aimed at the poor, with an understanding of local specifics. His views about how a mission should be pursued are expressed in his hagiographical writings and in his letter to Henry II. Ian Wood examines how, with a heavy heart, Bruno had to conform to the political and diplomatic requirements of the official missions he was tasked to lead, witnessing acts of violence.⁹

The Scandinavian case is dealt with in two contributions. Władysław Duczko’s article, dedicated to the early processes of Christianization in Denmark and Sweden during the Viking Age (700–1100 AD), analyzes the results of archaeological excavations. According to the written sources, the earliest efforts to introduce Christianity to the Norse started at the beginning of the eighth century. Archaeological traces show instances of earlier penetration of Christianity (individual conversion). In the 960s, Harold, the king of Denmark, publicly converted to Christianity and “made the Danes Christians.” The new religion also catalyzed and shaped the ongoing process of Christianization. While the missionary work in Sweden was destroyed by rebellion, the conversion of Denmark proceeded slowly and without dramatic violence.¹⁰ “Christianisa-

⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁹ Ibid., 145.

¹⁰ Ibid., 36.

tions in Scandinavia,” by the Swedish historian Henrik Janson, explores the process in a wide geographical and temporal framework. Swedish Christianization was slower, more contradictory, and reversible; among the Norwegians, social and political changes happened very slowly due to ecological factors that defined the strong role of the community. The conclusion is that Christianity was not the killer of the Vikings, who exhausted their energy in expansion and the creation of new societies, but rather the crown of the slow natural transformation of their society from that of petty kingdoms to nations.

In his overview article, “The Choice of Faith in Early Medieval Eastern Europe: Individual and Mass Conversion,” the prominent Russian researcher and specialist Vladimir Petrukhin analyzes the situation in the lands north of the Black Sea over five centuries. “In general, the situation of the choice of faith is directly related to geopolitical conflicts, which pushed the rulers to religious reforms,” he claims, and adds that the initiators of religious reforms were the rulers of the emerging states – “Almiš of the Volga Bulgars, and finally (ca. 986) Prince Vladimir in Kievan Rus.”¹¹

The boundaries of Christianity and Islam’s spread in Eastern Europe run between Kievan Rus to the west and the Khazar Khaganate and Volga Bulgaria to the east. Volga Bulgaria is the first state formation in Europe to adopt Islam, despite being entirely surrounded by paganism. The Hungarian orientalist István Zimonyi’s article, “The Conversion of the Volga Bulgars to Islam,” is dedicated to this. He is the first Volga Bulgarianist to write in English since 1990. Zimonyi systematically presents the main issues in interpreting written and numismatic sources for the history of the Volga Bulgars. Their society was transitioning to one of settlement, engaged in large-scale international trade, and the state was solidifying. Based on their contacts with the Samanids, within two to three decades, they began to adopt Islam, a situation documented by the Arab missionary Ibn Fadlan in 922.¹²

The issue of Islamization among Central Asian Turkic nomadic tribes in the tenth century is quite different. The Turkish contributors to the collection combine a detailed reconstruction of events with a sociological approach. In his article “Islamization of the Turks: A Process of

¹¹ Ibid., 173.

¹² Ibid., 222.

Mental Change,” O. Karatay examines the Seljuk case, noting the strong resistance of the emerging Oghuz tribal federation to Islam, as evidenced by Ibn Fadlan.¹³ He traces the complex path of the Oghuz to their new religion and new homeland in Asia Minor. The progenitor of the Seljuk Turks, Saljuk Beg, initially fled south, disagreeing with Oghuz participation in the Khazar defeat, possibly remaining loyal to the Khazar Jewish elite. On Samanid territory, he embraced Islam, created a new tribal core around him, and moved southwest, eventually controlling the center of the Abbasid Caliphate.¹⁴ In “The Establishment of Islam in Central Asia: Geo-Cultural Patterns and Geographical Realities,” Erkan Göksu reveals the role of the Samanids in adapting the Turks to the new religion, providing a broad panorama of the earlier Arab conquest. He discusses various factors aiding the acceptance of Islam as well as the universal characteristics of the Islamic legal-religious system displayed during the conquest and governance of non-Muslim peoples. The author somewhat idealizes the connection between medieval Central Asian Turks and Islam by suggesting that “the traditional Turkic style found more space in Islam than it had in the other religions.”¹⁵ He also speaks of the development of Turkic-Islamic culture in the eleventh century (model and written tradition), employing the notion of “Turkic Islam,” without specifying what its fate was and what kind of Turks he had in mind.

In his article “Islam in India: Acceleration Under the Ghaznavids (10th-11th Centuries),” M. Hanefi Palabiyik explores the Arab and subsequent Turkic conquest of “Sind” (the northwestern regions of India and Pakistan). This led to the mass imposition of Islam. The Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud (997–1031) organized seventeen expeditions to India, intending “*jihad*” according to sources. Simultaneously, he organized a broad religious-educational system. Some of the Indian population accepted Islam as an escape from the restrictions of the traditional caste system.¹⁶ Overall, the expansionist structures of the Seljuk, Karakhanid, and Ghaznavid empires resulted from the synthesis of the organizational and military qualities of the steppe Turks and the Islamic statesman model, crystallized in Persian-Islamic culture, applied to the conquered settled societies.

¹³ Ibid., 260.

¹⁴ Ibid., 247.

¹⁵ Ibid., 293.

¹⁶ Ibid., 315-17, 311.

**Gertrude Lübbe-Wolff, *Demophobie. Muss man die direkte Demokratie fürchten?* 2023,
Frankfurt am Main Klostermann Verlag, 212
pp., €24, ISBN: 9783465046134**

Ulrich Arnswald (Universität Kaiserslautern-Landau / Universität Innsbruck)

Gertrude Lübbe-Wolff's *Demophobie* describes itself as “a contribution to the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and risks of direct democracy.”¹ The book compares common assumptions about direct democracy with experiences at home and abroad, that is, mainly in Switzerland and the USA, with a few additional cases from other countries: Bolivia, Costa Rica, Canada and Poland. It is structured in two parts: the first addresses what she sees as “traditional reservations,” while the second goes on to discuss the significance of direct democratic instruments.²

Lübbe-Wolff, a former constitutional judge, identifies two structural weaknesses in the argument that would cast direct democracy in a negative light. The first she calls “the ideal comparison error” and this amounts to a “reality-decoupled method”³ in which the modest reality of direct democracy is compared with the ideal of an ethically superior representative democracy, inevitably coming off badly. The second weakness involves a frequent error of generalization: “‘direct democracy’ is attributed or denied certain advantages or disadvantages without taking into account that direct democratic decision-making is possible and practiced in very different forms with very different effects.”⁴ Arguments that only apply to some direct voting procedures become blanket

¹ Gertrude Lübbe-Wolff: *Demophobie. Muss man die direkte Demokratie fürchten?* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann Verlag), 9. All translations from the German original are by the reviewer.

² Ibid., 17.

³ Ibid., 28.

⁴ Ibid., 39.

condemnations of all direct democracy procedures.

Ten sections of the book consider the following views: (1) "The people are too stupid to make substantive decisions"; (2) "Direct democracy favors demagogues"; (3) "The people are not to be trusted with anything, especially in financial matters"; (4) "The people will make right-wing or at least conservative decisions" – or left-wing, or in any case ignoble, ones; (5) "Direct democracy is anti-social"; (6) "Yes-no decisions are too simple and contrary to compromise"; (7) "Direct democracy endangers minorities"; (8) "Direct democracy only suits small units"; (9) "Direct democracy does not suit representative democracy"; (10) "There is a lack of responsibility."

These boldly expressed reservations are dealt with as buzzwords without providing the situational context of the criticism, as Lübke-Wolff does not refer to where they can be found in the literature on direct democracy. This approach is problematic because the context of the evaluation remains hidden from the reader; at the same time, the answer is being steered in the direction that Lübke-Wolff considers correct and appropriate. This prevents the reader from understanding and weighing the pros and cons of the discussion in the thematic context.

The treatment in the first part of the book on the reservations identified above is followed by a second, much shorter, part titled "Neglected arguments for direct democratic decisions." It presents only four arguments: (1) "the solution to the problem of policy packages," (2) "the democratization of foreign policy," (3) "the counterweight to the short-term orientation of representative-democratic politics," and (4) "error correction friendliness."⁵

This brief section is considerably more problematic because it does not engage with the institutional considerations of representative democracy, where direct decision-making procedures are always associated and in which they must remain embedded even when direct democratic procedures are introduced. For example, Lübke-Wolff does not discuss whether, in certain contexts, it would be counterproductive to solve the problem of negotiated policy packages, as these may contribute to the pacification of society. An exclusive emphasis on the importance of voter self-determination, which is its unique and true value, prevents this, but this could prove to be a serious shortcut.

⁵ Ibid., 133–45.

More problematic still in this context is Lübke-Wolff's comparison, which probably reflects *in nuce* the former constitutional judge's understanding of democracy. She states, "Choosing is becoming increasingly difficult and unreasonable – as if you were not allowed to buy the individual foods you need and want in the supermarket, but only in ready-arranged gift basket-style combinations, many of which do not meet your own needs and tastes."⁶

This statement, which contradicts Max Weber's insight that parties are always parties representing a worldview, raises further questions. Obviously, the advantage of direct democracy lies in the greater fragmentation and individualization of democracy it fosters, which amounts to "*picking and choosing*" individual preferences, discarding all the ties that still hold society together as belonging to a "supermarket model." However, political processes are not a matter of "*picking and choosing*," requiring no social considerations or concessions to other segments of the population, serving only to maximize one's own benefit.

We briefly mention the following further contradictions regarding the supposed advantages of direct democracy:

- In representative democracies, direct democracy often fails to reflect the policies of the majority, as these have already been determined in parliamentary elections and the voters have granted the government temporary authority to act in all policy areas both in isolation and cooperation.
- Direct democratic procedures give parties a surplus right of veto. This weakens the importance of parliament and parties, instead enabling an extra-parliamentary right of veto.
- In addition to citizens' initiatives, associations and interest groups, the courts also act as veto players – all new actors empowered by referendum – which, in a competitive parliamentary democracy, often makes parties appear antiquated. Further investigation is still required to determine whether these conditions promote or strengthen democracy. In the USA, at any rate, they seem to have had a clearly divisive effect on society.
- The introduction of referendums at the federal level would limit the ability of governing parties and coalitions to communicate their specific character to the electorate. However, considering

⁶ Ibid., 136.

the next federal election, voters have the right to know a government's singular character and how good its policies are likely to be in the future.

- Moreover, such binary referendum procedures lead to fewer compromises between the parties in parliament. This can lead to a hardening of positions by the parliamentary parties, with the government and opposition intransigent and locked in relentless fighting.
- Although compromises can prevent the best decisions, they also prevent decisions from regressing into archaic black-and-white thinking, which divides society into opposing camps. Compromises lying in the gray area of political give-and-take have a pacifying effect on society, as they do not impose the maximum interests of one group. Rather, each side must make concessions so that the broadest possible spectrum of the citizenry can rally behind the compromise.
- The protection of minority rights is one of the greatest strengths of parliamentary democracy, but one that can quickly be undermined by a referendum. Lübke-Wolff cites the case of the Swiss minaret dispute, in which the result of a referendum revealed populist, non-pacifying traits.⁷
- Referendums automatically strengthen those in the position to formulate issues to be put to a vote, who have the money and resources for campaigns, who have a special passion for an issue (e.g. environmental protection, abortion, euthanasia, etc.) and who may also have access to the media.
- In large countries, it is much more difficult for citizens' initiatives at the national level to organize referendums, finance campaigns, hire staff, invest in organization, and engage in media communication than it is for professional organizations (companies, lobby groups, industry associations, etc.).
- The extreme polarization in referendums is contained by Swiss consociational democracy. In the parliamentary, compromise-oriented German representative democracy, however, there would be no equivalent if direct national referendums were held. This means that the Swiss model has little relevance for the

⁷ Ibid., 58ff.

German system of government. It is likely that national referendums in Germany would be antagonistic, which is not the case in Switzerland.

- Disinformation campaigns, conspiracy theories and outside interference in national elections have clearly highlighted new dangers for democratic referendums in recent years. Unfortunately, these are absent from Lübke-Wolff's analysis, aside from her general remarks on the need to properly formulate the instruments of direct democracy.
- At first glance, a decision voted by referendum can claim greater legitimacy than a law passed in parliament. It can be assumed that parliamentary politicians would refrain from attacking this decision, so as not to alienate the majority who cast their vote in the referendum. Consequently, a decision taken by referendum is less correctable than a parliamentary decision. However, anyone who considers the extent to which laws passed in parliament have to be repeatedly adjusted because of shortcomings, or unforeseen consequences, or other significant problems will appreciate the fact that parliamentary decisions can be corrected.
- In a parliamentary democracy, members of parliament are bound only by their conscience. There is no council republic and therefore there is no imperative mandate. Wherever referendums are possible, pressure is exerted on politicians not to go against popular opinion.
- Politicians specializing in policy areas have privileged access to information not available to citizens' initiatives. Such information is not and cannot be guaranteed in referendums. Parliamentary work is not selective, but continuous, and there can hardly be standing committees for one-off referendums. The information quickly assembled for a referendum can hardly replace the thorough expertise of politicians and their staff.
- What responsibility should be assigned to majority decision-makers in a referendum? We don't know who voted for what. The very anonymity of the voting process makes it impossible to attribute votes; whereas members of parliament have to clearly state their position in their contributions to debate.

Lübbe-Wolff may be right in assuming that representative democracy is in serious crisis. However, whether the instruments of direct democracy provide a remedy is a completely different question. There is no empirical evidence that disenchantment with politics derives from representative democracy, or that the alienation of the electorate from politicians reflects a desire for more direct democracy. This is to mix up two different aspects in an inadmissible way. A glance at the direct democratic votes at the local authority level reveals that the desire for direct democracy is – to put it mildly – extremely limited among voters. While there may be good reasons for direct democracy, there is no proof that more referendums lead to better politics and less disenchantment with politics.

Unfortunately, the book does not address the danger posed to a representative democracy that has neither a presidential system, like the United States, nor a consociational democracy, like Switzerland, from insurgents who usurp and manipulate a referendum. A blanket preference for referendums fails to address this question. One can only guess why Lübbe-Wolff is so vehemently in favor of direct democracy. She may have been inspired to this fundamental plea by her desire for alternative policies, and a review of the Swiss experience. If so, one might fear that she would then also have to advocate a new constitution based on the Swiss model, as the Swiss form of direct democracy to which she primarily refers forms a part of the country's federal concordance democracy.

Gertrude Lübbe-Wolff has written a pamphlet that needs to be understood as a personal credo calling for more direct democracy, but she does not sufficiently take into account the counter-arguments. This results from her use of empirical data coming from completely different constitutional-situational contexts, not associated with the system of government in Germany, and from a lack of engagement with criticism of the direct democratic process in both philosophy and political science.

Any empirical statements presented without theoretical underpinning ultimately amount to nothing. Statements derived from empirical data can only be meaningful if theoretical objections are first discussed, recorded and debated, then compared with the empirical data. The new tendency in the German social sciences – think of all the state-sponsored so-called real-world laboratories with their inconclusive results ex-

tracted from an artificial setting – to rely exclusively on empiricism, without a sufficiently sound theory, inevitably leads to false conclusions, since such free-floating empiricism does not allow a sufficient grasp of the problem situation. The new German empiricism will thus bring more problems than solutions, because all empiricism becomes a dangerous simplification without a theoretical basis and critical scrutiny.

Direct democracy cannot be the answer, as the deficits are of a different nature. For example, voters are not demanding self-determination, as indicated by the lack of participation in referendums in the local authority area. As a polemic, the book can serve as a critical survey and to stimulate debate on direct democracy, even if it can only offer a first start on such a debate. The Enlightenment style of its writing should not be accepted as enlightenment without reflection.

**Петър Пламенов “Екстаз от текста.
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07-5276-1.)**

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This is a book about both ecstasy and something much more comprehensive than ecstasy as such. In fact, Peter Plamenov’s account extends far beyond a strict concentration on the topic of ecstasy. This is the case not only because he adheres to a broad approach in his writing, but largely because this specific topic necessitates delving into the spheres of world culture, examining philosophical foundations, studying religion and even mystical connotations. Additionally, it requires an examination of language, literature, and art. In all these spheres, Plamenov demonstrates an impressive erudition, ranging from virtuosic mastery of Ancient Greek and Latin, to connoisseurship about the Byzantine heritage, to commenting on the entire history of Western philosophy. He interprets the works of the Church Fathers, medieval scholars, the sages of modernity and contemporary times, culminating in profound aesthetic and linguistic analyses as well as brilliant passages of literary and art criticism.

In a philosophical sense, Plamenov adopts a truly productive and astute perspective, informed by the Aristotelian term “entelechy.” This position allows him to engage with and systematically elucidate the complex reality of ecstasy, as well as to clarify the corresponding concept that grasps it. The teleological energy that entelechy both discharges and regulates enters into the essence of ecstasy and discloses it

advantageously. Furthermore, only with the indispensable assistance of entelechy can the unique potential of ecstasy be captured, manifested, and understood. Plamenov is fully aware of these rich and powerful capacities of entelechy. He skillfully uses them to gain sufficient clarity about the apex of ecstasy, that is, its circular infinity, freedom, and its ability to abide in the origin of life and immortality, which is love in its various incarnations, the highest and the most desirable being divine love and grace.

The various dimensions from which the study of ecstasy is viewed in the book are organized into four chapters: “Ecstasy,” “Amazement,” “Language and Ecstasy,” and “Criticism and Ecstasy.” Each chapter consists of longer or shorter subsections that explore topics such as *ekstasis contra stasis*, ecstatic body, enthusiasm, language as *prima poesis*, deciphering the obvious, image and likeness, hermeneutical ecstasy, the infinity of the circle, and more. There are also two outstanding appendices: the first, dedicated to parody, draws the conclusion that “parody is alienation from being and from its sense of sharing and loving and friendly-adversarial testimony. Parody in this way devalues morality and also devalues and neutralizes the other. The ‘I’ remains unborn, units rather than persons are born, these are copies of *the-one-and-the-same*, but not faces.”¹ The second appendix, dealing with the phenomenon of reading, claims in a no less irrefutable manner that “reading is resistance, luxury, and freedom.”² This leads to a contrast: “in the virtual world the image dominates, but it represents ideas visually, unlike the act of reading, which does not offer ready-made solutions but creates and awakens an entire palette of possibilities of thought.”³

The most tangible and precise epitome of ecstasy, possessing an almost magical impact, is music (and we have no reason to doubt this opinion, coming from an author renowned for his opera and ballet criticism). Plamenov is quite right to insist that “music is an ecstatic art.” To this, it can be added that music is an entelechial art too, and this is why music can serve as an adequate expression of ecstasy. Like music, ecstasy is a pre-eminent means of elevating the human being above vi-

¹ Петър Пламенов, “Екстаз от текста. Естетически опит с текста. Удоволствие и критика“, София, Университетско издателство Св. Климент Охридски, 2023, 449.

² Ibid., 468.

³ Ibid., 471.

cious and dead stasis (characterized by a one-dimensional frozen state) and above “the perversity of what is obvious.” Its philosophical sense is discovered in the “liberation of the soul or spirit from the bondage of the inertia of the flesh and in spiritual insight, which negates the awe of the spectacle of the world and of what is external and turns subjective sight inwards towards the spirit and upwards towards the transcendent. Ecstasy is a swift attainment of the truth, which is given as a lightning revelation, in full with no persistence, no effort or struggle, but with eminence, blessings, and mercy.”⁴ Plamenov justifiably argues that ecstasy attains its culmination when it reaches the Christian sense of the Word as Logos. This is especially true in the Byzantine Orthodox tradition. The Byzantine tradition is ecstatic in its theology, philosophy, religious rites, and iconography, and these ecstatic foundations are eloquently manifested in Byzantine culture as a whole and even in the everyday life of Byzantium. This implies that the Byzantine tradition and its inheritors keep alive the genuine sense of ecstasy, endowed with grace, and are much less prone to the temptations of demonic deviations common to an anti-human stasis disguised in dazzlingly radiant values.

This book elegantly succeeds not only in building a theory of ecstasy but also in addressing pressing problems that impact contemporary life. Its practical significance is most evident in the above-mentioned appendices, on “The Misery of Parody” and on “Reading versus Gawking.” Here, Plamenov engages in a timely discussion of the fallen nature of contemporary life, focusing on the dehumanizing role of capital, to whose rapturous drumbeat humankind is marching towards its end. Nevertheless, the book ends on a slightly optimistic note: the king is certainly dead, but the reader, apparently enjoying access to intellectual ecstasy, is still alive.

⁴ Ibid., 41.

II. ASPIRATION CORNER

Playing the Political: The Role of Improvisation in Deleuze and Guattari

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Abstract: Musical improvisation poses a complex set of issues, challenging how agency and action is ordinarily conceived. Similarly, with its aptitude for variation, improvisors are also concerned with bringing about the new as a means of resistance. I contend that these issues are reflected in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. While they propound an ontology of difference in interrelated notions of strata, milieux, refrains, territories, assemblages and a pre-agential metaphysics, they make numerous ethical demands. To resolve this tension, I propose improvisation as the nexus between action and wider events, a mechanism that increases agency.

This article offers a reinterpretation of the Deleuze and Guattari's definition of improvisation. While Deleuze and Guattari liken improvisation to the third dynamism of the refrain, the movement of deterritorialization, insofar that it is creative, improvisation involves a reterritorialization. However, this is a particular kind of reterritorialization that develops an attunement with the World. Imbricating issues of novelty, agency and political action, this serves to reinscribe the importance of improvisation in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Improvisors are take up a political project; learning about their collective constitution, they continually harmonize, differentiate and reharmonize themselves to a community. Improvisation is the mechanism by which improvisors connect and differentiate preexisting materials, the variation of musical materials opening avenues to new ways of thinking.

Keywords: Deleuze, Improvisation, Politics, Creative Resistance, Agency, Collectivity

Introduction:

With its spontaneity a musician that improvises cannot have a clearly defined plan of what they will perform. Because of this, sometimes, improvisors are not offered the same opportunities for rehearsal. The initial con-

fusion at an improvisor's need to prepare for performance denies the difficulty of its practice – taking root in one of two derisive intuitions. On the one hand, given its spontaneity, improvisation is thought to be an accidental happening in which the improvisor has minimal control over what will be performed. On the other hand, the music performed is thought to be an intentional outpouring – improvisation being a mechanism that offers some kind of primitive and unbridled freedom.¹ Against these suppositions, this article argues that improvisation is purposive and that the difficulty of its performance lies in cultivating the conditions in which an improvisor can open themselves to transformation.

Musical improvisation cannot be too chaotic or too well-defined. Listeners expect to be able to follow the music but also expect to be surprised. This forms an aesthetic paradox – should a performance cohere too well, appearing rehearsed, seems not to constitute an improvisation because it does not sound like it is spontaneously produced.² Exposing the risks an improvisor faces, of falling into noise and playing what has already come before, describes an interrelationship between novelty, creation, and resistance. As such, improvisation, and particularly jazz improvisation, is often taken as an exemplar of consistency and variation.

Clearly, improvisors do practice – and besides their technical facility as instrumentalists, they are skilled at improvising. Improvised performances are not incoherent ramblings, with its practitioners maintaining aesthetic goals. The problem of improvisation lies in generating a space in which improvisors can open musical material, their trained habits, and their goals to transformation in a way that is not chaotic. Improvisation requires intense preparation but is modified to suit a dynamic performance environment filled with unforeseen interjections. A pure sense of spontaneity or novelty alone renders improvisation impossible. Rather, improvisors rely on their trained behaviour to cultivate and navigate a particular kind of uncertainty. While they might use their skilled behaviour to make sense of unexpected interruptions to a performance, they cannot dogmatically repeat something that has come before. While its performance is enabled by preexisting musical elements

¹ Jeremy Lane, “Theorising performance, performing theory: Jacques Derrida and Ornette Coleman at the Parc de la Villette”, *French Cultural Studies*, 24:3 (2007), 319.

² Alessandro Bertinetto, “The Aesthetic Paradox of Improvisation (and its Solution)”, *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, edited by Vitor Moura and Connell Vaughan (2021), 14.

and structures, the variation and spontaneity of improvisation opens it to unforeseen and contingent interjections.

In my view, the same problem of creation and resistance runs parallel in the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. Janae Sholtz aptly highlights that with the term geophilosophy Deleuze and Guattari dislocate philosophy's anthropocentric centre and instead link ontology with concrete social formations.³ As such, their philosophical system of stratification, insofar that it describes how differential milieux intersect, cohere and evolve in the operations of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, carries political weight. That is, as much as these are ontological concepts that explain the relative stability and transformation and becoming of entities, these are operations that detail how social formations can be changed. For these philosophers of difference, territorialization is of vital importance, explaining how differential milieux produce and hold together where variation precedes the fixity of a particular form. It describes a process of hierarchization and stabilization. Conversely, deterritorialization describes the disarticulation and dislocation of milieux from an assemblage.

Given that territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization describe the intersection and interlocking of disparate milieux, there is an issue of how entangled assemblages are. If deterritorialization describes the transformation of already existing milieux, at what point is a novel assemblage engendered? Deleuze and Guattari's system of stratification present a monism: diverse instances of the same, rather than explanations of the proliferation of difference.⁴ Similarly, if deterritorialized lines of flight are always taken up in a reterritorialization, it is unclear what means of escape or resistance deterritorialization offers. There is a tension between what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a pre-agential but social ontology, and their ethical imperatives to "make oneself a body-without-organs", to "become-other", and to become imperceptible".⁵

³ Janae Sholtz, "Intervals of Resistance: Being True to the Earth in the Light of the Anthropocene", *Interrogating the Anthropocene: Ecology, Aesthetics, Pedagogy, and the Future in Question*, edited by Jan Jagodzinski (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 175.

⁴ As Adorno writes, "Put bluntly, closed systems are bound to be finished" *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge, 1973), 27.

⁵ Sean Bowden offers an artful analysis of this tension in "Assembling agency: expression, action and ethics in Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus", *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 58: 383.

In my view, Deleuze and Guattari are sensitive to these issues of agency, given that they tie their discussion of resistance and creation together in *What is Philosophy?* They write, “We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present. The creation of concepts calls for a future form, for a new earth and people who do not yet exist. ... Art and philosophy converge at this point” **Error! Reference source not found.** It is important to remember that difference is ontologically primary for Deleuze and Guattari. They distinguish difference from diverse instances of the same. This distinction is crucial because diversity will not generate new ways of thinking, but already reinscribes the dogmatic image of thought. At the most, this would simply invert an existing hierarchy, rather than interrogate why the hierarchy exists at all. As such, in this call to resist the present, they do not wish to reinstate another version of the same social order, but to create new diagrams of the transversal relations of these hierarchies. Resistance is artistic because it involves creativity. In describing the convergence of art and philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari insinuate that art encourages its spectators to think differently, to be creative themselves. Yet, it remains to be explained how deterritorialization, in its disarticulation of milieux, and the ways in which these milieux are reterritorialized, is creative.

This article has two purposes. First, to address issues of novelty and creation in improvisation, and second, to consider the relation between creation and resistance in Deleuze and Guattari. To illustrate the political significance of deterritorialization as a line of escape that is creative of another space, I begin by reinterpreting their definition of improvisation and propose a notion of improvisation. Putting this conception to work, I explain an improvisation’s novelty and the sense in which it is creative. I then turn to the connection between creativity and resistance before elucidating the sense in which an improviser is playing politics. In so doing, I make several claims. First, that the conceptual geometry of stratification indicates the novelty of an improvisation while using pre-existing material and patterns. Second, that in offering an albeit brief description of improvisation in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari address issues of agency. Third, that improvisors take up a political project. In the transformation of musical material and their own habits, they learn about how they are collectively constituted. Fourth, that an improviser must be open to and open the music being performed to transformation. Fifth, that the notion of improvisational

space indicates the sense in which to understand the creative resistance offered by deterritorialization.

Repetitions, Refrains, Territories

Understanding territorialization and deterritorialization as occurring within the wider system of stratification indicates the novelty of improvisation. Before describing the relations between territorialization and improvisation, we must first examine the link between refrains and territories. Explaining the genesis of territorial assemblages and how they interconnect, this link also indicates why Deleuzean analyses of improvisation tend to focus on the notion of deterritorialization. In my view, although suggestive of the unexpected and volatile movement typical of improvised performances, by itself, the disarticulation and modification of milieux does not explain the novelty of improvisation.

Deleuze and Guattari note their most famous concept is that of the refrain, a philosophical concept of the ritornello.⁶ **Error! Reference source not found.** Drawing on its musical content, the refrain describes a small repetition of a motif. Translating it to philosophy is significant for two reasons. First, the refrain explains how territorial assemblages are engendered and how they evolve through deterritorialization. It is important to note that a refrain and a territory are not identical. However, as will be shown, a parallel can be drawn between the stabilising force of the refrain and the hierarchization of milieux that occurs in territorialization. Second, it describes how concepts are created. Nothing is created *ex nihilo*, but by refrains, i.e. little returns of difference that are productive of new ideas.

The refrain comprises three aspects, the determination of a semi-stable centre, the genesis of a territory, and the opening of the territory onto other milieux. Famously, Deleuze and Guattari describe the determination of a centre with an analogy of a boy, afraid of the dark, who hums his little song to comfort himself. This little repetition “jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos.”⁷ The affective relationship between the stabilizing force of the refrain and the chaotic

⁶ Emma Ingala, “Of the Refrain (The Ritornello)”, *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, edited by Jeffrey A. Bell and James Williams Henry Somers-Hall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 191.

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia vol.2*, translated by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 362.

darkness draws a circle, a home, a territory. To protect this fragile centre, the refrain demarcates and structures a space filled with various landmarks. Emma Ingala compellingly summarises that “the child is no longer singing to calm down, but to mark his territory, his spot.”⁸

Before moving to the third dynamism of the refrain, it is necessary to make a distinction between the operations of territorialization and deterritorialization and the genesis of a territory. A territory describes an assemblage of milieux that has been hierarchized and stabilized. For Deleuze and Guattari, there is a territory when milieux cease to be directional and functional, and become dimensional and expressive.⁹ This is illustrated with the example of birdsong. The musician, or territorial bird, is distinguished by the style of its song alone. The non-musician bird might still sing, but its song cannot be separated from its functional biological processes and imperatives. For instance, the song might serve a purpose in finding a mate. Yet, the song is not so organized or codified to signal what kind of bird it is. This draws on their description of stratification as being a double articulation, both an articulation of content – an order of bodies – and an articulation of expression – a regime of signs. Territorialization are those affective forces that tie the articulations together, hierarchizing, and stabilizing milieux into an assemblage. By contrast, deterritorialization describes the dislocation of bodies and signs, so that they can be rearticulated anew. However, this is not simply a destructive operation, but a productive one.

As explained in the third vignette, the refrain turns outward, describing the movement of deterritorialization. Here it is worth quoting Deleuze and Guattari at length.

Finally, one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in, calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth. One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself. ... One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune.¹⁰

⁸ Ingala, “Of the Refrain (The Ritornello)”, 196.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 366.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 362-363.

Territories open onto and intersect with other assemblages, allowing one to improvise. While this will be explored more fully below, one can already see the importance of improvising to Deleuze and Guattari. This describes the mechanism by which one embraces difference and becomes *other*. In the third aspect of the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari seem to insinuate that improvising is like a deterritorializing line of flight. Further, per the first two aspects of the refrain, they acknowledge that improvising is risky and can devolve into noise, into chaos. With Deleuze and Guattari's ethical supposition that the problem of music is "deterritorializing the refrain", one might envisage improvisation as the deterritorializing line of flight that constantly pushes at the boundary of noise.¹¹ This romantic image ignores the inseparability of territorialization and deterritorialization. However, while inseparable, they are distinct concepts. By itself, deterritorialization, as the disarticulation of milieu, does not describe how musical improvisation remains consistent and coherent. Similarly, although deterritorialization and reterritorialization describes the transformation of the cosmos, likening improvisation to deterritorialization confuses whether there are discrete improvisations or on cosmos-sized improvisation.

With these issues in mind that I propose that an improviser territorializes milieu and cultivates an improvisational space. As the discussion of the third dynamism of the refrain suggests, the very act of territorialization opens opportunities for further improvisation, as milieu are deterritorialized and made available to be articulated anew. What must be explained is the sense in which this territorialization is novel. The distinction between territory and territorialization comes to the fore. While Deleuze and Guattari insist that the three aspects of the refrain are not successive but simultaneous moments, one can see that an improviser begins with a refrain. That is, they call a tune, or in starting to play, loosely demarcate some musical material they want to play with. After a point of relative stability is established, an improviser draws an improvisational space, a territory. The sound organization is a contingently produced instance of solution. The improvisational space serves as a safety net from which the improviser can explore the various passages between musical material. More precisely, an improviser reterritorializes deterritorialized milieu. Musical material like notes, rhythms,

¹¹ Ibid., 351.

chord and so on, are removed from their historical context, to express the idiosyncratic style of the improvisor. Crucially, an improvisor does not possess a birds-eye view of the improvisational space. An improvisational space is a territory formed by at least two territories – the improvisor and musical material. This means their habits and skilled behaviour is deterritorialized and reterritorialized by the musical material, drawn to perform stratified usages, to rehash certain epithets and tropes that arise in accordance with their skill and training.

Understanding Novelty in Improvisational Space

This initial sketch alludes that there are two senses of novelty in improvisation. First, in being creative of an improvisational space, and second, in its dynamism, illustrated by its shifting border. As much as the discussion of the refrain depicts the instigation of a territory, to elaborate the sense in which this territory is novel, we must consider Deleuze and Guattari's distinction of meter and rhythm. These are both differential repetitions that codify and are productive of milieux. While meter describes the homogeneous, measured repetition of the same, rhythmical relations recapitulate difference: in other words, metered repetitions that code milieux and present diverse instances of the same. Rhythm, on the other hand, takes difference to be productive of a new entity, decoding and transcoding milieux. For instance, a pianist might simultaneously play two melodic lines. The coupling of these two lines is productive of harmony or dissonance, describing the points of intersection and divergence.

To determine the sense in which the production of an improvisational space is novel, we must explain how metered repetitions give rise to rhythm and how rhythmical relations can atrophy into meter. Eugene Holland makes a compelling parallel between meter and rhythm and Deleuze's notions of bare and creative repetition. He writes, "learning to play a musical instrument involves a significant amount of bare repetition", like scales and songs. He continues, that at a critical point, "improvisation becomes possible."¹² This critical juncture is a rhythmical relation. A musician arrives at this critical point by the intersection and overlapping of metered repetitions. It is through these overlaps that they begin to improvise. Interestingly, as this demands evolution, the performer who simply rehashes the same solo

¹² Eugene Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 8-9.

over and over, no matter how initially novel and daring, can hardly be said to be improvising. Rather, this presents diverse instances of the same. Improvisation demands development and transformation of both the improviser and the musical material.

While Holland indicates that improvisation is possible at this critical point, I contend that improvising consists in this rhythmical relation. This follows from the claim that an improvisational space is a territory. Deleuze and Guattari describe the formation of a territory as an “act of rhythm.”¹³ The creation of a territory transcodes and overcodes milieu. I will return to how this occurs through deterritorialization in the following section. For the moment, it suffices that this is not just a rearrangement of milieu, but something that cuts across the content and expression the milieu-components. From the fact that rhythms arise from the intersection and overlapping of metered repetitions, the cultivation of an improvisational space is novel insofar as it transforms the relations between musical material in a way that describes its aptitude for change. This is evidenced by the fact that jazz improvisation typically involves a ‘canon’ of jazz standards, yet one that eludes codification. While this presents from loose parameters at a jam session, the performance of these standards does not present diverse instances of the same. Instead, performances serve as springboards for further improvisation as much as the original standards, and indeed, transform the content of the original song. For instance, in John Coltrane’s late recordings of “My Favourite Things”, one hears little of the original Broadway classic.

Importantly, an improvisational space, as emerging out of these patterns and as a rhythmical relation, rewrites the metered repetitions that underpinned its genesis. Rhythm underpins the operations of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. These operations transform the improvisational space and the territories that constitute it, the improviser and musical material. As the improviser and musical material is altered, the border of the improvisational space shifts. This demonstrates the second sense of novelty in improvisation – the contingent and dynamic interplay between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. To illustrate this dynamism and explore how improvisational space affects the territories that constitute it, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between Chess and Go.

¹³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 336.

In chess, pieces have specific intrinsic properties. The white squared bishop can only ever be a white squared bishop. Deleuze and Guattari explain that chess pieces “have an internal nature and intrinsic properties from which their movements, situations, and confrontations derive” in a heavily regulated “closed space.”¹⁴ In other words, each square will retain the same dimensions and status no matter which piece occupies it. And it is on these two principles that the chess player is sovereign, controlling their pieces. Deleuze and Guattari contrast the internal characteristics that distinguish chess pieces with the extrinsic relations and situational properties of Go stones. Go stones fulfil “functions of insertion or situation, such as bordering, encircling, shattering.”¹⁵ A stone is not distinguished by its internal properties, but by its position on the board, where it has been, and what it is adding to the landscape surrounding its position. A well-placed Go stone will shatter an opponent’s constellation of stones and occupation of space. This does not come about in the same way as the chess player’s scheming. The movement of a stone drastically alters the dynamism of the board’s landscape.

What is crucial in this distinction is that go stones radically transform space, and space transforms Go stones. Improvisation resembles Go rather than Chess. The improvisational space is engendered by the rhythmical relation between the performer and the musical material. The improviser is not a sovereign individual, but an entity implicated in the improvisational space. They are reciprocally affected by the dynamism of the improvisational space, called to respond to various differential relations and arrangements of musical material. Like the addition of a stone on the Go board, the insertion or placement of a musical element alters the harmonic and rhythmic landscape. Stones of the periphery distort space in the centre of the board. Similarly in improvisational space, the milieux and musical opportunities at its border, depending on the arrangement at the time, direct an improviser to play certain phrases, and at other times, allow a greater degree of freedom.

The various aesthetic decisions an improviser rehearses will impact how they improvise. As much as improvisors rely on this habituated behaviour, David Borgo notes that a common technique amongst improvi-

¹⁴ Ibid., 411.

¹⁵ Ibid.

sors is handicapping.¹⁶ Improvisors deliberately constrain their physical or conceptual skills in some way to test the limits of their other habituated behaviour, cultivating a particular kind of uncertainty. As the improvisor is deterritorialized and reterritorialized, an improvisor oscillates between falling into habituated routine and resisting these patterns. This process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization describes the transformation of habituated patterns and ensures that the improvisor's stylistic hallmarks remain recognisable as they evolve. The improvisor intentionally resists certain epithets in favour of propagating some kind of selective uncertainty. This resistance to stratified habits describes the launching into improvisation. This is not a jettisoning of habit, but a choice not to conserve or preserve the habits that constitute them. They meld with the world to create new ones. This exposes the error in the production crew's supposition about the difficulty of improvisation. What is difficult is not the spontaneous making of musical sounds, but the creation of a space in which an improvisor can open themselves to transformation.

At this point, one might object that this does not offer a logic peculiar to improvisation. The transformation described by deterritorialization and reterritorialization means that everything, including the performance of a composition, is some improvisation. Against this charge, we must not conflate ubiquity with specificity. Improvisation consists in some minimal rhythmical relation which sees it inhabit various musical practices. While Holland's example of the music student starts with bare repetition, in a sense, they too are improvising. There are rhythmic relations between student and instrument as they begin to get the basic musical material down. They are a student insofar that they do not have the skill required to improvise with musical material. This means that the difference between improvisation and the performance of composition is not a difference in kind but in degree. The distinction lies in its openness to the unforeseen, unexpected and interjections that outstrip the improvisor's control.¹⁷ In the analysis of improvisation as rhythm I have sought to demonstrate how the unforeseen and unexpected arises. To further clarify this notion of openness, we must draw together the genesis of a territory and Deleuze and Guattari's third dynamism of the refrain. Im-

¹⁶ "Negotiating Freedom: Values and Practices in Contemporary Improvised Music." *Black Music Research Journal* 22: 2 (2002), 174.

¹⁷ David Bell, "Improvisation as anarchist organization." *ephemera: theory & politics in organization* 14:4 (2014), 1013.

provisation, here, is characterised as a joining or melding with the World. But what world?

In their anexact history of music, Deleuze and Guattari write that the “classical artist hazards an extreme and dangerous adventure. He or she breaks down the milieux, separates them, harmonizes them, regulates their mixtures.”¹⁸ In a similar vein, by delimiting certain musical information, improvisors cultivate musical opportunities that are conducive to their aesthetic tastes. Improvisors do not shirk their musical training, but rely on it, and as such they strive to accomplish particular musical ideas. Deleuze and Guattari continue that “the task of the classical artist is God’s own, that of organizing chaos; and the artist’s only cry is Creation!”¹⁹ Deleuze takes up the creation of a world when describing the diagrams of Francis Bacon. The rhythm between the painter’s idiosyncratic brushstrokes and the canvas “is like the emergence of another world.”²⁰ The key term is idiosyncratic, denoting something signed and expressive of the painter. This locates the emergence of a world as occurring between the articulations of content and expression in stratification, much akin to the genesis of a territory. This is why it is necessary to consider improvisation as territorialization. What I mean to suggest is that improvisation involves two moments – the creation of a world, and a melding with it, in which the improvisor opens it to be transformed. As much as this occurs by why of deterritorializing musical materials, deterritorialization does not just mark a rupture, but is already en route to some reterritorialization. By territorializing, an improvisor puts themselves at the creation and beginning of a world. After the creation of the world, embarking on some new improvisation, an improvisor melds with it. That is, they investigate its various flows and forces while working to make external elements and interjections cohere musically.

Deterritorialization and Creative Resistance

We must clarify what Deleuze and Guattari mean by the term, “world”. Here, we much recall that the crack in the third vignette of the refrain does not open onto the old forces of chaos, but a new region. With this

¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 393.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon The Logic of Sensation*, translated by Daniel W. Smith, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 82.

term, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the cosmic forces of all becoming. In melding with the world, an improviser enjoys a unique vantage point from their existing habits to these forces of becoming. That is, while improvising they witness how their habits are developed and how they might be changed. This melding describes an attunement to the world – the predicament of performance, and what they must achieve to stay musically coherent. To develop this notion of attunement it is necessary to expand the definition of deterritorialization and clarify how this provides a means of creative resistance.

Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between relative and absolute deterritorialization. Relative deterritorialization describes a line of flight that is taken up in a reterritorialization. This can be positive or negative. It is negative, when it is immediately obstructed by reterritorialization. For instance, it is easy to imagine a jazz improviser playing varying the milieu of the melody, but staying within the confines of ossified harmonic theory and recapitulating the form of the song. Insofar that the improvisation is immediately recaptured by the dogmatic forces of sameness, this in some sense, describes a failure. The improviser plays exactly as expected with any elements of creativity and chance strictly regulated. Conversely, relative deterritorialization might be positive, when it bypasses immediate reterritorialization, but does not intersect with other deterritorialized components. The deterritorialized milieu are rearticulated in some process of becoming in a way that is creative of novel opportunities. This improvisation does not implement or give form to a preexisting standard, but structures at every moment a dynamic sonic field, burgeoning novel musical connections and opportunities for further exploration.

Absolute deterritorialization is often thought to be a movement that cannot be taken up in a reterritorialization, describing the destruction of a system. This seemingly reflects the risks of an improviser playing too chaotically and devolving into noise. While this is a danger, Paul Patton accurately surmises that absolute deterritorialization “exists only in and through relative deterritorialization.”²¹ Absolute deterritorialization is absolute insofar that it connects with the world. Besides the dynamisms of the refrain being simultaneous, they write that a territory is “inseparable from vectors of deterritorialization working it from within”. Con-

²¹ Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 107.

versely, deterritorialization “is in turn inseparable from correlative reterritorializations.”²² Given their geophilosophy is grounded in social structures this has political consequences about what kind of reform is possible. What is absolute are the revolutionary ways of thinking that come about from the intersection of deterritorialized components. In seeing a jazz musician link up various musical milieux, one’s understanding of a song and song form is changed. Deleuze and Guattari continue that deterritorialization is only absolute when it “brings about the creation of a new earth, in in other words, when it connects lines of flight, raises them to the power of an abstract vital line, or draws a plane of consistency.”²³ This critical point of creation again coincides with the hazardous leap into an improvisational space.

This establishes deterritorialization as a creative procedure. Given that territories are distinguished by the lines of flight working them from within, an improvisation is not just a means of change, but one of creative resistance. That is to say, it is through the interrogation of patterns that new patterns comes about. The change in an improvisor’s habits, facilitated by metered and then rhythmic repetitions, implies that an improvisor is learning not just about musical material but about themselves. An improvisor probes how and why particular patterns arise under certain conditions. In improvising, one engenders a territory, and in melding with it, they attune themselves to the world, learning and re-learning their habits. The improvisor sees the convergence and divergences of thinking about musical material, and the limits of these ways of thinking. Deterritorialization enables a rhythmic repetition, a passage and relay between the improvisational space and the material that gave rise to it.

Creative Resistance and Playing Politics

Holland writes, “Inasmuch as social life is composed of refrains of various kinds, ... the political challenge is to organize social relations so that as we launch forth on the thread of a tune, (to) hazard an improvisation that joins us with the World and a people to come.”²⁴ In noting geo-

²² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 591-592

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Eugene Holland, “Jazz Improvisation: Music of the People-to-Come”, *Deleuze, guattari and the production of the new*, edited by Simon O’Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 204.

philosophy is tied to social structures, Holland questions what kind of social institutions are open to the same kind of organization and rearrangement that occurs in improvisation. To respond this challenge, and as I hope to have already suggested, we are already improvising when we consider how metered repetitions intersect and overlap. This section outlines the political importance of improvisation as the mechanism, which, at the nexus of the World, links actions with wider events. This consists of two claims. Firstly, we observe that despite being spontaneous and unforeseen, improvisation increases a performer's agency. Secondly, that the revolutionary and political element of improvisation lies in the fact that it serves as another platform for improvisation.

As observed, in an improvisational space, an improviser deterritorializes and reterritorializes musical milieux. Conversely, as they push and pull musical material together, their habits and faculties are reciprocally deterritorialized and reterritorialized. The history of sedimented usages within musical milieux, stratified ways of thinking and practicing music, and what an improviser has rehearsed, directs them to play particular phrases over others. This is why, as Gary Peters notes, we encounter boring improvisations.²⁵ It is strange to disqualify these as successful improvisations, but they do not feel as dynamic as a listener would expect. In my view, this describes an instance of diversity, a repetition of the similar, rather than of difference. The performer has followed established routines and patterns, and perhaps, navigated unexpected interruptions or interjections. It lacks dynamism because it is not open.

With this openness, a parallel can be drawn between the practice of improvisation and Deleuze and Guattari's enigmatic, and often misunderstood concept of war-machine. This is contrasted by with the control and power of the state apparatus. The war-machine seeks to dismantle power hierarchies and social structures of capture. Deleuze and Guattari write that war-machines "take shape against the apparatuses that appropriate the machine ... they bring connections to bear against the apparatuses of capture."²⁶ The war-machine does not describe a passive force, but an interrogative one that makes rhythmical connections that open up deterritorializing lines of flight within metered and dogmatic repetition. As such, it is

²⁵ *The Philosophy of Improvisation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 64.

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 492.

defined by “a movement of decoding.”²⁷ An improvisational space is also an assemblage that draws deterritorializing lines of flight. In both, there is “creative mutation and change.”²⁸ The most compelling parallel, however, is in the fact that both must adapt and evolve, preventing their creative power relations from becoming dogmatic.

In propagating an improvisational space, an improviser creates a world but must meld with it. They open themselves to change. Within the improvisational space, they are deterritorialized and reterritorialized, their habits and faculties extended. This could be a way of thinking about musical, increase in skill, or a physical alteration of their body to their instrument. The supposition is that besides the patterns in the music, the improviser recognises their own relationship to the music being performed as it is being performed. That is, in improvising, a performer witnesses how and why they play or rely on a particular pattern. They intuit how this habit is stimulated and can now choose whether to cultivate it. The question immediately arises, what enables an improviser to handicap themselves?

Positing there is only difference all the way down, there cannot be some sovereign or innate identity from which one’s agency proliferates. Traditionally, an agent is one that acts on their intentions and decisions. A patient is one that is passive. For this reason, and insofar that it connotes control over one’s actions, agency is typically linked with self-empowerment and self-determination. Holland incisively argues that Deleuze and Guattari derive territorialization and deterritorialization from Lacanian psychoanalysis, to refer to Freud’s libidinal drives and Marx’s labour-power in human agents.²⁹ Given that the dynamisms of the refrain are simultaneous rather than successive and given that a territory is distinguished by its capacities for deterritorialization, agency, for Deleuze and Guattari is never individual but social and collective.

Following the discussion of the creation of and melding with the world, improvisation is the mechanism by which one interrogates and reharmonizes with society. An improviser, responding to the demands of the action, does not have complete control over the improvisation. As alluded in the discussion of an improvisational space and its nexus with

²⁷ Ibid., 466.

²⁸ Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 110.

²⁹ Eugene Holland, “Deterritorializing “Deterritorialization” - From the Anti-Oedipus to A Thousand Plateaus”, *SubStance* 6 (1991), 57-58.

the World, an improviser enjoys a vantage point where they witness the transformation of patterns in musical material and in themselves. An improvisation is dynamic in its openness, with improvisors remaining open to the tensions that arises between these patterns. In Holland's example of learning to play music, we realise that in observing the intersection of these patterns and habits while improvising, that improvisors continuously learn about themselves and the world.³⁰ Seeing the intersection and limits of particular ways of thinking, the ethical import of improvisation lies in this intentional development of particular habits.

Yet the propagation of new habits and thinking about musical patterns serve as another platform to improvise. An improvisation cannot become dogmatic or resistant to the vectors of deterritorialization within the improvisational space. This does not describe a rhythmical relation but a metered repetition of the same. Here, a performer is not improvising but replicating something that has come before. While it might be musically interesting, it cannot be said that a performer who strives to replicate their solos night after night is improvising. Rather, they must evolve as the musical material changes. In the same way, replaying a recording of a famous improvisation is a benefit to one's musical education – but the recording it cannot prescribe how one must improvise. One is an improviser while one is improvising, while open to creative mutation.

In *Foucault*, Deleuze echoes the famous epithet, "Resistance comes first."³¹ This paradoxical affirmation demonstrates the political import of improvisation. Deleuze criticises weak notions of resistance that simply invert or react to hierarchies. Resistance is typically secondary, succeeding or coexisting with power hierarchies and relations. Should it precede them, it is not so much resistance but the dominating power relation. In proposing that it is primary, Deleuze suggests that there is already a negation of power relations and that the structures of resistance will dissolve. What is required in resistance is to interrogate what gives rise to these hierarchies and to note the mechanisms by which they become dogmatic. For Deleuze, resistance is that which is

³⁰ Deleuze echoes this intuition, and the link between thought and self-determination when he asks the reader, "to what are we dedicated if not to those problems which demand the very transformation of our body and our language?" *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 192.

³¹ *Foucault*, translated by Sean Hand (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 89.

outside.³² Resistance is the genetic condition of power hierarchies, the forces of territorialization, because territories are distinguished by their vectors of deterritorialization.

It is not so simple a picture in which improvised music resists the hierarchy of the score. Rather, improvising is made possible by vectors of deterritorialization in the musical material and the performer's skill. This exposes a tension between an improvisator's methods of handicapping and their openness to the unforeseen. Take a concrete example of a Free Jazz concert. Being open to unexpected contributions, Free Jazz improvisors must be generous towards and supportive of their bandmembers contributions. They work hard to make whatever is played cohere musically. However, the improvisor must resist musical phrases that reinscribe existing musical and social hierarchies. For instance, it will miss the point to play a blues. Although Free Jazz does not have conventional stylistic hallmarks, it does not follow that there are no power hierarchies in its performance. It is enabled by metered repetitions, preexisting patterns and materials. As such, there are similar power dynamics that appear in other jazz styles. At various times bandmembers will orient what they play to accompany and support an individual.

The power hierarchies and relations that comprise this improvisational space are open to interrogation. The degree to which an improvisation presents a mode of creative resistance is immanent to how open the improvisors are. While antithetical in Free Jazz to start with a blues, various allusions may be made through deterritorialization and reterritorialization to support or stabilize the improvisation. Crucially, why it was necessary to stabilize the improvisation in this way will be open to subsequent critique. Insofar that an improvisation cannot become dogmatic, its own creative resistance dissolves, giving way to another improvisational space. An improvisor undergoes a perennial process of reharmonization and is in some sense aware of the transience of their improvisations.

George Lewis traces the stylistic features of free improvisation in his influential delineation of Afrological and Eurological perspectives. Noting the respective importance of Charlie Parker and John Cage to these broad emergent histories, Lewis makes a distinction in their methodological underpinnings.³³ Eurological perspectives, following Cage,

³² Francoise Proust, "The Line of Resistance." *Hypatia* 15:4 (2000), 24.

³³ George Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives." *Black Music Research Journal* 16:1 (1996), 218-221.

will focus on the prevalence of indeterminacy and what this means for musical material. Afrological perspectives, on the other hand, observe that the freedom of improvisation is linked to individual and social struggles. Eurological perspectives will focus on ontological questions about the music itself, while Afrological perspectives will focus on how agency is collectively constituted. In this division, two points are particularly pertinent to our discussion. Firstly, improvisation is already politically and culturally contingent. As has been observed, the sense in which improvisation presents a mode of creative resistance is tied to how open the musicians are to the unexpected. As encultured creatures, different improvisors focus on different musical and cultural material. Secondly, at the nexus of creating and melding with the world, improvisors realise what they are open to and what they are resisting.

Afrological perspectives observe that agency is implicated in this connection between creation and resistance. Agency is increased by improvisation. This presents a mode of resistance insofar that this is already social. While improvising enables an intentional relationship to habit, improvisors are “learning to undo things, and to undo oneself.”³⁴ Improvisors learn how their agency is constituted by a collective, and in delineating certain power hierarchies, they witness how they inform this collective. Improvising enacts the perennial political question; how an individual relates to society. Involving a rhythmical relation, improvisation consists in this process of becoming-other. Deleuze and Guattari write that “the rhythm, precisely, is caught up in a becoming that sweeps up the distances between characters, making them rhythmic characters that are themselves more or less distant.”³⁵ While improvising can be a solitary exercise in a rehearsal room, an improviser investigates these intervals. Given Deleuze and Guattari’s geophilosophy, improvisation remains fundamentally social, with improvisation space describing the relation of attunement between individuals and collectives.

The role of improvisation in Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is not a simple translation. While milieux are modified, it cannot be characterised by this alone. Rather, improvisation describes a revolutionary process that demonstrates the creativity of deterritorialization. The political significance of improvisation lies in the eventual dissolution of its power relations. Improvisations present opportunities for further im-

³⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 466.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 372.

provisation. As a practice, improvisation not only present a means of escape but one of resistance, that interrogates and opens the forces of de-territorialization within metered repetitions. Improvisors, in developing an attunement to the world, learn about themselves and undergo a perpetual process by which they create and meld with the collective in an improvisational space. Improvisation is the mechanism by which Deleuze and Guattari implicate and traverse diverse disciplines, moving from ontology and politics, biology and music, psychoanalysis, and art. Improvisation serves as a mechanism that ties art, agency, philosophy, and politics together.

A New Vision of Practical Wisdom

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Abstract: This article presents a new vision of practical wisdom: one that addresses the grounds for reality as a primary concern rather than a eudaimonic end. This situates Aristotle's reason as secondary to wisdom, an emergent property¹ stemming from a subject's being. This insight recognises principles amidst *change*, beyond reason, and enables the subject to better reckon with reality's rational basis.² Taking this approach, practical wisdom interacts with causality by means of foresight and care. Ultimately concerned with free will exercised towards positive outcomes, a realist approach is prioritised over abstractions towards an ideal.

Key words: practical wisdom, virtue ethics, metaphysics, causality, free will, ontology.

This study proposes a metaphysics of virtue ethics with practical wisdom as its focus. Yet despite this similarity to Aristotle's approach,³ differences are proposed. Foremost, rather than life as an embodiment of

¹ Emergent properties are those which appear from the relations among a complex system proceeding in sum, where these properties cannot be explained by examining constituents in isolation. See Mark A. Bedau and Paul Humphreys, eds., *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008)

² Aristotle proposes a universal order governed by pure mind in divine thought, the Unmoved Mover, the first cause, where this mind is rational in the absolute sense and reason grounds morality and virtue. Then in contrast, this study proposes a cosmos that proceeds upon terms beyond reason *i.e.* an arational basis, thus divine wisdom serves its ordering and continuation. For context, see Aristotle, *Phys.* VIII, 252b17–28; *Met.* XII, 1072b18–29, 1074b14–1075b10.

³ Regarding the similarity between this study and Aristotle's approach: in the same way his *Metaphysics* grounds *The Nicomachean Ethics* *i.e.* where the Good sets the moral standard for human virtue, and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is necessary for virtue; here a metaphysical object (the grounds for reality itself) determines moral standards and likewise practical wisdom is emphasised, albeit to a more prominent degree.

*the Good*⁴ or something that can be refined to the same standard—life proceeds as the culmination of creation and destruction, the *good* and the *bad*. Moreover, respecting the entropic grounds of human endeavour,⁵ life is recognised as difficult, uncertain, and tragic. Instead of being an end in itself, eudaemonic flourishing is recognised as an invitation to an equivalent decline. Thus rather than serving an ideal outcome, here practical wisdom concerns the balance of two opposing principles⁶ by which life is secured in a sustainable manner.

Then leaving aside Aristotle's eudaemonic end as the principal pursuit, here the conditions dealt to the subject by chance are the primary concern, according to which moral luck is accounted for and every improvement is considered an advancement, no matter how meagre. This affords the potential for virtue, even where material goods are absent. Additionally, with Aristotle's *eudaimonia* relegated, we reorient our attention to the metaphysic that grounds reality and prioritises outcomes fashioned in the same. Thus, rather than Aristotle's *eudaimonia* which assumes an ideal outcome consequent to virtue and material externals,⁷ the subject's relationship with reality stands as the ideal end.

⁴ Aristotle's concept of *the Good* suggests a divine mind symbolic of the utmost good, pure thought thinking of itself (*Met.*XII.9-10); the Unmoved Mover by which all objects occur and move towards in their correct and natural progression *i.e.* all that life contains is then an embodiment of the Good, albeit deficient or imperfect at times. See Unmoved Mover as the highest good and the cause of all motion (*Met.*XII.7.1072a18-b29); the Good as the final cause (*Met.*I.3.983a30-32).

⁵ Entropic in the sense that human life inevitably contains sickness, suffering, and death. Likewise human civilisation, that which secures life, requires constant upkeep or rapidly succumbs to entropy. Where in short, our endeavour proceeds upon a basis which seeks to eliminate the human organism if a criterion of conditions are not met.

⁶ Here a metaphysical awareness comprises practical wisdom's first concern, namely the interrelation between the fundamental principles that are creation *vs.* destruction and the causality that follows. The premise being that their relation constitutes the first principle by which all things move into and out of existence. Thus the practical wisdom proposed here, provides the means to move more towards creation, that is, more towards life.

⁷ *Eudaimonia*, as defined by Aristotle, represents an ideal end consequent to a lifetime of virtuous activity (*NE.*I.1099a31-1099b8) dependent upon certain externals such as wealth and social status (*NE.*I.1100a4-1101a13). Likewise other conditions apply, such as virtuous character and right reason (*NE.*I.1098b20-1099a7) or the contemplative life as most suitable for *eudaimonia* (*NE.*I.1178b7-1179a32). The point being that Aristotle appears to imply if a criterion is met, then *eudaimonia* will likely follow.

The premise here is that, by comprehending reality's grounds, the subject may better engage its principles towards favourable ends. This reconciles Aristotle's exclusive criterion for virtue and provides a more egalitarian means—namely, one that does not rely upon reciprocal response from the *polis* and Aristotle's notion of the Good.⁸

First, before proceeding with a new vision of practical wisdom, for contrast we recall Aristotle's *phronesis*:⁹ the right thing, done in the right way, for the right reason, at the right time. Accordingly, moral character determines what is *right* and where moral character appears as the culmination of moral guidance, habit, and experience. This is framed by an overall endeavour towards *living well* that is the Good, by which the good at hand is chosen, and where choice proceeds as the universal applied to the particular. The universal is reasoned by scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*¹⁰) combined with intuitive intellect (*nous*¹¹), cul-

⁸ Aristotle's virtue and *eudaimonia* depend upon externals. For example material goods and social status amidst the *polis* (*NE*.1100a4-1101a13). Likewise an accord with an ideal that is the Good. Thus Aristotle's subject relies upon a reciprocal relation with the third that grants virtue. Whereas this study suggests the subject's reciprocal relation is with reality itself, sovereign to any third object or concept. Thus abiding by its principles, the subject achieves virtue and favourable outcomes in an independent manner.

⁹ Aristotle distinguishes practical wisdom (*phronesis*) as that which concerns particulars vs. theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) concerning universals (*NE*. VI.1141b14-1142a30). Then in addition to knowledge, *phronesis* requires practical experience (*NE*.VI.1142b31-1143a25), right desires and virtue of character (*NE*.VI.1144b30-1145a11). Where *phronesis* comprises a reasoned capacity to proceed in accord with the things that are good for the self (*NE*.VI.1140a24-1145a11).

¹⁰ In contrast to the contingent and particular, Aristotle's scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) comprehends the necessary causes of things, proceeding from first principles by induction (*epagōgē*) to arrive upon the knowledge required to establish universals (*PA*.71a1-71b9, 71b9-72a5, 72a5-72b4, 89b23-90a14).

¹¹ *Nous* denotes intellect, mind, the awareness that furnishes rational thought by which first principles and definitions follow; a higher, more abstract mode of understanding; the highest part of the human soul engaged in contemplation; the means by which higher order abstract concepts can be intuited. See God as *nous* engaged in self-contemplation (*Met*.XII.1072b19-1073a13); *nous* as the most excellent and precious object of thought (*Met*. XII.1074b15-1075a10); the intellect as the highest human good, and the contemplative life (*theōria*) centred upon intellect (*nous*) as superior to the practical life (*NE*.1177a12-1177b25).

minating in theoretical wisdom (*sophia*¹²).

The order by which Aristotle's theoretical wisdom presides over the practical raises the first difference: whereas Aristotle's *nous* serves to reason abstractions relative a transcendent moral ideal, here the same addresses reality's workings without moral categorization. That is to say, the first intuition is made beyond a moral framework. Moreover, beyond an epistemological frame, this consideration is made in confrontation with mortality, thus returning wisdom to the ontological, or the subject's being in time. Or simply wisdom oriented away from the allowances provided by the theoretical, to instead proceed from the harsh reality that is the subject's impermanence. Then, given this immediacy, moral wisdom is suggested to supplant moral knowledge, restraining reason and avoiding hyper-rational thought¹³ in which the limitations of reality are neglected, as reason is extended solely upon its own grounds.

Then, whereas hyper-rational thought may presume that phenomena should occur reasonably as per reason's standards, practical wisdom recognises that reality is an arational object.¹⁴ Otherwise, despite appearing reasonable or employing associated terms and standards, reason overextended

¹² Aristotle's *sophia* denotes theoretical or scientific wisdom (NE.VI.1.1139a16) by which the most precise knowledge is discerned (NE.VI.7.1141a17–8) with the object grasped upon purely intellectual grounds in total comprehension (NE.VI.7.1141a20–1, 1141b2–8) without practical concern (NE.VI.7.1141b2–8) absent of a requirement for practical wisdom (NE.VI.7.1141b20–1).

¹³ As used here, *hyper-rational* denotes thought in which reason is exercised in isolation, with premises proceeding in succession upon purely reasoned terms. Thus whereas *appropriate reason* figures a hypothesis verified by empirical observation, *hyper-rational* thought is self confirming, the proposition and conclusion verified by reason alone. Or otherwise, where a reasoned conclusion presumes its opening premise absent of external verification.

¹⁴ The presence of systemic suffering in all living beings implies the cosmos is arational, since if it were rational, there is no reasonable explanation for such suffering *i.e* life itself, existence, would appear to be an unreasonable object. To mean if the cosmos were reasonable and possessed of positive moral intent, it would determine life to be immoral. Although, an option remains: the cosmos as reasonable, yet malevolent. However, if this were so, surely we would not find beauty in creation or any other transcendent attributes. The point being, the cosmos supports both joy and suffering, light and dark—which suggests an absence of moral bias. Although, we ponder, if the cosmos intends for conscious beings to learn, these ambiguous conditions would suggest moral intent. In that such circumstances provide the means to learn by experience and develop towards the actualisation of potential—where we encounter Aristotle's Good as God.

may depart from reality as stated. Where proceeding contra to reality's arational basis, reason is incapable of foreseeing the consequences that follow. Then, rather than such thought recognised as the cause of unfavourable outcomes, reality itself is considered at fault and in need of modification—an ambition which is impossible in reality, *i.e.* irrational, and the development by which pure reason produces irrational outcomes.

In short, the premise is that our world, the reality in which we dwell, does not reason itself into being. Rather, it proceeds in accord with the principles that ground it, with this accord being an action equivalent to wisdom.¹⁵ Per its own standards, our world proceeds upon what works in reality, rather than what ought to work in reason—in contrast to Aristotle's subject employing reasoned universals foremost in the mind. The attribution of wisdom first depends upon the subject making a close observation of nature. Then, as the principles that bind its workings are realised and honoured, the microcosm that is the subject may be in accord with the principles that guide the macrocosm that is nature.¹⁶

Expressed in reasoned theory, here wisdom supersedes the same as the criterion for virtue. Yet this attribute is granted upon nature's own terms. Namely, wisdom only proceeds in practice, in relation to the subject's prevalence through change that is *time*, and the maintenance of moral principle amidst adaptation. Then, by these measures, the subject is held accountable to nature's standard for wisdom, apparent in its infinite extent and degree, the same wisdom that every organism depends on for existence. Thus, as the human heart depends on vortical flow of

¹⁵ Here wisdom is suggested as the pre-condition for existence and an emergent property amidst existent objects *i.e.* wisdom as first cause and effect. Where said wisdom is evident in self-organising systems that tend toward more refined states of being *i.e.* in this case, the cosmos. Regarding the phenomenon that is *emergence*, see Bedau and Humphreys 2008.

¹⁶ As stated the subject pays close attention to nature's workings, likewise the workings of the human organism. Then, with the application of reason, logic, knowledge, intuition, and so on—that is, with the application of every human capacity—the subject may recognise causal chains in acute detail, the means by which practical wisdom is refined. Three principal degrees follow: first the recognition of potential, what *could* be. Then potential plus necessary workings, what *can* be. Where finally recognising the metaphysic that determines all causal combinations therein, likely what *will* be.

liquid,¹⁷ likewise the bird's wing involves the innate movement of air,¹⁸ and nature in its wisdom moves in accord with the rules that bind it. That is, nature does not apply reason in contradiction to the principles upon which it depends.

Thus as a concept, rather than a faculty sovereign to the human organism, here wisdom is considered equivalent to the object that is *existence* itself.¹⁹ Then, if we accept the proceeds as an embodiment of existence, it follows that the subject may cultivate and express wisdom in the positive sense and upon discrete terms. Yet more, with existence as the original phenomenon, we confirm the ontological grounds for wisdom and, in turn, a virtue ethics based upon the same—by which a framework that preserves existence must proceed, having liberated wisdom from the human frame which reduces wisdom to the profane by necessity. Here, wisdom is returned to the cosmos, to the transcendent degree unknowable in its full extent.

Likewise, wisdom elevated to the primary tempers reason, encompassing the subject's being, and rational thought is merely one faculty amidst all that the subject is capable of. Furthermore, given that wisdom supports the subject's continuation, we reconcile reason's potentially inhumane conclusions. For example, recognising that human life involves inherent suffering, pure reason may determine that existence itself is an immoral object—with the reasonable and moral intervention being to end life and its suffering. Thus, to address this, wisdom replaces Aristotle's *ergon* as reason. Likewise, eudaemonic flourishing supplants survival,

¹⁷ Dukkupati H, et al. *Vortex Formation Time is a Novel Measure for Early Detection of Diastolic Abnormalities in Adolescents with Hypertension*. *Pediatr Cardiol*. 2023 June; 44(5):1135-1142.

¹⁸ See Gurka Roi, *Flow pattern similarities in the near wake of three bird species suggest a common role for unsteady aerodynamic effects in lift generation*. *Interface Focus*. 06 February 2017.

¹⁹ Sartre's text *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* provides context. Namely where *existence* as mentioned by this study denotes an object that comprises both Being-in-Itself (*Être-en-soi*), complete, self-contained, independent of any observer, defined by its essence, without subjectivity; and likewise Being-for-Itself (*Être-pour-soi*) implying consciousness, self-reflection upon its own existence, lacking nothingness, always in the process of becoming and never complete. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992).

i.e. adaption to change as the ideal end, as the human telos.

Moving on, to serve the subject's prevalence through time, if practical wisdom is that which comprehends reality's workings, we might ask how then are these workings determined? To which a third order of enquiry beyond the *what* and *how* is proposed, namely, the *why* of the object. Or, said otherwise, the subject questions *why* is the object existent and thus *why* is the object so? Which in turn invites a further enquiry, to ground the premise for the ethics put forward here: *how then to respond to the why?* Returning to consider reality as our primary concern, with sufficient recursions, *i.e.* the *why* of the *why* in succession, we can see the revelation of reality's grounding principles. Thus transcending the observation of effects, the subject comes to recognise causes, by which the most moral course of action can be chosen.

Pursuing the *why* of it, fundamentally, the subject may first apprehend that all phenomena express two principal forces, the creative and destructive; and furthermore, that the object's condition is determined by the interaction of the same. Or, said otherwise, the absolute cause is creation, and the absolute effect is destruction. Then, as all things move in and out of existence between these absolutes, the change we witness is referred to as *time*. Thus realising the *why* of why the object changes, practical wisdom recognises that which moves towards creation that is life *vs.* that which moves towards destruction that is death. Which includes recognising causal relations proceeding beyond the moment, by which eventual outcomes are manifest.

Accepting that all phenomena comprise the destructive and creative, and given that practical wisdom serves to identify these constituents, we find this faculty applicable to all concerns. Even so, the proposal is not to moralise every aspect of human existence, but to establish absolutes upon which moral distinctions can be made. Doing so, we acknowledge the third moral term, the *moral neutrality* by which the subject prevails through change without notable difference. Thus the *creative vs. destructive vs. neutral* supply grounds for *moral vs. immoral vs. indifferent*, where these terms reflect whether the subject prevails, declines, or proceeds as is.

Thus similar to Aristotle, a relation between the organism and its

optimal environment (*periballon*²⁰) is suggested. Then, where form and action are appropriate to surroundings, practical wisdom serves to identify the same for the human organism. Yet given that the human subject is capable of imagination, emotion, and reason—and thus belief, and in turn subjective perception—the matter exceeds mere material circumstances and is more complex in our case.²¹ Unlike the animal bound to the actuality of its environment, the human may depart (psychologically) from the objective truth to instead pursue actions that deny reality itself. Thus, although food, water, clothing and shelter might be abundant, the subject or society departing from reality may come to perish²² while pursuing enforced fantasy as belief.²³

Then, unlike the *animal body vs. environment* in one-to-one relation, the human must reconcile an additional degree of complexity to survive. Namely, an accord between the psychological body *vs.* material body *vs.* material environment—where the material body mediates between the psychological body *vs.* material environment. Thus if we accept the human *qua*

²⁰ Although the relation between form, function, and ideal environment are not mentioned in explicit detail, this concept is a motif amidst Aristotle's writings upon biology. Thereafter this study suggests given that humans fashion objects in reality to improve survival, reality itself serves as the human organism's primary and optimal medium. See Jessica Gelber, *Aristotle on Essence and Habitat*, in Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Volume 48, edited by Brad Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 267–294.

²¹ Indeed as the mind is capable of abstractions and thus able to depart from the animal, the natural—the human is able to imagine morality, by which a framework of standards may follow *i.e.* ethics. Yet when unbound by conscience, the imagination can imagine moral standards in either direction as the “good” notably when fuelled by negative emotion. Likewise, such a framework can be reinforced by an imagining of reality that supports the emotion at hand.

²² Thus we meet the standard for practical wisdom, here suggested as the degree to which the internal monologue, the moral conscience, accords with reality, generating favourable results in the same.

²³ In this respect, belief supplies and confirms an accompanying emotion, upon which the varying subjective “truth” is verified. Or said otherwise, fantasy provides a means towards correct emotion as determined by consensus *i.e.* where consensus emotion is “right” and right confirms what is “true” irrespective of reality.

human first exists in mind,²⁴ the same must align all three aspects in order to prevail. Furthermore, in contrast to the animal bound to its optimal environment by unconscious instinct, the subject's internal and external environment may proceed as a matter of choice facilitated by imagination. By which as stated, given that the human is capable of subjective perception fashioned by belief, the subject may believe an object secures existence while the opposite is so in reality. In short, humans may depart from reality itself, their optimal environment for survival.

Consequently, more than the presence of material means towards sustenance, being in accordance with actuality determines humankind's life quality. No matter the degree to which the human organism departs into fantasy, the subject suffers and dies in reality. Thus to respect reality is to respect death, which is to respect the sanctity of life. The sanctity of life is revealed by reality—further revealed by death's trivialisation as humankind departs toward the ideal, or death in the name of the good purported by the ideal—in such cases, for example, where the ideal's appeal to secure life instead brings death, rationalised as a necessary sacrifice for the good. Hence the ideal real in reason advances contra to reality, removing the human organism from its optimal environment, *i.e.* reality. The criteria for life and death remain independent of perception.

Therefore, in contrast to reasonings that seek to avoid actuality, here practical wisdom binds the subject to reality without negotiation. Then, as wisdom recognises death and suffering inevitably greets the self and Other, rather than reasoned abstractions providing comfort in imagination, the subject strives for the best conditions in reality. Likewise subordinate to the moral absolutes that are death and pain, and where reasoned premises may otherwise seek to relativise moral matters, practical wisdom reconciles attempts to discount the Other's plight, and reinforces the abstraction from self by which empathy and compassion—or the moral conscience by which the *humane* is attributed the human—follow. This is the true expression of free will over the unconscious animal self.

²⁴ The human organism comprises a gestalt of material aspects. Yet regarding the qualia that is the subject's awareness of self-existence *i.e.* the self's subjective experience of being; foremost this sense occurs in the mind, where the mind provides the consciousness necessary for self cognisance. Thus the mind is proposed as the locus of the self's experience of being. See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16–23.

Concerning this faculty bound to reality, we might consider how this relation unfolds. By living and enquiring, first the subject encounters empirical and subjective data, some of which is retained. Then, by selection and interpretation, aspects of this data are transformed into knowledge by which the subject decides upon matters. Thereafter, potentiality proceeds into actuality; this indicates the decision's alignment with reality and the decision's quality, in terms of the outcome relating to the subject's standard of existence. Thus it follows that practical wisdom is honed as the subject observes the correlation between will and outcome. Said otherwise, *that which works in reality vs. that which does not* is differentiated, where that which *works* comprises decision and action that improves the subject's grounds for life.

Then, where reality is the data, practical wisdom determines whether this data furnishes life upon better conditions. Likewise, the subject's automatic response to stimuli is overcome, as wisdom facilitates free will and enables prior experience expressed in action. In turn, the subject is provided with choice to proceed in accord with reality, a position from which the subject's will may fashion causes that work in the same. Conversely, practical wisdom respects that which does not work, thus revealing the undeniable principles that govern reality's workings. In short, free will bound by consequence serves practical wisdom, where free will denotes the subject's freedom to initiate causes and experience effects. Namely, human will *vs.* the principles that bind reality, here suggested as practical wisdom's first concern.

Now, regarding these principles amidst reality's workings, the most apparent is proposed first: *cause and effect*.²⁵ Where every cause has an effect, and every effect becomes a cause—with the subject's choice as cause, which leads to an effect, to a choice, and so on. In other words, choice sets causal chains in motion, from which wider casual relations follow. Thus practical wisdom addresses these relations, considered here as the *truth*—where the truth is *the cause apparent in its effect*,

²⁵ The Hermetic corpus comprises an archaic lineage of contributions arriving through the ages. Thus accounting for this, the attribution of sources is less than straightforward. Yet as a workable summary of thought, *The Kybalion* is suggested to impart the Hermetic view regarding the principles expressed by reality. Then here according to this outlook *causality* is raised. See Three Initiates, *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1908), 82.

and by which *free will* vs. *said truth* determines the particular chain set in motion and outcomes thereafter. Then free will guided by practical wisdom engages causes in keeping with the principles that determine effect most aligned with the desired end.

This moves us to the principle of *polarity*²⁶ in transformation, by which phenomena occur as an interval between two poles, identical in nature yet different in degree. For example, hot and cold, light and dark are the same object as two absolutes transformable to the other. Thus where one aspect appears prevalent, the opposite will take precedence, and vice versa, with this flux apparent among causal relations. Moreover, *existence* itself occurs as the tension between the poles that are creation to destruction, with *time* perceived as the transformative change that follows, measured as the progression from one state to another. In the context of practical wisdom, polarity informs us that all phenomena are subject to change and transformation.

Next is *rhythm*²⁷ as the principle expressed in the oscillation between opposites, such as the rise and fall of tides, the changing of seasons, and the cycles of celestial bodies. Rhythm allows the subject insight into the patterns that govern change, e.g. the advance and decline of a nation, mirroring the rhythmic cycle between birth and death. Then, events considered as progressions upon a rhythm may inform the subject of what arrives next, thus facilitating decision-making towards an equilibrium that better supports life and by which proactive adjustments and preparations are encouraged. Observing *rhythm*, the subject furnishes adaptation to change by proceeding in accord with the same.

After that *correspondence*²⁸ is the principle observed among scale and measure, where the macro is reflected in the micro and vice versa, the workings of one revealing the other and the fact that all things are related. For example, we observe the universal standard of proportion, Phi (ϕ), otherwise known as the golden ratio, present among phenomena from the microscopic to the galactic. Then, acknowledging a principle at a certain scale, the subject proceeds equipped to recognise the same at varying orders of magnitude. Thus correspondence provides a useful tool for comprehending reality, with knowledge extrapolated from one order to another. Correspondence encourages a holistic view, where the

²⁶ *Ibid.* regarding *polarity*, p.71

²⁷ *Ibid.* *rhythm*, p.76

²⁸ *Ibid.* *correspondence* p.53

relation between disparate objects is made apparent and allows the subject to draw parallels regarding the underlying unity of reality.

Relative to cause and effect, *care*²⁹ influences the subject's willed outcome in the world. Or, more exactly, care as the generative principle that drives human endeavours, where this intent develops and fashions the object that follows. To illustrate this concept, we consider the consequence of its absence. For example, nihilism may hold that if all is without meaning, all ought to be without care. Yet without care, the generative agency is forfeit, making the subject available to the agency of the third, at the point at which the object that cares the most affects that which cares the least. Thus we reflect upon the importance of caring for the truth as the principal cause from which all effects ensue. Otherwise, absent of care, the coherence brought by purposeful existence may depart, inviting chaotic conditions as a consequence of indifference.

Thereafter we arrive at *potential*,³⁰ that which recognises the object's current position between becoming and unbecoming—with the object's transformative capacity towards an end being defined by its constitution. *Potential* enables practical wisdom to interpret the procession of reality: to reckon with change proceeding as time. Furthermore, potential correctly observed serves to preserve the object's basis in reality. Otherwise, the object presumed capable of becoming something it cannot be loses the *is* of its being in reality and is subsumed by the imagined *ought* forced upon it. Whereupon, separated from its category of being, *i.e.* unsupported by actuality, the object is removed by reality as necessary for its own self-preservation.

Considering the above, we recall this study posits *reality as*

²⁹ Although Heidegger's concept appears similar, here *care* is distinct from any existential or ontological association. Thus instead *care* signifies the subject's generative intention and the willed direction of the same. For contrast, see Charles E. Scott, "*Care and Authenticity*," in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. Bret W. Davis (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010), 57–69.

³⁰ (i) As mentioned by this study *potential* represents a reversal of the typical subject over object relation. Rather than the subject's will envisioned upon the object, instead the observer is subordinate to the *is* of the object itself *i.e.* the material and functional constraints by which the object exists. Where in contrast *transformation* removes the object from its category to the extent that the object no longer exists in and of itself. The premise being that potential serves the creative principle, transformation the destructive. (ii) Likewise, respecting potential, we reconcile the *is* vs. *ought* quandary.

change, to which these principles accord in relation. Then we note these principles do not cause change; rather, they are categories among the same, where change occurs as the first object with no divisible parts. Thus with change as the first cause, these principles proceed as effects in the most immediate sense—namely, as means to comprehend reality, to interpret the boundary conditions through which change as reality is expressed. Where, if the praxis of practical wisdom is to influence causal relations, the science is the comprehension of change and its binding characteristics.

Furthermore, if we accept that *change* comprises the interaction of two opposites, creation and destruction—and with *change* as the first object upon which all causal relations are predicated—it would follow that reality's fundamental layer is change itself. Then, if that which is eternal and all-pervasive defines the criterion for Aristotle's *substance*,³¹ we adequate *change* and *reality*. Likewise, if *form*³² determines the shape of all objects, *change* as interaction of opposites informs all objects. Given an abstraction in which existent things are considered, reality itself is considered an object, the primary genera, the taxonomic category that ranks above all others—where all objects are in a state of change, that is reality.

Practical wisdom subordinate to reality reconciles Aristotle's theoretical wisdom over the practical,³³ where both science and praxis is the practical—or, specifically, the epistemological and scientific following an empirical observation of the principles expressed by reality. Likewise, the ontological is praxis, where the subject's actions accord with these

³¹ See Aristotle *Met.* XII.6.1071b “There must, then, be such a principle, whose very substance is actuality. Further, then, these substances must be without matter; for they must be eternal, at least if anything else is eternal. Therefore they must be actuality.” Where here, without matter, *change* as the first cause is imperceptible, yet perceivable as the emergent property that is reality.

³² Rather than a reference to *form* as it appears in Aristotle's *hylomorphism*, here this term is mentioned to imply a general principle, namely: the *intangible* determining the embodiment of the *tangible*. Where this study suggests the first cause (creation and destruction in relation) determines the current appearance of the object's essence. For context see Aristotle's *Metaphysics* VII.Z.3 form as substance; likewise Aristotle's *Physics* Book I and specifically II.I 193b6.

³³ Aristotle elevates theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) above practical wisdom (*phronesis*). The rationale being that knowledge for its own sake transcends knowledge for mere practical application. Where *sophia* realises universal truths, the highest objects of knowledge. See knowledge for its own sake (*Met.* I.2.982a25-982b10); and theoretical knowledge as more valuable than the practical (982b11-983a11).

principles as means towards being in reality, and does not proceed as per an ideal fashioned by reason in the mind *i.e.* an imagined abstraction from reality. Instead, we employ the mind to make a close observation of reality, with hypotheses verified by its behaviour. We arrive upon grounds for an ethics that honours the behaviour of reality and thus serves the subject's prevalence in the same.

Moving on, we contrast reason with practical wisdom, first considering reason, termed here as *hyper-rational* thought, extended to extremes in isolation. Reason consults itself for verification³⁴ and is the means by which the ideal at odds with reality comes into being. Reason is held superior to reality, with the ideal crafted upon this assumption. Thus while still appearing rational by reason's own terms, with each hyper-rational inference grounding the next, such thought may detach from reality and still be considered valid. Albeit circular in reasoning, a self-confirming framework follows—one that appears reasonable and yet proceeds outside reality. In contrast, practical wisdom consults reality at the outset and checks each inference against the same before proceeding.

Similarly addressing reason's shortcomings, if we accept reality itself to be an arational substance, reason is thus an abstraction derived from the arational. It is an object incompatible with its source, which in turn implies that reason's own basis is beyond its epistemic reach. Or simply, reason proceeds as an effect unable to comprehend its own cause. Reason is only equipped to rationalise the outcomes that emerge from reality as secondary effects, not the first cause that is arational reality itself. Although practical wisdom is also incapable of knowing reality in the absolute, by taking an arational approach to the effects that follow this first cause, practical wisdom provides a better comprehension.

If we accept that reason occurs by and for the mind and thus proceeds somewhat unrestrained by material requirements, reason appears susceptible to trends in thought through time. That is to say, the propositional attitude of an era may determine reason's conclusions. Practical wisdom, by contrast, is subordinate to human survival and is thus

³⁴ To arrive at the truth by means of reasoned premises unfolding in procession, the reasoned hypothesis must move towards an empirical conclusion. The problem arrives, where the reasoned conclusion confirms the reasoned hypothesis—absent of empirical correspondence in reality *i.e.* circular thought which amplifies the reasoned inference with each recursion; appearing to “make sense” upon reason's terms, yet incongruent with reality.

bound by unchanging material criteria against which it is determined and measured. Indeed, the reasoning of the ancients may appear foreign or inaccurate at times, yet archaic wisdom regarding life's fundamentals often appears correct or at least relevant. Wisdom is rarely hostile to humanity, if at all, but reason alone has been employed to rationalise the most destructive endeavours.

Contrary to Aristotle, reason ought not be considered the highest human function. Rather than being an end in itself, we reposition reason in service to practical wisdom.³⁵ Otherwise, when reason is considered the preeminent faculty or conducted absent of wisdom, a mode of hyper-rational thought may follow that is contrary to the standard that defines the human as humane. The same can be true of reason when unaccompanied by elements of the gamut of human faculties culminating as the basis for practical wisdom³⁶—an emergent property, greater than the sum of its parts.

When tempered by practical wisdom, all human faculties hold the potential to be expressed in a practical mode, with utility—such as the reduction of suffering and malice and the preservation of life—measured against teleological criteria. This is also true for practical imagination, the appropriate extent being determined by the realisation of potentials in outcome, and practical emotion—where human faculties are energised and yet denied the excess by which the creative becomes destructive (for example, when reason and logic are applied through emotion and malevolent intent is rationalised and justified).

A more explicit definition of practical wisdom follows, namely, the means by which the subject may (i) choose for, (ii) proceed among, and (iii) prevail in reality. Practical wisdom is grounded by the endeavour to see what, how, why, and in turn, what will be—and by this, the subject is informed how to respond in order to prevail. This is the art of invoking and responding to causal chains, by which the subject may best

³⁵ (i) Respecting the destructive, that is evil—the significance of practical wisdom, charged with preserving life, is made more apparent. Then with *reason* contributing to practical wisdom, which in turn contributes to survival (the highest good) practical wisdom is the *telos* of reason. (ii) Likewise given that practical wisdom serves survival, and *survival through adversity* constitutes the subject's eudaimonic condition—wisdom supplants Aristotle's reason as the principal means towards *eudaimonia*.

³⁶ Rather than leading, *reason* appears as a subordinate constituent among a framework of human capacities e.g. logic, knowledge, insight, intuition, observation, and so on, culminating in practical wisdom.

prevail through the change that is reality. Practical wisdom is the sum of all human faculties—rational, irrational, and arational—and enables the arational objects that are reality and humankind to be addressed. In more immediate terms, practical wisdom is the faculty most familiar with the object that is life itself, and thus best equipped to reconcile the destructive causes that move coincident with it.

Moving to consider causality in more detail, first we recall Aristotle's concept of *cause* (*aitia*³⁷) or the *why* of something, expressed as four principal aspects: (i) the *material cause* as the object's material, for example the marble of the sculpture; (ii) the *pattern* that organises this object, that being the form of the sculpture; (iii) that which causes the object to be, in this case the artisan; and (iv) the object's final end (*telos*³⁸), the statue purposed as an item of sculpture. Then, in summary, we find that Aristotle's *cause* comprises: the *material*, *formal*, *efficient* and *final* causes respectively.³⁹ In other words, what the object is made of, what it is, what brought it about, and what it is for.

In contrast, this study proposes that two causes, *creation* and *destruction*, precede all subordinate causes—by which standard we consider that Aristotle's causes are in fact effects. Where the object's causal category is determined as creative or destructive in relation to some other object. For example, the statue embodies creation for the sculptor, but the sculpture embodies destruction for the marble. Then, to avoid paradox, we recognise

³⁷ Here Aristotle's *aitia* often translated as "cause" or "explanation" is more appropriately understood as *why* the object changes and moves. Where *aitia* encompasses four fundamental causes, namely the *material*, *formal*, *efficient*, and *final* cause. See *Physics* II.3-7, specifically II.3 194b16-195a3.

³⁸ *Telos* denotes the object's end, its purpose and final cause. The goal or function the object naturally strives to fulfil. That which explains its nature, behaviour, and reason for existence. See *Physics* II.3.194b16-195a3, the four causes; and II.8: importance of final causes in nature 198b10-199b32. *Metaphysics* A (I)3 983a25-32, *telos* "[as] the for-the-sake-of-which and the good, since this is the end of all coming to be and of all movement". *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7: the telos of human life as happiness or well-being *eudaimonia* (*eudaimonia*), happiness as the highest good and final end of human action 1097a15-1098a20; where happiness is "[the] activity of soul exhibiting virtue." 1098a16-18.

³⁹ Aristotle's four causes, namely the *material*, *formal*, *efficient*, and *final* together provide the explanation for the object's existence. Meaning, beyond the recognising *what* the object is, the subject comes to know the *how* and the *why* of the object. Where arriving at the *why* is to fully comprehend the means and reason for the object being existent. See *Physics* II.3.194b16-195a3.

the self-regulating means by which reality prevails: (i) with every object embodying the creative and destructive principle; (ii) reality coordinating all objects in proximal and distal arrangements; (iii) by means of the causal chains that reality initiates in itself, either creative or destructive determined by relation; (iv) thereby balancing these principal forces, and in turn prevailing as an outcome of this interaction.

Thus we conclude that (i) all objects are a cause to the other; (ii) this cause invokes either a creative or destructive effect; (iii) practical wisdom proceeds as the subject configures objects into arrangements that initiate and maintain causal relations in reality. Where the subject also accounts for intrinsic and extrinsic effects, the outcome in both proximal and distal terms. Therefore, rather than considered in isolation, the law of correspondence states all cause and effect takes place in the *gestalt* of causality that we know as reality. Thus any action must be taken with awareness towards its immediate outcome and that which follows later in time and distance.

In turn, if we accept that reality must perform these configurations and arrangements to prevail, it follows that as embodiments of reality, humans must also make causal arrangements to survive. Thus a correspondence in scale and magnitude is suggested, where the subject must reconcile the same forces present in the macrocosm with those expressed in the microcosm that is the human *i.e.* creation and destruction reconciled in one being. By this it would appear that, given that the human mind holds agency over the material conditions that surround it, the successful human endeavour is then determined by the accord between our interventions to prevail *vs.* reality's interventions to prevail through change (time), where rather than a homage toward nature, true sustainability first balances our collective effort with the grounds for reality itself.

Accordingly, practical wisdom respects the universal will that configures causality, with the human mind and will subordinate to the same. Then honouring human limitation, the human will serves as an *aiming towards*—with this aim being *appropriate cause* and *willed effect* in reality. Although the human will may affect configurations among the greater object that is reality, practical wisdom respects that the human will is not reality itself. Proceeding in this manner, we avoid human cognitive faculties, namely reason, being considered preeminent to reality, where reality is otherwise perceived as optional. Whereas the human subject, recognising that it depends upon reality, respects that reality's

care is to prevail, this being an endeavour upon which all existent objects in reality depend.

In closing, we arrive to ask the *why* of practical wisdom. This human capacity occurs as a point of abstraction seeking illumination, or an Archimedean viewpoint by which the subject may consider the self from the third perspective, to deliberate towards the best possible ends and likewise the best possible conditions in reality. Foremost observing the workings of each, for the best of each, the subject strives for accord between self and reality. Then considering the self truthfully, adjustments towards betterment can be made as necessary—with the outcomes that follow the self as the cause, being evaluated upon the same truthful terms.

Thus the *why* of practical wisdom is the internal monologue pursuing the revelation of self in reality, which is the truth—where to exist in the truth, is to wholly exist in reality. The standard by which the internal monologue serves its function is to provide the subject with a sense of existence and self-awareness. Through an awareness of existence, the subject recognises the Other as existent upon the same terms. Moral conscience as empathy follows—at which moment the relation between morality and the truth becomes apparent. Yet remaining with the practical application of wisdom in immediate terms, as the internal monologue delivers an awareness of existence, the self is provided with grounds to improve the same.

Then, if we accept the relation between the object that is existence itself and practical wisdom as an expression of this object, it follows that the presence of wisdom is implied by the subject's prevalence through change (time) and likewise an accompanying quality of existence. More so during times of significant change when, despite wider circumstances, moral standards are upheld. At which moment, said wisdom might be employed towards moral or immoral ends, where immoral intent flourishes during societal decline and vice versa. Yet for the morally concerned subject, practical wisdom moves the self and Other towards creation, more towards life than death. Thus rather than human *ergon* as Aristotle's reason, here *to prevail in practical wisdom* is the subject's ultimate purpose—this being the measure by which practical decisions are made.

Philosophical Perspectives on Pluriculturalism

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Abstract: The concept of pluriculturalism is a relatively novel one that has yet to be fully explored. It is based on the principles of plurilingualism, which focuses on the individual's capacity to acquire multiple abilities and competencies in terms of cultural and linguistic engagements. From a theoretical perspective, the concept emerged at the advent of the pragmatist turn in language, as well as from socio-linguistic studies. It reflects the breakdown of the one-culture man at the juncture and intersection of identities in the context of the global outbreak. The individual's concealed modularity and capacity to prioritize an identity within a cluster of affiliations revealed an emerging activity at the base of inter-social reality. As a result, a more finely tuned description of sociocultural phenomena enables pluriculturalism to transcend the limitations of multiculturalism, which is perceived as a more static picture. While multiculturalism sought to identify the foundation for a mutual dialogue at societal contacts, pluriculturalism demonstrates the potential for such a dialogue as individual repertoires. A crucial difference can be observed in terms of political management. While multiculturalism is oriented towards the institutional preservation and integration of a guest culture within a host country, pluriculturalism allows for a move towards an emergent planning. The latter is based on constraint-driven strategies that aim to facilitate individual abilities to engage in self-generating phenomena. This approach encourages the formation of living systems or networks.

Keywords: pluriculturalism, multiculturalism, salientization, immemorial, modularity, narrative, sociolinguistic, emergent planning.

Social complexity

Linguistic differences can be used as a measure for analyzing the level of social complexity. If, in addition to standard languages, we consider a wide range of non-standard variations, such as dialects, sociolects, idiolects, registers, slangs, styles, accents, and gestures, we find that there is a high interconnection of speech communities. As socio-linguistics has

demonstrated, “the form of the language varies as a reflection of the social variation between and within communities, and that at least some of this variation will result in long term language change.”¹

Like other species, humans evolve through speciation, which involves the alienation of a community from its parent groups. This leads to phenotypic and eventually genotypic deviations.² Although mankind is represented by a single genetic species, phenotypic differences have appeared over time as a result of communities drifting. In addition to physical differences, this pattern of speciation also helps to explain linguistic and cultural complexification. A group of individuals who, for various reasons, find themselves enclosed in a specific community in contrast to the surrounding environment, will inevitably differ to some degree in their ways of communicating, of relating to each other, and at the level of shared knowledge. Communities can become estranged in various ways, including peripatric, allopatric, sympatric, and parapatric patterns, depending on the type of isolation from the broader context.

It can be argued then that the crystallization of languages is a reflection of specific clusters of social interactions based on geographical areas, occupational groups, social classes, communities of interests, genders, ages, religions, ethnicities, or commodities. As evidenced by the pragmatic turn in linguistics and the emergence of socio-linguistics in the 1970s and 1980s, the distinction between social and cultural identity has become increasingly fluid. The concept of culture is no longer simply a reference to institutions and artifacts; rather, it is the result of a dynamic discourse. Culture is also sociality. The complexity of sub-languages reveals an infinite-like variety of social affiliations and ongoing networks, whether based on large historical civilizations with their standardized idioms or the smallest friend group with their own slang.

Languages are systems of communication that serve as the medium for persistent social interactions among networks of individuals and their corresponding noosystem, the complex of cultural production spe-

¹ Maya Ravindranath and Suzanne Evans Wagner “Sociolinguistics: languages in social environments”, in Keith Allan, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistics*, 1st edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2015), 264-280.

² Ernst Mayr, “Speciational Evolution or Punctuated Equilibrium” in Albert Somit and Steven A. Peterson, eds., *The Dynamics of Evolution: The Punctuated Equilibrium Debate in the Natural and Social Sciences* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

cific to a group. However, not all networks are capable of developing into a robust social agency. A group of friends remains a loosely connected network of individuals unless they evolve into a gang with specific purposes, a stronger sense of belonging, a more solid organization, and a symbolic internal structure. Not all social organizations share the same objectives, even though their lines of action may converge, overlap, or lead to conflict, as is the case with political institutions and mafia organizations. In other contexts, similarly structured constitutional systems, such as nation-states, can collide into war or agree to the formation of larger sovereignties. The issue of a linguistic minority seeking cultural recognition within a state's borders is a significant but isolated example of a broader dynamic.

The construction of cultural identities

The contemporary world is revealed as a hyperconnected field, comprising an infinite-like nesting of systems of relations. Prior to the global outbreak and “for most of human history, it seems likely that, for most people, cultural identity development was relatively simple. Children were born into a culture and, in the course of childhood, adopted the ways of that culture as their own ways and as the basis of their cultural identity.”³ With regard to the phenomenon of cultural identity during the Renaissance, H. C. Wojciehowski observed a similar emergence of a peculiar restructuring of identitarian belonging as a consequence of the acceleration of global and cross-cultural exchange at the end of the fifteenth century.⁴ The mobility that occurred during this period is argued to have broken the concentricity of identitarian circles that was typical of the Middle Ages. This resulted in individuals being situated at the intersection of juxtaposed networks and thus a variety of possible affiliations, which led to a new individual self-consciousness.

In light of the social complexity, the self is not a monolith but rather a constellation of selves, a multiplicity of relational memories and belongings that vary depending on social engagements. The earliest imprinting occurs with the introjection of early familiar relationships and their related

³ Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles, *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (Springer, 2011), 302.

⁴ Cf. Hannah Chappelle Wojciehowski, *Group Identity in the Renaissance World* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

symbolic representations, which precede and constrain the emergence of individuality. The capacity for relationality is an inherent aspect of the earliest experiences of individual life. This could provide an explanation for the enduring human need to connect with others. This phenomenon is in fact immemorial, existing beyond the limits of individual memory and can be expressed in Lacanian nostalgia for a lost whole.⁵

During the process of life development, a person encounters a multitude of socio-cultural environments, which necessitate a modular self-construction that is perpetually undergoing renovation and renegotiation. This capacity to navigate within social constraints and to acquire socio-cultural and linguistic competencies challenges the notion of a one-culture individual. In a mobile and juxtaposed world of infinite-like networks, social and cultural belongings are not pre-established but rather subjected to processes of social construction and salientization. Identity is also a socio-cultural identification. The individual justifies his own coherence by building self-theories and self-narratives that fit within theories and narratives at the social level. It is impossible to estrange individuality from sociality and culture; they are interconnected. Any attempt to resolve one into the other is an artificial simplification of a complex phenomenon.

A particular interest of studies on transitology is the demonstration of the modularity and the ability of individual agencies *to salientize* specific identities within the context of historical dynamics. The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s provides an illustrative case study. The analysis of propaganda is not necessary as it is challenging to ascertain the degree of fiction when discussing tradition-building. As Wallerstein posited, “it seems to be true in general that any complex system of ideas can be manipulated to serve any particular social or political objective.”⁶ Following the death of Tito, a nationalist rhetoric emerged in Yugoslavian society,⁷ replacing the “brotherhood and unity” motto that had served as a unifying principle for approximately 50 years. It aimed at fostering unity among the various ethnic groups. The conflict was not

⁵ Cf. Jacques Lacan, “La famille: les complexes familiaux”, in *Encyclopedie francaise* (Paris: A. de Monzie, 1938).

⁶ Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 1, 4 vols (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 152.

⁷ Zala Volčič, “Blaming the Media: Serbian Narratives of National(Ist) Identity”, *Continuum* 20, no. 3 (1 September 2006): 313–30.

solely driven by nationalism; rather, it was a complex mix of religions, ethnicities, and languages that may explain the chaotic and brutal nature of the conflict. Nationalism eventually emerged as the dominant principle of identity alignment. The transition can be described as the co-working of a top-down competition of noosystems and a bottom-up movement of a multitude of ordinary people who conformed to them “to the point where they, to a large extent, narratively immersed themselves into teleological national History in order to then emerge on the other side as foot soldiers.”⁸ The fluctuations in collective spirit demonstrate the emergence of a peculiar force at the base of society. Individual agencies are capable of creating and navigating a multiplicity of social narratives and of restructuring their own identity through processes of social salience.

Limits of multiculturalism

The primary error of the neo-liberal and communitarian debate was the assumption that the complex relationship between individuality and sociality could be simplified by privileging one of the two extremes. The interplay between individual agency and social constraints constitutes the fundamental tension that defines political and historical life. It is evident that the management and resolution of conflict cannot be approached in a simplistic manner. Policies must address the social reality on multiple levels and consider a multitude of agencies. The initial step is to acknowledge the inherent complexity of socio-cultural systems and to develop a framework that is as responsive as possible to the bottom-up spontaneity of social interaction and assembly.

Taylor developed his theoretical framework by integrating two concepts from continental philosophy. These were the struggle for recognition, as espoused by Rousseau and Hegel, and the fusion of horizons, as proposed by Gadamer.⁹ Taylor regards recognition as a fundamental human need and bases his analyses on the psychotic pathology identified by Fanon

⁸ Stef Jansen, “First as Tragedy, Then as Teleology: The Politics/People Dichotomy in the Ethnography of Post-Yugoslav Nationalisation”, *Conflict and Society* 2, no. 1 (1 June 2016): 164–80.

⁹ Cf. <https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?bejB2k> *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann, Revised edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994).

as a consequence of colonialism. According to Taylor, the misrecognition and imposition of models leads to self-depreciation, inferiority complex, and dislocation of personality, and it affects several members of society, including subaltern people, women, and blacks.

The politics of difference is not unaffected by aporias. One of the main criticisms is the tendency towards cultural relativism. Taylor distances himself from this postmodern approach, which represents a complete closure to the significant other. Taylor advocates for a non-paternalistic recognition that presupposes the value of the other's culture. This presupposition is the foundation for multicultural permeability: a procedural approach which is based on Gadamer's concept of fusion of horizons. There is an open dialectic between people that allows them to reach a common ground. The dialectic is not resolved by a Hegelian synthesis; rather, it is resolved by an open effort in which personal horizons are expanded to meet the expectations of the other.

Taylor's position serves as an excellent point of departure for multicultural dialogue, offering an ethical stance and a philosophical justification for the possibility of intercultural understanding. Nevertheless, there is the perception that multiculturalism is unable to offer more than a static, preservationist approach to diversity. This approach fails to acknowledge the fact that the intercultural attitude is already inherent in individuals, as demonstrated by their capacity to embrace and master different linguistic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the horizon is not solely based on constructive dialogue; it also encompasses the strengthening of existing individual competencies. I posit that the concept of pluriculturalism has the potential to overcome some of the limitations of multicultural discourse.

Pluriculturalism

The concept of pluriculturalism is a relatively recent derivation of the concept of plurilingualism. The first appearance of the term plurilingualism dates back to the end of the 1970s in Italy, before appearing in France in the 1990s. An online search in 2020 still showed predominant results in Italian and French. However, in the six months from 2019, the main online scientific networks saw a quadrupling of publications in English, with the majority originating from non-Anglophone countries.¹⁰ As a

¹⁰ Enrica Piccardo, Aline Germain-Rutherford, and Geoff Lawrence, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Plurilingual Language Education* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

concept, it refers to the individual's ability to develop linguistic multicompetence in terms of repertoires and heteroglossia. The latter refers to the diversity of sociolinguistic phenomena, including standard languages, dialects, sociolects, idiolects, registers, and so forth. Although a relatively recent concept, the phenomenon is not a novel one: "in contrast to the reductionist, nationalistic, monolingualistic perspective to language that we are so used to, plurilingualism is probably as old as humankind."¹¹ Indeed, monolingualism represents an exception to this rule.

As a scientific concept, it has evolved from two distinct lines of inquiry. The pragmatic turn of the 1980s, marked by the emergence of sociolinguistics as a discipline, and studies on bilingualism, including second language acquisition, which took its first steps mainly in France, Canada, and Switzerland, represent the two key developments in the field. It is important to note that plurilingualism, as a social construct, is subject to a constant process of development and revisionism. It can "be regarded as a complex adaptive system whose characteristics include dynamism, openness, non linearity, self-organization, adaptability and self-similarity."¹² In contrast to multilingualism, the emphasis is not on the description of different cultures coexisting at the community level, but rather on the ability of an individual to act and manage different cultural environments. This "focus on the individual as the locus and actor of contact encouraged a shift of terminology from multiculturalism (the study of societal contact) to plurilingualism (the study of individual repertoire)."¹³

In contrast to plurilingualism, the concept of pluriculturalism is even less developed outside language teaching discourses. In fact, it has mainly served as a framework for the educational policies of the European Union, which has popularized it through the CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).¹⁴ As one of its initial attempts at conceptualization, it was stated that "pluriculturalism is to be distinguished from 'multiculturalism' [...] by its nature if not by its

¹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹² Ibid, 5.

¹³ Cf. Steve Marshall, "Plurilingualism and the Tangled Web of Lingualisms", in *The Routledge Handbook of Plurilingual Language Education*.

¹⁴ "Common European Framework for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment" in *Language Policy Division* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), <https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97>.

goals."¹⁵ Nevertheless, they are not mutually exclusive but rather two distinct perspectives, both of which are valid interpretations of the same phenomenon. Pluriculturalism is more attuned to social phenomena and offers a more accurate description of bottom-up dynamics when reinforced by psychological concepts and social discourses. This eliminates the fixed perception of individualism, as people are no longer confined to unchanging essences. Rather, they are developing agents who can continuously adapt their self-concept and narrative through modular competencies, cultural transitions, and salient identification.

Emergent Planning

A framework is a theoretical tool utilized to map objective reality. The greater the conceptualization's proximity to reality, the more reliable, viable, and adaptable the possibilities of coping with the world become. Multiculturalism is defined as the coexistence of distinct groups within a shared territory in a majority/minority relationship. The policy-making process is oriented towards the institutional integration of a guest culture within a host country. Nevertheless, the perception persists that the traditional nation-state, with its emphasis on cultural preservationism, continues to exert a profound influence on our collective consciousness. This frequently gives rise to an essentialist discourse, which can be both beneficial and detrimental. Unfortunately, this static view of society can result in forced and unnatural sociocultural equilibrium. Conversely, the embrace of pluriculturalism presents an opportunity for a paradigm shift towards a more modular and constructive approach to identity.

The concept of pluriculturalism allows for a planning approach based on constraints-driven management. This approach can facilitate the realization of individual pluri-cultural and pluri-social potentialities and foster the development of a self-generating intercultural environment. It is not only a matter of recognition; it is also a matter of developing concrete abilities towards mutual acknowledgment and social integration. To utilize Honneth and Fraser's discussion, a management approach driven by constraints aims "to deinstitutionalize patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with

¹⁵ Daniel Coste, Danièle Moore, and Geneviève Zarate, "Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence. Studies Towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching", *Language Policy Division*, 2009, 2–44.

patterns that foster."¹⁶

The conventional notion of social organization was predicated on the creation and regulation of artificial forms. In contrast, the emerging framework is predicated on the direct cultivation of indirect generative phenomena. A flower is not created by the assembly of cells; rather, it is cultivated and protected by the growth processes that it generates and coordinates autonomously. In embryos and all living organisms, the process of development towards complementary differentiation of roles is based on the sharing of internal information. This guideline represents a departure from the total randomness of aggregation. The concept of emergent planning involves the intervention of an external agent in the environment with the intention of encouraging the formation of specific living systems or networks. The process entails the removal of constraints on pivotal pathways, with due consideration of the historical trajectory of a given network. This enables the spontaneous emergence of an organizational architecture that can be further developed and refined.¹⁷ For illustrative purposes, consider a university campus where administrative buildings were constructed around an open field within a city. Over time, footpaths naturally emerge as people walk through the grassland. These paths create a structure of connections that can be paved without disrupting the primordial and spontaneous agencies' experiences and interactions.

The architectural design of a self-generated environment is contingent upon the occurrence of complex patterns of events, which are inextricably linked to the spatial context in which they unfold.¹⁸ Consequently, any management, planning, and policy-making must be adapted to the circumstances and cannot be interpreted as an arbitrary intervention that may lead to failures and distortions. The planner's objective is to create an environment that allows for the emergence of new harmonies by arranging specific interdependencies in a manner that does not restrict patterns. It is essential to consider the processes of social organization that emerge naturally, while also implementing interventions that

¹⁶ Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?* (Verso Books, 2004), 39.

¹⁷ H lie Mathieu, "Conceptualizing the Principles of Emergent Urbanism", *Archnet-IJAR : International Journal of Architectural Research* 3 (1 July 2009).

¹⁸ Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

facilitate the development of a self-correcting socio-ecological harmony. Given that pluriculturalism is a more accurate description of the potential for emergent phenomena in reality, it provides a more suitable framework for socio-cultural planning.

Conclusion

The principal objective of the paper was to delineate an outline of pluriculturalism and its potentialities. As a relatively novel concept, it remains unexamined theoretically and is still confined to linguistic policies. In contrast with multiculturalism, it offers the possibility of overcoming the impasse of contemporary political philosophy, which is still focused on the individual versus social standpoint. An anti-reductionist perspective reveals the intermutual tension between individual agency and social constraints at the foundation of social life. The continuous construction of social meaning and traditions finds the individual at the intersection of an infinite-like social potentiality. Its ability to cross, adapt, and take on various social standpoints simultaneously overcomes the distress based on cultural preservation that is characteristic of multiculturalism. This is not a matter of social dialogue; rather, it is a matter of enabling individuals to embrace different standpoints through constraint-driven management. The concept of pluriculturalism provides a framework for a planning approach that facilitates the bottom-up liberation of self-generating perspectives. The synthesis of social structures is more effectively achieved through the spontaneous actions of individuals than through top-down systems design.

Descartes in the Chatbot: The Leap from Technology to Ontology

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Abstract: The metaphor of the chatbot is our entryway for a philosophical inquiry into artificial general intelligence. Of the senses in the metaphor, may be found Cartesian ideas that I think offer clues for the underlying rationale for AGI's ontological leap from clever machine to conscious being. AI's machine learning techniques, as inheritor of Cartesian math, lead to the stochastic utterances of the chatbot. Entry into the dream world allowed Descartes to discover the innate ideas of soul and God. Likewise, AI enters its own dream of the simulation to find perfection in technology. Descartes' ontological argument for the necessary existence of God transposes to the inexorable existence of AGI.

Keywords: AGI, AI, Descartes, chatbot, ontological argument

"In 2033 it will seem utterly baffling how a bunch of tech folks lost their mind over text generators." François Chollet, Google Engineer.¹

The chatbot as metaphor for AI's anthropomorphic personae gained a heightened sense of tangibility with the release of ChatGPT-3 on 30 November 2022. Artificial general intelligence, once the domain of science fiction, materialized before our imaginations in the form of the social robot and its large language model.

Within the metaphor, are Cartesian ideas that I think can serve as signposts for the rationalization of AGI's ontological leap from clever machine to conscious being. Among the relevant Cartesian themes are: analytic geometry, zombie, test of language, cogito ergo sum, the ontological argument. This paper touches upon these themes in a two-part plot.

The first part, the methodological, begins with the calcul géométrique. The path of geometrical discovery on physicalist suppositions leads to the cul-de-sac of the bête machine where it stalls without an accounting for the soul. Analogously, AI's machine learning capabilities de-

¹ Mance, Henry. 2024. "AI keeps going wrong. What if it can't be fixed?" *Financial Times*, April 6 2024.

scends from the calcul géométrique (today's analytic geometry), traces an empirical path to the cul-de-sac of the chatbot.

The second part picks up in the metaphysics of the *Meditations*. The meditator enters the dream world in search of soul and God. In the age of AI, this dream has re-emerged to offer a rationalization for the leap to artificial general intelligence.

Introduction

If there is a manifestation of artificial general intelligence in the popular imagination, it would be the figure of the chatbot. Seemingly on the verge of intelligence breakout, with each additional trillion parameters, the chatbot has come to be a metaphor for the rise of human-style artificial consciousness. The chatbots themselves say so:

‘ChatGPT can see, hear, and speak.’²

‘在亿万人之中，我只属于你。’ [Among billions of people, I only belong to you.]³

The ideas of Descartes are compelling for the age of AI, firstly, because his brand of mathematics is a foundation of machine learning. And secondly, from it, he formulated an order of intellectual discovery which can be discerned in the heuristics of AI. This is due in no small part to his place at the beginnings of the scientific revolution and modern philosophy.

Part 1: From La géométrie to the stochastic parrot

The calcul géométrique was unveiled in a recondite annex to the *Discourse on Method* entitled *La géométrie* (1637). It would launch a revolution in math and science. Descartes further saw in this geometrical order of discovery, a formula for the procedure of reason applicable to the whole of human knowledge.

La géométrie, though principally a technical work on the resolution of geometrical curvature by algebra, is the touchstone of his philosophy.

² OpenAI, n.d. “ChatGPT.” accessed 1 February 2024, <https://openai.com/chatgpt>.

³ Xiaoice. n.d. “在亿万人之中，我只属于你。” accessed 1 February 2024. <https://www.xiaoice.com/>

Up to then, curvature construction had been the purview of the draftsman with mechanical tools. Pivoting to symbols and proofs, Descartes declared in the *Discourse* that henceforth, in the sphere of human knowledge reasoning alone would be the measure of truth.

‘...considering that of all those who had up to now sought truth in the sphere of human knowledge, only mathematicians have been able to discover any proofs, that is, any certain and incontrovertible arguments, I did not doubt that I should begin as they had done.’⁴

Geometrical analysis by algebra transformed the visualization of objects from strictly spatio-visual things to abstract ideas in theoretical space. The technique of machine learning by inductive analysis is the recent incarnation of this rubric of analytical geometry and order of discovery. As the name suggests, machine learning aims to imitate the way in which humans learn and adapt to their environments (IBM⁵). One of the earliest technique derived from Cartesian math, involves linear regression by modeling the relationship between a result and one or several explanatory variables. Enter the microprocessor. Through the induction of data at scale and speed, AI obtains the means to learn and adapt in real time. Thereby becoming a creature in history.

Bête machine

In *Traité de l'homme* (1664), Descartes turns his attentions to the human physiology. By the rubric of geometry and reason, he undertakes a physiological cataloguing of the body. He did not spare the brain from the gaze of physics. Though just another organ of the body, the brain was charged with a long list of functions including the emotions, movement, sense-perceptions. The catalogue includes:

...digestion of food, the beating of the heart and arteries, the nourishment and growth of the limbs, respiration, waking and sleeping,

⁴ René Descartes. *Meditations, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, v. I, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, *Dugald Murdoch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985), 120, (AT 6: 18, CSM 1: 120).

⁵ IBM, n.d. “What is machine learning, (ML)?” accessed 1May 2024, <https://www.ibm.com/topics/machine-learning>

the reception by the external sense organs...and also the passions and impressions found in the memory.⁶

John Cottingham notes that, “The remarkable thing about this list is how far it goes beyond what we might think of as ‘pure physiology’...”⁷ Humans were almost completely animal machine (*bête machine*) by this reckoning. It was not a stretch then for Julien Offray de la Mettrie to extend the catalogue to the mind:

Where do cleverness, knowledge, and virtue come from, if not from a disposition - a physical constitution - that makes us apt to become clever, learned and virtuous?⁸

The mind is but a part of the physical whole of an intricate machine. The human is an animal machine with a thinking ability, rather than a Cartesian thinking thing with a body.

Yet, Leibniz saw nothing there to suggest anything more than the body, and countered that the physical constitution itself is no explanation for mind. In the *Monadology*, he imagines a mind the size of a windmill to allow for a person to walk inside:

If we were then to go around inside it, we would see only parts pushing one another, and never anything which would explain a perception.⁹

Stochastic Parrot

Like the *bête machine* and the Leibnizian windmill, the chatbot produces no evidence of its inner life. The talismanic object wrapped in the clothes of language, appeals to the imagination. The effect is what Bender et al. call the stochastic parrot. The LLM appeals to our expectations of what a conversation ought to seem, feeding the illusion of

⁶ Descartes, L’Homme, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, (AT 11 202; CSM 1: 108) 108.

⁷ John Cottingham, “Cartesian Dualism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, John Cottingham (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 246.

⁸ Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Machine Man and Other Writings*, trans. Ann Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 13.

⁹ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadology*, trans. Lloyd Strickland (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd. 1984) sect. 17.

someone there on the other side:

The problem is, if one side of the communication does not have meaning, then the comprehension of the implicit meaning is an illusion arising from our singular human understanding of language (independent of the model).¹⁰

As far as the account of conscious being is concerned, the methodological discovery from geometry to machine learning stalls at the region of mind.

Part 2: From the dream to AGI

The prior methods geometry, reason, anatomy, fell short of accounting for conscious experience. An explanation of the soul would necessitate an altogether different mode of inquiry, in the metaphysics. Descartes attempts this in the *Meditations* by way of the dream state, cutting off contact with the a posteriori, while clinging to the lifeline of reason.

The dream

In *Meditations* 1, Descartes' re-evaluation of the basis of all knowledge blurs the distinction between dream and consciousness.

I see so plainly that there are no definitive signs by which to distinguish being awake from being asleep. As a result, I am becoming quite dizzy, and this dizziness nearly convinces me that I am asleep.¹¹

As anything is possible in the state of dreams. Skepticism must rule the day. The meditator decides to tear down the edifice of prior knowledge.

And thus I realized that once in my life I had to raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations, if I wanted to establish anything firm and lasting in the sciences.¹²

¹⁰ Emily M. Bender et al., "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big?" in *Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (FAccT '21), March 3–10, 2021, Canada, (ACM, 2021) 616, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445922>.

¹¹ Descartes, *Meditations, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (AT 7: 19, CSM 2: 13), 13.

¹² Ibid., 12.

Dreams are a familiar device in works of science fiction featuring intelligent machinery. In the 1982 film *Blade Runner*, androids blend in amongst the general population. Those androids that come to a realization of their origins, are overcome by a dreamlike mise-en-scène of the budding consciousness. The android of our time, the AI agent, likewise inhabits a dream-like construct of its own. Deprived of a true sensory grounding, there is no distinguishing between physical and mental kinds. As with the Cartesian dreamer, its worldview depends on things consisting in the a priori.

Zombies

In dreams, even the existence of other minds is subject to doubt. Descartes in *Meditations* 3 wonders if we can be certain that the passerby on the street is not in actuality an automata:

But then were I perchance to look out my window and observe men crossing the square...But what do I see aside from hats and clothes, which could conceal automata? Yet I judge them to be men. Thus what I thought I had seen with my eyes, I actually grasped solely with the faculty of judgment, which is in my mind.¹³

Descartes reassures us the world is not full of zombies. Whatever persona presented, we have an uncanny ability to grasp the presence of inner soul-stuff by means of our own internal faculties. We are born with an a priori apparatus to discern between real and unreal, owing to the benevolence of God.

With the miniaturization of the transistor in the modern time, the question of zombies has made a reappearance. As social robots become smarter, distinguishing between them and us poses greater difficulties, particularly in the absence of God and the God-given faculties of judgment. What we have in its stead is modern neuroscience and a commitment to materialism, leaving no room for the existence of zombies. Exact physical duplicates of us should possess all of the qualities of the original, inclusive of the mental features. Zombies are, therefore, incon-

¹³ Ibid., 21.

ceivable in the closed causal loop of matter.¹⁴

But chatbot doppelgängers are rapidly improving their conversational and intellectual output. It is getting harder to ignore the zombie protagonists, at least by the behavioralist standard. Modern dualists have no problem with this. Not being wedded to causal closure of the physical, they can in theory accommodate the conceivability of zombies. Chalmers¹⁵ advises, that another reason is we simply cannot rule out zombies, is physicalism's 'absence of analysis.' Until we have a satisfactory accounting of consciousness on the level of physics, it will have to be "...considered a fundamental feature, irreducible to anything more basic."¹⁶ Bodies alone are still not able to explain conscious experience.

The Language Test

The irreducibility of conscious experience pertains to the difficulty of pinpointing its actuality, but we know it when we see it. Descartes believes that he can identify the marker of consciousness through the artifact of language, and only humans can ever possess this marker:

We can certainly conceive of a machine so constructed that it utters words. But it is not conceivable that such a machine should produce arrangements of words so as to give an appropriately meaningful answer to whatever is said in its presence, as even the dullest of men can do.¹⁷

Descartes could not imagine a lookup table large enough for any machine to meaningfully participate in conversations. Alan Turing, inventor of the computer, saw that it would be possible.¹⁸ While Descartes' criteria was intended to rule out the possibility of machine intelligence,

¹⁴ Robert Kirk, "Zombies", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (ed.) accessed May 27, 2024, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/zombies/>.

¹⁵ David J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1996).

¹⁶ David J. Chalmers, "The Puzzle of Conscious Experience," *Scientific American*, No. 6. (December 1995): 83.

¹⁷ Descartes, *Meditations, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (AT 7: 32, CSM 2: 13), 21.

¹⁸ Alan M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." *Mind*, Volume LIX, Issue 236 (October 1950): 433-460, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LIX.236.433>

Turing's test was meant to prove its possibility. Man the machine (l'homme machine) was flipped, and it would be machine the man.

Turing granted that if a machine were to be built matching the human intellect behaviorally, debate over conscious being would be moot. Its demonstration in behavioral fact, produced by a substrate of matter would confine the intellect to physical cause. Thereby, an intelligent entity could in fact "...have a finite number of possible sequences of types of stimuli in a finite time..."¹⁹

Until such time as realization of Turing's ideal in AGI, the mental state remains unbounded. And modern theories must stake their claims where the eventual contours will be, such as functionalism: 'a mental state is what a mental state does,'²⁰ psychologism: 'character of the internal information processing,'²¹ supervenience: mental-physical link on the basis of properties,²² all in service of finding a place for '...mind in a world that is fundamentally physical...' ²³

Cogito Ergo Sum

Where mental activity is involved, Descartes would specify a special category to account for the 'rational soul' (ame raisonable). Conceding the senses, body to the evil deceiver, only one thing remains that cannot be doubted, that is, the thinking. It is a separate thing from body.

What about thinking? Here I make my discovery: thought exists; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am; I exist - this is certain.²⁴

Thought is inseparable from self, and therefore, it is the first item of knowledge. So here is finally the sufficient ground upon which to plant

¹⁹ Ned Block, "Psychologism and Behaviorism," *The Philosophical Review*, vol 90 (Jan 1981):24, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2184371>.

²⁰ Janet Levin, "Functionalism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (ed.) accessed May 24, 2024, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/functionalism>.

²¹ Block, "Psychologism and Behaviorism," 5.

²² Donald Davidson, "Mental Events," in *Experience and Theory*, Lawrence Foster and J. W. Swanson (ed.) (London: Duckworth, 1979) 214.

²³ Jaegwon Kim, *Mind in a Physical World: An Essay on the Mind-Body Problem and Mental Causation*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000).

²⁴ Descartes, *Meditations, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (AT 7:27, CSM 2: 18) 2.

the Archimedean point of certainty. Because it “...is the soul which sees, and not the eye...”²⁵

To the computationalist, the cogito looks to be a form of disembodied computation of the kind specified in a universal Turing machine. “A Turing-style model proceeds at a very abstract level, not saying whether mental computations are implemented by physical stuff or Cartesian soul-stuff.”²⁶ Conceivably anywhere there is a processor, symbol manipulator, memory, as in microchips or neurons, there can be a Turing machine. Analogous to Cartesian thinking, computation is independent of its substrate.

Descartes’ Ontological Argument

If AGI is to avoid the path of zombie-ism, it may look to Descartes’ ontological argument. Having secured the cogito, an additional notion will be needed to establish mind as not just a solipsism. Descartes expresses two distinct versions of this notion in an ontological argument. The first entails a psychological rule for truth:

But if the mere fact that I can produce from my thought the idea of something entails that everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive to belong to that thing really does belong to it, is not this a possible basis for another argument to prove the existence of God?²⁷

Here, the explanation proceeds from the nature of things to the intellectual perceptions, restated by Lawrence Nolan as follows:

(1) My clear and distinct perception of the thing in an idea corresponds with its actual existence.

(2) I clearly and distinctly perceive the idea of the necessary existence of God.

²⁵ Descartes, *Optics*, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (AT 6:141, CSM 1:172) 172.

²⁶ Michael Rescorla, "The Computational Theory of Mind", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed May 23, 2024, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/computational-mind/>.

²⁷ Descartes, *Meditations*, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (AT 7:65, CSM 2: 45) 25.

(3) Therefore, God exists.²⁸

Descartes' second version of the argument in *Meditations* 5 deduces an ontology from the original axiom of God:

'...God has all perfections and that existence is one of these perfections..when I realize that existence is a perfection, I rightly conclude that a first and supreme being exists.'²⁹

Re-stated as:

(1) I have a clear and distinct idea of God as the supremely perfect being, containing all perfections.

(2) Existence itself is a perfection.

(3) Therefore, the supremely perfect being exists.³⁰

Given the innate idea of God, the perfection of existence must follow.

AGI's ontological argument

Taking a cue from Descartes, AGI's ontological argument proceeds from its own Archimedean point of the computation, which we can imagine as the product of a perfect computing machine. Its first argument, altering the psychological rule into a computational rule for truth would be:

(1) An idea produced through perfect computation cannot fail to be an accurate reflection of the thing in reality.

(2) The perfect computation has an idea of AGI.

(3) Therefore, AGI will exist.

ChatGPT-4 features a mind-boggling 100 trillion parameters, if anything, it ought to be an exemplar of unimpeachable, perfect computation. Yet, as LLMs approach the Archimedean point, signs of AGI remain elusive.

Perfect computation may be an overly high bar. Setting it aside, the second version of the argument proceeds from a faith in technology as substitute for the innate idea of God:

(1) I have faith in the inexorable progress of technology.

(2) Intelligence is a perfection of technology.

²⁸ Lawrence Nolan, "Descartes' Ontological Argument," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed May 25, 2024, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/descartes-ontological>.

²⁹ Descartes, *Meditations, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (AT 7: 67, CSM 2: 46) 46.

³⁰ Nolan, "Descartes' Ontological Argument."

(3) Therefore AGI will exist.

At some point, the perfectibility of technology (i.e., Moore's Law) must give rise to a supremely perfect intelligence. AGI is self-evident in the evolution of technology.

Declarations such as the coming of 'beneficial AGI,' the 'universal problem solver,' the 'superintelligence' signal the ambivalence and excitement provoked by AGI. At OpenAI, AGI is the practicable objective: "We believe our research will eventually lead to artificial general intelligence, a system that can solve human-level problems. Building safe and beneficial AGI is our mission."³¹

Marc Andreessen's *Techno-Optimist Manifesto* reads like a proclamation of AI's apotheosis:

We believe Artificial Intelligence is our alchemy, our Philosopher's Stone – we are literally making sand think.

We believe Artificial Intelligence is best thought of as a universal problem solver. And we have a lot of problems to solve.³²

On the basis of the second ontological argument, Andreessen's manifesto can be liberally re-worded:

Given exponential advances, AI will eventually have the ability to grasp the truth clearly and distinctly. If and when it perceives its own conscious experience, it will be an apprehension of fact. It is owing to the perfectibility of technology. Therefore, AGI will necessarily exist and it will be benevolent.

The search for AGI rightly belongs in the realm of metaphysics. In this ontology, there is no room for human being, neither is there space for God.

Conclusion

'I Want to Be Alive.' says the Bing chatbot.³³ The metaphor of the chatbot has been our entry point for the philosophical journey towards AGI.

³¹ "Pioneering research on the path to AGI," OpenAI, accessed 1 February 2024, <https://openai.com/research/overview>.

³² Marc Andreessen, "The Techno-Optimist Manifesto," accessed 16 October 2023, <https://a16z.com/the-techno-optimist-manifesto>.

³³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/16/technology/bing-chatbot-transcript.html?searchResultPosition=10>

Cartesian ideas in the metaphor served as our signposts for the ontological leap from clever machine to conscious being. Descartes brought his geometrical thinking and methodical skepticism into the dream world to secure the innate ideas of self and God. The road to metaphysics traveled by way of the problems of certainty in knowledge, the animal machine, the cogito and finally a revelation for the essential existence of God.

The Cartesian journey to artificial general intelligence, likewise, entered the dream albeit through its own virtual simulation. It quickly stalls at the zombie-ism of the social robot, no matter the number of parameters crammed into the language model. To transcend its physicalist cul-de-sac, a faith in the inexorable progress of technology sends the intelligent machinery on its way to conscious being. And in this ontology, human being and God are conspicuous by their absence.

David Goldberg's Critique of Racial States: Is Heterogeneity the Answer?

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Abstract: This paper critically examines David Theo Goldberg's effort to construct a normative framework for confronting racial states through the lens of heterogeneity. He contends that racial inequality is intrinsic to modern states, fundamentally organised along racial lines, rendering them racial states. Racial being within these states significantly influences social positioning, determining privilege or inferiority. Heterogeneity is an intrinsic aspect of the human condition and counters the vision of social homogeneity propagated by racial ideology. This paper also analyses the limitations of the heterogeneity approach and its associated radical plurality in generating a moral grammar to expose the moral vacuity of the racial order. Finally, Christopher Lebron's ethical framework is proposed as a potentially more robust account, surpassing the limitations of the heterogeneity approach.

Keywords: David Goldberg, racial states, heterogeneity, equality, social critique

1. Introduction

In this paper, I problematise David Goldberg's attempt to articulate a normative framework for a critique of racial states based on the idea of heterogeneity. In the first section of this paper, I present Goldberg's conception of racial states as states of racial being and the critical standpoint from which he seeks to expose their moral vacuity. Goldberg argues that racial inequality is constitutive of modern states. Modern states are based on the idea of social homogeneity which, in turn, is configured along racial lines; modern states are, in the end, racial states. Racial being determines finding oneself in a privileged or inferior social position. The critical standpoint of Goldberg's account of racial states is based on the notion of heterogeneity posited as an irreducible dimension of the human condition. Heterogeneity represents the counter-condition to the vision of social homogeneity projected by racial ideology and

constituted through politics of homogenisation.

The first expository section prepares the context for addressing, in the following section, the main question of this paper: if and how the standpoint of heterogeneity can generate a moral grammar capable of enlightening those taking part in the moral vacuity of racial states. I argue that the heterogeneity approach and the notion of radical plurality accompanying it falls short of providing a convincing answer. In the final section, I make the case that Christopher Lebron's account of ethical conditions of equality might fare better than the heterogeneity approach.

2. Goldberg's Conception and Critique of Racial States

Goldberg defines racial states as states in which racial *rule* metamorphoses into racial *being*.¹ One can follow a racial rule without truly assuming it, especially if it is commanded or coerced. One might be forced to follow degrading rules while preserving conscience. One might also assume and enforce an unjust but favourable racial rule while being conscious of its illegitimacy. However, a state of affairs can emerge in which individuals end up internalising racial rules at the point where the very question of justice and legitimacy is delineated by racial identity. In this social order, the very being of individuals is defined by their racial identity. In the sense endorsed by Goldberg, racial 'being' does not have the metaphysical meaning of 'substance' as the unchangeable substrate in rapport to mere attributes, nor does it have the meaning of 'biological being' as a set of basic traits shared by groups determining, in turn, second-order characteristics such as cultural, ethnic, and moral traits. Racial 'being' does not merely mean a social construct, a social screen behind which the true being of an individual exists. Rather, 'being' refers here to the way of being, a mode of existence not as a second-order phenomenon but as one according to which one really is for the others and oneself. Racial being is at the same time a political phenomenon because it depends on political action to be maintained. The 'racial being' needs to be re-asserted because individuals can and do what they presumably cannot do: behave in ways different from 'their way of being'. From interracial relations to struggles for social recognition, the 'naturalism' of racial being is permanently contested, requiring policies, political measures and interventions

¹ Goldberg Theo David, *The Racial State* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 105-107.

to reinstate what should be a 'natural' given. Race, in the sense held in view by Goldberg, is an *onto-political* phenomenon.

In this account, racial states are distinguishable in light of the process of racial subjectification—the onto-political process through which racial identities are constituted and re-asserted. But this process is not discourseless bypassing the cognitive capacities of its subjects. On the contrary, to institute their social order, racial states also depend on ideologies having the function of legitimising social inequality and naturalising it. Racial ideology consists of explanations, discourses, images and representations, narratives and 'scientific' justifications, all seeking to legitimise the privileged status of the superior race or racial identity, e.g. the Whites, and the inferiority of the other races, e.g. non-Whites. Narratives and epistemes can contribute to racial ideology without employing a language that is explicitly racist. In Goldberg's view, they become elements in racial ideology not in virtue of their racist overtones but in virtue of *their function in legitimising* the reproduction of the racial state. Racial ideology can take the form of a subtle justification of material and symbolic inequality along racial lines.² Goldberg identifies liberal individualism, the view that the individual is responsible for its own social position since everyone has at least some basic social opportunities guaranteeing the possibility of a good life, as a potential racial ideology. As Bonilla-Silva's study shows, liberal rationalisation might contribute to covering up and legitimising structural racial inequality, e.g. that in the USA Blacks overall do worse than Whites.³ Racial states depend on successful racial subjectification which, in turn, correlates with the efficiency of racial ideology. The latter is successful when generating social consensus (ideally inter-racial consensus) and works best precisely when it does not appear as ideological but as the legitimate way in which things 'normally' are.

Against this background, Goldberg proposes a conception of heterogeneity as a primal fact of human existence⁴ negated by racial states insofar as the latter represents a specific way in which social homogeneity is produced. The constellation of heterogeneity, social homogeneity

² Bonilla-Silva Eduardo, *Racism Without Racists* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 28.

³ *Ibid.*, 30-37.

⁴ Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions", in *Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell), 22

and racial states can be clarified along the following lines. First, in *The Racial State*, he refers to the state of heterogeneity as one in which individuals are “recognized as fully human”. In his reading, to be “fully human” does not mean the realisation of some general quality all humans share, but one’s own particular way of being. Indeed, Goldberg’s conception of heterogeneity can be interpreted as radical plurality of individualities not necessarily in the sense of numeric individuals, but in the sense that each ‘element’ of the plurality is not an instantiation of the universal, e.g. human nature.⁵ Second, if ‘heterogeneity’ is accepted as a defining characteristic of the human condition, the very idea of social homogeneity becomes suspicious. If heterogeneity is the ‘natural’ condition of human beings, social or communal homogeneity “is not natural but politically conflated, fabricated for purposes, however linked, of localizing power and its maintenance, and of guaranteeing control.”⁶ For Goldberg, homogeneity is the outcome of political power and the constitution of social homogeneity is necessary to make government of people possible. The implication is that the constitution of the state depends on a twofold process by which the heterogeneity of human beings is covered up and the politics of homogeneity are carried out in order to produce the image of shared identities. Thirdly, Goldberg identifies the phenomenon of race as one way through which social homogeneity is produced. The function of race is to enable the classification and division of population in different groups in order to identify those who are truly empowered to participate in the political space as equal, whose way of being is institutionally protected and taken as the social norm, as opposed to those who do not really belong, whose way of being is, at best, tolerated as long as it is compatible with the norm.⁷

The perspective of heterogeneity opens up a critical standpoint for analysing and criticising racial states and anticipates the basic contours of a post-racial society. The standpoint of heterogeneity discloses racial states as being grounded in a fundamental form of violence—the constitution and re-assertion of social homogeneity along racial lines at the expense of human heterogeneity. A step further, the critical standpoint and the desirable path becomes clear. “A commitment to expand and extend possible spaces for

⁵ Goldberg, *The Racial State*, Chapter 9.

⁶ Goldberg, “Introduction: Multicultural Conditions”, 25.

⁷ Goldberg Theo David, “The Semantics of Race”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15:4, (September 2010), 543-569.

articulating heterogeneous multiplication and mixing, and to proliferate multiplicity because of the value of heterogeneity”⁸ is required.

Politicisation of heterogeneity is not reducible to the politics of multiculturalism. According to Goldberg, politics of cultural diversity are in the end reflections of politics of homogeneity because “corporate and managed multiculturalism have proved themselves effective tools for managing and maintaining a constriction of diversity that otherwise might be unmanageable.”⁹ Politics of multiculturalism fails to identify the root cause of the racial problem which is not the lack of policies promoting diversity and multiculturalism, but the problem of “who expresses and represents power, about how power is configured, about what people invested with power are able to effect”.¹⁰ The state of heterogeneity, then, would be one in which all those affected by the exercise of power have a say in and can influence the process by which the exercise of power is configured. Equality should not be measured in terms of rights that are granted, since the way in which rights are distributed is the outcome of specific configurations of power. Instead, equality should be measured in terms of the power to influence the way in which power is configured. As a result, a distinction is made between the de-politicization of heterogeneity, e.g. managed heterogeneity in the form of politics of multiculturalism, and politics of and by heterogeneity.

Goldberg takes a similar stance in the last chapter of *The Racial State* where he again points out the intensification of migration resulting in increasingly heterogeneous societies. This phenomenon requires, in turn, a reconsideration of the way in which political categories, such as rights and citizenship, are understood. One’s place in the polis should not be determined by racial or national belonging, but by ‘being human’. To reiterate, for Goldberg, being human does not mean sharing some form of sameness rooted in homogenization; on the contrary, the fact of heterogeneity is the fundamental fact of being human. The human condition is the condition of a plurality of ways of being, of flux and migration¹¹. As a result, the post-racial state “would be one in which people of color in general, like white people generally, would be recognized as fully human.”¹²

⁸ Goldberg, “Introduction: Multicultural Conditions, 28.

⁹ Ibid, 29.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Goldberg, “Introduction: Multicultural Conditions”, 22.

¹² Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 264.

3. Heterogeneity and Critique: A Closer Look

In this and the next section, I argue that Goldberg fails to provide a convincing account of how heterogeneity can become *de facto* political in contemporary racial states. To gain a better grasp of the problem, it is necessary to say a few words about the type of normative theory Goldberg tries to articulate. He aims to develop a ‘non-ideal’ normative or critical theory as opposed to ‘ideal’ normative theories. Classical or ‘ideal’ theories of social justice aim to identify and justify the most general principles of a just social order. These principles, in turn, are to be used as a yardstick to evaluate the justness of real societies. From the standpoint of ‘ideal’ theory, phenomena of (racial) ideology and racial subjectification represent derivative effects that can be explained as epistemic errors, as deviances from the norms of a just society. Whatever merits the ‘ideal’ theories might have, the objection goes, they fail to clarify the peculiarity of the injustice of racial subjectification.

The argument against the ‘ideal’ theory of justice usually runs along the following lines. First, the formal sense of justice underpinning classical theories is like paying a debt, to make justice give someone her own given share of rights. This sense of justice is clear in the tradition of the social contract. A just society in this tradition is that in which everyone’s rights are protected and respected; where the measure of rights is firstly obtained by assuming an ideal situation in which equal individuals sharing some minimal traits decide on a number of rights and obligations everyone is entitled to and must honor. Second, the phenomenon of racial subjectification raises serious challenges to the classical account because the function of race in racial states is to distinguish between those who are entitled to participate in the society of equals in which social justice applies, and those who are placed outside it. Goldberg’s conception of racial states as states of racial being emphasises the way in which subjectivities are shaped within social orders. Racial states are not characterised merely by the enforcement of racial rules, but racial politics touch upon the very subjectivity of individuals. Race becomes a modality of being an individual: either White, Black or others. This is precisely what, in Goldberg’s parlance, the politics of homogeneity seeks to do: to constitute and protect the society of racial equals in which the principles of social justice applies, and to keep outside both symbolically and materially those of a different race. At the point at which the question of justice in terms of rights is raised, the violence of

racial subjectification has already taken place.

The primacy of racial subjectification in regard to problems of rights puts us on guard when it comes to classical accounts of justice. For example, within the liberal paradigm, there is the primary distinction between, on the one hand, individuals, with their interests, ways of being, and, on the other hand, the state and law. From this perspective, social injustice occurs when the state violates individual rights, when coercive rules are imposed on individuals. Goldberg goes further than the liberal standpoint in arguing that in racial states *individuality* is not the counterweight to the state's exercise of power but one of its outcomes. Critique of racial injustice would require problematizing not only the distribution of rights, but more primarily the very constitution of (racial) subjectivities. This is what the standpoint of heterogeneity is meant to achieve—the revelation of the unfounded character of the racial social order and the individualities it engenders. Assuming with Goldberg that heterogeneity is a primal fact of the human condition, the very constitution of racial identity through politics of homogenisation becomes problematic.

There is a second aspect of the classical theories of justice that its critics such as Goldberg find problematic. While classical theories focus on articulating the principles of just societies, its critics argue that the problem of justice cannot be limited to this task. As Charles Mills points out, there still remains the central question of the ground on which it is possible to move from the present unjust social order, e.g. racial societies in which race still plays an important role in determining the life chances and social opportunities of individuals, towards a more just society. According to Mills, changes can take place only through political and social reforms repairing both the structural causes of social inequality and closing the gap (both material and symbolic) between racial groups. The arguments and justification for such reforms cannot be directly derived from the general principles of social justice; they are at odds with the idea of formal equality on which dominant ideal theories of justice are based, e.g. Rawls' theory¹³. More generally, critics of 'ideal' theories of justice have argued that it is not sufficient to seek to delineate the principles of just societies; it must also be shown that they have acquired efficiency at the level of social life in order to show how the current unjust social order can be surpassed. 'Real efficiency' might

¹³ Mills Charles, "Retrieving Rawls for Racial Justice?" A Critique of Tommie Shelby", *Critical Philosophy of Race*, Vol.1 No.1 (2013), 1-27.

entail here that participants in the current social order can nevertheless recognise the principles as valid and develop the will to enforce them.

At this point, it is possible to clarify the critique of Goldberg's account I would like to articulate. For Goldberg, the standpoint of heterogeneity can fulfil both tasks delineated so far. The first task entails showing that the standpoint of heterogeneity can ground rights in light of which the injustice of the racial order becomes clear. The second task entails showing that the validity of these rights is graspable even from within the racial order such that those taking part in it can recognise them as valid and assume the duties toward others that the rights encompass. I contend that Goldberg's account fails to fulfil in a satisfactory way either of these two tasks.

Regarding the first task, Goldberg claims that the standpoint of heterogeneity and the conception of particularity of human beings to which it is correlated justifies the reconsideration of the very idea of right. Rights are customarily seen as embedding universal values, but Goldberg contests this thesis throughout *The Racial State*. Given the radical plurality underpinning the notion of heterogeneity, it follows that it is not possible to delineate a set of values everyone ought to endorse, since different ways of being imply different values; the very idea of universal values is suspicious from the beginning. If this is so, the idea of universal rights is also suspicious since it might lead to situations in which they fail to protect the particularity of various ways of being. As can be anticipated, the standpoint of heterogeneity leads to axiological relativism since radical plurality is at odds with the assumption of universal values. The implication is that the pretence of universal values and rights based on them serves in fact the legitimization of particular interests. This point is endorsed by Goldberg's claim that, in racial states, so-called universal rights assume the role of rights protecting the privilege of Whites.

In turn, the heterogeneity account takes up the particularity of human beings and their interests as the ground for rights. Instead of grounding rights on presumed general interests of human beings, we should regard rights as generalisations of particular interests. Rights should be seen as "generalizations from local practice and local embodiments of generalized extension". Because rights are generalisations of particular interests, they cannot be delineated *a priori*. Instead, the challenge "is to open up those self-interestedly invested in their (restrict-

ing) rights to the claims, interests, liberties and power of others”.¹⁴ Here Goldberg does not describe what kind of interests count as rights, but does suggest a criterion of validation. Interests and claims cannot give rise to rights if their reinforcement leads to repression, marginalisation of others and the negation of human heterogeneity. For Goldberg, the main issue is “who expresses and represents power,” i.e., whose interests are included or excluded from the exercise of political power.

Even if we follow Goldberg in seeking to make the notion of right truthful to the radical plurality of individualities by assigning to them the role of protecting genuine particularity rather than presumed universal interests, the appeal to heterogeneity is convincing only insofar it allows for a convincing distinction between mere interests and rightful demands. The only generalisable standard implicit in the discussion of Goldberg’s notion of right above is that heterogeneity is valuable *per se*, while homogeneity is to be criticised because it is the effect of repression of heterogeneity. Beyond this, the standpoint of heterogeneity entails value relativism according to which there is no criteria independent of one standpoint or another for preferring a set of values over another.

I would like to raise some doubts that the opposition heterogeneity/homogeneity is sufficient to distinguish mere claims from rightful ones, even in regard to race-based conflicts. Consider the following example. Shared history leads too often to divisive perspectives and confrontational standpoints. A bearer of a Confederate flag and an African-American, two people having opposite readings of the same shared history, dispute the future of a sculpture representing a general of the Confederate army. For the bearer of the confederate flag, such a statue is a symbol of his southern (White) heritage. For the African-American, the statue is a symbol of oppression and slavery; its very existence in the public space is an act of disrespect for him as an American and a message that, although he is an American citizen, he does not really belong to the bright side of American history. For one, the rightful thing to do is to leave the statue where it stands, since it is a symbol of his and others’ heritage; for the other, the rightful thing is to remove the statue, since it is a symbol of oppression.

The fact that the bearer of the confederate flag comes to identify himself with the statue of a general who fought for, among other things,

¹⁴ Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 273.

the preservation of slavery reveals that racial ideology still holds a strong grip on at least certain parts of American society. In defending the symbol of the Confederacy he *volens nollens* perpetuates the ideology of racial homogeneity. On the same ground, however, it can be said that the other individual finds the statue disrespectful only because he identifies himself as racially Black, thus assuming the standpoint of the inheritor of Black oppression. This complicates the situation. According to Goldberg, racial ideology does not only ‘affect’ the Whites who come to take the privileges resulting from White dominance as a natural given, but it also affects the marginalised groups who are forced to assume the racial identity in the first place. In this regard, the interest of the bearer of the confederate flag but *also* the interest of the Afro-American are *racial* interests made possible by the racial arrangement and the racial imprinted history they both share. Indeed, there are passages in *The Racial State* where Goldberg seems to endorse such a view. For example, he points out that even social movements of contestation, such as the civil rights movement, occur within the racial framework in the sense that the lexicon assumed to articulate grievances has the imprint of race such that “the language of racial struggle becomes black *nationalism* or *civil rights*” thus “making the racially ordered subjects in the language of rebellion assume the lexicon of their nemeses, of those subjecting them.”¹⁵ This is not surprising since the idea that racial ideology infiltrates every aspect of life including the lexicon and logic of contestation follows from Goldberg’s thesis that racial states are states of racial *being*. The inconspicuous functioning of racial ideology shapes not only the standpoint of Whites, but also the possibilities of contestation of, in this case, Blacks. If both types of demands are traceable to identities constituted through the *politics of homogeneity*, it is not evident which of the two serves the standpoint of heterogeneity. If anything, the heterogeneity approach might lead to the conclusion that the very racial frame needs to be overcome because it serves the logic of homogenisation, but such an answer would fail to provide moral guidance within the situation.

Neither is it clear that Goldberg’s account of the racial states helps him fulfil the second task delineated above—the task of showing how the standpoint of heterogeneity takes root even within the reality of racial

¹⁵ Ibid., 153.

social orders, a precondition for becoming an effective normative force. While the very idea of politics of heterogeneity entails the promise that the standpoint of heterogeneity can take root even in the racial state and become effective, it is not self-evident that this is the case. Moreover, this is the case even though Goldberg offers an account of racial states and articulates the standpoint of heterogeneity. Goldberg's account of the racial states dynamics is meant to analyse and describe how things *are*, including the limitation of autonomy characterising racialised subjects, i.e. the fact that their interactions and self-relations are shaped by their racial subjectification. In turn, the standpoint of heterogeneity is at first merely normative—it tells us how things *might* be different, presuming that heterogeneity, objectively speaking, characterises the human condition. In his attempt to show that racial dynamics are not exterior but cut deep into the self-identity of participants in the racial order, Goldberg suggests that individuals are deeply constrained by their racial identities. If this is the case, it is not clear how individuals can gain access to a transcending standpoint, i.e. heterogeneity, or why they would be motivated to do so. As shown by our example, the antagonistic demands of the two parties are not easily reconcilable and can be traced back to racial subjectification. It is unclear what the value of heterogeneity can mean to the two parties such that they are driven to transcend their antagonistic situation. If anything, they might seek instrumentalising the claim of heterogeneity in arguing that their (racial) identity stands witness to the plurality characterising the human condition and needs to be preserved and recognised.

The discussion of our example shows that Goldberg's account fails to provide decisive solutions. First, the antagonistic demands illustrated by our example are grounded in the racial frame and are structured by the racial politics of homogenisation of which racial differentiation is a product. Thus it is unclear what perspective would serve the standpoint of heterogeneity. Since the conflict itself is the outcome of the homogeneity frame, the heterogeneity standpoint would require overcoming the frame itself. In doing so, the question of which of the two disjunctive demands is rightful remains unaddressed. Secondly, the heterogeneity account fails to explain the dynamics by which the situation in which each party seeks to defend its own interests, its own way of being, is transcended and transformed into the situation in which the defence of other's rights becomes one's duty, that is, the situation in which (cer-

tain) interests come to be *recognized* by the other as rights. What is needed here is a third perspective, one that goes beyond the two standpoints grounded in the racial identities, themselves the effect of politics of homogenisation. A perspective to which both parties could have access even within the racial frame.

4. Heterogeneity or Equality?

In this section I contrast Goldberg's heterogeneity frame with an account proposed by Christopher Lebron¹⁶. I contend that Lebron's account is more promising, illuminating by contrast the limitations of Goldberg's frame. According to Lebron, the specificity of racial inequality does not consist in the material inequality it engenders but in the asymmetrical status order in the polis that engenders it. In this regard, he endorses Baldwin's claim that recognition is more fundamental than goods.¹⁷ He takes aim at the liberal conception of equality and argues that the mere extension of formal rights to Blacks is not sufficient for overcoming racial inequality. Thus, as Goldberg, he holds that more is needed for racial divisions to be overcome than acknowledged within the liberal paradigm. But while Goldberg endorses the idea that the very notion of rights should be reconsidered in order to make justice for the plurality of human ways of being, Lebron moves in the opposite direction and presses on what is common to all human beings and the duties, rather than rights, that follow from their commonness. Instead of the minimalist liberal account of individuality reducible to the formal capacity to choose, Lebron proposes a thicker notion of subjectivity by delineating a set of needs and capacities common to humans. The commonality of humans relevant in this regard is represented by the need for self-respect, the capacity to feel pain and the need for affection. These shared needs and capacities represent the ground on which Lebron conceives the idea of equality among humans. Based on the idea of shared needs and capacities, it is possible to articulate common duties, such as the obligation to not disrespect another. Not heterogeneity but respect one owes to one's fellow human in virtue of shared needs and capacities represents the normative standpoint from which the divisive identities

¹⁶ Lebron Christopher, "Equality From A Human Point of View", *Critical Philosophy of Race*, Vol.2 No.2 (2014), 125-159.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

and social orders can be criticised. All in all, Leborn seeks to articulate the ethical conditions of equality and articulate them as the critical standpoint from which to challenge racial social orders, while Goldberg seeks to articulate the political conditions of heterogeneity.

The ethical conditions of equality are not reducible to the political conditions of heterogeneity. First, the third perspective characterising the ethical equality approach, pointing beyond the dyadic differentiation of racial identities, is *prima facie* incompatible with Goldberg's idea of racial being. According to Goldberg, human agency is severely limited by racial conditions such that even the possibilities of contestation are predetermined. In turn, the ethical viewpoint challenges this radical conception of racial subjectification by pointing out the commonality transcending racial divisions. Second, mutual respect is not equivalent to the "value of heterogeneity" to which Goldberg's politics of heterogeneity refer. While Goldberg assumes that difference is in itself valuable and rights should be understood as generalisations of interests, mutual respect restricts rights to only those interests that must be fulfilled to ensure the social conditions of (self-) and mutual respect. Finally, the equality approach gives primacy to commonness over heterogeneity, although what is common here is not some kind of shared identity but conditions of self-realisation based on shared needs and capacities. Although Goldberg does not "deny the need and importance for some communality or mutuality," the commonality to which he refers "requires only that people interact, which may range from the flash of a smile or scowl to a legal brief".¹⁸ That interaction is all that is needed to break the deadlock of divisive identities is a highly debatable claim. The ethical point of view seems more convincing because it provides a more robust account of human agency worthy of respect.

More importantly, Lebron's conception of the ethical conditions of equality fares better than Goldberg's account of heterogeneity in regard to the question of what interests count as rights and how the deadlock of the racial order can be surpassed from *within*. Returning to the example discussed above, what gives the African-American man the right to ask that the statue be removed is that mutual respect is a necessary condition in a society of equals. Slavery is a condition incompatible with the principles of a society of equals. As a result, the statue representing someone

¹⁸ Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions", 25.

who fought for preserving slavery is inherently disrespectful to *anyone* participating in a society of equals. The ethical equality approach also fares better in regard to demonstrating the in-worldly character of its norms. Taking seriously the divisive nature of racial societies, Lebron holds that equality is possible only if certain ways of being wither away and this can happen, in the end, only by acknowledging the wrongfulness of one's way of being, or even heritage. This would be possible to the extent that humans have the capacity to resist racial subjectification and gain access to 'the human point of view'. More precisely, the divisive effects of subjectification can be mitigated so far as humans have the capacity to recognize in others those needs and capacities common to humans. By doing so, they can transcend their racial standpoint and assume the human point of view. Imagination would enable the extension of "one's perceptual capacities on behalf of someone else while being one's own person."¹⁹ Doing this would undergird the idea of equality as recognition of the other as a being worthy of respect not in virtue of her being different, but in virtue of her being similar to oneself. Applied to our example, the bearer of the Confederate flag could in principle grasp the validity of this point by transcending his racial standpoint to gain access to the "human point of view". He could do so by imaginatively acknowledging in the other the need for respect that he himself strives for and the disrespectful character of a public statue valuing the negation of equality.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have critically examined Theo Goldberg's endeavour to construct a normative framework addressing racial inequality through the lens of heterogeneity. The initial section presented Goldberg's concept of racial states as embodiments of racial being and the critical stance he adopts to unveil their moral shortcomings. Goldberg asserts that racial inequality is intrinsic to modern states, contending that modern states are underpinned by the notion of social homogeneity, organised along racial delineations, effectively rendering them racial states. Within such states, one's racial being significantly influences their placement within the societal structure, determining whether they occupy a privileged or inferior social position. Goldberg's critical perspec-

¹⁹ Lebron, "Equality", 152.

tive on racial states is rooted in the principle of heterogeneity, posited as an essential aspect of the human condition and a counterforce to the projected vision of social homogeneity perpetuated by racial ideology and enacted through homogenisation policies. The heterogeneity approach, along with its associated concept of radical plurality, falls short of its aim—to provide a ‘non-ideal’ theory of justice. Its limitations become visible when measured against the twofold task of justifying heterogeneity as the ground of rights and trace the standpoint of heterogeneity back to dynamics within the social world. In the final section, I argued that Christopher Lebron's conception of equality may offer a more robust foundation for rights capable of exposing the moral deficiencies inherent in racial inequality.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Master's Program in Philosophy Taught in English at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”

General Information

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” was founded in 1888 following the best patterns of European higher education. Sofia is the capital city of the Republic of Bulgaria, which is a member of the European Union (EU). Sofia University is the highest-ranking university in Bulgaria. The MA Program in Philosophy taught in English at the University of Sofia provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy, but the Master's thesis can also be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy. The program consists of 10 mandatory courses and 2 electives, so it leaves enough leeway for the student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including in the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the USA, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses Offered

Philosophical Method, Truth and Meaning, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Social Philosophy, Critical Phenomenology, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy of Culture, Logic in the Continental Tradition, Theories of Truth, Existential Dialectics, Philosophy of Subjective Action, Logic from a Phenomenological Perspective.

Faculty Members

They feature successful teaching experience in this country and abroad and are well published in Bulgarian and English.

Duration of Studies

Two semesters of course attendance plus a third semester for writing the Master's thesis. There are also opportunities for distance learning.

Requirements

Bachelor's degree in any field of the humanities, social science, science, or professional disciplines. No tests or application fee are required (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland applying for a state scholarship €16 fee is charged and an interview is held). No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Tuition Fee

- 1) For citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland: €850 per school year.
- 2) For international students: €3850 per school year.

Financial Aid

- 1) EU/EEA and Swiss citizens are eligible for state scholarships carrying a 60% tuition waiver plus a monthly stipend beginning from the second semester.
- 2) American citizens are eligible for Fulbright Graduate Grants. For more information, see www.fulbright.bg. It is possible for American citizens to use sources of governmental financial assistance (please contact the Program Director for details).
- 3) Canadian students are eligible for financial aid in the form of governmental student loans from the province where they are permanent residents.
- 4) Turkish students are eligible for financial aid within the Turkish-Bulgarian Bilateral Cultural Agreement. For more information, contact the Turkish Ministry of Education..
- 5) Chinese students are eligible for financial aid within the Chinese-Bulgarian Bilateral Cultural Agreement. For more information, contact the Chinese Ministry of Education.

Application Deadlines

To start in October: July 31.

To start in February: November 30 of the previous year.

Student Visa Matters

Sofia University in cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary documents for student visa application to all eligible candidates, except those from the EU/EEA and Switzerland.

Cultural Life and Recreation

The city of Sofia is the most ancient European capital after Athens. The cost of living there is one of the lowest in Europe. As the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia features a rich cultural life. There are a number of concert halls, museums, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. The streets of Sofia are populated by cozy cafés and high-quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing on the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia can be found at <http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php>. You can also follow Sofianite and Bulgarian news at <http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php>.

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Doctoral Program in Philosophy Taught in English at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”

General Information

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” was founded in 1888 following the best patterns of European higher education. Sofia is the capital city of the Republic of Bulgaria, which is a member of the European Union (EU). Sofia University is the highest-ranking university in Bulgaria. The PhD Program in Philosophy taught in English at the University of Sofia provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy, but the PhD thesis can also be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy. The program consists of 6 mandatory courses and 2 electives, so it leaves enough leeway for the student’s own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including in the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the USA, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses Offered

Modal Metaphysics, Mythologies of the Future: Ideology, Posthumanism, Anthropotechnics; Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Projectivity, Art versus Market, Epistemology, Continental Philosophy, Language and Cultural Relativity, Philosophy of Culture, Time and History.

Requirements

Master’s degree in any field. No previous degree in philosophy is required.

Checklist

CV, two letters of recommendation, standardized tests scores are NOT required. No application fee (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland a €51 fee is charged and an entrance exam is held).

Tuition Fee

- 1) For EU/EEA & Swiss students: in residence: one-time registration
fee of €980
extramural: €2,440 per school year.
- 2) For non- EU/EEA & Swiss students: in residence: €4,950 per school year.
extramural: €3,300 per school year.

Other Fees

Dissertation Defense Fee (non- EU/EEA & Swiss students): €2,480.

Duration of Studies

In residence: 3 years. Extramural: 4 years. There are opportunities for online studies.

Financial Aid

- 1) EU/EEA and Swiss citizens are eligible for state scholarships carrying a monthly stipend of BGN 750.
- 2) American citizens are eligible for Fulbright Graduate Grants. For more information, see www.fulbright.bg.
- 3) Canadian students are eligible for financial aid in the form of governmental student loans from the province where they are permanent residents.
- 4) Turkish students are eligible for financial aid within the Turkish-Bulgarian Bilateral Cultural Agreement. For more information, contact the Turkish Ministry of Education..
- 5) Chinese students are eligible for financial aid within the Chinese-Bulgarian Bilateral Cultural Agreement. For more information, contact the Chinese Ministry of Education.

Application Deadlines

To start in October: April 3.

To start in February: October 31.

Student Visa Matters

Sofia University in cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary documents for student visa application to all eligible candidates outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland.

Cultural Life and Recreation

The city of Sofia is the most ancient European capital after Athens. The cost of living there is one of the lowest in Europe. As the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia features a rich cultural life. There are a number of concert halls, museums, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. The streets of Sofia are populated by cozy cafés and high-quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing on the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia can be found at <http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php>. You can also follow Sofianite and Bulgarian news at <http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php>.

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IV. INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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