Max Schmermbeck
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OUR CANON AND BEYOND

Our Canon

and
Beyond

Collected Philoshophical Writings
2021-2022

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Max Schmermbeck

"A creator is somebody who creates their own impossibilities,
and thereby creates possibilities."

- Gilles Deleuze

Contrary to popular belief, clichés are not always bad. Even though they are, by their very nature, tiresome and worn out, they sometimes provide soothing refuge when one is at a loss for words. As luck would have it, I am currently in such a position. As I sit down to write this foreword, I cannot help but conclude that my inability to articulate profound and novel reflections on the past two years of studying and living in times of a global pandemic is not attributable to the overwhelming sublimity of that period. It is rather due to the fact that I somehow feel as though all has been said on the issue. Life in times of COVID has been tough and challenging, and it seems as though there is no end in sight. Brief glimpses of hope and progress are continuously met with devastating setbacks and pessimistic prognosis, resulting in widespread uncertainty about the future that is yet to come. See, I told you it would be cliché!

What must be kept in mind, however, is that this grim and bleak picture does not tell the entire story. Even though the devastating effects of the corona pandemic continue to affect many aspects of our daily lives, we would be selling ourselves short by only focusing on that which this crisis has forced us to abandon. When assessing the consequences of a global catastrophe as impactful and horrific as the one we are currently living through, the question 'what has gone?' should always be accompanied by two other questions: 'what is left?' and 'what has emerged?' In times like these, we must not forget to be mindful of the things that sustain us, give us pleasure and meaning, and inspire us to grow as thinkers, writers and artists.

To me, this is what philosophy is all about. Over the past two years, I have come to realise that philosophy is more than 'just' thought; it is also an unparalleled and unstoppable source of creativity and inspiration. This project serves as testimony to this fact, because it symbolises the resilience, strength and creativity that can be found through the practice of philosophy.

In the following pages, you will find nine essays, each accompanied by a personal introductory text from the author. The project opens with my own essay, in which I offer a critique of Theodor Adorno and Marx Horkheimer's concept of the 'Culture Industry' through the perspectives of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In this essay, I attempt to outline an approach to political resistance that does not seek liberation in some form of *transcendence* of the socio-political system, but rather through an immanent, creative way of being *within* that system. I have selected this essay not only because it captures my love for the philosophically magnificent power couple Deleuze and Guattari, but also because it explores creativity as a form of political resistance. As such, it constitutes the kind of philosophical work I aspire to continue in the future.

After the opening essay, we dive into the topic of postmodernism through a discussion of the relation between truth and trust by Maarten Doevendans, and discursivity and meaning by Giuditta Ercolino. Thereafter, Mara V. Varelaki's essay on literature as philosophy allows artistic and literary perspectives to enter the philosophical picture. This theme is further explored by Rien de Bont, who discusses the role of storytelling in totalitarian regimes, and Bob Matthijse, who discusses notions of trauma and subjectivity in relation to writing and literature. Eef Schoolmeesters' essay on ecology and object-oriented art continues the topic of trauma whilst shifting the object of study from literature to the visual arts. Thereafter, Ilana Buijssen continues the philosophical reflection on mental health by offering a new perspective on depression through a discussion of Emmanuel Levinas' concept of life as enjoyment. The final text is provided by Lex van der Steen, who shows us a new way to break with the philosophical canon through a series of short, interconnected essays.

The topics discussed in these essays are thus quite divergent. However, their connection is not textual, but *conceptual*, since they all designate the unique relation between the author and the philosophical canon. 'Our Canon and Beyond' signifies the duality of our interaction with that canon; not only have we been trained to understand and articulate its most influential and groundbreaking ideas, we have also been stimulated to reach beyond it, exploring paths yet undiscovered. Therewith, 'Our Canon and Beyond' touches on some of the most interesting and challenging philosophical themes of today and represents the diverse and multi-faceted curriculum of the department of philosophy at Tilburg University whilst still deploying classical philosophical methods and argumentation. Moreover, it shows how we, as students of philosophy and driving forces behind this project, have developed our own personal philosophical canon during our time at Tilburg University.

Aside from this, it is important for me to emphasise that this project is not just meaningful because of its philosophical merits. It also represents my time in Tilburg, a time in which I have had the good fortune of meeting a group of inspiring, interesting and lovely people who have taught me loads about philosophy, myself and the world around me. These people supported me in tough and stressful times, made me laugh, gave me advice, got me drunk, and, perhaps most importantly, did not hesitate to tell me when my philosophical ramblings and ideas made absolutely no sense. I have come to accept that this occurs rather frequently; a lesson for which I am begrudgingly thankful.

To everybody who has contributed to this project or featured in one of the many adventures that I have been fortunate enough to experience during my time here: I thank you. A lot. I could not have done any of it without you. Frankly, whether or not that statement constitutes the kind of cliché I discussed at the beginning of this foreword does not matter to me. All that matters is that it is true. And that it needs to be said. Because some things simply need to be said, whether they are cliché or not. So, without further ado, I invite you to read 'Our Canon and Beyond,' a compilation of nine essays written by master students of philosophy at Tilburg University. It has been a great pleasure to have read these beautiful pieces of writing and to have met the people that wrote them. I hope it will be for you as well.

RETHINKING THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

Conceptualising a Creative Attitude Through Minor Literatures

One of the features most commonly associated with art is its potential for providing critical thought. Historically, art has shown a unique capacity for reflection upon the status quo, allowing thinkers and artists to criticise power inequalities and engage in practices of resistance. In the hyper-commodified world of 21st century capitalism, the critical potential of art is under pressure. If art is a tool for reflection and critique on the contemporary state of affairs within capitalist society, how can art serve these purposes if it has become commodified itself? Does the commodification of art in capitalist society entail the loss of art's critical capacities, or is there a way out? While the demand and necessity for critique and acts of resistance seem to become more pressing, the necessary spaces for these acts, such as art, seem to be disappearing. What, then, is the future of art and critique? And how can philosophy prove itself useful in creating possible bridges between the two?

In this essay, I take up this challenging problem by connecting two different philosophical perspectives on art, critique and resistance. Firstly, I use a method of close-reading to outline the critique of culture, art and capitalism found in the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.[9] Their account of the 'culture industry' will serve as the main framework for problematizing the critical potential of art. After having laid out this problematization, I turn to the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I use their concept of a minor literature to argue why the culture industry's totality does not signify the end of critique in art, but rather serves as *its condition*. Then, I connect this argument to the concept of *parrhesia* developed by Martine Prange to explore the political dimension of minor literatures.[10] Finally, I conclude by connecting these various perspectives and concepts, thereby outlining an approach to art and creativity that challenges the critique found in Adorno and Horkheimer.

THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

In this section of my essay, I offer a close-reading of the chapter "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in the highly influential work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. I will quote key passages and sentences to accurately depict the positions I will criticise later on. From this reading, I draw an overall problematization of the relation between art and critique, emphasising the culture industry as a *totality*.

"The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" offers a fierce critique of contemporary mass culture and art, in which Adorno and Horkheimer argue that modern capitalist forces have fundamentally changed the function of culture and art within society. The opening passages set the tone for the entire chapter, stating that "Culture

today infects everything with sameness. Film, radio and magazines form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 94). Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the various forms of culture available to consumers within capitalist society are completely indistinguishable and exchangeable. Therewith, they create their own aura of universality. The authors state: "The conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm confronts human beings with a model of their culture: the false identity of universal and particular. All mass culture under monopoly is identical" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 95). The key thought in this passage is that modern culture is signified by an absence of difference between the universal and the particular, between that which is known and that which is unknown. This is one of the main critiques found in the entire *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; modern thought and culture is *afraid* of that which it lacks, that which is different, that which is unique. It universalises. It breeds uniformity. Therewith, human beings themselves become universalized and uniform. The cultural power of the culture industry reinforces this through its *framing* of the world, since "The whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 95-99). Again, the theme of *totality* is key. The quote shows that Adorno and Horkheimer explicitly deny that culture is just a *part* of the world. Rather, culture in the culture industry frames the world and our experiences in it. The writers continue advancing this thesis, stating that "every phenomenon is by now so thoroughly imprinted by the schema [of capital] that nothing can occur that does not bear in advance the trace of the jargon, that is not at first glance to be approved" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 95-99). The culture industry's systematic and totalizing power is apparent in this passage. The usage of 'every phenomenon' indicates the ways in which the culture industry plans and controls all aspects of contemporary life. Creativity and spontaneity have disappeared and have been replaced by consumption, passivity and uniformity.

The picture painted by Adorno and Horkheimer in "The Culture Industry" does not only relate to mass culture; it also has strong implications for the role of art and its relation to critique and resistance. The authors write: "What is new, however, is that the irreconcilable elements of culture, art, and amusement have been subjected *equally* to the concept of *purpose* and thus brought under a single false denominator: the totality of the culture industry" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 101, emphasis added). Through a logic of consumption and commodification, the culture industry usurps everything that holds difference. Referring back to one of the book's central themes, the cited passage shows how the distinction between the universal and the particular, between the 'macrocosm' and 'microcosm', is lost in art in the culture industry. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, there is no spontaneity, no creativity and no attention to detail in art anymore. Art is only style, repetition, and differentiation; it abides by the devastating

logic of the culture industry. Therewith, it loses its potential to express critique and truth: "At all its levels [...] intellectual products drawn ready-made from art and science are infected with untruth" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 114). The purpose of culture, art and amusement in the culture industry goes beyond truth according to Adorno and Horkheimer: it only refers to capital, profits and consumption.

Art in the culture industry does not critique, it does not even *pretend* to critique. Its commodification causes the absence of a veiling critical attitude: it legitimises its non-critical potentialities through its consumerist logic (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 95). Further on in the chapter, a similar problematization of art in the culture industry is drawn by Adorno and Horkheimer: "For the consumer there is nothing left to classify, since the classification has already been preempted by the schematism of production. This dreamless art for the people fulfils the dreamy idealism which went too far for idealism in its critical form." (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 98). This underlines the paradox of art within capitalist society: the necessity for artistic critique becomes more pressing, whilst the possibilities for offering critique get eliminated. Capitalist forces create a totalizing cultural system, which undermines the potential for creativity, spontaneity, critique and resistance. The result, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is domination, uniformity and obedience.

TOWARD A MINOR LITERATURE

Thus far, I have exposed the problematic relation between art and critique as formulated by Adorno and Horkheimer. In this section of my essay, I discuss the concept of a minor literature developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I analyse a chapter of their work *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* in relation to this problematization to conceptualise an attitude of resistance through creativity.

I divide my analysis of the chapter "What is a Minor Literature?" into five distinct sections. In the first section, I explain what constitutes a minor literature and offer a reading of a minor literature as an attitude to creativity. Thereafter, I outline the conceptual connection between a minor literature and the culture industry. Third, I use my reading of a minor literature to criticise "The Culture Industry." Fourth, I connect a minor literature to the concept of parrhesia found in the work of Martine Prange. In these four sections, I explore a specific approach to art and critique, bringing all concepts together in the final fifth section.

In Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, Deleuze and Guattari examine the works of Franz Kafka and their relation to language and resistance. In the beginning of the chapter "What is a Minor Literature?," the authors state: "A minor literature doesn't come from

a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 16). The contrast drawn in this sentence between 'major' and 'minor' refers to asymmetries of power; a major language constructs power, it is that which is seen as normal, good, acceptable and conventional. It disseminates power through its own logic. Moreover, a major language is never neutral, but *selective*. Its logic is one of exclusion; it excludes the narratives, experiences and epistemologies of minorities to maintain and concentrate power. In contrast to this, a minor literature is a creative tool for expression; it is an antidote to the excluding and oppressive logic found within a 'major' language (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 16).

Deleuze and Guattari set out three main characteristics of a minor literature. They write: "the first characteristic of minor literature [...] is that its language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 17). With deterritorialization, the authors refer to the appropriations, modifications and inventions a minority can make *within* a major language. Deterritorialization signifies a process of playful creativity, of using that which is known and turning it into that which is unknown, that which is different (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 16-17). Continuing, they state: "the second characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political [...] its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 17). Through its intimate connection with the major language, a minor literature is always defined by power relations of domination and resistance. Though not necessarily explicit, minor literatures therefore always have a political dimension.

Third, a minor literature possesses collective value. Because minor literatures are written by minorities, they are also defined by a scarcity of opportunities, power and talent. Outlining the minority position that is inherent to minor literatures, Deleuze and Guattari write: "scarcity of talent is in fact beneficial and allows the conception of something other than a literature of masters; what each other says individually already constitutes a common action" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 16). The contrast drawn by Deleuze and Guattari between the minor literature and the major language is thereby also framed through collective creativity. In his interpretation of *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Robert Brinkley further illustrates this characteristic: "The desire to de-code or to deterritorialize seems particularly crucial for minorities who want to remain minorities and affirm perspectives that are not those of the culture they inhabit" (Brinkley, 1983, p. 13). As such, a minor literature is that which allows for the collective affirmation of minority perspectives through creative practice.

The various aspects of creativity found in the concept of a minor literature are useful for

a critical examination of the previously drawn problematization between art and critique. Though the concept is developed through a reading of the great literary figure Franz Kafka, a minor literature exceeds stylistic genres or art-forms. It is a place of 'pure experimentation'; it represents a certain *attitude* towards creativity rather than a description of correct or incorrect artistic practices. Further illustrating this point in the foreword to *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Réda Bensmaïa writes:

>   Thus, the art (**modern** art in this sense) that Kafka tried to introduce is effectively no longer an art that proposes to "express" (a meaning), to "represent" [...] or to imitate. It is rather a method (of writing) – of picking up, even of stealing: of double-stealing as Deleuze sometimes says, which is both "stealing" and "stealing away" – that consists in propelling the most diverse contents (Bensmaïa, 1986, p. xvii).

This quote shows the importance of creativity for a minor literature, which is concerned with 'propelling the most diverse contents'. A minor literature creates different kinds of art, questioning linguistic, artistic and cultural conventions (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 17). The references to 'stealing' are in line with the deterritorializing, political and collective characteristics of a minor literature: minor literatures are 'stealing' the language of the majority, appropriating it, moulding it, reshaping it to give it new meaning. The creatives of a minor literature are thieves in the night of artistic expression.

This reading allows for an approach to a minor literature as a form of discourse, as an attitude towards thinking and creating. Robert Brinkley adds: "The result [of a minor literature] is not an interpretation but a map, a tool with which to find a way. The map is the production of an experimental reading [...] not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as an act the outcome of which is unknown" (Brinkley, 1983, p. 13). It is in this way that I will apply a minor literature to the concept of the culture industry: a minor literature is a *creative attitude* rather than a description of language. Further conceptual clarification will be provided in the following section, where I connect the culture industry to a minor literature.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Thus far, my analysis has predominantly been descriptive and interpretive. I have problematized the relation between art and critique through Adorno and Horkheimer and thereafter outlined a minor literature through Deleuze and Guattari. In the following sections of this essay, I connect these two perspectives.

In order to do this, an important conceptual clarification is required. It seems as though the various authors discussed in this essay are concerned with different realms of

creation: Adorno and Horkheimer criticise mass culture and art, whereas Deleuze and Guattari discuss literature and language. However, conceptual connections arise out of my analyses. My interpretation of the culture industry focuses on the *totality* of culture. It emphasises the systematic control and power of mass culture and art. I interpret the culture industry as a system that does not only create its own logic, but also its own *language*. A key sentence supporting this is found in the chapter's discussion of the culture industry's totalizing power: "The culture industry defines its own language positively, by means of prohibitions applied to its syntax and vocabulary. The permanent compulsion to produce new effects which yet remain bound to the old schema, becoming additional rules, merely increases the power of the tradition which the individual effect seeks to escape" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 108). The culture industry constructs a certain form of discourse through its own logic. It 'speaks' to consumers through its products. As such, the culture industry is a discursive, totalizing system which functions through a logic of capital, commodification and consumption of culture and art.

My reading of Deleuze and Guattari has posited minor literature as an *attitude of creativity towards art and language*. Discussing this attitude, Deleuze and Guattari ask: "How many styles and genres or literary movements, even very small ones, have only one single dream: to assume a major function in language, to offer themselves as a sort of state language, an official language. [...] Create the opposite dream: know how to create a becoming-minor" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 27). As such, a minor literature is a creative attitude towards totalizing discursive structures. This is the central conceptual connection between the culture industry and a minor literature, which I will now expand upon.

RETHINKING THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

As I have already outlined in the first section of this essay, the central critique in "The Culture Industry" focuses on the loss of difference in culture and art. Through its consumptive logic, the culture industry totalizes all cultural meaning. It breeds uniformity and universality; it reduces the different to the same. This seems to be incompatible with the critical potential of art, especially if the artwork is itself a commodity.[11] Art in the culture industry does not *criticise* the system, it is a *part of the system* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2016, p. 101-108).

However, this is precisely where the power of a minor literature resides. The major language is not that which prohibits the creativity and resistance found in a minor literature, it rather serves as its *condition*. Only through the power of a major language can a minor literature affirm its own position and adopt its specific affordances. The crucial creative force that is brought to life in a minor literature is the *affirmation of its own position*

of marginality. As a creative attitude, it does not seek liberation through a complete transcendence of the system in which it finds itself. It does not offer a way out. Brinkley writes: "What is at stake is not a matter of 'liberation as opposed to submission' – it is a matter of line of flight, escape, an exit, outlet." (Brinkley, 1983, p. 13). The contrast between liberation and escape Brinkley discusses must be read in light of the affirmation of marginality inherent to minor literatures. Minor literatures create the possibility to escape *within themselves*, to find a place where minorities can affirm their own perspectives instead of being forced to speak the major language.

Deleuze and Guattari write: "We might as well say that minor [literature] no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 18). This is where the affirmation of marginality in a minor literature resides. It does not reside outside of the system, but 'within the heart' of that system. It is internal to it, 'stealing' its style, modifying it, playing with it. Here, Adorno and Horkheimer's critique concerning the absence of a 'microcosm' and 'macrocosm', the lost difference between the universal and the particular, is reversed. As an attitude to creation, a minor literature creates its own microcosms within the macrocosm. This act, referring back to the political characteristic of a minor literature, is an act of *creative resistance*: "That is the glory of this sort of minor literature – to be the revolutionary force of all literature" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 19).

From the various contrasts between major and minor, power and complacency, and escape and resistance, new questions arise. How must the 'revolutionary force' Deleuze and Guattari speak of be interpreted? What are its elements? The authors ask: "how to tear a minor literature away from its own language, allowing it to challenge the language and making it follow a sober revolutionary path? How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language?" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 19). In this quote, the creative attitude of resistance and critique within a minor literature again becomes apparent. However, in order to further elaborate on the kind of *political* action a minor literature allows for, a more detailed account of political resistance and critique is needed. Therefore, it deserves further analysis. For this, I will connect the creative attitude of a minor literature to the concept of parrhesia.

MINOR LITERATURE AND PARRHESIA
In her paper *"Parrhesia' in Times of Post-Truth and Populism,"* Martine Prange investigates the notion of parrhesia in relation to populism, post-truth and democracy (Prange, 2019, p. 1-27). Parrhesia is a useful concept for exploring the political characteristic of a minor literature, because its fundamental attitude is one of resistance and revolt. Prange

states: "My primary concern is how to make the term parrhesia fertile for the understanding, criticism, and correction of the current state of affairs" (Prange, 2019, p. 6). She argues that the *parrhesiasthes* is characterised by an instrumental attitude of resistance: "The ultimate goal of parrhesiasthes is to bring about political and/or social change" (Prange, 2019, p. 14). Further outlining this argument, she writes:

> **1.** *Parrhesiastic* truth-telling is instrumental; it is not about truth-telling itself, about showing someone the truth. It is about the critical purpose and effect of truth speaking. There must be a political or societal change in relation to parrhesiastic speaking. Using *parrhesia* can thus be regarded as an act of **resistance** aimed at the redistribution of power. *Parrhesia* is used with the intention of denouncing hegemony and convincing the ruler to share his or her political power with other segments of the population (Prange, 2019, p. 16-17).

> **2.** The *parrhesiasthes* is someone who, as a minority, stands up against the majority with the aim of achieving greater social and political equality. It is someone who resists the prevailing culture, social or political order. There is a risk that the *parrhesiasthes* with his critique will harm his interlocutor by denting his reputation and power. With *parrhesiastical* critique, the speaker emasculates the ruler's political authority (Prange, 2019, p. 17).

Let us now return to the creative attitude of a minor literature to further outline the political characteristic described by Deleuze and Guattari. Reading Prange's concept of parrhesia in relation to their concept, a crucial question arises: can the creative minorities of a minor literature be called parrhesiasthes? Do they engage in parrhesiastic critique?

First, the emphasis on *resistance* and 'denouncing hegemony' found in Prange's conceptualization of parrhesia is tightly connected to the second characteristic of a minor literature, which shows the 'revolutionary path' of which Deleuze and Guattari speak. As such, a minor literature is a form of parrhesia, a future-oriented attitude that criticises power. It does so through creativity and self-affirmation.

However, a minor literature does not offer an alternative. It does not create a new system of power or offer a way out. It criticises hegemony through affirming its own minority position. It works *within* the system, drawing and redrawing boundaries, playing with language through creative experimentation. Therewith, the second characteristic of the parrhesiathes outlined by Prange also connects to a minor literature. The creatives of a minor literature resist the prevailing cultural, social or political order. They do this

through play and experimentation. But they *need* the major language to affirm their own position. They do not stand outside it; they *engage* with it. Deleuze and Guattari write: "Even when it is unique, a language remains a mixture, a schizophrenic mélange, a Harlequin costume in which very different functions of language and distinct centres of power are played out, blurring what can be said and what can't be said [...] Even when major, a language is open to an intensive utilisation that makes it take flight along creative lines of escape" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 26).

This echoes the notion of parrhesia outlined by Prange, who states: "The purpose of parrhesia is not just to speak the truth, but to speak the truth in order to break hegemonic political power" (Prange, 2019, p. 14). The notion of 'breaking hegemonic power' mirrors the 'creative lines of escape' found in Deleuze and Guattari, linking the two perspectives together through their attitudes of resisting power. A minor literature is an attitude of resistance through creativity, just like parrhesia is an attitude of resistance through free speech.

From the connection between Deleuze, Guattari and Prange, I argue that a minor literature is a form of parrhesiastic critique through creative experimentation. A minor literature questions and resists the major language and criticises the hegemonic power of social and cultural orders. It does so through affirming its own position of marginality. It undermines totality through its playful but serious engagement with language and art. Just like the parrhesiasthes, its practice is *instrumental*; it is future-oriented, outlining a 'revolutionary path.' However, this revolution is *not* the creation of new totalizing systems or the creation of a new major language. It is a continuous process of escape through self-affirmation and creativity. Minor literatures follow the revolutionary path they create for themselves. Therewith, the creative forces within a minor literature engage in a form of parrhesiastic critique.

ATTITUDES OF CREATION
What remains is drawing the connections between the various perspectives I have outlined in the previous sections. How do the culture industry, a minor literature and parrhesia fit together? I argue that a minor literature is that which can allow for parrhesia to be actively practised in a totalizing cultural system such as the culture industry. Even though it is not the only place where parrhesiasthes can engage in acts of resistance, the specific characteristics of a minor language lend themselves to the practices of resistance and critique central to parrhesia. They allow for a bridge between art, critique and resistance that lies *within* the system's totality, not outside it. Through a deterritorialization of language, they allow for creative and inventive linguistic play. Moreover, the connection between the individual and the political creates a space for resistance. Lastly, the collective value

allows for an exploration of boundaries between minorities and major languages *whilst questioning those boundaries*. These practices are future-oriented, aiming at new forms of thinking, writing and speaking. The culture industry's totalizing power does not limit any of these parrhesiastic practices, but rather creates the major language within which these practices can meaningfully occur through creativity. As such, the many sides of art's critical potential can be rediscovered if the attitude towards creativity and resistance is explored through different concepts, such as parrhesia.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have connected two different perspectives on art, critique and resistance. Firstly, I have discussed the critical theory of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, outlining their concept of the culture industry as a cultural totality. Thereafter, I have discussed the concept of a minor literature developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to conceptualise an attitude of possible resistance and critique through creativity. Thereafter, I have connected the political element of a minor literature outlined by Deleuze and Guattari to the idea of parrhesia developed by Martine Prange to offer a more concrete understanding of the political practices of minor literatures. Finally, I have brought these various perspectives together to argue that a minor literature can allow for parrhesia to be practised *within* a system's totality. The crucial thought found in the connection between Deleuze, Guattari and Prange is that even an entity as seemingly dominant, powerful and totalizing as the culture industry allows for creative lines of escape. Not by transcending it, but by finding a place in its very heart. As thinkers, writers and creatives, we must strive to create minor literatures, drawing our own creative paths and developing our own practices of creative parrhesiastic critique. Through such practices, art, creativity, resistance and critique can find the place in society they so rightfully deserve.

Maarten Doevendans

"It is more shameful to be distrustful of our friends than to be deceived by them."

- Confucius

I am Maarten Doevendans, master's student of Philosophy of Contemporary Challenges at the University of Tilburg and the author of the essay below. This essay, which I wrote in the spring of 2021, is an eminently philosophical essay which focuses on a central and recurring concept in philosophy: 'the Truth.' However, it does not make claims about the truth. On the contrary, it is a reflection on the present era in which anyone can claim to be the bearer of the truth. This becomes painfully clear in the context of the corona pandemic. It seems as if everyone is suddenly a virologist or sociologist, claiming to have knowledge about very complex matters. This often leads to the spread of misinformation. Unintentionally spreading "untruths" is problematic, but consciously using the truth as a concept to hide bad intentions is even more problematic. This particular misuse of the truth made me decide to interpret the crisis of truth as a crisis of trust. The person behind the words is more important than the words themselves. It is precisely this change of perspective, from the fact to the person, that touches my interest in the interpersonal, and is the reason that I am sharing this essay for this project. If you are curious about how I distinguish the trustworthy speaker from the unreliable one, I recommend reading the essay.

Now that the end of the master's program is approaching and I am saying goodbye to life as a student, it is time to briefly reflect on this period. Retroactively, I can say that I am very happy to have made the choice in the spring of 2020 to continue studying and to register for the premaster's of philosophy. Over the past two years, I have developed on a personal level, broadened and deepened my perspective, met interesting people, built friendships, and concluded that there is still enough philosophy to keep me busy for the rest of my life. I also enjoyed the social element, which we managed to realise despite the corona pandemic. The inspiring conversations, which occurred in the university corridors, at picnic tables or during pleasant evenings where philosophy and life were discussed over a glass of red wine, were incredibly valuable to me. But if you ever do find yourself alone at home for the evening, I hope you will have the pleasure I had reading Albert Camus's *The Plague* with a glass of red wine. A great piece of literature, rich in philosophy, and meanwhile a recognizable insight into the lives of people during a pandemic. The book really appeals to me and I hope it will reach your canon as well.

THE CRISIS OF TRUST
Trustworthiness to Deal With the Crisis of Truth

We find ourselves in a post-truth era. This is a period of fake news, populism, and other forms of truth-risk-promoting developments, characterised by a crisis of truth. Martine Prange (2019) in *'On the Relation of Truth, Democracy and Critique: 'Parrhesia' in times of post-truth and populism'* argues that the crisis of truth is happening because everyone claims to speak the truth, not because the truth has become unimportant. She investigates how to distinguish truth-speakers from those who only claim to speak the truth. Or, in Prange's words: ''how to discern parrhesiastes from populists?''(Prange, 2019, p.1). I will not try to elaborate or challenge Prange's way of distinguishing between truth-speakers and those who claim to speak the truth. Instead, I will offer a new perspective to help find a way out of the crisis of truth.

First, I approach the crisis of truth and highlight, based on the work of Prange, that the crisis of truth is problematic because even bad-intentioned speakers present themselves as truth-speakers. I then explain why I interpret the *crisis of truth as essentially a crisis of trust*. Who do we trust to speak the truth? To provide a description of the trustworthy speaker, I look at the notion of truthfulness as that part of trustworthiness that is concerned with speaking. For this I turn to both Bernard Williams and Jurgen Habermas' understanding of truthfulness. I explain how both views on truthfulness together form an image of the truthful and thus trustworthy speaker that serves as a standard to better judge a speaker's trustworthiness. Subsequently, I show how this perspective on the crisis of trust contributes to a more rigorous distinction between the truth-speaker and the populist. Finally, I propose two critical remarks against my thesis. I will discuss both separately and respond more generally to the critique. After I have discussed the critical remarks, I draw my conclusion.

CRISIS OF TRUTH
Before I turn to my own approach of dealing with the crisis of truth, I take a step back and ask two questions. First, what do these 'truth-speakers' claim to speak the truth about? Second, why is the situation where everyone claims to speak the truth considered a crisis?

To be clear, Prange (2019) refers to the crisis of truth as the situation in current democracies in which "everyone claims to speak the truth." This is emphatically about speakers with political motives. Speakers who want to influence or criticise the current state of affairs with their claim. One might argue that many differing opinions about the truth is a crisis in itself, because how do you deal with claims about the truth that are incompatible with each other? However, there is an even more troubling element to consider the current situation as problematic. Prange states that "[...] the correct use of *parrhesia* (free speech) will lead to redistribution and restriction of political power. Such correct use

creates order and harmony, whereas populist misuse of free speech effectuates chaos and polarisation" (Prange, 2019, p. 7). Here the author explains that people use their right to free speech for good purposes as well as for bad purposes. According to Prange, the populist belongs to the category of speakers who use parrhesia for the wrong purposes. The populist is the 'flatterer of the people' who claims to speak the truth in the 'people's' interest. But 'the people' is a disguising concept to refer to a small group of the population (Prange, 2019, p. 5). The populist is therefore not only someone with selective political motives, but, as Prange states, "populist politicians tend to come in the disguise of courageous truth-tellers" (Prange, 2019, p. 4). This is the essence of the crisis of truth. It is a critical situation because we allow ourselves to be influenced by speakers who both claim to speak the truth, but of whom we do not know whether they are after order and harmony or chaos and polarisation.

CRISIS OF TRUST

Due to the disguise of these populist speakers with bad intentions and because of the lack of a clear picture of the truth, we cannot easily, based on 'what' one says, demarcate between the truth-speakers and the ones claiming to do the same (but do not). I therefore suggest we focus on who we trust to speak the truth in determining who are the truth-speakers and who are not. Or better said, what kind of person is a trustworthy speaker? In this way, what the speakers say becomes less relevant, but the person who speaks becomes the focus. I do this with the hope that examining the trustworthiness of the speaker tells us something about the level of truth in what one says. The same turn in the type of questioning occurs regularly in moral philosophy. When we are not certain what exactly is the right thing to do, we ask what kind of person would do the right thing. Here the focus is on character traits or virtues that belong to this person. Subsequently, the description of this 'virtuous person' provides a standard for various moral considerations (Crisp & Slote, 1997, p. 12). This transition in thinking and focus is from 'the given/the fact' to 'the person.' The same is possible outside of moral philosophy. I will try to do the same thing, but in this case, to provide a picture of the trustworthy speaker. This makes the crisis of the truth more a crisis of trust. Instead of distinguishing between the truth speaker and the populist, I will focus on the trustworthy speaker and the untrustworthy speaker. I, therefore, interpret the claims to truth as claims to trust. To be clear, the speakers claim to speak the truth, but it is difficult to judge the credibility of these claims based on what they say. Therefore, I interpret these claims as if these are claims of trust. Or in a more concrete sense, as if these speakers claim to be trustworthy speakers. Focusing on trust is a way of coping with the complexity of separating truth-speakers from those who claim to do the same (but do not). But how do we determine this trustworthy speaker? To answer this question, I turn to Bernard Williams' notion of truthfulness in his book *Truth and Truthfulness: an Essay in Genealogy*.

TRUTHFULNESS

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, I want to provide a standard of the trustworthy. According to Bernard Williams, ''Truthfulness is a form of trustworthiness, that which relates in a particular way to speech'' (Williams, 2002, pp. 71-72). Because I am concerned with the trustworthy speaker, I will examine the notion of truthfulness. In particular, I will start the examination with Williams's notion of truthfulness.

Williams states that truthfulness refers to both virtues of *accuracy* and *sincerity*. The first meaning: '"you do the best you can to acquire true beliefs" (Williams, 2002, p. 14). Williams refers to two components of accuracy. One being the "self-conscious pursuit of the truth" (Williams, 2002, p. 93). This is the investigator's will to resist obstacles such as self-deception or wishful thinking. And the second component refers to the method that is used to arrive at true beliefs. The accuracy of the method is determined by the extent to which the method is truth-acquiring. However, it is still quite vague to state that methods are 'truth acquiring'. This vague standard might not help to demarcate between all methods in categories of truth acquiring or not. However, it gives a standard to distinguish some methods, but more importantly, it tells us where to focus on. It shows us that the method of acquiring one's beliefs should always be looked at to determine the trustworthiness of the speaker. The second is the virtue of sincerity, meaning ''what you say, reveals what you believe" (Williams, 2002, p. 14). Together these virtues say something about the level of trustworthiness of the speaker's relation to truth and the relation to others (by speaking).

I claim that someone is a truthful and thus trustworthy speaker if they embody both the virtues of accuracy and sincerity. Someone can sincerely say what one believes, but if the way of coming to these beliefs is inaccurate, then this person is not truthful. For example, I tell you completely sincerely about my beliefs about climate change. However, I have gained these beliefs from a football magazine. You can seriously doubt my truthfulness because the will and the method for acquiring true beliefs about climate change are unreliable. And this also applies the other way around. Someone who accurately seeks true beliefs about the world but then proclaims otherwise as the truth is not a truthful person. For example, one accurately acquires information about climate change. This means, both the will and the method for acquiring true beliefs are present. But this person is insincere and does not share these accurate beliefs. Again, this person is untruthful. However, one could argue that these virtues in concrete cases do not help to determine if someone is a trustworthy speaker. We cannot look inside someone's head and find out if they are collecting their beliefs accurately and sincerely expressing them. In the case of the people we experience intensively, it may be possible, based on experience, to judge if someone embraces the virtues of truthfulness. However, as Prange points out, the po-

pulists disguise themselves as genuine truth-speakers. They are claiming to speak for 'the people,' while, in fact, one secretly serves a small group of society (Prange, 2019, p. 7). Therefore, we must further examine the notion of truthfulness to get a broader picture of the trustworthy speaker and reveal the untrustworthy speaker. For this, I will turn to Jurgen Habermas' perspective on truthfulness.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

In the book *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1999) Habermas offers an alternative way of looking at truthfulness. He outlines an approach that might help further articulating the picture of the trustworthy speaker and revealing the untrustworthy speaker in disguise.

The crisis of trust is a communicative issue which affects two groups: on the one hand, the political speakers claim to speak the truth. And on the other hand, the people who are the receiving group of these messages. The receivers must determine which speaker speaks the truth. Or in this case, which speaker is the trustworthy speaker. Habermas states that "In cases where agreement is reached through explicit linguistic processes, the actors make three different claims to validity in their speech acts as they come to an agreement with one another about something. Those claims are claims to truth, claims to rightness and claims to truthfulness" (Habermas, 1999, p. 58). This statement affirms the value of closely examining the people who claim to be telling the truth. To agree with someone would mean we take part in claims to truth, rightness, and truthfulness. Habermas states that claims to truthfulness are claims in which the speaker refers "to something in his own subjective world (as the totality of experiences to which one has privileged access)" (Habermas, 1999, p. 58). Here Habermas acknowledges that truthfulness has something to do with the consistency of thought with speech. This refers to the virtue of sincerity as outlined by Williams.

Habermas also explains the way speakers can rationally motivate the hearer to accept the claim to truthfulness. Or in other words, how to convince someone that they are a truthful speaker. This additional perspective on truthfulness gives a broader understanding of truthfulness that might help better noticing the trustworthy speaker. Habermas makes an important distinction regarding claims to truth and rightness or claims to truthfulness. To claim that something is true or right, one can convince someone else by giving reasons. The recipient of these arguments is then able to determine whether these arguments are convincing. This is different from claims to truthfulness in which the speaker "[...] does so through consistent behaviour (A person can convince someone that he means what he says only through his actions, not by giving reasons)" (Habermas, 1990, p 59). In this way, one shows to be truthful by acting instead of only claiming

to be. Or as it is often described: 'practice what you preach.' In this way, truthfulness not only refers to the consistency between thoughts and speech but also of speech with behaviour. I will now continue my interpretation of the works of Williams and Habermas to form a broader notion of truthfulness that serves as a standard to determine the trustworthy speaker.

TRUTHFULNESS TO DETERMINE TRUSTWORTHINESS

I argue that thinking about truthfulness as a combination of both Williams' and Habermas' views on truthfulness can help us better picture the trustworthy speaker. With the combination of Williams' and Habermas' understanding of truthfulness, I refer to the trustworthy speaker as one with a consistent relationship between one's beliefs, speech, and behaviour. And with the essential condition that the belief is acquired accurately. This reflects both virtues of accuracy and sincerity as stated by Williams and includes the relation of speech with behaviour as proposed by Habermas.

I have shown that the old notion of truthfulness as presented by Williams faced difficulties when it was used to distinguish the trustworthy speaker from the untrustworthy speaker in concrete situations. This had to do with the fact that truthfulness had a hidden subjective character. For example, suppose one claims that he finds it important that we should not eat animals. In that case, it is nearly impossible for people outside of the speaker to determine whether the speaker's claim reflects what this person believes. This is hidden within the subjectivity of the speaker. And this is problematic because if this person is someone with wrong intentions, we cannot reveal this. The examination of Habermas' perspective on truthfulness leads to a broader notion of truthfulness. Here I refer back to Habermas' perspective on truthfulness as the consistency between speech and behaviour. This relation makes truthfulness something of the speaker's non-penetrating subjectivity and something that should be translated into behaviour. And behaviour is, to some extent, visible for everyone. Within the broader notion of truthfulness, we can determine the trustworthiness of the speaker who claims that we should not eat meat by checking whether he practises what he preaches. If the speaker eats meat himself, this will make the speaker untrustworthy because this act is not in line with what he claims to believe is important. This form of untrustworthiness is often referred to as 'hypocrisy of inconsistency' and refers to the inconsistency between what one claims and how one acts (Crisp & Cowtown, 1994, p. 345). The extended notion of truthfulness, which looks at the consistency between belief, speech, and behaviour, allows us to better determine whether someone is truthful or for example, hypocritical.

But what does this mean for the crisis of trust? As Williams stated, truthfulness is that form of trustworthiness that is particularly related to speech (Williams, 2002, pp. 71-72).

The broader notion that I compiled with Williams' and Habermas' perspective is a notion of truthfulness. To deal with the crisis of trust, we can determine the speaker's trustworthiness based on one's conformity with the broader notion of truthfulness. I just illustrated this with the example concerning eating meat. I showed that if the speaker ate meat himself while claiming this to be wrong, the speaker would be untrustworthy. This reveals the dissimilarity between the claim and the speaker's behaviour. And this could also contribute to revealing the untrustworthiness of the populist speaker in Prange's examination. Suppose this person claims to serve the people, but subsequently only serves a part of the people. In that case, the speaker's behaviour is inconsistent with his speech, revealing this speaker as untrustworthy and not truthworthy. Untrustworthy and therefore not truthworthy, as not being worthy of telling the truth. In this way, the focus on trustworthiness can help with dealing with the crisis of truth. I will now discuss some remarks that criticise this broader notion of truthfulness as a proper criterion to deal with the crisis of truth.

HOW TRUSTWORTHY IS TRUSTWORTHINESS?

First, (un)truthfulness can be determined by the (in)congruence of words (saying) and behaviour (doing). But one might still argue that we cannot determine how someone acts and what one says is in line with what someone thinks. This remark refers to the *problem of subjectivity*, as I mentioned in the section about the virtues of accuracy and sincerity. Even if speech were harmonious with action, we never know whether this person is truthful to one's beliefs. I think this remark is legitimate. The broader notion of truthfulness does not entirely solve the problem of subjectivity. However, I think this is not as problematic as it might seem. If someone makes a claim and acts accordingly, is it then problematic if this person is not convinced of the claim himself? We might consider this person to be an untrustworthy speaker, but not someone who secretly performs wrong or damaging actions. In short, the broader notion of truthfulness does not reveal all untrustworthy speakers. But by viewing truthfulness also as the consistency between speech and behaviour, the 'dangerous' untrustworthy speakers can be revealed if this person performs different acts than one preaches.

Second, what about mistakes? Elgin (2010) also noticed this problem. Everyone makes mistakes, and "we do not expect the truthful person to utter or be disposed to utter only truths" (Elgin, 2010, p. 373). This would mean that truthfulness, because it leaves room for mistakes, is no guarantee of truth. This remark represents a broader critique. To trust someone speaking the truth is not the same as speaking the truth. This claim is also legitimate. However, I do not claim that the trustworthy speaker is a truth-speaker. But as Prange rightly pointed out, there is a 'crisis' of truth. In a crisis, one tries to find the best possible solutions. I think the focus on truthfulness in forming the trustworthy

speaker provides a decisive criterion to reveal many people who claim to be telling the truth but do not.

Both remarks implicitly carry the same message. Is trustworthiness able to deal with the crisis of truth? As we have seen, the focus on trustworthiness does not guarantee revealing all the untrustworthy speakers. Trustworthiness of the speaker is also not one and the same as speaking the truth. However, trustworthiness does reveal the worst kind of untrustworthy speakers. And in addition, trustworthiness, through the virtues of truthfulness, strives for true beliefs. Mistakes are no reason to reject the focus on trustworthiness altogether. I do not think that this criterion should stand in the way of other criteria either. I think a focus on truthfulness and trustworthiness can work to complement other perspectives. In this way, my approach to the crisis of truth can be used to complement Prange's perspective. Multiple perspectives work together to find a way out of the crisis of truth.

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have focused on the crisis of truth, as described by Prange. A crisis because everyone, both the sincere truth-speakers and those who are not, claim to be speaking the truth. I argued that if we cannot tell if someone is telling the truth based on what someone says, then we should look to who we trust to speak the truth. Here I have shifted the focus from a crisis of truth to a crisis of trust. To help deal with this crisis, I have tried to describe the trustworthy speaker as a standard by which to distinguish the trustworthy speaker from the untrustworthy speaker. For this I turned to Bernard Williams' perspective on truthfulness. Truthfulness as the form of trustworthiness that is related to speech. Here I examine 'accuracy' and 'sincerity' as the virtues of truthfulness set out by Williams. These virtues give a better picture of the trustworthy speaker. But establishing the speaker's trustworthiness in concrete situations remained difficult. This is because truthfulness as described by Williams only refers to the relationship between beliefs and speech, which takes place in the subjectivity of the speaker. I then turned to Habermas' perspective on truthfulness. His perspective on truthfulness also referred to the consistency between speech and behaviour.

From both Williams and Habermas' views on truthfulness I have formed a broader notion of truthfulness that makes it easier to determine the trustworthiness of the speaker. Truthfulness in this notion refers to the consistency between one's accurately acquired beliefs, with one's speech and behaviour. And behaviour takes place outside the subjectivity of the speaker, so by looking at the consistency between speech and be-haviour, the speaker can be better judged on his trustworthiness. Finally, I discussed two critical remarks against my thesis. This showed that the focus on trustworthiness revealed

the most 'dangerous' untrustworthy speakers, but did not reveal all the untrustworthy speakers due to the problem of subjectivity between speech and beliefs. It also turned out that the trustworthy speaker offers no guarantees for a truth speaker. I therefore concluded that my perspective on the crisis of truth, by focusing on trustworthiness, should not be a solution in itself. This insight can work to complement other perspectives, such as Prange's. In this way, multiple insights contribute to a way out of the crisis of truth.

Giuditta Ercolino

I owe everything to the brilliant minds I crossed,
As well as to all the other minds.
We'll be fine,
Or not.

Political discontent, populism, scientific distrust, identity crisis, nihilism. For some, how to solve these issues is not clear, yet their cause is: postmodern thought. Being suspicious of radical claims, I felt the need to ask myself; is it so? Starting from analysing the public debate on these issues, I quickly realised that what 'postmodernism' actually entails is far from clear. As with questionable concepts such as 'basic bitch' or 'tiny dick energy,' 'postmodernism' seems to have entered our vocabulary without having a shared or stable meaning[5]. Since I deeply believe in the great power of language, I therefore decided to dig deeper, in the attempt to better understand postmodernism and evaluate its implications.

Tilburg is where I first concluded a thought. Dramatic, but true. Before then, whenever I would start thinking about any abstract existential or societal issue, this is what usually happened: I would start from a point X, let's say, a reflection upon the value of friendship, to then find myself ten minutes later looking online at statistics about homeless global population rates. In the meantime, I would have jumped from friendship, to lack thereof, to loneliness, to poverty, to poverty rates in my country, to poverty rates in Europe. Ten minutes passed and I am now exhausted and unmotivated by the fact that I will never be able to conceive something in its entirety, because of the overwhelming complexity of life.

Philosophy taught me not only that the best minds of all time did not manage to conceive any issue in their entirety, but also that trying to do so would most probably lead to a simplistic, superficial and problematic train of thought. Being aware of this finally confronted me with the limits of my own intellect, in a way that made me feel relaxed and at ease. I can now take my microscope and indulge in an infinitesimal portion of reality without the need to rush, to jump away, to 'solve' anything. I am now finally here *to watch*, *to listen* and *to explore*, instead of *to get*, *to take* or *to explain*. Accordingly, my plan is to keep existing as a critical being, making good use of this relieving attitude I learnt - and that I also somehow describe in the essay.

THE POSTMODERN CONDITION AS
A LOGIC OF ARTICULATION

> Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed
> in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange.
> - Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, 1979

A worrying symptom of contemporary discussions concerning *postmodernism* is that
some of the concepts to which it is reduced seems to be linguistically defective. Starting
by acknowledging this issue, I will propose a more fundamental understanding of post-
modernism as a *logic of articulation*.

First, I will frame the dialogue between modernists and postmodernists and I will show
how they seem unable to engage constructively. To overcome this, I will propose to
shift the focus from postmodernism's *signifieds* to its *signifiers*, meaning that instead of
looking at the concepts expressed we should rather turn to how meanings are articulated.
Supporting my argument with Laclau and Mouffe's rhetorical theory, I will argue in fa-
vour of conceiving postmodernism as a *mode of articulation* of whatever social, political
or ideological content. However, I will also address the concern of modern scholars by
stating that this discursive understanding of postmodernism does not imply that truth
and *untruth* are alike. To do so, I will rely on Nietzsche and Laclau's conceptualisation
of language and I will propose a reflection on truth and meaning that will help overcome
the above mentioned concern.

I will then turn to identify what the postmodern logic of articulation implies by sugge-
sting to understand postmodernism as a *condition* that not only reflects but also shapes
our discursive practices. To better explain this, I will rely on Lyotard's definition of post-
modernism and I will argue that the postmodern condition expresses itself in a discursive
manner, as a way to articulate incredulity toward metanarratives.

After having framed the postmodern condition in these terms, I will turn to identify
the project of Enlightenment in order to compare the two and evaluate postmodernism
accordingly. In doing so, I will argue that the postmodern condition is compatible with
the project of Enlightenment in reason of fostering the preconditions identified by Kant,
namely freedom and courage to make use of one's intellect, in a critical and constructive
manner.

THE CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF POSTMODERNISM:
AN INEFFECTIVE NEGOTIATION

Before turning to the implications of *postmodernism* and to its evaluation I will first
settle what postmodernism means. This however seems to be the first major challenge
since academics defending and blaming postmodernism do not seem to share the same

conceptualisation of the term. Moreover, postmodernism is often associated with problematic *concepts* such as post-truth, adding a further layer of confusion. As Habgood-Coote (2019) rightfully points out, *post-truth* is a linguistically defective concept since the descriptive content of the term cannot be clearly identified. In this view, the descriptive content of a term is determined by: a community's belief about content, a community's disposition to apply a term, expert use of the term and the history of the term (Habgood-Coote, 2019, p. 7). In looking at *post-truth* there are multiple definitions that can be found in academic work ranging from "an era without truth" to "an era in which political beliefs have lost contact with reality" to "an era which fails to value the truth" and others (Habgood-Coote, 2019, p. 17). Such terms are therefore highly context-sensitive and this may turn them into *nonsense* concepts (Habgood-Coote, 2019, p. 18), meaning that the speakers fail to say anything when using the term. It must be noted here that it is still possible to imply and make use of such terms. In fact, saying that a term is context-sensitive implies that the term can have meaning in a particular linguistic context but does not *have general* descriptive content (Habgood-Coote, 2019, pp. 18-19).

I will now frame the dialogue between modern and postmodern scholars in more general terms. On one hand, for academics such as Pluckrose, postmodernism is particularly dangerous because it implies a rejection of objective truth and a disrespect for the power of reason (Pluckrose and Lindsay, 2017). On the other hand, postmodern scholars sustain that these attacks are misguided and based on a superficial interpretation of the concept (Houston, 2018). In the latter view, postmodernity challenges dogmas in a critically constructive way and can be understood as a natural development of modernism. We could therefore state that postmodernism is currently subject of a *metalinguistic negotiation*. A metalinguistic negotiation occurs when two speakers use a term in two different ways in order to express a dispute about what that term ought to mean (Habgood-Coote, 2019, p. 20).

It is important here to acknowledge that this controversial understanding of postmodernism does not simply regard its implication but rather the very nature of the phenomenon. In turn, an ineffective negotiation about what the term ought to mean undermines the possibility to evaluate the implications themselves. In fact, without a common understanding of what postmodernism is, any discussion about its political and societal implications will likely be ineffective or at least highly problematic for those not sharing the same conceptualisation of the term.

So far I have laid the foundations for my argument by pointing at the current debate between those defending and those blaming postmodernism. As mentioned, this contro-

versy appears to be more than a different interpretation of the implication of postmodernism as a phenomenon. Rather, I have argued that the very nature of postmodernism is currently subject to a *metalinguistic negotiation* in which both parties -the defenders and the blamers- are disputing about what the concept ought to mean. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the concept of postmodernism is not only itself unclear, but it is also associated with other defective concepts, *such as post-truth*.

Therefore, to evaluate its implications, I will here propose to focus on communicative practices and to understand postmodernism accordingly. In doing so, my aim is to overcome a simplistic understanding of the phenomenon *as an era* that can be reduced to a particular set of claims. Rather, I will argue that postmodernism should be understood as a *condition* that manifests itself through discursive practices, reflecting and shaping how we conceptualise and articulate *meaning*.

ON TRUTH AND MEANING

In questioning the limits of the traditional debate about postmodernism, I identified the main issue in the attempt of modernists and postmodernists to frame the phenomenon as a specific set of beliefs. The reason why this approach seems to be failing is that both parties have a different understanding of what these beliefs are and this different interpretation undermines the effort of evaluating the implication of postmodernism.

As Ernesto Laclau points out, any definition presupposes a theoretical grid giving sense to what is defined and this "can only be established on the basis of differentiating the defined term from something else that the definition excludes" (Laclau, 2005, p. 1). But what if there is no consensus on what ought to be excluded from the definition of a term? How can we constructively engage in a debate regarding the practical, social and political implications of postmodernism without a common understanding of what the phenomenon is? To overcome this, I propose to shift our focus from postmodernism's *signifieds* to its *signifiers*, meaning that we should rather look at how contents are articulated instead of looking at specific claims identifiable as 'postmodern.' This suggests that postmodernism's meaning ought to be found in a particular *mode of articulation* of whatever social, political and ideological contents (Laclau, 2005, p. 34).

This understanding of postmodernism however does not seem to address the concerns of those worried that this postmodern logic implies a distrust in scientific claims. However, I will argue that reducing postmodernism to radical relativism and nihilism is also misguided. In fact, the project of re-articulating our conceptualisation of postmodernism is closely linked to our understanding of what truth entails. We therefore cannot settle the definition or the implication of the phenomenon without discussing

the concept of *truth*. To do so, I will here employ Nietzsche's famous essay *On truth and lies in a non-moral sense*. The reason why I choose to frame truth in these terms is that Nietzsche's understanding of truth is compatible with the discursive approach implied by Laclau. In Nietzschean terms, truth is established by the "legislation of language," to be understood as the uniformly valid designation for things invented by man in order to exist socially (Nietzsche, 1873). For Nietzsche, this is where the contrast between truth and lies arises for the first time. Moreover, their distinction is purely instrumental since it is rooted in arbitrary abstractions. Similarly, from a discursive perspective the meaning of the world is not discovered but rather constructed through rhetorical practices (De Luca, 1999, p. 338) and in this light, discursive elements do not have a fixed identity or an essential meaning.

The underlying assumption is that objects are never given to us as existential entities but are always given to us within discursive articulations (Laclau, 1990, pp. 100-104). This understanding however does not mean that truth and 'untruth' are alike but rather that the *meaning* of things is not a matter of truth but rather of *perception*.

It might be useful here to provide a practical example. It cannot be denied that toxic waste sites exist. However, their *meaning* -and therefore implications- is a site for political struggle. In a consumerist perspective, these sites are the normalised cost of economic growth. However, environmental justice groups are trying to re-articulate our conceptualisation of these sites by arguing that they are examples of structural inequalities such as institutional racism, class discrimination and corporate colonialism (De Luca, 1999, p. 342). Therefore, whilst the 'truth' of the existence of toxic waste sites cannot be debated, their *meaning* can.

To assert that the capitalist or the environmentalist view is the *true* one, would imply that there is such thing as a *correct perception*, to be understood as "the adequate expression of an object in the subject" and this, as Nietzsche points out, would be a *contradictory impossibility* (Nietzsche, 1873). The focus on perception also reveals an important element that the postmodern logic of articulation includes, namely an emotional and intuitive characterisation of individuals. What Houston points out is that individuals are not *essentially* reasonable, they invariably get things wrong and often rely on incomplete information acting as if they were speaking the truth (Houston, 2018). Conceptualising individuals as not essentially reasonable will prove useful to understand postmodernism as not only compatible but also necessary for the project on Enlightenment.

This reflection upon *truth* and *meaning* brings us closer to the broader understanding of postmodernism I want to propose. In fact, so far I have stated that postmodernism should rather be understood as a mode of articulation but what this discursive practice

entails has not been deepened yet.

I will now proceed by identifying the features of the postmodern discursive practices. I will here imply the straightforward definition used by Lyotard (1984, p. xxiv) stating that "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodernism as incredulity toward metanarratives." What this statement is frequently taken to mean is that the postmodern condition implies a rejection and refutation of meta-narratives, a concept which is understood as theories appealing to universal truths or values. As already mentioned, the implications of this rejection of universal truth are the main reason why postmodernism is criticised by modern scholars.

However, Lyotard uses the specific term *incredulity*, suggesting that postmodernist thought is aimed at carefully criticising, evaluating and analysing the present by acknowledging the problematic character of *meaning* and *perception*, as suggested in the previous section. The holocaust, globalisation, structural inequalities, the climate crisis and consumerism are amongst the causes of this necessary critical stand. In fact, "postmodernists are creatures of a modernist society and culture who have lost faith, of a certain sort, in its ability to deliver on its promises" (Burbules, 2009, p. 2). This incredulity and disenchantment is, as many point out, a *condition* rather than an era or particular beliefs. And this condition implies discursive conceptual instruments aimed at questioning *truth* and *meaning*, rather than rejecting their possibility. Therefore, we could say that the postmodern condition expresses itself in a discursive manner, through our communicative practices, as a way to articulate this incredulity.

This idea is developed by Laclau when addressing modernist concerns regarding the risk to abandon the idea of *stable meaning*. In this regard, Laclau states that the "abandonment of the myth of foundations does not lead to nihilism, just as uncertainty as to how an enemy will attack does not lead to passivity. It leads, rather, to a proliferation of discursive interventions and arguments that are necessary, because there is no extra discursive reality that discourse might simply reflect" (Laclau, 1993, p. 341). Once again, the underlying assumption is that reality and truth are tied to what Nietzsche calls the legislation of language and in this light, discursive practices are no longer instruments in the service of Truth but rather become constitutive of any social or political collectivity (De Luca, 1999, p. 344).

I will now consider one of the main objections raised to Laclau and Mouffe's rhetorical theory, namely that this understanding "collapses the distinction between the discourse and the real." In the words of rhetorician Dana Cloud: "if a bomb falls on civilians in

Baghdad and a critic is not present to see it, the bomb still did, in reality, fall" (De Luca, 1999, p. 342). However, nothing said so far implies that the falling of the bomb should or could be contested. As already pointed out in the previous example, the *existence* of the bombing is not contested. What is contested is rather its meaning. In this case then, the *meaning* of the event is not settled (accident, tragedy, imperialist slaughter etc.) (De Luca, 1999, p. 342). Could someone say that the different perception a U.S. military and an Iraqi mother who lost her child might have of the bombing is a matter of truth? I think not. The postmodern condition can therefore be understood as a logic that allows to articulate the different meanings that an event, a statement or a *fact* can take.

Instead of looking at what the beliefs and claims expressed by postmodern thought are, we should therefore turn to identify the phenomenon as a *discourse* that allows us to articulate the contingent nature of *meaning*. From this new conceptualisation of post-modernism I will now turn to identify the project of Enlightenment in order to evaluate the phenomenon accordingly. To do so, I will frame Enlightenment in Kantian terms and I will compare the project he describes with the above-mentioned conceptualisation of postmodernism with the aim of questioning whether they are compatible or not.

THE PROJECT OF ENLIGHTENMENT: ON COURAGE, FREEDOM AND SELF-REFLECTION
In the essay *What is Enlightenment?*, Kant refers to this project as "the human being's emancipation from its self-incurred immaturity" (Kant, 1784, p. 18). The elements to unpack here are the concepts of emancipation, immaturity and self-incurred. Starting with *immaturity*, Kant considers it to be the "inability to make use of one's intellect without the direction of another." The reason why this is *self-incurred* is that the cause of immaturity ought not to be found in a lack of reasoning capacity but rather in a lack of courage. Therefore, the key to *emancipation*, the third concept, is to overcome the need to rely on others for direction, a need that is rooted in a lack of courage.

But what does Kant imply when referring to 'make use of one's intellect?' The answer interestingly lies also in the etymology of the German word *Unmündigkeit* -immatu-rity- in which *Mund* means "mouth," suggesting that the primary connotation of this immaturity is the inability to speak (and decide) for oneself (Kleingeld, 2006, p. 18).

The project of Enlightenment therefore becomes the ability to speak and decide for oneself with courage. This conceptualisation leads us to two important intertwined questions. What is the precondition to speak for oneself fearlessly? How and to whom should we speak? In Kantian terms, the precondition is *freedom*, to be understood as the freedom to make *public use* of one's reason in all matters. This public dimension is key and cannot be restricted (Kant, 1784, pp. 18-19). As scholars, people should therefore

enjoy full freedom to communicate publicly their own -carefully examined and well-intentioned- thoughts, as well as their suggestions for a better arrangement of institutions. The instrumental value of the project of Enlightenment therefore becomes calling upon citizens to publicly reflect upon the role of institutions and providing suggestions to make them better.

After having outlined the project of Enlightenment, I will now turn to the postmodern condition described above and I will evaluate it accordingly. We have seen how Kant highlights the importance of freely communicating one's thoughts. However, it could be argued that the postmodern condition seems to imply something more fundamental, in which the discursive logic of articulation that emerges is the result of a specific attitude (attitude that, as already pointed out, coincides with the *incredulity* mentioned by Lyotard). This understanding of postmodernism has major implications in evaluating the phenomenon. In fact, conceptualising the postmodern condition as a mode of articulation not only allows us to acknowledge how different subjects might perceive an event differently by appointing different meanings to it, but also allows agents a certain *freedom* to reflect critically on themselves and eventually change their position.

As already pointed out, individuals are neither *essentially* rational nor static. This means that a subject can be understood as a nodal point of conflicting discourses or, according to Mouffe: "a social agent is constituted by an ensemble of *subject positions* that can never be totally fixed [...] The *identity* of such a multiple and contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporarily fixed at the intersection of those subject positions" (Mouffe, 1993, p. 77). To settle this, I will now provide another example. Let us imagine an interaction in the workplace between two colleagues. One of the two makes a sexist comment intending it as a joke, to which they both laugh. This is because they both give the comment the same *meaning*, in this case, a *joke*. However, one of the two is introduced to feminist thought and starts developing interest on the subject. She starts reading, listening to podcasts and reflecting upon her own life experience. A few months later, her colleague makes the very same joke but this time, instead of laughing, she explains to her colleague why such comments are problematic. In this case, the event -the comment- did not change but its *meaning* did, at least for one of the two parties. This therefore had an impact on the interaction between the two since the *discourse* has now changed. The *meaning* of the comment is not settled and implicit anymore but is now subject to a *metalinguistic negotiation* between the two parties. Again, their different perception of the comment is not a matter of truth but rather of *meaning*. It could therefore be argued that the struggle to settle and re-asses contingent meanings should not only be understood intersubjectively but also internally to the subject itself since agents' identities are also contingent and precarious.

This concept and example will be useful in understanding the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. In fact, we have seen how Kant also highlights the instrumental value of "making use of one's intellect" in order to provide suggestions for a better arrangement of institutions. This passage can be understood as the key to connect the modern and the postmodern condition. In Kantian terms, the project of Enlightenment invites scholars to question and evaluate modern institutions. And if we conceive institutions as those entities whose role is to provide a coherent narrative in terms of *truth* and *meaning*, we can now see how Kant himself calls upon citizens to critically reflect upon them. The relationship between modernism and postmodernism can therefore be understood as the one between institutions and scholars as described by Kant. The postmodern condition is therefore not only compatible but also necessary to pursue the project of Enlightenment since it expresses itself in language and does so through the medium of self-reflection. Therefore, postmodernism as a discursive practice is more than a mere way of speaking and it rather reflects a different conceptualisation of how meaning ought to be articulated into the framework of modernism itself.

Moreover, we could also take a step further by identifying this fear of attachment and incredulity as an increment of freedom. As previously mentioned, Kant identifies freedom as the precondition to make use of one's intellect with courage. However, it could also be argued that courage is not only needed to speak truth to power but is also needed to speak to oneself. In fact, when Kant talks about those *guardians* that immature citizens rely on as "domesticated animals" (Kant, 1784, p. 18) we could also understand the concept metaphorically. In fact, guardians could also be understood as institutions or, in more abstract terms, as *stable meanings*. Therefore, instead of blindly following and accepting the direction of these implicit principles, we should rather think -and speak- to ourselves with courage, by critically analysing our own thinking and biases. In this case, courage becomes what is needed in order to be free since it allows one to make use of one's intellect without the direction of those "truths" that are so comfortable. Therefore, incredulity becomes what allows us to constantly question and criticise our guardians and the courage to do so leads to the freedom that Kant sees as the precondition for the project of Enlightenment (Kant, 1784, p. 18). As argued, I identify the postmodern condition as the very logic of articulation of *meaning* that opens up to the possibility of this critical self-reflection.

While it could be argued that self-reflection and critical thinking are not exclusive to the postmodern condition, I argue that the suspicion emerging from this condition is more fundamental than what it may seem. In fact, this structural incredulity leads to what can

be understood as a fear of attachment to any fixed and static truth. This position allows us to acknowledge the contingent nature of meaning and to facilitate a critical reflection upon the potentially contradictory internal discourse of modernism.

In conclusion, I have argued that the postmodern condition is not only compatible but also necessary for the project of Enlightenment. In fact, by pointing at the incredulity identified by Lyotard as the cause and result of the postmodern condition, I have argued that the discursive practices expressed by this mode of articulation allow scholars to set themselves free from their guardians. Moreover, I have also pointed out how this logic enhances both courage and freedom and should therefore be understood as the precondition for the project of Enlightenment.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the postmodern condition expresses itself in a discursive manner. To clarify this, I evaluated the different levels in which this condition affects our communicative practices. I started by framing the dialogue between modern and postmodern thinkers and I proceeded by addressing some of the concerns raised by those opposing postmodernism. I therefore proposed to take a step back and to understand postmodernism as a condition rather than reducing it to a specific set of claims. This allowed me to reflect upon the concept of truth and, supporting my argument with Nietzsche and Laclau's theories, I argued that we should look at the concept of *meaning* instead. I then deepened the features of the mode of articulation stemming from this postmodern condition and I introduced the concept of incredulity proposed by Lyotard.

After having proposed this new conceptualisation of postmodernism I turned to identifying the project of Enlightenment and I compared the two in order to evaluate their compatibility. What emerged is that the communicative practices expressed by the postmodern condition are not only reflected in the relationship individuals have with institutions but also with themselves. I therefore argued that the postmodern condition allows one to reach the freedom and the courage identified by Kant as the preconditions to make use of one's intellect. In this light, postmodernism appears to be not only compatible with human beings' emancipation from their self-incurred immaturity, but also necessary.

Mara V. Varelaki

"Stories are wild creatures ....
When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?"
- Patrick Ness

The field of literature is of great significance to me as I believe that written words hold a power unlike any other kind of human creation. Myths, poems and prose carry the stories and ideas that shape our cultures. Furthermore, literary works examine the particular while philosophical theories attempt to formulate theories that encompass the universal. By employing the tools offered by philosophy in examining the content of literature, I can form a better understanding of the human experience and, most importantly, different human outlooks to the world. This process and way of approaching literature assists me in my artistic research where I explore the possibilities and forms of narration. During my studies at Tilburg University I have developed my reading skills by having been introduced to the method of close reading. This method has broadened my understanding and experience of written language and urged me to re-visit texts I thought I knew well. These texts, which constitute my canon, are the Greek, Norse and Finnish mythological accounts. Re-visiting them, conceptualising the underlying ideas and relating them to philosophical theories, is an ongoing journey in developing my own ideas and enriching my artistic vocabulary.

The following essay examines how viewing literature as philosophy breaks with the Western philosophical canon by using the 19th c. novel *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky as an example. The novel is treated as an objection against utilitarianism as Dostoevsky seems to present the basic elements of utilitarian theories and apply them to an extreme example; as if he is conducting a thought experiment. The objection Dostoevsky is raising is articulated through the emotional and mental landscape of the main character, the actual consequences of his act within the narrative, and the assumed intuitive response of the reader.

LITERATURE AS PHILOSOPHY

Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment as an Objection to Utilitarianism

INTRODUCTION

In this essay I will examine how, if literary works are viewed as philosophy, they break with the Western philosophical canon. In order to do so, I will use the 19th c. novel *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky as an example. I will treat the novel as an objection against utilitarianism. In the first section I will give a brief account of utilitarianism by presenting the outlines of the theoretical frameworks developed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. For the scope of this essay I will focus on the most prominent characteristics of the theory of utilitarianism and I will avoid elaborating on the particular contributions and details of the works of Bentham and Mill. Then in the second section I will offer a brief summary of the plot of Dostoevsky's novel, highlighting and conceptualising the philosophical content. I will piece together Dostoevsky's objection to utilitarianism by pointing at how the author critiques the theories through the inner-turmoil and anguish of the characters of the narrative and the subtle depiction of the consequences of the action of the main character, Rodnio Romanovich Raskolnikov. Also, I will draw attention to the way in which Dostoevsky calls for the reader's intuitions. In the third section I will explain how, if literary works are to be considered philosophical, this form of philosophy breaks with the Western philosophical canon. Additionally, while some literary works might offer interesting philosophical insides and contributions, I will draw attention to some of the drawbacks of doing philosophy through literature. I will conclude with a summary.

SECTION ONE: UTILITARIANISM

Being a form of consequentialism, utilitarianism determines the righteousness of an action according to its consequences (Driver, 2014). Utilitarianism is generally seen as an approach to normative ethics which holds that an action is morally right or wrong depending on whether this action produces the most good (ibid.). What is good then, according to theorists that support this approach, is that which is to maximise *pleasure* 'for the greatest possible number' (ibid.). For example, Bentham, influenced by Hume's argument that pleasure is to be understood as a measure of moral value, perceived pleasure as a good consequence (ibid.). So, if an action leads to pleasure, and pleasure is good, then the action that leads to it is desirable and morally right. Additionally, for Bentham an action is right or wrong only instrumentally and not intrinsically (ibid.). That is, an action cannot be deemed right or wrong on any other grounds than the consequences it has.

An important aspect of utilitarianism is its *impartiality*, which indicates that the happiness of every individual is equal (ibid.). However, according to Mill, there is some kind of hierarchy between different pleasures. That is, there is not only quantitative but also qualitative difference between, for example, the pleasure of eating chocolate, and the

pleasure of reading a work of literature or attending a concert. For Mill, the presumably intellectual, sophisticated and complex pleasures such as reading literary works are a 'higher and better sort' of pleasure than sensual ones (ibid.). Mill argues that *happiness*, which is associated with pleasure, is desirable by humans and that general happiness is "a good to the aggregate of all persons" (Mill, 1998, p. 81). Maximising the amount of happiness in the world (the aggregate of all individuals) is the desirable utilitarian end and the actions that lead to this end are morally right. In the following section I will examine the way in which Dostoevsky articulates the utilitarian approach in *Crime and Punishment* and how he forms his objection to that approach to normative ethics.

SECTION TWO: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT AS AN OBJECTION TO UTILITARIANISM
Dostoevsky's 1866 novel *Crime and Punishment* was initially published in monthly in-stalments of the literary journal *The Russian Messenger*. As very little actually happens in the course of the narrative, the plot of the novel is fairly simple and it can be summarised as follows: a young student resolves in killing and robbing an old pawnbroker so he can rise himself above poverty and help others, aiming at minimising pain and maximising happiness. After he carries out this deed however, he is plunged into confusion, self-loathing and paranoia. He eventually confesses to the police and is sentenced to serve in a Siberian prison.

In more detail, in the beginning of *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky introduces the reader to the young law student Rodnio Romanovich Raskolnikov who is living in Saint Petersburg. Raskolnikov is struck by poverty and he has already given one of his few valuable possessions to the pawnbroker, an old woman. His mother and sister live in a rural area, equally affected by poverty and, after he commits his crime, they eventually pay him a visit. Their presence causes him to be even more confused and distressed, creating discomfort and pain both to them and to himself. The greater part of the novel deals with the inner-turmoil, self-loathing and regret experienced by Raskolnikov after he kills the old woman and is forced to also kill the pawnbroker's half-sister with an axe. Dostoevsky's descriptions present a person on the brink of madness, suffering delirious fever and hallucinations; a person shaken to his core. At the end of the novel, Raskolnik-ov confess to the authorities that he committed murder, serves in prison in Siberia and eventually, with the help and example of other characters in the narrative, he comes to realize the gravity of his crime.

In the first chapter, Raskolnikov takes his father's old watch to the pawnbroker as a pretext; in truth he is *rehearsing* the actions he must take in order to execute his later plan (Dostoevsky, 2000, p. 5). Raskolnikov is depicted as very nervous, worrying about whether his appearance is noticeable and memorable and about the way in which the old

woman perceives him (ibid., pp. 4, 6). That is because, as we read on in chapter six, he has resolved in killing and robbing her (ibid., pp. 58-59). Raskolnikov's motivation is not to merely rob the old woman for his own benefit, but rather, he is prone to help others in need (see for example ibid., pp. 24, 154, 160). While the act of murder is atrocious, even unthinkable for most people, he believes that in doing so he will alleviate the pain, struggle and misery of many individuals. The pleasure his unthinkable act will bring about for an excessive number of individuals, so his argument goes, outweighs the pain of one murdered person. He also believes that some exceptional individuals such as Newton (ibid., p. 222), can and *should* have the right to overstep the boundaries of morality and law in order to achieve their great deeds and benefit the whole of humanity (ibid., pp. 221-223). These thoughts are contextualised in the particular case of the killing of the pawnbroker. In the early chapters this idea is not articulated by Raskolnikov but by a stranger whom Raskolnikov overhears in a tavern, and it is worthy of quoting at length:

> ... on one side we have a ... horrid old woman, not simply useless but doing actual mischief... On the other side, fresh young lives thrown away for want of help by the thousand... A hundred thousand good deeds could be done and helped on that old woman's money ... Would not one tiny crime be wiped out by a thousand good deeds? *One death, and a hundred lives in exchange...*
> (ibid., pp. 58-59, emphasis added).

Here Dostoevsky seems to be presenting the basic elements of utilitarian theories and applying them to an extreme example; as if he is conducting a thought experiment. So according to the utilitarian approach, as it is articulated by Dostoevsky, the death or more precisely, the *killing* of one individual which is effectively doing harm to others, could allow for the happiness or at the very least the chase of suffering of hundreds of people. Saving many young people from corruption and poverty (ibid.) can *wipe out* one murder. The process of putting the two on a scale is explicit and, for the characters that hold these views, the answer to the question of whether it is right to kill is rather clear. In theory, murdering a person that is 'useless and is doing harm' in order to help unfortunate ones and ease their suffering, is permissible; it is "simple arithmetic" (ibid., p. 59).

The objection Dostoevsky is raising is articulated through the emotional and mental landscape of Raskolnikov, the *actual* consequences of his act within the narrative, and the assumed intuitive response of the reader. I will first elaborate on the latter. So, Dostoevsky's description of the murder in chapter 7 of part one, is not presented as the righteous action that it is believed to be by the characters which articulate the reasoning behind it. The author makes explicit that Raskolnikov is not executing the act as if it is a simple matter of reason or *arithmetic*. Raskolnikov's hands are weak and feel *numb* and

wooden (ibid., p. 68). The young student is mentally and emotionally unstable, swinging between a state of being "scarcely conscious of himself" to being in "full possession of his faculties" (ibid., pp. 68-69). After he commits the crime and time passes, *fear* takes hold of him (ibid., p. 71). Dostoevsky goes on to state that had he been able to 'reason more correctly' Raskolnikov would have given himself to the police from simple "horror and loathing of what he had done" (ibid.).

From the above, it is evident that the author portrays the murder as a crime, not only because the law has been broken, as Raskolnikov claims to see it (ibid., pp. 456-457), but because he does not perceive the matter of killing the old woman as *simple arithmetic*. Dostoevsky seems to indicate that there is something fundamentally wrong about killing a human being that cannot be framed by theories like utilitarianism nor can human life be placed on a scale. The author, through the portrayal of the murder in the narrative, hints at the intuition that murder is wrong even if many people will, supposedly, be benefited by the absence of an individual. That is, an act can be wrong and immoral regardless of its consequences.

Returning to the emotional and mental landscape of Raskolnikov, what is interesting is that Dostoevsky seems to maintain that, even if Raskolnikov firmly believes that he did the right thing, he still senses that his crime is not only a legal matter. Raskolnikov believes that his only wrong was to confess and that all great men throughout history have committed these kinds of necessary crimes for the greater good (ibid., p. 457). However, the delirious behaviour, fever and self-loathing he experiences in the second part of the novel show that there is a part of himself, independent of his reasoning, that cannot justify the crime by weighing the supposed good that was thought to come about. This part of him sees the atrocious act for what it truly is. That is, not the outcome of a rational decision but a horrible act worthy of loathing and repentance.

At last, the actual and unpredictable consequences of Raskolnikov's act did not maximise anyone's happiness, nor did they eliminate pain. In fact, quite the opposite happened. In the end of the novel, Raskolnikov is imprisoned and hated by his inmates (ibid., p. 456), the money he stole from the old woman never reached those in need, his family suffers as his mother grieves and is no longer "in full possession of her faculties" (ibid., pp. 452-453) and two human beings (the pawnbroker and her half-sister) have been gruesomely murdered. No one is benefited by his act; the act has resold to no pleasure but rather, to an increasing of pain.

Dostoevsky objects to the way in which utilitarianism determines what is a right or wrong act based on the amount of pleasure or pain the act will lead to. He does seems

to implicitly claim that even if the death of the pawnbroker *did* benefit some people (a point that is not made explicit in the novel), the act of murdering her and her sister cannot be justified, but he does not appeal to another theoretical approach in the philosophical tradition of ethics to support this claim. Rather he shows the factor of unpredictability through the narrative. Dostoevsky illustrates that the world and the human and social relations are messy and resist the attempts to calculate and scale them, as they are carried by theories. Mistakes are made and plans fail to materialise so that the consequences of actions often cannot be predicted. For example, Raskolnikov is forced to kill the half-sister of the old woman only because she happens to walk into the murder scene and see the pawnbroker dead. This second killing was not intended and it shows the failure to plan and control every aspect of an action.

Furthermore, the suffering of Raskolnikov after he murders the two women, shows that even if the actor is convinced that they did the right thing, in some cases there is a visceral part of the human being that cannot be convinced by the utilitarian calculations of what is right or wrong. That is, there is *something* about the act of taking a human life that is loathsome, repulsive and cannot be *wiped out* by calculations.

SECTION THREE: LITERATURE AS PHILOSOPHY

As I have hinted at in the above section, when one considers the objection raised to utilitarianism, *Crime and Punishment* seems to be an elaborated thought experiment. But perhaps treating a major work of literature in such terms is not desirable. That is because *Crime and Punishment* might not be solely intended as an objection to a recently articulated moral theory. As a literary work, the novel is also a work of art. By being a work of art and not an academic philosophical text, Dostoevsky's book does not engage with the philosophical tradition, that is, the canon, and it does not enter into discussion with the work of the authors toward which it objects. What it does successfully however is to explore the impact of actions on the human psyche. This literary work shows that because human lives are interconnected in an intricate social web, this impact reaches further than the sides involved in a particular act. These aspects might be missing from a philosophical inquiry and conceptualization of a particular question. Literature offers an inside to the particular and draws attention to elements of the human experience that philosophical frameworks such as utilitarianism might not explore or take into account.

What is problematic in treating this literary work as a philosophical text however, is that the narrative does not do justice to the theories it objects to. That is, Dostoevsky does not properly refer to the theorists that articulated the utilitarian ideas he is critiquing. For example, when the utilitarian framework is articulated (Dostoevsky, 2000, pp. 58-59), the character that presents the issue at hand does not make explicit that, according to

utilitarianism, everyone's good is considered *impartially* (Driver, 2014). Also, because of the nature of literary prose which lacks, for instance, citations or rigorous argumentative structure, it is virtually impossible to trace the claims back to theorists or other bodies of work. While the reader can relate the ideas presented in the passage I have cited in section two to utilitarianism, the theoretical frame is not explicitly mentioned or explained. The framework of utilitarianism might not be accurate or the way it is presented might be heavily influenced by the author's personal views and bias. The problem with this is not merely that the presentation of the theory of utilitarianism might not be charitable enough, but rather, because the author does not explicitly engage with the philosophical tradition of ethics, the reader has no way of determining whether this presentation is accurate.

Further, while *Crime and Punishment* can be a compelling case of a literary work engaging with philosophical considerations, one cannot claim that all literature does the same. There might be a great number of literary classics which engage with philosophical ideas (see for example Gregory, 2009, chapter 9, on the ethical reflections explored in *Wuthering Heights*) but that is not evidence that every literary work does so or that these ideas are explored and developed in the same way as it happens in philosophical works. That is because the nature and also the goals of the two disciplines seem to be different. For example, by developing the theory of utilitarianism, philosophers Bentham and Mill were aiming at constructing a theoretical framework for social as well as legal reform (Driver, 2014). By identifying laws and practices as *useless* through the lens of utilitarianism, such reform could materialise (ibid.). Novels on the other hand are not viewed as such projects, but rather as works of art and specimens of storytelling.

SUMMARY

In this essay I have used Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* as an example in order to examine how literature, when viewed as philosophy, breaks with the Western philosophical canon. I have looked at the novel as an objection to the normative ethical theory of utilitarianism as it is articulated by Bentham and Mill. In this view, Dostoevsky is presenting the basic utilitarian ideas and then, through the narrative, he is constructing an objection by showing how an act based on these ideas would potentially affect the one who carries the actions and those around them. Dostoevsky seems to support his objection by showing that (1) the human actions cannot be determined as right or wrong based solely on their outcome, (2) the effects of an action are unpredictable, and (3) the outcomes of utilitarian calculations can be against some very basic intuitions, such as considering murder unjustifiable.

I have also shown that while, under this light, Dostoevsky's novel could be perceived as a

philosophical work which articulates his objection, there are some issues with seeing lite-rature as philosophy. Those issues relate to the way in which literary works are construc-ted. That is, novels, even if they engage with philosophical questions, do not explicitly articulate them, nor do they draw on the body of works that constitute the philosophical tradition in order to formulate ideas or objections. By not doing so, the literary works that could be considered philosophical, break with the philosophical canon.

Rien de Bont

"It is 1971, and Mirek says that the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

- Milan Kundera

In the essay that follows, I discuss how the author Milan Kundera writes about the role of stories in totalitarian regimes. I chose to include this essay in 'Our Canon and Beyond' not so much because of the exact content of this essay, but rather to highlight how the Philosophy master's in Tilburg gave us the freedom to write about whatever caught our interest. Coming from a technical university with many predefined assignments, it was interesting to explore this freedom and write about literature for a change. Of course, this comes with its challenges, as a novel (evidently) does not present a clear line of argumentation. However, you always learn a lot when you simply jump into something that is entirely unknown beforehand.

Besides the intellectual leaps we all made during our time in Tilburg, I think the master's also provided a great platform for developing ourselves personally. It is nice to be surrounded with people that think the same – that is, 'philosophical'-, yet all bring different backgrounds and experiences with them. After my time in the completely different environment of a technical university, I sponged up all this diversity as much as I could, while at the same time enjoying the sense of belonging I felt amongst the philosophers. Definitely life changing, but now it is also time to go back to the 'real' world. I look forward to the changes that either a professional or academic career will entail.
Before moving on to the essay, I was asked what I thought everyone should add to their canon. I think my response would be to encourage people to read French or Russian literary classics, like the work of Stendhal or Turgenev. And Dutch stuff! For instance, the work of Reve or Mulish. In my experience, most of my fellow philosophers read a lot of English or American literature. This is of course great literature, but it is also great to explore the work from 'the continent' whilst at the same time retracing a connection with the Dutch language. Enjoy the following essay!

THE ROLE OF STORIES IN TOTALITARIAN REGIMES

Resting Oblivion or Bursting Out Into Laughter

Everyday experience is filled with stories: stories in literature, series, on social media, and the stories that are told while spending time with friends and loved ones. Philosophy has concerned itself with the question of why we need stories, or put differently; myth (Prange, 2008, p.18). Based on a close reading of Homer's *Odyssey*, Martine Prange argues that man tells stories to attain a form of immortality. She bases this account on the scene when Odysseus arrives naked and without any belongings on the island of Scheria (Prange, 2008, p. 26-27). Even though nobody knows him there, he notices his name has been fixed in the memories of men, as he hears himself mentioned in the songs of a troubadour (Prange, 2008, p.26). With this, he experiences that he will live on, even after his death (Prange, 2008, p.26).

With the terrible experiences of totalitarian regimes in the 20th century, I wonder whether Homer's view on stories might not be complete today, especially if we note the relation between power and oblivion in these regimes. Regarding this, Czech novelist Milan Kundera writes that, as a result of the Czech spring in 1968, the Russian army forced half a million individuals to leave their jobs and leave for the province, making that they were effectively erased out of the country's memory – they were forced into oblivion (Kundera, 1978, p.22)[6]. This makes that Homer's view of stories bringing immortality might only take us half way when living in a totalitarian state: even though an individual might make an effort to establish their name, immortality might only be attained if this name is not erased later by the dominant powers existing at the time (Prange, 2008, p. 27).

Even though Homer's account of stories might still be relevant in situations without censorship, we might need an alternative account for the function of stories specifically within totalitarian states. In this paper, I will develop this alternative account of stories by discussing Milan Kundera's work *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, mainly because it extensively discusses the lives of individuals living in a totalitarian state. More specifically, Kundera's work features several characters – Mirek, Tamina and Kundera (autobiographical) – who use stories in their struggle against the Russian Authorities. I will ask the following research question to guide my inquiries:

What role do stories play in the struggle of Mirek, Tamina, and Kundera (autobiographical) against the Russian domination in The Book of Laughter and Forgetting by Milan Kundera?

By discussing these three characters I will highlight three ways in which Kundera understands the function of stories in authoritarian regimes. First, by discussing the character of Mirek, I will argue that stories can play a role in immortalising individuals

as political actors with the intention of setting forth their political project; a function which resembles Homer's understanding of stories. Then, by discussing the character of Tamina, I find that stories can help to resist the (natural) oblivion that comes along with the passing of time. This resistance is not done to reach immortalization in a Homerian sense, but rather to make life bearable for the ones that are left behind. Therefore, such an understanding comes closer to Nietzsche's understanding of stories as to make the truth of our suffering existence bearable. As both characters fail in their attempt to resist the oblivion enforced by the Russians, I will argue Kundera is rather cynical towards the effectiveness of stories in resistance. By discussing a third character - Kundera's reflections upon his own experiences - I argue for a third role of stories when resistance against oblivion fails: to help us burst out into laughter. This helps to question the sternness of existence and to briefly escape in pure joy. Before going into my analysis, I will explain why Kundera notes that totalitarian regimes force individuals into oblivion.

KUNDERA'S DESCRIPTION OF THE 1948 COMMUNIST TAKEOVER AND THE 1968 PRAGUE SPRING

Kundera's *Book of Laughter and Forgetting* mainly discusses the Prague Spring of 1968. However, in Kundera's reading, this event was foreshadowed by the 1948 Czechoslovak coup d'état, when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia took control of the government of Czechoslovakia (Pohanka, 2018). Kundera describes this event as follows:

> So of course the grandiose enthusiasts won out over the cautious compromisers and lost no time turning their dream into reality: the creation of an idyll of justice for all. Now let me repeat: an idyll, for all, where every man is a note in a magnificent Bach fugue and anyone who refuses his note is a mere black dot, useless and meaningless, easily caught and squashed between the fingers like an insect (Kundera, 1978, p.14).

In this description, it is not so much important what this 'program' exactly entails, but rather that all individuals must fit the program, with little room for individuals to 'refuse their note.' Later, after more and more citizens were jailed, resistance against the communist party started to grow, eventually leading up to the Prague Spring (Kundera, 1978, p.22). The Prague Spring was a brief period of liberalisation in Czechoslovakia and was initiated when Alexander Dubček became first secretary of the Czechoslovak communist party (Britannica, 2020). Although Dubček insisted that he could control the country's transformation, the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries viewed the developments as tantamount to counterrevolution and therefore invaded the country with armed forces and occupied it (Brittanica, 2020). Kundera describes this event as follows:

> Russia, composer of the master fugue for the globe, could not tolerate the thought
> of notes taking off on their own. On August 21, 1968, it sent an army of half a mil-
> lion men into Bohemia. Shortly thereafter, about a hundred and twenty thousand
> Czechs left their country, and of those who remained about five hundred thousand
> had to leave their jobs for manual labour in the country, at the conveyor belt of an
> out-of-the-way factory, behind the steering wheel of a truck—in other words, for
> places and jobs where no one would ever hear their voices (Kundera, 1978, P.22).

The purpose of the invasion was not so much to punish the 'notes' that took off on their
own. Instead, Kundera writes how the purpose was to erase the revolution of 1968 "out
of the memory of the country," as "to be sure not even the shadow of an unpleasant
memory could come to disturb the newly revived idyll" (Kundera, 1978, p.14). In the
quote, Kundera highlights this was done by forcing individuals into oblivion; when the
individuals were sent off to the province and forced to stop publishing and protesting, it
would only be a matter of time before they faded out of the memory of the country.
It is in this context that the first two characters I will discuss – Mirek and Tamina –
struggle against power, as they are both confronted with the oblivion enforced by the
Russians, both in different ways. In the next section, I discuss how these characters use
stories in their resistance.

STORIES TO RESIST OBLIVION

Mirek is first mentioned in one of the crucial sentences of Kundera's work, which I
added as an epigraph to this paper: "It is 1971, and Mirek says that the struggle of man
against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting" (Kundera, 1978, p.8). This
quote implies that remaining in the memories of men – and thus becoming immortal -
involves the struggle against power (Prange, 2008) (Kundera, 1978, p. 26). The following
quote follows up his remark on power and forgetting: "That is his attempt to justify
what his friends call carelessness: keeping a careful diary, preserving all correspondence,
taking notes at meetings where there is discussion of the current situation and debate of
where to go from here" (Kundera, 1978. p. 8).

To resist potentially being forced into oblivion by the Russians, Mirek aims to bring
these "stories" to a safe space. However, he fails to do so in time, and the documents are
confiscated by the police when he is captured for his acts of resistance (Kundera, 1978, p.
35). He was therefore not successful in resisting oblivion; to the contrary, the documents
even served to help erase his friend out of the memory of the country as well (Kundera,
1978, p. 36).

Even though the story of Mirek shows that Kundera is rather pessimistic regarding

the effectiveness of resisting oblivion by means of stories, he does nonetheless propose the possibility of storing notes and correspondence for this purpose. The purpose of this safeguarding of notes is a form of immortalization, but differently from Homer's understanding. Namely, Mirek does not so much store his notes with the purpose to immortalise himself, but rather he aims to immortalise the political project of resistance against the Russians. This attempt involves the immortalization of himself as a political actor.

Where the stories in the character of Mirek function as a reminder of a political project, the second character I will discuss, Tamina, aims to resist a much more personal form of oblivion; the forgetting of her late husband. Tamina and her husband lived in Czechoslovakia during the Russian domination for eleven years, but later managed to escape during an arranged group trip to Yugoslavia (Kundera, 1978, p. 110). As they could bring no more than a single large travelling bag, Tamina was not able to bring many personal belongings. Most importantly, she could not bring the books containing annotations of every single year she spent with her husband – this would be suspicious at the border. Shortly after escaping, her husband falls ill and dies. In the following quote, Tamina hopes to 'practice' memorising the face of her husband:

> During these exercises she tried to evoke his skin, its colour, and all its minor blemishes: tiny warts, protuberances, freckles, veins. It was difficult, almost impossible … She would concentrate all her attention on him, and remodel his face inside her head, darkening the complexion, adding freckles and warts, scaling down the ears, and colouring the eyes blue. But all her efforts only went to show that her husband's image had disappeared for good (Kundera, 1978, p. 110).

With this, Kundera expresses that time inevitably fades away the memory of individuals. Tamina hopes to counteract this natural force by getting back the eleven notebooks she was forced to leave behind. The function of stories – in the form of annotations and letters – is to resist this natural oblivion, and to remember. With this, we must note that the Russians did not explicitly *force* Tamina's husband into oblivion, the same way as happened to countless other (political) individuals during the Prague Spring. Instead, the influence of the Russians causes Tamina to lack the means of resisting the unavoidable oblivion that comes along with the passing of time. In this way, her struggle against oblivion is a struggle against power (Kundera, 1978, p. 8).

In the case of Tamina, Kundera's understanding of the role of stories seems to deviate from Homer's idea of immortalization. Namely, whereas stories in Homer's understanding primarily function for the benefit of the one whose name is remembered – as they

want to be immortal –, stories in Kundera's understanding serve the ones who are left behind: Tamina in this case (Prange, 2008, p. 26). This is highlighted by Kundera in the following two quotes:

> She is aware, of course, that there are many unpleasant things in the note-books—days of dissatisfaction, quarrels, even boredom. But that is not what counts ... She is not compelled by a desire for beauty, she is compelled by a desire for life (Kundera, 1978, p. 113).

In the next quote, we see that this desire for life does not concern her late husband, but instead Tamina herself:

> She longs to see the notebooks so she can fill in the fragile framework of events in the new notebook, give it walls, make it a house she can live in. Because if the shaky structure of her memories collapses like a badly pitched tent, all Tamina will have left is the present, that invisible point, that nothing moving slowly toward death (Kundera, 1978, p. 113).

Tamina needs to reconstruct her memory by means of the stories in her notebook - to escape from only being left with the present, which Kundera holds to be empty. Hence, we can say the focus of immortalising lies with Tamina, instead of her husband. The purpose of stories is therefore to make the present bearable, and this view on stories resembles what Prange (2008, p. 18) argues to be Nietzsche's understanding of the story in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, where stories function to make the truth of our suffering existence bearable. With this, I am not so much implying that Kundera views life as suffering; on the contrary, a life with memory would be very much valuable. Instead, the parallel lies in that stories in Tamina's situation help to comfort her in the situation she is in – stories would allow her to live (Kundera, 1978, p. 113). We might therefore say that Kundera's understanding of stories in the case of Tamina is a synthesis of Nietzsche's and Homer's account of stories: stories function to immortalise, but this in turn is done to make life bearable for the ones that are left behind.

After two attempts to retrieve the books containing her annotations, Tamina gives up on her journey to retrieve them. Just as in the case of Mirek, we can say that this shows that Kundera again is pessimistic in the role of stories in the struggle against forgetting.

LAUGHTER AS RESISTANCE

By discussing Mirek and Tamina, I have highlighted two related functions of stories: firstly, to immortalise political actors with the purpose of immortalising a political

project. Secondly, resisting the oblivion of a loved one that comes with the passing of time in order to make life bearable. Kundera is pessimistic about the effectiveness of both forms of resistance. In the sections of the book where Kundera reflects upon his own experiences living under Russian domination, I find an alternative role of stories instead of resisting oblivion: to help us burst out in laughter.

Kundera's reflections start at the point where he was already removed from the memory of Czechoslovakia by the Russians: he was fired, and no one was able to give him a new job (Kundera, 1978, p.80). In order to still make a living, a young woman named R. offers Kundera to write pieces for the socialist magazine. The job is to write a weekly astrological column, which was an attempt of the magazine to attract some public even though astrology goes against the purity of Marxist ideology. In order to disguise Kundera's identity, R. arranges that Kundera writes this weekly column under the assumed name of a non-existing nuclear scientist that wants to stay anonymous.

After some time of publishing articles, the editor-in-chief of the magazine - who was also one of the prominent members of the communist party - asks R. whether a personal horoscope could be written for him for the compensation of a thousand crowns (Kundera, 1978, p. 81). When R. and Kundera in the end get caught for their deeds, they have the following dialogue:

> "Do you think they know about the thousand crowns you got for that horoscope?" "Don't worry. Nobody who spent three years studying Marxism-Leninism is going to admit to having horoscopes drawn up for himself." She laughed, and even though the laugh lasted no more than half a second, I took it as a modest promise of salvation. It was just the kind of laughter I was yearning for when I wrote those stupid little articles about Pisces, Virgo, and Aries, just the kind of laughter I saw as my reward, and it never came (Kundera, 1978, p. 95).

The purpose of the astrological stories was to invoke laughter. In the following sentences, Kundera leaves some hints why he was especially out for this:

> In the meantime, all the critical posts in the world, all the general staff, had been occupied by angels; they had taken over the left and the right, Arab and Jew, Russian general and Russian dissident. They looked down on us from all sides with their icy stares stripping us of the motleys we wear for happy-go-lucky mystification and reducing us to common cheats who work at magazines for socialist youth even though we have no faith in either youth or socialism, who write horoscopes for editors-in-chief even though we consider both editor-in-chief and horoscope

to be ridiculous, who waste our time on trivialities when everyone else (the left and the right, Arab and Jew, Russian general and Russian dissident) is fighting for the future of mankind (Kundera, 1978, p.95).

Even though the above sentences are filled with metaphors, the most important aspect is the tension Kundera sketches between 'not taking anything seriously' and the sternness of 'fighting for the future of mankind.' By engaging in an act that is done to reach a 'comical effect' without any underlying faith in Youth, Socialism, the Editor-in-chief or Horoscopes, Kundera brings forward the existence of an alternative to the attitude of 'fighting for the future of mankind': to laugh about it and not take it too seriously.

In the small chapter following the above quote, Kundera describes further how laughter functions to shield individuals from all sternness of daily life. The quote discusses two students following a summer school discussing different plays, a rather serious theme. The students decide to give a rendition of Eugène Ionesco's play *Rhinoceros* while wearing paper noses to highlight that the horn worn by the main character serves as a 'comical effect.' The teacher greatly appreciates this and bursts out in an insane attack of laughter, and the students follow her. This results in the following scene:

As they laughed and danced and their cardboard noses jiggled, the class looked on in mute horror. By then, however, the dancing women were paying no attention to anyone else, they were completely caught up in themselves and their rapture. All at once Madame Raphael stamped a little harder than before and rose a few inches above the classroom floor. Her next step did not touch the ground. She pulled her two friends up after her, and before long all three of them were circling above the floor and moving slowly upward in a spiral (Kundera, 1978, p. 99).

From this we can see that the act of laughing leads to a situation wherein everything and everyone around the ones laughing fades. The floating of the ground can be seen to symbolise the liberating effect of laughter. In this scene of extreme laughter, the 'stern' discussion of Eugène Ionesco's play moves to the background, and only laughter remains. From this, we can draw a parallel to the situation between Kundera and R.: in the brief moment of laughter by R., Kundera and R. escape the "Icy stares of the left and the right, Arab and Jew, Russian general and Russian dissident." All that remains is a focus "on themselves and their rapture" (Kundera, 1978, p. 95).

Based on this discussion we can note a third way in which Kundera understands the role of stories[7], namely to let us burst out in laughter and forget the seriousness of life

and escape in a moment of pure joy, when the hope of being remembered is no longer realistic. Such an understanding of stories again resembles Nietzsche's understanding of stories making the truth of our suffering existence bearable. Even though Kundera does not share Nietzsche's pessimism, he does acknowledge that within totalitarian states, stories function to make the situation bearable by bursting into laughter.[8]

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I investigated the role of stories within totalitarian states, as Homer's account of stories as immortalising falls short when states actively aim to force individuals into oblivion. My method consisted of discussing the use of stories in several characters in Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* in the struggle against power. By discussing Mirek, I have argued that "safeguarded" stories can act to resist being forced into oblivion as a political actor. The purpose of such an endeavour would be not so much to immortalise the individual but rather to immortalise a political project. By discussing the character of Tamina, I have argued that stories in the form of letters and notation books can help to resist a much more personal form of oblivion, namely the forgetting of a loved one. The story of Tamina showed that access to these stories can be denied by the powerful, making that the natural oblivion of time cannot be resisted any longer. Going deeper into the motivation of Tamina for remembering, I discussed that this understanding of stories can be seen as a synthesis between a Homerian and a Nietzschean understanding of the story: even though the purpose of stories is to immortalise the late husband, this is done to make the life of Tamina bearable.

At the end of my discussion of Mirek and Tamina, I identified that Kundera is pessimistic with regards to the effectiveness of using stories to resist the Russians. We might say that Kundera mentions stories as preventing oblivion as a hopeful note to highlight the ideal function of stories - if only it would *be possible to resist oblivion this way*. In Kundera's autobiographical reflections, I found that he sketches an understanding of stories that is perhaps more realistic in totalitarian regimes; to let us burst out into laughter as to temporarily free ourselves from suffering. Again, this understanding of stories was argued to be Nietzschean.

Based on the discussion on Kundera, I therefore draw two broader conclusions on what the role of stories are in totalitarian regimes: First, that stories can function to resist oblivion, making it possible to set forth political projects and to be able to remember the ones that have passed away. If this attempt is in vain, one can fall back on a second purpose of stories, namely to invoke laughter, which can make the suffering moment bearable.

Bob Matthijsse

"You can't beat death, but you can beat death in life."
- Charles Bukowski

Philosophy can be distant or deeply personal, it can be concrete and almost touchable or mythically abstract, somewhere lost in the realm of metaphysics. There is so much philosophy in the world, so many different strains and theories that one will never be able to fully capture it in a lifetime. It is no surprise that in a publication like this, these differences come to light.

One of the reasons I decided to follow a path into philosophy was exploration. Not merely of the academic life and the different philosophers that reign, but mostly the exploration of the world and myself. The relationship with philosophy has always been a deeply personal one, and the essay you are about to read embodies that. Life feels like a puzzle and the pieces found in theories such as psychoanalysis, the *unexperienced experience* and the role of art, reveal a small but valuable picture of subjectivity. A fragment of who we are and who we could become. A possible explanation why the things are the way they are and the realisation that it does not have to be that way.

While struggling with traumatic experiences myself, I refused to engage in a clinical and sterile approach towards something radically subjective in the form of an existential weight. No one truly knows the intensity of death until one locks eyes with it. It can be for a moment, a fraction of a second but everything can and will change after that. Not the world around you, but you change. Death takes a hold of you as the quickest and most ruthless revolution in existence. Even though you will survive, on the other hand you did not survive. The essay you are about to read addresses this very question: what happens the day after the end, once the smoke has disappeared, the screams have died and silence roams as a ruthless reminder through the air?

Subjects such as these manage to itch my brain. Notably, my way of philosophy has always been a little bit darker than my fellow students, yet in my view I always try to confront myself in my work with death, emptiness and isolation. Most important for me are the topics that everyone will one day experience, but no one speaks about it. Therefore it became my canon, inspired by series such as *After Life* and *Mr. Robot*, by books such as *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, but most importantly, inspired by the rawness of life. I hope you will enjoy it, the same way I enjoyed my time at Tilburg University.

MORTARS, DEATH,
AND THE UNEXPERIENCED EXPERIENCE

Mortar rounds were flying around while every soldier was running for his life, searching for the nearest foxhole. Trees were falling chaotically while the entire forest flashed in an inscrutable form of hell. Screams of death and trauma whispered through the icy ground of the Ardennes forest on January 2, 1945. That day became too much for 1st Lieutenant Lynn "Buck" Compton of Easy Company, part of the American 101st Airborne. When fellow soldier Joe Toye was lying in the snow with a severed leg while Bill Guarnere attempted to drag him to safety, another mortar shell hit, blowing off Guarnere's leg as well. Buck crawls out of the foxhole and looks at the mangled bodies of his friends. With pain in his eyes, he desperately calls for a medic. He takes off his helmet and silently mouths the word *"medic."* Luckily both soldiers survived the incident, but Buck was never the same after. The American TV show *Band of Brothers* (2001) called this his breaking point. Soon after, Buck resigned and returned to the United States because he was too traumatised to continue his part in the war.

This scene from *Band of Brothers* (2001), which is based on the real-life accounts of the war experiences of the 101st Airborne on their European campaign, depicts not only the heroic moments of the war, but zooms in on the traumatic experiences the soldiers had to endure, changing their lives forever. In the last episode of the TV show, just a moment before they will go home and leave the war for good, Darrell "Shifty" Powers states to his commanding officer: "I just do not know how to explain all this," thereby referring to all the traumatic experiences he had to endure.

Traumatic experiences can be enigmatic. Even though we know why we are traumatised, it is hard to explain what exactly happens when we relive the trauma. From a certain moment on, our old selves seem to have vanished, and as an outcome of the trauma, we become a different person. There are many clinical theories with a sterile, machine-like approach to trauma. For instance, the Oxford clinical psychology handbook states that defining trauma and PTSD has proven to be controversial (Grey & Clohessy, 2014, p. 170). Clinical theories seem to be able to partly explain what trauma entails and how we can control it, but refrain from defining it. These machine-like approaches often seem to lack a critical element, such as a metaphysical approach of how trauma is actually experienced, or perhaps to show the lack of the experience. Therefore, I will approach trauma from a philosophical perspective to analyse whether art and especially literature can help to demystify the experience of trauma. With the help of the concept of *unexperienced experience* from French philosopher Jacques Derrida, I will shed further light on traumatic experiences. With a close reading of Blanchot's *The Writing of Disaster*, a literary piece heavily focused on traumatic experiences, I will apply Derrida's conceptualization of the *unexperienced experience* to illuminate the mysterious phenomenon of trauma that still haunts many souls today.

In the first section, I will present the theoretical groundwork of the unexperienced experience and set out several aspects of the concept: time, the self, and the experience. Following, I will argue that art – and especially literature – is able to express the impossibility of the unexperienced experience. Consequently, I will apply these notions to the work of *The Writing of Disaster* (2000), showing that the experience of what Blanchot calls *the disaster* cannot be textualized, but that the impossibility of the unexperienced experience can still be shown through the means of art, thereby partly de-mystifying the experience of trauma.

SECTION ONE: THE UNEXPERIENCED EXPERIENCE

In this section, I will explain the Derridean notion of the unexperienced experience. First, I will dive into the concept's origin by linking Blanchot's *The Instant of my Death* to Derrida's reading. The starting point for Blanchot's fictionalised account is "death experienced as the impossibility of dying" (Langlois, 2015, p. 22). Even though it can be perceived as a simple sentence, these words contain the beating heart of conceptualising the unexperienced experience. Blanchot opens his work by stating: "I remember a young man – a man still young – prevented from dying by death itself." He continues to describe a near-death experience in what appears to be Nazi soldiers ordering the young man to go outside to line him up to be executed (Blanchot, 2000, p. 3-5). Due to an explosion of battle nearby, he is released by what turn out to be Russian Soldiers portraying as Nazis. The protagonist looked into the barrel of the gun, of what he thought would undoubtedly be his end, but luck had it that he would not leave earth that day. Nonetheless, describing the moment itself, Blanchot writes:

> In his place, I will not try to analyse. He was perhaps suddenly invincible. Dead——immortal. Perhaps ecstasy. Rather the feeling of compassion for suffering humanity, the happiness of not being immortal or eternal. Henceforth, he was bound to death by a surreptitious friendship (Blanchot, 2000, p. 5).

Notably, Blanchot fictionalised his own near-death experience, but the most remarkable element of *The Instant of My Death* is the perspective. In the way he phrases the experience, there is a remarkable distance between the narrator and the protagonist as if he is telling a tale about someone else, elaborating an experience that the narrator himself did not experience. Additionally, this passage is the first occurrence of the unexperienced experience. The narrator states that the protagonist suddenly feels invincible while looking into the gun barrel, which most likely will end his life. However, the gun does not have to go off since the protagonist is already dead. The traumatic experience was enough to kill the poor soul, and the person standing there waiting to be executed was someone else. At first sight, this remark may sound void of any form of logic since we are still talking about

the same physical body, with the same name and the same clothes on, yet it is the kernel element of the concept of the unexperienced experience. In order to further explain this, I will delve into Derrida's close reading of *The Instant of my Death*.

In the work *Demeure* (2000) Derrida takes a philosophical approach towards testimonies. Here I will present the three most critical elements: time, the self, and experiences. Derrida states that testimony cannot be proven and therefore has to be believed. Imagine an eyewitness who describes how an event occurred; no one is able to go back to time and see if the event occurred as the eyewitness says. The only kind of proof one could gather is whether the person was at the location they said they were, or relying on other testimony, verifying the original testimony. Due to the limitation of testifying, Derrida calls it a secret (Derrida, 2000, p. 30). This secret simultaneously ties in with the singularity of the experience the testifier endured. The experience itself cannot be shared, one can only tell about it through testifying, but the experience's kernel remains within (Derrida, 2000, p. 32). Imagine Blanchot's experience of looking into the barrel of the gun; he can testify what happened based on facts he remembers, yet no one will ever actually understand what Blanchot precisely experienced. Even if one has a similar near-death experience, it will never be precisely the same as Blanchot's.

Moreover, according to Derrida, there is an element of time within the testimony as well. He states that "repetition carries the instant outside of itself," meaning that when someone testifies about the experience, it is not the experience itself anymore; it is a different experience telling about a past experience (Derrida, 2000, p. 33). The original experience cannot be experienced anymore. This ties in with the two most critical characteristics of the testimony for the aims of this essay, namely the conception of the self and the experience itself. According to Derrida, within a (traumatic) experience, the self is not the self anymore. Recalling the experience (in the form of testimony) is a testification of a version of yourself that no longer exists. He states that the witness of the experience is a third party; "the witness is a survivor, the third-party... the one who survives" (Derrida, 2000, p. 45). In other words, there are three versions of a person: before, during, and the narrator afterwards. The former two can be considered 'dead;' they do not exist anymore. This can be perceived in soldier Buck's experience in the Ardennes forest. He changed and was never the same, because he was someone else than before and during the traumatic experience. Many people died in the Ardennes Forest, and two of them were Buck, as he was broken and traumatised through the experience. Therefore, it can be said that Buck did not experience the attack in the Ardennes forest himself, even though he can recall it. Since his former self has died, he is only left with the testimony but not the experience itself. Thus, his experience was an unexperienced experience, just like Blanchot's protagonist, who stared into the barrel of the gun. Blanchot, hauntingly and beautifully, phrased the essence of the unexperienced experience by saying: "I am alive. No, you are dead" (Blanchot, 2000, p. 9).

SECTION TWO: THE WRITING OF DISASTER

In this section, I will apply the notion of the unexperienced experience to Blanchot's *The Writing of Disaster* (1995) through the means of a close reading. In doing so, I will show the ambiguity of traumatic experiences and how art, especially literature, can shed light on the mysterious yet impossible phenomenon that we call trauma.

Blanchot published *The Writing of Disaster* in 1980 as a reflection on the Second World War and, most significantly, the concentration camps, Hiroshima, and the Holocaust. He aimed to answer how one can textualize the true nature of these horrific experiences. Blanchot explores the boundaries of writing with the term 'disaster,' meaning the situation in which some experiences defy speech and compel silence. In this essay, I will approach conceptualization as a broader term, outside of the specific realm of the Second World War, in order to determine how the conceptualization of disaster and the unexperienced experience are linked with each other.

According to Blanchot, the *disaster* is understood as an ever-lurking storm that does not happen or arrive, but it is simultaneously an immemorial past that is not received, remembered, or experienced (Blanchot, 1995, p. 4-9). Consequently, Blanchot writes: "The disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact. It does not touch anyone in particular; "I" am not threatened by it, but spared, left aside. It is in this way that I am threatened; it is in this way that the disaster threatens in me that which is exterior to me—an other than I who passively becomes other" (Blanchot, 1995, p. 1). Already the first sentence is philosophically packed; it becomes clear that the disaster is not something destructive; it does not obliterate everything but leaves everything intact as it is, but still manages to cast its dark, melancholic shadow on everything. Therefore, the actual disaster is not destruction but transformation, while leaving every piece in the same place.

Further down the passage, it becomes clear that it is not the world which changes through the disaster, but you. The very element of being spared by the disaster is the true disaster for Blanchot. It is the transformation of yourself, the 'I who passively becomes other,' the person you thought you were, which disappears through the smoke in the aftermath of the violent disaster. As shown in Buck's example, he died twice in the Ardennes Forest, yet still survived. This idea fits the phrasing of 'passively become other.' It becomes clear that Blanchot is writing about the self who becomes someone else due to the traumatic experience, while the disaster only leaves the earlier mentioned witness, who becomes a third party to the experience.

Consequently, Blanchot writes: "There is no reaching the disaster" (Blanchot, 1995, p. 1). This neatly ties in with the conceptualization of the unexperienced experience. Since

no one truly experiences the disaster itself, the self who did, died. We, as people, are left after the disaster as a witness and third party of the disaster. Therefore, the true experience of the disaster cannot be reached because we did not truly experience it as a direct victim of the disaster. Merely as an indirect victim. Thus, it can be said that the trauma could be viewed as the lack of experience of the disaster. Blanchot indirectly alluded to this notion by writing: "The disaster is related to forgetfulness – forgetfulness without memory, the motionless retreat of what has not been treated – the immemorial, perhaps. To remember forgetfully: again, the outside" (Blanchot, 1995, p. 3). Especially the last words, 'again, the outside,' zoom in on the aspect of being a witness and third party in the grasp of the disaster. One gets externalised from the disaster and is positioned on the outside. These words bring back the element of distance noted in Blanchot's *The Instant of my Death*. He did not situate himself within the true experience of the disaster, but outside, distancing himself from the actual experience and simultaneously being reduced to a mere witness of the traumatic experience.

Therefore, Blanchot is convinced that the disaster can never be genuinely experienced: "The disaster, unexperienced. It is what escapes the very possibility of experience – it is the limit of writing. This must be repeated: the disaster de-scribes. Which does not mean that the disaster, as the force of writing, is excluded from it, is beyond the pale of writing or extratextual" (Blanchot, 1995, p. 7). The passage alludes to Derrida's concept of the unexperienced experienced. The death of the self, as stated earlier, makes it impossible to experience the disaster. More critically is the use of the word *de-scribes*, not understood in the general context of 'describing something,' but exactly the opposite. De-scribing signifies the idea that the discarding of writing is through writing about it. In other words, the disaster cannot be experienced through writing, which simultaneously shows the limits of writing and literature.

It becomes clear that the disaster escapes the textual grasp of writing. This means that the experience cannot be put into words, and therefore, authentically shared. From a philosophical perspective, with Derrida's notion of the unexperienced experience, the true experience cannot be put into words because it is the very essence of the absence of the experience in itself. Through his writing, Blanchot gives a testimony of a traumatic event, an unexperienced experience. Nonetheless, Blanchot cannot reach the disaster in itself but can merely describe the exteriority of the disaster. Thereby creating an image of the disaster which comes closer to the disaster itself through writing. Although writing will never fully capture the dark terrorizing heart of the disaster, since it de-scribes, writing can reduce the gap that otherwise would have remained larger than it was.

This brings me to the overall aim of the essay, namely, how writing can shed light on

the unexperienced experience. Paradoxically, Blanchot's passage gives away that he is convinced that the true experience of the disaster cannot be expressed through writing. However, in *The Instance of my Death*, he still attempts to return to the disaster and put the experience into words, or better said, the lack of the experience.

This contrast interestingly reveals something regarding the consequence of the unexperienced experience. Just like Blanchot, many artists went back to the moment of disaster through their artwork, such as J.R.R Tolkien, who put elements of his World War I trauma into the trilogy of *The Lord Of The Rings* (1954-1955). Even though the experience of the disaster cannot be put into words, there still seems to be a hunger within the artist to return to the disaster, just like Blanchot, who returned to his near-death experience in 1994 through writing *The Instance of my Death*. The person has been robbed of experiencing the disaster, thereby leaving a gap in the self, like a missing piece of a puzzle, leaving one with an endless hunger to experience the disaster so one can move on truly. Through the means of art, and in this case writing, one attempts to return to the disaster, make sense of it, experience it, and finally, make peace with it. By literally describing the phenomenon word for word, the artist hopes he can escape the ghost's haunting. It is through the means of telling and retelling the story that within the artist resides the hope they are able to resolve the disaster and free themselves of the invisible chains of the trauma, so they can redeem themselves and abandon life as an undead creature, as someone who is both alive and dead.

Blanchot puts it rather beautifully: "It is not you who will speak; let the disaster speak in you, even if it is by your forgetfulness or silence" (Blanchot, 1995, p. 4). As Blanchot writes, through the likes of writing, the disaster can speak; it creates a door to return to the fateful moment, a possibility to replay the unexperienced experience to make sense of it all in an endless storm of confusion. This confusion can be textualized, and the impossibility of comprehending the face of disaster can be shared. Since there is a lack of experience within the disaster, it will always escape the potentiality of being textualized, but it is precisely this impossibility that writers such as Blanchot managed to textualize instead of the disaster. This simultaneously shows that writing has its limitations, especially writing about the disaster as an unexperienced experience, yet it can capture what it is to experience the unexperience experience.

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have explored Blanchot's *The Writing of Disaster* through Derrida's notion of the unexperienced experience. This has shown that there is an impossibility of the unexperienced experience, which we are not able to textualize. Further, I have shown the limitations of writing but simultaneously illustrated that we can illuminate the experien-

ce of the unexperienced experienced itself through writing. Writing can describe how the house looks exteriorly but is unable to describe the interior of the metaphorical house. Just like Buck, who is able to describe the chaos while the Nazi's mortar rounds were striking the Ardennes Forest and what kind of other horrors he witnessed; he will never be able to describe and textualize how it truly was to be a member of Easy Company that fateful day. He will never be able to explain how it was to die twice on January 2, 1945.

The impossibility of writing is shown through the crack of that which escapes symbolization. The conceptualization of the unexperienced experience shows how trauma can be enigmatic, how a person can suddenly change after a traumatic event, and how someone can carry it with them the rest of their life.

Eef Schoolmeesters

"When we flush the toilet, we imagine that the U-bend takes the waste away into some ontologically alien realm. Ecology is now beginning to tell us about something very different: a flattened world without ontological U-bends. A world in which there is no "away"."

- Timothy Morton

I never thought that writing about the end of the world would be a pleasure, but it was. *Art at the End of the World: Pretraumatic Testimony to a Future already Here* concerns how art may install necessary, affective change in an audience, in light of the current climate crisis. It engages with the concept of pretrauma, or fear of something terrible yet to happen, and with *object oriented ontology* (OOO) as found in Timothy Morton, which focuses on de-centralising humans from being most important in this world. Specifically, it engages with the *hyperobject* of climate emergency, which is an object bigger than us, that transcends both localisation and our understanding of it, due to its massive size. Importantly, it is not an object that lies outside of 'us' humans. Instead, we are living within it, and there is no *away* from its consequences – we must take care of it.

The essay, for me, represents my 'recently' discovered ability to engage with art through academic theory and philosophy, whilst applying it to an existing artwork and an existing crisis. Moreover, the essay also shares my hope that art can actually install affective change in light of the climate crisis – one of the topics I got more invested in during these studies. As such, this writing represents my engagement with both contemporary art and climate. Also, it was a great opportunity to finally start an essay with an interesting epigraph (go and listen to *Godspeed You! Black Emperor*, they are great - and definitely recommended for your musical canon).

Since I wrote this piece for the course *Trauma and Art*, I want to thank Dr. H. Jacobs for discussing her feedback with me, as it motivated me to revise the essay for this occasion. One of the outcomes of these studies, more generally, is that it brought reading and writing (back) into my life. I chose Philosophy of Humanity and Culture as an addition to my artistic practice, and it has definitely influenced my societal, political and cultural engagement. Simultaneously, it has become more than just an addition: I see it as a vital asset of my future development. As such, I aim to combine (academic) theory and (artistic) practice into my work to come, as I believe both have their limits and benefits in critically engaging with the times we live in. On a final note, I thank all who have contributed to making it a good, interesting time with each other despite the pandemic, through talking, discussing, drinking, sharing philosophical jokes and memes, or meeting and just being together, and to those who pointed out all my 'awk' writing, to those suggesting how to shorten my sentences – even if they were technically correct -, to those always supportive and trusting that things will work out. It was great – see you on the other side! For now, for all, please enjoy reading about the end of the world.

We are trapped in the belly of this horrible machine
And the machine is bleeding to death
[...]
The skyline was beautiful on fire
All twisted metal stretching upwards
Everything washed in a thin orange haze

I said: "kiss me, you're beautiful -
These are truly the last days"

Godspeed You! Black Emperor, The Dead Flag Blues (1997)[1]

ART AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Pretraumatic Testimony to a Future Already Here

It is *the end of the world*: not in its physical form, but our concept of world is changing drastically, as Timothy Morton says. We live in the Anthropocene and one of its effects we experience is the climate emergency. This essay aims to analyse how art can testify to this development. I will argue that art has a valuable transformative power that can contribute to change, if we experience the *hyperobject* of climate emergency as a form of *pretrauma*. This way, art can install an affective experience that de-centralises humanity from being the centre of the universe, contributing to necessary ontological change.

To argue so, I will first clarify the notion of the Anthropocene, and I will stress the importance of the events of climate emergency and global heating. Following, I will explain the notion of pretrauma as fear of terrible events to come. I will follow E. Ann Kaplan who says that art can impact our current selves, through imagining our future selves, through trauma.

Then, I will turn to the *object oriented ontology* by Timothy Morton that is focused on de-centralising humanity from being most important in the world, which is necessary now we are living in the time of the hyperobject. The hyperobject, such as global heating, is an event bigger than us and therefore not localisable. Instead of denying climate emergency, we must make an ontological turn in our thinking and start taking care of these (hyper)objects. Object oriented art can install affective change in the audience through being uncomfortable and confronting. I will claim that this type of art can install a form of affective pretrauma.

Following, I will turn to Jacques Derrida and his perspective on testifying in relation to the *unexperienced experience*, to focus on the role of art bearing witness to these hyperobjects and how this may affect us. I will further explain his through the artwork *AGHDRA* by Arthur Jafa that engages with these notions, and in addition address the possible intersectionality of hyperobjects and trauma. In doing so, I aim to contribute to broadening our concepts concerning testifying to pretraumatic experiences expressed in and through art, that may lead to change at the end of the world.

I. TRAUMA AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

The term *Anthropocene* is generally understood as a new geological time period. It translates as 'human epoch' and emphasises human's influence and alterations on earth's processes, from the atmosphere, biosphere, and geology, amongst others (Pharand-Deschênes & Doucet, sd). Climate change and global warming are the result of crossing one of the planet's boundaries (Pharand-Deschênes & Doucet, sd). According to Paul Crutzen, who introduced the term Anthropocene to the public, humans have become a dangerous "geologic force" (Kaplan, 2016, p. 1). Consequentially, we are experiencing that our way

of living, producing, and extracting from the planet is exhaustive, and climate change is one of the effects we are confronted with. To stress the urgency of climate change, I will henceforth address it as *climate emergency* or climate crisis and global warming as *global heating*, as I believe this better covers the event's seriousness.

The climate emergency of the Anthropocene is daunting. Research shows that especially young people suffer from *climate depression*, as they feel frightened, distressed, sad, sometimes even hesitant to have children, whilst believing that governments are not acting enough (Kalmus, sd). This notion of climate depression may be an effect of what E. Ann Kaplan defines as *pretrauma*. The concept of pretrauma or *Pretraumatic Stress Syndrome* (*PreTSS*) covers the psychological condition of trauma of an "immobilizing anticipatory anxiety about the future" (Kaplan, 2016, p. xix). In contrast to *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (*PTSD*), a condition that relates to past events, pretrauma has one living in fear of future terrifying events (Kaplan, 2016, p. xix). According to Kaplan, this notion of pretrauma can currently be found in whole populations as media surround us with dystopic news and scenarios, of a future uncertain, specifically in light of this climate crisis (Kaplan, 2016, p. xix). My aim is to take these notions of the Anthropocene, climate emergency and pretrauma, and to analyse how art can play its part to testify to this future that is (in)visible. Following Kaplan, I believe art can contribute to change by impacting ourselves in the now, through imagining our future selves through this lens of trauma (Kaplan, 2016, p. 7). To better understand our human relation to climate emergency which is both a future fear and a current phenomenon, I will turn to Timothy Morton and his concept of the *hyperobject*.

2. THE HYPEROBJECT OF GLOBAL HEATING
Timothy Morton engages with *object oriented ontology* - or OOO in short. This ontology de-centralises humans from a dominant position of importance. It centralises co-existence with objects instead, as this is the existence that constitutes our ecology (Morton, 2013a, p. 125). Objects (or entities) are unique and therefore cannot be understood holistically. They cannot be reduced to a sum of their parts, as there are endless possibilities of 'sets' - or relations - between objects (Morton, 2013a, p. 117). According to this perspective, all objects are interrelated and interconnected. Morton names the age that follows from the Anthropocene the *Age of Asymmetry*. In this age, it is realised that the world does not exist of objects that are materials for humans to use. Instead, the relation between humans and non-humans is overturned: both humans and non-humans must be acknowledged to have an inner space (Morton, 2013b, p. 172). In other words, the world can no longer just evolve around humans, as we are not exceptional beings of prime importance. Rather, we must descend from our ivory tower and aim at co-existence with objects.

Besides objects, Morton introduces the concept of *hyperobjects*. A hyperobject is an object that is bigger than us and transcends localisation (Morton, 2013a, p. 118). Its scope is beyond our human understanding because we cannot fully grasp it. Hyperobjects are not outside of us; we live *within* them, as they are distributed through space and time (Morton, 2013a, p. 118). Morton describes global heating as a hyperobject. [2] This event is a consequence of our human actions. Importantly, global heating is not something outside of humanity that now enters our world: it was already here, and there is no escaping it. Because there is no *away*, Morton poetically describes this *ontological turn* we must make:

> When we flush the toilet, we imagine that the U-bend takes the waste away into some ontologically alien realm. Ecology is now beginning to tell us about something very different: a flattened world without ontological U-bends. A world in which there is no "away". (Morton, 2013a, p. 115).

We are inside the hyperobject of climate emergency and *there is no away*. We have to coexist with toxic waste and plastic soup because the waste we create will not magically disappear (Morton, 2013a, p. 109). Therefore, Morton says we must consciously take care of these objects instead (Morton, 2013a, p. 120). We must become 'guardians' of the future (Morton, 2013a, p. 121). Morton expresses an ethical call towards this unknowable future, where change begins with thinking about the other – the (hyper)objects; not our human selves (Morton, 2013a, p. 123). In what follows, I will briefly explain how art can contribute to the ontological turn we must make, through creating an affective experience.

2.1 AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF THE HYPEROBJECT
We are grieving, and we are overwhelmed by our role in the Anthropocene, according to Morton (Morton, 2013b, p. 183). *We know there is no away* and this often leads to denial of climate emergency. Therefore, Morton argues we need an *affective* experience that leads to change:

> Reasoning on and on is a symptom of how people are still not ready to go through an affective experience that would existentially and politically bind them to hyperobjects, to care for them. We need art that does not make people think [...] but rather that walks them through an inner space that is hard to traverse. (Morton, 2013b, p. 184).

Object oriented art can evoke resonance between humans and non-humans through confronting humans with the "uncanny non-human" or ghostly appearances, an expe-

rience resulting in goosebumps (Morton, 2013b, p. 169). This art is not about pleasant aesthetic contemplation. In contrast, showing the hyperobject that is withdrawn from our understanding, it confronts us with the limitations that arise from our human being in this world – and our inevitable death -, evoking an intense and intimate experience (Morton, 2013b, p. 171). It is the experience of the vastness of the 'world' we are part of. Object oriented art focuses on the non-human, creating a space where the audience can adjust to the hyperobject, to install a situation in which the mind *attunes* or harmonises with the object (Morton, 2013b, p. 171). In this Age of Asymmetry, art must tune to the object which is 'demonic', eerie, uncomfortable and strange, making us realise that we, subjects, are not that different from these objects (Morton, 2013b, pp. 174 - 175). Art, in other words, can confront us with the weird, the real, the void; with things that are beyond us and simultaneously so close and true, like a catastrophe closing in whilst already being here.

The hyperobject of climate crisis is disturbing and we must come to terms with it. Morton's account interestingly emphasises how OOO art can contribute to this by focusing on these hyperobjects that can install a feeling of emergency and uncertainty. It evokes an intimacy that "sticks to us and flows over us," as it captures humans in coexistence with objects (Morton, 2013b, p. 189). These are confrontations we cannot easily shake off, as they emphasise our being part of this object oriented relation and as such, everything around us, confronts us with the consequences of our behaviour which we do not transcend. According to Morton, this intimacy may be able to *restore a trauma* (Morton, 2013b, p. 193). Trauma is looking forward towards death, the inevitable, which is absent when one is in denial (Kaplan, 2016, p. 6). As such, I will argue that the affective experience of the hyperobject through art can be a form of pretrauma, that brings together the future and past self through attuning with the object, a notion I will discuss below. And in this time of hyperobjects, we may just need this pretraumatic experience to change the future.

In the next section, I will turn to Jacques Derrida and his perspective of *testifying* in relation to the *unexperienced experience*, to further focus on the role of art bearing witness to these hyperobjects and how this may affect us. I will connect these theories through discussing the artwork *AGHDRA* by Arthur Jafa, which I think engages with these topics.

3. TESTIFYING TO THE UNEXPERIENCED EXPERIENCE

According to Jacques Derrida, testimony has a double nature. He writes that "Testimony seems to presuppose the instance of the instant that, at that very instant, however, it destroys" (Derrida, 1998, p. 32). This means that the witness on the one hand should testify physically, in the present, as it is a first-person speech act, in the *instant* (Derrida,

1998, pp. 32 - 33). On the other hand, the act of testifying in an instant to an earlier in-stance is temporal – or exists of multiple instances - and as such, the testimony becomes repeatable, rendering the testimony divisible and thus no longer an instant (Derrida, 1998, p. 33). If we apply these notions to object oriented ontology, which goes beyond centralising the subject, then, art objects are able to testify as well. On the one hand, the artwork expresses its 'testimony' in the moment, whilst on the other, its expression is repeatable for each and every audience member anew. Hans-Georg Gadamer has captu-red this ability by attributing art a *timeless present*. This means that the experience of the artwork always has its own present, as interpretation always happens contemporaneous-ly, anew, *in* the moment (Gadamer, 2001, p. 181).

Even though art and literature are excluded from attesting by law, Derrida shows how literature can testify through the writing of Maurice Blanchot, who narrated his own death from true experience (Derrida, 1998, p. 44). [3] Derrida addresses the concept of the witness as a survivor – from death -, who as such becomes a third party to their own experience, to which they can testify (Derrida, 1998, p. 45). This brings me to the testi-mony of the *unexperienced experience*: a testimony to what is always already here – death -, and as such has already taken place; but from which the past has never been *present* (Derrida, 1998, pp. 47 - 50). Because even though one cannot testify to their death *from* their death, one "can testify to the imminence of [their] death," which is always bound to happen and as such, is an instance (Derrida, 1998, p. 46). In other words, a testimony to the unexperienced experience is truthful even though the full execution of the event has not yet taken place.

As I have claimed that an artwork is able to testify from the perspective of OOO, in addi-tion I will argue that art can testify to the unexperienced experience. The unexperienced experience can be read, in my analysis, as the hyperobject of climate emergency that is a future already here. Where Derrida's perspective on temporality deals with a past that was never present but is still here, the hyperobject of global heating in its turn deals with a future that is to come yet already present. I mean this not only in the sense that we may simply be ignorant of the fact that it is here, because global heating is already happening; but also due to the extent of the consequences of our contemporary actions that capi-talise the future, so to speak. As such, both Derrida's and my own account deal with an unexperienced experience, though different in nature, which leads me to argue that art can testify to the unexperienced experience of the hyperobject of the climate crisis.

In what follows, I will show that art can play a valuable role in testifying to and enabling the affective experience of pretrauma, which is important in light of the ontological turn we must make. Where trauma and pretrauma can lead to the inability to act due to, for

instance, paralysing fear, this section will show how pretrauma through art can motivate one to reflect upon necessary change, precisely because the hyperobject of climate heating relates to the unexperienced experience. As such, it is not so much about dealing with past trauma to overcome, but about experiencing what one does not want to be confronted with through envisioning it, from a safe artistic distance, that equally is all encompassing and relentless.

3.1 THE BLACK WAVE

The artwork *AGHDRA* (see Figure 1) by Arthur Jafa is an 85-minute film of what appears to be an ocean (Greenberger, 2021). In this computer-generated film, one sees movement that is resemblant of waves, slowly swelling and rising, yet these waves move somewhat differently than usual (Greenberger, 2021). As the boulder-like, deep dark black waves slowly rise and fall, they create a vibrant motion, while the sun seems to be setting in the background. At times the surface seems calmer, and at others it comes closer, threatening, as if it will swallow the audience.

Figure 1
Arthur Jafa, *AGHDRA*, 2021, double film still
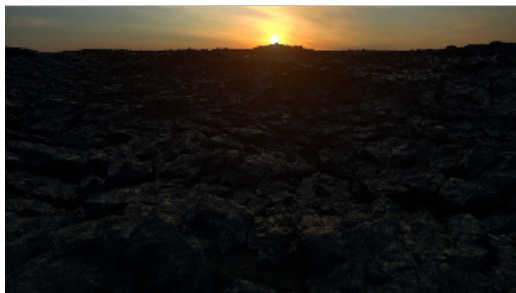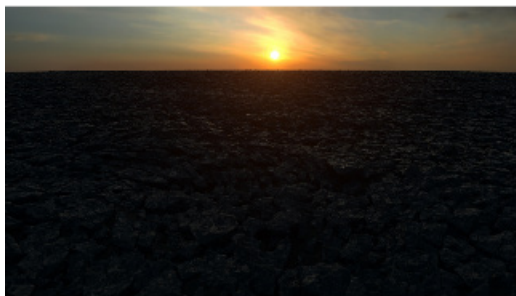
Note. Both retrieved from https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/arthur-jafa-new-film-aghdra-1234609084/

Jafa says that it is perceivable as a wave, but it is also a landscape, and he thought of it as an encrustation, or as "the North American continent fragmented into a hundred thousand pieces" (*Day 4: AGHDRA. An Excerpt from a Film by Arthur Jafa. Film with Introduction and Conversation., 2021, 19:25 – 20:35*). To use the phrasing of Morton, *AGHDRA* feels like it is the end of the world, and it is sticky. Jafa also imagines *AGHDRA* like an organism, a neural network in the aftermath of an ecological disaster (Greenberger, 2021), clearly setting the tone for the work. The darkness of the work draws one in as it is both aesthetically beautiful and simultaneously disturbing, eerie, uncomfortable. It is familiarly unfamiliar to the world we thought we knew. As such, I believe it can render an affective experience of pretrauma, as it can create a feeling of anxiety for a future similar to this.

Through this visual experience, pretrauma can contribute to changing our perception or installing affective experience. Where fear in itself may prevent one to take action as it can work paralysing, be it in regards to trauma or pretrauma, experiencing it through art may work differently. Art discloses its own truth and often has fictional or abstract facets that differentiate it from other subjective experiences. Art can confront us with our thoughts and actions without necessarily being didactic, or politically correct, or morally 'right': moreover, it can make us *feel* something, it can punch us in our gut. In this way, its testimony can bring about different affective responses and experiences compared to other realms dealing with similar issues. Arguably, one of the reasons that art can do so, is its timeless present as noted earlier: its being in the present can serve as a new perspective on current, past and future events, and the experience of the artwork is always between oneself and the artwork in the present, every time anew. And because of this timeless present, I see another connection to the *unexperienced experience*. The artwork can testify to this future already here, which is both a real threat, and a fictional one: the pretrauma is real, yet, through its fictional aspect, will less likely work paralysing on the audience, and instead install affective change. Returning to *AGHDRA*, the fact that the work is computer-generated, gives it the fictional aspect of the unexperienced experience. This ocean as such may not be out there in the world but it appears to disclose a truth about the experience of the hyperobject of climate emergency that is already here. It testifies to the imminence of our death, to the inevitable, it testifies to a future without humanity as such. It shows a world that looks both realistic and fictional. And this fictionality enables us to affectively go beyond our human-self, to imagine another future and a different ecology, without directly harming or endangering us in the now through aesthetic distance.

Jafa's work can also be read from an intersectional perspective, as he aims to embody black experience and trauma, not through a direct narrative, but slowly (*Day 4: AGHDRA. An Excerpt from a Film by Arthur Jafa. Film with Introduction and Conversation.,*

2021, 28:09 – 28:33). On the one hand, the only direct human presence in the work can be found in the audio that accompanies the film. As such, the film seems to suit Morton's OOO as it centralises the hyperobject of the ocean, the continent, the sun and the sky, all things bigger than us. But on the other hand, one specific excerpt of the film is accompanied by a love song titled 'Who am I' by The O'Jays, which is edited and distorted by Jafa. Jafa consciously decided to use this song as it belongs to the tradition of black (love) music. He says that black music is more existential than it is often portrayed. Many love songs, for instance, appear as 'light popular' songs. By editing it into his film, it helps to unpack the complexity of black articulation throughout history, to show the existential aspect of black music and black being in the world (*Day 4: AGHDRA. An Excerpt from a Film by Arthur Jafa. Film with Introduction and Conversation., 2021, 14:00 – 16:03*). A part of the song hauntingly addresses the ontological question of being:

Who am I
Who am I
To death, the past good-bye
Who am I
Who am I
I'm a fool without an alibi

(*Day 4: AGHDRA. An Excerpt from a Film by Arthur Jafa. Film with Introduction and Conversation., 2021, 7:35 – 13:10*)

 This conscious decision to include black experience underscores the subjective experience of both trauma and art, especially in relation to the question of being. This allows me to argue that hyperobjects equally can be part of an intersectional perspective.[4] As Kaplan says, the climate crisis not just affects 'humanity' as a group, it knows many intersections and we can distinguish between "the poor, women, racialized peoples, and the invisible minorities who are already bearing the brunt of the first waves of environmental catastrophe" (Kaplan, 2016, p. 8). Some groups are already experiencing this disaster directly, whilst others are not yet. Different groups can thus be affected by different forms of pretrauma and art. On a final note, in terms of affective experiences, Jafa believes that black music specifically has a strong transformative power, maybe even stronger than protesting. Because if we recall history and see how black music was banned, it indirectly testifies to the power of music and art (*Day 4: AGHDRA. An Excerpt from a Film by Arthur Jafa. Film with Introduction and Conversation., 2021, 25:50 – 27:35*).

Summarising, I believe art can realise affective change and testify to the future that is already here. It can capture the complexity – and the intersectionality - of the hyperob-

ject, and can deal with the pretrauma of the fear of what might happen. The work can confront us with our arrogance of thinking that humans constitute all life (*Day 4: AGH-DRA. An Excerpt from a Film by Arthur Jafa. Film with Introduction and Conversation., 2021, 20:40 – 20:50*) and instead, centralise coexistence with (hyper)objects. As such, art can show us a different concept of *world*, bringing us closer to ontological change.

CONCLUSION

Morton's OOO has proven vital in this analysis, to shine light on the ontological turn we must make since there is no *away* from the climate crisis. I believe art has an important transformative power, as taken from Kaplan, confirmed by Morton, and expressed through Jafa. Art must not be the only realm to confront us with the necessary ontolo-gical turn we must make. But art can transform our current selves through showing us a future, a traumatic one, that is already here. Art can truthfully testify to this unexperien-ced experience of the hyperobject of the climate emergency. The concept of OOO allows the art object to be taken as seriously as the human, individual, subjective testimony. Even though art that centralises OOO is dark, this is what enables some of its transfor-mative power because art that just focuses on or engages with contemplative beauty will not lead to pretrauma or true critical ontological reflection. It is not about reasoning, but about affective change. And I hope to have shown how a work such as *AGHRDA* can lead to this affective experience as it de-centralises humanity (or a certain kind of huma-nity, if focused on the intersectional aspect of the hyperobject) and as such, confronts us with a strong, different ontology and ecology, of a new world.

Ilana Buijssen

Essay-writing is a humble attempt to make sense of things

However funny this may sound, I truly am so happy that this master's gave me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge about what is probably the saddest topic on earth: depression. Considering that 1 in every 6 people suffer from depression at least once in their life, and considering that we are still deeply, deeply uncertain about what depression actually is, it seems to me all the more important to have devoted a large part of my master's to it. It taught me the most valuable lesson I think anyone can learn during my philosophy master's: that there is so much that I do not yet know. Or, as Aristotle famously wrote: "The more you know, the more you realise you don't know." This most definitely applies to the topic of depression, but I think that it applies to any topic one can philosophise about (which includes basically any topic, I guess).

In that sense, this master has been one big lesson in modesty and prudence for me. It has taught me to ask before answering, to analyse before arguing, to think before speaking. I remember at the beginning of the programme, I was under the impression that teachers wanted me to come up with ground-breaking ideas by taking a clear and decisive take a stand on an issue, and so I tried to write very argumentative essays that did just that. But I struggled and got very insecure about my writing as I had set the bar so high for myself. I could always come up with a thousand different arguments that would undermine my viewpoint. Halfway through my master's, I decided to change my approach by merely trying to make sense of what the philosophers we read about were actually trying to convey to me, and I started asking myself if there are interesting links that I could draw between what they were writing and what I already knew. Due to my background in psychology and my job in mental health care, I had quite some knowledge about mental illnesses, particularly about depression as there are many (way too many) people around me who suffered from it. So I applied my knowledge about psychology and depression to the philosophical texts we read, and I have been doing that for most of my essays I have written ever since.

It was such a relief to discover that all this time, essay-writing is only a humble attempt to make some sense of things. Looking back on it now, this change in the way I approached essay writing not only lowered my stress levels, it also greatly improved my writing as I stopped hiding that there were still many things I did not understand. I have come to fully embrace that I do not need to. To me, the most important thing is just to ask the right questions. As I am writing this, I realise that this ability to ask questions is not only a valuable skill for a philosopher, but also for the therapist I am hoping to become one day.\

UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF LOSS IN DEPRESSION THROUGH LEVINAS' IDEA OF LIFE AS ENJOYMENT

"Depression is a slower way of being dead"
(Solomon, 2013, 8:42)

INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that people who fall into a depression feel miserable. However, oftentimes they struggle to find the right words to convey the full depth of their misery, causing misunderstanding in the immediate environment of the depressed person. As Styron (1992) puts it: "Such incomprehension has usually been due not to a failure of sympathy but to the basic inability of healthy people to imagine a form of torment so alien to everyday experience" (p. 18). This essay is an attempt to illuminate in what sense the misery of depressed people is beyond the imagination of non-depressed people by connecting depression to Levinas's idea of life as enjoyment. It will particularly focus on the experience of anhedonia, the loss of the ability to feel interest or pleasure, which the DSM-5 describes as one of the core symptoms of depression (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Since such a symptom description does not explain what a depression feels like, I will use sources that describe first-person experiences with it. Connecting these descriptions to Levinas's writings, I contend that Levinas' idea of life as enjoyment can account for the experience of three types of losses people with depression often describe: the loss of the world, of oneself and of others, with anhedonia at the root of these experiences of loss. The ability to enjoy things will therefore come to light as a central aspect of life, supporting Levinas's description of life as "love of life" (Levinas, 1969, p. 112).

First, I will relate the experience of anhedonia to the loss of connection with the world. Second, I explain how anhedonia might also lead to disintegration of one's 'self'. Finally, I discuss the effect of anhedonia on the relation with others. Of course, it is impossible to account for the experience of depression in all its manifestations, especially in a short paper like this. Nonetheless, drawing some connections between its key features will hopefully contribute to increasing awareness concerning the nature of this profoundly disruptive sickness of the mind that is often met with much disbelief and misunderstanding.

HOW ENJOYMENT CONSTITUTES OUR CONNECTION TO THE WORLD

To understand Levinas' idea of life as enjoyment and to connect it to anhedonia, it is helpful to first distinguish it from another prominent view on enjoyment, which I will call 'the physiological idea of need satisfaction,' a view Levinas rejects in his book *Totality and Infinity*. According to this view, needs primarily signify a lack, and the satisfaction of needs is perceived as fulfilling this lack (Levinas, 1969, p. 115). For example, eating whenever one is hungry fulfils the lack or need we call 'hunger'. Within this picture of need satisfaction, enjoyment appears only as a by-product of satisfaction. I fulfil my

needs because I want to stay alive, and enjoyment appears as an "accident of being," a "psychological state" that happens to often accompany need satisfaction, for instance when I eat a well-cooked meal (Levinas, 1969, pp. 112-3).

Intuitively, this idea of needs as a lack might make sense: hunger indicates that something is missing, that there is an emptiness in one's stomach that needs to be filled. However, depression puts this view into question. If need is simply a lack that needs to be filled to subsist, and if enjoyment is simply a by-product of need fulfilment, how can one account for the disruptiveness of feeling depressed even in the case one's physiological needs are satisfied? To give an impression of its horrific nature: with a severe depression, one's quality of life is as low as 15%. Even for someone in the middle of a migraine attack this is still 50% (Bulnes, 2014). Why is one's life so severely disrupted if enjoyment is only a 'by-product' of our existence? Levinas provides an answer to this question by describing enjoyment as essential in the picture of need satisfaction. Need satisfaction does not involve the mere filling up of some lack to stay alive, but we live from the enjoyment of activities such as eating. They contribute to our 'quality of life', not simply to our staying alive. Such conditions, like the food we eat or the air we breathe, are always already "objects of enjoyment," they never only fill up a lack (Levinas, 1969, p. 110). One does not eat food to stay alive, but to *enjoy* them: "One does not only exist one's pain or one's joy; one exists from pains and joys" (Levinas, 1969, p. 111). The food nourishes us in two ways: of course, it reduces hunger, but it also brings enjoyment, the latter being the most crucial to life: "Life is affectivity and sentiment; to live is to enjoy life" (Levinas, 1969, p. 115).

The idea of life as enjoyment therefore explains why anhedonia of a depressed person is such a horrifying experience: by disrupting the ability to experience joy in anything one does, one's being is reduced to this 'bare existence,' which in fact seems to come quite close to the physiological idea of need satisfaction. The fact that we are directed by enjoyment reveals that needs are not mere tools necessary for our subsistence as individuals in the world. The 'anhedonic state' of a depressed person, qua exceptional state in which life is severely disrupted, confirms the central place of joy constituting our lives: "[...] originally life is happiness" (Levinas, 1969, p. 115).

This same idea of life as enjoyment also shows why anhedonia is different from mere sadness. In fact, depressed people often not only experience the lack of pleasure, but as the DSM-5 also indicates, they also experience a lack of *interest* in the world (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Emotions such as sadness still indicate an interest in the world: they still motivate one to seek happiness to relieve the suffering. Such suffering does not deny the value of enjoyment but confirms it: "Far from putting the sensible life into question, pain takes place within its horizons and refers to the joy of living"

(Levinas, 1969, p. 145). It is only in the state of anhedonia that one steps outside of this horizon of affectivity: someone with anhedonia is *beyond* the possibility of enjoyment, by virtue of the impossibility to experience both positive and negative emotions. As Van Boxsem (2021) describes her experience with depression: "There was no anger, no sadness, no relief or consolation, I did not feel the touch of my husband and children. I was undead: I was breathing but I was not alive" (p. 106, quote translated from Dutch). As it is impossible to experience any emotion (or 'interest' as the DSM-5 phrases it), one also does not feel alive. Anhedonia is the exception that confirms the rule of life as enjoyment precisely because the absence of the possibility to feel enjoyment is so disruptive.

As a result of their anhedonia, people often lose their motivation to connect to the world around them: why bother doing anything if it does not bring any joy? In line with Levinas's idea of life as enjoyment, being active seems to depend on the ability to experience joy from activity. Levinas (1969) also acknowledges this: "Happiness is the condition for activity," and any experienced lack "does not break with the ideal of joy" (pp. 113, 146). The possibility of enjoyment is a condition for active engagement with one's surroundings. When this ability to feel anything is lost, someone also loses the drive to act. Feelings of sadness or despair still motivate one to find relief, while anhedonia comes closer to paralysis as the world simply does not make an impact any longer. As Solomon (2013) rightly put it: "Mood is adaptive. Being able to have sadness, and fear, and joy, and pleasure […] are incredibly valuable. Major depression is something that happens when that system gets broken" (pp. 23, 42). Consequently, one loses the connection with the world in the sense that there is no reason to search for objects one can take up to obtain what is so important for human beings: joy.

LOSING ONESELF THROUGH ANHEDONIA

The previous section has shown that anhedonia takes away any reason to act, which can be explained by Levinas's idea that enjoyment is a central aspect of one's engagement with the world. Another kind of loss depressed persons often report is the feeling of having lost oneself. Solomon (2002) describes this experience as follows: "We are told to learn self-reliance, but it's tricky if you have no self on which to rely. […] Every morning starts off with that breathless uncertainty about who I am" (p. 151). As I will show in this section, anhedonia can also be related to this experience.

For Levinas (1969), happiness is not only the condition for activity but also "the principle of individuation" (p. 147). Thus, it is by engaging with the contents of life through which one enjoys life, someone experiences oneself as an 'I' separate from the rest of reality (or 'totality' in Levinas's terms). Levinas (1969) draws an analogy between birth and the separation that is constituted by enjoyment: "Enjoyment is the very production of a being that is *born*, that breaks the tranquil eternity of its seminal or uterine existence to

enclose itself in a person, who in living from the world lives at home with itself" (p. 147). Here, the uterine seems to refer to the state of union between the child in the womb, which signifies a lack of selfhood by virtue of the connection of the baby to the mother. As soon as one is born, this connection is (quite literally) broken. Enjoyment is comparable to such rupture by constituting one's 'birth' as an individual distinct from one's surroundings in the same way a baby that is born becomes separate from its mother. The fact that enjoyment individuates the self might account for the experience of the loss of oneself in depression. If happiness constitutes the 'I', and if anhedonia involves the inability to experience happiness, then one could infer that the sense of being a self as separate from the rest of the world will be affected because of anhedonia. Therefore, anhedonia not only disturbs the relation with the objects of enjoyment: the inability to feel pleasure disturbs one's sense of self. This "breathless uncertainty of who I am" that Solomon describes seems to signify the loss of one's substantiality as a self through the consistent lack of enjoyment in the engagement with the world. Following Levinas, you become who you are by doing the things you enjoy. Whenever there are no things that you love to do, you also lose your sense of being a separate, integrated entity that we usually describe as being a 'self'. In this sense, the inability to experience joy can be the steppingstone to an existential crisis.

ANHEDONIA AND THE SOCIAL RELATION

The previous section has highlighted the importance of enjoyment for our sense of being a self. As I will show now, this disintegration of the self can also uncover why anhedonia disturbs the relation with other people. This is in line with the subjective experience of depressed people: they often report an inability to connect to others. For instance, Meijer (2019) explains that "[d]epression does not only take away the desire to connect to others [...], it also makes it impossible to spin threads between yourself and other people" (p. 45, quote translated from Dutch). The words 'to spin threads' seem to imply that it has become impossible to connect with others.

For Levinas (1969), selfhood forms the condition for standing in relation with others. In other words, the self needs to be separated from the rest of the world before one can enter relations with other people: "While the atheist independence of the separated being does not posit itself by opposition to the idea of infinity, it alone makes possible the relation denoted by this idea" (p. 60). In this sentence, 'the idea of infinity' refers to the idea the self has of the other person that enables the self to relate to the other even though this other always transcends the self because of its radical alterity.[1] The 'separatedness' (or 'ipseity') of the self is a condition for forming the idea of the other which makes it possible to *relate* to them. Thus, it is through this separation that one realises that one can relate to something that is radically different from oneself. Therefore, enjoyment that

constitutes my separation from the world also forms a condition for realising connections with others. Put simply, it is only possible to be open to others for a self that realises it is closed off from the rest of the world.

The fact that the relation with others depends on the individuation of one's self might explain why this relation is so often disturbed in depressed people. By losing sense of one's 'self' as an interiority with respect to the exteriority of the rest of the world, it becomes impossible to form an idea of the other inside me that is necessary for standing in a relation to them. As the sense of being a self breaks down through the inability to enjoy things, it becomes impossible to conceive of another person who is beyond my own existence. To realise that there is another person who distinguishes itself from me I must first realise that I am this separate being. It is hard to "spin threads" between yourself and others when it is unclear where your own self ends and where the other begins.

CONCLUSION

The disruptiveness of anhedonia, one of the core symptoms of depression, supports Levinas's idea that life is primarily about enjoyment. This enjoyment is at the centre of one's connection with the world, oneself, and others. It is what motivates people to fulfil their needs, what constitutes their selves and what forms the condition for their connecting with other people. The loss of connection could explain why depression is so often described as an experience of emptiness; when all those connections that fill up one's life and make it worthwhile are lost, an unbearable emptiness is all that remains. If anhedonia disrupts one's ability to experience joy, the world and others do not 'speak' to them anymore. As one depressed woman rightfully put her experience with anhedonia: "You look at the world, the array of things that you could do, and they're completely meaningless to you" (Karp, 1996, p. 32).

However horrifying it may be to realise that there are so many people who drag themselves through such complete meaninglessness day in day out, I hope that this essay also contributed to an increased understanding for people who go through such an exceptional kind of misery. From this emptiness that remains due to the loss of connection, one can begin to understand why Solomon (2013) said depression is "a slower way of being dead" (pp. 8, 42). The reduction of life to 'bare existence', far from being a state of peace and calmness, seems to be the equivalent of 'barely existing.'

Lex van der Steen
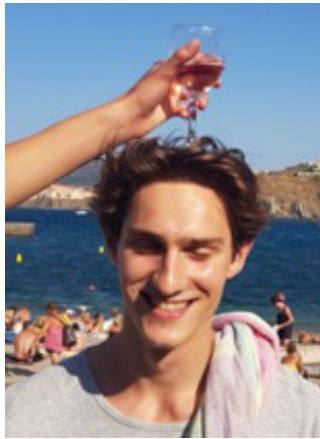
"All profound distraction opens certain doors… you have to allow yourself to be distracted when you are unable to concentrate."

– Julio Cortázar

No great quantity of words is needed in order to express complex and deep thoughts. I'd rather write something short than something long, for now. Words also do not have to be long to say much. 'Life' and 'love' are pretty short I would say, and even though I do know by now that they are the most important things around, I have yet to 'figure them out.' But, something needs to be expressed, I believe we should say and write things, because names only express something once broken by discourse. And all the small thoughts and phrases that stack up will eventually contain something that was worth being said.

I chose this particular text because I simply like it the most out of all my texts that I've had to write for my master's in Tilburg. It is closest to me, whatever that means. And also, it explains itself, it explains what it is, and exactly that which it is, is what makes it different from the other texts I have written for the university. In Tilburg I have learned a few things about philosophy, and more things about other stuff, which has made it possible for me to see what is close to me and what is not. For example, I like arguments, but I don't really like 'argumentative-ness.' I like explaining, but I don't necessarily like 'truth' too much. However, the most valuable thing I learned of all things, and I am not sure whether I learned this inside the university or outside of it, is that the best things can come from anywhere, unexpectedly. That it is exactly outside of the university, a place where one expects to learn, that I have learned the most important things. So, even though I have embraced philosophy as something on which I will focus my attention for the following years, planning to do a PhD in the near future, I am ready to be over-whelmed by whatever I will find outside of philosophy. I will not propose any concrete piece of work that one should add to their canon. I only want to say that you should just be open for things to come your way. Perhaps a shitty novel that one buys in the super-market contains a particular sentence that lights a fire, or the lyrics of a song that you used to dislike all of a sudden appears as an explanation for a difficult passage you were reading the other day. Only think of your own canon as pure possibility.

Thank you to everyone that I have met and spent time with, thinking, not-thinking, peer-reviewing, drinking beers, finishing this degree together. The people I have met are without doubt for me the most important part of this time.

BEYOND THE SUM OF ITS PARTS:
ON THE METHODOLOGY OF THE PARADIGM

How does one break with the regular course of things? How does one change course, break from the old, when one is at the very moment still riding the course? When the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss introduces the idea of 'bricolage' in his book *The Savage Mind*, he states that it comes from the (French) verb 'bricoler', which refers to activities like riding, shooting, hunting and ball games. However, "It was [...] always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 16). 'Bricolage' therefore has to do with 'some extraneous movement', a movement that is unknown, a change of course that is not normal, unexpected, not following the predetermined rules. Lévi-Strauss introduces this concept because, according to him, 'mythical' thought and reflection are forms of bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). Exactly because of this, "mythical reflection can reach brilliant unforeseen results in the intellectual plane" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). Here again, bricolage is characterised by the 'unforeseen'.

Lévi-Strauss uses the concept of bricolage and of the 'bricoleur' in order to compare it to the engineer. This comparison is, according to Lévi-Strauss, an analogy for the difference between scientific thought and mythical thought (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). The engineer is the one that does his tasks with the raw resources and tools that are made specifically for that task, that is to say, the engineer follows the rules, follows the path straight ahead that is and was. The bricoleur on the other hand - and this is exactly what 'bricolage' entails - uses whatever is ready at hand, whatever is near and whatever can possibly be used: it entails a *compositional* logic. Lévi-Strauss states about the bricoleur that:

> His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17).

The 'universe of instruments' of the bricoleur is 'the contingent result' of all 'previous constructions and destructions.' As such, in contrast to the engineer that is bound to the predetermined tools for every specific act, it seems that the bricoleur understands that everything that is said or made can and could have been said or made with different tools and different sources: the 'universe of instruments' is and can be contingent.

Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss says about the set of instruments of the bricoleur that:

> It is to be defined only by its potential use or, putting this another way and in the language of the 'bricoleur' himself, because the elements are collected or retained on the principle that 'they may always come in handy' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 18).

As such, it becomes clear that the instruments of the bricoleur are not only contingent, but also encompass some kind of potentiality. Exactly because the instrument in question is not assigned any particular function or task, it has the potential to serve many different tasks. It is only in the moment that the 'instrument' is used by the bricoleur and turned into something concrete, that the potential is actualized, and that the 'identity of the instrument' becomes clear, or rather, is constructed. Contingency and potentiality are therefore connected: the instruments have the potential to be and do many things, exactly because they are contingent, because they could have been something else, and vice versa. The bricoleur is capable of seeing a connection between things that are seemingly unconnected. Texts, artworks, research, data, objects, they all are understood as potentialities.

How does one break with the regular course of things? The bricoleur does not have to break with anything, as her set of instruments has always been contingent, and there is no need for a determined set of instruments, as everything that is ready at hand is seen as a potentiality. The artist as bricoleur can use anything as a paintbrush, the philosopher as bricoleur understands that all thought can be philosophy, the carpenter as bricoleur understands that many objects can be hammers and that hammers can be doorstops.

ON CONNECTION

How does the unexpected happen? How can something break from the expected? The American writer Charles Bukowski wrote many poems in the period of 1972 and 1973, among which the following one, named *Pull a string, a puppet moves...* :
each man must realize   ▶

that it can all disappear very
quickly:
the cat, the woman, the job,
the front tire,
the bed, the walls, the
room; all our necessities
including love,
rest on foundations of sand –
and any given cause,
no matter how unrelated:
the death of a boy in Hong Kong
or a blizzard in Omaha . . .
can serve as your undoing.
all your chinaware crashing to the kitchen floor, your girl will enter
and you'll be standing, drunk,
in the center of it and she'll ask:
my god, what's the matter?
and you'll answer: I don't know,
I don't know

One could read this poem as being about interconnection: things are connected and influence one another. Interconnection leads to unexpected causal relations, ones that cannot be predicted. We ought therefore to realise that 'it can all disappear very quickly', and that our 'necessities' are rested upon 'foundations of sand'. 'No matter how unrelated', particular things can influence other things. That is to say, because of the way things are interconnected, singular things are given their potential. Even something seemingly trivial like 'the death of a boy in Hong Kong' can serve as one's undoing. That is to say that the boy has the potential to serve one's undoing.

One can break with the seemingly necessary. The form of a poem is somewhat necessary: another word, another empty space, another rhythm might result in a completely different poem. However, if even the most random of things 'can serve as your undoing,' then this must go for everything: all things have this potential to manifest the unpredicted. Therefore, 'the cat, the woman, the job, the front tire', could also have been 'the tree, the house, the cup, the party.' In other words, the poem in some way communicates the contingency of its own form. This however does not change the given that any change to a poem changes the poem completely. Bukowski's poem as such *deactivates* its original poetic function in order to communicate its content, while simultaneously remaining untouched and still, a poem.

How can something break from the expected? As interconnection allows for the potential to manifest the unexpected, it follows that everything can be used for this goal: everything has the potential to be the hammer that breaks from itself while remaining itself (and not be reduced to the task at hand).

ON THE BILDERATLAS

How does one look beyond the common way of seeing things? How does one not get stuck in the same? How does a particular discipline not fall victim to running around in a circle? Although Aby Warburg is seen as one of the founders of the practice of archiving art history, in his *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, Warburg aimed to go beyond the self-referencing of art history so far.

The Bilderatlas consists of 79 wooden boards measuring one and a half by two metres. These wooden boards were covered in black cloth and on them were arranged different pictures of paintings, drawings, sculptures and artefacts (Johnson, 2012, p. 9). Besides these art-historical images, Warburg also included book pages, reproductions of manuscripts, maps and contemporary images he took from magazines and newspapers (Johnson, 2012, p. 9). By arranging the images in a certain way, composing their positions and selecting from thousands of images, Warburg aimed to show why and how particular images, particular forms and compositions, mainly symbolic, persist in Western cultural *memory* (Johnson, 2012). The images date from ancient Babylon to Weimar Germany, although specifically focusing on Renaissance art, and are in their juxtaposition capable of showing particular themes that have been re-emerging in Western culture, surviving time ('Nachleben'). Christopher D. Johnson, in his book *Memory, Metaphor and Aby Warburg Atlas of Images, catches the Atlas* most accurately when he writes that "the Bilderatlas was a nearly wordless attempt to chart the Nachleben of the classical Gebärdensprache (language of gestures) in Renaissance art and beyond" (2012, p. 9). Especially the emphasis on the *wordless* character of the Bilderatlas is essential to understanding the power of Warburg's capability to break with the conventional way of archiving history.

Johnson writes that in the Bilderatlas, "Unlike most synoptic thinkers [...] Warburg trades discursive excess for the more immediate metonymies produced by juxtaposed images and heuristic diagrams", which makes that the Atlas "embraces the concision, ambiguity, and instability of metaphoric expression" (2012, p. xi). Warburg's juxtaposing images is hence a wordless speaking, which is unstable, concise and embodies ambiguity, yet nevertheless is in its wordlessness capable of producing 'more immediate metonymies'. As being 'immediate metonymies', it could be said that the images juxtaposed on Warburg's boards, without the interference of language, refer *directly* to one another, retaining

some type of immanence. This direct referring is only capable because of the absence of words. Aristotle already mentioned in *De Anima* that "Assertion, like affirmation, states an attribute of a subject, and is always either true or false; but this is not always so with the mind: the thinking of the definition in the sense of the essence is always true and is not an instance of predication" (Aristotle, 350 BC/1935, p. 175). In other words, language is that which says something about something, and as such objectifies, divides (into the something that is and the something that is being said), while the mind can, suspending its use of language, *think* the thing in question undivided. Warburg's method of *Mnemosyne* can therefore indeed be understood as pure memory (history): never explicitly bringing his sources into language, never giving them a set identity and actualized meaning, the sources he uses retain their *potential* to become something, to be understood differently. Every one of Warburg's boards is capable of retaining the potential of its building pieces, the images, while simultaneously suggesting a whole, a theme. This, again, is only possible by inexplicitly, wordlessly placing his sources next to one another.

How does one look beyond the common way of seeing things? How does one not get stuck in the same? By not explaining the juxtaposition and putting it into language, but letting the meaning arise by itself. As Johnson writes about Warburg's method:
It creates a *Denkraum* that still calls for interpretation, not only because of Mnemosyne's fragmentary, elliptical qualities, but also on account of Warburg's intellectual nomadism, that is, his scorn for disciplinary, conceptual, and chronological boundaries, as well as, arguably, because of our own fascination with the dynamics of identity and difference (Johnson, 2012, p. 19).

Figure 1: Board 46 of the Bilderatlas (The Warburg Institute)

ON BRIDGES

How to build without destruction? How to include without thereby excluding?

The Khasi-tribe located in Meghalaya, a state in the North of India, is known for building what they call a *jingkieng dieng jri*, which translates to 'rubber tree bridge' (Watson, 2019, p. 51). According to their mythology, the ancestors of the Khasi people descended from the heavens to earth by means of a living root ladder (Watson, 2019, p. 50). These bridges and ladders are constructed by the roots of the Indian rubber tree, also known as *Ficus elastica* or simply 'rubber fig', and grow stronger as time passes (Watson, 2019, p. 51). The rubber figs have a system of secondary aerial roots that develop on all sides of the tree, fulfilling a buttressing function for the tree (Watson, 2019, p. 55). The aerial roots receive their nutrition from humidity in the air and from the sun. Because of their malleable character, the Khasi people are capable of directing the roots from one tree across rivers to the opposite bank, where they, after decades, can take root (Watson, 2019, p. 51). The Khasi people place flat stones above the root system, creating a walking path and turning the tree into a bridge (Watson, 2019, p. 55). The trees need a great amount of water to grow, which makes a position next to the river the ideal place for the trees to develop (Watson, 2019, p. 55). Without these bridges the Khasi villages would be separated by the flooding season between June and September, the *juxtaposition* of the trees and the river transforms the hostile force of the river into something nutritious.

Figure 2: Living root bridges, photo from Lo-TEK by Julia Watson. Taken from Earth by Amos Chapple (https://www.amoschapplephoto.com/). Copyright, Amos Chapple.

That the bridges built by the Khasi tribe are 'alive' does not only encompass the fact that they are so in the sense of 'life' and 'being alive'. Their 'alive' can also be understood as referencing their potentiality. A tree has the potential to become a bridge, to be actualized into a bridge, namely by the fact that one can cut down the tree and use the acquired wood to build. By being actualized, the tree as a tree is left behind and is turned into a particular construction. In the case of the living root bridges, the actualized bridge is also still the tree. By never turning the tree into building materials, by never completely turning from the potential to the actualized, the tree remains a tree, and simultaneously becomes a bridge. That is to say, the 'instrument' (tree) is never reduced to one particular task, namely being a bridge, but remains in its potential to be many things: the bridge could be deconstructed and return to 'just being trees'. The form of bridge is included by the tree, but does not thereby make it impossible for the tree to return and include another form of being.

ON THE PARADIGM

How does one come to conclusions without falling into the difficulties of abstraction? How does one make universal statements about abstract concepts like the human subject without having to take into account the difference any specifics might make? How does one avoid problematically reducing the particular to the universal? Our procedures of knowing seem to entail this problem inherently. Deduction moves from the universal to the particular, and induction moves from the particular to the universal, both in their conclusion inevitably reducing the particular to the universal.

In *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben included an essay called *What is a Paradigm*?. The paradigm, which is central to his philosophical method, is understood by Agamben through the work of Aristotle as distinguished from deduction and induction, and "defined by a third and paradoxical type of movement, which goes from the particular to the particular" (2009, p. 19). As such, as a form of knowledge, the paradigm is neither deductive or inductive but rather analogical. As moving from particular to particular, the paradigm lives up to its etymological origin, namely as *para-deik*. *Para* meaning 'alongside' and 'beside', and *deik* meaning 'to show': a showing next to, a placing next to (Online Etymology Dictionary, sd). However, this placing next to one another is in no way dichotomous. Agamben writes that

> The epistemological status of the paradigm becomes clear only if we understand – making Aristotle's thesis more radical – that it calls into question the dichotomous opposition between the particular and the universal which we are used to seeing as inseparable from procedures of knowing, and presents instead a singularity irreducible to any of the dichotomy's two terms. (2009, p. 19)

The dichotomy of particular and universal is avoided by the paradigm. It is therefore not a singular object or plurality of singular objects that relate to a general rule (universal), but it is a singularity that, in the process of relating to its own *intelligibility*, *becomes* the paradigm. The paradigm as a singularity relating to its own intelligibility is neither particular nor universal, but rather is *that object that makes the set to which it belongs intelligible*. That is to say that "the paradigm is a singular case that is isolated from its context only insofar as, by exhibiting its own singularity, it makes intelligible a new ensemble, whose homogeneity it itself constitutes" (Agamben, 2009, p. 18).

The paradigm functions as an example, but in this process needs to deactivate its normal use. An example of this dynamic would be the grammatical example. If one would like to explain the rule that defines the linguistic category of performatives, one could give the example of 'I swear' (Agamben, 2009, p. 24). However, although the speech act is exactly the same, the normal use of 'I swear' needs to be deactivated in order for it to explain the rule of the linguistic category of performatives, because the uttered 'I swear' is in the case of the example not a real oath. As such, the paradigm is the case in which a singularity makes the set to which it belongs intelligible, without ever entering into the universal. Another example that Agamben refers to is that of Foucault's exposition of the panopticon. Foucault describes the actual idea of the panopticon and its basic features. However, by this exposition Foucault does not only aim to explain the concrete historical phenomenon of the panopticon, but also that which he himself introduced as 'panopticism': 'the panoptic modality of power', which is a 'figure of political technology' (Agamben, 2009, p. 17). The singular phenomenon of the panopticon is, in its relating to its own intelligibility which requires the deactivation of its normal use, the paradigm of the panoptic modality of power, without leaving its particularity.

How does one avoid problematically reducing the particular to the universal? By never entering into the universal, but remaining on the plane of the particular. The universal, like language, makes abstract, gives an identity. In an essay called *On Potentiality*, Agamben mentions that the subject of his work could be stated as "an attempt to understand the meaning of the verb 'can' [potere]. What do I mean when I say: 'I can, I cannot'" (1999, p. 177). By remaining in the particular, the cases that he describes keep their potentiality, as they are never given a set identity within the universal. As such, the paradigm is unlimitedly inclusive, never reducing the particular to a predetermined universal.

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Eef Schoolmeesters

[1] Adjusted excerpt of the lyrics. Listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9th-vHDskYvA

[2] Morton uses the term 'global warming' from which I deviate.

[3] Derrida responds to Blanchot's "The Instant of my Death" in his "Fiction and Testimony" (1998).

[4] This does not just concern the hyperobject of global heating, but also capitalism and colonialism, for example. Though interesting to further develop this notion, it was outside of the scope of this version of the essay.

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[5] I can hear Lex in my head say: "can any concept ever have a truly shared or stable meaning? Isn't any meaning necessarily contingent?"
"Maybe dear, sure in a decade or so you'll be raising these questions to the world"

Rien de Bont

[6] FL refers to Kundera, M., & Heim, M. H. (1978). The Book of laughter and forgetting: By Milan Kundera, New York, NY: Penguin.

[7] the story under discussion here is not so much the "stories" consisting of the personal horoscopes composed for the editor-in-chief. Instead, the story under consideration is the broader, not explicitly told, "story" of a firm believer in Marxism-Leninism believing in an Astrology.

[8] In a discussion of Ernst Lubitz' film To be or not to be, Zizek (2015) mentions a similar relation between suffering and laughter. He argues that the massacre at Srebrenica was too horrible to be tragic. There, he argues that survivors of Srebrenica invented countless dark jokes to cope with the present. The scenes with Kundera and R. show something similar; instead of telling a tragic story about his prosecution, he discusses the situation in a dark, humorous way.

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[9] For the sake of brevity, I will have to set aside the many fascinating critical works on art and society associated with these two thinkers and with the entire Frankfurt School. Adorno's work Aesthetic Theory and Walter Benjamin's text The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction are two seminal texts that have exerted influence over the kinds of questions I take up in this essay. However, my method of close-reading limits me to a small selection of key texts, of which "The Culture Industry" is most in line with the aims of this essay. I hope my research will provide interesting philosophical insights that can be applied to other texts within this tradition as well.

[10] For this, I will use the text "'Parrhesia' in Times of Post-Truth and Populism." (2019) Michel Foucault has also written extensively on this subject, but the approach outlined by Prange proved to be most concise and useful for the points I want to address in this essay.

[11] In his work Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Frederic Jameson develops a neo-Marxist perspective on this problem through the lens of 21st century culture. He explicitly outlines the relation between commodification and artistic practice, supporting this statement through a contemporary Marxist analysis.

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[13] It should be noted that Levinas (1969) also asserts that the relation to the Other qua intimate Other is constitutive for the individuation of the self (see p.150-1). Large (2015) also draws attention to this ambiguity by distinguishing two types of relations with the other: the intimate Other, who inhabits the self from within the home and thereby constitutes this self, and the transcendent Other, who comes from outside the self through speech, speaking to a self that is already a self (p.66). As the relation between the intimate and transcendent Other is unclear, the current reading of Levinas is limited to Levinas's description of the relation of the self with the transcendent Other only.