Doctoral Dissertation

The Civil Power of Imagination: Intercultural Understanding and Democratic Politics

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Abstract

My dissertation explores the relationship between, on the one hand, culture and imaginative practices and, on the other hand, the politics of intercultural understanding. I contest the wide-spread view that imagination is necessarily irrational, manipulative, and dangerous, as well as a source of totalitarian politics. Instead, I argue that imagination can be responsible and civil, and that intercultural understanding requires creative imagination. The focus is twofold. The first is to enrich Habermas’ discourse ethics, by making aesthetic imagination more central to communication and dialogue. The second is to develop Arendt’s performance model of democracy, by making rhetoric and creative imagination more central to the making of a common world with a cultural core. In view of this I interrogate Kant, Schiller, Herder, Vico, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

I argue that the philosophical and political project of the Enlightenment needs to be critically enlarged by recognizing that aesthetic imagination is politically relevant because it is a key element of shared culture and language. Rather than in contractual agreements or in a centralized and bureaucratic state, it is here that we find the political capacities of collectivities. I argue that cultures are not monolithic wholes, but originate in the capacity that creative imagination has to dialogue with the foreign. The challenge for modern democracies is to engage creative imagination in the expansion and transformation of given cultural horizons. Such an engagement of creative imagination would prevent transforming culture into ideology and politics into nationalism and political aestheticism.

I conclude by prescribing a form of symbolic (democratic) politics where imagination is publicly used in a responsible way, namely, in a way that does not fail to answer to the other’s
unique presence, and where cultural products are understood not as expressions of authentic
traditions, but as caring for the world. As a result of this, cultural differences would not be turned
into oppositions between ‘us’ and ‘them.’

I interpret the conception of Orhan Pamuk about a “novelist’s politics” as providing, in
the European context, an example of such a responsible and creative political engagement of
imagination and culture, in the service of creating a non-Christian and post-national, open idea of
Europe. This is possible, because, similar to Bonnie Honig’s interpretation of the “myth of an
immigrant America,” Pamuk’s “novelist’s politics” employs narratives as “myths of
denationalization.”
To Stefan, with whom I share the same ideals
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Introduction

Intercultural Understanding, Culture, Imagination, and Politics

The Problem: Intercultural Understanding and Imagined Solidarities in a Post-National World

This is a dissertation about the relationship between culture and imaginative practices, on the one hand, and intercultural understanding, on the other hand. In it I argue that intercultural understanding requires, besides public argument and deliberation, the public use of creative imagination. Creative imagination can transform and expand given cultural horizons in ways that enhance the democratic (cosmopolitan) potential of modern societies. I define culture as the symbolic definition of reality. More specifically, culture refers to the use of narratives and symbols to demarcate, define, and redefine political solidarities.

One of the fundamental assumptions that I make refers to the interconnectedness, complexity, and plurality that defines culture. It refers to the fact that cultures do not have a monolithic texture, but are traversed by the voice of the foreign. As a result, I do not refer to culture as Clifford Geertz does, as “primordial attachments.” I do not see culture as given, but as the result of social interaction and as irreducible to a pristine, authentic, and primordial core. In this sense, my notion of culture is closer to Paul Ricoeur’s. According to Ricoeur, cultures are configured and reconfigured by the two imaginative practices of ideology and utopia. Through them human groups both project the symbolic
representation of their cohesion and solidarity and “produce otherness at the very heart of
the experience,” thus undermining their own taken-for-granted symbolic definition of
reality.

My view of intercultural understanding draws upon a critical discussion of Jürgen
Habermas’s discourse ethics. The discussion is based on M. M. Bakhtin’s conception of
the aesthetic, of dialogic imagination, and of polyphony. Through it, I intensify the role
of aesthetic imagination in making communication and dialogue possible. As a result, I
argue that intercultural understanding can happen when a universe of intersubjectively
shared meanings, of symbols, and narratives has been created, not only as a result of
argument and public debate, but also as a result of creative imagination and of aesthetic
sensibility. This is the case because intercultural understanding requires the imaginative
and creative capacity to anticipate and address the other, to colonize his symbols and
myths, and to transform them from within. Also, the creation of such universe does not
require reaching consensus. It can also occur even when there is contestation going on.

My view of creative imagination draws upon a critical discussion of Arendt’s
performance model of democracy. Through it, I intensify the rhetorical and poetic
elements in her agonistic understanding of politics. As a result, I define creative
imagination as a form of rhetorical and poetic imagination, which can expand common
cultural horizons in democracies, by connecting in an inventive manner given and
familiar meanings to new particular cases. This reflects the capacity democracies have to
be receptive to the foreign and the unfamiliar.
In the *Liberating Power of Symbols*, which was published at the turn of the century, Habermas claims that today political “conflicts are increasingly defined from a cultural standpoint.”¹ Unfortunately, his claim proved to be correct, and was intensified, and aggravated by events happening in the first decade of the century. In 2000, Serbians and Albanians fought over the symbolic value of the region of Kosovo. The conflict was escalated by the fact that each of the two sides over-simplistically pictured the other as an enemy, as unequal, and even as subhuman, as somebody with whom coexistence was impossible. An important role in thus imagining solidarities in the former Yugoslavia was played by cultural (academic and religious) and political elites.

In the 1990s, both cultural and political elites revived the language of 19ᵗʰ century Serbian nationalism, which aimed to liberate Kosovo from the yoke of the Turks. Kosovo became a source of national pride. However, in creating such a symbolic value for Kosovo, its prevalent inhabitants, the Albanians, were dehumanized and presented by the Serbian propaganda as incapable of governing themselves and “as the sort of element that ought to be exterminated.”² In reply, the Kosovar Albanians constructed their legends around a tradition of rebellion. The other is the enemy, because only blood can wipe out the blood.

In 2008 in the Netherlands, Geert Wilders, a member of the Dutch Parliament, over-simplistically and aggressively opposed – thus adding to the nationalistic and xenophobic attitude in the Netherlands and in general in Europe – in an anti-Islamic short film, *Fitna*, an anti-modern and violent Islam and an emancipated and tolerant European secularism. The film called the *Qur'an* an Islamic *Mein Kampf* and it presented a
selection of Suras from the Qur’an, interspersed with media clips and newspaper clippings that showed or described acts of violence and/or hatred by Muslims. The intention was to demonstrate that the Qur’an and the Islamic culture in general motivate their followers to hate all those who violate the Islamic teachings.

The power of people like Geert Wilders resides in their separatist, oversimplifying, and aggressive rhetoric, which overemphasizes contrasts and antagonisms, thus fabricating radical differences between groups.

Both examples illustrate the power cultural narratives and symbols have to divide, but also to politically mobilize people against the others by oversimplifying the complexity of language and of the social and cultural imaginaire that symbolically defines human bonds. In both cases imagination is engaged to clearly separate ‘them’ from ‘us.’ In both cases the ‘others’ are radically devalued. The case of Kosovo speaks about the power nationalism has to destabilize political communities and to create (military) conflicts as a result of separatist and purist practices, namely, cultural practices that clearly and radically demarcate between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ that exclude the foreign, and devalue other cultural groups.

The rise of Flemish nationalism and the failed nation of Belgium add a new dimension to the story. As some argue in Belgium, the failed Belgian nation is the result of nationalistic cultural practices, namely, of practices that separate French and Flemish languages, traditions, and memories. Some argue that, what the Belgian national consciousness misses is the revival of memories such as that of Bruges in the 15th century, which thrived because it was full of foreigners, or of the Flemish poet Émile
Verhaeren who wrote in French. People who, like him, want nowadays to inhabit both cultural spaces are, however, discouraged in Belgium and even looked at with enmity.³

At the same time, stories such as Geert Wilders’s are ‘confirmed’ and enforced as they are mirrored by the other side, by ‘them.’ This refers to the countries where Islam is very important and where the secular state is still a moot issue, while religion a source of inspiration for how to frame the constitution. The danger is that such countries would allow only one form of Islam, the radical version of it, to speak for the Islam. This is the Islam that is taught in many madrassas, the religious schools. For example, Pakistan is traversed (geographically) by the dividing line between a moderate and a radical form of Islam. It is a battle field between these two forms of Islam. The danger is that, despite the country’s democratic efforts, radical Islam, such as taught in many madrassas in Pakistan, which are attended by many (poor) young people, would come to speak for the Islam.

The trouble is that the radical Islam that is taught in the madrassas in Pakistan is connected to the “fundamentalist Deobandi sect, an austere interpretation of Islam that calls for a rejection of modernity and a return to the ‘pure,’ seventh-century Islam of the Prophet Muhammad.”⁴ Opposite to it, but pushed aside and threatened lately, by military groups, such as the Taliban, which are an outgrowth of radical Islam, there is a moderate form of Islam, Sufism. Briefly, this can be defined as “a personal, experiential approach to Allah,” which celebrates a 13th century saint, Qalandar, who acted as an integrator of different religions⁵ and not as a separatist searching for a ‘pure’ core of orthodoxy. While it is true that Qalandar is the symbol of the Bhutto family, which thus associates itself with moderate Islam, the political challenge is to engage the dialogic power of this
cultural figure, its openness to other ways of thinking and its inclusive and integrative potential for increasing the democratic potential of Pakistan.

These examples show the pivotal role that culture plays in making or unmaking political and/or democratic solidarities. They indicate that many of the political conflicts that occur, in the contemporary world, increasingly in connection with culture (with the way national myths are symbolically redefined and engaged in the struggles for power) could be traced back to the perpetuation of a way of imagining solidarities that is mostly associated with the nation-state and especially with its ideology, nationalism. Nationalism presupposes the clear-cut demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ as well as, the exclusion and the devaluing of the foreign and of the other.

Many modern nation-states incorporated over time more democratic and inclusive procedures of defining political membership. Still, Habermas makes it clear that the nation is “Janus-faced.” This refers to the fact that the nation-state is traversed by the tension between “the universalism of an egalitarian legal community and the particularism of a community united by historical destiny.”6 However, the nation-state is challenged today from within by the explosive potential of multiculturalism. Habermas points out that, this moves us further and further away from the “model of a nation-state based on a culturally homogenous population.”7

At the same time, the nation-state faces from without the pressure of globalization. Seyla Benhabib argues that this makes disintegrated citizenship possible, namely, that individuals can “develop and sustain multiple allegiances and networks across nation-state boundaries.” New ways of imagining solidarities, inside and outside
the territoriality and the homogenous cultural space of the nation-state, thus become possible. However, Seyla Benhabib argues that the multiple allegiances and networks that individuals can develop and sustain as part of a post-national world are conducive to democratic citizenship only if they are connected to a locality and to a specific constituency, only if they are connected to drawing boundaries, namely, to specific and particular horizons where democratic will is deliberatively constituted.

In a world of multiculturalism and globalization, one question to ask is if the solidarity that the nation-state provided on ethnic grounds can be replaced with something else. The modern liberal replacement of nationalism is “constitutional patriotism,” namely, a political culture that crystallizes around a constitution and that develops a distinctive interpretation of the constitutional principles that are equally embodied in other republican constitutions. However, some might object that constitutional patriotism provides “too weak a bond to hold together complex societies.”

As a result, Habermas argues that, the question to ask is “under what conditions can a liberal political culture provide a sufficient cushion to prevent a nation of citizens, which can no longer rely on ethnic association, from dissolving into fragments?” His solution is that, multicultural societies can be held together by a political culture only if “democratic citizenship pays off not only in terms of liberal individual rights and rights of political participation,” but also in terms of “social security and reciprocal recognition of different cultural forms of life.”

One of the main ideas that this dissertation defends is that, “the reciprocal recognition of different cultural forms of life,” as part of a political culture that would
create solidarity among citizens in terms other than ethnic and would support, at the same
time, constitutional patriotism, requires, as I will argue in Chapter One, more than what
Habermas is prepared to admit in the limits of his discourse ethics. It requires more than
public debate and argument. It also requires the creative imagination to anticipate the
other’s cultural difference and the linguistic creativity to colonize and hybridize it, in
order to find ways to address it. It requires a specific form of symbolic or cultural
politics.

In brief, the dissertation makes the stronger claim that, in order to make
intercultural understanding possible, the reciprocal recognition, by the citizens that are
engaged in public argument and debate, of different cultural forms of life should be
conducive to their (creative) hybridization and mutual transformation. In the process of
hybridization and mutual transformation new sensibilities and affections are developed.
As a result, a liberal political culture would be able to provide a sufficient cushion to
prevent a nation of citizens, which can no longer rely on ethnic association, from
dissolving into fragments, if it would generate a transformation and expansion of given
cultural forms of life or cultural horizons, as well as more inclusive civil metaphors.

A liberal political culture would be able to provide “solidarity among strangers”
other than on ethnic grounds only if it would expand the imagination and the sensibility
of the people, its affection and sense of solidarity in a way that includes the other, the
stranger and the foreigner. In brief, the challenge is to overcome the clear cut distinction
between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ which underlines nationalism, in ways that appeal to and
engage not only one’s reason, but also one’s imagination and sensibility. It is also to
define and understand culture on grounds other than ethnic. It is to engage, as I will argue in Chapter One, the potential a culture has for dialogue as a combination of the two imaginative practices, of ideology and utopia.

Moreover, it is also possible to argue, drawing on Bonnie Honig’s *Democracy and the Foreigner*, that, the challenge in making liberal political culture successful in this way would be to create a specific form of democratic cosmopolitanism. Honig defines this as “forms of internationalism that seek not to govern, per se, but rather to widen the resources, energies, and accountability of an emerging international civil society that contests or supports state actions in matters of transnational and local interest such as environmental, economic, military, cultural, and social policies.” The idea is that, thus understood, democratic cosmopolitanism is made possible by a widening and enlargement of one’s understanding and imagination, of one’s sensibility, affection, and sense of solidarity.

What makes Honig’s idea of democratic cosmopolitanism particularly attractive is that its source is internal to given (national) societies. Democratic cosmopolitanism requires the development in (national) democracies of the capacity to engage cultural symbols in their transformative and expansive potential. In Herder’s language, as I will argue in Chapter two, this refers to the capacity cultural symbols and narratives have to expand one’s understanding of and feeling for humanity. Only thus, a political liberal culture that connects people other than just through ethnic ties or just through constitutional principles could develop. In Honig’s view, the source of democratic cosmopolitanism is the symbolic presence of the foreigners, mostly, as immigrants, inside
(national) democracies. In her view, foreigners are both a source for the renewal of
democratic energies and a menace to the democratic community.

However, even if sometimes foreigners reinforce democratic (national) myths,
most of the time their unsettling presence, especially their cultural and political
inventiveness, expands the democratic horizons of understanding, sensibility, and
affection. The main idea in Honig’s argument is that foreigners create a cleavage, a
distance in the symbolic space of democracies, allowing the latter to pluralize their
passion and their sense of solidarity. The implication is that such a pluralization of
passion and of one’s sense of solidarity would enlarge one’s capacity to apprehend and
comprehend the world in a wider, deeper, and subtler way that what the (nation) state
makes possible.

The foreigner introduces a reflective and emotional cleavage. He pluralizes one’s
passion. He multiplies one’s affections, attachments, and belongings. Thus, the foreigner
makes it possible to have, both passionate support for certain heroes (or principles or
institutions), as well as deep fear of them. Honig argues that such a pluralization of
passion works in favor of cosmopolitanism. By introducing a cleavage and a tension at
the center of national democratic imaginations, the foreigners as immigrants make it
possible to engage into a specific form of cosmopolitanism. In such a form of
cosmopolitanism one has the courage to risk one’s principles by engaging others in one’s
particularities, “while at the same time defending, (re)discovering and (re)articulating
located universalisms and the equal dignity of persons.”

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In tune with Honig’s conception of the symbolic role that foreigners play within the confines of national democracies, this dissertation will argue that intercultural understanding requires a transformation of national (given) cultural horizons in ways that are conducive to democratic cosmopolitanism. The origin of such a transformation is one’s capacity to listen to the different and unfamiliar other and to linguistically, imaginatively, and culturally invent the ways of addressing him. Only such a capacity can make democracies more inclusive and universal. Thus, interpreting the Biblical story of Ruth as an immigrant who engages in the democratic practice of taking rights from Boaz, instead of just waiting for them to be given to her, Honig underscores Ruth’s inventiveness. She emphasizes the cultural and consequently, political inventiveness of the immigrant, because Ruth “acts in advance of the categories that might legitimate her actions.” Thus, she invents and transgresses.\(^\text{11}\)

To this extent, one could argue that Ruth uses her creative imagination. As I will argue in Chapter One, drawing on M.M. Bakhtin’s philosophy, Ruth colonizes and hybridizes the symbolic space of Boaz, of the Israelites, the symbolic space where she, as a guest, acts trying to carve out a public and legitimate niche for her existence. At the same time, as I will argue in Chapter Three, drawing on Vico’s philosophy, she invents new words, the language for the categories that are still missing. She opens up new sites of intelligibility. According to Vico, the opening of such sites is a poetic (creative) performance. In brief, rights and laws are first rites or poetic enactments.

More generally, Honig focuses on symbolic politics, namely, on how symbols can transform and expand (confirm or shrink) one’s sense of solidarity and belonging, one’s
attachments. Such a focus becomes essential for the political task of intercultural understanding if one considers that social bonds are symbolically constituted. Thus, as Ricoeur argues, every society possesses or is part of a “socio-political imaginaire, that is, an ensemble of symbolic discourses.” If this is true, then imagination could be engaged either way: either to reinforce national myths or to denationalize these myths and to (re)nationalize them in a more inclusive manner.

Imagination could be used for the destructive and manipulative purposes of nationalism and of extreme and radical ideologies, as the examples discussed above show, which define in-group solidarities in a homogenous and exclusionary manner, one that sharply demarcates between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ It could also be used for giving reality to the democratic cosmopolitanism that Honig defines by taking the “myth of an immigrant America” as a model and by switching from a national to a democratic interpretation of the myth. Honig argues that, because this is “a narrative of demands made by outsiders, it is not just a nationalist story; it is also, potentially, a myth of denationalization.” Central to the making of the demands and to the denationalization of democracy that it entails is “the staging of a nonexistent right;” its poetic enactment. Such performance cannot take place in the absence of poetic and rhetorical imagination.

In short, the theoretical challenge that confronts this dissertation is to argue that poetic and rhetorical imagination has the power to engage culture and symbols in a dialogic manner. More precisely, imagination has the poetic power to question and problematize the familiar (the national) and the rhetorical power to inventively address the other in ways that expand the democratic sense of solidarity. The challenge is to show
that imagination can inter-illuminate and hybridize languages and vocabularies; that it can engage symbols and metaphors in ways that induce dialogue and transformation. The challenge is not only to show that imagination could provide a reflective and critical outlook on those aspects of a comprehensive doctrine or of an ideology that could hamper intercultural understanding. The challenge is show that imagination can disclose new sites of intelligibility, new horizons on which understanding depends and, at the same time, it can expand and transform given and familiar vocabularies in ways that make existent solidarities more inclusive.

This is the case because intercultural understanding requires more than detecting and thematizing the barriers, systemic, social, or cultural, to communication and dialogue. It requires expanding the scope of communicative praxis by asking questions such as “How should we act toward other cultures? How should we anticipate their action toward us through utterances? How can other cultures creatively take on elements from our utterances and in part, become us while remaining themselves and vice versa?”

Besides the capacity to reach agreement in the “given culture” from which they “draw consensual interpretative patterns in their efforts of interpretation,” the participants in the communicative praxis of intercultural understanding should also be able to aesthetically imagine the others, ‘them.’ They should practice not only discursive, but also aesthetic and imaginative responsibility, while the culture to which they belong should be able to engage creative imagination in a way that creatively answers to the other’s living and unique presence and that produces otherness at the heart of experience,
namely, of the actual and familiar image a group represents of itself and of a solidarity that makes a group to politically cohere.

If this is true, then the task of intercultural understanding is not only about how “can there be rational communication with those faiths which are articulated in strong traditions and in comprehensive doctrines, and which appear to the unbeliever only in the form of ciphers.”\textsuperscript{16} It is also, and, perhaps, more fundamentally, about the capacity societies have to engage imagination and symbolic discourses in the forming of in-group solidarities in a way that does not exclude and devalue the others. It is about the capacity societies and their citizens have to engage imagination to rhetorically listen to the uniqueness of the others, the foreigners and the aliens, the unfamiliar ones. It is also about their capacity to allow for the cultural and political inventiveness of the foreigners.

In brief, the task of intercultural understanding is also about expanding one’s affective citizenship, one’s imaginative capacity to grasp the other’s different form of cultural life, one’s receptivity to the other’s uniqueness, but mostly, one’s capacity to linguistically create and to inventively imagine the ways of enacting nonexistent rights and liberties, new powers and visions.

The present dissertation will also expand the meaning of foreignness. In the attempt to show how foreigners can expand democratic horizons, Honig looks only at the foreigners that come either to found a political space or to inhabit an already constituted one, the immigrants. She looks at the foreigners that come into a given and familiar space. She does not also consider the imaginative power to go or to wander into the foreign. This is the imaginative power to enrich and expand one’s given horizon by
visiting the foreign and by *bringing* the foreign ‘home,’ by inviting the foreign that one has visited as a guest back ‘home.’

*Imagination, a Complex Human Faculty:*

*Political Aestheticism and Democratic Aestheticism*

Still, one could argue, imagination is too powerful, complex, and dangerous of a human faculty to be thus domesticated and engaged for the purposes of dialogue, intercultural understanding, and democratic cosmopolitanism. In fact, as George Kateb powerfully argues, imagination is to a large extent responsible for the mass murder politics that different forms of political totalitarianism initiated and conducted in the 20th century. Human beings, Kateb points out, are driven by “aesthetic cravings” for “coherence, purpose, and meaning.”¹⁷ When religion fails to satisfy these cravings, secular fanaticism, namely, those leaders who use myths and narratives in order to enroll people in their projects for redesigning reality, will provide for them. According to Kateb, hyperactive imagination plays a crucial role in designing these projects.

Hyperactive imagination is aesthetic. It is driven by the unscrupulous desire to design and give form to an imperfect reality. To this extent, it is the main agency of political aestheticism. Political aestheticism consists of an exaggerated desire, led by a “passionate sense of possibility,” to make the world meaningful by design, a sort of unscrupulous and immoral “addiction to comprehensive meaningfulness,” and to “a kind of enchantment;”¹⁸ to the production of “certainties of meaningfulness.”¹⁹ In this process,
its “hyperactive imagination of power” sees human beings as “instruments or impediments, as raw material or dirt or disease;”\textsuperscript{20} in brief, as something that can “be processed for the sake of the design”\textsuperscript{21} and for the production of a comprehensive, certain, and enchanted meaningfulness.

Kateb argues that, what makes political aestheticism so troublesome is the existence of a perennial need and unavoidable human tendency to project aesthetic attitudes and feelings unto the social reality and that most of the time this craving is not recognized. As something inescapable that will always be with us, aestheticism penetrates the very way human beings organize and live their everyday life. Kateb identifies several ways in which the daily life of people is geared toward the aesthetic creation of the “certainties of meaningfulness.” These are: the conviction that the right style exists, namely, that the appearance of persons and social situations is suitable and is as it should be, the conviction that “one’s own experience or the experience of one’s group has form – the form of a story, pattern, or properly unfolding narrative,” the “conviction that one’s identity or the identity of one’s group has a distinctive shape or form (in an extended sense) and that all the traits and qualities fit together and result in a unique or even superior style,” and the conviction “that society’s rituals and procedures, customs and practices, and institutions and arrangements all are shapely and well formed, and all help to comprise a way of life, and hence that confusion, disorder, or rapid unpattered change or brute immediacy has been overcome.” These achievements, Kateb concludes, “not only please; because they are craved, they provide intense gratification when they are imagined to exist, and often will be defended without mercy.”\textsuperscript{22}
Kateb’s discussion of aestheticism and of political aestheticism, as a pathological deviation of an unavoidable human tendency to approach social reality aesthetically, takes one to the core of the relationship between politics, aesthetic imagination, and culture. Thus, it suggests that the question to ask is not so much about how to keep politics and aesthetics separate. It also suggests that the question cannot be reduced to how to avoid the aggressive and violent consequences of nationalism and of separatist rhetoric, as well as of a political aestheticism, which is conducive to mass murder politics.

Since hoping that aesthetics and politics can be entirely separated proves to go against deeply ingrained human tendencies, the question to ask is also about how to rightly cultivate and discipline in the citizens the inescapable human tendency to project aesthetic attitudes and feelings unto social reality. The problem is how to cultivate such a tendency in a direction that is not conducive to extremist ideologies, and, eventually, to conflict, to political aestheticism and mass murder politics, but to the shaping and increasing of one’s civility, thus enhancing the political and democratic capacities of collectivities. This can be done by cultivating the citizens’ capability to grasp and understand the foreign and the different, thus enriching and expanding given and familiar cultural horizons and, consequently, making existent solidarities more inclusive.

Kateb’s argument suggests two possible answers to these questions. First, the unimaginative reduction of human beings to raw material, he contends, was also made possible by the fact that, whenever present, hyperactive imagination was associated with the absence of benign active imagination, namely, with a “false sense of impossibility” in
leaders and followers alike. Inactive imagination made them morally blind and indifferent. Thus, while the aggressive imagination of the leaders “is the rabid capacity to make the absent present, to imagine a different reality, to have designs on reality, the complementary phenomenon is the lack of benign active imagination, namely, the failure to see reality as present and thus to treat it as if it were absent. It is the failure to define reality other than as “one’s own little piece of it.”23 Thus, Kateb prepares the ground for the necessary distinction between, on the one hand, harmful “imagination,” or better, fantasy, and, on the other hand, benign active imagination.

Second, the discussion by Kateb of the moral and political impact of aesthetic imagination is structured by a fundamental distinction between, on the one hand, aesthetic craving and, on the other hand, aesthetic attitudes and feelings. Aesthetic cravings are characterized by the obsessive and morally uncontrolled and undisciplined search of hyperactive imagination for the overall meaningfulness of the world. This results in political aestheticism and mass murder politics. Instead, aesthetic attitudes and feelings accept moral limits, and thus, refuse to idealistically redesign reality. Although not explicitly stated by Kateb, it makes sense to connect aesthetic attitudes and feelings to benign active imagination.

Thus, it seems that the challenge for the political engagement of imagination, of a rightly-conducted and other-sensitive sense of possibility, is to morally discipline its aesthetic moment. Therefore, only when morally controlled, the aesthetic moment of imagination is moved by an “insatiable attention” to every particular aspect of the world, because everything “has a meaning worth pondering.” In Kateb’s argument the challenge
is to cultivate in modern societies democratic aestheticism. Democratic aestheticism is “receptivity or responsiveness to as much of the world as possible – its persons, its events and situations, its conditions, its patterns and sequences.” It is an aesthetic attitude of appreciation and admiration, an attitude that grants “standing to what seems not to merit it.” Thus, its aim is to curb the aesthetic for the sake of morality. The aesthetic feeling seems to be here the vehicle of attention and respect for “the world as it is.”

Kateb’s notion of democratic aestheticism does provide the right framework for the attempt of theorizing a positive political role of aesthetic imagination and of culture, as required by the task of intercultural understanding. In his account of democratic aestheticism, the aesthetic moment of benign active imagination is connected to morality, to the extent that its role is to sensitize one to the diversity of the world, to the manifoldness and imperfect particularity of persons, events, and situations; to this extent, democratic aestheticism does represent the antipode of the search for comprehensive meaningfulness and perfection that moves political aestheticism. It is the antipode of seeing human beings as dirt or disease, as something to be processed for the sake of the design, since for democratic aestheticism each and every human being is worth one’s answer and responsiveness to its particularity.

Thus, benign active imagination, which I assume is what democratic aestheticism attempts to cultivate, fulfils, in Kateb’s view, a double role. On the one hand, it is capable of recognizing present reality despite any possible obstruction. On the other hand, it can make the invisible, absent “inwardness of another” present. To this extent, it seems to provide precisely what the egoistic fantasy of hyperactive imagination misses. That is the
twofold capacity of keeping one vividly tuned to the other’s (cultural, biographical, in a word, contextual and contingent) presence and of making present the other’s inwardness, namely, of seeing it as a living source of meaning.

Harmful “imagination” is either the hyperactive imagination (or aggressive fantasy) of the leaders or the illusion and hallucination that takes over the minds of their followers. It is clearly fantasy or illusion and it cannot, in consequence, be aesthetic either, because it is not capable to recreate the living presence of the other, who happens to be a source of meaning as I am. Opposite to this, benign active imagination is the antidote for moral blindness and political crime, for vice, and cruelty, because it is the beginning of moral sentiment in the human agent, of the moral perception of the other as an originator of meaning. Kateb’s notion of active benign imagination is similar in meaning to Iris Murdoch’s truth-seeking creative imagination, which she distinguishes from egoistic fantasy.

As Kateb’s benign active imagination, Murdoch’s truth-seeking creative imagination is aware of the other’s existence and moved by the concern for him. Truth-seeking imagination helps one to become unpossessive in one’s dealings with the world, because it causes one to be capable of forgetting one’s self. As a result, the truth seeking creative imagination helps the good man to liberate himself from selfish fantasy, to see himself as others see him, to imagine the needs of other people, to love unselfishly, and to “lucidly envisage and desire what is truly valuable.” In brief, through truth seeking active imagination the good man does not escape the world, but he learns different ways of joining it, from different angles and perspectives.
Through truth-seeking creative imagination the good man learns two essential moral virtues: courage and humility. He learns courage because he is capable of overcoming the embitterment, brutalization, or bewilderment of affliction through the “moral discipline of mind” to “imagine something else.” He also learns humility because truthful imagining does not engage images in a compulsive manner, but rather in a way that helps the good man to evaluate his situation and to see it in light of its perfection, of its fullest potential. Thus, truthful imagining gives the good man a positive and constructive sense of his imperfection; the sense that his experience, identity, and way of life is dynamic and still not fully actualized in its possibilities. It is not a certainty of meaning, but the possibility to transform and improve oneself. Truthful imagining inspires one to become better. In this sense, images are the beginning of reflection and of moral betterment, because they can educate desires and imagination, while imagination is “intelligent sensibility,” because it makes one capable of seeing order, form, and meaning in feelings and desires in a non-compulsive way, namely, in a way that does not crave for “certainties of meaningfulness” and perfection.

Similar to Murdoch, M. M. Bakhtin sees creative aesthetic imagination as benign, namely, as capable of shaping moral virtues in individuals, by educating their desires and thus preventing them from selfishly and oppressively projecting their fantasies upon the others. Bakhtin argues that the aesthetic, form-giving, act of imagination is penitent in me and heroic in the other. Creativity is penitent in me because in forming my own experience, identity, and way of life I am led by the sense of my own imperfection, by the sense that I never coincide with what I am yet to become. At the
same time, creativity is heroic in the other, because the other is the hero who gives form to my life. This means that every attempt to give form to my experience, my identity or my way of life takes the form of a narration. In short, narration and story-telling, from keeping a dairy and making a confession to writing a biography or a novel - is always about me as another, even if it is the story of my own life. The other is my better self, what I strive to still become. Thus, the aesthetic moment of imagination, through which I give form to my experience, identity, and way of life, should be a lesson of humility because through it I see myself as a potential better other. The other is the call for my perfection, for my striving to become better, since the author (the I) always transfigures himself through his hero (the other).  

Murdoch thinks that, through such exercises of aesthetic imagination one practices and refines his moral vocabulary and sensibility. As Kateb would argue, thus enriching Murdoch’s analysis, refining one’s moral vocabulary and sensibility is an enlargement of one’s moral imagination. An important part of such an enlargement of one’s moral imagination, Kateb would add, is to make people sensitive to “the impure, the incomplete or inconclusive, the hybrid,…the unstable, the heterogeneous, the random, the disorderly, the out of place.” Such an enlargement Kateb claims, would develop in the people “aesthetic charity.” To this extent, aesthetic charity would be able to check the politically dangerous tendency to harsh and unnecessary condemnation and punishment, which can result in conflict and mass murder politics.

Such an enlargement of moral imagination and practicing of aesthetic charity seems to rely on the assumption that what democratic aestheticism cultivates in the
people is an aesthetic sensibility that appreciates the creative de-form-ity of change and transformation, the creative impurity of hybridization, and the unsettling value of otherness and of the foreign. In brief, it seems that Kateb is moving in a direction where one can form one’s experience, identity, and way of life not as a certainty of meaningfulness, but as a dialogue with the unsettling living and unique other, where one’s experience, identity, and way of life are not ordered and coherent, but always on the threshold, anticipating and addressing the other, and thus transforming themselves. In brief, thus understood, the core of the aesthetic is change, hybridization, and transformation, not certainty and rigidity of meaningfulness and perfection of coherence, order, and design.

However, fully developing such an implicit thread in Kateb’s discussion of democratic aestheticism requires operating a distinction that he does not make. This is the distinction between reproductive and productive or creative aesthetic imagination. The distinction between reproductive and productive or creative imagination is based on different conceptions about the role and meaning of images. Theories of reproductive imagination, such as that developed by Hobbes, see images as weak or faded perception, as “decaying sense.” Thus, the implication is that images only repeat and confirm what is already given, something that was present and is now increasingly fainting. As Ricoeur explains, theories of creative imagination, such as that developed by Giambattista Vico, see images “in terms of absence, of the other-than-present,” as attempts to disclose, to bring forth “this fundamental otherness.” Here one expects images to expand one’s
capacity to understand one’s own world, as well as, worlds that are alien, different and uncanny.

It is my thesis that Kateb’s benign active imagination makes possible a respectful and responsible, moral, way of relating to the other’s living presence, only insofar as its aesthetic moment is creative, and not the obsessive or protective repetition of a presence that keeps fading away. Imagination has the power to keep a moral and living connection with the other human being in a manner that enhances the political capacities of human collectivities only insofar as its aesthetic moment is creative. Such a claim presupposes that the aesthetic is not just the mimetic (as for Plato), that it is not just the contemplative (as for Kant, at least to a large extent), and that it is not just the performative/theatrical (as for Nietzsche, at least to some extent). It presupposes that the aesthetic is the linguistic invention, through the poetic act of naming, of new sites of intelligibility, due to one’s rhetorical capacity to listen and to respond to the foreign and the uncanny. Thus, one’s benign active imagination can keep a moral and living connection with the other human being only to the extent that it makes one listen and respond to the other’s unfamiliarity and thus it empowers one to poetically invent a new site of intelligibility, where oneself and the other can encounter and address each other, namely, can dialogize their differences. The creativity of aesthetic imagination originates in one’s sensitivity to the others’ living and unique presence.

Still, one could argue that one danger in the attempt to bring creative imagination to the center of moral and political practice is, as the case of political aestheticism that Kateb discusses shows, to confuse the image and the real; to take the image for the real,
to collapse life and art. Responding to such an objection, Ricoeur points out that the challenge is to engage imagination as “the very instrument of the critique of the real.” Fundamentally, this means to keep imagination itself connected to reason and judgment; to make it part of reflective thinking. As I will argue throughout this dissertation, this means two things.

On the one hand, one needs to keep the creation of images, as an attempt to capture the other-than-present, connected to a common world of symbols and meanings, to a world that one shares with the others, thus avoiding the dissolving of the real and of life into utopian imagination (sheer fantasy). On the other hand, the challenge is to keep such imagined commonality connected to the foreign, in general, to the sense that the taken for granted can be otherwise, it can be different. Only thus, imagination could posit something at a distance from the real and thus “produce otherness at the very heart of experience” and creatively expand and transform given cultural horizons in a society.

Unfortunately, Kateb weakens his own argument in favor of benign active imagination and of its power to work as an antidote to hyperactive imagination because he does not differentiate between reproductive and productive imagination, and consequently, between the two possible roles of images. Thus, he cannot fully develop the idea that the democratic aesthetic sensibility is appreciative of imperfection and hybridization, of transformation and otherness and thus appreciative of a type of aesthetic that is not craving for certainty of meaningfulness and perfection of design, but creative engagement in the incomplete and uncertain, open and finalized dialogue with the other. Moreover, because Kateb fails to distinguish between the two forms of imagination, he
mistakenly qualifies the hyperactive imagination of rulers such a Stalin and Hitler as creative.\textsuperscript{35}

Opposite to this, one can argue, following M. M. Bakhtin’s conception of the aesthetic, that the hyperactive imagination of rulers such as Stalin or Hitler is not creative, but\textit{only} playing or daydreaming. The reason is that, in contrast with what Bakhtin calls an aesthetic situation, it lacks a spectator, and thus the “built-in limits”\textsuperscript{36} that come with “the excess of seeing, knowing, and feeling” that is the privilege of the contemplator.\textsuperscript{37} Such imagination is\textit{only} egoistic fantasy, because it mechanically generates “narrowly banal false pictures (the ego as all–powerful),” without being moved by the desire to express and elucidate what is true and deep,\textsuperscript{38} by answering to the living presence of the other. Far from being creative, the ‘aesthetic’ moment of hyperactive imagination is only a surrogate of life, not “an active aesthetic relationship to life.”\textsuperscript{39} In brief, such a form of imagination is not responsible, because it does not answer to the other’s living and particular, unsettling and moving, changing presence. It does not anticipate the other’s response to one’s action. In brief, it does not appreciate the dynamic, incomplete, and thus imperfect character of one’s attempt to form one’s experience, identity, and way of life.

Hyperactive imagination is not analogical either. This means that it neither sees the other as an I, namely, as a potential source of meaning who has a unique life, nor does it see the unique life of the other as the way to the meaning of the I’s life. This is the case because hyperactive imagination is only a substitution (of the I for the other), an immersion (into lived-experience), or, at best, an expression of one’s inner life. It is a
greedy and, at the same time, a self-satisfied imagination, because it strives to dominate through the monotonous repetition and reproduction of itself and its own formative power. To this extent it is evil. The leaders that imposed their designs upon reality through their hyperactive imagination might have dreamed of a different reality, but they did not image forth a world, as a result of engaging the other’s presence and the creative incitation and limitation that comes with it. To this extent, hyperactive imagination was not a form of penitent imagination. As a consequence, it undermined the very possibility of being in the world, with, not for or against, the others. It was not able to engage images as attempts to capture the other-than-present.

Moreover, there is an undeniable romantic overtone in Kateb’s understanding of aesthetic imagination. This charms our attention. It is a sort of enchantment that takes over our souls and being. Thus, the easiness with which, for him, imagination can slide into craving and transform itself into either the aggressive fantasy of irresponsible and criminal leaders or the illusion and the hallucination that take over the minds of their followers. By overstressing the irrationality of aesthetic imagination, Kateb almost undermines his own attempt to theorize a form of benign active imagination, one that can be morally disciplined thus being capable of working together with reason, as an indispensable part of the judgments one makes, as well as an indispensable source of linguistic creativity that facilitates human communication, because it expands meaning, and shapes civility, because it expands one’s moral sensibility.

It is, nevertheless, true that Kateb’s prudent confinement of aesthetic creativity is not total. When defining democratic aestheticism, Kateb points out that one of its aims is
to “dispel both conventional perception and the spirit of confident cultivation and to provide a morally indispensable supplement to both popular and elitist aestheticism.” If to “dispel conventional perception” means to act against popular aestheticism and its reproductive use of imagination in mass culture, then democratic aestheticism engages a form of aesthetic imagination that is more than just admiring, contemplating or attentive. As acting against what is conventional, it is creative. At the same time, to the extent that democratic aestheticism is directed against the assertive and self-expressive individualism that characterizes elitist aestheticism, its creativity has to be engaged intersubjectively; it requires the other’s creative participation.

Unfortunately, all these promising developments about the possible creative moral and political role of imagination are, in the end, trumped by the fact that Kateb sees human nature through the lenses of a “pessimism that is ever mindful of the imagination both in its aggressive exercise and in the human disinclination to exercise it benignly.” Although they tend to live so much in their imagination, human beings fail to use it precisely at the point where it could shape their moral and political consciousness of the other, and thus it could stimulate their willingness to recognize the other’s humanity and dignity. In effect, it seems almost impossible to think of imagination other than as a curse, and not as a human faculty that can be cultivated and educated, through the right kind of culture, where imagination and reason are equally valued and trained.

Thus, even when he recognizes the benign side of imagination, Kateb cannot really develop it, because first, he distrusts the human propensity for using it, second, he does not see imagination as a preparing ground for reflection, but rather as a form of
compulsion, and third, he does not see that a morally disciplined form of aesthetic imagination does not need to be strictly contemplative and just admiringly accepting; it can be, and it should, creative, as well. In a nutshell, Kateb confines too much, close to destruction, the sense of the possible that is attached to creative imagination. Consequently, he makes it impossible for aesthetic imagination to play a role in criticizing and thus in creatively changing and transforming the world. All that aesthetic imagination can do is to appreciate the world as it is. However, imagination can play a critical role only because it is creative, only because, as Ricoeur argues, it produces “otherness at the very heart of experience.”

*Creative Dialogic Politics:*

*A Plea for Cultural Diversity, Imagination, and Linguistic Creativity*

As a result of wrongly attributing creativity to hyperactive imagination, Kateb dismisses the *creative* aesthetic moment of imagination altogether, by conceptualizing it *only* as a fanatical designing of reality that is led by a false sense of possibility. Thus, Kateb does not realize that the responsiveness that characterizes democratic aestheticism presupposes linguistic creativity and productive imagination. However, one consequence of misinterpreting the role of aesthetic creativity is that, he thus leads one to think that culture can be relevant to politics in its imaginative and aesthetic dimensions *only* in the pathological guise of secular fanaticism and of political aestheticism. A positive relevance of culture to politics thus becomes questionable, if not altogether impossible.
Thus, one question to ask is if symbols, metaphors, and narratives can be politically used for something different than just to endorse and give form to an “obsessive adherence to order,” as it happens in what Kateb calls secular fanaticism and political aestheticism. Can the aesthetic dimension of culture, as well as imagination, play a positive role in facilitating intercultural understanding, namely, in bridging diverse cultural traditions and visions of reality, and thus in mitigating and even preventing conflict? Can they form individual and group experience, identity, and ways of life in such a way that the result is intercultural understanding and thus the expansion of common cultural horizons, and not conflict?

This compels political theory to raise the general question about how to politically engage culture in a post-national world in such a way as to imagine solidarities in non-separatist and non-homogenous ways, thus better answering to a changing and complex world where cultures get closer to each other. The normative question that political theory has to answer is what kind of culture can imagine solidarities in ways that bridge diverse traditions and visions of reality, thus mitigating and even preventing conflict? What kind of culture can form individual and group experience, can imagine identity, and define ways of life in such a way that the foreign and the other are not excluded, but encountered and engaged in ways that expand the commonality of given and familiar horizons? What kind of imagination can expand the communicative and dialogic powers of citizens in a post-national world; their capacity for solidarity with different and alien others?
Answering such questions, this dissertation argues, thus enriching Habermas’ discourse ethics, that dialogue cannot take place in the absence of metaphors, poetry, and narratives. It cannot take place if the participants to the communicative practice do not have poetic and rhetorical sensitivity. That is the sensitivity for the living and multiple meanings that foment and for the voices that speak in the origin of concepts they use in their arguments. It cannot take place in the absence of benign creative imagination. Moreover, such a view of dialogue relies on a specific view of the nature of language, as essentially poetic, creative, and rhetorical.

The implication is that understanding requires not only clearly defined concepts and valid arguments. It also requires the capacity to engage imaginative expression and aesthetic creativity in the formation and reformation of the concepts that structure rational and argumentative discussion, in the judgments one makes and, eventually, in the attempt to communicate the results of one’s judgments to the others. Understanding requires imagination and affection. Moreover, metaphors and narratives disclose worlds. They have the poetic and rhetorical power to bring to language new actions and emotions, new aspects of reality, of agency, and of the world. Thus, they enrich, deepen, and widen meaning and understanding, and with it one’s capacity to communicate.

One fundamental assumption that the present dissertation makes is that politics is culturally and symbolically embedded. It is symbolic politics. However, according to the line of reasoning that the dissertation develops, culture is neither a parochial straightjacket nor a thin layer of universal and formal procedures. On the contrary, the cultural world, without which politics would not be possible, is plural and complex, only
thus cultural creation and hybridization can take place. Dialogue and communication are politically possible only when one recognizes and creatively answers to the diversity, particularity, and complexity of cultures. One essential precondition of the creativity that facilitates dialogue is not to reduce culture and its diverse voices to shallow abstractions and hollow procedures. It is not to reify it into doctrines and monological ideologies. It is also not to see culture as an endless proliferation of private vocabularies and idiosyncrasies. Only where there is creative and imaginative sensitivity to the complexity, the particularity, and uniqueness of human situations, given and familiar, common horizons, can be expanded and transformed, thus facilitating intercultural understanding.

Only by intensifying the particularity of cultural values and objects – which is the very core of the aesthetic experience – a creative and active answer to their uniqueness can happen. To intensify particularity means, Bakhtin argues, to “expose and develop all the semantic possibilities embedded in a given point of view;” an enterprise that requires creative imagination. From such a perspective, the particularity of culture is not seen as an expression or self-expression of ‘pure’ or ‘primordial’ values, a view that assumes that there is a clear cut separation between ‘us’ and ‘them.’

Instead, the particularity of culture is seen as the aesthetic performative event of giving form to the other, of encountering him and of talking to him, without assimilating or merging with his ideas, but, nevertheless, enriching the symbolic spaces of both sides. Bakhtin calls this the dialogizing of difference. Through it a world is imagined forth where the encounter of the other becomes possible. This is the case because through the
creative answer to the other’s particularity cultures enrich each other formally, namely, they expand the categories of understanding and the rules for judging.

However, when the diversity, particularity, and complexity of cultures thus burst into politics, consensus and agreement are not always achievable. Still, this should not be the end of politics and of the attempts to forge solidarity. The dissertation argues, thus enriching Arendt’s performance model of democracy that aesthetic creativity and imagination can act dialogically in the realm of political agon, of confrontation and struggle, by renewing and expanding the commonality in the absence of which politics would not be possible. Creative imagination can expand the meaning of the ‘same’ and the familiar by seeing it as something else, as “the other-than-present.” In extremis, one can yet argue that, even when struggling, insofar as they address each other, vocabularies, languages, and cultures colonize and anticipate each other, thus mutually transforming, enriching, and hybridizing each other through the power of their creative imagination.

The result of enriching discourse ethics, by making creative aesthetic imagination an essential element of understanding and dialogue and of enriching Arendt’s performance model of democracy, by intensifying the poetic and rhetorical aspects of agonism is to sketch a model of democratic politics that I call creative dialogic. This is a form of non-consensual, although dialogic, politics. As participants to such a form the politics, the democratic citizens would be creative and imaginative individuals. On the one hand, they would pay an ongoing and renewed attention to particularity, which prevents any final formal structures and totalities. On the other hand, such an attention
would result in the renewed attempt to accommodate novel and contingent actions and speeches to the commonality of the world.

At the same time, as dialogic, such a form of democratic symbolic politics does not recognize any absolute differences. However, it does not recognize any absolute unities either. According to such a form of politics, the rational and argued criticism of unjust practices and institutions, can take place only to the extent that creative imagination and linguistic creativity are at work. Criticism can take place only to the extent that the unjust practice is rejected not from the standpoint of impersonal reason, but from inside the world to which it belongs, from inside the living texture of its culture. This requires not only dissenting thinking, but also the emotional and imaginative capacity to inhabit the other symbolic space and to start changing it from inside, to start developing from inside its fabric of meaning alternatives to the current injustice.

Such a possibility rests on the assumption that no culture or way of life is opaque and self-sufficient, but it defines and redefines itself through the imaginative anticipation of the other’s outlook. To this extent, every culture is traversed by different voices, traditions, and memories, by shades, tones, and gradations of differences, and not by oppositions. These shades, tones, and gradations of difference can be revived and intensified if only one finds the way to creatively and imaginatively address them from ‘inside’ that given culture. Such a skill requires an intense familiarization and engagement with particular cultures, narratives, traditions, and memories.

If cultures are thus dialogically and imaginatively penetrated, then, there cannot be absolute, but only dialogized differences. Hence, the confrontation and even the
struggle between different opinions and values are never total, since there is always a possibility to address the other. In brief, both the democratic agon and the criticism of injustice engage their protagonists in a process of cultural creation, where the other is not only confronted and criticized, rejected or assimilated, but he is also creatively addressed. In the process, the language and the vocabularies of both sides are transformed and hybridized. Confrontation and criticism cannot take place except through the creative enrichment of the language and of the other’s, as well as, of one’s own; in brief, through the expansion of given cultural horizons. Such a creative enrichment decides the scope of the world where being with the others is possible.

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Given the dangerous political impact of imagination and of its aesthetic, form-giving moment, as well as, the pertinence of cultural issues for political conflicts, but also the possible redemptive qualities that an active benign use of imagination might have for political practice, namely, for intercultural understanding and the rebuilding of solidarities in the contemporary world along post-national lines, it is rather surprising, as Kateb points out, that the canon of political theory under-theorized or simply neglected this important human faculty.

Thus, it is the aim of the first chapter of the dissertation to critically assess the conceptual and thematic status of imagination and of aesthetic creativity in contemporary political theory. This is going to be only a preliminary step that is meant to prepare the ground for a more constructive approach. This refers to a theorizing of creative aesthetic imagination – as an essential prerequisite of citizenry in a post-national world – and of
culture – as a construct for which elites are highly responsible through the way they
disseminate memories and (re)create narratives and metaphors in societies – that can
account for the possibility of intercultural understanding as a political task.
Chapter One

The Concept of Imagination in Contemporary Political Theory: A Critical Discussion

There is a significant amount of suspicion about imagination in politics and for fairly good reasons, as the discussion of political aestheticism tried to prove in the introduction. Therefore, no wonder that imagination is usually seen as irrational and compulsive fantasy or as illusion, even by thinkers who, as Kateb, see not only its dangers, but also its moral and political promise. No wonder that imagination is seen, at best, as lacking objectivity and impartiality, as John Rawls does. Moreover, even when imagination and its form-giving, aesthetic moment are recognized as the preparing ground for reflection and communication, as in the case of Habermas, the specificity of the aesthetic experience is too easily sacrificed. The result is the amputation of the essential capacity of imagination to be sensitive and respond to particularity, to the living and unique presence of the others. This is regrettable because, as I argue in this chapter, such a capacity is a source of cultural creation and of dialogue in politics.

However, one could argue, there are today political philosophers, such as Richard Rorty and Michel Foucault, who do recognize the importance of imagination in politics and do not sacrifice the specificity of its aesthetic moment. Still, I contend in this chapter, they fail to argue for a form of imagination and of aesthetic creativity that can act as a source of the commonality without which politics could not take place. They fail to argue for culture as a factor that can stabilize politics and, at the same time, enhance
the political capacities of collectivities. In brief, they fail to argue, in the manner of
Hannah Arendt, for imagination and culture as factors that are essential in the making of
the public realm and of a (artificial) common world, of speeches and narratives, which
politics requires.

I intend to show in this chapter, that, due to a prejudiced fear of imagination,
prominent moral and political philosophers, such as Rawls, have, if not an utterly
negative, at least an ambiguous and rather hesitant attitude toward it. The theoretical
damage produced by these thinkers is a rather simplistic and thus a reductionist
conception of imagination. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutic philosophy, I argue
that a reductionist approach to imagination ignores the role that imaginative practices,
such as ideology and utopia, play in symbolically structuring social bonds and in drawing
the cultural horizons that define democratic solidarities.

Even thinkers, who like Habermas treat imagination with a more sophisticated
respect and thus see it as a source of reflection and understanding in politics, still fail to
recognize the specificity of its aesthetic moment. Thus, I argue in the present chapter that
Habermas cannot recognize the specificity of aesthetic experience because of the general
epistemological and particular linguistic assumptions that ground his model of
communicative rationality. Still, his model of communicative reason does not completely
ignore the role that aesthetics and imagination could play in understanding and dialogue.

Therefore, drawing on M. M. Bakhtin’s philosophy, I critically develop
Habermas’s conception of aesthetics and its timid integration in the model of
communicative rationality. The more general point I make is that any attempt to integrate
creative imagination and its aesthetic, form giving moment, into a dialogic framework needs to start from modified general epistemological and linguistic premises. I start modifying these premises in the present chapter, through a discussion of Bakhtin’s conception of the aesthetic and the novel, and I continue in the next chapters through an interpretation of Kant’s, Schiller’s, Herder’s, and Vico’s conceptions of aesthetic imagination and language.

Still, one could argue, there are contemporary social and political thinkers, such as Rorty and Foucault, who recognize, more than Habermas, contingency and particularity as sources of creativity, as well as the creative and imaginative nature of political power. Nevertheless, I argue, they still fail to subordinate aesthetic and power-fed creativity to the making of a (public) world, as a sine qua non condition of politics.

The chapter concludes by arguing that Arendt’s performance model of democracy connects aesthetic imagination, poēsis, and culture to plural and public praxis in a way that makes it possible to account for intercultural understanding as a political task. However, her conception of imagination, of poēsis, and of the aesthetic dimension of politics still needs to integrate more the role that cultural and linguistic creativity play in the making of a plural, public, and common world.

In brief, her overall understanding of the human condition needs to add to labor, work, and action, a fourth category, that of creative and polyphonic poēsis. Hence, the chapter closes with a synopsis of how the thinkers discussed in the present dissertation, Kant, Schiller, Herder, Vico, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, can improve her performance model of democracy in this sense, thus making it possible to sketch a notion of creative
dialogic politics; that is, a form of politics that can facilitate intercultural understanding and democratic cosmopolitanism in a post-national world.

Rawls on Justice and Imagination

One of the most influential and most debated political theorists of the 20th century, John Rawls, makes no real room for the public use of imagination in his interpretation of Kantian constructivism. This is the case despite the fact that Kant himself assigned imagination a very important role in his critical philosophy, including his moral and political philosophy, as I will argue in the next chapter of the dissertation. To begin with, the original position, the representative device for choosing the principles of justice, as a “procedural interpretation of Kant’s conception of autonomy and the categorical imperative,” allows no room for imagination. Imagination plays no role in the construction of the principles of justice. It could be inferred that the reason is, as Rawls himself seems to suggest, through his criticism of the utilitarian concept of sympathetic spectator, that, if used in practical deliberation, imagination would not be conducive to impartiality, namely, to a rational and reasonable standpoint, but to impersonality, namely, to just an emotional conflation of all individuals minds into one. The powers of imaginative identification with the other, Rawls concludes, consist in the “conflation of all desires into one system of desire.”

Based on his criticism of the sympathetic spectator, it can also be inferred that Rawls sees imagination in a rather narrow manner. The assumption he makes, in the
tradition of behaviorist psychology, in rejecting Mill’s idea of the sympathetic spectator as the ground for a theory of justice is that images are mental and private. Thus, the faculty of imagination can provide one only with subjective and factual projections. Thus, it conflates plurality and difference. Imagination is reductive. Only reason can give an adequate, impartial and objective, representation of plurality and diversity. As a result, one can conclude that insofar as a deontological theory, namely, one that states the priority of right over good, takes seriously the distinctions between persons, it cannot use imagination in the construction of the principles of justice.

However, although not explicitly recognized as playing a role in the construction of the principles of justice, and thus in laying the ground for a well-ordered society, imagination seems to play, nevertheless, a certain role in supporting the principles of justice once they are chosen and recognized as matching the considered judgments. A sort of productive or, at least, spontaneous imagination seems to be necessary for the creation of those social values that would support a public conception of justice, once in place. Rawls mentions briefly and rather indirectly creative imagination in connection with the Aristotelian Principle and the third “main concept of ethics,” in that of moral worth. Part of one’s moral worth is the capacity to enjoy performing increasingly complex activities and thus of becoming better persons. Complex activities, Rawls argues, “satisfy the desire for variety and novelty of experience, and leave room for feats of ingenuity and invention.” Invention and ingenuity thus seem to be an important part of one’s moral worth.
While the original position was built based on the most general facts about human nature, which made rationality the hallmark of being human, at this stage of the argument Rawls seems to add creative imagination and ingenuity as an equally important part of the same natural make-up of man. The spontaneous play of children and animals is invoked in support of the idea that one enjoys, as against routines, “natural and free activity” that keeps up the vitality and zest of one’s life. Moreover, social practices and cooperative activities should be the result of imagination, and as its products they should be capable of challenging individuals to perfect their moral worth and the excellence of their skills. In brief, it can be inferred that, in the context of the thick theory of good, imagination seems to be a sort of social and moral power that can generate new forms of social and political liaisons and forms of association. In the end, it is even suggested that imagination might even play a role, even if a minimal one, in generating respect and self-respect.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day, despite his recognition of the minimal role that imagination can play in the creation and enhancement of the moral and social complexity of the life of the individuals in a well ordered society and thus of their moral worth, Rawls fails to see imagination as a politically relevant human faculty. This means as a faculty that does play a fundamental role in choosing the principles of justice and in structuring the basic institutions of society. More seriously, Rawls fails to connect imagination to the most important notion of justice as fairness, that of the reasonable. Thus, he does not seem to think that the citizens of a well-ordered society might need imagination as a component of the power of the reasonable, which is complementary to
that of rational in the idea of fair cooperation.\textsuperscript{50} In brief, the sense of justice is an entirely rational affair.

Rawls defines the power of reasonable, an essential notion for political constructivism, as a “form of moral sensibility that underlines the desire to engage in fair cooperation as such.”\textsuperscript{51} Despite this definition, which suggests that the power of the reasonable might have something to do with sensibility and perhaps with imagination, Rawls argues in \textit{Political Liberalism} that reasonable persons can filter out those moral values from their comprehensive doctrines that properly apply to basic political institutions from those that do not, only insofar as they are aware of the burdens of reason. That is, of the burdens of correct reasoning and judgment. Thus, the public use of reason is the only mechanism for reaching an overlapping consensus about the values that would count as political. Imagination plays no role in this decanting.

Thus, Rawls’s last word about what he comes to name political constructivism is that “the “citizen’s capacity for a sense of justice is modeled by the procedure itself.”\textsuperscript{52} Procedural reason has the first and last word in distinguishing between reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines and thus in making a political conception of justice possible. Although important in enhancing the moral worth of one’s life, imagination does not play, in the end, any role in mediating the relations between citizens and thus in choosing the political values that structure institutions and policies.

Against Rawls’s final conclusion about the preeminence of reason over any other mental faculty in the construction of the principles of justice and, consequently, of the institutions that characterize a well-ordered society, Ricoeur argues that the original
position does not make very much sense if it is conceived only as a product of reason. Thus, he contests the usual assumption about the continuity and the mutual presupposition of our considered judgments and the final theory that is inaugurated by the thesis of the original position, by pointing out that the original position creates an epistemological gap (*coupure*) between the considered judgments and the deliberation they initiate.\textsuperscript{53} This gap resides “in the constructivism involved by the imagination of the original position.”\textsuperscript{54} The two principles of justice are not only “a progressive clarification of what was already anticipated,”\textsuperscript{55} but they are also the result of an imaginative leap, which is held in check by the “extension of the critical moment of the moral conviction.”\textsuperscript{56}

On the one hand, this makes Rawls’ moral theory the result of ethical pre-comprehension, and thus, the justification of the most common moral convictions. On the other hand, it makes it the result of an imaginative anticipation, which introduces a form of discontinuity between theory and the most common moral convictions. Therefore, what Ricoeur seems to be saying is that Rawls’s original position makes sense only if seen as the result of imagination, and not only as the result of a progressive rationalization to an increased level of abstraction of what people have already intuitively understood about the basic structure of their society. In short, constructivism involves two elements: imagination and the circularity that characterizes all great moral theories, which thus justify and, simultaneously, aim to change, the most common moral convictions of a society or culture.
It makes sense to infer that Ricoeur’s discussion of the manner in which Rawls constructs his moral theory is based on the assumption that (a) theory (of justice) is a construction that is both continuous and discontinuous with the imaginative practices of a society. On the most fundamental level every group necessarily gives itself an image of itself. To this extent, theory, as a higher level of symbolic construction, is still part of the attempt of a society to give itself an image of itself and thus to represent and justify the most common moral convictions of the group, by turning them, at the same time, into an object of reflection. Creative imagination and reason work together in the symbolic production of theory.

Thus, through a theory such as Rawls’s theory of justice a “group becomes conscious of its existence and its practice,” of its most common moral convictions. At the same time, the theory that Rawls constructs is not only a representation of the most common moral convictions, but it is also a criticism of them. In Ricoeur’s view such criticism is made possible by the utopian leap of imagination. Thus, Rawls introduces at the core of the most common moral convictions, at the heart of experience, “the imaginary project of another society, of another reality.” This otherness at the heart of experience has the function to criticize the most common moral convictions from the nowhere and the outside of utopia.

Moreover, contrary to what Rawls likes to think, deontological theory needs imagination. Ricoeur argues that the reason is the manner in which contract theory defines the other as a partner, namely, the manner in which the distributive, mutual structure of the basic social phenomenon is constructed. In a word, the proof is in the
manner in which the sense of justice is made possible. Ricoeur thus implies that it is not plausible to think that reason is enough to provide for the sense of justice, namely, to provide for how the others are perceived as subjects of right. Ricoeur’s criticism has the merit of providing the connection that Rawls does not make between the reasonable, the sense of justice, and imagination.

Ricoeur argues that the distributive phenomenon in a contract theory, and, particularly, in Rawls conception of justice as fairness as an interpretation of contract theory, presupposes a subject that is not a “face” (visage), nor a “they” (on), but an “each one” (chacun), namely, the one to whom a part is allocated.59 “Each one” is “the subject of right.”60 Thus, the “each one” that the representative parties in the original position have to bear in mind is neither the immediate and concrete presence of a face that is in front of them, nor an impersonal presence of someone that could be anyone. Instead, as Ricoeur’s own conception of society suggests, “each one” could be a contemporary that I never meet, a predecessor that I never heard of, or a successor that I will never have the opportunity of seeing. The question is if reason can really see “each one,” if it can really make living and fully human the presence of those whom I might never see or even hear of? According to Ricoeur, reason is not enough. For seeing these people as “each one” imagination is required. Thus, the role of imagination seems to be essential in constructing the subject of right.

Thus, according to Ricoeur, it can be said that, choosing the principles of justice and thus laying the ground for the basic institutions of a society, is not only a matter of rational choice or only a procedural matter, but it also requires, if the representative
parties are to be able to envisage the “each one,” which is the subject of right, analogical imagination. This is the capacity to transfer my “here” into “there.” To this extent, one could argue that drafting a constitution and thus designing the basic institutions of a society requires analogical imagination. Due to analogical imagination I can see my contemporaries, my predecessors, and my successors, which I need to consider when constructing the subject of right, as I see myself; namely, as a source of meaning and as capable of sharing into meaning, and not as things. Even if I will never really see them or meet them, I can envisage them as “each one,” namely, as people for whom self-respect and moral worth have as much value as they have for myself.

In a nutshell, based on Ricoeur’s interpretation one could argue that the construction of Rawls’ moral theory, as well as, the overlapping consensus through which the values that structure a political conception of justice are constructed, are not only products of reason and of its procedures. Instead, they also grow out of the imaginative practices of a society, such as ideology and utopia and require analogical imagination, as well. Accordingly, time and analogical imagination are essential aspects of the type of judgment that takes place in the original position. This is the case because one also needs to envisage the subject of right, namely, to imagine as “each one” those myriads of people that belong not only to the present, but also to the past and to the future, whom one will never see or meet, but to whom one needs, nevertheless, to attribute a human, meaningful, and living presence, similar to one’s own.

A larger implication of Ricoeur’s discussion is that people who use imagination in this sense would find it difficult, if not impossible, to treat the others that they do not see
or even hear of only as instruments or as impediments, as dirt or disease. This is possible because, by analogically exerting their imagination, they would broaden their sensibility and with it their cultural and historical field of moral and political perception. They would broaden their common sense. Part of thus broadening one’s common sense is to understand, as I will argue in chapter five, through an interpretation of Heidegger’s conception of everydayness that the present, the past, and the future are interconnected with and grow out of each other.

Repeating the narrative of the past would discover new semantic possibilities, projecting the future would anticipate new possibilities, and in the vision of the present diverse desires and ethical obligations would be compared. However, Ricoeur observes, this would be possible because of imagination’s power to bracket “our first-order interest in manipulation and control,” thus making it possible to fulfill its “general function of developing practical possibilities.” As a result, the analogical capacity of imagination transforms its sense of possible, of seeing as, into a field where “I try out my power to act” in a world of the past, present, and future that is made out of human beings as I am, and not of mere things that can be ordered or just wiped out of one’s mind. This shows that the creativity that is at work in analogical imagination is not technological, namely, it does not issue in manipulation or control of other human beings. The main reason is that, as long as analogical imagination is active, any attempt to represent and justify reality (ideology), but also any attempt to change and to redesign it (utopia), cannot bracket the fact that the other human beings are each a source of meaning and moral worth as I am. It cannot wipe off the living and personal presence of the other.
Ricoeur argues that the analogical transfer of my “here” into “there” is mediated by “imaginative practices,” which are a part of the social and cultural imaginaire. Imaginative practices can play such an important role because social bonds are symbolically constituted. Thus, every society possesses or is part of a “socio-political imaginaire, that is, an ensemble of symbolic discourses.” Ricoeur identifies two such imaginative practices: ideology and utopia. Ideology has an integrative function, while utopia has a subversive function. Ideology is grounded in the fundamental fact that any group gives itself an image of itself, of its existence and its practice. Only to the extent that, in the process of being reinforced and repeated after-the-fact, this image continuously increases the distance between real practice and its interpretation, does ideology become pathological. The moment the ideology is captured by the system of authority in any given society “the function of dissimulation wins over the function of integration.” Otherwise and up to a point any ideology fulfills the function of integration and reproduction, and even the function of reflection, through which a society becomes aware of its own existence and its own practices.

Ricoeur thinks that utopia does not have only pathological connotations. On the contrary, the central idea of utopia is that of the nowhere, the non-place from where “we are able to take a fresh look at our reality; hereafter, nothing about it can continue to be taken for granted. The field of the possible now extends beyond that of the real.” In this quality, utopia “performs the function of social subversion.” It undermines the real and the familiar. Ricoeur argues that the pathological aspects of utopia originate at the same point where the positive aspects become possible: in the fact that “utopia arises from a
leap elsewhere, nowhere.” From here “it develops unsettling features that are easy to spot in the literary expressions of utopia: a tendency to subordinate reality to dreams, a fixation with perfectionist designs, and so on.”

Reading Kateb’s discussion of political aestheticism through Ricoeur’s discussion of the role the imaginative practices of ideology and utopia play in a culture adds new dimensions to the challenge that one faces in the attempt to avoid political aestheticism. Political aestheticism could be either the result of the pathological excess of mad utopia, namely, of a false and passionate sense of possibility, which collapses life into dream, or the result of the pathological excess of rigidified ideology, which occurs when the aesthetic justifies too much the world as it is, being incapable to see its familiarity as problematic and strange.

Thus, it can be argued that, if one wants to avoid political aestheticism, the challenge is “to construct together the integrative function of ideology and the subversive function of utopia.” Ricoeur claims that, on the one hand, such a joint construction is possible because, even the most “conservative” ideology, “one that would exhaust itself in simply repeating the social bond and reinforcing it,” would still, “insofar as it mediates the immediate social bond,” produce a gap, a distance, consequently, something potentially “excentric,” where the criticism of utopian imagination can install. In short, to the extent that it discourses about immediate reality and to the extent that it engages language, even the strictest ritualization of the social bond, of the “here” still makes room for the “there,” for the possibility of seeing things differently. The possibility to ‘see as’ and thus to bring unspoken meanings to expression resides in the very nature of language.
On the other hand, the excentric movement of utopia leads back to the “here.” This is the case because its excentric movement is only the “desperate effort to show the fundamental nature of man in the clarity of utopia,” thus expanding the image that a society can give of itself. In a nutshell, one cannot be without the other. Ideology does move toward integration, repetition, and reflection, but in this process its narrative creates a distance that allows one to ask if the real could not be seen as something else, if it could not be re-configured as another. At the same time, utopia is excentric, but its wandering narrative is bent on illuminating and expanding the nature of man, of the “here.”

One could assume that such a pairing of ideology and utopia is made possible by the fact that creative imagination is a process or a method rather than content. Such an understanding of creative imagination relies on the assumption that image is an “emerging meaning.” It is a capacity, a dynamic, and a power to expand meaning. However, if this is true, then any integration and reproduction of the cultural and ideological content, as well as any reflection upon the image that a group gives of itself is geared toward the expansion of meaning through the creative and metaphorical capacity to configure and refigure images. What matters is the process of how many new connections the transfer of the integrative “here” of ideology into the wandering and subversive “there” of the other of utopia can create and vice versa.

With his definition of ideology and utopia, as the two fundamental imaginative practices that symbolically produce, configure and refigure society, Ricoeur takes us to the core of what culture is. He underlines the fact that culture is an integrative and stabilizing, as well as a subversive-transformational and thus enriching medium. At the
same time, he manages to focus attention on one fundamental impact culture has on politics. This is achieved by his argument that, as long as the two imaginative practices are not dissociated, no ideological integration can be so total as to make impossible the critical outlook of utopian imagination and no utopian subversion can be so excentric as not to be able to keep its connection with reality and thus to enrich its meaning.

Ricoeur’s argument suggests that only a society that is capable of subverting its own integrative and reproductive ideological tendencies, while, at the same, time being able to reconnect any excentric or centrifugal forces to a common reality, can successfully engage in a form of politics that facilitates intercultural understanding. Moreover, only a society that employs creative imagination in a manner that questions the tranquillizing familiarity of everydayness and the tendency of its members to get immersed into the closest objects of their concern can successfully engage in a politics of intercultural understanding. Such a society would thus not lose sight of the foreign, thus keeping alive its capacity to address the unfamiliar, not allowing it to become unsayable.

The full political relevance of Ricoeur’s pairing of the two imaginative practices shows its true scope in connection with what Habermas considers to be an important political task of the contemporary world: intercultural understanding. Such a political task requires not only the capacity to reflect upon and criticize ideologies through the construction of valid and persuasive arguments. It also requires the capacity to engage creative imagination to “produce otherness at the very heart of experience” and thus to change and expand given horizons of meaning and the symbolic definition of reality.
In contrast with Rawls and closer to Ricoeur, Habermas thinks that imagination plays an important role in preparing the ground for a culture of communication and dialogue. Productive imagination plays a pivotal role in the creation of (cultural) concepts, and thus indirectly in the creation of the lifeworld, with its personal biographies and intersubjective meanings. Through productive imagination “human beings gain distance from the immediate pressure of nature.” As distancing and emancipation from any kind of immediacy, productive imagination prepares the ground for freedom and reflexivity, thus playing a fundamental role in the civilizing process. The civilizing process is “a movement toward increased civility.” Civilized behavior consists in the capacity to give form to our impressions, and to use this form as a source of reflection on our beliefs. The key activity in this process is the form giving power of productive imagination, namely its aesthetic dimension. Productive imagination, as a preparatory ground for reflection, could thus facilitate a politics of intercultural understanding.

However, while it is Habermas’ merit to recognize that productive imagination, far from being the irrational “spontaneity of non-alienated life,” can actually play a fundamental role in the process of conceptual synthesis, and thus it can be a preparing ground for critical thinking, it is my contention that, in the process, he takes away the specificity and integrity of the category of the aesthetic. This results from his definition
of “form” exclusively as distancing and of objectification as decontextualization. Since symbolization (and with it the nature of language) moves progressively and irrevocably from sensuous expression and perceptual representation to pure meaning, the aesthetic form is, gradually, cut off from its living origin in perceptions and emotions.

The impression is thus created that the civilizing process can take place only by superseding the aesthetic moment of imagination, as anchored in the living particularity and disposition of perceptions and emotions. Only impartial and objective thinking that alone is conducive to communication and understanding would be possible. In the end, it is, therefore, true to say that Habermas subordinates the form giving power of imagination to reason, to its emancipatory and critical role, to an extent that robs the aesthetic moment of imagination of its connection with life and the living character of particularity.

The problem is that such a subordination of the aesthetic moment of imagination and of its creativity to reason in a way that reduces it to just a (superseded) moment in the development of the Enlightenment (and thus of one particular culture), undermines the very aim of a politics of intercultural understanding. The main reason is that, in order for intercultural understanding to be possible, the (anthropological) diversity of cultures, as well as the complexity that is at work in each and every one of them should not be reduced to just a thin and universal veneer. Only insofar as the diversity of cultures and the complexity, which runs through each and every one of them, are not effaced, can political creativity be cultivated as an essential skill of the citizens. Political creativity, a concept that the next chapter will further develop, refers to the capacity to be sensible to
the different particularity of the other and to answer to it in a manner that makes it constitutive to one’s own identity. Thus understood political creativity could become a source of public common cultural horizons.

Such horizons would facilitate intercultural understanding because they would not reproduce and confirm “authentic” traditions, selves, or values. On the contrary, they would come into being through the dynamic and plural co-existence and interaction of particularities, as a web of relations, where imagination works as both a transformative and a hybridizing force. However, in order to be able to account for the formation of such horizons, Habermas’ notion of “linguistically generated intersubjectivity”\textsuperscript{72} needs to be complemented with a deeper imaginative and creative dimension, by connecting it to the event of dialogue, where, as Greg Nielsen points out, the aesthetic “plays a larger role than either the objective or authoritative validity claims in communicative actions.”\textsuperscript{73}

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Despite the recognition of linguistic\textsuperscript{74} and individual creativity\textsuperscript{75} as crucial prerequisites of modern, post-Enlightenment, lifeworld, discourse ethics cannot incorporate the aesthetic moment of imagination in a dialogic manner, namely, as the creative answer to the other’s cultural and biographical living particularity, which happens in the event of crossing over to him. On a superficial level, this is a consequence of Habermas’ understanding of the notion of culture and of its role in achieving communication. On a deeper level, this is a consequence of the general epistemological assumptions that underline his model of communicative rationality.
Relying on Max Weber’s theory of modernity, Habermas defines modern, post-Reformation and post-Enlightenment, culture as a “formal stock of universal structures of consciousness expressed in the cultural value spheres that develop, according to their own logics, under the abstract standards of truth, normative rightness, and authenticity.”

The assumption that underlines this concept of culture is the strict separation of form and content, of formal validity claims and cultural values. What makes rational, based on arguments, communication possible is this “universalist” assumption. The rational and criticizable character of communication is made possible by validity claims. These “are open to criticism because they are based on formal world-concepts. They presuppose a world that is identical for all possible observers, or a world intersubjectively shared by members, and they do so in an abstract form freed from all specific content.”

In the attempt to achieve “the unity of reason in the diversity of its voices,” validity claims present a Janus face. On the one hand, they are raised here and now, because they are culturally and historically embedded. In this sense, Habermas rightly states that the “universalist position does not have to deny the pluralism and the incompatibility of historical versions of ‘civilized humanity.’” On the other hand, the validity claims transcend the cultural and historical context. As a result, validity and, thus, the universal dimension that makes rational communication possible should not to be confused with cultural values, namely, with the historically changing particular patterns of value.” Consequently, communicative reason is finite, namely, contextually embedded, and at the same time open to further contexts and critique, because there are no final answers to what is true or right. It is intersubjective and constructive reason.
However, at the end of the day, openness and intersubjectivity are made possible *only* through the formality of reason.

The trouble is that intercultural understanding requires not only an open and constructive reason, but also creative imagination and cultural hybridization as part of the attempt to keep the dialogue unfinished, even when rational consensus and agreement are not reached. Unfortunately, because of the strict separation between formal validity (reason) and cultural contents and values, Habermas’ ethics discourse cannot account for this. This can prove problematic for purposes of intercultural understanding, since here the primary concern is not to appeal to an idealized speech situation, but to create a cultural and linguistic commonality, as well as an affective and emotional solidarity, that does not exist in the first place.

As a result, Habermas’ sensitivity to the context’s capacity for transcending (through productive imagination) its own limitations and thus for developing the distance necessary for critical self-reflection and rational communication or for providing the communicative power that keeps the legitimacy of law from running dry needs a new dimension. This refers to the capacity productive imagination has to function as a connector of plural forms of life and of individual life stories and thus as a creator of cultural hybrids. Bakhtin’s notion of transgredient, according to which an idea or lifeworld can develop *only* by crossing over to other ideas or lifeworlds, can provide this dimension to Habermas’ notion of productive imagination.

On a deeper level, the strict separation of the content of culture from the formality of reason (that keeps the dialogue open) expresses the fact that Habermas’ notion of
communicative rationality can be seen as fundamentally framed by what Bakhtin calls the epistemological model of abstract thinking and the theory of knowledge, in brief, by theorism. What this model values is not the “the actual fact of the aesthetic performance,” but “the theoretical transcription” and “the cognizance” of the object that was chosen for consideration. As a result, the universal comes into being through abstracting from “the concretely intuited uniqueness of the world,” and not from its intensification.

Opposite to the assumptions made by theorism, Bakhtin constructs a view of dialogue that starts from the premise that the truth of a situation is not what is “repeatable and constant in it” and that what is essential in a dialogic situation is not “that which is universal and identical (logically identical).” Because the dualism between cognition and life cannot ever be overcome from within theoretical cognition, central to Bakhtin’s conception of dialogue is not the notion of “unity,” but that of “uniqueness” and “outsideness.” As a result, he argues that the productiveness of the event of a life does not consist in achieving “unity,” but “in the intensification of one’s own outsideness with respect to others, one’s own distinctness from others: it consists in fully exploiting the privilege of one’s own unique place outside other human beings.”

Opposite to theorism, the aesthetic performative moment presupposes finding a point d’appui, a concrete embodiment, in the other, namely, it requires “some genuine source of real strength out of which I would be capable of seeing myself as another.” As a result, the aesthetic moment lifts particularity to form, not by abstracting from it, but by intensifying the response to the other’s specificity, because the core of the relationship
with the other is living addressivity. This is the ongoing dialogue with the other, as the creative and active anticipation of his responses, which never separates itself from the living concreteness of his emotions and dispositions, which are not suppressed, but continuously restructured.

While Habermas would agree that to exist as a person means to exist as “the subject of an address,” still the way he conceives answerability, if compared with Bakhtin’s notion, which emphasizes the moment of aesthetic and imaginative performance, would still be predominantly discursive. As a result, discourse ethics needs to interiorize more the assumption that guides aesthetic objectification in Bakhtin’s sense, namely, that dialogue happens only through imaginatively and creatively answering to the concreteness of my life and the other’s life. This is necessary because intercultural understanding requires “imaginative mobility” and flexibility that can come only from the living connection with the living presence of the other, thus not allowing worldviews and ideologies, hollow images and symbols, to obliterate that “everyone is as real to himself and herself as one is oneself.”

That is why validity is here primarily answerable and performative. Answerable validity is the expression of the performed act and of the uniqueness of my life and the other’s life, as expressed in the fullness of the word, which is taken in its tripe identity, as concept, as image, and as intonation. Contrasted to just formal validity, answerable validity does not divorce form from content, cultural product from life, norm from the will and the imaginative sensibility that creates it. As for Habermas, the criteria that one uses to understand and judge the world are not given, but a creative task. However,
because, for Bakhtin, the ethical (ought) has a strong aesthetic core normativity can be achieved only through my unique life answering to the other’s unique life, namely, in the event and the performance of our dialogue.

This aesthetically creative task is neither irrational and the egoistic expression of the fantasies of the inner self nor “readiness for excitement without any proper object,” because it can be achieved only through forming the other’s life in a way that responds to its uniqueness. Only through the living transformation of the other’s life into a story, which is the result of an intensification of its uniqueness and outsideness, and not an inherited stereotype or an obsessively repeated and reproduced image, can I gain the distance I need in order to see my life aesthetically, namely, as a whole.

To this extent, aesthetic reason is “a moment of practical reason,” while the category that subsumes both aesthetic and practical reason is “answerability” (literally, responsibility). The pivotal moment of aesthetic reason as a moment of practical reason consists in the relationship between the I and the other. This is a relationship that is structured by moral categories, such as the absolute respect/love for the other, who is the hero of my life. The care for my own life is unavoidably the care for the other’s life, because only through the other I come to understand myself as a human being, namely as finite, as a “delimited empirical object,” with a body and a soul. The other is my moral compass, only through him I learn to be moral, loving and caring, because “it is only the other who can be embraced, clasped all around, it is only the other’s boundaries that can all be touched and felt lovingly.” In this sense bestowing the gift of form (which is the
core of the aesthetic experience) on the other cannot be domineering and manipulating, but loving, and caring. It is the summation of my moral attitude toward him.

From such a perspective, normativity is the product of the always incomplete event of the dialogized co-existence and interaction of different particular lives, and not a structure that is the result of the evolution of a particular (Western) form of intersubjectivity. In this sense, Bakhtin’s notion of unity, his holism is a good example of post-metaphysical thinking, in Habermas’ sense of not being a finished exercise. However, where Habermas sees the unfinished exercise of unity as being possible only through the formality of reason, even if culturally embedded, Bakhtin sees it as being fundamentally possible through the living encounter of other cultural ideas and forms of life. As a result, he prefers to speak about “formal enrichment,” which is the result of the aesthetic and creative intensification of the outsideness of the other. This is the act of enriching the other’s life without merging with it, but keeping the distance of the author/contemplator, and thus lifting the other’s life to the level of (aesthetic) form.

Formal enrichment is the core of cultural creation and it resides in the capacity to transpose the concrete object to another axiological plane, to bestow the gift of form upon it and in so doing to “enrich the event of my life.” It means to get to the universal dimension through the intensification of uniqueness. Content and form are not so strictly separated here. On the contrary, the content is intensified in its concreteness and, only as a result of this, can it be transposed on a different axiological plane, and, thus, formally transmuted. Thus, to be engaged in aesthetic activity means neither to merge with the other nor to abstract from the concreteness of the other’s life, but to image forth the form
that makes our dialogue possible in a way that requires that one sees oneself from the outside, through the other’s life story and sees the other as being at the core of who one is. This implies that destroying the other is, in a sense, destroying oneself.

To this extent, every attempt to pull form out of the event of dialogue creates the danger of installing one unique form as the form, and thus of depriving it of further dialogization. Aesthetic form is the endless creation of the dialogized co-existence and interaction of different voices. It is dialogized creativity. Michael Eskin calls this model, the architectonic of co-existence, and he opposes it to the Kantian idea of an architectonic of reason. The Kantian architectonic makes the claim to give a complete and systematic table of the categories of reason, one that is final. It is precisely this idea that both Bakhtin and Habermas try to (post-metaphysically) rethink in the context of human finitude. However, more radically than Habermas, Bakhtin conceives this finitude as the living, imaginative and performative, event of crossing over to the other, and not only as the condition of communicative reason. Thus, he can root normativity deeper than Habermas, since he connects it to the aesthetic and cultural process of creative advancement and formal enrichment, where the “I” and “the other” “are not static and do not congeal into an unshakeable structure,”¹⁰¹ where every unity is unique and at the same time diversifiable.
Linguistic assumptions:

Clarity and transparency versus metaphorical and polyphonic creativity

Since one fundamental prerequisite of intercultural understanding is the cultural and linguistic creation of the commonality on which rational communication depends, and since reason is, as Habermas points out, linguistically embedded, it becomes important to consider the linguistic assumptions that underline discourse ethics. The idea that guides such an enquiry is that the conception of language that structures discourse ethics does not sufficiently recognize the communicative power of metaphorical and polyphonic linguistic creativity, despite Habermas’ recognition of the world disclosive nature of language.

Habermas’ conception of language takes shape along two lines of argument. One of them is historical and it relates to his theory of modernity. The other follows the conclusions of analytic philosophy about the nature of language. In the first line of argument, Habermas takes the results of Weber’s and Durkheim’s theories of modernity as the premises for his understanding of cultural and societal modernity. According to these, the coming into being of modernity is accompanied by the total translation of the symbolism of the holy into rational form. Modern mind is caught in this formal frame, which is a tragic situation for Weber, since creating powerful and vital images of the world is both necessary and dangerous (the re-enchantment of the world) in the modern political landscape, and a liberating one for Durkheim, as long as there can be found secular equivalents for the functions the sacred used to perform in traditional societies.
Habermas does recognize modern art as an autonomous and differentiated sphere of modern culture, which, as his discussion of Schiller’s aesthetic utopia proves, has a “communicative, community-building and solidarity-giving force.” It has the force to unify a fragmented and differentiated modern society, thus fulfilling a role that belonged to religion. Consequently, Habermas argues that modern art can connect the (alienated) culture of experts to daily lifeworld, as a counterpart to science and cultural rationalization. As he promisingly foresees, symbols could be forms of secular illumination, the “semantic energies” that a culture arrived at the “moment of overcoming age-old repressions,” would need in order to give content and meaning to life and world, in order to save the “structures of practical discourse” from becoming desolate. He even recognizes that, “when it is related to problems of life or used in an exploratory fashion to illuminate a life-historical situation,” art influences cognitive interpretations and normative expectations and alters “the way in which all these moments refer back and forth to one another.” However, to the extent that he accepts Weber’s and Durkheim’s conclusions about a modernity ineluctably impoverished in its symbolic powers, where the symbolism of the holy has been completely translated into rational form, one cannot but wonder about the nature of the symbols Habermas has in mind as the forms of secular illumination.

Unfortunately, the attempt to redeem art and symbols within the narrative of communicative reason is short circuited by the second line of argument that Habermas develops about the nature of language. If as he states “propositionally differentiated language is organized in such a way that everything that can be said at all can also be said
in assertoric form, then it would be reasonable to assume that what is said in metaphors, and generally speaking in any symbolic language, can be also entirely translated into this form. By thus giving priority to the literal/logical over the figurative and innovative meaning of words in everyday communication, Habermas cannot recognize metaphorical and poetic speech as a distinctive type of speech (and thinking), as well as its role in everyday communication. The reason Habermas so carefully singles out the literal meaning of words as having priority in everyday communication and, at the same time, defines the standard speech act as being the literal one is the fear he entertains that the contact with the objective world would otherwise be lost. With it the capacity for critical thinking would be gone, as well as, the possibility for judging, namely, for “taking a positive or negative position” on the reasons offered by the interlocutor.

In the *Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas undeniably takes the literal meaning of language to be the standard type of speech act, because his purpose is ultimately to assure transparency and to spot the distortions of language and communication, or any other form of deception. As a result, he defines the lifeworld as mainly “familiar and transparent,” as taken for granted and shared meanings. The unfamiliar or the exceptional is “disturbed mutual understanding,” while “creative linguistic innovation” is a “limiting case.” This requires “the repair work of translators, interpreters, and therapists.” Despite the fact that he mentions renewal and novelty as a creative socialization that is part of social and cultural reproduction, the dominant orientation of society and lifeworld is geared in the end toward integration and continuity. These are achieved through reproduction and stabilization.
However, in the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas presents a more nuanced conception of how the everyday use of language could be, to some extent, poetic. He recognizes here the “power of metaphorical tropes” to illuminate the routines of everyday life and the specialized languages of science, law and morality, economics, political science. He also admits that even the “normal language of everyday life is ineradicably rhetorical.” Moreover, philosophy and literary criticism mediate between expert cultures and the everyday world through rhetorical linguistic creativity. This consists in the capacity to reconnect specialized languages to the dynamics of everyday practice “in which linguistic functions and aspects of validity are intermeshed.” If I rightly understand Habermas here, rhetorical linguistic creativity, far from being manipulative, consists of two operations that could possibly enhance communicative power. One would be to diversify the frozen unity of the specialized language, by re-imagining it in the living contexts of everyday life. The other would be to see, in the process, the cognitive, normative, and the aesthetic as more interconnected than they are usually considered under Habermas’ Kantian assumptions of modernity.

Unfortunately, this promising thread is too quickly interrupted, by the subordination of rhetorical linguistic creativity to the “discipline of a *distinct* form of argumentation.” In the end, the primacy of problem-solving over world disclosure and the (over)concern for social integration and cultural continuity trump the possibility of a thicker conception of linguistic and cultural creativity. Thus, as a result of his rationalistic conception of language, which is encased in a theory of society and culture that overemphasizes reproduction, integration, and continuity, metaphorical and poetic
creativity is not incorporated in the nature of language as part of its normal, daily cultural use.

If discourse ethics is to be able to offer a better account of how intercultural understanding could take place, it is this incipient thread in Habermas’ conception of language that needs further development. Metaphorical tropes, through which, if we follow the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, rhetorical discourse is constructed, are more than just illuminators of everyday practice and expert cultures. They can creatively expand language and culture. Since metaphors are genuine creations, they cannot be analytically reduced to their component parts. As Marcel Danesi points out, when we say *John is a gorilla*, a kind of semantic metamorphosis occurs. This means that both *John* and the *gorilla* cease to be the same by the very fact that they are brought together, while their intersection, which is the genuine metaphorical creation, cannot be reduced to any of the two initial meanings, but it is authentically novel and standing by itself, as a new *sui generis* reality.¹¹⁸

The main quality of a metaphor is its transformative power. Metaphor does not confirm its premises, but it uses them in a generative/constructive manner. Thus, when engaged in metaphorical creation the individual does not reproduce his cultural heritage or world. He does not re-state something constant or universal. On the contrary, he advances the familiar world by the creative attunement of the particularities that are involved. Moreover, it is impossible to reduce the *sui generis* result to the initial premises of the performative deed, since these are transformed through the metaphorical creation. Thus, the creative result cannot be traced down to the expression of some initial,
authentic truth or self. In Vico’s view, as I will argue in Chapter Three of the dissertation, metaphorical speech proves to be a really powerful communicative factor, since metaphor is an intrinsic element of the rhetorical performance, of the manner in which the speaker persuades the audience, by actively and creatively involving it in the construction of the metaphor. Moreover, metaphor, thus defined, is part of the everyday use of language, contrary to what the literalist model states. It is a “fundamental mode of thought and of communication.”

However, if metaphorical creativity is not a distortion of the daily use of language, but a constitutive part of it, then it would be reasonable to expect speakers not only to be capable of arguing, but also of being able to creatively advance their world even when they cannot reach a rational consensus. As I will argue at length in chapter three, Vico sees the dynamics of the metaphorical transformations of language as a source of social change where contestation takes place only though the creation of new cultural objects. If ingenuity is, as Vico thinks, the crucial feature of cultural beings engaged in the making of their political world, then (social and political) conflict is never completely divisive. In this sense, there is never an absolute discontinuity between different speeches or discourses in the social and political conflicts, because (metaphorical) ingenuity and, generally, the poetic power of language are deeply dialogic. Dialogic in this sense is not primarily discursive, but intensely creative and imaginative.

Similar to Vico’s poetic power of language that sees conflict not simply as divisive, but also as a creative transformation of and within given symbolic unities,
Bakhtin characterizes the utterance as the intersection of centralization (unity) and of living heteroglossia (semantic difference). Thus, it is “the tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language” in the concrete utterance that defines the polyphonic creativity of language. The concrete utterance is deeply creative and active. It is responsive in a creative manner to the other voices that utter. Language consciousness “participates in actual heteroglossia and multi-languagedness.”

Language consciousness is dialogized heteroglossia. At the most basic level, the word, which is the “eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogical interaction,” language always brings together several voices, which, in the encounter, creatively dialogize each other. Aesthetic creativity occurs here through the dialogized, simultaneous polyphony of voices, which constitutes the very nature of language. It can take the form of hybridization of two languages within the confines of the same utterance or of the interrelation and inter-illumination of languages, where the second voice in the utterance preserves its distinctiveness. It can also take the form of pure dialogue. This is a dialogue of languages and cultural forces “perceived not only in their static co-existence, but also as a dialogue of different times, epochs, and days, a dialogue that is forever dying, living, being born.”

It is this twofold creativity of language, polyphonic and metaphorical, that Habermas’ conception of language cannot account for. As a result, he cannot define intercultural understanding as responsive understanding. As characterized by Bakhtin, responsive understanding is “an active understanding, one that discourse senses as resistance or support enriching the discourse.” Thus, resistance does not only split. On
the contrary, it enriches the discourse, the culture. Responsive understanding is characterized by “internal dialogism,” not by comprehensibility and clarity. Thus, it is fundamentally creative. It is, as I will argue in Chapter Four, through an interpretation of Nietzsche’s conception of the relationship between master and slave, creative agonism. It is political creativity. As Bakhtin explains, passive understanding never enriches the word, because it seeks the reproduction of a given content. In contrast with this, “aesthetic” is always synonymous with creative answerability (even when contestation, resistance, and struggle occur). To understand something through an aesthetic experience is to be active and creative. It is a specific form of poēsis.

Rorty and Foucault on Aesthetic Creativity: A Critical Discussion

Richard Rorty and Michel Foucault criticize Habermas for stifling cultural and linguistic creativity through the formalism of his model of communicative reason. For Rorty and Foucault poēsis is, at least to some extent, a component of praxis. However, it is my point that, while both Rorty and Foucault recognize metaphorical linguistic creativity as part of political criticism, agonism, and confrontation, as effective in both proliferating and retrieving difference, they fail, in the end, to situate this type of creativity in the context of polyphonic linguistic creativity.

They do not see aesthetic and linguistic creativity as being in the service of polyphony, namely, of a dialogue of plural voices that due to their capacity to answer to each other’s uniqueness and particularity co-exist and interact with each other within the
confines of a relative unity and in view of creating and renewing common cultural
horizons, across and beyond their differences. If Habermas’ discourse ethics tends to
neglect the linguistic creativity that is at work in the everyday event of answering to the
other’s living uniqueness, Rorty and Foucault overstress the endlessly dispersed field of
resistances and proliferations that defy the very possibility of dialogizing differences and
thus of having some sort of relative unity.

Rorty opposes to Habermas’ universalism his “willingness to live with plurality”
against the background of an increasing sense of the “radically poetic character of
individual lives.”126 The reasons are his conception of language and the self as historical
contingency, not as a medium of increased universality, and the fact that he gives up the
notion of universal validity claims. As a result, the only standoffs he recognizes in the
process of communication are practical, not theoretical, because they can always be
solved by a renewed creativity.127 Undistorted communication can continue because of
the endless capacity to invent new vocabularies, and to reweave the web of relations.128
The source of this intellectual progress is metaphor.

Similar to Foucault and, partially, to Bakhtin, Rorty excludes any hope of
completion, convergence, and unification, because he sees the inherent creativity of
language and the self as an expression of the pathos of finitude. Such exclusion is
grounded in the fact that, as Bakhtin, Rorty sees the practical as having priority over the
theoretical, as well as, a largely aesthetic meaning. In brief, he sees the practical as a form
of (imaginative) making, and not as a finding. Thus, he argues, only pragmatic creativity,
for which there are no barriers except the lack of imagination, matters. The mood of
someone who practices this type of pragmatic creativity is irony. Such a mood seeks only “concrete alternatives and programs.”\textsuperscript{129} As a result of unbridled pragmatic creativity, the liberal ironist is capable of living in a field of imaginative possibilities, always already transposed into a new description, into a new vocabulary, into a new anticipated re-description.

Such an imaginative capacity situates the liberalism of the ironist not “in her devotion to those particular words but in her ability to grasp the function of many different sets of words.”\textsuperscript{130} In agreement with Bakhtin, for whom “the writer of prose…attempts to talk about even his own world in an alien language” and “he often measures his own world by alien linguistic standards,”\textsuperscript{131} Rorty sees the poetic use of language not as a confirmation of one’s own world and identity, but as a capturing and an anticipation of otherness and difference. Thus, since otherness is the core of any “identity,” the latter, in the spirit of metaphorical creativity, cannot “converge to the antecedently present.”\textsuperscript{132}

However, what makes imaginative liberalism politically dangerous is that, opposite to Bakhtin, Rorty understands creativity exclusively as playfulness. In Bakhtin’s language, one could say that his concept of creativity has no built-in limits. It is not answerable, because, as daydreaming and playing, does not have “an active aesthetic relationship to life.” Bakhtin argues that playing is led by an unlimited sense of possibility, because it is not (en)framed through the eyes of a spectator that would give it form, and thus answerable validity.
In this sense, the liberal ironist is just a private (and, perhaps, irresponsible) narcissist and a hedonist by default. One could even venture and say that he is vaguely reminiscent of the extrapolation and over-projection of the self, which is at work in the political aestheticism described by Kateb. Furthermore, as a consequence of the excess of irony, Rorty pushes the doubting zeal of the liberal ironist to the point where he cannot take himself seriously anymore. The contingent self is so fragile\textsuperscript{133} that, in the end, nothing seems to be left to even justify creativity. While one who refuses redescription, because he wants to be taken just as he is and talks,\textsuperscript{134} can be seen as an indication that he wants to be recognized in his living and irreplaceable uniqueness. It is also true that such refusal indicates the incapacity of such a self to engage in a creative and imaginative dialogue with the other; to answer to him.

As a result of the incapacity to answer to the other, and opposite to Bakhtin’s conception where the author is the source of polyphonic unity, for Rorty the author, the moral subiectum, the liberal ironist himself vanishes altogether. Both authority and responsibility (answerability) become hard, if not impossible, to justify. It appears that Rorty’s notion of creativity is only a form of private playing, with no real power to mutually engage the I and the other and thus to have an impact on the public sphere, and on values such as freedom and equality. The liberal ironist does not commit his creativity to the generation of new public spaces, to the creative advancement of the public world. Irony is only the empty private right of being idiosyncratic.

However, one could argue against such a conclusion that Rorty does ascribe to the poetic culture the role of generating redescriptions and vocabularies in the guise of novels
and ethnographies that “sensitize one to the pain of those who do not speak our language.” To engage imagination in order to sensitize people to the pain of those who suffer and are humiliated is, indeed, a desirable value. Thus, it appears that, after all, Rorty’s concept of creativity might not be just a form of contingently private and playful endeavor, but a responsible and publicly oriented imaginative and poetic enterprise.

Still, I would argue that the liberal ironist does think that it is futile and nonsensical to say why this (pain or suffering) would matter to anyone more than anything else. To this extent, the liberal ironist fails to provide a criterion for distinguishing between different engagements of imagination. The assumption that underlines the lack of such a criterion is that all ways of life are equally justifiable. If that is the case then there is no difference of value between the suffering of this victim and the political leader who uses his hyperactive imagination to regiment human beings as raw material for his playful redesigning of reality. At the end of the day, the “imaginative acquaintance with alternative final vocabularies” of the liberal ironist proves to be as useless as a collection of disconnected oddities.

In the end, Rorty’s pragmatic creativity leaves one without the possibility of judging, because there are no objective criteria or norms. The absence of such objective criteria makes it impossible to say why the value of expanding “our chances of being kind” through the use of imagination would count for more than the value of being a tyrant and of using hyperactive imagination for plastic politics. Although, Rorty’s aim is to sensitize people to the suffering and the humiliation and, therefore, to the life of other human beings, to the extent that the liberal ironist cannot say why this matters more than
other uses of imagination, his attitude is one of indifference, where nothing seems to be
really at stake.

However, Rorty assures us that the liberal ironist has a sense of solidarity, and, at the same time, he acts in the direction of constructing solidarity among human beings. While I agree with Rorty that solidarity is a construction, I do not see how a sense of human solidarity can be based only on a “sense of common danger.” In the end, Rorty’s attempt to build solidarity only on a sense of common danger reveals the fundamental pitfall of his notion of “creativity,” namely that it is not creative at all. The reason is that Rorty’s poetic creativity can produce only a very thin (emotionally circumscribed) public space, one that is based only on the selfish fear of not suffering pain and of not being destroyed. This is the case because what unites the liberal ironist with the rest of the species is not a common language, but a “common selfish hope,” that is “the hope that one’s world …will not be destroyed.” If, ultimately, one is left with an empty public space, this only reflects the fact that Rorty understands creativity only as the endless proliferation of idiosyncrasies.

Thus, if one wants to avoid political aestheticism and, at the same time, to facilitate intercultural understanding, Rorty’s conception of the liberal ironist cannot successfully serve the purpose. A different form of poetic and metaphorical creativity is required. Instead of selfishly juxtaposing private stories, as so many attempts to deflect private fears, such a form of linguistic creativity would intersect and connect differences, would hybridize them in the manner of Bakhtin’s dialogized heteroglossia. In a word, such a form of poetic and metaphorical creativity would expand the common cultural
horizons of a society. It would expand what Heidegger calls the world, namely, the site of intelligibility where other human beings, nature, the sacred, but also things and equipment become manifest, receive meaning, and can thus be encountered.

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Both Habermas and Rorty could be criticized on grounds of underplaying the connections that exist between political power, communication, and the cultural production of narratives; in brief, in the production and reproduction of discourses in a society. Such an aspect is not lost on Michel Foucault. Since, in Foucault’s view, discourse is just an attempt made by power to legitimize itself, any unification operated by reason needs to be dissolved and connected to its contingent beginnings. Since power produces truth, Foucault opposes to Habermas’ “universalist assumption,” which leads to the wrong conclusion that there is only one form of rationality, a “contingent history of rationality.” According to this, there are different forms of rationality and of truth, and, as a result, it is impossible to identify a moment when reason lost its project or when it moved from rationality to irrationality. No given form of rationality is Reason.¹³⁶

Reason, truth, object, and subject are constructions. They are the results of different practices that vary over time. Consequently, Foucault replaces the couple subject/object, as the defining structure in the construction of the self, with the process-like categories of “subjectivation” and “objectivation.”¹³⁷ Similar to his conception of reason as a construction that allows for a multiplicity of forms of rationality, “subjectivation” and “objectivation” refer to the fact that there is more than one possibility for organizing self-consciousness or for constructing an object. Thus,
“subject” and “object” come to signify a plurality of techniques of subjectivation and, respectively, of “objectivation, rather than a permanent and enduring substance. As much as the notion of reason itself, the notions of “object” and “subject” are seen as an open ‘unity.’ This is not the result of theoretical cognition, but of practical and creative activity, of specific social and cultural practices.

As a reflection of his conception of the way reason, truth, subject and object are constructed, Foucault defines thinking as problematization. Its role is to dissolve the “unity” and familiarity, the necessity of given discourses and categories back into their contingent roots. The role of thinking is to develop a sense for the possible, thus, freeing ourselves for other ways of thinking and doing, as a result of understanding that these are not expressions of necessity, but only creative and contingent constructions of it. According to Foucault, the principle of the Enlightenment, as “the principle of a critique and of a permanent creation of us in our autonomy” reflects such a form of thinking.

He argues that the modernity of the Enlightenment consists in the attempt to find what is “heroic” in the present moment. Being modern and living in a post-Enlightenment world means, on the one hand, to rediscover the contingency of one’s own identity and of the discourses that construct it. On the other hand, it means to intensify one’s contingent present, one’s capacity to pass life to the level where it has an exemplary value, a value that transfigures one’s mortality and fleeting presence by making it into a work of art. This explains why the technique, the askesis, that
characterizes being modern consists not in taking oneself as given, but as the “object of a complex and severe construction.”

Foucault defines the Enlightenment as an ethos and an attitude (une attitude limite) that makes it possible to think at the frontiers and from outside given forms of discourse. The model for this type of thinking is provided by the space of literature. Similar to Heidegger’s conception of poetry and thinking, which I will discuss in Chapter Five of my dissertation, but, definitely, in a more radical and politically engaged manner than for the German philosopher, literature is, for Foucault, a way of thinking from the absence, from what language did not capture yet, from what is still possible; from the unspoken and the unfamiliar. As thinking at the frontiers and on the threshold, literature provides a space of transgression. Foucault argues in his book on Raymond Roussel that the core of language in the space of transgression of literature is imagination.

The space of literature makes possible not only the negative distancing of critical thinking, but also creativity. Here language displays its most remarkable and marvelous property, that of generating wealth and abundance of meanings out of its own poverty. Language is an imaginative field where out of the coat of the ordinary and the familiar, the absent and the unfamiliar emerge and take shape. Thus, Foucault argues that the moderns need to exercise this type of emancipatory-critical and creative thinking. This is required if they want to (re)construct their moral and political selves other than in a normalizing and disciplinary fashion. The challenge is to construct moral selves other than through practices that mask the power drive under a false claim to unity and universality. This can happen only to the extent that one sees foundations and origins, in
general, any authorial positions and the claims that come with them, as contingent. This recognition both emancipates and renews creativity. Unity, as for Bakhtin and Habermas, remains open. However, to the extent that, opposite to Bakhtin, Foucault eliminates the notion of author altogether, and to the extent that, opposite to Habermas, he downplays intersubjectivity, the open dynamism of discourse construction does not place, in the end, creativity in the service of making a public common world.

Still, Foucault’s merit for my present purpose resides in the fact that he connects the creativity of imagination and of language to the game of power relations, which pervade society. In a late article, entitled “The Subject and the Power,” Foucault chooses to focus not on the normalizing and disciplining aspects of power, but on the different forms of resisting it. He argues that power relations are intermingled with relations of communication and of production (cultural production included). However, power relations have their own specific profile. What defines a relation of power between “partners” is that it is a mode of action that does not directly and immediately act upon the others, but it acts on their own action. A power relation is not a relation of violence. On the contrary, a power relation requires two indispensable elements: that the “other” (on whom power exerts itself) is clearly recognized and preserved until the end as a subject of action and that a field of possible responses, reactions, effects, and inventions opens up in connection with the power relations.

In this sense, power exerts itself not in the mode of opposition, but in that of governing. This refers to the fact that power “structures the possible field of action of the others.” However, this can happen only if the others are free. In a nutshell, Foucault
concludes, thus defined, power is “a relation both of mutual stimulation (d’incitation réciproque) and of struggle.” It is not so much a one to one opposition that blocks people in front of each other, but rather “a permanent provocation.” Foucault calls such power agonistic, instead of antagonistic. Its core is represented by the strategies of confrontation and their relation with the power relations. Thus, the ongoing provocation and incitation between power relations and the strategies that fight against them is open, inventive, and creative; for two reasons. On the one hand, the game of agonistic reactions should not be reduced to stable mechanisms through which one can conduct the actions of the others in a constant and certain manner. On the other hand, the power relations should not reduce the others to a condition of total powerlessness or turn them from agonistic partners into adversaries.\(^{143}\)

The agonistic definition of power relations and strategies of confrontation as mutual stimulation and permanent provocation is connected to the late definition that Foucault gives to truth as the construction of one’s life as work of art. The dynamism of open and inventive incitation between power relations and the strategies of confrontation, where the game of agonistic reactions cannot be reduced to stable mechanisms and the other to a powerless or alienated presence, presupposes the open construction of one’s life. This refers to “the work of oneself on oneself in view of transformation or for making to appear that self, which fortunately cannot ever be reached.”\(^{144}\) Such an open construction of one’s self, though mutual stimulation and permanent provocation happens through the relationship of friendship.
Foucault defines friendship as a way of life where the rules and the techniques for dealing with pleasure are invented in the absence of any institutional yardsticks. Foucault tells us that the two friends “have to invent from A to Z a relation still without form.” Through friendship as an agonistic game that invents a new relation, the other is an absence of “truth,” an absence of language, an absence in one’s life, namely, the non-expressed possibility of oneself, rather than the object of disciplinary and normalizing power techniques. The other is the living embodiment of the absences of meaning in the construction of one’s life as a work of art and as an open project. Thus, continuing Foucault’s thought, it can be argued that friendship describes a form of interaction where I engage with the other in a creative game of mutual stimulation, where the relation can never be reduced to stable mechanisms of conduct (frozen institutional and ideological structures) and neither one of us can become powerless or completely alienated from the other.

Through his discussion of friendship, which also situates the Greek notion of caring for one’s self at the center of creating one’s own life as a work of art, Foucault does take ‘the self’ more seriously than Rorty, who just chooses to dissolve this in the ocean of contingency. Unfortunately, he does not go far enough. The small essay on friendship is just an incipient project that Foucault did not develop in a direction that explores further the creativity and inventiveness of mutual provocation and stimulation. That is a direction that could produce new non-normalizing and non-disciplinary institutional structures, thus contributing to a world that is common and public in the sense that Arendt gives to the notion.
Thus, despite bringing power at the core of the communicative and productive praxis and despite making creativity and inventiveness the core of an agonistic understanding of power relations, similar to Rorty, Foucault does not lift the meaning of the “aesthetic” beyond the rather private forming of one’s life as a work of art. As a result, he too cannot account for an aesthetic and linguistic creativity, which, because it is dialogic, namely, capable of answering to the other’s living and unique presence, can be engaged in the making of a public realm. In brief, for both Foucault and Rorty, aesthetic and linguistic creativity does not bridge differences. It only multiplies them. In their view linguistic creativity is, perhaps, poetic, but it is not polyphonic, in Bakhtin’s sense. Thus, the differences that creativity proliferates are in danger of not meaning more than personal idiosyncrasy. The reason is that these differences cannot creatively disclose a public common world. Consequently, such a form of aesthetic and linguistic creativity cannot be political, insofar as plurality and the proliferation of differences is a self-sufficient end, and not just a precondition for and source of a renewed commonality.

Because it fails in the end to account for aesthetic intersubjectivity and for art as a communicative force, in the manner of Habermas, Rorty’s ‘political’ universe is just a collection of juxtaposed and parallel playful idiosyncratic privacies. They ‘meet’ each other in the shallow publicness circumscribed by their selfish fears of not being destroyed. For the same reason, Foucault’s ‘political’ universe reduces itself to the endless confrontation of the strategic attempts to dominate and the equally strategic attempts to resist and to liberate oneself, which do not issue in renewed normativity and institutional structures. I take this characterization to be true despite Foucault’s final
attempt to envisage a more constructive form of micro politics, where the endless suspicion of institutions makes, finally, room for the more amiable project of constructing one’s life as a work of art through the agonistic friendship with the other.

**Arendt’s Performance Model of Democracy and Intercultural Understanding**

When George Kateb criticizes the cannon of political theory for its inadequate account of the moral and political dangers, but also, of the benefits, that are associated with imagination, he mentions two exceptions to this theoretical inadequacy: Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. Heidegger is mentioned because of his insight into the dangers of transporting into politics the essence of technology, which defines the modern understanding of production. Arendt is mentioned because she is aware of the role that the hyperactive power of ideological imagination, its passionate sense of possibility to reshape the world in accordance with its imperious fictions,\(^{146}\) plays in the production of different forms of totalitarianism. One could argue that she constructs her conception of the political action and the plural and public *praxis* as an attempt to correct and contain those activities of the human condition that might generate political pathologies, such as totalitarianism.

Dana R. Villa argues that Arendt’s non-foundational and non-teleological conception of political action is the result of rethinking Aristotelian *praxis* through the critical reading of Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s philosophy. However, especially in contrast with Heidegger, she saves the distinctiveness of politics as plurality and finitude.
Villa points out that one reason is that she uncompromisingly divorces *praxis* from any associations with *poēsis*. Thus, she does not commit the fundamental mistake of Western philosophers since Plato, that of applying to the realm of human affairs “a poetic model of disclosure.” This is mistaken and politically dangerous, because *poēsis* is violent and monological. It is mastery not awareness and acceptance of finitude. It is identity not difference. It is non- and even anti-political. That is why, any association of *praxis* with *poēsis* ends by sacrificing contingency and plurality, which constitute the very “identity” of the political realm. As a consequence, politics is seen as plastic or, as Kateb would say, as aestheticism. This was, after all, the very nature of totalitarianism, to the extent that, under it, the ‘plastic art’ of politics consisted “in the production of a collective subject whose movement is directly determined” by either the laws of nature or of history.

In Villa’s brilliant reconstruction, Arendt succeeds in preserving the distinctness of *praxis* by taking several steps. First, in the attempt to de-teleologize Aristotelian *praxis* (to purge it from the taint of *poēsis*) she conceives it as performative appearance. She thus aestheticizes *praxis*. Aesthetic means in this respect theatrical. It is the performance that matters and not the expression of some inner self. Second, she tames the Nietzschean agonism (the still strongly individualistic formative power of the will) with the help of the Kantian aesthetics. Thus the performative/aesthetic theatricality is combined with the contemplative/aesthetic judging.

Third, she deepens the non-foundational and non-teleological rethinking of action by connecting it to the Heideggerian distinction between authentic and inauthentic modes of being. Political action is authentic to the extent that it is disclosive. Thus, the
performative aspect of political action is intensified through the disclosive dimension. Political action is a form of unreified disclosedness: an opening up and illuminating of new aspects of agency and of the world. In this context, freedom is understood in a non-foundational manner as non-sovereignty. In Kateb’s words, freedom can be defined as “continuous and improvisatory creativity,” as the renewed ingenuity of presenting one’s strangeness to the world and thus of appropriating the world. However, Villa concludes, the “ironic and supremely un-Heideggerian result is that” for Arendt “authentic disclosedness is ‘localized’ or domiciled in a realm of opinion and talk.”¹⁴⁹

Fourth, Arendt connects political action to the Heideggerian post-metaphysical understanding of Being as appearance, namely, as given through the act of interpretation and only as incomplete meaning. It is here that, according to Villa, resides the crucial separation between the two thinkers. While Heidegger privileges “the poetic, world-disclosive activity of the creator over the praxis of the many”¹⁵⁰ (as the original-al modality of bringing Being to presence), Arendt turns toward an “experience of the being of appearance drawn entirely from the plural, doxastic, and public dimensions of praxis.”¹⁵¹ As a result, she sees the world, in a manner similar to Foucault, as the agonistic “sharing of words and deeds.” Thus if praxis is indeed transcendence, namely, world disclosive, it is only in a doxastic modality, where the centre of gravity is the struggle for truth.¹⁵²

Villa’s insightful and inspired reconstruction of Arendt’s rethinking of Aristotelian praxis through the lenses of the Nietzschean and Heideggerian post-metaphysical thinking is correct in many respects. However, there is, to begin with, one
fundamental facet of his reconstruction of the theoretical sources of Arendt’s conception of political action that requires a critical discussion. Villa’s conclusion about Arendt’s situating of authentic disclosedness and of Being as appearance in the realm of plural and public praxis is based on two assumptions. First, it is based on the assumption that Arendt does indeed radically separate praxis from any form of poēsis. Second, it is based on the assumption that poēsis, and implicitly imagination and its aesthetic creative, form-giving moment, cannot be dialogic, and thus, it can enter the realm of plural and public praxis only as mastery and identity, not as dialogue and plurality. As a result, if there is, after all, a benefic manner in which imagination and its aesthetic moment can enter the political realm, this is only as detached contemplation and judgment, and not in a creative/authorial manner.

It is my contention against Villa’s first assumption that, while it is true that Arendt situates authentic disclosedness in the realm of opinion and talk, she, nevertheless, sees poēsis, namely, a specific form of cultural production or work, as being fundamental for the realm of praxis. This is the case for two reasons. On the one hand, the finite and plural realm of speeches and deeds needs the permanence and stability of things. It needs a certain type of reification that comes with poēsis. On the other hand, given the pivotal role work has in providing a stable and permanent world that neither labor nor action can, one fundamental challenge is to find a privileged cultural product through which homo faber could, nevertheless, transform himself into an actor that can perform in the plural and public realm of talk and opinions.
The fact that for Arendt poēsis and imagination play both a stabilizing and a transformative role in the realm of praxis, of plural and public talk and opinion, provides a fruitful framework for my project of theorizing a type of politics, where culture and imagination could facilitate intercultural understanding. In a nutshell, her performance model of democracy makes it possible to think together the rapports between poēsis, imagination and its aesthetic, form-giving moment, on the one hand, and praxis as plurality and finitude, on the other hand, as inseparable aspects of politics.

However, in order to successfully account for the potential culture has to mitigate and even prevent conflicts and to expand the horizons that define democratic solidarities Arendt’s performance model of democracy needs to be critically developed in several respects. Both her conception of poēsis, which accounts for the importance of cultural production for politics, and her conception of the political role of imagination in providing an enlarged mentality, which facilitates understanding across different cultures and life styles, necessitate further critical development.

First, a creative, not only a contemplative, dimension of imagination and of its aesthetic moment needs to be theorized as essential to understanding and dialogue, namely, to an enlightened form of politics. Second, a polyphonic and dialogic form of poēsis and of cultural production needs to be theorized and integrated into her conception of the human condition, as an equally important form of activity, besides labor, work, and action. Third, her notion of public realm as a space of appearance and performance needs to include a dimension that accounts for a mutual stimulation and permanent provocation of the actors, in Foucault’s language, that is, ultimately, in view of creating and renewing
common cultural horizons and a common world. Such a critical development of Arendt’s conception of the human condition, action, imagination, and the public realm would intensify a form of creativity that is already at work in her understanding of freedom, as the capacity to initiate something new and original that belongs to each and every newcomer to the world. In order to develop Arendt’s performance model of democracy in these directions, my dissertation will interrogate thinkers as diverse as Kant, Schiller, Herder, Vico, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

To begin with, Arendt develops her conception of the benefic political role of imagination based on Kant’s notion of reflective judgment. However, her reading omits aspects of Kant’s conception of aesthetic and teleological judgment that are relevant for the politics of intercultural understanding. Among them, there is the important role that creative imagination plays in making communication possible, as well as in cultivating sociability and civility in the citizens. She also ignores the important role that imagination and the beautiful arts play for Kant in building a culture of reason. That is a culture that supports the attempt by the moral politician to make the principles of political expediency coexists with morality, thus educating the minds and the character of the citizens in addition to creating a good political constitution.

Chapter Two will bring Kant, Schiller, and Herder into dialogue with each other, on the issue of the political role of aesthetic imagination. I will argue that for Kant aesthetic imagination and the beautiful arts play an essential part in creating a second human nature, namely, in shaping the sociability and civility of people. Thus, they support the work of the moral politician to give historical reality to the highest end of
nature and of culture. This is man’s cosmopolitan existence, as made possible by his sociability and civility, and not only by a good constitution. However, Kant’s understanding of culture is too abstract, while his view of imagination does not fully consider the role that creative imagination and linguistic creativity can play in facilitating communication and in shaping sociability and civility.

Schiller and Herder can add new facets to Kant’s understanding of the role imagination can play in moral politics. Schiller critically develops Kant’s conception of the role that the beautiful and the sublime play in the moral education of man, as an essential support of the attempt to political reform or to the creation of new political institutions. This is reflected by his conception of freedom.

Freedom requires the full development by the individuals of both the sensuous and the rational aspects of their nature. Only individuals thus developed would be open and receptive to strange feelings, natures, and situations, to a multiplicity and variety of situations, being, at the same time, able to bring such a variety under the unity of their personality. Beautiful arts, more specifically, theater, play for Schiller an essential role in cultivating in the citizens of modern societies a form of imagination that mediates between feelings and reason, thus allowing such a full development of individuality.

In a society where individuals would be thus fully developed, the relations between them would be mediated not only by power or law only, but also by grace and gentility. However, Schiller does not situate imagination and aesthetic sensibility in the living context of the varied national narratives and traditions that different people have.
Such a conception of imagination belongs to Herder’s conception of humanity. Herder critically develops Kant’s incipient and hesitant conception of anthropology. This is reflected by his conception of culture. The chapter will end by arguing that, according to Herder, humanity is circumscribed by the diversity, complexity, and equal value of all cultures. Consequently, in order to develop one’s humanity one needs to cultivate one’s imagination, as the vehicle that makes possible the participatory understanding of the living character of other (national) cultures. One also needs to cultivate the capacity to turn one’s belonging to a particular culture and language into a starting point for the further imaginative and linguistic enrichment of one’s own horizon of meaning and understanding.

Through his notion of humanity and culture, Herder lays the ground for a critical development of Kant’s idea of cosmopolitanism. Enriched through Herder’s conception of humanity, cosmopolitanism would require more than a constitution that brings states into a peaceful federation. It will require more than the right to hospitality. It will require the development of an affective and imagined participation in the different cultures, which express the varied facets of humanity. In brief, it would require the development of a common feeling of humanity.

Unfortunately, this promising development in the meaning of culture and of humanity (as deeper grounds of cosmopolitanism than law or commerce) is largely undermined by the fact that Herder tends to see national culture as the expression of a people’s feelings and experiences. As a result, his conception of culture can be too easily
connected to the idea that there is an authentic self that each individual or people need to bring to expression. In brief, Herder’s conception of culture is not dialogic enough.

My reading of Kant, Schiller, and Herder will enrich Arendt’s conception of the political role of imagination, by arguing that, exerting one’s imagination is a political requirement not only for the spectator and judge of history. It is also a political requirement for the actors themselves, for those engaged in the making of history. It is a requirement for the citizens that are engaged in the democratic agon.

Drawing on Vico’s philosophy, Chapter Three will address both “the expressive flaw” in Herder’s conception of culture and it will further develop the idea that exerting one’s poetic and rhetorical imagination in creative and dialogic ways is a requirement for a democratic (cosmopolitan) citizenry that would be able to successfully engage in intercultural understanding.

The chapter will argue that if culture and its symbols are to be engaged, not as sources of illiberal and mystical nationalism, as well as of fanatical patriotism, but as enhancers of democratic cosmopolitan, then, democratic citizens should be able to rhetorically listen to the foreign, to poetically invent names, thus creating the language for enacting nonexistent rights, and to culturally (re)invent, (as) more inclusive, civil metaphors.

This is possible because, according to Vico, humanity and its first cultural embodiment came into being through the dialogue with the alien voice of the thunder. Humanity came into being through a hermeneutic and creative act of imagination. Through such an act one rhetorically listens to the alien voice of the strange and the
unfamiliar. One interprets its sounds as meaning, and poetically invents the language to address the voice, to respond to the meaning that one thinks this conveys.

Politically, this is reflected by the fact that the first human societies came into being as asylums, by offering shelter and protection to the strangers. Thus, the founding (symbolic) act of human polities is that of welcoming the foreigner in one’s familiar horizon and of dealing with his positively stimulating and provocative, as well as menacing presence.

The dialectic of human history, the movement from one form of government and authority to another, culminating with democracy, occurs through creative contestation. This is a contestation where the democratic practice of taking rights is first exerted symbolically and poetically. Political struggle takes place through the symbolic colonization and poetic transformation by the foreigners-guests of the narratives and the myths of the citizens and/or the dominant class.

Vico thinks that this politics of dialogic and creative contestation is daily reenacted in the democratic piazza. Thus, an essential prerequisite of (democratic) citizenship is a form of practical wisdom that engages imagination and cultural ingenuity in the creation of new syntheses between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Such a form of poetic and rhetorical practical wisdom expands democratic solidarities. Vico also claims that the universal institutions of religion, marriage, and burial, which are present in all the human cultures, incorporate the same poetic and rhetorical capacity, thus being able to instill it in the citizens across different societies.
However, because of its dominant Cartesian nature, modern culture tends to neglect the cultivation of creative imagination, of the poetic and rhetorical skills of the citizens. As a result, modern beings become less political, in two ways. On the one hand, they become more solitary and more prone to separate from each other, because they lack the imaginative capacity to anticipate the other and to inhabit his symbolic universe. On the other hand, they become incapable of overcoming their political struggles in other ways than instrumentally or strategically. Either way, the political capacities of modern societies are undermined. The main reason is that, because of the atrophy of creative imagination and of the rhetorical skills in the citizens, cultural distances become oppositions. In brief, modern beings suffer from a deficit of creativity.

Moreover, it is true that, in reconstructing the mechanism of symbolic politics, Vico does not privilege Christianity, but he mostly looks at the Hebrew, Greek, and Roman myths, symbols, and narratives. However, he never goes as far as to question the Christian premises of his own conception of politics. According to Nietzsche, this would make Vico’s conception of culture and imagination an inadequate candidate for overcoming nationalism. The reason is that, for Nietzsche, the secular embodiment of nihilism is nationalism. However, nihilism itself is the result of consistently and unremittingly following Christianity and its will to truth. The will to truth paralyses freedom and creativity. Thus, Nietzsche would argue that, if Vico wants the moderns to become creative again, the Christian will to truth needs to be questioned and overcome.

Drawing on Nietzsche’s philosophy, Chapter Four will argue that modern democracies need to reinvent in their citizens the capacity to exert creative imagination
and, in general, their creativity. In Nietzsche’s view this would be part of the modern attempt to complete and overcome nihilism, as well as, one of its manifestations, nationalism. It would be part of the attempt to overcome the will to truth, as the will to certainty and to idols to which one craves to cling, unreflectively and unimaginatively.

In brief, overcoming nihilism is possible only insofar as the “good Europeans,” the free spirits of the future, who are also true bearers of culture, learn to engage aesthetic imagination and language in a manner that heightens their individuality and power and, at the same, time renews common horizons of meaning. The “good Europeans” would be aware of the analogical tendency of imagination to reduce similarities to identities. Thus, they will be able to counteract it by engaging the explorative power of the imagination to see the familiar (our everyday) as a problem, namely, as strange, as distant, and as ‘outside us.’ They will also be able to keep vivid the memory about the primary orientation of words and language toward addressing and persuading the others; namely, their rhetorical polyphony. Given, the prominent role of imagination in freeing oneself from the will to truth, I will argue that, for Nietzsche, the overcoming of nihilism can start only from within the ‘slave’ morality (and from within Christianity).

The ‘slave’ needs to learn how to turn his imaginative and inventive power, to dissimulate, to hide, and to envisage himself somewhere else, in brief, his vigorous sense of the possible, into a way of acting in the world and of changing it. I will argue that Nietzsche’s replacement of the will to truth is the will to power. This consists in the open and mutually inspiring interplay of the commanding and the obeying drive. It consists in the open and mutually inspiring interplay of the worldly power of the ‘master’ to engage
in direct and spontaneous action and the poetic and imaginative capacity of the ‘slave’ to be somewhere else.

Those who will be able to constitute their cultural and political ‘identities’ in such a way would be “good Europeans,” because they would never trade off their struggle and striving for the certainty provided by actual and earthly idols, by any form of ascetic ideals, such as nationalism or an overarching (Christian) idea of Europe. However, one could still argue that Nietzsche’s conception of power is, nevertheless, structured by the belief that everything can be made if only one musters the will to it. To this extent, its poetic and imaginative aspects can still be conducive to plastic and aesthetic politics, namely, to the belief that there are no limits to one’s sense of possibility.

Answering to such objections, Chapter Five will argue that, if aesthetic creativity and imagination are to be politically effective, namely, to work not for nationalism and political aestheticism, but for democratic cosmopolitanism and intercultural understanding, they need to be situated in the context of one’s care and freedom for the world, of man’s disclosive and revealing being. According to Heidegger man is a being that discovers or encounters himself, other human beings, things, equipmental totalities, and nature only insofar as he discloses a world. This is a totality of references and relations, a site of intelligibility, where understanding, acting, and thinking first become possible. I will argue in Chapter Five that, in Heidegger’s view, man’s failure to care for the world, namely, to practice his disclosive power and freedom, generates what he calls in the 1930s machination and in the 1950s enframing.
Machination and enframing are the cultural sources of what Kateb calls political aestheticism: the form of politics that is driven by the sense that there is no limit, in the way other human beings are treated, to one’s attempt to make the world meaningful by design. It is the ultimate and most dangerous, from a political standpoint, form of secular nihilism. This refers to the attempt at finding secular idols to which one wants to cling unreflectively and unimaginatively. Political aestheticism is more dangerous than nationalism because it is conducive to totalitarianism and mass murder politics.

I will also argue that Heidegger develops a conception of poetic care as the passage and the journeying home through the dialogue with the foreign. Such a conception of poēsis or creation, as a dialogue with the foreign and the unfamiliar, is connected to “a language that does not calcify time,” but sees meaning as emerging, and to a form of inventive or poetic thinking, which Heidegger calls in Contributions to Philosophy, entthinking. Heidegger intends poēsis as a dialogue with the foreign as an alternative to poēsis techne, namely, to poēsis as re-presentation and mastery, as it is at work in machination and enframing.

I will conclude Chapter Five by arguing that Heidegger’s conception of poēsis, as a dialogue and encounter with the foreign and as world-disclosive, which he develops as a response to what politics becomes in Nazi Germany after 1934, as well as his conception of entthinking and of language need to be situated in the realm of public and plural opinions. Heidegger himself suggests such a move through the conception of everydayness that he develops in 1924, based on his interpretation of Aristotle’s Rhetoric. This is also the time when Arendt was his student at Marburg University.
Resituating Heidegger’s view of poēsis in the realm of plural and public praxis makes it possible to add to Arendt’s performance model of democracy a meaning of the aesthetic that is neither just contemplative (the model of the Kantian judge) nor just theatrical performance and appearance (Nietzsche’s artistic illusion), but creative. Such a notion of ‘aesthetic’ would designate a form of creative making. Instead of issuing in machination and enframing, this would refashion common cultural and imaginative horizons. It would refashion the artificiality, the permanence, and stability without which politics would not be possible.

At the same time, thus understood, the aesthetic would not block the access to the changing plurality and contingency of the world, to its inexhaustible strangeness, to the unsettling and uncomfortable presence of the different and foreign others. Through such a redefinition of the ‘aesthetic,’ it becomes possible to argue that Arendt’s public and common realm is constituted by a form of culture and imagination that can make one’s nearness and familiarity problematic, thus sensitizing one to the encounter and the dialogue with the unfamiliar and the foreign, through which the habitual and the conventional are recreated.

Chapter Six will argue that such an addition enriches Arendt’s performance model of democracy in a way that makes it possible to distinguish between a form of aesthetic imagination and of rhetoric that is conducive to political aestheticism (nationalism and totalitarianism) and one that can facilitate intercultural understanding in democratic contexts, as well as the coming into being of democratic cosmopolitanism.
The poetic and rhetorical engagement of imagination and culture that is conducive to intercultural understanding and democratic cosmopolitanism would consist of two movements. On the one hand, one should *poetically* intensify the questionableness and not-at-home-ness of one’s culture and language and to produce otherness at the heart of experience would. On the other hand, one would should *rhetorically* release “new attunements to the world” and bring forth “new possibilities for (communal) life,” new civil metaphors that re-envision democratic solidarities in a plural and changing world.

Drawing on Arendt and Bakhtin, Chapter Six will construct a notion of political creativity that brings together authority and non-sovereign freedom. This combines receptivity to the otherness, to the foreigner and the unfamiliar, with the creativity that brings him inside the space that the author already disclosed. Authority/authorship is an anticipation of the others’ or heroes’ freedom to respond to the author, while the freedom of the heroes is a listening attunement to the voice of the author, a creative answering to it.

Such a notion of political creativity is the result of an intensification of the poetic and rhetorical character of the care and freedom for the world. According to Arendt, this is essential in making the common publicness in the absence of which politics is not possible. This refers to the worldly artificiality that political actors need if they are to be visible for the others, and not something that can disappear without a trace. The chapter will close by arguing that nationalism and political aestheticism are pathological distortions of such a form political creativity. The framework of the argument will be provided by an interpretation of Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism*. 
The dissertation will conclude by prescribing a form of creative dialogic politics. This is a form of symbolic politics where imagination is publicly used in a responsibly creative way – that is, in a way that answers to the other’s living and unique presence. It is a form of symbolic politics where cultural products are understood not as expressions of some authentic traditions, but as world-disclosive and as caring for the world. It is also a form of symbolic politics where power relations are agonistic and creative in a manner that keeps renewing the mechanisms of confrontation, while never allowing any of the protagonists of the game, foreigners and hosts, ‘us’ and ‘them’ to be either totally subjugated, alienated, or even transformed into adversaries.

I will argue in the conclusions of the dissertation that, in a post-national world, modern democracies need to engage in such a form of symbolic politics, if they want to redefine democratic solidarities in ways that take into account the growing complexity, changes, and displacements that characterize the contemporary world. The growing complexity of the contemporary world increases the relevance that culture has for political struggles. One reason for which culture becomes relevant to political struggles is the fact that national borders are becoming more porous and cultures are getting closer to each other. This could increase tensions, but it also offers the opportunity to answer to each other’s particularity and uniqueness.

Also, there is the fact that foreigners, guests, and hosts, the strange and the familiar are becoming more contiguous with each other, are brought closer into each other’s proximity. All these developments make more pressing the need to engage culture for preventing or mitigating political conflicts. It makes more pressing the need to find
and engage those aspects of culture that enhance the political capacities of collectivities. In such a context, creative dialogic politics would facilitate intercultural understanding because it would cultivate the potential that culture and imagination have to overcome nationalism from within the national democratic imaginations, thus contributing to democratic cosmopolitanism.

I will interpret in the conclusions of the dissertation Orhan Pamuk’s conception of “a novelist’s politics” as providing in the European context an example of how to engage culture and imagination in the sense of creative dialogic politics. A “novelist’s politics” engages imagination in a public and responsible manner – that is, a manner that enables the reader-citizens to expand given cultural horizons and thus to redefine democratic solidarities, by making them more inclusive. The Turkish writer defines a “novelist’s politics” as the power to produce cultural hybridization and transformation through the “ability to imagine himself as someone else.”

Through the novelistic exercise of imagination “[o]thers become ‘us’ and we become ‘others.’” This gives us the power to “begin to test the lines that mark off that ‘other’ and thus, to alter the boundaries of our own identities,” the geography of our daily lives, as summoned by “the collectivity, the nation, the society to which we belong.” In brief, through the “patient reading of great novels” citizens can learn how “to share in unique lives that trouble us” and thus to expand their imaginative and cultural horizons.

I will also argue that Pamuk’s interpretation of the ‘identity’ of the city of Istanbul provides an instantiation of a “novelist’s politics.” Pamuk argues that Istanbul’s ‘identity’ has been defined between the East and the West. This is an example of how culture, as a
coming to one’s own through the encounter and the dialogue with the foreign, can be politically engaged against nationalism and totalitarianism.

Pamuk’s story of Istanbul will thus offer an example of how writers from places that are on the boundary and dreaming of Europe can creatively transform and expand identities. This happens by opening an “inspiring and critical new space” between cultural worlds. Pamuk argues that the political impact of such a space resides in its capacity to transcend the either/or thinking of nationalism and Westernization, as well as, the obsessions with identity. To this extent, such a space contributes to the creation of “a Europe-wide political culture.”

Honig defines democratic cosmopolitanism by taking as a model the “myth of an immigrant America.” She argues that, because this is “a narrative of demands made by outsiders, it is not just a nationalist story; it is also, potentially, a myth of denationalization.” Central to the making of the demands and to the denationalization of democracy that it entails is the democratic practice of taking rights. Such a democratic practice requires “the staging of a nonexistent right;” its poetic enactment. This requires the poetic and rhetorical imagination to colonize the other’s world, to create the means for addressing him, and the cultural capacity to create more inclusive civil metaphors.

Part of Honig’s argument is to point out that democratic cosmopolitanism requires not only institutions, but also the development of a form of affective citizenship and of different forms of emotional solidarity, of common sensibilities and public imaginations. In taking the “myth of an immigrant America” as the model for democratic
cosmopolitanism, one implication is that the myth can function as a civil metaphor that can be reinterpreted and resymbolized in a more inclusive way.

Measuring the political project of a European Union through Nietzsche’s model of the good Europeans, Stefan Elbe also argues that the project requires more than just political institutions. It requires a specific form of citizenry. It requires free and creative citizens, who have rich aesthetic imaginations and sensibilities. I assume that such citizens would be able, because open and receptive, free and creative, to reimagine, to reinvent, and to resymbolize civil metaphors and myths in ways that never close the interplay with the other in the dead end of an idol or ascetic ideal.

I will thus argue that Pamuk’s notion of a novelist’s politics and his interpretation of the ‘identity’ of the city of Istanbul provides in the European context an example of how the democratic practice of taking rights poetically stages a nonexistent right, i.e., Turkey’s membership in the European Union, thus reinventing the idea of Europe and making it more inclusive. To this extent, it provides an example of overcoming nationalism not by providing an overarching idea of Europe, but an idea that is open and contested, an idea that is creatively and imaginatively reinvented. This is possible, because, similar to Bonnie Honig’s interpretation of the “myth of an immigrant America,” Pamuk’s “novelist’s politics” employs narratives as “myths of denationalization.”
Chapter Two

Rethinking the Enlightenment:

Kant, Schiller, and Herder on the Moral and Political Power of Aesthetic Imagination

I will argue in this chapter that imagination, the beautiful arts, and culture, in general, play an essential role in supporting a form of (symbolic) politics that aims at cultivating humanity, reason, and freedom, namely, man’s capacities as a moral species to achieve his highest moral and political end, which is a cosmopolitan existence. Such a form of politics requires more than a good constitution. It requires the cultivation in the citizens of a certain type of character. It requires the cultivation of certain social relations and a use of symbols and myths that develops a common feeling of humanity, thus enriching one’s capacity to share, feel, and communicate with the others.

Making such an argument is an attempt to rethink the Enlightenment. Such a rethinking consists in recognizing, deeper than discourse ethics, reason’s cultural and linguistic embodiment. Given this, if communicative practice wants to be successful, it cannot ignore the role that aesthetic imagination and sensibility could play in facilitating dialogue. It cannot also ignore the role that forms of affective citizenship can play in forming sociability. In short, to rethink the Enlightenment refers to taking into consideration the role that aesthetic imagination and sensibility can play, as supports of reason, in achieving the emancipation and empowerment of the citizens, in increasing their capacity for communication, sociability, and solidarity.
I will construct my argument through an interpretation of Kant’s aesthetic theory, of Schiller’s conception of aesthetic education, and of Herder’s view of culture and humanity. Thus, I will argue that Kant sees imagination and the beautiful arts as playing an important role in building a culture that supports the attempt by the moral politician to reconcile right and politics, and to make the principles of political expediency co-exist with morality. However, while the idea is still incipient in Kant’s moral and political philosophy, I will argue that his contemporaries and disciples, Schiller and Herder, further develop it in connection with both domestic and international politics.

Kant thinks that moral beauty represents the beginning of the education that forms the moral feeling in man. He argues that in the pragmatic task of cultivating (Kultur) humanity, “[w]e begin, then, with moral beauty, and with moral liability,” which are grounds of morality “that are sensuous and vivid.” Going a step further, Schiller argues that human nature has an aesthetic, namely, a sensuo-rational, core. As a result, cooperative, supportive, and active citizens would have a character that expresses the full development of their reason, sensibility, and imagination.

Such individuals would be receptive and open to unfamiliar modes of representation and to strange situations, feelings, and natures. At the same time, they would be capable of bringing the unfamiliar back to the unity of their personality and make it an expression of their freedom. The relations between individuals thus formed would be structured not only by power or law, but by gentility as well. Thus, they will encounter the others not only as objects of self-interest or as subjects of rights, but also as
objects of free play, namely, as an occasion and a challenge for enriching their power of becoming human.

However, Schiller does not connect imagination and aesthetic sensibility to cultural myths and narratives. Despite his conviction that sensibility and reason should grow out of each other, an idea that is conveyed by his notion of play drive, still, similar to Kant, Schiller does not see reason as being culturally and linguistically embedded. Through his conception of culture and humanity, Herder critically addresses these flaws in Schiller’s conception of reason and culture, which are an expression of his Kantianism.

Herder radicalizes Kant’s Copernican Revolution. This refers to Kant’s idea that metaphysics needs to be revolutionized in the same way Copernicus revolutionized astronomy. As Copernicus thought that maybe the movements of the heavenly bodies would be better explained “if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest,” Kant thinks that “a similar experiment can be tried in metaphysics as regards the intuition of objects.” As a result, he proposes that, instead of thinking that our intuition must conform to the constitution of the objects, we should think that “the object (as object of the senses) must conform to the constitution of our faculty of intuition.”

The knowledge of the object becomes a construction and a synthesizing (unification) operated by the subject out of the empirical manifold and under the guidance of the concepts of the understanding. Imagination plays an important role in this construction, because it mediates between the a priori forms of sensible intuition and the concepts of the understanding. Kant makes sensibility an essential element in the construction of the human knowledge. With this, he also sets a limit to the activity and
spontaneity of the human intellect. The latter has to work with the material that sensibility provides. According to Kant, time and space are the two a priori forms of sensible intuition. Therefore, the spontaneity of the intellect is limited by what sensibility provides through time and space.

It is true that Kant sees the human subject as a transcendental generic consciousness. However, the important role that sensibility and the two a priori forms of sensible intuition, as well as, imagination, play in the construction of the object of knowledge, suggest that finitude and the embodiment of the human subjects are essential aspects in the construction of knowledge. As I will argue in the first part of this chapter, one aim of Kant’s aesthetic (beauty) theory is to connect the ideas of reason to the finite and embodied human agents, to their sensibility and feelings, that is, to the world of appearances. Schiller develops this aspect of Kant’s philosophy through his conception of beauty as an embodiment of man’s moral and political freedom and of aesthetic education as the way to promote successful political reform.

In his turn, Herder radicalizes Kant’s Copernican Revolution in the attempt to expand that aspect of it, which, in being concerned with adding an aesthetic dimension to philosophy, leads to the birth of anthropology, as a self-standing discipline. While Kant deduces the concepts of understanding from the logical forms of judgment, Herder argues that the concepts of reason are cultural and linguistic constructions that reflect the specific activities in which a people engages at a certain point in history. He thus corrects the Kantian transcendental philosophy “that takes its lead from the model of abstract
“science” and, in a manner similar to Heidegger, he defines human existence in terms of “structures of the lived world.”

In contrast with Kant and, as I will argue in the next chapter, similar to Vico, Herder sees reason and the concepts that it employs in its judgments as linguistic and cultural products. In this quality, they originate in analogical imagination and in metaphors, its products, thus reflecting the capacity that human beings have to actively and creatively respond to changing (historical and cultural) circumstances and environments. To this extent, the Kantian construction of knowledge by the generic human subject becomes for Herder the human cultural creation of knowledge. It becomes the poetic and linguistic creation of knowledge.

Reflecting such different philosophical premises, Herder thinks that the role of imagination is not to connect a disembodied and abstract reason to an equally unqualified world of appearances (a generic human experience). Instead, the role of imagination is to connect different cultures and linguistic spaces thus making it possible to feel, interpret, and judge what humanity means across varied contexts. It is to engage (national) cultural narratives and symbols in a way that, in expanding one’s imaginative and affective horizon, it also expands one’s humanity and reason. Thus, I will argue that, for Herder, cultivating humanity requires the development of a common feeling of humanity by means of an intense acquaintance with other cultures through literature broadly understood.

Herder’s view of humanity requires more than Schiller’s program of aesthetic education. The latter requires cultivating the openness of the senses and their receptivity
to strange natures, situations, and feelings. Herder’s view of humanity requires the cultivation of the capacity to imaginatively participate in and feel with other cultures from inside their living and intricate symbolic fabric. A common feeling of humanity requires the cultivation in the democratic citizens of a sympathetic, participatory, and imaginative understanding of the living character of other national cultures. Only thus one would also develop one’s own reason, namely, one’s capacity to judge and understand other cultures from inside their living being.

The argument I make in this chapter will enrich Arendt’s performance model of democracy in two ways. First, Arendt takes Kant’s reflective judgment as the model for political judgment. However, she defines imagination as the re-presentational “ability to make present what is absent” and to establish “the proper distance, the remoteness or uninvolvedness or disinterestedness, for evaluating something at its proper value.” She also casts imagination only as “tamed” by taste. Thus, Arendt fails to account for the creative potency of imagination, which Kant theorizes through his conception of the sublime and of the aesthetic ideas.

Second, Arendt sees imagination as playing an essential role in the contemplative act of judging history. However, by focusing exclusively on this role of imagination, she sidetracks Kant’s pragmatic concern. This refers not to what nature makes of man, but to “what man as a free agent makes, or can and should make, of himself.” Kant argues that, as “knowledge of the world,” anthropology is considered to be pragmatic only when it is “knowledge of man as a citizen of the world.” Man as a citizen of the world means man as destined by his reason to live in a (cosmopolitan) society with men, and “to
cultivate himself, to civilize himself, and to make himself moral by the arts and sciences.” However, this is a regulative idea of reason. Thus, it needs to be cultivated and developed. It needs to be given reality, in the world of experience.

This shows that Kant views humanity “as a problem set for human beings by their nature, for whose solution not nature but human beings are responsible.” Moreover, it also shows, as Katerina Deligiorgi points out, that “Kant has an agent-centered rather than a ‘contemplative’ perspective on history.” In short, the argument I make in this chapter will add to Arendt’s performance model of democracy a view of imagination that emphasizes more the positive moral and political role of aesthetic creativity and a view of democratic citizenship that stresses the importance of aesthetic sensibility and imagination as sources of affective solidarity and democratic cosmopolitanism, as two important preconditions of intercultural understanding.

In this way I will further expand Honig’s view of affective citizenship as a source of democratic cosmopolitanism. Honig argues that democracy is not only “politics among strangers.” Instead, she argues that, in reverse, one should redeploy “the affective energies of kinship on behalf of a democratic politics that is more cosmopolitan than nationalist in its aspirations.” Democracy thus understood would require the use of “‘kin’ relations to model extraterritorial solidarities.” To this extent it would “interrupt projects of (re)nationalization by generating practices of affective citizenship and solidarity that exceed state boundaries and sometimes even violate state foreign policy.”

As a result, democracy thus understood would “disperse the sites of democratic politics beyond and within the states that would like to be democracy’s privileged and
exclusive centers.” However, Honig observes, such a pluralized sense of solidarity aims at denationalizing the state, not because the democratic cosmopolitans “do not value affective ties and memberships, but precisely because they do.” Instead, they denationalize the state “in order to make room for the generation of alternative sites of affect and identity against which states often guard.” As a result, democratic cosmopolitanism would be made possible by “a sense of solidarity that may be located on any of a number or registers – local, national, or international.”

I will argue in this chapter that, although starting from different philosophical premises, Schiller and Herder also sketch a portrait of the citizens that would be able to engage in affective citizenship, thus deploying “kin” relations not in the service of nationalism, but of democratic cosmopolitanism. I will argue that especially Herder’s conception of humanity and language can be interpreted as making a significant contribution to democratic cosmopolitanism. One reason is that Herder does not connect culture and the role of imagination in creating a national Publikum to the state. Instead, he emphasizes the variety of local forces in the genesis and the make-up of a national culture. At the same time, he locates national cultures in the context of humanity. Thus, he sees national cultures as sites from and through which a common feeling of humanity can be developed.

The argument I make in this chapter will also start addressing some of the flaws that mar Habermas’ understanding of culture. For discourse ethics, the realm of culture is the source for reviving the language of politics. The symbols of art and rhetoric reconnect politics to the lives of the people. They help people to become aware of their problems
and to reflect on them with a language that escapes the reification that is generated by systems such as state bureaucracy and the market. However, as I argued in Chapter One, Habermas does not consider the role that imagination can play in the relations between different particular cultures.

However, this is an important aspect on which the possibility of intercultural understanding hinges. Intercultural understanding requires considering not only the role that culture plays in helping people to thematize and reflect upon problems that hamper their transparent and clear communication. It also requires considering how one encounters other cultures, how one imaginatively anticipates their answer to one’s presence, and how this transforms the involved parts.

Intercultural understanding requires sympathetic and creative imagination. It requires the imaginative anticipation of the other’s answer to one’s symbolic presence, as well as the capacity to invent the language for addressing him. However, such an act already creatively transforms the involved cultures. It hybridizes them. My discussion of Herder’s conception of humanity, more precisely the idea that a common feeling of humanity requires an intense acquaintance through imagination with other cultures, starts addressing this theoretical flaw of discourse ethics. More precisely, it starts sketching a model of intercultural understanding where feelings and imagination play an essential role in shaping one’s capacity to understand and judge other cultures from inside their living symbolic texture, as well as one’s capacity to universally communicate the results of such participatory judgments.
Kant: The Role of Culture and Creative Imagination in Moral Politics

Aesthetic and Teleological Reflective Judgment

Kant tackles the issue of aesthetic feelings, imagination, and culture in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Here he adds between understanding, which “yields a priori laws of nature,” and reason, which yields laws of freedom, a third faculty: the power of (reflective) judgment. Reflective judgments are made about particular cases for which no universal rule, principle or law exists. Kant explains that to reflect is “to compare and to hold together given representations...in relation to a concept, thereby made possible.” Reflective judgment refers to representations not to things. Imagination plays an important role in the activity of comparing and holding representations together.

Kant distinguishes between two types of reflective judgment: aesthetic and teleological. Both types of judgment are reflective; that is, they both judge particular cases in the absence of a universal rule, law, or principle. In brief, they judge particular cases without a concept and without providing knowledge. However, aesthetic reflective judgment only demands that the others share one’s subjective satisfaction and feeling of pleasure or awe and respect. To this extent, the universal that the aesthetic reflective judgment seeks, and which Kant calls exemplary validity, is “interpersonal agreement in pleasure in a beautiful object or in awe at a sublime one.” Teleological reflective
judgment does attempt to say something about the object, nature or history, despite the fact that this is judged only as if one would have a concept for and knowledge about it.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant reconsiders from the perspective of his transcendental philosophy a fundamental concept of traditional metaphysics, that of teleology, finality, or purposiveness. He argues that teleology or purposiveness is only a projection of our mind, because of its rational need for order. It is a projection of order and unity for which one has no concept and hence no knowledge. It is a way of evaluating and reflecting upon things in nature and happenings in history as if an intention would be at work behind them, that organizes and orders them, or as if a will would set its ends through them. To this extent, purposiveness is a regulative and “a heuristic principle of judgment”\(^1\) to guide our thinking.

Kant discusses two forms of aesthetic reflective judgment: the judgment of taste and the sublime. In pointing out to a friend in a judgment of taste that a rose is beautiful what is at stake is the possibility of sharing a common form of sensibility and a common perspective, of creating “solidarity of sensibility”\(^2\) or commonness of feeling. Kant explains that when “we call something beautiful, the pleasure that we feel is expected of everyone else in the judgment of taste as necessary, just as if it were to be regarded as a property of the object that is determined in it in accordance with concepts; but beauty is nothing by itself, without relation to the feeling of the subject.”\(^3\) Thus, the point is not to turn the rose, the sunset (or any other object that is declared beautiful) “into the determining factor of human relationships but to turn human relationships into the determining factor of a common worldview.”\(^4\) This is possible because the judgment of
taste postulates a universal voice with regard to satisfaction. It postulates that a state of mind, namely, “that unison in the play of the powers of the mind,” can be intersubjectively communicated.

The pleasure that brings subjects into “solidarity of sensibility” and a common perspective in the judgment of taste is disinterested. It is a pleasure that one wants to share with the others. This can be universally communicated because, in the judgment of taste, imagination and understanding are in a harmonious, lively, and free, although, lawful, play, “where the imagination in its freedom arouses the understanding, and the latter, without concepts, sets the imagination into a regular (regelmässiges) play.” Only then “is the representation communicated, not as a thought, but as the inner feeling of a purposive state of mind.” Kant calls this “purposiveness without an end,” because there is order, harmony, and unity, as would be provided by the understanding, the faculty of concepts and laws. However, such order is without a concept or an end, from whence, the possibility for imagination to (lawfully and regularly) play in an unstudied and spontaneous way.

When involved with the sublime, the subject experiences a conflict between imagination and reason. First the vital powers are inhibited and, then, it follows an even more “powerful outpouring of them.” The sublime is associated with negative pleasure. Admiration and respect, and not pleasant sociability, follow out of it. Kant distinguishes between two forms of sublime: the mathematically and the dynamically sublime. The mathematically sublime is that “which is absolutely great.” When attempting to comprehend the absolutely great (of the infinite) and bring it to the unity of
reason, imagination experiences its own limits. Thus, “it sinks back into itself, but is thereby transported into an emotionally moving satisfaction.”

This is an occasion for the imagination to reflect on its own limits and to try renewing its capacity for the presentation of the ideas of reason in experience. An enlargement of mind occurs, “which feels itself empowered to overstep the limits of sensibility from another (practical) point of view.” Kant argues that this marks the beginning of imagination’s role in the service of practical reason. By agitating and unsettling the mind, imagination makes it judge empirical reality. Thus, one realizes the gap between empirical reality and the norms of reason. Such awareness awakens the moral feeling in men, that is, the feeling for their supersensible destination. Kant concludes by pointing out that this is the capacity “to feel an aptitude for higher ends, which lies hidden in us.”

The dynamically sublime defines nature as a power “that has no dominion over us.” As sublime, nature arouses fear in us. However, such fear helps men to discover in themselves the power to resist nature. Therefore, if the mathematically sublime awakens the feeling of men’s supersensible vocation, the dynamically sublime enhances in them the feeling that they have the power to accomplish their vocation. Kant contends that the dynamically sublime elevates the strength of our souls and allows us “to discover within us a capacity for resistance,” which gives us “the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature.”

Teleological reflective judgment is about purposiveness in the internal organization of organisms, as well as about the purposiveness of nature or of history as a
whole. As Kant claims in his political writings, the aim is to interpret history as a whole and as having an end, although the end is only a projection and an evaluation made by one’s mind and not something that one knows in an objective way. This is the case because it is beyond man’s understanding to penetrate providence and to know the end of nature and history.

The best man can do is to look at nature or history as if he could judge them as a whole, thus being able to grasp both their beginning and their ends. It is to look at them as if they would progress in the direction of their highest end, which is, as Kant hypothesizes, a cosmopolitan existence, for nature, and the production of sociability and civil security among men, for history. It is also to look at nature and history as if there would be proof in them that men have the power to achieve these ends. This way of judging requires imagination and interpretive capacity. It requires prophetic and conjectural capacity.

The introduction by Kant of a principle of reflective judgment after the first two Critiques changes his critical philosophy in several ways. First, Rudolf Makreel argues that it adds a hermeneutical and imaginative dimension to the way we orient ourselves in the world, in nature, history, and culture and to the way we communicate with the others. Politically, this is important because it shows the role imagination can play in judging history for practical purpose, namely, in influencing one’s posterity “in such a way that it will make constant progress,”180 as well as in interpreting particular historical events as examples and signs that man has “an aptitude and power for improvement.”181 In this sense, teleological ideas such as the idea of culture or that of a cosmopolitan society,
which specifies and gives imaginative content to the abstract ideal of an invisible kingdom of God on earth,"¹⁸² “can be used to reflect on the way moral purposes are realized in history through the development of our natural capacities and our moral freedom.”¹⁸³

Second, Jane Kneller argues that, in writing the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant’s aim is to “link morality in its pure rational form to the fact of human beings’ finitude and embodiment,”¹⁸⁴ namely, to sensibility and feeling. Since for Kant we are finite and corporeal beings, in order to fulfill the demands of reason on earth, we need to feel and imagine ourselves as having such a power and as accomplishing progress in this direction. Thus, the introduction by Kant of a principle of reflective judgment after the first two *Critiques* adds an aesthetic and imaginative dimension to the Kantian primacy of practical reason. It follows that the primacy of practical reason is not only a matter of will, but also an aesthetic matter, where the free play of imagination and aesthetic contemplation,¹⁸⁵ as well as artistic production, perform an important role.

As an example in this sense one can cite the experience of the sublime, which marks the beginning of the moral feeling in men. Through the aesthetic feeling of the sublime, imagination discovers its limits, reflects on them, and strives to enlarge its presentational power. One thus becomes aware of the gap between empirical reality and the ideas of reason.¹⁸⁶ Part of this awareness is the feeling of admiration and respect that is ignited by the experience of something that surpasses and at the same time ennobles us; namely, our moral vocation to form humanity according to the ideas of reason. In short, the aesthetic feeling of the sublime can cultivate in the people respect, enthusiasm, and
passion for rights. It can also make people feel like they have the power to close the gap between right and politics, namely, the power to cultivate humanity.

Moreover, aesthetic ideas, which are the works of poets, but also of composers, architects, painters, and even metaphysicians, relate the ideas of reason to feelings by symbolically embodying them. The faculty of aesthetic ideas reveals itself in its full measure in poetry, which for Kant is the highest among all arts. Kant argues that the important cultural figure of the poet ventures himself “to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature, by means of an imagination that emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum.”

Kant thinks that aesthetic ideas can play an important political role insofar as they can symbolize in experience, in the actual world or the world of appearances, the idea(1)s of reason. An example of a politically applied aesthetic idea is that of a republican state that is symbolized by a living body. In Makkreel’s interpretation, this is an example of “a politically applied aesthetic idea that mediates between the teleological idea of an empirical organism and the rational idea of a supersensible or divine kingdom of ends.” Thus, as a symbol of morality, the aesthetic idea mediates here between nature (necessity) and reason (freedom). This is important for practical and pragmatic purposes:
for the self-making of man, because it presents in experience an idea of reason, which, otherwise, would not be accessible.

The efforts of the moral politician to reconcile right and politics require an imaginative judging and interpretation of history. According to Kant, this can be provided by philosophers and onlookers at the historical events, by public thinkers, as he is. The efforts of the moral politician also require the creativity of artistic production that can enrich one’s capacity to communicate the results of one’s judgments. In brief, taking Kant’s intention one step further, one could argue that such judgments and interpretations of history, as well as the creative engagement of imagination by the (common) faculty of the genius, need to belong to the public realm, namely, to the realm where people communicate with their fellows and make their maxims public.

Third, John Zammito argues that, in light of his aesthetic theory, Kant’s interest is in “establishing the very possibility of practical reason operating effectively in the actual world.”189 To this extent and similar to Schiller and Herder, Kant is moved by the pragmatic interest of changing man. This denotes the attempt to shift “from our natural identity, as beings with certain natural capacities, to our self-created identity, which takes into account what we do with what we are given.”190 This means that, to a large extent, humanity is an issue of self-created identity and self-making; not only an issue of judging and reflecting upon history. Cultivating humanity is not only a hermeneutical exercise, but also a pragmatic task. Or, to put it differently, the hermeneutical approach that is carried by the spectators of history is part of a larger, pragmatic task of making humanity,
of cultivating and disciplining the (hostile) nature of the actors engaged in the making of history.

Kant’s purpose, in putting together an aesthetic theory, is not only interpretative. It is also pragmatic. The aim is to change man, by cultivating (Kultur) those abilities that are required for the production of humanity: taste (the interest in society), the ability to feel one’s vocation or calling, and the power to achieve it throughout history. In this project, the aesthetic plays an essential role in enacting the unity between reason and nature or the unity of humanity. To this extent, the aesthetic becomes an essential aspect of both moral and political practice, because it makes possible the transition from the culture of skill to the culture of discipline; thus, preparing the ground for moral politics.

Two Types of Politics: Their Means and Purposes

One of Kant’s fundamental assumptions about human nature refers to its inherent hostility and penchant for war. Thus, he never gets tired from reminding his readers that war itself “does not require any particular kind of motivation, for it seems to be ingrained in human nature.”191 As a result, an essential part of the political project is to make possible the peaceful coexistence of the individuals in a republic, of states in an international order, and of individuals, e.g., the foreigners that enter the territory of another state, and states in a cosmopolitan order.

This can be done without trying to cultivate, improve, and even change human nature. As a result, in discussing the possibility of establishing and preserving a
republican constitution, Kant argues that “setting up a state can be solved even by a nation of devils (so long as they possess understanding).” A republican state can be set by designing a constitution, which would make it possible to inhibit the oppositions between the citizens, in such a way that “the public conduct of the citizens will be the same as if they did not have such evil attitudes.”

Setting a republican state does not necessitate the moral improvement of man, but only “finding out how the mechanism of nature can be applied to men in such a manner that the antagonism of their hostile attitudes will make them compel one another to submit to coercive laws, thereby producing a condition of peace within which laws can be enforced.” Thus, the expectation is not that moral attitudes would produce a good political constitution, but that the latter will also produce, over time, a “good level of moral culture.” In short, Kant concludes that the “mechanism of nature by which selfish inclinations are naturally opposed to one another in their external relations can be used by reason to facilitate the attainment of its own end, the reign of established right.”

To this extent, politics means only “the art of utilising nature for the government of man,” because in a state thus set “everything that happens or can happen simply obeys the mechanical workings of nature.” The setting of the state in such a manner is seen only as a technical matter, and not as a moral matter, only as a matter of skill, and not as a matter of discipline, educating and cultivating reason and freedom in the individuals. This situates man “into the same class as other living machines.” Thus, he is not seen in his (moral) freedom and in his capacity to be the ultimate end of nature. He is not seen in
his capacity to develop culture in the highest possible sense, namely, as the cultivation and the development of humanity and sociability.

Kant thinks that the ultimate end of nature is to prepare man to go beyond nature; that is, to achieve culture. He defines culture broadly as the “production of the aptitude of a rational being for any ends in general.”\textsuperscript{195} There are, of course, several types of ends. One of them is happiness. Unfortunately, this is not achievable because of a twofold hostility, that of nature outside us and of nature inside us. This indicates that the ultimate end of nature is not happiness, but culture and the production of humanity. This is man’s responsibility. It is a task and a problem for men, not for nature.

Fulfilling such a task takes one beyond the realm of politics understood only as the art of utilizing nature for the government of men. It takes one closer to form of politics that tries to reconcile itself with morality. According to this form of politics, which Kant calls moral, “people should combine to form a state in accordance with freedom and equality as its sole concepts of right” based not on expediency, but on duty.\textsuperscript{196} In brief, moral politics requires the cultivation of humanity and of the respect for human rights.

Such a form of politics is the work of the moral politician. This is someone who “believes that man possesses a greater moral capacity, still dormant at present, to overcome eventually the evil principle within him (for he cannot deny that it exists), and to hope that others will do likewise.”\textsuperscript{197} The moral politician is someone who believes that the progress of reason is possible through the promotion of sociability, which is “the principal end of human destiny.”\textsuperscript{198} In brief, the moral politician is somebody who tries to
bring political reality closer to the commands of practical reason. In this effort, he needs to cultivate the minds and characters of the people. He needs to educate man “as a human being and citizen.” He needs to educate sociability and respect for the human rights.

Closing the gap between right and politics, which is the aim of the moral politician, requires both setting a good republican or cosmopolitan constitution and achieving “moral maturity” and a “morally good attitude of mind” in the citizens. Since humans are finite and embodied (having a body and senses) beings, the task of making practical reason effective in the actual world requires connecting it to feelings and sensibility in the attempt to produce sociability, by changing the nature of man.

The task is to create a second nature. In this enterprise, the moral politician needs the help of taste and of aesthetic ideas, in brief, of imagination. Thus, the attempt to develop a culture of reason (of duty and respect for rights) necessitates the help of a culture of taste and of creative aesthetic imagination. In Kant’s view, the sociability that is appropriate to humankind consists of two properties: the universal feeling of participation and the capacity to communicate one’s inmost self universally. As a result, *humaniora* or “humanitas aesthetica and decorum” plays an essential role in cultivating the mental powers that shape sociability thus understood.

*Sensus Communis and Creative Imagination in the Service of the Enlightenment*

Makkreel argues that situating the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the overall context of critical philosophy makes it possible to add to Habermas’s ideal speech
situation, which represents “a nontranscendent version of Kantian practical reason,”
reflective specificity. That is the capacity imagination has to present the concepts of the
intellect and the ideas of reason in experience. Such a capacity is connected to aesthetic
ideas, which are the product of the faculty of the genius and of its creative imagination.
Habermas’s ideal speech situation thus incorporates the creativity of the faculty of the
genius. I argue that, as suggested by Kant’s philosophical premises, this can be seen as a
faculty common to all.

It also makes it possible to add imaginative flexibility to Habermas’s ideal speech
situation, as proved by Arendt’s spectator of an event such as the French Revolution.
This has the imaginative ability to use a particular event as a historical sign and as an
example “that not only intimates a better future for the human race, but also confirms a
moral predisposition that can help bring it about.” To this extent, the ideal speech
situation adds to its make-up the power of the judgment of taste to create solidarity and a
commonness of feeling.

The Kantian principle of reflective judgment makes possible a reflective
interpretation of our world (nature and history). Makkreel claims that this proceeds
tectonically, by “allowing the parts of a given whole to enrich and revise our initial
understanding of it.” The guidelines for interpretative reflection are provided by
imagination. They are indeterminate. They coordinate particularity and universality in
the interpretation of an event, such as the French Revolution, in such a way that a
“contingent historical fact can intimate a necessary human telos,” thus indicating
“something humanly valuable and significant.”
The products of taste and the aesthetic ideas, the creations of genius’ imagination, provide the model for how such imaginative and reflective guidelines that the interpretation of history requires would be produced and practiced in a society. Kant argues that the products of taste are exemplary, namely, they cannot be imitated. Everybody has to judge for himself and thus each person should cultivate his autonomy of taste. This is the case because the examples provided by the predecessors have only the exemplary role “to put others on the right path for seeking out the principles in themselves and thus for following their own, often better, course.”205 Thus, the “[e]mulation of a precedent, rather than imitation, is the right term for any influence that products of an exemplary author may have on others; and this means no more than drawing on the same sources from which the predecessor himself drew, and learning from him only how to go about doing so.”206

Makkreel explains Kant’s thoughts on this issue by pointing out that the cultivation of taste requires not examples but the exemplary. Whereas “examples provide determinate images with the power to bind us,” the exemplary engages images in a reflective, interpretive, and creative manner. Thus, as exemplary, the products of taste are an invitation to engage imagination in its freedom. This refers to imagination not as reproductive and thus subjected to the laws of association, but as productive207 and self-active,208 as the “authoress of voluntary forms of possible intuitions.”209

In Makkreel’s view, by relating taste to the exemplary and the influence of precedents, Kant “places aesthetic norms in a public framework.”210 This has two important consequences. First, Kant relates the ‘territory’ of aesthetic judgment to “a
‘domain’ of mutual accountability, but in a way such that no one is compelled.”²¹¹ This is made possible by the distinction he makes between emulation and imitation. Accordingly, the precedent model is characterized not as a determining ground, but rather as orienting. As exemplary, the aesthetic norms function as “an external guide that awakens an internal source as well,” thus inviting us to “draw on our resources.”²¹² As Schiller argues, further developing the Kantian thought, aesthetic norms reveal our freedom and are invitation to exert it. Second, the “exemplary is like an indeterminate schema²¹³ that leaves the imagination some flexibility in how to proceed.”²¹⁴ Thus, it invites to creation and invention.

Within the realm of culture, the models or the examples of taste should function as exemplary particulars that invite us to situate them in a broader “territory,”²¹⁵ thus “preparing us to judge things from the general perspective of human sensibility.”²¹⁶ Kant explains that this is possible because the judgment of taste can be made only under the presupposition that there is common sense. In declaring something to be beautiful one makes a claim to subjective, aesthetic, or favorable universality.

This type of universality is not objective, but intersubjective; namely, it “expects confirmation not from concepts but only from the consent of others.”²¹⁷ In brief, “if one then calls the object beautiful, one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone.”²¹⁸ In this sense, the generalization we make in the judgment of taste “is not an inductive prediction, but anticipates how we humans should respond.”²¹⁹ The judgment of taste is prescriptive and normative. It imaginatively
“projects a felt agreement with other subjects.” Such an agreement is not the result of concepts, but of sensibility.

Kant understands by *sensus communis* the idea of a communal sense, namely, “a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (a priori) of everyone else’s way of representing in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole…Now this happens by one holding his judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgments of others.” Sensus communis is different from (uncultivated) common human understanding. The crucial maxim in the definition of *sensus communis* is that of an enlarged, broad-minded, or liberal way of thinking.

Kant explains in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* that a liberal way of thinking “accommodates itself to other people’s concepts.” Such accommodation takes place through the work of a self-active, voluntary, and productive imagination. Thus, as a broad-minded or liberal way of thinking, *sensus communis* comes into being not by transposing oneself into the actual standpoint of the other, but through “a prior enlargement of one’s thought based on imagining possibilities that are not merely variations of the self.”

In brief, according to Makkreel’s interpretation of Kant’s notion of *sensus communis*, a “liberal way of thinking that accommodates itself to other people’s concepts” comes into being by projecting “a possible intermediary position held neither by the self nor by the other.” Such an intermediary position offers “a perspective, based on the *sensus communis* that makes possible a better understanding of both the self and the other.” Imagination and feeling play an essential role in its creation.
However, Makkreel concludes by pointing out that common sense is rather regulative. It aims at an ideal community. In approximating it, imagination plays an essential role in gradually constructing, through reflection on particulars, a projected “normative universality to be arrived at by the human community.” Imagination plays an essential role in constructing a communal sense, which thus appears to be not so much something presupposed, but a possibility to be cultivated. In short, as a regulative ideal, communal sense guides human beings in the attempt to gradually form solidarity (of sensibility) out of their war like inclinations. Adding to Kant’s idea, Herder could contend that the gradual construction of a communal sense consists in the development of a common feeling for humanity through the interpretative and creative engagement with other cultures, which imagination makes possible.

Kant does argue that resistance and antagonism, which come from the fact that every individual wants to “direct everything in accordance with his own ideas,” play an essential role in the full development of the human capacities. Such resistance and antagonism encourages “man toward new exertions of his powers and thus toward further development of his natural capacities.” However, this belongs only to politics as the art of utilizing nature for the government of men. It belongs to politics insofar as this follows and skillfully tries to use the path of nature, that is, the unsociable sociability of men. Still, Kant points out that the highest aim of politics is to educate “a morally good attitude,” sociability, civility, and humanity in the citizens. The regulative ideal of a communal sense thus serves the end of moral politics, that of cultivating humanity.
An example in this sense is provided by Kant’s interpretation of the French Revolution as a sign that there is a tendency in the human nature and in history to progress, that is, to advance in the direction of civility and sociability, in brief, of humanity. Kant contends that the sign of this advancement is the public attitude of the spectators of the French Revolution. This denotes the fact “that this revolution has aroused in the hearts and desires of all spectators …a sympathy which borders almost on enthusiasm.” The public of this event experienced passion and true enthusiasm. However, this shows a fact of “considerable anthropological significance.” It shows that “true enthusiasm is always directed towards the ideal, particularly towards that which is purely moral (such as the concept of right), and it cannot be coupled with selfish-interests.”

In brief, the public of the French Revolution showed universal and disinterested sympathy at the anticipated success and attempts to progress, namely, to set a republican constitution, of “the human race as a complete association of men.” With this it proved “an aptitude and power for improvement” in the human nature, namely, the power to cultivate humanity. Thus, due to its universality, the reaction of the spectators of the French Revolution “proves that mankind as a whole shares a certain character in common, and it also proves (because of its disinterestedness) that man has a moral character, or at least the makings of one. And this does not merely allow us to hope for human improvement; it is already a form of improvement in itself, in so far as its influence is strong enough for the present.”
The capacity to interpret events of history as signs that mankind is progressing in the direction of reason can also profit from the use of aesthetic ideas. Kant defines aesthetic ideas as a product of genius. Genius is “the exemplary originality of talent.” The original work of genius is exemplary, namely, it serves as a model to inspire and animate the others. As with the products of taste, the work of the genius is not to be imitated, but to be emulated by another genius, “who is thereby awakened to the feeling of his own originality, to exercise freedom from coercion in his art in such a way that the latter thereby acquires a new rule, by which the talent shows itself as exemplary.”

An aesthetic idea is the product of creative imagination. Kant explains that an aesthetic idea is “a representation of imagination that occasions much thinking” and thus, it cannot be made fully intelligible by any concept or language. As a result, the excess of imagination revealed in the creation of the artistic genius “aesthetically enlarges the concept itself in an unbounded way.” The aesthetic ideas produced by the genius are analogues to the ideas of reason, because they also “strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas).”

Kant illustrates this idea by pointing to the role symbols play in making it possible to analogously intuit an idea of reason. Since the ideas of reason are “concepts of perfection that we can always approach but never fully attain,” because “no object given in experience can be adequate” to them, they can be given to us only as symbols for reflection. The role of symbolization is to “create reflective analogies between our
experience and ideas that surpass (überreffen) experience.” Thus, given concepts are connected to a field of possibilities and further expanded.

In sum, opposite to the rational ideas that just transcend experience, namely, simply and completely leave it behind, in the attempt to reach the first element in a series of thoughts and thus acquire (an impossible) knowledge about entities such as God or the immortality of the soul, aesthetic ideas only surpass it. This refers to the fact that, in showing the limits and the imperfection of experience, aesthetic ideas aim, at the same time, to transform and enrich it by following the guidance of the regulative idea(l)s of reason. In this sense, aesthetic ideas give reality to the regulative power that rational ideas can have for human experience, namely, for improving and perfecting it.

In a nutshell, aesthetic ideas “orient us to rational ideas.” Thus, they play a practical role. Such a role provides a criterion for distinguishing between harmful and fruitful aesthetic ideas. The fruitful aesthetic ideas are “ought-generating,” namely, action generating. In this sense, they provide one with a feeling of participation in the ideas of reason, such as the idea of humanity and the sociability that is associated with it.

Kant provides an example of how aesthetic ideas can be engaged in this way through his conjectural interpretation of the beginnings of mankind. In his own words, he engages in an exercise of imagination and a journey “on the wings of imagination – although not without the guidance of experience as mediated by reason” in order to speculate about the origins and the end of history. The map he follows in this journey of imagination is a sacred document, the Bible. Thus, he interprets narratives and symbols, such as that of the garden (of Eden), in order to speculate about how humanity and
sociability, as ideas of reason, could be cultivated out of nature and about how history progresses or could progress in this direction.

Aesthetic ideas also provide one with expressions for communicating one’s inmost self universally, as well as the results of one’s reflective judgments. The originality of the genius is required for purposes of making a representation universally communicable. This is the case because “to express what is unnamable in the mental state in the case of a certain representation and to make it universally communicable…that requires a faculty for apprehending the rapidly passing play of the imagination and unifying it into a concept (which for that very reason is original and at the same time discloses a new rule, which could not have been deduced from any antecedent principles or examples), which can be communicated without the constraint of rules.” 237 Kant observes that the genius can communicate without rules while disclosing through the excess of his imagination a new rule.

Insofar as they disclose affinities with the rational ideas, aesthetic ideas can in turn suggest new concepts. 238 The intertwining of concepts (rational ideas) and creative aesthetic imagination, as embodied in the aesthetic idea, helps to define a form of aestheticized understanding. Kirk Pillow theorizes aestheticized understanding in the spirit of Kantian critical philosophy and in tune with recent developments in contemporary epistemology. Aestheticized understanding is a form of epistemological constructivism. Epistemological constructivism considers that understanding is not a matter of lining oneself up to the way things are. Instead, it involves “construing the
world along with others, in ways that make the world an artifact of how we interpret it. \textsuperscript{239} Imagination and ingenuity play an essential role in this construction.

Epistemological constructivism considers (reflective) judgment, where imagination plays a pivotal part, as being essential to the acts of understanding,\textsuperscript{240} thus making cognition contiguous with artistic production. Therefore, such reflective understanding “does not merely categorize, but also construes things through symbols, metaphors, narratives, and other seeing-as devices in order to produce comprehensive perspectives on their meanings.”\textsuperscript{241} It is interpretative. It is also creative or ingenuous, since it “extends meaning by continually making new connections between domains of inquiry, and it does so frequently by means of metaphors.”\textsuperscript{242}

The cognitive role of imagination, as illustrated by the notion of aestheticized understanding, reflects Kant’s idea that, as engaged by the artistic genius in the production of aesthetic ideas, imagination is not an illusion, but “very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives.” Kant points out that when experience seems too mundane to us, we entertain ourselves with this creative power of imagination. Thus, we transform (\textit{umbilden}) experience in accordance with analogous laws, but also in accordance with principles that lie higher in reason, thus feeling “our freedom from the law of association.”\textsuperscript{243}

In tune with the position of epistemological constructivism, Pillow argues that ‘genius,’ the source of aesthetic ideas, does not need to be seen as the exclusive talent of a “mysterious few.”\textsuperscript{244} Instead, it can be seen as being common to any act of understanding. Kneller points out that Kant himself seems to hesitate between genius as a
special capacity and as a capacity common to all. She concludes by saying that “Kant leaves unclear the relationship between ordinary consciousness and the creative process of genius, perhaps because, for him the two are not so essentially separated in the last place.” 245

Still, as suggested by, at least, parts of Kant’s text and as supported by epistemological constructivism, genius can be interpreted as a quality that is common to any act of understanding. In this quality, it refers to “the capacity to communicate a broad and deep (my italics) understanding of something.” 246 Thus, Pillow concludes that judgment (a cultivated talent for understanding richly) and genius (a talent for apt expression) are thus two sides of the same coin.

One can thus argue that both the public engagement of the products of taste and of the aesthetic ideas serve the natural vocation of man, which is “to communicate with his fellows, especially in matters affecting mankind as a whole.” 247 To this extent, they serve the culture of the Enlightenment or the culture of reason. They serve the duty of the public thinker. This is to assume for practical purposes that “since the human race is constantly progressing in cultural matters (in keeping with its natural purpose), it is also engaged in progressive engagement in relation to the moral end of its existence.” 248 Thus, they serve moral politics, by making the advancement of culture and history to be a progress into humanity, sociability, and civil security.

From the Culture of Skill to the Culture of Discipline, toward a Cosmopolitan Existence
Kant argues in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that the ultimate end of nature is to prepare man “for what he must himself do in order to be a final end,” namely, for going beyond nature and for becoming independent of it, namely, free. This is the end that must be separated from all the other ends made possible by nature. In brief, the ultimate end of nature is culture. Kant defines culture as the “production of the aptitude of a rational being for any ends in general.”

In Kant’s view there are two forms of culture: of skill and of discipline. The culture of skill cultivates the aptitude for finality, namely, the aptitude for the promotion of *ends in general*. The culture of discipline promotes the *will* in the determination and choice of its ends. The highest that the culture of skill can produce, that is, the greatest development of the natural predispositions, is to order man’s relations in a civil society and a cosmopolitan whole. This provides “the optimal historical condition for human culture.”

The culture of skill advances through inequality, exploitation, and antagonism between people. It relies on the division of labor and of commerce. Even war makes it flourish, insofar as this brings people closer to each other, thus encouraging commerce. Kant explains that “the sources of the very unsociableness and continual resistance which cause so many evils, at the same time encourage man towards new exertions of his powers and thus toward further development of his natural (my italics) capacities,” culture and art among them. Thus, up to a point, antagonism and “this splendid misery is bound up with the development of the natural predispositions in the human race, and the end of nature itself, even if it is not our end, is hereby attained.”
In brief, through the culture of skill, capacities are fully developed, but only as an end of nature and only insofar as nature favors them. Kant explains that, formally, namely, rationally such a development is possible in a civil society, “in which the abuse of reciprocally conflicting freedom is opposed by lawful power in a whole.” However, for this to happen, *assuming* that humans would be clever enough to discover this and wise enough to subject willingly to its coercion, “a cosmopolitan whole, i.e., a system of all states that are at risk of detrimentally affecting each other, is required.” In its absence, and given the ambition, greed, and love of power of the powerful ones, hostility and war are inevitable.\(^{249}\)

Kant seems to suggest that, if left to its own devices, nature can undermine its own end. The sum of all the ends that are possible through nature is earthly happiness. Unfortunately, Kant points out, happiness, (which is just an idea) cannot be the ultimate end of nature, for two reasons. First, human nature “is not of the sort to call a halt anywhere in possession and enjoyment and to be satisfied.” Second, it is the hostility of outside nature towards as (such as pestilence, hunger, flood, cold, etc.) and the hostility of nature inside of us. The latter refers to plagues that man invents for himself, such as “the oppression of domination, the barbarism of war.” It refers to the fact that man “works so hard for the destruction of his own species, that even if the most beneficent nature outside us had made the happiness of our species its end, that end would not be attained in a system of nature upon the earth, because the nature inside of us is not receptive to that.”\(^{250}\)
One can argue that this is where the culture of skill reaches its limits. Thus, the best the culture of skill can do is only to bring to full development that which nature is capable of doing in order to prepare man “for what he must himself do in order to be a final end.”

That is for taking himself as his own task. However, in this enterprise, the challenge is to go beyond nature and to create a second nature. It is to create culture and humanity, as our problem and responsibility, not as that of nature. Such a task belongs to the culture of discipline.

The culture of discipline is purposively engaged in “an education to make us receptive to higher ends than nature itself can afford,” such as freedom and equality. It is a culture that aims at cultivating reason, sociability, and civility. Its main end is the cultivation of humanity and of man’s aptitude for freedom. An essential aspect of this is to make one feel and imagine the aptitude for higher ends than those of nature. This is where the culture of discipline requires the help of beautiful arts. These cultivate the (aesthetic and imaginative) mental powers that nurture sociability and develop humanity through, not against, nature and beyond it. Central to such powers is “the art of the reciprocal communication of the ideas of the most educated part with the cruder, the coordination of the breadth and refinement of the former with the natural simplicity and originality of latter.” In a nutshell, central to the mental powers that are conducive to the making of humanity is the art of discovering the “mean between higher culture and contended nature.”

Finding such a mean presupposes identifying ways through which man can liberate from nature by taking its drives, not as fetters, but as guides. In brief, the task is
to free ourselves from animality without neglecting and injuring it, while, at the same time progressing beyond it.\textsuperscript{254} The task is to gradually advance from the culture of skill to the culture of discipline, namely, from nature to reason and freedom. It is to develop human culture to the point where perpetual peace becomes possible, namely, to the point where war and hostility are not any longer means of advancing culture. Of course, such a possibility suggests that there should be in the human nature other drives and tendencies than hostility and the desire to dominate. It is Kant’s assumption that taste and imagination might be connected to such drives in the human nature.

The task in cultivating humanity as our problem is to go beyond the culture of skill, thus disciplining will and creating, with the help of imagination, a second nature out of that given to us. Imagination plays an essential role in both disciplining will and in making man to discover and experience the freedom of creating himself beyond nature. One implication is that such ‘disciplining’ should take place in a playful manner. It is also that the ‘disciplining’ should be the result of the sense of possibility that belongs to creative imagination.

Kant argues in his \textit{Anthropology} that, as part of \textit{humanitas aesthetica and decorum}, taste cultivates “the mental powers for sociable communication,”\textsuperscript{255} because it shapes our way of appearing to the others in society. Taste \textit{enacts} and \textit{stages} humanity and sociability. To have taste in \textit{presenting} one’s person and artifacts defines one’s living in a state of society. Kant argues that in this enterprise one’s person or one’s artifacts produces pleasure in the others not through sensation immediately, but rather through
“the way in which free (productive) imagination arranges this matter inventively – that is, the form.”

Kant also provides in his *Anthropology* an example that can be interpreted as showing how one’s taste can enact sociability. This refers to the arrangement of a tasteful dinner party that *animates* the company. Kant starts by advising that dining alone is not recommendable because this is “fatiguing work, not a stimulating play of thought.” Dining should take place in the presence of the others and while conversing with them. Kant defines a tasteful dinner as one that cultivates the sprightliness of the participants, while presenting them with alternatives to their own ideas and with new material to stimulate them. This requires, as much as the life of a reasonable man or a drama, narrative unity and a connecting thread. Kant thinks that being able to create such a narrative unity is a sign that one has advanced in culture, not only in one’s logical skills, but also in one’s imaginative powers.

In the tasteful dinner party the act of dining together and the act of conversing grow together and stimulate each other. Thus, Kant argues that the culture of the spirit (conversation) needs to be found in one of nature’s purposes (eating). This is possible in this case because taste (the aesthetic feeling of the beautiful) mediates between nature and reason and thus makes one feel their unity.

Also, as much as a reasonable life or a drama, a tasteful dinner requires the imaginative and creative capacity of its organizer to project a diversity of tastes in an intermediary space. That is a space that is not just a projection of one’s own self, but an *anticipation* of the others and an *accommodation* to their opinions. As a result, Kant
advises that the organizer should carefully design a stage where each and every participant can act, without feeling, at the end, alienated (Entzweiert) from any of the fellow guests.

If alienation is to be avoided, the organizer has to also be able to bring all the different tastes and opinions together in a playful and pleasurable manner, which ends with laughter. This means in a manner that is not connected to any immediate empirical interest (business). It also means in a manner of “mutual respect and benevolence” toward the others. Kant concludes the example by pointing out that the rules he has listed are the ‘laws’ of “refined humanity,” because they promote through pleasing maxims and manners sociability.²⁵⁷

By having taste in presenting to the others one’s person and artifacts and by following the laws of refined humanity, the organizer of the tasteful dinner party promotes morality in an external way. This is the case because making a “man well-mannered as a social being falls short of forming a morally good man, but it still prepares him for it by the effort he makes, in society to please others (to make them love or admire him).”²⁵⁸ To this extent, taste can be considered “morality in one’s outward appearance.”²⁵⁹

Kant explains that taste enacts sociability in the above example, because it provides, by the manner in which it brings people together in the event, “a garment that dresses virtue to advantage.” The implication is that, without taste and the graces, virtue can be just egoism (in Kant’s sense, this means solipsism). Thus, “the cynic’s purism and the anchorite’s mortification of the flesh, without social well-being, are distorted figures
of virtue, which do not attract us to it. Forsaken by the graces, they can make no claim to humanity.\textsuperscript{260} In brief, humanity requires not only virtue, but also taste and grace in presenting oneself to the others and in liberally accommodating oneself to their opinions. It requires the theatrical capacity to present to the others’ one’s virtues, to make these speak to them.

The event of the tasteful dinner party provides an example of how, in Kant’s view, human nature could be engaged in an aesthetic manner, in order to cultivate humanity and sociability out of (logical, moral, and aesthetic) egoism, as well as, out of man’s natural hostility and unsociability, out of the fact that we “cannot avoid constantly offending one another.” Kant argues that this is possible because an event that aesthetically enacts sociability, such as that of the tasteful dinner, engages men’s (natural) tendency to be actors. This tendency has roots in our nature, namely, in our “tendency to give ourselves over readily to illusion.” The hope is that “if men keep on playing these roles, the real virtues whose semblance they have merely been affecting for a long time are gradually aroused and pass into their attitude of will.”\textsuperscript{261} Thus semblances become their second nature.

However, Kant goes even further. He suggests that the decisive step that takes man beyond nature, by freeing him for creating a second nature, is made by imagination in cooperation with reason. Based on his interpretation of the Bible, Kant claims that, with the help of imagination, reason invents desires that lack any corresponding natural impulse and are even at variance with nature. This encouraged man to experiment, namely, “to make the first experiment in free choice.” Thus, he “discovered in himself an
ability to choose his own way of life without being tied to any single one like the other animals.”

Moreover, “by means of imagination” man also learned that he can render his inclination “more intense and lasting by withdrawing its object from the senses.” Thus, refusal “was the device that invested purely sensuous stimuli with an ideal quality.”

This prepared man for the next step, namely, the capacity “to visualize what is yet to come.”

By becoming increasingly capable to experience and feel the freedom to make himself, man came closer to realizing that he is the true end of nature. Consequently, the fourth step of reason and of imagination “is also associated with man’s release from the womb of nature” in view of cultivating his will and freedom.

Kant concludes by saying that the task facing the age of the enlightenment is to develop “man’s capacities as a moral species.” Such a task requires more than cleverly using nature in order to discipline one’s will through coercion, which is as far as politics, as the art of utilizing nature for the government of man, goes. The task is to develop humanity through the cultivation of freedom, an essential part of which is to engage imagination in the creation of a second nature out of that given to us. One can argue that such a task is, probably, more in tune with Kant’s notion of moral politics.

According to Kant, one feature of the effort to cultivate man’s capacities as a moral species, his humanity, is to develop “a cosmopolitan system of general political security” and a cosmopolitan constitution, which includes as an essential aspect of it, the right to hospitality. He argues that the “peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation
of rights in *one* part of the world is felt *everywhere.*” The main vehicle that brought about such interconnectedness is commerce of all sorts. The hope is that the more the spirit of commerce will spread, the more this is will clash with man’s natural desire to go to war. In Kant’s view, the existence of such a universal community shows that the idea of a cosmopolitan right is not fantastic or overstrained at all. The right to hospitality, that is, “the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else’s territory,” thus becomes a universal right of humanity and “a necessary complement to the unwritten code of political and international right.”

Kant sees cosmopolitanism as grounded in a rational constitution and in law, which, of course, has its undeniable advantages, since it makes the right to hospitality enforceable. Respecting and enforcing human rights is part of the attempt made by the moral politician to reconcile morality (as theory of right) and politics. However, one could also argue that, in accordance with the present reconstruction of Kant’s conception of the relationship between politics and imagination, cosmopolitanism requires and consists of more than the legal aspect. It requires the enthusiasm and the passion that the public of the French revolution showed for the sacredness of human rights. It also requires the capacity, which the aesthetic feeling of the sublime cultivates, to understand the discrepancy between the ideal and facts. As a result of this, “one can never be satisfied as long as there are human rights violations.” However, this is how far Kant goes.

Kant’s conception of cosmopolitanism, which is the idea of reason under which alone the full development of man’s capacities is possible, can be further enlarged by
drawing on Schiller’s and Herder’s philosophy. It can be further developed through Schiller’s conception of individual freedom and his argument that constitutions and political institutions need the support of a certain type of character in the citizens that is the result of a specific form of freedom and of a certain form of society. It can also be developed further through Herder’s conception of the common feeling of humanity, which is grounded in one’s capacity to share and participate through imagination in the cultures and horizons of meaning of the others. Thus, Herder argues that, since culture and language make government and peaceful co-existence possible in a deeper way than contractual agreements or the bureaucratic and centralized state, the more culture, language, and religion people share, the deeper and wider their political association and peaceful cosmopolitan co-existence in a universal community would be.

*Schiller: Political Reform through Aesthetic Culture*

*The Problem of Politics in Practice and Its Solution*

Schiller develops in a critical manner Kant’s incipient conception about the role of the aesthetic in the promotion of morality. To this extent, he shares some of Kant’s ideas. As Kant, he accepts the distinction between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom. Thus, he argues that the ideas of reason need sensible embodiments in the actual world in order to promote political reform and the development of humanity. However, in a way never embraced by Kant, Schiller sees the work of art as *the* sensible embodiment
of freedom. Similar to Kant, he considers beauty to be the symbol of morality. As a result, he sees beauty and imagination as working in the service of reason, namely, as engaged in advancing the idea(l)s of reason in the actual world. However, in contrast with Kant, Schiller sees the aesthetic as the very core of the human nature.

In the end, it is truer to say that Schiller embraces some of Kant’s ideas and develops them beyond the Kantian philosophical framework. First, one of the premises of Kant’s philosophy is the rigid separation between duty and inclination. This is true despite his attempts to mediate between nature (sensibility) and freedom (reason). Instead, Schiller argues for the harmony between reason and sensibility, for their equal rights and cooperation. He argues for duty from inclination (for moral action as beautiful), not for duty against inclination, because he sees reason and sensibility as growing out of each other. The mediating element is the play drive, where imagination occupies a central position.

Second, Kant’s concept of the highest good remains moralistic (happiness according to moral virtue). In contrast, Schiller situates Kantian morality in a broader perspective. Thus, he argues for the development of the senses as ends in themselves and for the realization of human individuality, as a value in itself.268 Opposite to Kant, Schiller develops an anthropological perspective, where the cultivation of individuality and sensibility ceases to be considered as just a means to moral development, in order to become an end in itself.269

Third, one could argue that Schiller values diversity more than Kant, because, in his view, “content counts no less than form, and living feeling too has a voice.”270 The
anthropological perspective developed by Schiller pays equal attention to the unity demanded by reason and to the multiplicity demanded by nature. As a result, the moral character should not assert itself only by sacrificing the natural and a political constitution should not achieve its unity only by suppressing variety. To this extent, Schiller comes closer to Herder’s view according to which humanity is more than an idea of reason. Instead, humanity consists of the diversity and complexity of lifestyles and cultures. It exists only through them.

Fourth, Kant does see the aesthetic as playing a certain role in shaping the natural egoism and hostility of men into a politically desirable type of culture, namely, into a culture that would promote humanity and sociability. However, Schiller straightforwardly considers the aesthetic (sensibility, feeling, and imagination) as the solution to “the problem of politics in practice (Erfahrung).”

The problem of politics in practice is how to reform a corrupt constitution (and construct true political freedom) without ending in the all destructive violence and terror of the French Revolution and without tearing the state apart, because “the living clockwork of the state must be repaired while it is still striking.” At the same time, the challenge is to keep alive the normative and inspiring power that the rational ideal (the idea of moral man) has to transform imperfect reality. This is the case because, while Schiller as much as Goethe rejects revolutionary change, he does not give up the belief in the power of theory and of political visions to change reality, which is, undoubtedly, a Kantian (and liberal) element of his thinking.
As envisaged by Schiller, the solution to the problem of politics in practice requires aesthetic education. The reason is that only such an education can fully develop the sensuo-rational nature of man, thus making individual freedom possible. Schiller argues that only fine art (schöne Kunst) can complete the task of cultivating both sensibility/imagination and reason.

However, he opines against critical voices, such as Rousseau’s, that in such an enterprise, one should not follow experience as the judge for what fine arts could be and could achieve, because “we turn our eyes in past history we find taste and freedom shunning each other, and beauty founding her sway solely upon the decline and fall of heroic virtues.” Instead, one should deduce a rational and normative notion of beauty from the “sheer potentialities of our sensuo-rational nature.” Thus, Schiller observes, the burden is to demonstrate that beauty is a “necessary condition of human being.” The burden is to demonstrate that the aesthetic condition, namely, the interplay of sensibility and reason, is constitutive to be the fact of being human.

Schiller’s solution to the problem of politics in practice relies on several assumptions. First, he thinks that, if reason is to become a force (Kraft) in the world, as the Enlightenment hopes, then, it has to connect itself to a drive that would become “her champion in the realm of phenomena.” The motif is that “drives are the only motive forces (bewegenden Kräfte) in the sensible world.” Thus, the most urgent need of the age (of reason) is the “development of man’s capacity for feeling” (Ausbildung des Empfindungs Vermögen). Otherwise, the theoretical culture that the Enlightenment developed would not reach people, thus making itself worthy of respect. Otherwise, the
state will remain forever “a stranger to its citizens since at no point does it ever make contact with their feeling”\footnote{278} and the governing section will end by confusing the concrete reality of the individual with a mere construct of the intellect.

Second, the human will can act as a power (Macht) only insofar as one cultivates and exerts both sensibility and reason. Only to this extent, will is an expression of man’s freedom, namely, of his capacity and potentiality (Vermögen) of becoming human by fully developing both his sensibility and his reason. Third, a (rational) constitution and institutions are not enough for guaranteeing political and social freedom. In order to be effective, political institutions need to be linked to a culture that encourages such a full development of individuality, as well as, specific social relations.

In Schiller’s view, the state is not the right agent for undertaking such a reform because it is itself part of the problem and thus the source of the corruption. The state is intermeshed with the spirit of the time that permeates modern culture and society. The increasingly complex machinery of the modern state is intermeshed with and thrives out of the division of labor that brings about sharper divisions between sciences, as well as, between ranks and occupations. As a result of this diagnosis and in the same vein as Kant and Herder, Schiller argues that (cultural and political) reform should come from the civil society, “more specifically from enlightened individuals taking responsibility for the education of the people.”\footnote{279}

Schiller defines the modern division of labor as “the fragmentary specialization of human powers.”\footnote{280} The trouble with the division of labor is that it propagates a dangerous split in the unity of human nature, between imagination and reason, between the intuitive
and the speculative understanding, between the spirit of speculation and the practical spirit; thus obscuring the “rich meaning of human nature.”

To the extent that modern government just perpetuates the division of labor, it also perpetuates its harmful cultural, social, and political consequences that come out of the split in human nature.

The result is that, on the one hand, “a riotous imagination ravages the hard-won fruits of the intellect,” and, on the other hand, “the spirit of abstraction stifles the fire at which the heart should have warmed itself and the imagination been kindled.”

Lacking a properly formed imagination, individuals are either driven by the spirit of speculation, thus, having a cold heart. Or, they are driven by the practical spirit. Thus, they end by “judging all experience whatsoever by one particular fragment of experience” and wanting to make the rules of their own occupation apply indiscriminately to all others, which narrows their heart.

The undesirable moral and political consequence of the modern division of labor is that, the individual’s imagination (Einbildungskraft) is confined to the monotonous (einförmigen) circle of one’s profession (Beruf). As a result, imagination cannot expand to unfamiliar modes of representation (fremder Vorstellungsart). Such a narrowness of apprehension and understanding affects one’s capacity to be free, as well as, one’s capacity to understand the others and to relate to them in a sociable and gentle manner.

Unfortunately, the culture of the Enlightenment perpetuates such a division in the human nature, because it one-sidedly cultivates only understanding and reason, while neglecting the heart and “man’s capacity for feeling,” as well as, his imagination. Instead,
the role of culture should be “to put humans in a state of freedom and to assist in realizing the concept of a human person as a whole.”

The task of culture should be the cultivation and development of both the sensuous and the rational nature of man, because, as Habermas observes, “society is reproduced not just in the consciousness of people, but also in their senses.” Thus, “the emancipation of consciousness must be rooted in the emancipation of the senses.” Furthermore, the form of art that Schiller proposes as a support of political reform, his “aesthetic utopia,” is “not aimed at an aestheticization of living conditions, but at revolutionizing the conditions of mutual understanding.”

It is a form of art that facilitates communication and understanding and thus, the sociable and civil existence of man. It is a form of art that favors a certain type of society. Moreover, Schiller argues that a civil and political art, one that can revolutionize the conditions of mutual understanding, is possible only insofar as aesthetic semblance is honest and autonomous semblance, namely, it does not claim to be real and it does not need the support of reality. The moment it claims to be reality and it has need of reality to make its effect, aesthetic semblance ceases to be free. Instead, it becomes just a base instrument for material needs.

*The End of an Enlightened and Liberal Political Culture:*

*Freedom of Full Individual Development*
In the attempt to demonstrate that beauty is a “necessary condition of human being,” Schiller argues that the person is “merely the predisposition (Anlage) to possible endless expression (zu einer möglichen unendlichen Äusserung).” It is just “form and empty potential (Form und leeres Vermögen).” The person becomes something determinate only to the extent that one feels and desires, only to the extent that one has an object for its activity. Only to this extent one transforms one’s potential (Vermögen) into active power (zur wirkenden Kraft). Thus, we give reality to the predisposition (form) we carry with us when we confront (gegenüberstellen) the eternal unity of the self “with the manifold variety of the world” and we give form to the matter when we subjugate (unterwerfen) the manifold variety of the world to the unity of the self. Consequently, we are both independent and active (form) and dependent and passive (matter).

Such a characterization of the person shows that the sensuo-rational (aesthetic) nature of man consists of two fundamental drives or forces that move us: the formal drive (to form), which is active and spontaneous, and the sensuous drive (to sense), which receives. The formal drive proceeds from the rational nature of man and expresses the intent to affirm his person among all his changes of condition. The sensuous drive proceeds from the physical existence of man and expresses his existence in the flux of time, insofar as this changes. Schiller argues that the task of culture is to watch over these drives and to secure for each its proper frontiers. It is to “preserve the life of sense against the encroachments of freedom” and “to secure the personality against the forces of sensation.” Thus, by modestly restraining their energy, the two drives should be able not to encroach upon
each other. At the same time, they should have a reciprocal relation and an interaction
(Wechselwirkung) through which “the activity of the one both gives rise to, and sets
limits to, the activity of the other.”

When the sensuous and the formal drives interact with each other in such a
manner, the play drive comes into being. Through their synthesis in the play drive, the
sensuous and the formal drives limit each other. At the same time, the two drives free the
individual from the constraint of both nature and reason.

On the one hand, the play drive introduces form into matter. Thus, it deprives
feelings and passions (matter) of their dynamic character, because it takes their
compulsiveness away. It transforms feelings and passions from forces (Kraft, Gewalt)
that drag the individual along as fate, into vehicles of freedom. This shows that, in
Schiller’s view, the feelings and the sensibility that are required to support the theoretical
culture of the Enlightenment and the political reform that this promotes are not irrational
impulses. On the contrary, they are disciplined and cultivated feelings. They are formed
feelings

On the other hand, the play drive introduces reality into form. This means that it
deprives the laws of reason of their moral necessity (Nötigung). As a result, these do not
coerce or command the individual anymore. They are not imperatives. Instead, because
they are reconciled with the interests of the senses, they speak to the individual through
his heart. In this sense, the play drive is the force (Kraft) that reason needs if it wants to
be effective in the world because it touches people’s hearts.
In a culture that properly fulfils its task, namely, that of nurturing and forming the play drive, the cultivated man (gebildete Mensch) would be able to make a friend of nature and honor her freedom, while curbing only her caprice. Only thus one would see in the actions of instincts the expression of a moral determination, while being, at the same time, able to place the ideas of reason (the ideal) in appearances.

Schiller calls the object of the play drive a living form (lebende Gestalt). Such a concept serves “to designate all the aesthetic qualities of phenomena and, in a word, what in the widest sense of the term we call beauty.” Through beauty, form lives in our feeling and life takes on form in our understanding. Through beauty the “sensuous man (der sinnliche Mensch) is led to form and thought” and the “spiritual man (der geistige Mensch) is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense.” Beauty is the middle state between matter and form, passivity (being affected) and activity (affecting), because through it “sense and reason are both active at the same time.”

To this extent, beauty makes possible a state of free disposition (freie Stimmung), because through it the individual is subject neither to the physical nor to the moral constraint, and yet he is active in both these ways. Schiller calls this an aesthetic condition, namely, a “condition of real and active determinability,” where the mind is free of all limitation, while experiencing “the sum total of powers that are conjointly active within it.”

Through beauty, the individual experiences “the power of becoming human” and the “freedom to be what he ought to be is completely restored to him.” As experienced thorough beauty, freedom is not an idea of practical reason, but it is deeply connected...
with one’s self-consciousness and inner being.\textsuperscript{297} It is an inner experience,\textsuperscript{298} which requires the full development of one’s individuality through the complete cultivation of sensibility, imagination, and reason. In short, freedom is a dynamic wholeness (Totalität) of character.\textsuperscript{299}

Such a full development of one’s individuality requires both multiplicity and variety of experiences and the capacity to bring them under the unity of form, namely, of one’s personality. Individuals thus developed would be both receptive and self-determining and active. They would be both open to a large variety of experiences and able to give form to such multiplicity. They would be creatively free because able to turn every condition that (passively) limits their personality (or freedom) into something that (actively) belongs to their own self, while, at the same time, they would able to turn into outward and worldly expression what is just an inner potentiality of their self (or personality).

These individuals would cultivate their sensibility in a multiform (vielseitiger, multifaceted) and variable (veränderlich) manner. They would also cultivate the strength (Kraft) and depth (Tiefe) of their person, as well as the freedom of their reason. The more multiform and variable the cultivation of their sensibility would be, the more world would they apprehend (ergreifen), because the more they will be receptive and open to different situations. The stronger and deeper their personality would be and the freer their reason, the more world would they comprehend (begreifen),\textsuperscript{300} because the more they will be able to reflect upon and understand the new situations.
Expressing the interplay of their sensibility and reason, such individuals would have a living, creative, and imaginative understanding (lebendigen Verstand and Genie) and feeling (Empfindung), instead of having an understanding that is only dead letter (tote Buchstabe) and experienced memory (geübtes Gedächtnis). Moreover, the cultivation of the two powers, of the openness of the senses (Offenheit des Sinnes) and of the vigor of the intellect (Energie des Verstandes) in the apprehension and the comprehension of the world (Welt), would provide them with the capacity (Vermögen) to make strange natures (fremde Natur) genuinely and truly a part of their selves, appropriate strange situations (fremde Situationen), make strange feelings (fremde Gefühle) their own.

Schiller concludes by pointing to the fact that such a twofold power would make people co-operative and participatory (teilnehmenden), supportive (hilfreichen), and active (tätigen Menschen). They would be co-operative and supportive, because of the capacity to be receptive to strange situations, natures, and feelings, to sense and imagine a large variety of circumstances. They would be active, because they would not get lost in the endless variety of strange situations, natures, and feelings. Instead, they would bring this variety under the unity of their personality, thus enlarging their horizon of meaning, enriching their understanding, and, consequently, their power to act; in brief, their own freedom (of reason).

If this is true then (a liberal and enlightened) culture and society, one that values freedom, should aim at forming a type of person that has a broad, many-faceted receptivity (sensibility) as well as a deep, powerful, free, and active personality. Ideally, Schiller argues that a person should “combine the greatest fullness of existence with the
highest autonomy and freedom.” Such a person “instead of losing himself to the world, will rather draw the latter into himself in all its infinitude of phenomena, and subject it to the unity of reason.”

Schiller’s argument for the development of individuality is similar to John Stuart Mill’s conception of the “individuality of power and development.” Following in the footsteps of Wilhelm von Humboldt, Mill argues for the free development of individuality. To have a just society requires the cultivation in each and every individual of a form of freedom that brings about “the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole.” As for Schiller, such a development requires freedom and variety of situations, individual vigor and manifold diversity. It requires “fullness of life” and originality, because, human nature “is not a machine to be built after a model…, but a tree which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.”

Individuals thus formed would be active, energetic, and self-helping. They will be self-dependent.

Mill argues for individual liberty as a way to resist the modern tyranny of the majority and of collective mediocrity. Thus, the similarity between the two conceptions adds a new dimension to Schiller’s own plea for aesthetic imagination. Not only that imagination can repair the split human nature that is the result of the modern division of labor, but it also plays an important role in increasing the freedom of the individual, namely, his capacity to resist numerical majorities and their tyranny. One could argue, pushing the argument further that this is also important because it is such unimaginative
submission of the individuals to the tyranny of the majority and to collective mediocrity that eases their regimentation in the mass murder politics of those who engage in plastic and aesthetic politics.

At the same time, Mill thinks that every human action has, besides a moral and a sympathetic aspect, an aesthetic aspect, as well. The aesthetic aspect refers to one’s imagination and, as a result, it admires or despises an action.\textsuperscript{307} One could also argue that the cultivation of the “individuality of power and development” requires imagination. This is the case because, as “the power by which one human being enters into the mind and circumstances of another,”\textsuperscript{308} imagination can provide and multiply the variety of situations and the manifold diversity that the power and free development of individuality requires.

However, Mill never goes as far as to argue that imagination, as an indispensable part of individual freedom, could play an important role in the liberal attempt to resist numerical democratic majorities. He also never goes as far as to argue that imagination could create and consolidate solidarity among the members of a society. He never goes so far as to argue that imagination could make people not only active, energetic, and self-helping, but also, as Schiller argues, cooperative, supportive, and gentle.

\textit{The Aesthetic State: A Necessary Complement to the Dynamic and to the Ethical Liberal State}
Imagination plays a central role in making possible the full development of individuality, thus promoting freedom. Schiller argues that this is the case because imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) plays an essential role in shaping the sensuous drive and the life impulse, which provides the clue to the whole history of human freedom and to the will and power of becoming human.\(^\text{309}\)

Schiller summarizes such a role of imagination in the following argument. Through aesthetic contemplation man establishes a distance between himself and the world, thus putting it beyond the reach of passion. Thus, nature is not experienced as fate, but as an object. As a result, through aesthetic contemplation man discovers his freedom as the capacity to give form to that which is formless. At the same time, through aesthetic contemplation he enters the world of ideas without leaving behind the world of sense. This is the case because beauty is both form, insofar as we contemplate it (we reflect upon it), and life, insofar as we feel it. It is at once a state of being and an activity we perform. In beauty, reflection and feeling are profoundly fused with each other.

The central force of aesthetic contemplation is imagination. This mediates between body and mind (*Geist*). In the same way as the bodily organs, imagination has its free movement and its material play. It has its free association of images. At the same time, in the same way as the mind (*Geist*), imagination attempts at bestowing free form on the play of images. Thus, it leaps to aesthetic play, where the mind brings the arbitrary activity of imagination under its control.\(^\text{310}\)

Due to the twofold kinship of imagination, with the body and with the mind, man can manifest through beauty his moral freedom and his spirit *without* fleeing matter. In
In Schiller’s view, through his creative activities that engage free play and aesthetic semblance, the artist best embodies such a happy equilibrium between sense and spirit, between the receptive and the formative power. In this sense, he provides the model for how each individual should bring to expression the ideal man and the archetype of a human being that he carries within himself. The artist provides a model for how one should constructs one’s character and presence in the world. This is the case because the artist is capable of both elevating the mind to the ideal (the rational) and of making the ideal an object of the heart’s desire (relocating it into the appearances, in the sensuous, in nature). In brief, he combines in his creations both living presence and the idea.

Moreover, Schiller argues that the true artist should be both a child of his time and a stranger to his own century. He should be both a realist and an idealist. As a stranger to his own century, he would be able to dilute the grip that reality has on people. Only thus could he see in the fabric of actuality and of the present new potentialities that can be brought to expression. As the child of his time, he would be able to divest the ideal that moves him of its earnestness. Only thus would he give a light weight to the ideal, by situating it within the limits of experience and of human nature (emotions and passions).
Taste or beauty is freedom that appears as nature, namely, as spontaneous and simple. A moral action is beautiful when one forgets himself in his action and fulfills his duty with the ease of someone acting out of mere instinct. The reason is that, as beautiful, the moral action “appears as an immediate [sich selbst ergebenden] outcome of nature” or that “the autonomy of the mind and the autonomy of appearance coincide.” To show beauty or taste in one’s moral action is to form one’s presence in a way that is spontaneously derived from one’s inner being and energies, from one’s life. It means to form and shape oneself by setting restrictions from the inside. In this sense, taste or beauty is “power limited through itself; restriction of power.” As formed by taste, self-limitation and moral disciplining should appear with the spontaneity and simplicity of nature. It should appear as effortless.

Schiller opines that, when applied to moral actions, such an effortless expression of one’s whole nature in actuality, such harmony between one’s being and the actual world, is called grace. This is “a kind of beautiful expression of the soul in the voluntary movements,” mostly, speaking movements. It is the pleasing aspect of a person’s appearance as expressed, mostly, through one’s speech. Since grace is the harmony of reason and sensibility in the way moral actions are performed, a person acts in a graceful manner if he acts without the constraint of either sensibility or reason. In a word, he acts in a graceful manner if, as an expression of the play drive and imagination, his moral action is a living form or a living presence.

The human being who harmoniously unites his sensuous and his formal drive has a beautiful soul. When such a person acts, he does so with a sense of lightness,
because he is free from the constraints of both sensibility and reason. He can carry out with lightness the most embarrassing duty, as if pure instinct would act through it. He can carry out the most heroic sacrifice, as if the natural drive has been subdued as a freely willed effect. 320 In short, in the beautiful soul, the play drive and the free play of imagination are in the service of expressing in actuality the whole nature of the person in a spontaneous and artless manner.

The social effect of beauty thus expressed in one’s appearance and action is gentility. Schiller calls gentility beauty in social relations. The first law of gentility is to have consideration for the freedom of others and the second is to show your freedom. However, this is neither just freedom as an idea of practical reason nor just freedom as the unencumbered pursuit of one’s own interest. It is the freedom to imaginatively and beautifully express one’s whole nature (reason and sensibility) in actuality in a way that, while manifesting one’s own mind, it is spontaneously and artlessly receptive and open to the other’s unfamiliar modes of representation. Thus, one’s will is naturally and spontaneously expressed, while one’s power is limited through itself. 321

In a society where human beings experience freedom as an expression of their whole nature, namely, of both sensibility and reason, where moral actions show grace, and where individuals show gentility in their social relations, one encounters the others not only as subjects of rights and as ends in themselves, 322 but also as objects of free play. Schiller calls this an aesthetic state. He contrasts the aesthetic state with both the dynamic state, namely, the liberal ‘watch guard state,’ and with the ethical state, namely, Kant’s ‘kingdom of ends.’
In the dynamic state one man encounters another as a force (als Kraft) and only thus does he impose limits upon his activities. The dynamic state makes society (Gesselschaft) possible by letting one’s nature be curbed by another.\textsuperscript{323} This is the case because, in the dynamic state, the (cultural) attitude of men toward objects and other men is characterized by a relation of immediate contact with the world of sense. Ceaselessly tortured by imperious needs, men find rest nowhere, but in exhaustion and limits, nowhere but in spent desire.\textsuperscript{324} In brief, in the dynamic state, individuals are treated only as physical beings that join society out of self-interest (self-love) or physical need. The governing principle of the dynamic state is power.\textsuperscript{325}

In the ethical state of duties “man sets himself over against (entgegenstellet) man with all the majesty of the law, and puts a curb on his desires.” Society is made possible only by “subjecting the individual will to the general.” Here individuals are treated only as rational beings that join society out of moral obligation, because it is a universal moral law that orders them to do so. The governing principle of the ethical state is the moral law. If in the dynamic state individuals limit their actions, because they encounter each other as forces, in the ethical state individuals limit their wills, because they encounter each other according to the moral law.

Schiller argues that both states are incomplete because none of them properly cultivates aesthetic imagination. Thus, none of them can properly mediate between sense and spirit, between the life impulse and reason. In this sense, none of them forms individuals for freedom. Schiller points out that the man of the dynamic state might have what he calls a reeling imagination (Imagination). However, this seeks only the here and
now that the individual already knows.\textsuperscript{326} It is not an imagination that facilitates reflection and freedom \textit{without} divorcing spirit and ideas from life. The man of the ethical state is entirely driven by duty and the stern voice of (rational) necessity. Schiller warns us that as long as (moral) necessity dictates (as in the ethical state) and need drives (as in the dynamic state) “imagination remains tied to reality with powerful bonds.”\textsuperscript{327} It remains tied to actuality. Thus, it cannot engage in free play or take delight in aesthetic semblance, which is “a genuine enlargement of humanity and a decisive step toward culture.”

In sum, both the dynamic and the ethical state need to cultivate in their citizens a form of aesthetic imagination that can play an active role in the production of grace in one’s moral actions and of gentility in one’s social relations. Only thus one would encounter the others as objects of free play. This describes the fact that one would be able to show consideration for the others’ freedom, because one would be capable of being highly receptive and open to the unfamiliar character of their modes of representation, to their strange situations, natures, and feelings. One would be able to sense and imagine their strangeness and unfamiliarity. At the same time, one would be able to show one’s own freedom, because one would be capable of bringing strange situations, natures, and feelings under the unity of a strong and deep, of an active and self-determining personality.

Such citizens would be able to develop affective citizenship, not in a nationalistic, but in a cosmopolitan manner, because they would not have a monotonous imagination. Instead, they would have an imagination that can grasp unfamiliar modes of
representation, without, nevertheless, getting lost into the world. They would be open and receptive to a variety of situations. At the same time, they would never fail to affirm their freedom, namely, their capacity to turn their receptivity into activity and creativity, thus increasing their power of becoming human.

They would be co-operative, supportive, and active. They would show grace in their moral actions and gentility in their social relations in a way that extends beyond their narrow sphere of occupation or their circle of familiarity. Such qualities would prepare them for the political task of intercultural understanding. For example, such individuals would have the will to respect and enforce the universal human right to hospitality because they would be able to exert the social and cultural capacity to be receptive to the strange natures and feelings of the others and to make such strangeness part of their own personality and an expression of their own freedom.

However, while Schiller correctly sees that reason and sensibility need to be cultivated together and made to grow out of each other as in the play drive, if individuality is to be fully developed and thus fully free, he does not see reason and sensibility as embedded in a (national) cultural and linguistic context. As a result, he makes the same mistake as Kant and thinks that the reason of the Enlightenment is universal.

Instead, Herder would contend against such a position, the reason of the Enlightenment provides only one possible definition of humanity, one that expresses the European culture or only one part of it. The motif is that reason is linguistically and culturally embedded. Thus, humanity is defined by a plurality of cultures and reason and
its categories are defined in and through numerous cultural and linguistic contexts. The role of imagination is not to connect a disembodied and abstract reason to a generic human experience. Instead, it is to connect different cultures and linguistic spaces in the attempt to imagine and interpret what humanity means across different contexts and, thus, to continue to construct the open unity of the categories of reason.

The role that Herder assigns to imagination relies on a stronger assumption than Schiller’s idea that one needs to expand one’s capacity to apprehend and comprehend the world as part of increasing one’s freedom, if one wants to pluralize one’s passion and identity. It relies on the idea that humanity is not an idea of pure reason, but it is an idea of reason that is expressed and can be brought to full development only through plural and different cultures. It also relies on an understanding of culture not as the general aesthetic cultivation of imagination and sensibility in the individuals through art, specifically, theater, but as the customs and the morals through which a people expresses its needs and specific circumstances.

*Herder: The Role of Imagination, Language, and Culture in the Formation of Humanity*

*The Aim of Good Government in Herder’s View*

One could argue that, in Herder’s view, good government requires cultivating humanity (*Humanität*). The German philosopher defines the political constitution of a
nation in a very large sense as being made out of “its laws, government, customs, and civic traditions.” Such a definition shows that, in Herder’s view, culture plays an important role in the political constitution of a country and in connection with its government. One aspect of such an important role of culture is that drafting a good political constitution and assuring a good government requires recreating traditional narratives and social practices in the context of modern institutions and in connection with the two fundamental values of freedom and justice.

Thus, when Herder speaks about the cultivation of humanity, he refers to the engagement of culture and imagination for giving practical reality to the ideals of the Enlightenment, to reason, freedom, and equality. In this sense, in the same way as Schiller, Herder criticizes the Enlightenment without giving up its ideals. He criticizes the Enlightenment without renouncing the ideal of fighting paternalism and despotism in view of creating a world where freedom of thought, the “fresh air of heaven in which all the plants of a government, especially the sciences, thrive best,” and equality would become political reality.

Reflecting such a concern, Herder makes a distinction between mankind (Menschheit) and humanity ((Humanität). On the one hand, humanity can be only the result of the full cultural diversity that mankind develops and expresses throughout history. Thus, mankind and humanity overlap. On the other hand, while mankind experiences throughout history unreason and inequality, cruelty and injustice, humanity presupposes the development of reason and freedom, but also of sensibility and imagination. It also presupposes equality and justice. One could argue that humanity
requires the full and complete development of every individual to autonomy, of every generation to the fullest potential of its time, and of every national culture to the political institutions that embody reason and guarantee freedom and equality.

Humanity is a task, which aims “to the noble formation of the human being to reason and freedom (edle Bildung zur Vernunft und Freiheit), to the finer senses and drives (zu feinern Sinnen und Treiben).” In this sense, humanity is the creative actualization of a disposition (Anlagen). Thus, “we are born with this character only in terms of disposition, and, to become actual, it must be developed (angebildet werden). We do not bring this character with us ready-made into the world; but, in this world, it is to be the goal of our strivings, the sum of our endeavors (Übungen), of our worthiness (Wert)… The divine in our kind is the ascent to humanity…The effort to attain this quality is a task (Werk) that must be carried on incessantly, or we will sink back…to raw animality, to brutality.”

An essential part of such a noble task is the formation of a feeling of humanity (Gefühl der Menschheit), of a common feeling (gemeines Gefühl), and of a “sense and sympathy for the whole of humanity (Sinn und Mitgefühl für die gesamte Menschheit).” Such a common feeling for humanity should be the product of a sympathetic, creative, and reflective imagination, which serves reason, freedom, and justice.

Herder’s complex understanding of humanity, which pays equal attention to the development of reason, senses, and drives, reflects the fact that reason and language come into being at the same time through the working together of all the forces of the soul, perceptive, cognitive, and volitional. Language does not represent an objective
reality, but it creates reality. Furthermore, language does not originate in imitation, in common understanding, or in arbitrary societal convention.  

Instead, man invents language “only out of poverty, because he is lacking; he imagines and poeticizes because he does not know.” 

The origin of language and reason expresses the fact that humans are primarily poiētēs or creators of analogies and metaphors. In this sense, for Herder and, as I will argue in the coming chapters, for Vico and Nietzsche, the “linguistic construction of reality, and thus also of human nature, occurs preeminently as a process of construction of metaphors,” Thus, the whole life of human beings is “to a certain extent poetics: we do not see images but rather create them.” The image is “a work of art” created by the soul’s faculty of perception.  

Language molds our mentality and our way of thinking (Denkungsart), our human and cultural existence. The world is given to the human beings through the “veil of language” and of culture. In this sense, reason is “an acquired knowledge of the propositions and directions of the ideas and faculties, to which man is fashioned by his organization and mode of life.” Reason is “the accumulation or product of the impressions that are received, the examples that are followed, and the internal power and energy with which they are assimilated within the individual mind.” 

Reason is rich or poor, sound or diseased, stunted or well-grown depending on one’s capacity to receive and assimilate, as well as on one’s capacity to engage impressions, observations, and examples in a creative manner, namely, in a manner that constitutes his inner self and his relations with the others. In short, Herder concludes by
pointing out that “man’s reason is the creation of man.” Reason is a cultural and linguistic creation, which displays “an orientation of all powers of the soul.”

This makes reason a ‘reflective mind,’ a reflection, or an awareness (Besonnenheit). Kant conceives the reflective power of reason as referring to one’s capacity to judge particular cases in the absence of a rule or concept. To this extent, reflective judgment requires creative imagination. However, Kant never goes as far as to think, as Herder, that a ‘reflective mind’ is continuous with life and with one’s immersion in existence and it expresses the active and creative engagement of a being with the surrounding world.

Thus, one could argue that, unlike Kant, Herder thinks that the more actively a human being is engaged with the world, the more he can apprehend and imagine. The more a human being can apprehend and imagine, the more language he can invent. The more language a human being can invent, the more reason he has. Thus, reason as a ‘reflective mind’ expresses one’s way of existing in the world. It expresses one’s active, imaginative, and creative engagement and exchange with it. In a word, for Herder, one’s capacity to understand and judge, namely, one’s reason, hinges on one’s capacity to be a true poet or creator. In this sense, one could also argue that, in Herder’s opinion, reflection denotes a form of social and cultural criticism that can assess from the inside, through emotional and imaginative participation, the particular and unique value of a form of life and, at the same time, it can creatively judge its universal contribution to the development of humanity.
The essential role that creative imagination plays for Herder in the genesis of language and of reason reflects the more fundamental truth that, in contrast with the animal, man needs to create himself and his own world through the orchestration of all his powers. Man has no uniform and narrow sphere where only one performance or work is expected from him. This spreads the powers of his soul over the world. As a result, man “does not fall blindly in one point and remain lying there blindly, he becomes free-standing, can seek for himself a sphere for self-mirroring, can mirror himself within himself.” Language makes such self-mirroring possible. Herder argues that through language man is no longer “an infallible machine in the hands of nature.” Instead, he “becomes his own end and goal of refinement.”

The catalyst for the twin creation of language and reason is imagination or the sense of language, which is a self-made sense. Language is the medium through which man becomes conscious of his inner self and understands his relationships with the others. This presents language as a “means of connection.” As Herder explains, “I cannot think the first human thought, cannot set up the first aware judgment in a sequence, without engaging in dialogue, or striving to engage in dialogue, in my soul. Hence the first human thought by its very nature prepares one to be able to engage in dialogue with others! The first characteristic mark that I grasp is a characteristic word for me and a communication word for others!” Through language one defines and expresses oneself and, at the same time, communicates this self-constitution to the others.

In short, the capacity to create words and language, in general, is constitutive to the act of self-definition, to the construction of reality, as well as to the attempt to
communicate to the others one’s inner self and one’s view of reality. The capacity to invent words (the act of naming) is constitutive to reason, because, in the deepest language, reason (understanding) and word are one and reason and creative imagination are one. As a result, Herder argues that those who have much of this “inner word, of this intuiving, divine gift of designation, also have much understanding, much judgment.” They possess an “image-making understanding,” which combines truth, vividness, and clarity.

To this extent, metaphors and analogies do not belong to a stage of culture that is superseded in the progress from emotional to conceptual (rational) language. Instead, they play an equally important role in the act of self-understanding, as well as in the act of understanding the others and of communicating with them. Thus, Herder would argue that the literal and the figurative, the metaphorical and the logical, the assertoric and the innovative meanings of words are equally important in everyday communication.

Opposite to Habermas, who takes the “discipline of a distinct form of argumentation” as the model for communication, Herder would argue that one cannot eliminate the connections between concepts, bold images, and metaphors from the language, except at the cost of diminishing one’s capacity for self-definition, self-expression, and for communicating with the others; in a word, without diminishing one’s reason.

Unfortunately, Herder critically points out, the French lumières and Kant’s apriorism of reason ignore the cultural and linguistic embedment of reason and the plurality of human cultures. They fail to understand the important role that feelings, imagination, and linguistic creativity, in a word, culture, play in the development of
humanity and of reason. As a result, they prove incapable of bridging the gap between theory and practice or between reason and action, because failing to cultivate the whole and undivided being of the individuals, namely, their being taken as a composite field of cognitive, emotional, and volitional forces. In short, they do not succeed to reach the individuals and thus to empower them, as well. To this extent, as Beiser explains, in Herder’s opinion, the Enlightenment fails to develop “the power of autonomy and self-government in the people themselves.”

This shows that Herder understands autonomy and self-government as the capacity to bring one’s individuality to full expression and completion, because perfection (Vollkommenheit) in “an individual human being is found in that he, in the course of his existence, be himself and continue to become himself. That he utilizes the powers (Kräfte) nature has given him as his heritage; that he strives with them to profit himself and others.” Autonomy requires not only the cultivation of reason and of the capacity to judge, but also, and in connection with it, the cultivation of the imaginative capacity for the participatory interpretation and understanding of one’s own customs and traditions, as well as, of other cultures.

Herder thinks that only individuals thus developed would be able to re-imagine and recreate customs and traditions in the context of building modern political constitutions. To prepare citizens for such a task is an important part of the attempt to cultivate a modern public. The creation of a modern public, namely, one that can autonomously judge the just or unjust character of political institutions, requires not only the strength of the mind, but also cultural vitality. This refers to the ability to engage
images as vivid, reflective, and creative devices in the full development and expression of one’s individuality, as well as in the renewal of shared commonalities.

Moreover, the French lumières and Kant’s apriorism of reason also fail to grasp the nature of freedom and justice. Such a failure is the result of the Enlightenment’s unimaginative understanding of history, which perpetuates despotism and imperialism, thus stifling freedom and spreading injustice. History is seen as a linear progression, which finds its culmination in the modern European (French) culture. Every stage of history is seen as just a means in view of one purpose: the coming into being of the European (French) culture.

Against the narrowness of the Enlightenment, Herder claims that freedom is self-determination and self-activity. It is the full development of an individual or culture to their perfection. It is the bringing to full expression of one’s uniqueness and particularity. Justice refers to the fact every culture is equally necessary, valuable, and relevant for defining humanity, because “no individual can suppose himself to exist for the sake of another or for posterity”\textsuperscript{345} and no culture is to be preferred, because, Herder argues, there is “no favorite people on the earth.”\textsuperscript{346}

Herder’s definition of freedom and justice reflects the fact that, in his view, everything has an “intrinsic truth, harmony, and beauty.”\textsuperscript{347} Thus, every culture has “the center of its happiness in itself”\textsuperscript{348} and each individual has the capacity to become a “well-formed, healthy, forceful human being, living in his place and functioning very intensely there.”\textsuperscript{349} It reflects the fact that, since mankind is “a copious scheme (Entwurf) of energies and capacities that, as everything in nature, rests on the most determinate
individuality,” its “great and numerous capacities could not appear on our planet otherwise than divided among millions,” which indicates that “each human perfection is national, generational (säkular), and considered most exactly, individual.”

The implication is that the happiness of one single people or individual “cannot be imposed onto, talked onto, loaded onto the other and every other.” If the happiness of one single people is imposed on the others (imperialism), the international political result is the resignation of humanity and thus the stifling of its development in other cultures and parts of the world. The international political result is a meek and timid humanity, one that does not measure itself against its own potential and against the powers of its will (Willenskräfte).

Bearing this dangerous possibility in mind, Herder does (to some extent, with potentially dangerous consequences, as I will argue at the end of the chapter) overstate the fact that nations and peoples “should live beside each other, not mixed up with and on top of each other oppressing each other (nebeneinander, nicht durch- und übereinander drückend wohnen).” However, his intention is to criticize the imperialism of the Enlightenment and its imaginative incapacity to see history other than as a straight and linear progression, which finds its culmination in the modern European (French) culture.

At the same time, if the happiness of one single individual is imposed on the others (despotism) the domestic political result is the abolishing of the individual forces and limbs of the state, those of autonomous justice, dignity, and determination. It is, Herder concludes sarcastically, the highest ‘virtue:’ the resignation of the individual.
Bearing this dangerous possibility in mind, Herder carefully distinguishes between government and the state.

He points out that mankind cannot live without government, namely, without laws and the existence of some elected representative body. However, this can be solved on the local level. Unlike local self-government, the state consists of a centralized power, a permanent administrative apparatus or bureaucracy. In Herder’s view, the problem with the state as opposed to communal self-government is that it involves an alienation of autonomy. Thus, it can stifle the freedom, namely, the full development of the individuals, as well as, of all the local forces that constitute a people.

Based on such uncompromising plea for freedom and on the consequent overstating and overemphasizing of the need that nations and peoples should live beside each other, not mixed up and on the top of each other, one could get the wrong impression that Herder makes an argument for cultural and historical diversity tout court. However, such an inference would not pay enough attention to the importance that feeling, sharing and communicating with the others has for the German philosopher.

Herder argues that, besides self-preservation, the human form (Gestalt) is characterized by “the need to take part or communicate with others.” The human being has been formed by nature as “the one most eager to share” (teilnehmendsten geschaffen). The human being is the most capable to feel with (mitfühlen) the others. The source of this capacity resides in the human voice and in language (Stimme und Sprache). It resides in one’s sympathetic and creative imagination, which is the source of both language and reason. For this reason, as I will argue in the reminder of this chapter,
one important objective of symbolic politics, as understood by Herder, is to cultivate and develop in the citizens the capacity to feel, share, and communicate with the others.

The reason is that such a capacity to feel, share, and communicate with the others is what makes government and peaceful co-existence possible, deeper than contractual agreements or the bureaucratic and centralized state. Thus, the more culture, language, and religion\textsuperscript{357} people share, the wider their common feeling of humanity and affective solidarity would be, the deeper and wider their political association, their government, and peaceful co-existence would be.

Modern (liberal) political constitutions and institutions are effective (and just) only insofar as they engage images and myths in such a way that developing \textit{individuality} would be a part of the larger purpose of creating and recreating \textit{national} horizons and solidarities, and of cultivating a common \textit{feeling} of humanity, through the imaginative and sympathetic participation in the living and intricate texture of other national cultures.

\textit{Herder’s Symbolic Politics}

Given the foundational role that imagination plays in the genesis of language and reason, Herder argues that “the principles underlying legislation,” which belong to the government, must pay heed to the multiplicity and the various levels of culture of a people. These principles need to find sensible embodiments in images and narratives, in the customs and the traditions of a people. In this process, the ancient images and stories in a people’s childhood need to be connected to the more recent events that characterize
its modern political existences. Thus, the old images and stories are informed with a new poetic sense, being changed here and there in order to achieve a new purpose, one that serves the development of humanity and the values of freedom and justice.

As a champion of the Enlightenment, Herder thinks that one major concern of a symbolic politics that serves good government should be to create a modern mythology that is not a corpus of religious and historical truths, an example of sacred antiquity, or the empty echo and repetition of allegories that have been used ninety-nine times over. It should be to create a modern mythology that is the expression of a “new, creative, fruitful, and artistic hand” that appeals to the “reflective imagination” of the people. Such a modern mythology would be the expression of a vivid, sympathetic, and creative imagination that works together with reason, as an ally in the Enlightenment’s project to fight against imperialism and despotism, as well as to form and develop (a common feeling of ) humanity.

Only thus one would avoid the easy manner in which deceit or despotism has abused imagination, by “rendering the limitless ocean of the human fantasies and dreams (menschlicher Phantasien und Träume) subservient to its purposes.” Only thus one would prevent the use of imagination and of prejudice-images by despotic and tyrannical political projects, which perpetuate mythology as a state of infancy.

Herder is aware of the difficulty of the enterprise. Imagination does touch upon the most vulnerable, because it is the most immature, and, at the same time, the most forceful and vital, part of one’s being. Imagination (Einbildung) is the coming together of the different senses in our inner selves. As a result, this “does not consist only of images
[Bildern] but also of sounds, words, signs, and feelings, for which language would often have no name.”[^361] In a word, imagination is a “sea of inner sensuality” upon which our thoughts, sensations, and drives swim and float upon.[^362] Both individuals and nations are *formed* in their childhoods through sounds and images. Thus, imagination shapes the deepest and most fundamental layer in both the psychological make-up of the individual mind and in the cultural make-up of entire nations.

The ‘art’ of despotism and tyranny consists in knowing how to reach and activate this layer of the individual and the collective soul. On the individual level, this refers to the “first images formed by imagination; dreams that we silently cherish so long in childhood; the impression of every sound which supports and strengthens the impetuous inward tone which finds a dim echo in ideas only darkly perceived; the inclination to revel in the miraculous.” On the collective level, this refers to mythology as “a philosophical essay of the human mind which dreams before it is awake, and which is readily inclined to revert to its state of infancy.”

In a word, the ‘art’ of despotism and tyranny consists of perpetuating mythology as a state of infancy, namely, as the nostalgic, non-reflective, and non-creative reproduction of images. This happens when one pulls images out of the evolving and changing contexts and circumstances of life, of motion, action, and creativity. Thus, it forgets that the “human being is created for receiving and giving, for efficacy and joy, for acting and undergoing.”[^363] It also forgets that language is a “means of connection.” It is a way of feeling, sharing, and communicating with the others. As a result, the mythology used by despotism transforms images into dogmas and prejudices.
Opposite to mythology as a state of infancy, the modern mythology that Herder advocates would use the language of political maturity. In Herder’s view, this is well-formed prose, a combination of poetry and philosophical concepts. It is a language that is sensual and rich in bold images and metaphors and conceptual. This is important because the best way to reach the others and to include them in one’s horizon of meaning, without annulling their autonomy and freedom, is by directly and powerfully reaching their emotions and feelings and by providing, at the same time, conceptual correctness and clarity.\textsuperscript{364}

Herder thinks that an important part of the art of crafting such a language of political maturity is to clarify the “logic of the poetic faculty.”\textsuperscript{365} Thus, one would be able to understand how imagination and images can be creatively and reflectively engaged in the making of culture as a living creation and not as a reproduced body of dogmatic truths. One would also understand how to engage imagination in generating a common feeling of humanity and forms of affective citizenship in ways that connect to other local and national cultures.

The challenge in this enterprise is to keep images vivid in one’s mind, as well as, in a culture. Only thus images would renew ideas in ways that reflectively and creatively expand given cultural horizons and affective sites of belonging. Consequently, images would facilitate the coming together of individuals as a governable commonality and of peoples and nations as a peaceful universal and cosmopolitan community.

This should be the role of a true poet or creator. This is someone who is not content with having made images. Instead, a true poet is someone who can keep making
images and thought. A true poet is someone who does not allow images to become prejudices, but keeps reinventing them in new contexts of life, as both ways of expressing oneself and of communicating to the others one’s inner self. Herder argues that this is true because the possibility of understanding and judging depends on the extent to which one is able to keep one’s creation as “always unfixed, always in hand, always in progress, in development.”

The possibility of understanding depends on the extent to which one keeps one’s creation alive, thus inviting the others to imagine, to think, and to create with him. At the same time, a true poet is not a “raving dreamer,” namely, someone without consciousness and understanding. Instead, he is someone who enhances his thinking capacities through imagination. In Herder’s opinion, this is how Lessing engaged images and narratives in cultivating the capacity to understand and judge in the modern German public.366

Herder provides a few hints about how the logic of the poetic faculty would work in the service of renewing ideas and cultural horizons. He observes that, since without the body “our mind will not function; if all the senses are used vigorously and in a proper measure, the mind, too, is invigorated.” Thus, if one wants to produce original men, these need to have in their youth many experiences and accumulate many sensations. These “diverse tangible and vivid sensations, spontaneously perceived in the most unique manner, constitute the basic components of a sound human frame and the very foundation of that characteristic which we principally associate with original genius: strong, lively, creative ideas independently formed.”367
Moreover, imagination is connected to the body. Analogy, the mechanism for the invention of language, reflects this connection. Analogy is the projection of one’s sense, as well as, of one’s “manner of feeling and thinking onto external objects.” The body, a “little world” of light and sound, provides the analogon through which, due to the power of his imagination, “the sensing human being feels his way into everything, feels everything from out of himself, and imprints it with his image, his impress.” The result is the act of naming, a metaphorical creation, through which language comes into being.

Thus, the more experiences and sensations one would have, the richer and more creative one’s imagination would be, the higher its analogical and metaphorical power. Such an analogical power is also important because, as Herder points out, the capacity to slip imaginatively into almost any other creature, to feel with the others (Mitgefühl), is an analogue in us of the all-feeling deity. It is such a capacity that makes it possible to grasp culture, since this is a manner of living (Lebensweise) and a living creation (lebendige Schöpfung).

Moreover, feelings, emotions, and life have priority over concepts and understanding. Herder argues that this is proved by the fact that the bedrock of language and of culture is poetic language, which is primarily constituted by verbs. Verbs are “all action and motion; the roots of the verb are image (Bild) and feeling (Empfindung).” The primacy of verbs in any language shows that human beings are essentially life and irritation, activity and undergoing.

The “fervor, depth, and dispersion with which we receive, process and communicate passion makes us the shallow or deep vessels that we are.” From this
fervor, depth, and dispersion of passion, feeling, motion, and sensing comes one’s imaginative creativity, the “human spirit’s genuine art of invention,” where language originates. Such fervor and motion prevent images from becoming mere imitations and mere second copies, because, instead of allowing one to reproduce one’s initial and cherished fantasies and dreams, vivid sensations engage him in an active exchange with the world, with its diverse and changing circumstances.

Only by keeping images vivid and connected to their sensuous and emotional roots, to the changing and contingent living circumstances that triggered them, one can also keep alive the meaning and the role of one’s thoughts. For Herder, language comes into being as “a means of connection,” insofar as it provides both the means for one’s self-expression and for communicating this to the others. To keep images connected to the changing and contingent living, sensorial and emotional, circumstances that triggered them, means to also keep them connected to the expressive-communicative context that characterizes the coming into being of language. Only thus, would be produced “an adequate impression on one who has not seen or heard the things the speaker is talking about, or who has not heard them talked about as often as he himself has talked about them.” Only thus, one would speak as strongly as one sees and feels.

At the same time, imagination is not only a sympathetic and analogical power, but also a fictional capacity (die Dichtung). It is an associative and creative power through which out of the disordered multiplicity that surrounds it, from the diversity of experiences and sensations that the vigorous use of the senses makes available, “the soul
calls forth a figure (*Gestalt*) on which it fixes its attention, and thus, by its intrinsic power (*innere Macht*), it forms out of the many a whole that belongs to itself alone."

Thus, man “creates for himself a world of his own, a peculiar concatenation of thoughts, and each of his deviations in the linking of ideas is to the highest degree spiritual.” This shows that man “does not conceptualize according to the chambers of the brain, not even in sequence to the sensory stimuli, but rather in keeping with other ideas that are akin to his, and in keeping with his ability to make those his own.”375 The faculty that links ideas in this way is poetic and creative imagination, the source of the analogies and the metaphors through which language and reason originate.

The important role that poetic imagination plays in creating a world of one’s own reflects the more general truth that mankind, “taken as a whole and in its particular individuals, societies, and nations, is a permanent natural system of the most multifarious living powers (*vielfachsten lebendigen Kräfte*)” and that society is made out of “a superior maximum of cooperating powers (*Zusammenwirkender Kräfte*).”376 Such a priority of activity in the constitution of mankind and of society explains why Herder requires that feeling with the others needs to translate into an impulse for action (*Tätigkeit*). It needs to translate into an active and creative work of improving and extending humanity,377 namely, of *inventing* new and more encompassing symbolic forms (images) for its expression and communication. It needs to serve the ascent to humanity (*Bildung zur Humanität*) by creating more encompassing democratic affective solidarities.
Eventually, feeling with the others needs to translate into a creative activity that serves reason, because, as Herder points out, imagination is the mediating force between body, on the one hand, and thinking and willing, on the other hand. It is the “knot that ties body and mind together (der Knoten des Zusammenhanges zwischen Geist und Körper); the bud, as it were, of the whole sensual organization, expanding to the higher use of the thinking powers (denkenden Kräfte).”

Given the importance of the “need to take part or communicate with others,” one could argue that a crucial objective of the type of symbolic politics and modern mythology that Herder envisages should be to increase the capacity to feel and share with the others and to creatively translate this into action and creation. The capacity to share, take part, and communicate with the others is best developed by the belles lettres, namely, languages and poetry, rhetoric and history.

_Belles lettres_ are “those which cultivate the so-called lower faculties of the soul, sensuous cognition, the wit, the imagination, the sensuous appetites, enjoyment, the passions and inclinations.” In this capacity, they are “sciences and exercises that develop the feeling of humanity within us.” If they are true belles lettres, they will furnish form and content, namely, the spirit of their pupils will become bright, “their fancy and senses well ordered, their expression made beautiful by truth and adorned with simplicity,” but mostly they will develop in them the “feeling of loving humanity everywhere and of promoting its true good.” They will cultivate one’s imaginative flexibility and mobility, that is, one’s emotional versatility and ability to feel and...
imagine oneself into the manners of living and the living creations that other cultures and nations are.\textsuperscript{382}

The development of one’s capacity to feel and share with the others is also cultivated by one’s intense and ample imaginative familiarization through literature broadly defined, as to include poetry, novels, history, criticism, and travelogue, with other national cultures. Travel descriptions, for example, “lead to this recognition of the humanity in the human being much more surely than do systems.” They “expand our horizon (erweitern der Gesichtskreis) and multiply our sensitivity for every situation of our brothers (vervielfältigen die Empfindung für jede Situation unserer Brüder).”\textsuperscript{383}

On a more general level, literature plays an essential role in connecting people imaginatively and culturally and thus in creating their extraterritorial and cross-local solidarity. Herder argues that this is true because through poetic images we are magically transported into “other people’s natures and feelings.”\textsuperscript{384} It is also true because, as understood by Herder, literature is a sort of “‘spoken’ prose.” Through its speaking/rhetorical quality, literature can attach people to their circumstances and community, while, at the same time, giving them a reflective distance, through its writing quality.\textsuperscript{385}

The capacity to share and communicate with the others is also cultivated by the learning of foreign languages, because this expands one’s capacity to imagine and judge the different facets of humanity.\textsuperscript{386} It expands one’s capacity of actively taking part in the development of humanity and in the realization of its ideal at large,\textsuperscript{387} because it develops one’s culture and thus one’s capacity to sympathize with the whole of humanity. In the
enterprise of learning several foreign languages, one takes the mother tongue as one’s guiding thread. Herder points out that without its guiding thread “the mind will lose itself in the labyrinth of many foreign languages.” One could argue that this is a requirement because the mother tongue brings unity to the diversity of foreign languages.

Thus, it makes sense to think that, to the extent that reason is linguistically embedded, one’s native language offers the concepts through which one knows and judges the world. By bringing the diversity of foreign languages under its unity, the mother tongue operates with the authority of reason. However, Herder claims, while “I do not acquire other languages in order to lose my competence in my own,” I, nevertheless “walk through foreign languages only to gather flowers for my language.” This suggests that one needs to return to one’s particular horizon, to one’s locality in order to enrich and expand one’s native linguistic horizon.

Consequently, this expands the initial power of reason to understand and judge the world. Herder concludes by pointing out that our learning “must shape both kinds of languages, must tie both to each other to become the bond of knowledge.” Eventually, learning another language changes and expands the linguistic and cultural horizons that are involved, by connecting them to each other. Such an expansion of cultural horizons, through sympathetic and creative imagination increases the power of reason to understand and judge from the standpoint of humanity.

Honig argues that cosmopolitanism requires the pluralization of passion, of one’s attachments and belongings. In her view this is a combination of love and suspicion for one’s cherished ideals. It is a form of reflective love and commitment, one that can look
at one’s familiar and taken-for-granted horizons in a questioning manner. This is made possible by the (symbolic) presence of the foreigners.

Herder describes a similar (symbolic) experience when he (metaphorically) mentions the act of “walking through foreign languages.” However, here one *crosses over* to the foreign.

One’s crossings over into foreign languages and cultures need to be brought back into one’s locality or particular horizon. On the one hand, this enriches one’s ‘initial’ horizon. On the other hand, it ties the two horizons. It ties them to each other from inside their living symbolic texture. This transforms each of them. Thus, in coming back to one’s own initial horizon, one does not only have the opportunity of reflecting upon one’s understanding of humanity, but one also transforms it.

Thus, one could argue that cosmopolitan citizenship would require not only the pluralization of passion and the disintegration of (national) democratic citizenship, but also the capacity (of national) democratic citizenship to recreate and retie new attachments and belongings to one’s ‘initial’ locality and horizon. It requires the capacity to enlarge the capacity of one’s (national) locality to express and communicate humanity.

In sum, Herder would argue that the citizens who would be able to engage in the practices of affective citizenship, in a way that is conducive, not to nationalism, but to democratic cosmopolitanism, thus facilitating intercultural understanding, would need to cultivate, through *belles lettres*, literature, and the learning of foreign languages, a sympathetic, creative, and reflective form of imagination. They would need to cultivate a common feeling of humanity through the imaginative inhabiting of and feeling with other
cultures, but also through the capacity to creatively interpret their narratives and symbols in a way that contributes to the development of humanity and to its ascent.

In brief, such citizens would share a modern mythology that would facilitate the reconstruction of affective solidarity by moving from the local, to the national, and ultimately, to the international level. Such a common feeling of humanity, of emotional and imaginative mobility would make possible a twofold reflective process. First, it would make possible to interpret reason, freedom, and justice (humanity) in the context and in connection with local (national) cultural narratives and symbols, with customs and traditions that mankind developed throughout history. Second, it would make possible to interpret the local (national) cultural myths in their larger, human and universal meaning, in their capacity to be enriched and developed in and through other cultural and linguistic horizons.

One possible objection against the argument I make in this chapter, is that, at least to some extent, Herder’s plea for cultural and political freedom as self-activity and self-determination is an argument for nationalism, which is the ideology of the modern state. To some extent, this would be true since Herder speaks about national culture as the expression of a people’s specific needs and circumstances. To a large extent, such an objection would be untrue, since Herder does not connect his notion of national culture to the state. Instead, he sees it in a context of individual and local forces and freedoms, as well as, in a universal context defined by a plurality of human cultures and by the task of developing humanity. Feelings and imagination play an essential role in connecting these multiple, local, national, and international layers of culture.
Seen from this angle, Herder’s cultural nationalism is not aggressive and destructive. It is not an assertion of one’s political superiority. On the contrary, it is an affirmation of one’s freedom through cultural and political self-determination. It is also an affirmation of the capacity to enrich and enlarge, as part of one’s freedom, one’s national horizon, one’s (national) tradition in a creative and innovative manner though the imaginative ability to learn about and to understand other manners of living.

It is an affirmation of the requirement to develop ways of sharing and feeling with the people that belong to other national cultures. In this sense, Herder’s cultural nationalism can work in view of a democratic cosmopolitanism that combines respect for cultural diversity and a maximum of attention to (living) particularity and respect for a humanity, which requires, as part of its development, the enlargement and expansion of one’s national cultural and linguistic horizons, of one’s given/native capacity to feel and share with the others.

Thus, one could argue that, on the one hand, Herder tries to make a plea for diversity that avoids relativism. In his view, this would be possible, because “there lies in the human species an infinite variety of sensations, thoughts, and efforts towards the unity of a true, effective, purely moral character which belongs to the whole species.”

Thus, Herder thinks that diversity does not mean incompatibility and the impossibility to judge other cultures. Instead, if one wants to really recognize and respect cultural diversity then one has to also recognize that the only fair way of judging another culture is by first sympathetically and imaginatively participating in its living symbolic fabric and by understanding it from within.
Social criticism is never the work of a detached and non-engaged reason. Instead, it grows out of one’s imaginative involvement and conversation with other cultures. Thus, one passes his judgment always as part of the human story as this is enacted in a particular culture. Herder would argue that such an imaginative and aesthetic form of social criticism, where one’s grasping of the cultural diversity of mankind is guided by the task of developing humanity is a must for any form of cosmopolitan citizenship. The latter requires a form of interpretative and imaginative reason. This is a form of reason that incorporates the capacity that aesthetic imagination has to create the commonality in the absence of which the recognition, judging, and understanding of difference cannot take place.

On the other hand, Herder tries to make a plea for universalism, which avoids imperialism. Imperialism is facilitated by unimaginative and cold abstractions, such as Enlightenment’s linear view of history, which culminates with the (French) European culture. Sooner or later, such abstractions lead to the oppressive imposition of only one culture as the expression of humanity. In Herder’s view, making an argument for a universalism that avoids imperialism is possible because any access to the universal and to humanity is possible only through the sympathetic and imaginative expansion of one’s particular and finite native horizon where humanity and reason are first defined for the individuals. The force of such a creative expansion is an imagination, whose creativity works conjointly with reason.

Unfortunately, Herder’s concept of culture is marred by one fundamental flaw. Despite his argument for developing through belles lettres, literature, and the learning of
foreign languages a common feeling of humanity, thus enriching one’s local capacity to feel, share, and communicate with the others, Herder’s conception of culture is still too strongly framed by what Charles Taylor calls the expressive turn.\textsuperscript{391}

As a result, his conception of culture can be too easily connected to the idea that there is \textit{authentic} core that no foreignness can penetrate or taint. Such a definition of culture makes somehow questionable the extent to which one can penetrate its texture as an outsider. Such a possibility is further aggravated by Herder’s idea that a culture is a coherent whole. Thus, he defines culture as a “great garden in which people grew up like plants, to which they belong, in which everything – air, earth, water, sun, light, even the caterpillar that creeps upon them and the worm that consumes them belongs to \textit{gehört zu} them.”\textsuperscript{392}

However, as I argued in Chapter One, drawing on Bakhtin’s philosophy, the expressive paradigm can still have dangerous political consequences. This is the case, especially in connection with the risk of turning imagination into monological daydreaming and selfish fantasy, into the overarching projection of an autistic and self-enclosed self. Or, as Herder himself would argue, this is also the case in connection with the possibility of misusing imagination for crafting a mythology that uses images as fantasies, dreams, and as prejudices; namely, as a state of infancy and not as a source of reflective and dialogical imagination.

As a result of framing his understanding of culture through the expressive turn and of conceiving culture as organic, in the end, Herder cannot see that cultural products come into being not as expressions of their author’s authentic and pristine selves or of a
people’s genuine needs and circumstances, but rather through the rhetorical capacity to listen to the strange and the unfamiliar, and to invent ways of addressing it. Thus, Herder cannot make the strongest argument for engaging cultural symbols and narratives as myths of denationalization, namely, as myths that define more inclusive solidarities and possibilities for intercultural understanding. This requires recognizing, as Vico, the important symbolic role that foreigners play in symbolic politics.

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Thus far, I have argued that intercultural understanding can be facilitated by cultivating in the democratic citizens a manifold sensibility and an imagination that is open and receptive to unfamiliar modes of representation. It can also be facilitated by cultivating in them the capacity to feel, share, and communicate with members of different (national) symbolic spaces. However, Herder’s notion of culture is marred by the idea that this is an expression of a people’s needs and circumstances. To this extent, his notion of culture relies on the assumption that there is an authentic core that is impenetrable to foreignness.

Henceforth, in the coming chapters, I will critically develop Herder’s ideas about cultural diversity and about the political importance of expanding given symbolic horizons. Thus, I will argue that a culture that can engage in intercultural understanding is not a monolithic and organic whole. Rather it is a field of syntheses and intersections, of hybrids and crossings over to the (foreign and unfamiliar) other.

Drawing on Vico’s conception of culture, imagination, and politics, I will argue in the next chapter that foreigners play an essential symbolic role in (democratic) politics.
On the one hand, the foreigner-guests are democratizing factors. By poetically and rhetorically staging nonexistent rights and liberties, they expand in a polity the meaning of what it means to be human and citizen. On the other hand, the hosts, those who already inhabit the myths that define the circle of legitimacy listen and answer to the creative and contending act of the foreigners by inventing, in their turn, new symbols. I will also argue that because creative imagination is the faculty that plays the decisive role in this enterprise, Vico thinks that what qualifies one for (cosmopolitan) citizenship is the capacity to practice poetic and rhetorical practical wisdom.

Drawing on Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s philosophy, Chapters Four and Five will further develop a conception of culture and imagination and thus, of symbolic politics, where the intimacy and the trust provided by familiarity, as well as, the alertness and inventiveness that (the) strangeness (of the foreigner) awakens in the citizens, acts as a source of democratic cosmopolitanism, thus facilitating intercultural understanding. Arendt argues, similar to Vico, that this is possible only to the extent that the fear that one experiences in encountering the uncanny and the incomprehensible does not become longing for escaping into fantasy, but a passion for the world, the love and passion for augmenting it.

The argument I will develop in the coming chapters will enrich Arendt’s understanding of culture. Arendt thinks that culture stabilizes the plural and fragile realm of actions. It gives it stability and permanence. It gives it lasting memory and remembrance. To this extent, for Arendt, politics is symbolic. It is about how symbols are
politically engaged. However, she sees symbols predominantly as stabilizers and sources of permanence in the polity, as sites for the preservation and transmission of memory.

Henceforth, drawing on Vico’s and Nietzsche’s ideas, I will argue in the coming chapters that symbols and metaphors also have a transformative effect on the polity and its citizens. This is the case because they come into being as one’s creative answer to the strangeness of the other, to the alien and foreign voice that addresses one. Drawing on Heidegger’s philosophy, Chapter Five will further intensify this aspect of culture, which is seen as a coming ‘home,’ to one’s own through the dialogue with the foreign. The coming chapters will also try to answer the question about how can the transformative power of imagination, of symbols, and metaphors be politically engaged in a way that would make intercultural understanding possible.

Finally, drawing on Arendt’s performance model of democracy, Chapter Six will define a notion of political creativity that democratic cosmopolitanism and intercultural understanding require. Political creativity refers to the power to listen and to be receptive to the strange and the unfamiliar, to the foreign, and to creatively bring him in one’s space of authority, in the space that has already been disclosed, founded, and author-ized; in the space of authoritative precedents. At work here is a twofold creativity. First, it is the contesting creativity that is associated with the democratic practice of taking of rights, namely, of symbolically transforming the myths and the narratives of the (authoritative) other. Second, it is the creativity of anticipating the other’s freedom to answer to one’s already founded world, to one’s circle of legitimacy.
Such a definition of political creativity would be made possible by the fact that through the argument I develop in this dissertation I will add to Arendt’s performance model of democracy a more creative, poetic and rhetorical, analogical and explorative, form of imagination. It would also be made possible by the fact that the argument that I construct throughout this dissertation will add to her agonistic conception of democracy a notion of culture where symbols act as vehicles of transformation. Thus, they reflect a culture’s capacity to define one’s own as a coming ‘home’ through the dialogue with the strange and the foreign. Thus, my argument will intensify the creativity that is already at work in Arendt’s notion of natality and freedom.
Chapter Three

Vico: Democratic Politics, Foreignness, and Creative Imagination

For the Italian philosopher, Giambattista Vico politics is fundamentally symbolic. Similar to Herder, Vico thinks that what makes society and government possible are not contracts, but shared language and culture. He defines culture as language, myth, and religion, while politics refers, in the modern vein, to the origin of humanity, society, and government. However, in contrast with both Herder and contract theorists, such as Hobbes, Vico defines politics, somehow closer to Marx, as cultural struggle.

According to Vico, the first human societies came into being as asylums, by offering shelter and protection to the strangers. The (symbolic) founding act of the human polities is that of letting the foreigners inside one’s own familiar horizon. Thus, they become guests. In this quality, foreigners play an important symbolic and creative role in politics. In Vico’s view, the guests start colonizing and reinterpreting from within the myths of the fathers who charitably offered their hospitality.

Over time, they start struggling for being recognized as human beings and citizens, namely, as speaking beings. They poetically and rhetorically stage a nonexistent right and liberty. In Vico’s view, political contestation, as well as the transition from one form of government and authority to another, takes place through the definition and redefinition of cultural symbols and myths in the attempt to stage nonexistent rights and liberties. Through this, the meaning of being human and of what qualifies one for citizenship in a polity is enlarged.
I will argue in this chapter that the human faculty that plays the essential role in staging nonexistent rights, as well as in recreating (national) myths as more democratic, namely, more inclusive civil metaphors, is poetic and rhetorical imagination. I will argue that, in Vico’s view, this is creative, not reproductive, imagination. Staging nonexistent rights is a creative repetition or mimesis. In repeating the speech acts of the other, the contenders, who want to be recognized as human beings, reinterpret their meaning. They change it and make it, at the same time more democratic, because it is more inclusive. At the same time, Vico thinks that democracies, which he pictures based on Greek and Roman myths and histories, are the most open and generous political regimes. If this is true, then the practice of poetically and rhetorically enacting nonexistent rights as a way of ascending to citizenship should be central to the democratic piazza or agora.

Consequently, I will argue in this chapter that Vico’s conception of the origin of human cities as asylums and of the democratic piazza as place of symbolic contestation has the potential for addressing a fundamental question that democratic theory needs to answer in order to be able to account for the possibility of intercultural understanding. This is the question about what kind of (cultural) horizons must exist in a democracy, before democratic citizens can undertake encounters with the strange and the unfamiliar in a way that leads to the denationalization of their myths and to their recreation as more inclusive civil metaphors. I will argue in this chapter, through an interpretation of Vico’s philosophy, that the cultural horizons of democracies should be characterized by the rhetorical capacity to listen to the foreign, by the poetic capacity to invent names and to enact nonexistent rights, and by the cultural and linguistic capacity to invent civil
metaphors. The poetic and rhetorical capacity to listen to and to address the others combines memory, fantasia, and ingenuity. The cultural capacity to create civil metaphors is embedded in universal institutions, such as, religion, marriage, and burial.

In short, if the encounter with the foreign is to lead to democratic cosmopolitanism and to intercultural understanding, the democratic citizens should be able to practice a form of practical wisdom that is both poetic and rhetorical. They should be able to engage in a poetic and rhetorical performance, which, because it takes place on the threshold between familiarity and strangeness, makes (democratic) ‘identity’ an “unfinished metamorphosis” and transformation.

The argument in this chapter will also enrich Honig’s conception of democratic cosmopolitanism, which, as I argued in the Introduction, is an important prerequisite of intercultural understanding. Honig argues that the presence of the foreigners is not always conducive to a “more open” democratic politics, namely, one that produces “narratives of association” between strangers. Instead, sometimes, it just reinforces “the narratives of separation.” It reinforces the separatist logic of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ which is the logic of nationalism. Thus, the challenge for the politics of foreignness is to use the symbolic presence of the foreigners for improving the democratic capacity to live with others, by making national myths more inclusive.

Honig discusses, as an example, the myth of an immigrant America. She points out that, if interpreted from a national perspective, namely, one that maps “a normatively and materially privileged national citizenship onto an idealized immigrant trajectory to membership,” the myth ends by categorizing the immigrants in two categories: the good
and consenting immigrant and the nonconsenting, illegal, bad immigrant, “to whom we supposedly do not consent and who does not consent to us.”

This is the result of a model of citizenship based on national consent. According to Honig, such a model is symbolically enforced by the “oft-disseminated spectacle of new citizens taking the oath of citizenship.” This “reperforms the origin of the regime as an act of consent.” First, it “privileges a choosing subject as a natural subject prior to the law, and it grounds the law in a choice that is its foundation and its raison d’être.” Second, it “remarginalizes the varied, often violent sources of the republic (slavery, conquest, appropriations, and constitutional conventions), and it recenters the regime on a voluntarism that most citizens and residents never experience directly.”

However, Honig thinks that “myth of the immigrant in America can be turned from its nationalist functions to serve a democratic cosmopolitanism in which citizenship is not just a juridical status distributed (or not) by states, but a practice in which denizens, migrants, residents, and their allies hold states accountable for their definition and distributions of goods, powers, rights, freedoms, privileges, and justice.”

In brief, her argument is that the myth of an immigrant America can serve democratic cosmopolitanism if citizenship is seen as a product of contestation and, as I will argue in this chapter, drawing on Vico’s philosophy, as a product of cultural and linguistic creativity. This refers to the capacity poetic and rhetorical imagination has to listen to the other and to invent the means to address him.

In Honig’s opinion, this is possible, because, as a “narrative of demands made by outsiders” the myth of an immigrant America “is not just a nationalist story; it is also
potentially, a myth of denationalization.” Thus reinterpreted, it “might push late
democratic actors to pursue two conflicting aims simultaneously: (1) to insist on the
inclusion of immigrants and migrants in democracy’s national future, while, also (2)
pressing for the (symbolic and institutional) denationalization of democracy at the same
time.”

Such turning requires switching from the national interpretation of the myth of an
immigrant America, which sees immigrants either as givers or as takers from the nation,
to a democratic interpretation of it. Honig argues that, according to the democratic
interpretation of the myth of an immigrant America, the only thing that immigrants have
to give to ‘us’ is “taking.” In this sense, they act as the Biblical Ruth, who, as a Moabite
in Bethlehem, has no right to the land, the marriage, and the maternity that she asks from
Boaz, but she claims them anyway.

Honig interprets the Biblical story by pointing out that Ruth “acts in advance of
the categories that might legitimate her action, and so models a kind of political agency
that is appropriate for those who seek to make claims in the absence of proper legal
standing.” She acts in the same way as Vico’s foreigner-guests. She mimes the other’s
speech acts. She colonizes his myths and symbols. However, in the process, she changes
them. She creates “new rights, powers, and visions.”

Vico would complicate Honig’s interpretation of Ruth’s story as a taker of rights
who enacts her claims, by adding that the others, namely, Boaz and Naomi, the Israelites,
also know how to listen to her. Thus, he would present the situation as the dialogue of
receptive authority and of creative freedom. Such a dialogue engages both the rhetorical
capacity to listen to the other and the poetic capacity to reinterpret and recreate (national) myths as more inclusive civil metaphors.

Vico adds to the overall argument that I make in this dissertation a notion of culture where the dominant feature is the poetic and rhetorical capacity to listen to and to address the foreign. In such a culture, one’s attitude toward the unfamiliar others is not plagued by either the conceit of scholars or by that of nations. Vico thinks that scholars tend to forget that culture, and implicitly, humanity, starts not with reason and philosophy, but with creative imagination. Nations also vie to claim that one of them is the origin of humanity while all the other cultures are just copies and imitations of such creations. To this extent, Vico would perhaps agree that cultures that make such a claim, and cannot denationalize their myths, are, thus hampering the task of intercultural understanding.

Vico also adds to the overall argument of the dissertation the essential distinction between creative and simply reproductive imagination. The first form of imagination can, as for Herder, facilitate intercultural understanding. Creative imagination is the source of inventing new language and thus of enriching reason’s capacity to understand and judge. The latter form of imagination is a source of nationalism and of political aestheticism.

In short, drawing on Vico’s philosophy, I will argue that intercultural understanding requires that the democratic citizens will be able to practice a form of practical wisdom that is both poetic and rhetorical. It also requires that the democratic citizens have the creative imagination for inventing more inclusive civil metaphors, thus increasing both their democratic solidarity and their capacity for dialogue.
In order to achieve my aim in this chapter I will first argue that, for Vico, humans are essentially creators, not knowers. The source of this creativity is a threefold human \textit{deficit}: ontological, epistemological, and linguistic. This refers to the fact that human nature is \textit{made} through culture and history and to the fact that humans cannot understand what God created, but only what they have made. It also refers to the fact that the words to name the diversity of things that makes up the world are never enough. Hence, humans need to continue to invent them. They need to continue to be poets with a vivid and creative imagination. A culture that forms in its members an acute awareness of such a threefold deficit embraces values that oppose what Vico calls the conceit of scholars and the conceit of nations.

Second, I will argue that, for Vico, human creativity is coextensive with the origin of humanity. This comes into being through the rhetorical act of listening to the strange and awe inspiring sound of the thunder and of trying to interpret it as a voice that speaks to the pre-human creatures. Through this performance, the first God was poetically invented, as a metaphor, because the thunder was seen, by analogy with the (pre)human beings, as having a body and a voice that speaks to them. The engine of this cultural invention was creative imagination.

Third, I will argue that the practical wisdom that qualifies one for (democratic) citizenship consists in the poetic and rhetorical capacity to reinvent the myths and the metaphors that originally formed mankind, in a way that interprets the truth of particular nations as a part of the truth of the \textit{common} world of nations, thus making them more
inclusive. In this enterprise no nation can be left outside, because the principles of humanity are equally present in each and every one of them.

Fourth, I will argue that through such a symbolic action the man of practical wisdom cultivates in every culture the rhetorical-poetic human capacity to listen to the foreign and to invent the means for addressing its unfamiliar voice. Such a capacity is culturally reenacted in the universal (civil) institutions of religion, marriage, and burial. Religion, marriage, and burial reenact the capacity to listen to, to anticipate, and to address existential foreignness in three senses.

In the institution of religion, one dialogically engages the foreign in the guise of an awe inspiring and sublime presence, one that inspires fear. In the institution of marriage, one dialogically engages the foreign in the guise of the new arrivals that one allows inside one’s familiar horizon. In the institution of the burial, one dialogically engages the foreign in the guise of the strangers that belong to a past that one never inhabited and to a future that one will never inhabit.

Fifth, I will argue that, politically, the rhetorical-poetic capacity to listen to the other and to invent the means for addressing him is embedded in the origins of the first human cities. These came into being as asylums, where the fathers offered shelter to those who still wondered through a dark and violent state of nature. Thus, the symbolic presence of the foreigners or, more accurately, of the guests is coextensive with the coming into being of the human cities. Their symbolic interaction with the fathers sets the mechanism through which political history advances from one form of government and authority to another.
This is creative contestation, namely, political struggle that takes place through the symbolic colonization and poetic transformation by the foreigners-guests and/or the contending classes, of the narratives and the myths of the citizens and/or the dominant class. Through such a creative contestation, the symbols and the narratives, the metaphors that circumscribe solidarity and define citizenship, become, gradually, throughout human history, more inclusive and more democratic.

Sixth, I will argue that, in Vico’s view, democracies reflect best the origins of humanity, of culture and politics. The notion of democracy that Vico discusses draws on Greek and Roman myths. In his view, because democracies are the most generous and open regimes, they keep reenacting in their market places the poetic and rhetorical performance through which humanity and the first human cities came into being.

Human cities came into being through a civil metaphor that combined familiarity and strangeness, without completely closing the gap between the two of them. In the same way, in the democratic market place citizens can imaginatively and poetically hold differences together without annulling their particularity, or even the tensions that might exist between them.

The results of such poetic and rhetorical performances are civil metaphors, of both location and dislocation. On the one hand, they are metaphors of location because they project the familiar unto the strange, in the attempt to give to the latter a voice and a meaning. Thus, they stabilize cultural horizons and political realms. On the other hand, they are metaphors of dislocation, because the foreign-guests change the democratic cultural horizons from inside. They transform the cultural commonplaces of the hosts.
Either way, as a stabilizing location or as a disruptive dislocation, the result of such a poetic and rhetorical performance is the transformation both of the familiar/national (which is creatively applied to the unfamiliar) and of the foreign (which has to coat itself into the cultural forms of the hosts, to imitate them, in order to give itself an appearance and a face until it creates its ‘own’ forms). The result is a form of democratic ‘identity’ as “unfinished metamorphosis.”

_Vico’s Contested Modernity_

My reading of Vico’s philosophy runs counter interpretations, such as Mark Lilla’s. To my project of interpreting Vico’s philosophy in a way that enriches democratic theory and liberalism, Lilla would object that, instead of being a liberal promoter of diversity, Vico is an anti-modern and an anti-liberal thinker. The reason is that Vico argues for the Roman irrational custom against the Greek rational philosophy.\(^{399}\) He gives up political liberty and free philosophical thinking for religious wisdom and anti-modern social science (history over philosophy).\(^{400}\) In brief, he rejects reason and philosophy in the name of authority, namely, of religion and history. Instead of being the true father of cultural pluralism, as Isaiah Berlin likes to think, Lilla argues that Vico is an enemy of pluralism, because he deplores the negative effects of modern free thought, individual liberty, and the withering of tradition.\(^{401}\)

Following Lilla’s narrative, Vico’s anti-modernism is a reaction to the skepticism brought about by modern reason. This is characterized by anti-providentialism,
materialism, individualism, and the fact that ethics lacks justice and politics lacks a principle of natural right “in a world of naturally unsociable individuals, driven by bodily passions, unchecked by incorporeal ideas, and without the guidance of God.” In this reading, Vico condemns skepticism because it destroyed what Lilla calls the irrational element in politics, namely, imagination and common sense. The conclusion follows ineluctably that Vico defends primitivism against reason and philosophy.

Reason alone is destructive. Consequently, Vico criticizes philosophical rationalism because it brings about decadence and disorder. It generates religious and political skepticism. Lilla points out that, for Vico, reason needs to be limited, not so much because of what it is “capable of achieving,” but because of “what it is capable of destroying.” Drawing on Elio Gianturco’s work, Lilla concludes by portraying Vico as the inspirer and the source of Joseph de Maistre’s attack on the Enlightenment “on the grounds that man needs religion and authority.” Thus the verdict comes that Vico is an anti-modern in the line of de Maistre, although he is not using “terms such as ‘blood, soil, Cross.’” Undoubtedly, this is a dangerous connection since it links, in Gianturco’s own conclusion, Vico to Maistre’s mystical nationalism, where the preservation of traditions, religion, and history passes into nationalism and patriotic fanaticism.

Lilla does correctly identify some of Vico’s anti-modern philosophical positions, such as his criticism of modern skepticism and of Cartesian disembodied reason. However, Lilla completely ignores one of the most important grounds of Vico’s criticism of modern reason, science, and politics. This refers to the important political and civil role that imagination plays for Vico and to his belief that, if separated from cultural,
imaginative, poetic, and rhetorical roots, modern reason does indeed become destructive, because it loses its dialogic character. It loses the civil and creative power to listen to the others and to invent ways of addressing them. It loses its power to converse with the strange and unfamiliar others and thus to enrich its categories.

Lilla’s interpretation of Vico relies on a set of assumptions. First, there is the judgment he makes that Vico and his followers, such as Herder, looked at modernity with an aut-aut frame of mind, according to which there is either the tradition of the Enlightenment that “values reason, skepticism, and freedom, or the tradition of the Counter-Enlightenment that “abandoned those principles in the pursuit of order, authority, and certainty.” 408

Opposite to such opinions, I argued in Chapter Two that Schiller and Herder did not reject the Enlightenment in the name of an irrational and Romantic Counter-Enlightenment. Instead, their intention was to rethink the Enlightenment, by adding to the critical power of reason to emancipate and create good constitutions and right political institutions, the sympathetic and creative power of reflective imagination. This is required in order to create the emotions and the affective solidarities that make rational constitutions and political institutions efficient by connecting them to public imaginations.

In the same vein, Vico’s intention is to critically rethink the Enlightenment, its philosophical premises and political projects. Opposite to Lilla’s view, Vico is a critic of modernity who, because he stands on the threshold of modernity, aims at enriching the liberal understanding of politics. He aims at connecting, in the tradition of civic
humanism, which he continues in a world dominated by Cartesianism, modern reason and politics to rhetoric and imagination.

Second, Lilla bluntly defines imagination and common sense as irrational. He assumes that imagination (as both fantasia and ingegno) is entirely separate from and even opposite to reason. In fact, because he sees the poetic capacity of man, as theorized by Vico, only as a consequence of man’s fallen condition, Lilla tends to consider it as a flaw rather than as an empowerment. Opposite to this, I argue in this chapter that Vico transforms the fault (diffeto) of the human mind (reason), namely, its incapacity to understand truth as created by God, into the source of human creativity. Through this humans imitate (in a pious way) God and thus create their own nature and truth through culture (language) and history.

Vico transforms man’s fallen condition and his incapacity to understand (through reason) God, into a source of creativity. Vico argues that this is possible, because when man cannot understand, he makes or creates new meaning, by projecting the familiar unto the unfamiliar. One implication is that man can understand only what he creates or makes. Imagination plays a pivotal role in the making of history, as well as of the rational categories for understanding it. Such a fundamental creative role of imagination is grounded in the belief that Vico holds, in the tradition of Renaissance, that humans are primarily divine creators, not knowers. Thus, prior to reason and setting the ground for it, poetic imagination creates language. Through language, a world is opened up where humanity, thinking, and acting first become possible.
Third, Lilla opposes a form of Cartesian disembodied reason to what he considers to be, in Vico’s conception, irrational custom. In fact, he rejects altogether reason’s historical and cultural embodiment under the accusation of being conservative. Opposite to this, I argue in this chapter that for Vico reason is always culturally and linguistically embedded, without losing, at the same time, its universal opening. This is the case because for Vico human nature is both culturally and linguistically embodied and universally defined by institutions, such as religion, marriage, and burial, which are present in every culture. However, reflecting the existential conditions that define the genesis of humanity, religion, marriage, and burial are open universal institutions. This refers to the fact that they are practices through which cultures can symbolically dialogue with different forms of foreignness in ways that expand, through the creative engagement of imagination, the understanding of what qualifies one as a human being and as a citizen.

Fourth, Lilla’s discussion of Vico’s concept of science excludes entirely its poetic component. As I argue in this chapter, this is one of the most original contributions that Vico makes to a concept of political science that is an alternative to the (modern) concept of science as it took shape in the 17th century, following the scientific revolution. Vico sees both political speech and political institutions as having a composite nature, namely, one that brings together the corporeal and the intellectual, the sensorial and the conceptual, the mythical and the rational aspects.

The nature of an idea or an institution (and they cannot be dissociated in Vico’s opinion) is “identical with its nascence at a certain time and in a certain manner.” It is
its history and its cultural embedment. As a result, political concepts and institutions have an “overlapping nature,”412 where the poetic and the rational are interwoven. Therefore, modern social science cannot be based solely on reason. It also needs to be based on imagination and narrative. This is required by the fact that politics is fundamentally symbolic. This means that political institutions are not only rational constructs, but also symbolic and imaginative structures.

In a nutshell, instead of being a critique of philosophical rationalism tout court, Vico’s quarrel with modernity aims at enriching the modern concept of reason, by making this receptive to its poetic roots. This is important because reason’s communicative power resides not only in the validity of its arguments, but also in its capacity to enrich and reconstruct its concepts by keeping an open sensibility for their poetic and imaginative roots. As Donald Verene argues, for Vico image is not just a way of illustrating abstract concepts, as for Kant, but it is, as for Herder, the very origin of concepts, the original disclosure without which no concept would be possible.413 Imagination is world disclosive, because, as bodily thought, it opens up a site where conceptual thinking can take place. Bodily thought consists in metaphors and images “derived from the body”414 through creative perception.

Thus, opposite to Lilla’s interpretation, Vico does not denounce reason tout court, but only a form of reason that is disconnected from the world disclosive power of imagination and language. Such a form of reason would lack the linguistic creativity that is required in order to create the figures of speech, which symbolically structure political contestation. Thus, it would lack the capacity to expand political solidarities, by creating
the more inclusive symbols that can bring political contestation to a provisional end. Vico calls such symbols civil metaphors.

At the same time, cultural symbols, metaphors, and narratives can morally discipline emotions and feelings and thus cultivate civility. In brief, a form of reason that is not connected to the world disclosive and creative power of imagination lacks both the linguistic creativity to enact one’s claims, to make them speak to the others, and, eventually, to expand political solidarities and the ability to morally and civilly shape emotions and feelings. Both aspects are essential pre-discursive prerequisites of a successful attempt to dialogic or creative contestation.

However, one might object, Vico’s argument, that both political solidarity and successful communication need poetic symbols and metaphors, calls for the (re)enchantment of the world. Indeed, Vico does say that symbols, metaphors, and myths are essential in politics. They are vehicles of political contestation. They are also efficient in cultivating civil forms of citizenship and in coagulating political solidarities. Thus, it is undeniable that Vico wants to restore the power of imagination and metaphors in the modern world. One reason is that political institutions are efficient (democratic) only if they find a way of connecting, through myths and metaphors, their rational aspect to the imagination and the feelings of the citizens.

However, Vico’s conception of imagination and of its relationship with reason does not share Weber’s assumptions about the enchantment and the disenchantment of the modern world. Weber’s discussion of enchantment and disenchantment is based on a radical, pessimistic, and dangerous distinction between the irrational and prophetic
character of world images, on the one hand, and the purposive and methodical rationality of the modern world as it was most successfully first developed by Protestantism, on the other hand.

Thus, Weber’s view presents one with the following alternative. Either there is a world where images burst out with prophetic and irrational force; a world where there are mysterious incalculable forces that one cannot master by calculation and instrumental rationality; a world traversed by the belief in magical means through which one can appease the spirits. Or there is a world where the public realm is dominated by instrumental and methodic rationality and bureaucracy, and where, as a consequence, images, losing their public appeal, completely retreat in the private (artistic and sexual) life of the individuals.

To some extent, one could argue that this is also Vico’s view, since, in his opinion, the beginnings of mankind are poetic, while the later stages of the human history are increasingly rational. Thus, mankind gradually loses the capacity to create powerful images. It loses its capacity to believe in them. It becomes more skeptical, which is, of course, a result of secularization. However, Vico was an educator who has been trained in rhetoric. As a result, he put together an anti-Cartesian educational program, which he professed as a teacher. At the same time, Vico was acquainted with the tradition of Naples law courts, where law was made and remade through oral and imaginative rhetorical speech and performance. Thus, seeing the symbiosis between arguments and images at work in the daily practice of the lawyers, Vico thought that this can be also widely revived and cultivated in his society through education.
According to his educational program, he believed that young people need to be trained in the liberal arts and in eloquence. Only thus their memory, fantasia, and ingenuity will be cultivated, thus preparing them to “engage in the life of the community.”\textsuperscript{415} They need to be trained in the art of discovering and inventing arguments. This is not an art of the concepts, but an “art whereby we grasp philosophical meanings through narrative speech and not through argumentative process.”\textsuperscript{416} Only thus, they will not dissociate reason from narratives and poetic wisdom as they are stored and creatively advanced through common sense.

Thus, in the tradition of rhetorical speech, Vico sees reason and imagination as contiguous with each other. He also sees imagination, even when its images are powerful and vigorous, as fundamentally civil. Thus, the myths and the metaphors that Vico thinks are essential in politics are not irrational irruptions of prophetic minds that need to be rationalized further by followers and disciples. On the contrary, in the tradition of rhetoric, metaphors and symbols are from their inception public and dialogical.

They come into being through the act of listening to the other and of interpreting his utterances as meaningful. Metaphors and symbols are and remain morally and civilly transformative. To this extent, they are in the service of communicative, not of instrumental, reason. They are not in the service of legitimizing the authority of their creators, providing them, at the same time, with the power to rule over the others. Instead, they are in the service of creating the language for taking one’s rights and for addressing the others, in this endeavor.
Expressing such an understanding of the civil and dialogic role of symbols and metaphors, Vico sees freedom as the ability to contest through the poetic creation of the language for expressing and making public one’s claims. Such a creation of the language for taking one’s rights happens through the reinterpretation of the myths and symbols of the class in power, of those who have authority. At the same time, Vico sees authority not as blind submission to religion and history, as Lilla argues. On the contrary, he sees it as “the creative authorship and authority of human volition,” namely, as the capacity to enlarge, through the rhetorical act of listening to the outsiders, the cultural, religious, and historical horizons of a society. To this extent, receptive authority and creative freedom are engaged in creative contestation. The result of such contestation is the deepened democratization of human societies as well as, of the meaning of what it means to be human.

However, for Vico such an advancement of human history, through creative and dialogic contestation, is possible only if human societies preserve the memory of their origins. It is possible, only if they keep, as remembering collectivities, a connection with the strangeness that resides in their origins. In this sense the preservation of an as-wide-as-possible cultural and historical horizon, of a copious imaginative horizon “dell’idee, costumi e fatti del gener umano” is the very basis of cultural and political creativity. The key to the connection between the preservation of traditions and cultural and political creativity is rhetoric.

This is made possible by the fact that Vico’s theory of culture combines the classical principles of oratory with insights into “particular – principally Roman – forms
of poetry, myth, religion, and law.” What defines the vitality of a culture is the capacity to invent new topics, namely, new places from where thinking and acting can start, as well as, the capacity to make symbols more inclusive, thus expanding the scope of political solidarities. However, in the tradition of (Roman) rhetoric, only a society with a copious imaginative horizon, namely, one that preserves meaningful and non-linear, ramified connections with the origins can have a vital culture.

The origins of a society refer to the fables or the myths that first define mankind. These provide the metaphorical and poetic roots of morality and politics, of law, and philosophy. The faculty that repeats the origins in the present, in a way that reinvents them and makes them more inclusive, that denationalizes them, is imagination. Unfortunately, neither Lilla nor Gianturco consider this aspect of Vico’s theory of human nature, culture, and politics, which assigns imagination an essential role to play in politics.

Opposite to Lilla and Gianturco, Berlin recognizes the role that imagination plays for Vico in the making of human cultures, polities, and history. He considers Vico the “true father both of the modern concept of culture and of what one might call cultural pluralism,” namely, a “panorama of a variety of cultures, the pursuit of different, and sometimes incompatible, ways of life, ideals, standards of value.” However, given the important role that traditions and authority play for Vico, that for him morality “begins, not in the relativism of unencumbered will, but when humans succumb to the formidable chains imposed by Jove;” it is true to say that Berlin exaggerates the commitment of the Italian philosopher to modern and radical individualism.
Still, Berlin reaches his conclusion about Vico as the true father of cultural pluralism based on the Italian’s conception of history. According to this, one can understand through imagination (fantasia) cultures that are remote in space and time. Imagination has the capacity to recreate and grasp difference. Thus, it is Berlin’s merit to underscore, in the spirit of Herder’s argument for the need to create a common feeling of humanity, that the modern liberal appraisal of multiculturalism or of cultural pluralism, which is the result of individual freedom, requires the imaginative power to recreate and grasp the different, the strange, and the remote.

One implication is that the recognition of different forms of cultural life is not complete if it is not doubled by the imaginative and participatory understanding of other forms of cultural life. To this extent, Berlin does attempt, opposite to Lilla, to enrich liberalism and its conception of cultural pluralism by incorporating elements such as the power of imagination to grasp, express, and synthesize differences. The requirement to add to the recognition of different forms of cultural life, the power that imagination has to enhance and expand affective citizenship, is pressed upon liberalism by tasks such as that of intercultural understanding.

However, one could argue that for Vico imagination does more than just grasp the different. Creative imagination, as the source of language and of civil metaphors, has the power to disclose a world, which alone makes it possible that individuals and different forms of cultural life encounter and address each other. Thus, Berlin does not go far enough in the way he theorizes the power of the imaginative insight to grasp differences. He does not see that, not only that imagination can grasp differences, but it can do so
because it *creates* the language for addressing different forms of cultural life. It creates the words for naming new things. As Vico argues, poetic expression springs from two sources: the poverty of language, and the need to explain and to be understood.\footnote{422} It springs from the need to communicate with the others.

In short, because Berlin himself is a promoter of radical individualism and of incommensurable and indomitable value pluralism, he cannot see, as I will argue in the following chapters of my dissertation, that any act of grasping differences through imagination is possible because, through language, a *world*, a common site of intelligibility, is disclosed where encountering the others, human and nonhuman, first becomes possible.

Similar to Berlin, Habermas sees Vico as a philosopher who opens up a *modern* alternative to Bacon’s and Hobbes’ understanding of social science. In Habermas’ opinion, Vico opposes to the modern identification of the practical with the technical and to the modern divorce of politics from morality, both present in Hobbes’ philosophy, an understanding of politics that connects it to “the categories of ethical social intercourse.”\footnote{423} By connecting political science to prudence and rhetoric, Vico restores its “hermeneutic power,”\footnote{424} namely, the capacity to understand institutions and forms of social order in their cultural and historical context.

From the perspective of discourse ethics this also means that Vico reconnects modern politics to communicative praxis. An avenue is thus opened, that, unfortunately, Habermas does not fully follow. This is the path through which poetic and rhetorical praxis is recognized as *an indispensable component* of communicative praxis.
Habermas would have followed such a path he would have been able to see, years after writing *Theory and Practice* that, “the symmetrically conceded freedoms” and the “reciprocal willingness to view things from the perspective of the other,” as preconditions of intercultural understanding, which he defines as a “rationally conducted discursive engagement,” are (pre-discursively) shaped by imagination, through poetic and rhetorical performance. He would have seen the civil power of imagination; namely, its capacity to shape civility and to create the commonality of emotional and cultural horizons that rational communication requires. It would have seen its capacity to disclose a world where encountering the others is first possible in an affective, not only rational, way.

Thus, in the spirit of Habermas’ and Berlin’s interpretations, I argue in this chapter, against Lilla’s reading, that the new science of human society and history that Vico invents aims not at constraining, but rather at enlarging “the human horizon opened by the modern age.” It aims at enriching modernity, by opening avenues that Descartes and his followers, Hobbes included, sealed off. Vico saw that symbols and metaphors are relevant for politics not as something irrational that needs to be kept apart and controlled, but as factors that can play an essential role in the symbolic making of political institutions and in making affective solidarities more inclusive.

In my interpretation of his philosophy, I will not confine Vico’s voice, as Lilla, to the 17th century. On the contrary, I will listen to Vico’s voice. The leading concern in my interpretation of Vico’s philosophy will be to find out how culture and symbols can enrich, in his own words, “humankind’s most characteristic property, which is its
essentially social nature (d’essere socievoli).” In this sense, I will situate my interpretation of Vico in line with those commentators, such as Donald Phillip Verene, John D. Schaeffer, David W. Black, Joseph Mali, and Sandra Rudnick Luft, who, while reconstructing his work in a historical context, read it, nevertheless, with a 21st century mind.

_Pious Creativity: the Antidote to the Conceit of Scholars and of Nations_

In the tradition of the Renaissance, Vico considers the power to be a divine maker as the most important feature of human beings. The cornerstone of his _New Science_ is the idea that the civil world is the creation of humankind, because “just as God is the artificer of nature, so man is the god of artifacts.” The creation of humankind is initiated by imagination or the “supreme, divine artifice of poetic faculty.” At the same time, although divine, human creativity originates in a sort of deficit. Vico considers such a deficit to be constitutive to the human nature. I argue that this deficit has for Vico a threefold nature: ontological, epistemological, and linguistic.

On the most fundamental level divine human creativity is possible because of an ontological deficit. This refers to the fact that there is no given niche for the humans in the world, but only “an existential sense of human strangeness,” which comes from the “abyssal condition of the first men, nomadic wanderers in their ‘deserts’ – the forests, a world without order or one whose order is inaccessible.” As a result, humans are confronted with the task of disclosing their own world, of making it. This happens
through language. One assumption that guides Vico’s conception about the making of human nature and thus of the truth of the human world is that the nature of language is not representational, but metaphorical. As a result, the act of naming creates (human) reality, instead of representing (metaphysical) reality.

The act of naming, which is metaphorical and thus results in an imaginative universal (universale fantastico) or a poetic archetype, “is the appearance of is in experience.” In this sense, the vital imagination of the first humans is not a part of mind, but it is a vivid sense of inspiration, a strong sense of sublimity, that creates for the first time what is to be thought by our mind. Sandra Rudnick Luft calls this, in the spirit of Heidegger’s philosophy, poetic ontology or the “ontological creativity of language.”

The epistemological deficit means that humans are fundamentally creators, because of the fault (difetto) of their mind, namely, their limitation (limitatezza) and incapacity to understand, through reason, what God has created. However, the fault of the human mind is, in reality, a source of empowerment, because man turns this difetto to good, practical, and useful use (trasse da questo difetto della sua mente un utile partito). Thus human beings imagine and create what they cannot know. This means that the (original) moral and civil ideas and institutions that shape the beginnings of humanity are the work of creative perception, imagination, and language.

Linguistic deficit means that there will always be in the world more things than words to name them. Thus, humans are continuously confronted with the need to invent new words. With this in mind, Vico carefully reminds his readers “the important principle that every language, no matter how copious and learned, encounters the hard
necessity of expressing spiritual things by means of relationships with corporeal things.\textsuperscript{434} Therefore, human speakers need to use analogies and metaphors in order to create more language for naming the new situations and experiences that they discover in the world and for communicating the results of their judgments about them. In a word, divine human creativity originates in the power to turn to practical use the \textit{difetto} of the human nature, of the human mind, and of human language.

In Vico’s view, the existential conditions where human creativity originates are defined by ignorance, wonder, curiosity, and fear. The Italian philosopher argues that “whenever man is sunk in ignorance, he makes himself the measure of the universe.”\textsuperscript{435} Thus, when there is scarcity of known things, men judge the things of which they are ignorant in accordance with their own nature.\textsuperscript{436}

As a result, Vico generalizes by saying that “as rational metaphysics teaches that man becomes all things by understanding them (\textit{homo intelligendo fit omnia}), this imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by \textit{not} understanding them (\textit{homo non intelligendo fit omnia}); and perhaps the latter proposition is truer than the former, for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.”\textsuperscript{437}

Nevertheless, Vico distinguishes between two forms of ignorance: the simple ignorance of the first humans (“simplicity”) and the dissolute ignorance of the moderns that gives rise to the double conceit of nations and scholars. The simple ignorance of the first humans is deeply creative, because these are capable not to make the unfamiliar into
the familiar, but to encounter the unfamiliar as something strange. They are capable to encounter the strange as something utterly different, which one can bestow meaning upon through the “art of unthinking the obvious.”

The dissolute ignorance of the moderns comes from “turning ignorance (defined as uncertainty and indefiniteness of mind) into boria, or arrogance and false science.” Thus, it misleads nations and cultures into claiming that they are the sole possessors of what it means to be human (the conceit of nations) and it misleads scholars into claiming that humanity and science started with reason and logic (the conceit of scholars).

In the New Science, Vico opposes to dissolute ignorance, learned ignorance. His aim is to present to the human mind the creative simple ignorance of the first humans, thus undermining the inveterate tendency of the human (modern) mind “toward making over the unfamiliar into the familiar.” The aim is to revitalize modern culture, by reconnecting modern human beings to the existential origins of human creativity.

Verene argues that Vico’s concept of ignorance resembles Nicholas of Cusa’s notion of “learned ignorance.” Like the Socratic ignorance, this is a constructive and creative ignorance. It transforms limits into an incentive for further inquiry and linguistic creativity, because, in making humans aware of their shortcomings, it reveals the need to keep inventing the language and the categories for expressing the diversity of the world and of the human cultures. “Learned ignorance” makes one increasingly aware of how much wider and impossible to capture by one single culture or nation is the meaning of what it means to be human.
Thus, opposite to dissolute ignorance that leads to the conceit of scholars and of nations, learned ignorance makes nations *receptive* to the utterly different strangeness of other cultures and scholars receptive to the utterly different strangeness of the poetic origins of mankind, to their fables and metaphors. In both cases, such receptivity creates meaning because one encounters the unfamiliar as strange and as utterly different. Thus, one can unthink the obvious, become aware of the poverty of human language for naming the things of the world, and thus stimulate and activate one’s creativity.

Wonder and curiosity are both the daughters of ignorance. Wonder “opens our minds,” while curiosity searches for meaning, it asks what something “can mean or signify.”\(^{440}\) *Maraviglia*, wonder, the foundation of knowledge, which has a creative core, is the state that “ruptures the uniformity of an undifferentiated world because it marks the perception of an alterity transcending one’s state.”\(^{441}\) Thus it is capable of seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. On the other hand, curiosity “closes off the shock generated by wonder by seeking the sense of the experience.”\(^{442}\)

Moreover, Verene argues that, for Vico, fear is not passive, but an active and creative passion. It is also a self-limiting passion, being “awakened in men by themselves”\(^{443}\) It is extraordinary not ordinary fear, namely, it is not fear of humans, but an existential fear of formlessness. It is the fear that, wonder and curiosity would not be able to form a place, a clearing from which human thinking and acting can start in the dark and impenetrable darkness of the primordial forests.

It is the fear that one’s speech would not be able to open up a place where one can return, a root or a topic to govern one’s reasoning, without which one would get lost,
thus forgetting one’s origins and beginnings, as well as one’s connection with the existential conditions of creativity. Verene calls this form of extraordinary existential fear, “the terror of formlessness, which accompanies the attempt to make a new intelligibility.”

Opposite to the wise and prudent man who can turn fear into a source of creativity, the fool is devoured by curiosity, “always seeking excitement, never in touch with himself.” He is affected by one malady of curiosity: the “mind’s inability to hold onto the entities it questions.” He is thus devoured by desires and fear or anxiety. In brief, the fool cannot transform fear into a formative passion that both shapes his desires and passions in a superior moral sense and keeps him connected to the existential and emotional sources of human creativity.

Thus he cannot experience the existential conditions that put the mind in a heroic and sublime disposition. Such a disposition asserts the divine nature of human creativity and, at the same time, it curbs it, by revealing an over standing reality. It reveals that human creativity is neither hubristic nor a form of mastery. It is pious. Pious creativity transforms the creative agent in a way that allows him to experience a sense of otherness and strangeness, but also a sense of limitation and piety.

David Black argues that pious creativity shapes the moral identity of the human creators in a sense that makes them experience a deferential conscience. This is a form of conscience that “is linked to the feelings that reflect sublimity, devotion, and a sense of distance.” Thus, it grasps “the sense of otherness” that is “necessary to the perpetuation of wise and appropriate making.”
In Vico’s view, the *grossi bestioni*, the giants, who wandered the impenetrable forests of the pre-human world, experienced such ignorance, wonder, curiosity, and fear. Hearing the awe inspiring voice of the thunder in the feral darkness of the primeval forest, they put themselves in a heroic and sublime state of mind.

*The Origins of Humanity: Creative Imagination and the First Civil Metaphor*

In trying to interpret (*divinari*) the noise made by the thunder as a voice that speaks to them, the pre-human *grossi bestioni*, “imagined the heavens as a great living body.” This was a creative and transformative perception, one that, in making the concept of god, Jove, initiated simultaneously, through a transfer of meaning from bodies to heavens, a moral transformation, because, in the process by experiencing fear and shame, the creators became human.

The first ones to become humans underwent a moral transformation through an act of poetic and imaginative creation, which resulted in the first “civil metaphor.” Vico explains that this metaphor, “the first to be conceived by the human civil mind and more sublime than anything formed later” was “that the world and the whole of nature is a vast, intelligent body, which speaks in real words and, with such extraordinary sounds, warns men of that which, through further worship, it wants them to understand.” In Vico’s holistic conception of human nature the divine nature of spirit starts within the bodily experiencing of the world.
From this “civil metaphor in which Jove, identified with the Sky, would write his laws in lightening and promulgate them in thunder” the “first poetic civil sentiment” came into being “in which the sublime and the popular were united.” As Michael Mooney explains, through such an “act of ‘poetic’ imagination, of the transfer of meaning (metapherein) through the ‘ingenious’ discovery of relationships heretofore unnoticed, the grossi bestioni quit their spiritual isolation, established communication and community, and became men.”

In short, humans make themselves (and their truth) through imaginative and linguistic creativity. Prior to reason, imagination humanizes and civilizes the pre-human creatures that Vico calls grossi bestioni. What brought human beings for the first time together in society was an act of imaginative and creative perception. Human civility originated in the capacity of “vigorour sensations and vivid imaginations (robusti sensi and vigorosissime fantasie)” to create the first civil metaphor: the first god, Jove. It originated in creative, poetic, and rhetorical imagination.

Vico sees imagination as a very complex faculty. As for Herder, and, as I will argue in the next chapter, for Nietzsche, imagination is, for Vico too, closely intermeshed with the body, being, at the same time, a source of cultural and linguistic inventiveness. Vico classifies imagination as part of memory. Memory is made out of three faculties. First, there is memory proper (memoria). This is the power to recollect, namely, to preserve in a culture a copious historical horizon of human ideas, deeds, and customs. Second, there is fantasia. This is the power to alter and recreate, namely, to reorder what has been recollected. At the same time, fantasia constantly reshapes an
image into a human representation, and in this way “it allows the human being to encounter the unfamiliar as something strange that yet has meaning.” Fantasia is the power a culture has to recreate and grasp the different and the remote (the “remotest matters,” in Vico’s words) and to keep a meaningful (human) relationship with it.

Third, there is ingenuity (ingegno). This is the power to give a “new turn” (mentre le contorna) to the recollected and reordered images. Since ‘contornare’ means ‘to surround,’ ‘to go round,’ ‘to outline,’ ‘to border,’ then ingegno uses the recollected and reordered elements to outline, to demarcate a new image, a new frame, to form a new topic, a new commonplace; a vision of new reality. It is creative imagination, namely, the power to combine given elements in a new way, and thus to see new possibilities in the given elements of a culture. Vico calls such imaginative power, “acuteness” (acuto ingegno) and defines it as the capacity to join two lines (unisce già due linee, unisce cose diverse) in an acute angle, opposite to just “extending a single line.” Acuteness refers, in the Aristotelian tradition of rhetoric, which Vico follows in this respect, to the “characteristic of a well-aimed mind to see the likeness even in widely separated things.”

In Vico’s understanding, either as fantasia or as ingegno, imagination is always creative. Vico explains that imagination is the faculty “that makes present to our eyes lands that are very far away, that unites those things that are separated, that overcomes the inaccessible, that discloses what is hidden and builds a road through trackless places.” Imagination makes visible the invisible. It recreates and grasps the different and the strange, even the remotest, as meaningful. It synthetically finds connections
between things that are (widely) separated. It discloses what is hidden. According to Vico’s narrative, to disclose what is hidden can be understood as the capacity to interpret divine providence in a manner that develops and improves humanity, namely, the social and political capacities of collectivities. However, in a fundamental manner, imagination discloses worlds. It creates order in places that are initially trackless. It opens up places where humans can dwell together. Thus, it has a powerful political potential, which the wise man knows how to use.

In short, memory in its comprehensive meaning, namely, as made out of memory proper, fantasia, and ingegno, is creative. To remember the origins of mankind, which is Vico’s aim in his New Science, is an excursion into the unfamiliarity and the strangeness of the beginnings of mankind. It is an excursion into the alien and the foreign. The purpose of remembering is not to repeat the familiar, but, by encountering such strangeness, to start unthinking the obvious, thus “resisting the human tendency to convert the unfamiliar into the familiar.” It is to place oneself again in a situation that enacts the conditions that make human imaginative and linguistic creativity possible. In Vico’s view, these conditions were present at the beginnings of mankind and can be identified and reconstructed in each and every culture.

The creativity of imagination and memory (since the two are inseparable for Vico) presents two fundamental meanings. On the one hand, it is the capacity to order and reorder different aspects of sensible experience. It is the capacity to see things as if they are something else, to see the “same” reality as different. It is the capacity to give to the preserved cultural horizon a “new turn” (mentre le contorna). On the other hand, in a
stronger sense, imagination is creative because it discloses worlds through the metaphorical act of naming. However, in this stronger sense, the creativity of imagination comes from its capacity to invent the language for listening to and addressing the voice of a stranger. It is creative rhetoric.

Contrary to Vico’s notion of creative imagination and memory, reproductive imagination, the dangerous source of political aestheticism, either runs too much in the direction of possibility or in that of a shared reality. First, when it runs too deep in the direction of possibility, reproductive imagination loses contact with the cultural and historical imaginative horizon of a group and by extension of mankind, thus becoming boundless or utopian imagination.

On the one hand, it loses contact with what Vico calls *copia*, namely, the “the store of words and experiences upon which ingenuity works” and which enters mind and is held there by fantasia. Vico would argue that reproductive imagination is the “faculty of the age of rational abstraction,” *imaginazzione*, which “can only witness, not remake.” *Imaginazzione* is not creative, because it is incapable of connecting one to the poetic and rhetorical roots of concepts and judgments. *Imaginazzione* does not take one inside a cultural form of life, but only it looks at it, it witnesses it, in a non-engaged and detached way, from the outside. Thus, one cannot see and understand meaning in the context of the living texture of culture. When this happens, one’s creativity is not stimulated and activated, because no occasion to listen to the other and to speak with him is provided.
On the other hand, in its most extreme form reproductive imagination is narcissistic imagination. This is a form of imagination that, because it loses contact with a shared store of words and experiences, tends to colonize the others’ minds with its own sense of the possible, thus seeing the whole universe as just a projection of one’s own fantasy. As I argued in the Introduction, drawing on Bakhtin’s philosophy, narcissistic imagination is just a projection of ego’s daydreaming and playing, thus lacking the capacity to livingly address and answer to the other’s presence.

Second, when reproductive imagination runs to deep in the direction of a shared reality, it just repeats one’s reassuring familiarity, thus completely shutting down the dialogue with the voice of the stranger, the one that is distant and unfamiliar. It feeds the conceit of nations and the conceit of scholars. To this extent, it ceases to produce “otherness at the heart of experience.” As I will argue in the next two chapters, through an interpretation of Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s philosophy, when this happens imagination becomes just a provider of collective certainty and security and a promoter of ‘identity’ and uniformity. It becomes a source of nationalism and of political aestheticism. Thus, it can be used by leaders such as Stalin or Hitler for regimenting the masses and making them adhere to an exclusive image-frame.

At this point, image loses its capacity to see the other as a source of meaning as the ‘I’ is. It also loses its reflective power, namely, the capacity to engage the mind of the individuals in a reflective, interpretative, and creative manner; as an aid of judgment. Image is reduced to the status of an implicit emotional acknowledgement and reproduction of familiarity, of collective certainty, security, and uniformity. Perception is
not inventive and creative, while the listeners are not invited to creatively finish the enthymemic reasoning of the rhetorical and poetic speaker, thus providing through a joint effort a new turn to the common sense.

Poetic and Rhetorical Practical Wisdom

Opposite to those who (mis)use imagination in the service of nationalism and political aestheticism, Vico’s man of practical wisdom is a true poet and orator. He engages creative, not reproductive, imagination as a source of civility and commonality and as a source for renewing and enlarging the common cultural (and thus political) horizons of mankind, where his listeners are his partners in the creative-argumentative endeavor.

In this, he acts as an educator of mankind, who is engaged in “a rational, truth-seeking enterprise.” The reason is that his imagination is not narcissistic, but profoundly attuned to the voice of the other, to the remembering and imaginative horizons of a community, and, eventually, of mankind, due to his deep philological and historical sensibility. Moreover, as the “power that finds and creates connections (similitudines),” ingenuity “startles, uplifts, and brings men together,” educating at the same time their civility.

Vico’s poet is, in the initial Greek sense of poēsis, a creator who makes the truth through the oral performance of his elocution, which is not a stylistic accessory, but “an intimate concern of the logic of argumentation in real situations.” Reflecting this
feature, the man of practical wisdom makes and remakes the truth in the situation, namely, in the realm of opinion, where he appeals to the sensus communis of his audience. The poetic core of his practical wisdom is what Vico considers to be the most important trope or figure of speech: the metaphor.

Vico defines metaphor as “a kind of primal (generic) trope,”⁴⁶⁸ one in which “sense and passion” are ascribed to “insensate things.” The other tropes, of metonymy,⁴⁶⁹ synecdoche,⁴⁷⁰ and irony, are defined in relationship with it. Metaphor plays the most important role in acute expression, through which different things are yoked together. Thus, it is a product of ingenuity, but also of common sense and fantasia. This reflects the fact that in a culture ingegno is not possible in the absence of copia, of the “store of words and experiences upon which ingenuity works.” Thus, metaphor is the result of the capacity to project familiarity unto the unfamiliar, but in such a way that the unfamiliar is seen as something strange, thus forcing one to unthink the obvious in a way that unlocks creativity. In brief, metaphors can be created only if one pairs familiarity and strangeness without ever closing the gap between them.

Moreover, Vico considers that the metaphor can function as an argument, because it is an acute wit through which one unifies two arguments of a proposed problem. The metaphor is the middle term of the commonplace tradition or the enthymemic maxim. It is the ligamen that connects apparently disparate things. As understood by Vico, the metaphor unites argument and figural expression, truth and beauty. In constructing his metaphor the orator relies on the pre-logical and affective power of language. The
persuasive power of any figure of speech depends on the “perception of similarity between the terms, and a similarity between that similarity and the case at hand.”

The perception of similarity is made possible by sensus communis. Schaeffer argues that Vico uses two meanings of sensus communis: sensus communis-as-*copia*, namely, as value and corporal perception, as the capacity to interiorize the somatic nature of language through fantasia, and sensus communis-as-practical judgment, which is the ingenious capacity to fuse material from the *copia* with the new situation. Metaphor twins these two aspects. Thus, Schaeffer concludes by pointing out that, for Vico, metaphor is a conceit, because it is a new vision of reality (or a vision of a new reality) and it is a *sententiae* or a maxim, because its terms invoke accepted communal values imbedded in language.\(^{471}\)

Vico argues that the poetic and rhetorical art of the man of practical wisdom engages his audience in the creative-argumentative activity, because when “the orator presents a conceit \([\text{acuto dicto}]\) he makes a beauty that is left for his auditors to detect. For when the conceit is offered, there is indicated within it a rational connection, which when the hearer traces out, discovers the middle, unites the extremes, contemplates the aptness, in order to contemplate the beauty the orator made – he then seems ingenious to himself, and the conceit pleases him not as something offered by the orator but as something understood by himself.”\(^{472}\) Thus, the hearer “participates in the metaphor when he seizes upon the *ligamen*, and thus unites what is learned with how it is learned. The discovery of the connection is both the source of beauty and of truth.”\(^{473}\)
As a poet and an orator, the man of practical wisdom acts as someone who sees the productivity of the human spirit. To see that the human spirit is capable of making the civil world through the civilizing power of creative imagination and to realize that it depends on one’s own will, moral effort, and courage to make and perfect the civil world is the beginning of wisdom. Vico defines wisdom as “the faculty governing all the disciplines that teach the arts and sciences which perfect (compier) our humanity.”

Since, its aim is to develop the best (ottime) institutions, namely, those that “serve the well-being of the entire human race (il bene di tutto il gener umano),” aiming at the same time toward the highest good, which is the divine, such wisdom is practical. It is the capacity to judge, by combining rational, poetic, and rhetorical elements, how to achieve the development of the best (human) institutions. In this quality, practical wisdom consists in discovering in each and every particular culture the common laws of nations and in connecting all particular cultures in a story of humanity. Poetic imagination and eloquence play an essential role in this achievement.

One’s qualification for citizenship requires the possession of such a practical wisdom. This has for Vico two, almost impossible to analytically separate, components. On the one hand, to have practical wisdom means to know the certain. On the other hand, practical wisdom means to do the right. In knowing the certain, the wise man contemplates God. In doing the right, he imitates God. To contemplate God is an act of (imaginative) interpretation of and orientation in culture and history. To imitate God is a productive act of divine human making.
As knowledge of the certain, practical wisdom is “the faculty of making those uses of things, which they have in their own nature, not those which opinion supposes them to have.” This reflects the wise man’s awareness of the preeminence of (cultural) common sense over reason, of certum over verum. In Vico’s vocabulary, certum refers to all the ideas, deeds, and customs, which, before reason and philosophy, signified and shaped what it means to be human within and across different cultures. Certum encompasses “everything that depends on human volition: for example, all histories of the languages, customs, and deeds of various peoples in both war and peace.”

In this quality, certum refers to the common sense of humanity, namely, “an unreflecting judgment shared by an entire social order, people, nation, or even all humankind.” Vico explains that, if the man of practical wisdom wants to be “of the greatest service to the greatest number” he “must acquire as much learning as he is capable of by listening as much as possible, by reading as much as possible, by analyzing as much as possible, by meditating as much as possible, and by writing as much as possible.” After the model of the orator, who needs to be comprehensive, namely to “run through the complete set of loci which schematize the evidence,” he also needs to expand as copiously as possible his cultural and historical imaginative horizon.

At the same time, in contemplating God in the certain, the man of practical wisdom, opposite to the fool, perceives, interprets, and follows throughout all the traditional cultural ideas, deeds, and customs, the impetus of divine providence. This is the impetus to make and perfect the social nature of mankind. It is the impetus to create a sense of community that gradually comes to include not only the love of one’s own
advantage, but also the well-being of family, of the city, of the nation, and in the end of
“the entire human race,” because “the whole of mankind is valued more than any single
national unit.”

In contemplating God in the certain, the man of practical wisdom forms and
transforms senses and emotions. He sublimes them, in a way that enhances civility and
morality, thus perfecting and developing humanity. Vico argues that, in this way, he
forms man’s dual citizenship: that given to him by nature (the universal right of people,
natural law) and that given to him by birth (namely, by one’s nation, which, for Vico,
means both a shared origin, as expressed through myths and fables, and a shared history).

In imitating God, the man of practical wisdom is productive, thus manifesting our
“creative and free natures.” This means that he makes the civil world, “in a god-like
manner,” namely, from his own idea he gives being to things that lack it. Vico argues
that imagination, not reason, possesses such a demiurgic power. This is the case because
imagination is the core of spirit in human beings and as “God is continuous activity, spirit
is continuous productivity.”

Thus, in imitating God, the man of practical wisdom engages through poetic and
rhetorical language and speech his imagination in order to make humanity. As somebody
who does right and imitates God, Vico’s man of practical wisdom engages imagination,
in all its complexity and in the whole gamut of its powers, eloquence, as well as his
historical and philological sensibility in the cultural action of making the civil world,
namely, the human nature and its truth. This is achieved through “a master image of the
human world as a whole, which, the man of practical wisdom produces, as God would, namely, out of his own idea.

Such an undertaking reflects the understanding by the man of practical wisdom that certum is factum, namely, a creation of inventive and sublimating perceptions and of imagination. It reflects his knowledge that humans create the truth (far il vero) and that originally truth is poetic. Inventive and imaginative perception refers to the capacity to transfer meaning from what is physical, the body, to what is not, and in the process to undergo a moral transformation. Such a transfer, Vico explains, is the “universal principle of etymology in all languages: words are transferred from physical objects and their properties to signify what is conceptual and spiritual.”

In trying to give his readers a sense of the creativity through which the first humans made the original moral and political institutions of mankind, a creativity that the wise man should engage in his poetic-political art while, at the same time, keeping it vivid in his interlocutors, Vico mentions two synthetic and generative capacities that the modern mind, dominated by the Cartesian model of thinking, still possesses. One of them is associated with geometric synthesis, the other with literature.

Vico explains that, in geometric synthesis the mind runs through all “the elements of language, simultaneously choosing and combining” those that it needs. In literature, the mind runs through the letters of the alphabet, selects them and combines them in order “to read and write with them.” Thus, the man of practical wisdom should have a copious imaginative and cultural horizon. He should be able to easily identify the elements that one needs when confronted with a new situation and to ingeniously select
and combine given elements in order to generate new combinations and syntheses, in the same way the letters of the alphabet are combined to form words and languages.488

As a result of such skills and as somebody who has creative, not reproductive, imagination and memory the wise man would not allow the horizon of narratives and memories of a particular culture, but also, by extension, of humanity, to disperse into a discontinuous collection of Foucauldian epistemological configurations or of Rortyan private vocabularies. On the contrary, in a vital and healthy culture, where people practice such a form of practical wisdom, there would be no absolute discontinuities, because there will always be a shared language and culture.

At the same time, continuities would never become platitudes, imitations, and narcissistic reproductions, because the members of such a culture can be creative. This means that they can project familiarity unto unfamiliarity in a manner that does not reduce unfamiliarity to familiarity, but, on the contrary, it recognizes the first as strangeness and thus as a source for unthinking the obvious and thus for activating one’s creativity. In such a culture creative turns of the common sense and thus visions of a new common reality are always possible.

Vico tries to unlock for the modern mind throughout his New Science precisely this kind of poetic and rhetorical practical wisdom. The New Science is a science of origins. In this sense, it offers the elements and the axioms of the science of man, out of which the social, civil, and political world is created. These elements and axioms are the sensory topics, the imaginative universals, the poetic archetypes, and the fables that
originally formed humanity. In a word, they are “the forms of an original sensus communis of humanity.”

The poetic and eloquent art of the man of practical wisdom consists in the creative engagement of the original sensus communis of mankind. It consists in the making and remaking of the myths and symbols that formed mankind throughout history, in a way that interprets the truth of particular nations as a part of the truth of the common world of nations. In this enterprise no culture can be left outside, because the principles of humanity and of natural law are equally present in each and every one of them. As Vico argues, “the natural law of nations arose separately among various peoples who knew nothing of each other.” This makes the natural law “an idea which was one in substance, but was expressed differently in various articulated languages.”

Illustrating the poetic and rhetorical art of the man of practical wisdom, Vico narrates in the New Science myths and legends. He interprets metaphors and symbols, thus trying to unveil the power of metaphors and of language to make reality, to see similarities in what is different, “to join together disparate worlds.” It is this appreciation for poetic wisdom and for the metaphorical creativity of language that Habermas’ discourse ethics needs to internalize more, as an essential part of the communicative praxis.

As Verene points out, myths and metaphors provide the “actual sense of drama or time or space” of which the category robs us. Category covers the metaphorical, polyphonic, and rhetorical site where institutions originate, making one forget the diversity, as well as the sense of possibility that marked their birth. Category makes one
forget that universal human institutions, such as religion, marriage, and burial come into being as divinatory practices, namely, as cultural practices thorough which one creates the language for listening to and addressing the other, the stranger. Category makes one forget that its meaning can be expanded, that it can be made more inclusive.

In sum, in the enterprise of making a common and political human world, the poetic men of practical wisdom have a twofold task. First, they have to keep alive and reenact in a culture the existential conditions where human creativity originates. They have to keep a culture connected to its origins, namely, to the myths and the metaphors that first defined humanity within its confines. Second, they have to shape, based on their imaginative orientation in culture and history, which reflects their interpretation of divine providence, human senses and emotions in a manner that enhances the political and/or democratic capacities of collectivities. This means in a manner that actualizes, especially, in the modern democratic cultures, the creative and poetic potential of what Vico calls the principles of humanity, as these are embedded in the civil institutions of religion, marriage, and burial. Only to this extent, the men of practical wisdom would keep alive in modern (democratic) culture the paradigmatic political experience of men, that of first creating their collectivities as an asylum and a refuge; a situation that the market place of democracies can still reenact.

*Reenacting the Dialogue with the Foreign in the Civil Institutions of Religion, Marriage, and Burial*
The political art of the man of practical wisdom is to interpret and judge the metaphors and poetic narratives of a culture and the course of history in the action of making the common world of nations. However, as Vico points out right at the beginning of his *New Science*, this is an undertaking in which philosophers erred. Vico targets here the Epicureans, the Stoics and the natural theologians. These three categories of philosophers ignored, for different reasons, providence.

Vico argues that the Epicureans said “that human affairs are set in motion by the blind collision of atoms; and the Stoics said they are drawn along by an inexorable chain of causes and effects.” The natural theologians “merely considered providence within the order of natural things,” which is not, according to Vico, accessible to the human mind. In brief, all these philosophers failed to see “providence as revealed in the economy of civil institutions.” Thus, they failed to contemplate “God’s providence under humankind’s most characteristic property, which is its essentially social nature (*d’essere socievoli*).”

As an attempt to remedy such a failure, Vico considers the *New Science* to be a “demonstration, as it were, of providence as historical fact (*my italics*),” namely, of how wise men can engage their interpretation (*divinarî*) of divine providence for the purpose of making and serving the social nature of man. Given Vico’s general philosophical assumptions that deny the human capacity to know truth as created by God, this cannot be grasped by the mind as a metaphysical reality that is logically demonstrated.
Rather God represents the only direction and orientation humans have in piloting through the “unending waves of conjecture.” Such an orientation happens through divination, namely, through the imaginative interpretation of divine providence. Thus, Mali explains that for Vico divine providence represents “the way in which human mind has perceived the divine mind.” It represents, as Vico explains, the “universal belief in the provident nature of divinity” or “the human sense that there is a divinity.”

In Vico’s view, humans are pregnant with an innate concept of divine providence (nel concetto innato c’hanno gli uomini di essa provvedenza divina). This suggests that providence is rather a dynamis, the power humans have to make their humanity throughout history. Thus, Vico explains that “to divine” (divinari) is a human practice for understanding “either what is hidden from men, meaning the future, or what is hidden within them, meaning their conscience.” The idea of divinity is “the idea of a mind that sees into the future, for such is the meaning of divinari.”

Divination is the creative and imaginative cultural practice through which one interprets the strange as utterly different and, still, as meaningful. Such an imaginative and interpretative practice can enhance the morality, sociability, and civility of human societies throughout history through the human performative power to create new metaphors, namely, new visions of new reality. The original and universal civil institutions of the human world, religion, marriage, and burial, are such divinatory practices, where one dialogues with different forms of existential foreignness.

Aware that his task is to develop humanity and to improve its institutions, Vico’s man of practical wisdom understands that in the order of institutions, “providence makes
itself clearly felt (sentire) through three feelings (sensì): first, wonder (maraviglia),
second, veneration (venerazione)” and third, “ardent desire” (ardente disiderio). Thus,
he understands that making a common world of nations can be achieved through the right
orientation and cultivation of the feelings of wonder, veneration, and ardent desire in the
civil institutions of a culture. Making a common world of nations can be achieved
through keeping present and active in a culture the righteous, namely, the social and civil
meaning of the three fundamental civil institutions of humanity: religion, marriage, and
burial.

Vico calls wonder, veneration, and ardent desire righteous feelings (sensi diritti),
because of their social, civil, and political capacities. Wonder is the ability to see things
as for the first time, the ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. Veneration is the
capacity to make room for and thus recognize that there is something higher than and
superior to oneself. Desire involves a running ahead of oneself, a moving toward
something that one lacks and thus toward a more complete version of one’s self. The
force that moves desire is coming from the awareness that one’s self is lacking and
incomplete, thus, the effort to repair such deficit. Thus, in a sense, desiring involves
leaving one’s self behind, at least, the incomplete and lacking version of a self that the
very act of desiring denies.

It thus seems that the three feelings of wonder, veneration, and ardent desire have
the force to de-center individuals. This means that in experiencing them, individuals are
pulled out of themselves and thus distanced from the excessive concern with their own
advantage, security, or conceited national or scientific superiority (boria). In a nutshell,
wonder, veneration, and ardent desire act through the civil institutions of religion, marriage, and burial in the spirit of poetry and “imaginative creation,” which are characterized by *sublimità* (sublimity).

Mazzota argues that, by perturbing the minds of people (*excessus mentis*), namely, by pulling them out of their familiar settings (and throwing them into confusion) and by disturbing given and taken for granted forms of order, the sublime makes possible to experience “an overwhelming force that ruptures the uniform, repetitive patterns of perception.” Wonder, veneration, and ardent desire thus make it possible to experience the divine because they produce the sublime elevation and transfiguration of the mind. With this they make it possible to experience through the institutions of religion, marriage, and burial a genuine sense of otherness and strangeness, where the creation of meaning originates for Vico.

Mali argues that what makes the novelty of Vico’s theory of the principles of humanity is not the actual choice of religion, marriage, and burial, but the idea that our humanity and the poetic power to make it are grounded in and grow out of the same conditions. Mali explains that this requires seeing religion, marriage, and burial as real moral facts, namely, as facts that say something fundamental about humanity. Further developing Mali’s idea, I argue here that, as real moral facts, religion, marriage, and burial say something *fundamental* about what it means to be human across different cultures and about how to develop and improve humanity.

Religion, marriage, and burial provide exemplary ways of being human that are present in and can be practiced by each and every particular culture. However, the trick is
that being human in this way means being able to address the different forms of existential foreignness that the institutions of religion, marriage, and burial help one to deal with. In this sense, I think, opposite to Mali, that the choice of the three institutions is not entirely arbitrary.

Religion, marriage, and burial embody and reenact three different practices of dialoguing with the foreign, of creating a bridge to the strange, each in different circumstances and to different degrees. They embody different degrees of human ingenuity, as required by different crucial experiences in the making of human societies. All three institutions cope with the challenge of inventing the language for listening to, anticipating, interpreting, and addressing the voice of a foreigner and a stranger. In short, all three institutions indicate that to be human means to be able to listen to and to address three different forms of existential foreignness.

As the creation of the first civil metaphor, of Jove, by the grosse bestioni, shows religion is, for Vico, the paradigmatic practice for creating a bridge to strangeness and thus for becoming in an original sense human. The first civil metaphor, of Jove, is created by the grosse bestioni in a situation where there is no order, except the projective and transformative power of the (pre-human) creators. Through this creation humans listen to and interpret the foreign in the guise of an awe inspiring and sublime voice. This shows that, similar to Herder, Vico does not see true religion as one denomination. Rather, religion refers to the human moral aspiration, effort (conatus), and freedom to construct humanity by cultivating, through the de-centering, sublime, and poetic practice of divination, sociability, civility, and commonality.
By engaging feelings, such as wonder, veneration, and ardent desire, in a civil direction, namely, one that creates human commonality, the man of practical wisdom understands that if “peoples lose their religion, nothing remains to keep them living in society.”\textsuperscript{510} Thus, he takes religion in its etymological meaning as \textit{religare}, to bind.\textsuperscript{511} In this fundamental sense, true religion is not a confirmation of familiar territories, but the courage to engage oneself beyond these territories, by mastering one’s fear in a creative, non-destructive, and non-violent manner.

Ultimately, religion does not bind one to what is familiar, but to what is foreign and strange. The paradigmatic act of \textit{religare} and of providential cultural practice was that through which the (strange and fearsome) voice of the thunder awakened in the \textit{grossi bestioni} the moral effort and freedom to transform themselves into human beings. This was the poetic power to name the thunder Jove and thus to give form to their first possibility of becoming human. In its essential, \textit{human}, meaning religion is the creative response to the foreign and the strange that inspires fear. It is the sublime and heroic, the non-destructive attempt to give to the awe-inspiring foreign a voice and a face.

Vico conveys the meaning of marriage through the symbolism of three solemn rites. The first rite (and it has to be kept in mind that for Vico rites are the origin of rights) is that of defining marriage as a “lifelong sharing of one’s lot.”\textsuperscript{512} This is a reminder of the original act of the \textit{grossi bestioni}, that of dragging their women into their caves. Thus, it suggests that marriage is the practice through which a bridge is created to the newcomers into a space that is already structured by symbolic order (the cave).
The second rite is the veil worn by the brides. In Vico’s view, this symbolizes the origin of marriage in shame. The sheltering of the cave as well as the covering of the veil symbolizes the boundaries that encircle the consorts. The third solemn rite is the ritual abduction of a bride by force. This evokes the real violence with which the grosse bestioni dragged their wives into the caves. It is a perpetual reminder of the strangeness that accompanies the coming together for the first time of two human beings.

Based on the meanings suggested by these three rites, marriage can be defined as the practice (and the institution) through which a cultural and linguistic bridge, as well as a moral relationship are created between two strangers. The aim is to tame the initial violence that accompanies the act of entering by one of them the boundaries of the already (culturally and socially) ordered space of the other. In short, marriage reenacts the dialogue with the foreign in the guise of the new arrival in a culture, of the one who enters a new symbolic space. It reenacts the dialogue through which an unavoidable violation is tamed.

Vico notes that burial was “the origin of the universal belief in the immortality of the human souls.” However, faithful to the idea that what interests him is the social nature of human beings, not metaphysics, Vico points out, right after making this statement, that to “mark each grave, the giants must have fixed a slab…in the ground.” Around these grave markers tribes and clans grouped and genealogical threads grew. Genealogical threads were also represented on the first family shields. The burial sites of the dead also marked down the dominion over lands.
Based on the symbolic description of the burial sites that Vico provides, one could argue that, according to the Italian philosopher, they seemed to have functioned as temporal and spatial markers. They seemed to have functioned as markers of the cultural and social identity of the human groups, as preservers of memory, as well as projectors of the future. It thus seems that the social role of the practice of burial was to create a bridge between past, present, and future generations across time. Grave sites were the sign posts of a genealogical tree over time. They were markers of memory, of belonging, as well as, of change and transformation. They symbolically related and dialogically engaged the foreign in the guise of the strangers that belong to a past that one never inhabited and to a future that one will never inhabit. This was achieved by bringing, nevertheless, these strangers to the heart (family and property) of a community’s symbolic identity.

To come to the point, religion, marriage, and burial paradigmatically invent (though vigorous fantasia and acute ingegno) cultural, linguistic, and symbolic bridges to the awe-inspiring presence of the foreign, to the newcomer with whom one has to share one’s religion and, in general, one’s myths and metaphors, and to the foreignness of a past that recedes even further and of a still absent future. They are paradigmatic practices in the act of making the common world of nations, because they reveal in each culture, although through different narratives, that to be human means to be able to listen to and address the foreign in these three guises. It means to be able to situate the foreign on the symbolic map of a culture. It means to be creative in a way that makes one’s myths and metaphors more inclusive.
A culture is vital to the extent that it keeps in its moral and civil institutions, such as religion, marriage, and burial, and in the language for interpreting and communicating their meaning, such creative skills for the dialogue with the foreign and for placing the foreign at the core of one’s symbolic identity. The creative skills of dialoguing with the foreign, in a way that tames fear and violence, which are enacted in the institutions of religion, marriage, and burial, reflect the fact that the first human act was that of creating the language for expressing and communicating one’s fundamental strangeness to the world: the fact that humans are originally nomads and refugees. It also reflects the fact that for Vico the first human cities came into being as asylums and refuges.

_The Asylum-City and the Political Art of Metamorphosis_

Vico states that the order of human institutions is “first forests, then huts, next villages, later cities, and finally academies.” This signifies, at least, two things. One of them is that originally there is no given (human) order. There is only the darkness and the impenetrability of the forest. Order needs to be invented. The other is the nomadic, wandering condition of the first humans “through the earth’s great forest.” The first humans are “autochthonous” and “sons of the Earth.” However, in Vico’s view, this does not mean that they are possessors of roots and origins. On the contrary, it means that they are wanderers through forest and potential openers of a clearing, namely, of a human world.
In their nomadic wandering through the primordial forest, the *grossi bestioni*, the pre-human creatures, are both outsiders and strangers looking for a refuge and potential humans capable of *imagining* their familiarity with each other. The creative act that made their transformation into humans possible was the poetic and rhetorical performance of listening to and interpreting the thunder as a voice that speaks with them. The poetic end product of such a rhetorical performance was the first civil metaphor. It was the image of the “heavens as a great living body,” Jove, which thus became the first source of human order.

The *grossi bestioni* interpreted the thunder as a voice that has meaning and thus tells them something intelligible. The fear they experienced in hearing the strange and *violent* sound coming from the sky, turned creative when the noise became a voice that talked to them. On the one hand, the first humans were able to project familiarity, namely, their bodies, upon the unfamiliarity of the thunder. The latter thus became a corporeal presence with a voice, Jove. On the other hand, they were able to experience the strangeness of the thunder as being utterly different from anything they have seen before; namely, as something that requires the creation of the language for conveying its meaning.

One could argue that, in Vico’s view, humanity does not consist in the actualization of a (fixed) nature. Rather, it consists in the capacity to disclose a world and, in the process, to create and transform oneself; to undergo a metamorphosis. The making of humanity does not start from certain and clear principles that describe its
nature. On the contrary, it starts from an absence and from the sense that the worldly, cultural and linguistic, niche for filling this absence has to and can be created.

What humanizes the *grossi bestioni* is their poetic and world disclosive capacity. The world thus disclosed is the foundation of *politeia*, of civil government, because it first provides social order, cultural, moral and civil orientation for the *grossi bestioni*, the vigorous and robust giants. Moral and political order originates in the poetic making of man. This does not reproduce or confirm any initial model. It is, instead, the projection of a sense of possibility, where the creation of order emerges at the same time with the transformation of its creators into moral and political subjects. Its locus is language.

One could also argue that the Vichian creators of the first civil metaphor were in an on-the-threshold or on-the-boundary situation, which, as Bakhtin argues, is the core of aesthetic experience. The core of such an experience is the idea that “I am forever another,” an idea that also guides the manner in which Vico constructs his own *Autobiography*. The defining element of such a situation is “the possible transition to higher or different states of consciousness or social degree.” It is metamorphosis and transfiguration. Such a situation is characterized by the state of being outside and yet already inside, because of one’s capacity to transform oneself by projecting beyond oneself. To this extent, it is a combination of strangeness and familiarity. Its core is metaphoric and metamorphic, because what occurs in such a situation is a transfer of sense that generates the transformation of the creator.

Reflecting such a situation where human order originates in the mixture of strangeness and familiarity that characterizes one’s being on-the-threshold, Vico
considers that all cities began as a “refuge in the clearing.” Quoting Livy, he mentions that “refuges were the ancient counsel of city founders.” Thus, Romulus founded Rome “by opening a refuge in a clearing.” The archetype of a city, its origin, is to be a refuge, “whose invariable property is to protect their residents from violence.” Thus, cities “were the world’s first hospices, and the first people received there were the first guests or strangers, hospites in Latin, of the early cities.”

Vico also points out that “Theseus founds Athens upon the altar or shrine of mercy just as Romulus founds Rome in the sacred grove, both of them opening asylums to those in danger.” Accordingly, the defining feature of a (Roman or Greek) city seems to be its openness, because, as Vico points out, the eternal origin of all states is not deception or force, but “generous humanity,” to which all other kingdoms, “whether acquired by deception and force, must later be recalled in order to stand fast and preserve themselves.” It is the capacity to offer shelter and to consider such an offering as holy. Also, Vico argues that the “first associates in the world,” namely, “people allied for their mutual advantage,” “cannot be imagined or conceived before the appearance of the first refugees who fled to the first fathers in order to save their lives.” These became later the plebeians, who revolted against the nobles, thus marking “the birth of commonwealths from the family state.” These refugees, the first associates, were guests.

Vico explains that guest means both stranger and enemy. A stranger is a peregrinus in Latin. However, Vico continues, a stranger or a peregrinus is not a “true foreigner.” The difference is that “true foreigners,” when they travel through the world,
do not wander through the countryside, as the stranger or *peregrinus*, but stay on the
direct public roads. I take this to mean two things. On the one hand, because he takes the
public roads and does so in a direct manner, the true foreigner accepts and follows the
cultural boundaries (which simply demarcate) between him and the others. There is no
danger of transgression coming from him.

While the stranger, the guest sheltered in the asylum, in the refuge, the future
(contending) plebeian starts opening up his own roads, his own cultural commonplaces,
he starts creating potential public roads out of the inchoate potentiality of the countryside.
On the other hand, by taking the direct public roads, the true foreigner is not dangerous,
because he keeps himself in the open. He can be surveyed. He follows a beaten trade,
while the stranger as *peregrines* is harder to keep an eye on, because he wanders in the
countryside.

The stranger mingles with the others, he melts into the society and its culture, and
thus he transforms himself and the world around him. He is dangerous because he
transforms boundaries into crossings, and thus starts melting their role as just
demarcations. Boundaries become points of contact and contiguity. Thus, the stranger is
ambiguous. He transforms the asylum or the refuge city into an on-the-threshold place,
where strangeness and familiarity are woven into each other.

The stranger is both a source of diversity and of poetic and metaphorical creations
and of potential violent and tragic transgressions. This is the case, because, as Mazzota
points out, letting in the stranger as a guest “reveals the existence of worlds other than
one’s own, each world unknown to the other, and yet accessible to the other.”\(^{528}\) Thus, on
the one hand, the conditions are present to create cultural and symbolic bridges or narratives of association between hosts and guests. On the other hand, “the encounter between stranger and host puts in place a strange relation, a relation of strangeness,” one that, in a sense, does not cease to be unsettling and uncomfortable; one that does not cease to dislocate the familiar.

Vico shows through the story of Dido how this combination of familiarity and strangeness, which the presence of guests keeps perpetuating in the culture of a society, can turn tragic. Dido shows Aeneas, “great kindness and generously offers him the kingdom of Carthage as her dowry,” while, in the end, the Trojan hero “rapes and abandons her.” The tragic refers to transgressions and violations of law and order that the stranger as potential enemy can always engage in, as in the story of Aeneas or of Paris, “who is both the guest and the enemy of the royal house of Argos.”

However, Mazzotta argues that the paradigm of the asylum city as presented by Vico makes possible two forms of symbolic politics: the tragic and the archaic satire. The archaic satire can overcome the tragic, because it makes possible “a restoration of the plurality of discourses available in marketplaces and public assemblies.” The archaic satire presents the foreigner-guest as a source of plurality and creative contestation. The market places or the public assemblies are polyphonic places, where metaphorical creation becomes possible.

Market places and public assemblies are places where the multiplication of the sites of affection and identity, which is made possible by the presence of the foreigners, incites the creation and recreation of civil metaphors. For Vico this is the mechanism
through which human history advances from one form of government and authority to another. The social and political mechanism through which history moves from one form of government, but also the mechanism through which human societies become more inclusive and democratic, resides in the capacity to overcome tragic transgressions, violence, and conflict through metaphorical creation.

Vico argues that the strangers, first called the plebeians, started using the symbols of the heroes, those who hosted and sheltered them in the asylum city, because they had “no names of their own.” As Ruth, the Moabite, they entered the commonplaces of the others and started transforming them. They started dislocating the cultural topoi of the others, by creating inside the same name, which they shared with the heroes, their own fables. Thus, as Ruth, the Moabite, they started enacting their rights, by first creating the language, the symbolic rite for claiming them. To this extent, as Ruth, they engaged in the democratic practice of taking rights.

At the same time, the heroes, the authority, realized that it is for their mutual advantage that they appease the multitude of the rebellious clients, the strangers. They realized that it is in their advantage to listen to the rebellious intruders. Thus, they invented embassy and commerce, which were symbolized by the poetic archetype of Mercury. According to Vico, this god symbolizes the act of sending “the law to the rebellious servants.” As he points out, Mercury and Neptune are the last two gods to be invented.

Since for Vico the order of ideas follows the order of institutions, it becomes clear that these two gods symbolize how throughout history the cultural (and thus political)
connections between different nations, through commerce, ambassadorship, and navigation gradually increased. They symbolize the increased capacity of mankind to overcome the “narratives of separation,” which abound in the *New Science*, through “experiences of association,” and thus, to transform boundaries from limits that only separate into points of *contiguity* and *crossing*; into points where the democratic practice of taking rights coexists with the practice of listening to the strange and the unfamiliar.

Hayden White argues that social and political change takes place for Vico through the poetic and metaphorical power of language. In this sense, the dynamics of the metaphorical transformations of language acts as a source of social change where contestation takes place only though the creation of new civil metaphors. Throughout history, such civil metaphors are becoming increasingly democratic, because they are becoming increasingly inclusive. For example, the transition from the age of heroes to the age of men occurs as a transition from a metonymic to a synecdochic mode of perception. The rebellion of the servile class took the form of a creative use of speech. More particularly, they used the trope or the figure of speech of synecdoche. This allowed the servile class to take the part for the whole, namely to see themselves as human too, and based on this to make their claims for equality.

In brief, Vico’s conception of the symbolic role of foreignness belongs to what Honig calls “the politics of foreignness.” According to the latter, the foreigners can either reinforce national myths and cohesion, or they can expand the democratic potential of national cultures and their capacity to live with strangers. If the foreigners act in the
tragic mode, namely, if they violate the law of generosity and hospitality, they can reinforce national myths and their opaqueness to the strange and the unfamiliar.

However, if they act in the spirit of the archaic satire, they can pluralize passion and can help to multiply the alternate sites of affect and identity. Moreover, they become a source of creative contestation. They become democratizing factors, because by poetically and rhetorically staging nonexistent rights and liberties, they expand in a polity the meaning of what it means to be human and citizen. At the same time, they incite authority to listen to them and to invent new cultural symbols as part of a politics where contestation and change take place through the creation and recreation of myths and civil metaphors.

**Democracy: Contestation and Creativity**

The political regime that corresponds, in Vico’s view to the age of reason, is democracy. Vico thinks that democracies are places of great diversity, since they are the most “open, generous, and magnanimous” of all political regimes. Thus, they carry the greatest political opportunity, created by the foreign-guests, to improve one’s capacity to live with strangers, by making one’s myths and metaphors more inclusive.

However, Vico thinks that (modern) societies might not be able to live up to this challenge and great political opportunity because they lack cultural creativity and poetic and rhetorical imagination. The age of reason and democracy is dominated by the
Cartesian frame of mind that down plays, and, eventually, neglects the cultivation of imagination and of aesthetic creativity in the citizens.

While they are open to and generous with the foreigners, still the burden of democracies is to avoid dissolute ignorance. It is to avoid the reduction of the unfamiliar to the familiar with the arrogance and the narrow-mindedness that accompanies the conceit of nations and that of the scholars. Moreover, the burden on modern democracies is to reenact the first paradigmatic metaphorical act of human making and thus to create their common cultural horizons out of learned ignorance. The burden is to encounter the foreigner-guest as something utterly different, but not as a difference that enforces one’s national myths and cohesion. On the contrary, the foreign-guest should be met as a difference that forces one to unthink the obvious and to be creative.

At the same time, it is precisely the unsettling presence of the stranger that keeps the extraordinary at the heart of the ordinary and the familiar, thus not allowing one to close the gap between them. The unsettling presence of the foreign-guest is an ongoing source of fear that transgressions and violence would happen. However, the burden on modern democracies is not to let this fear turn ordinary, and thus become fear of humans, but to keep it extraordinary. It is to experience this fear as the existential terror of formlessness that only those who are primarily creators, not knowers, experience.

Such reenactment of the existential conditions of creativity can happen in modern democracies in the market place or the public square (piazza) where, as in the refuge or asylum city, “different worlds suddenly draw near to one another,”540 thus making available a plurality of discourses, as well as a situation where familiarity and strangeness
are interwoven. According to Vico, “all the principles of metaphysics, logics, and ethics originated”\(^\text{541}\) in the public square of Athens, namely, in the poetic and rhetorical performance through which the different worlds attempted to approach each other. At the same time “all of Roman law was a serious poem, acted out by the Romans in their forum.”\(^\text{542}\)

This shows that the origin or the foundation of both law (\textit{iura imaginaria}) and philosophy is poetic. It is a poetic and rhetorical performance through which, in a universe of diverse voices, of mixed voices of strangers and hosts, people learn to live on the threshold, between familiarity and strangeness. The metaphor that Vico uses to symbolize the poetic and rhetorical performance that creatively mediates between familiarity and strangeness is the act of wearing a mask. Thus, referring to the ancient public square, he defines it as the place where “there were as many masks as there were persons, for in Latin persona properly means a mask. And there were as many names.”\(^\text{543}\)

In fact, Vico explains that the act of wearing a mask denotes the initial meaning of persona, which is derived from the verb \textit{per-sonari}. This “meant to wear the skins of wild beasts.”\(^\text{544}\) This shows that wearing a mask is the symbol of a metaphoric and metamorphic performance through which the individual appears and is, at the same time, hidden, through which he is familiar and, at the same time, strange, through which he is a citizen and, at the same time, a foreigner, himself and someone else. It is the symbol of a transformation and a transition through which one infuses foreign elements in the given and familiar symbolic space of a community. The act of wearing a mask is a metaphor
that combines both location and dislocation, both the detection and the identification of
the familiar and its dislocation, as well as its undermining.

As symbolized by the act of wearing a mask, poetic and rhetorical performance
holds together the different voices and discourses, of the citizens and the foreigners that
confront each other in the public square, without collapsing them into each other and
without annulling their particularity. To this extent, as Honig argues, as well, the
symbolic spaces where laws and political institutions originate in democracies are not
constituted through consent, but through contestation. However, such contestation is
creative, namely, it expands origins and insofar as these are defined by (national) myths
and metaphors it expands these, as well. It denationalizes them. It makes them more
inclusive and civil. The core of such a contestation is the poetic and rhetorical
performance through which metaphors, which are fables *in nuce*, are created and
expanded.

Thus, the origins of laws, institutions, and ideas are not stable and completed, but
a dialogization of diverse voices, an inter-illumination and hybridization of different
languages and worlds, through which the participants transform each other. Origins are
sites where (democratic) “identity,” as in the act of wearing a mask, is potentially on the
verge of metamorphosis, on the verge of turning into another. Origins are sites where
(democratic) “identity” and the myths and metaphors that define it come into being
through the attempt to answer to the voice of the other, the stranger and the foreigner-
guest, whom one’s openness and generosity allowed in the asylum or the refuge city.
The crucial trait of democratic “identity” thus understood, namely, as contested and recreated through poetic and rhetorical performance, is not the “sullen reverence for stability,” which “gives logic too much credit, conceiving it as the most legitimate model of thought.”\(^{545}\) It is not “stability and completion of being.”\(^{546}\) Rather, it is “unfinished metamorphosis”\(^{547}\) and transformation. It is an in-between space that never closes off completely the differences between human and beast, between strange and familiar, between sacred and profane, between citizen and foreigner.

However, Vico argues, while democracies enjoy such a great political opportunity, they might lack the means to live up to it. They lack the imagination and the cultural creativity that creative contestation requires. They lack the poetic and rhetorical imagination to create and recreate civil metaphors. Such a defective status of culture springs from the Cartesian modern tendency to cultivate and educate in the individuals analysis over invention and synthesis, analytical reason over creative imagination.

It springs from the Cartesian neglect of topical philosophy, as the art to discover and invent arguments. In Vico’s view, this is not an art of the concepts, but an “art whereby we grasp philosophical meanings through narrative speech and not through argumentative process.”\(^{548}\) It is a form of philosophical wisdom (sapienza) that never dissociates concepts from narratives and poetic wisdom as they are stored and creatively advanced through common sense.

Through their exclusive focus on critical philosophy, Cartesians dissociate truth from common sense, which is the “criterion of practical judgment” and “the guiding standard of eloquence.”\(^{549}\) They undermine the modern ability to connect concepts and
arguments to cultural themes and narratives, to sensibility and emotions. They undermine reason’s connection with imagination’s creative power to disclose new commonplaces from where thinking and acting can start in a culture. They disconnect philosophy and politics from history, rhetoric, and poetry.

The worrisome consequence is that, with citizens thus impoverished in their capacity to use creative imagination, the age of reason and democracy might prove incapable of producing (more inclusive) civil metaphors. It might prove incapable of creating a sense of community that does not exclude the strange others. It might prove incapable of making a human world that is political and civil, namely, that is capable of improving one’s capacity to live with strangers.

Instead, individuals with such impoverished imaginative and creative capacities would isolate themselves from each other. As a result, the promising age of reason and democracy would end by being characterized by “the barbarism of calculation.” This denotes an extreme civil illness, which occurs whenever “people are accustomed to think of nothing but their own personal advantage” and “no two of them agree, because each pursues his own pleasure or caprice.” Peoples characterized by such civil illness lack generosity and solidarity. As a result, “obstinate factional strife and desperate civil wars” turn “their cities into forests and their forests into human lairs.”

As Joseph Mali points out, such an unsocial and uncivil situation reflects the reduction of “all the cultural activities of man to mere tactics of a defense mechanism (as, in Vico’s view, Hobbes did).” On a deeper level, where, as Giuseppe Mazzota argues, “the political sphere is circumscribed within the vast compass of the domain of culture
such an uncivil and unsocial situation reflects the incapacity to transform symbolic contestation into a creative enterprise. It reflects the incapacity to colonize the other’s myths and symbols and to change them from within. It reflects the incapacity to create and recreate civil metaphors in a way that makes them more inclusive. As a result, diversity would be present within the confines of (modern) democracies either as a piling up of private vocabularies or as reduced to an abstract rational unity. It would not be a source of creative contestation.

Vico compares the moderns, in their incapacity to create new civil metaphors, to “certain individuals who have inherited from their parents a gorgeous mansion leaving nothing to be desired in point of comfort or luxury. There is nothing left for them to do except to move the furniture around, and by slight modifications, add some ornaments and bring things up to date.” In short, the atrophy of the imaginative and creative linguistic powers of democratic and rational citizens undermines their power to create new civil metaphors, namely, new ways of dwelling together. Consequently, the moderns prove themselves incapable of renewing and thus enlarging the comfortable mansion(s) that they have inherited. With their diminished, at best reproductive and witnessing imagination, all the moderns can do is only to move the furniture around the mansion.

Thus far, I have argued, drawing on Kant’s, Schiller’s, and Herder’s philosophies, that the political task of intercultural understanding, as well as democratic cosmopolitanism, as an essential aspect of overcoming nationalism, requires rethinking
the project of the Enlightenment. Such a rethinking requires the recognition of the important role that aesthetic imagination and sensibility play, as supports of reason, in making (democratic) solidarity, civility, and humanity possible.

To this extent, intercultural understanding requires developing forms of affective citizenship, namely, forms of emotional solidarity, which are not nationalistic, but cosmopolitan. It requires cultivating in the democratic citizens a manifold and variable sensibility, which is open and receptive to unfamiliar modes of representation and to strange natures and situation, as well as, a living, creative, and imaginative understanding.

Such individuals would be able to express their own freedom and respect for the others’ freedom not out of self interest or moral obligation, but as an expression of their grace and gentility. To this extent, they would encounter the others as objects of free play, namely, as an occasion and as a challenge to widen both their apprehension and comprehension of the world, namely, their own freedom and power of becoming human.

I also argued thus far that intercultural understanding requires an engaged and participatory understanding of unfamiliar symbolic spaces. It requires that the democratic citizens would cultivate through belles lettres, literature, and the learning of foreign languages a sympathetic, creative, and reflective imagination. Only thus, they would develop a common feeling of humanity, namely, the capacity to feel, share, and communicate with members of other cultures. This would take place through the enlargement of the capacity of one’s (national) locality to express and communicate humanity.
I have also argued, drawing on Vico’s philosophy, that the political task of intercultural understanding requires that the democratic citizens are capable of rhetorically listening to the foreign and the strange, while possessing, at the same time, the creative imagination to invent new and more inclusive civil metaphors. My reading of Vico improved Herder’s notion of culture, which is still framed by the expressive turn. This is possible because Vico sees culture or symbolic frameworks as coming into being through the dialogue with the foreign. Such a dialogue is fundamentally made possible by creative, poetic and rhetorical imagination.

To this extent, my argument intensified and further developed the rather limited role that Habermas’ discourse ethics ascribes to aesthetic imagination and sensibility in the practice of communication. It also added to Arendt’s conception of the democratic agon a more incisive role of creative imagination in transforming and making public and common symbolic networks more inclusive. My argument also started developing a notion of culture that accounts not only for the emancipatory and stabilizing potential of symbols, but also for their capacity to anticipate, colonize, and to address the other, as well as for their capacity to transform the ‘identity’ of the protagonists of the symbolic encounter.

Vico’s philosophy stresses the essential role of creative imagination and of ingenuity in such an engagement of cultural symbols. However, he points out, democracies, which come into being in the age of reason, gradually lost such creative capacity. Friedrich Nietzsche would have agreed with Vico on this diagnosis. However, while Vico analyzes democracies as (symbolic) political regimes, based on Greek and
Roman myths and histories, Friedrich Nietzsche, similar to John Stuart Mill, analyzes the symbolic politics of modern democracies. He also inquires, deeper than Vico, the causes of the modern lack of creativity. In Nietzsche’s view, the ‘identity need’ and the will to truth, which originate with Christianity, paralyze the freedom to experiment and creativity. To this extent, they are also responsible for nationalism, a dangerous consequence of the wrong type of symbolic politics, which Vico does not discuss.

Henceforth, drawing on Nietzsche’s philosophy, I will further develop and complicate in the next chapter the role that imagination can play both as a source of nationalism, if it is engaged only in its analogical power, and as a source for the transformation and renewal of cultural horizons in a more inclusive way, if its explorative capacity is also cultivated. Thus, I will argue in the next chapter that intercultural understanding requires cultivating in the democratic citizens both the analogical and the explorative power of imagination, both the imaginative power to project a ‘home’ and the imaginative power to dissolve the familiar into the distant and the foreign.

It will also argue that intercultural understanding requires a form of symbolic politics that produces ‘identities’ such as that of the “good Europeans.” I will argue that such an “identity” can be seen as an example of an enlarged symbolic frame of reference for humanity. Moreover, I will argue that such an identity is the product of a form of political power that consists in the open and mutually inspiring interplay of the worldly power of the master to engage in direct and spontaneous action and of the poetic and imaginative (explorative) capacity of the slave to be somewhere else.
Those who will be able to constitute their cultural and political (post-national) ‘identities’ in such a way would be good Europeans, because they would never trade off their struggle and striving for the certainty provided by actual and earthly idols, by any form of ascetic ideals, such as nationalism or an overarching (Christian) idea, vision, and dream of Europe (or democracy).

In Chapter Five I will further develop Nietzsche’s view of culture and imagination by drawing on Heidegger’s philosophy. Thus, I will argue that intercultural understanding, as well as the effort to avoid nationalism and political aestheticism, requires a form of culture and of creation that is characterized not only by the capacity of its members to remain open to still undisclosed meanings and language, but also by the capacity to engage in the *dialogue* with the foreign, which is seen as the passage and the journeying ‘home.’

I will also argue in the last chapter of the dissertation, drawing on Arendt’s philosophy, that intercultural understanding requires a form of political creativity that combines the (imaginative) power to listen and to be receptive to the strange and the unfamiliar, to the foreign, and to bring him in one’s space of authority, in the space that has already been disclosed, founded, and author-ized; in the space of authoritative precedents. Intercultural understanding also requires an understanding and practicing of culture where ideas and values dialogize each other, namely, they can further develop their unfinalized and inexhaustible core by speaking with, not about, each other.
Chapter Four

Nietzsche: The Role of Imagination and Rhetoric

in Inventing Democratic ‘Identities’ Beyond Nationalism

Drawing on Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy, I will argue in this chapter that, if modern democracies are to reinvent themselves beyond the cultural vocabulary of nationalism they need to develop in their citizens a form of creative power. Imagination plays an essential and complex role as part of such a creative power. I will argue that this is the case because imagination is an essential component of Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power. Imagination is the faculty through which the body affects and touches us. It is the faculty where emotions, willing, as affective experience, interpretation, and reflection, and, consequently, reason first take shape.

Thus, imagination is not only a source of ideology and false consciousness, namely, an illusion through which the ‘slave’ of Christian morality escapes and mystifies one’s own conditions of possibility as an agent. In both its analogical and in its explorative capacity, as a source of metaphors and rhetorical speech, imagination can also be a source of (individual) power. In short, imagination plays an essential role in the way one presents oneself to the others, anticipates them, and addresses them with the aim of persuading them to accept one’s opinions as values.

Imagination is the sophisticated weapon that the ‘slave’ uses to create the illusory world of the ascetic ideal. According to Nietzsche, it is also the faculty where language and truth, as well as world as appearance and artistic illusion originate. As the creator of
the ascetic ideal, the ‘slave’ develops to a high degree of cultural refinement the power to produce artistic illusions and appearances. This is the power to draw the horizon in the absence of which no thinking and acting, no political community will come into being.

The challenge in accounting for the role that imagination can play as part of the experiential, interpretative, and self-reflective conditions of possibility of the individual as an agent is to argue that the ‘slave’ should and can reorient his imaginative capacity in a rhetorical and dialogic direction. The framework that will allow for the construction of such an argument is an interpretation of the will to power as the mutually inspiring and transformative interplay of what Nietzsche calls the commanding and the obeying drive.

The present chapter will run along two lines of argument. First, I will argue that the creative power that modern democracies need to cultivate in their citizens is an expression of the will to power defined as the open interplay of the commanding and the obeying drives. The interplay of the commanding and the obeying drives reflects the nature of the world and of life. As a result, it takes place between the drive to impose form, namely, to provide an interpretation of the world from a given perspective, and the drive to resist this imposition, which comes from other centers of force. Both drives are expansive and attempt to give form. Creative power originates in their interplay and contestation, in their agon. It originates in their mutually inspiring and transformative relationship. Both drives are equally essential in the formation of individual agency.

Culturally, the commanding and the obeying drives express themselves as heroic and ascetic cultures. In Nietzsche’s view, the new culture that modern democracies need should be the result of the interplay of heroic and ascetic cultures, of their confrontation
and mutual transformation. Heroic and ascetic cultures describe features that are, in fact, present in every actual culture, in the same way as the commanding and the obeying drives are both present in the way individuals construct their subjectivity and agency. The task facing heroic cultures is to make beautiful, graceful, and tasteful their sublime discharge of energy. The task facing ascetic cultures is to turn the distress and suffering that come from resisting the other’s imposition of form into (creative and outward-oriented) energy (Kraft). It is to turn spiritual profundity and refinement into worldly ingenuity and into political passion. In this creative turn imagination, rhetorical and theatrical power, play an essential role.

Second, I will argue that overcoming nationalism requires the cultivation in the democratic citizens of the twofold capacity of imagination: to analogically see similarities between differences and to exploratively dissolve the familiar into the strange and the distant. Such an imaginative and creative power plays an essential role in shaping the moral-aesthetic virtue of greatness. Unfortunately, Nietzsche opines, modern democracies failed to cultivate in their citizens greatness, nobility, and imagination. Instead, the modern state, mass political parties, and financial elites miniaturize their citizens and make them mediocre, selfish, and greedy.

Opposite to this, Nietzsche describes how a true bearer of culture would educate the citizens for cultivation and higher individuality and how he would see culture as a project and as a task, not as something given. Zarathustra’s narrative provides an example of how a wanderer and a true bearer of culture would engage imagination, rhetoric, and creativity in order to educate himself and the democratic citizens for cultivation, namely,
for developing the higher and more powerful, the creative and imaginative individuality of the “good Europeans.”

The argument I make in this chapter adds to Arendt’s conception of action a richer meaning of creativity than what the fundamental human fact of natality makes possible. Arendt’s agonism is (dominantly) incorporated in contemporary democratic theory in a manner that overemphasizes the aspects of contest and confrontation. From such a perspective, “politics and culture form a continuum, where ultimate values are always already in play” and thus “the basic rights and the purposes of political association” are “contested every day.” What such a perspective tends to neglect is the creative potential of culture, its capacity to produce civil metaphors, an aspect that I discussed in the previous chapter, drawing on Vico’s philosophy. I will argue in this chapter that Nietzsche’s model of the “good Europeans” provides an example of cultural creativity, where a new ‘identity’ emerges through the hybridization and mutual transformation of opposite values.

Nietzsche’s perspective on the relationship between culture and politics does not downplay the existence of tensions, resistances, and distances that come with the diversity and the boundaries of the democratic agon. However, such a view of the relationship between culture and politics, as endorsed by the argument that I make in this chapter, sees the tensions of the agon only as a precondition for the creation of new syntheses and civil metaphors, as opportunities for the renewed inter-illumination and hybridization of languages. In brief, from such a perspective, distances should not become opposites, because there are no absolute, but only dialogized differences. The
creative, rhetorical, theatrical, and imaginative power to persuasively address the others across differences is thus recognized as an essential prerequisite of intercultural understanding.

My interpretation of cultural and aesthetic creativity as well as of its political implications follows and makes explicit many of the hints and implications with which Nietzsche’s text tempts (versuchen) the reader. It develops potential meanings in Nietzsche’s text. With this, it is in tune with what, I assume, Nietzsche expected from his readers, namely, to bring his thoughts in the context of their lives and cultures and give them life again; to creatively determine and individualize them by developing one of their multiple (virtual) connotations. As a result, my interpretation of the text goes beyond what Nietzsche explicitly says. It is a reconstructive reading that approaches Nietzsche’s text from the perspective of the present. Also, my interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophy in this chapter heavily draws on numerous of his unpublished writings and fragments that range from the early 1870s to the end of his active intellectual life.

Through the argument I make in the present chapter, I oppose interpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy and politics, such as those of Frederick Appel and Bruce Detwiler. Both authors argue that Nietzsche is not an anti-political or a nonpolitical thinker. On the contrary, they both agree that Nietzsche has a more or less articulated conception of politics, one where culture plays an essential role. Such a form of politics is anti-democratic. Detwiler labels it as a form of aristocratic radicalism. He goes as far as to argue that Nietzsche’s view of the Dionysian irrational creator of values, the philosopher, generates a version of political aestheticism, namely, a form of political rule
where the others are used and even sacrificed for the (racial!) breeding of superior human beings and of their culture and values.

It is true that, at times, it is hard, if not utterly impossible, to call Nietzsche a democrat. However, not being a democrat does not automatically make one a proponent of political aestheticism and of mass murder politics. At the same time, the very notion of ‘democrat’ requires some discussion and clarification. It is also true that, as I will argue in the next chapter, from Heidegger’s perspective, that Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power can slip into some forms of political aestheticism.

However, to associate him down rightly with political aestheticism, namely, to a form of politics as aesthetic activity, which is irrational, aggressive, domineering, and immoral is an accusation that requires careful consideration. Such an association takes away the possibility of exploiting for democratic theory many of Nietzsche’s insightful remarks about the political role of imagination and culture in a context where the issue at stake is overcoming nationalism and a form of ‘democracy’ that is associated with it.

Appel’s and Detwiler’s argument share a few common assumptions. First, culture and politics are connected in Nietzsche’s view. I embrace this assumption in the argument I make in this chapter. However, I disagree with Appel’s and Detwiler’s interpretation of culture. For example, both authors emphasize the use by Nietzsche of Zucht and Züchtung as the German words for breeding the philosophers of the future, the free spirits and the “good Europeans.” They also point out that the German word has both biological and cultural connotations. This allows them to toy with the idea that Nietzsche’s conception of education has racial connotations, which, after all explains, in
their view, why the Nazis identified themselves with Nietzsche’s philosophical vocabulary and ideas!

It is true that Nietzsche uses frequently *Zucht* and *Züchtung* in order to talk about the education of the philosophers of the future. However, contrary to what Appel and Detwiler have to say, these are not Nietzsche’s only terms for culture and education. Thus, Appel argues that Nietzsche does not use *Bildung*, another German word for education and culture, because he sees it as being “irretrievably tainted by its association with slave morality,”\(^556\) while he treats another possible word, *Erziehung*, with equal suspicion. This is not entirely true. In many of the unpublished writings from the early 1870s, on which my argument in the present chapter draws from, Nietzsche argues for the education (*Erziehung!* of a people to cultivation (*Bildung*), namely, to higher power and individuation!

Nietzsche also uses *Erziehung* in a positive context in *Beyond Good and Evil* where he argues that the role of true education is to make people stronger and different, to form them to be creators. Both concepts, *Bildung* and *Erziehung* connect Nietzsche’s conception of education and culture to the Enlightenment and not to theories of racial breeding or to Plato’s program of breeding a caste of rulers! In fact, as I will argue later in this chapter, drawing on Nietzsche’s unpublished writings, he even shows concern for the education of the people as a public not as a herd, by forming one’s capacity for action, eloquence, reflection, and independence through a living praxis!

Second, both Appel and Detwiler define the will to power as a will to dominate those who are too weak for anything else, except to obey. Such a definition is based on
the radical separation from each other of the commanding and the obeying drive. This allows the two authors to conclude that Nietzsche argues for a form of society, politics, and culture where one small caste of masters dominates the many, the majority that is only affected and formed by the powerful and the domineering ones. However, such an interpretation is not consistent with Nietzsche’s conception of the will to power or with his ontology, which emphasizes the active, energetic, dynamic, and relational character of the world.

Instead, I will argue in this chapter that the will to power consists of the open and mutually transformative interplay of the commanding and the obeying drive. Those who obey are never passive. They resist the imposition of form through their imagination, which is a form of power. Those who command need measure and moderation. They need gentility and taste. They need to contain and discipline their discharge of sublime energy. The ‘noble’ that Nietzsche associates with the “good Europeans” and the free spirits is the result of such an interplay, which engages both the ‘master’ and the ‘slave’ moralities.’ Such interplay engages both the (masterly, in Appel’s view) architectural capacity to given form and organize and the (slave’s) theatrical/rhetorical capacity to wear many masks and costumes.

Third, both Appel and Detwiler argue that Nietzsche’s conception of aesthetic creativity and of power is irrational and aggressive. It is a form of forgetting and losing oneself. Against Appel’s and Detwiler’s line of reasoning, I argue that for Nietzsche, as for Herder and Vico, reason requires linguistic creativity and imaginative power. As a result, Nietzsche does not drop reason altogether. Instead, he argues for a form of reason
that Appel and Detwiler fail to conceptualize. Nietzsche argues for inventive reason
\( (\text{erfinderischen Vernunft}) \).\^{557} This is a type of reason that connects to passions
\( (\text{Leidenschaften}) \).\^{558} It is a form of reason that grows out of one’s body and one’s
passions. It is a reason that grows out of one’s memory and imagination. It is a form of
reason that never forgets that its concepts are originally images and rhetorical devices.

Thus, in making their argument that Nietzsche’s notion of aesthetic creativity is
irrational and aggressive, Appel and Detwiler omit to mention that for the German
philosopher the origin of language and reason is metaphorical and rhetorical. It is poetic
and aesthetic. However, this form of aesthetic creativity is not monological and
aggressive. It is not irrational. Instead, it is from the beginning oriented toward the others.
It is a way of inventing ways of presenting oneself to the others and of persuading them
that one’s opinions are value and meaning. Imagination, a power of the ‘slave,’ plays an
essential role in this enterprise.

In this sense, I concur with Mark Warren’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s notion of
the will to power. According to Warren, willing is not a unified entity, but a multiplicity
of conditions. Warren interprets Nietzsche’s notion of willing as being first an active
experiential orientation of the agent in a world of relations that continuously affects him.
Also, “every human act of will partakes of an intersubjective network of meanings.”
Thus, in the second place, there is in every act of will an interpretation. Third, “human
power is not only interpretative, but also self-reflective.” It is a feeling of growth.

Warren proposes a Nietzschean concept of rationality, which grows out of the
three features of willing, experiential, interpretative, and self-reflective. According to
such a concept of rationality, agency “is a rational self-interpretation to the degree that its worldly conditions of possibility are met in practice.” The failure of congruence leads to “irrational and ideological self-interpretations and involves a false consciousness of one’s own conditions of possibility as an agent.” It is such a failure that Nietzsche’s “good Europeans” should avoid.

Only thus, Nietzsche opines, they would return to reason (Vernunft), namely, would overcome fatherlandishness and soil addiction. This would be possible only insofar as they can see that one’s truth is only an opinion and a perspective, one way of interpreting and reflecting upon one’s social and cultural world. This suggests that the “good Europeans,” what Detwiler considers to be the Dionysian masters and creators, would need to have a receptive reason, namely, one that is open to other possible ways of interpreting and reflecting on the world. However, such receptivity and capacity to understand the other is a feature of the democratic sensibility of the ‘slave,’ who can travel in all cultural and historical directions! It is not a feature of the self-confident and self-assured, of the aggressive ‘master,’ who knows only to live in his close circle of ‘equals.’

In short, I will argue in this chapter, against Appel and Detwiler that Nietzsche is a critic of a certain form of democracy, namely, one that leads to nationalism, to collective mediocrity and to the miniaturization of man, one that sees equality as a doctrine and as sameness, not as an ongoing achievement and as a striving. I will also argue that he is not a proponent of aristocratic radicalism, at least, not in the sense given to it by Detwiler. According to Detwiler, for Nietzsche there is nothing worth sparing for
the purpose of breeding superior and exceptional irrational creators, who, in a world where God is dead, represent the only source of authority.

Instead, I will argue in this chapter, to a large extent in agreement with Warren, that Nietzsche proposes a model of agency and of ‘identity’ as a task and as an ongoing self-overcoming, self-mastery, and transformation. Nietzsche proposes a form of demanding democratic citizenship. This combines the capacity to live without eternal banisters and overall frameworks and the imaginative power (of the ‘slave’) to explore and sense other worlds, to inhabit and transform the other’s values and symbols, the other’s narratives. Explorative imagination, a cultural skill that the ‘slave’ develops and refines through the first revaluation of the values, plays an essential role in exerting such a form of demanding democratic citizenship.

_The Will to Power as the Interplay of the Commanding and the Obeying Drive_

Warren argues that Nietzsche removes the notions of subject and agent from the realm of metaphysics (of absolute values) into the (practical) realm of human goals. Thus, he sees human subjectivity and agency as being shaped by historical forms of cultural and linguistic practices, but also as constituting itself through an increase of one’s power. As goals, individuality and power express one’s capacity to feel, interpret, imagine, and reflect upon one’s conditions of existence as they are symbolically defined at a certain point in time by one’s language and culture.
Warren also opines that, in this way, Nietzsche boldly affirms culture as a source of agency and creativity, as a source of individuation. A healthy, non-ideological, culture can imaginatively reinvent its horizons of meaning by keeping itself connected to the Dionysian world, which is conceived as a “field of emergent, yet culturally unarticulated, possibilities.” One implication of Warren’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power seems to be that an individual can bring emergent possibilities to expression in a culture and language, thus increasing his power, only insofar as he has imagination and he is able to use it creatively. Thus, my argument in this chapter will further develop Warren’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s conception of subjectivity and agency as a goal, by reconstructing the role that imagination plays in this endeavor.

At the same time, it is my contention that Warren’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power does not sufficiently stress that human subjectivity and culture are the ‘result’ of the open and dynamic interplay of the commanding and the obeying drives, which thus limit and, at the same time, inspire and transform each other. Thus, it makes sense to think that, in a relational world (of forces), power denotes both the capacity to constitute oneself in a gracious and beautiful manner, one that concedes the other’s freedom or ability to resist, and the capacity to transform a situation where one is conditioned and constituted into an aspiration for creative resisting and thus into a source of renewed energy and originality.

Nietzsche defines the will to power as an “insatiable craving to manifest power; or to employ, exercise power, as a creative drive” (Ausübung der Macht, als schöpferische Trieb). The dominant feature of the will to power is to create or to
fabricate (der Wille als Erdichtung).\textsuperscript{563} In this capacity, the will to create (to design, to invent, and to fabricate) is the fundamental power in the (organic) world.\textsuperscript{564} Nietzsche defines such a creative power (schöpferische Kraft) as essentially synthetic, namely, as a binding of differences.\textsuperscript{565}

However, another important feature of the will to power is to be a dynamic and transformative creative ability. This makes it also a will to overcome and a will to surpass, namely, a process. Its ‘aim’ is not preservation, but surpassing. Its ‘aim’ is the possibility for further “active determining” (aktives Bestimmen)\textsuperscript{566} and thus for further expansion of power (Machterweiterung). As a result, the ‘power’ that Nietzsche sees as the moving force of the world is not simply and roughly domination, but the open interplay of the will to impose form and of the will to resist the attempt to command and master. It is the interplay of the commanding and the obeying drive.

Such a meaning of power corresponds to a vision of the world as made out of forces and relations, to a world that transforms incessantly. Nietzsche argues that the world is made out of “active and interpreting forces (Kräfte).”\textsuperscript{567} It is also a world of relations (Relations-Welt),\textsuperscript{568} because the forces that construe (construirt) it restlessly test each other through the “forms of martial arts” (Formen des Kampfspiels) that are obeying (resistance) and commanding.\textsuperscript{569}

In such a world a predicate, a quality is “something that happens” (ein Geschehen), a motion, not something that is (ein Sein);\textsuperscript{570} while ‘purposes,’ ‘aims,’ and ‘meanings’ are “only modes of expression and metamorphoses” of the will to power.\textsuperscript{571} They are only attempts to organize and synthesize from different centers of force a world
that has a “different face when looked at from each different point.” They are attempts to create the world and thus to expand the power of the creators.

Every center of force affects other centers of force and it is, at the same time, affected by them. This makes the will to power a dynamic quantum, a radiation of power-will, and a pathos. On the one hand, the will to power is the capacity to creatively organize, express, and, eventually, transform one (possible) way of ‘unifying’ the world and to affect through (such creation and transformation) the ‘whole’ of being. On the other hand, it is the condition of being affected, constituted, and organized by other creative centers of force.

Reflecting the interlocked nature of the world, where affecting and being affected occur almost simultaneously, in “man creator and creature are united.” Thus, against Appel’s and Detwiler’s line of reasoning, it makes sense to argue that what being ‘man’ means at different moments of time is always the result of the combined action of practices associated with commanding (creator) and obeying/resisting (creature). As a creator, man is a form-giver (Bildner), a constructive destroyer (which is a form of active nihilism), spectator (Zuschauer), and the moment of stillness and rest, the moment of ‘perfect,’ classical beauty, of relaxed muscles; the moment of will-less.

As a creature, man is material, fragment, overflow, clay, nonsense (Unsinn), and chaos. Material is shaped, as well as clay. Chaos needs order. Nonsense requires, by contrast, a meaning. A fragment makes sense only as part of larger whole. While excess is an overstepping that can take one over, that can overwhelm one, and thus, one cannot
control. All these are instances of being (in different ways) affected, conditioned, and organized by other forces.

In brief, as Nietzsche points out, man is a “creature (my italics) that makes shapes and rhythms (ein Formen- und Rhythmen-bildendes Geschöpf),” that “takes pleasure in nothing more than in inventing figures (Erfinden von Gestalten)” and in the “imposition of shapes upon things” (Formen-Aufzwingen).\textsuperscript{576} Man is a creative creature, namely an agent shaped (made) by his own creations, because, as Nietzsche points out, echoing Vico’s theory of truth as made, “we have created the world that concerns man.”\textsuperscript{577}

Similar to Arendt’s conception of action, Nietzsche argues that in a world of relations, man is equally and unavoidably both a doer of great deeds and a sufferer of consequences that he cannot entirely control.

Furthermore, in a world of forces and relations, every being/happening is rather an occasion (event) for transforming given selfsame identities into instantiations of a higher, more encompassing and comprehensive, more complex power, because as a “becoming that knows no satiety, no surfeit, no fatigue,” as transforming itself, the world is “a play of forces and force-waves simultaneously one and ‘many.’”\textsuperscript{578} Transformation adds to the manifoldness of perspectives and valuations, to the plurality of the centers of force. Thus, the fundamental feature of such a world that “only transforms itself” (sondern nur verwandelt)\textsuperscript{579} is ‘creativity,’ as passing on, as begetting, and as bringing forth,\textsuperscript{580} because here the many constantly become one, thus adding to its manifoldness and plurality.
The priority that creativity has in a world or forces and relations takes one to the core of Nietzsche’s conception of individual agency. Alexander Nehamas argues that in a world that is a dynamic web of forces and relations, the expansion of power cannot result in self-preservation because “the more one’s effects spread, the more one necessarily changes, and the less one remains recognizably who one already was.”

Thus, one could say that individual agency achieves its ‘highest’ value and power when it transforms itself, namely, when it passes on the actual form or synthesis that it became, thus bringing forth something new, beyond itself. In this sense, to be oneself is to point, already, beyond and over oneself; it is an increase of power and of horizon that occurs through a transferring into another being (center of force). It is to create “over and beyond yourself” (über dich hinausbauen) and thus, to transform oneself. Nietzsche himself suggests such an interpretation, when he aphoristically declares that “[w]hoever reaches his ideal (Ideal) transcends (my italics) it eo ipso (über dasselbe hinaus).”

A world of centers of force is, consequently, an arena of contest (agon). Elaborating on this idea, Nietzsche considers that life “should be defined as an enduring form of the process of testing force (Prozess der Kraftfeststellungen), where the different combatants grow unequally. In how far obeying also involves resisting (wiederstreben); the obeyer by no means gives up its own power (Eigenmacht). Likewise, in commanding there is a concession that the opponent’s absolute power (Macht) has not been vanquished, incorporated, dissolved.”

The Transformative Interplay of the Heroic and the Ascetic Cultures
Since creativity is the defining feature of a world of forces and relations, the commanding and the obeying drives face a transformative task in the process of testing their force, in their agon. Nietzsche argues that successfully meeting this transformative challenge by individuals and cultures is the sign of a “great health.” Only thus the mixture of different values and ideas that confront each other in modern democracies, their resistances and tensions, would be just an occasion for the creation of new cultural syntheses (dialogizable ideals) and thus for the transformation of the world where the protagonists can (incessantly) renew their contest. Otherwise, the contest would turn into an obstacle to the growth of its protagonists as individuals,\(^{586}\) because it would prove to be either a waste or a destructive accumulation of energy.

The challenge facing the commanding drive is to give form to and thus to contain the energy that seeks to discharge (\textit{auslassen}). It is the challenge facing the hero and heroic cultures. The test facing the obeying drive is to turn the distress and suffering that come from resisting the commanding drive into (creative and outward-oriented) energy (\textit{Kraft}), to turn spiritual profundity and refinement into worldly ingenuity and into political passion. It is the test facing individuals and cultures shaped by the ascetic ideal.

The most difficult task of the hero is to transform the sublime into the beautiful, namely, to make power become gracious, because it descends into the visible, thus being given form. Otherwise, he would exaggerate (\textit{übertreiben}), which is “a symptom of the barbaric.”\(^{587}\) That is why, Nietzsche explains, “no violent will can attain the beautiful by exertion,” but only by standing with “relaxed muscles and unharnessed will.” Only thus
could the hero, the doer, overcome his own deed and, consequently, conquer his own will.

Following this logic, the final self-conquest of the hero would be his ‘kindness,’\textsuperscript{588} because beauty should teach one not exaggeration and conquest, but penitence,\textsuperscript{589} namely, the capacity to overcome, to leave behind, and to transform his highest achievement: himself! This requires discipline. It requires that the hero incorporates in his self-constitution and self-development practices such as “the metrical compulsion of rhyme and rhythm, “spiritual discipline and cultivation,” a “bit of tyranny against nature,”’ as well as respecting “thousandfold laws” that all belong to the ascetic culture. Without them, Nietzsche concludes, no “freedom, subtlety, boldness, and masterly sureness” was ever possible;\textsuperscript{590} in brief, no creation.

Only thus can the hero achieve the “serene cheerfulness’ (\textit{Heiterkeit}) and detachment\textsuperscript{591} that would allow him to concede “that the opponent’s absolute power has not been incorporated (\textit{einverleibt}).” As Nietzsche point out, the serene cheerfulness of the hero would be a sign that one can concede and “even love a good deal of contingency (\textit{Zufall}, accident) and nonsense (\textit{Unsinn}),”\textsuperscript{592} namely, a good deal of resistance to his imposition of form. Moreover, being able of such a concession would be a proof of taste,\textsuperscript{593} as well as a sign of highest moderation (\textit{Mass}, measure),\textsuperscript{594} of the fact that one does not need “extreme articles of faith.”

In the spirit of Kant and Weimar classicism (Goethe and Schiller), by which Nietzsche’s thinking was largely shaped, taste reflects one’s capacity to form oneself as a sociable and gentle being. Taste refers to the capacity to combine free play and rules, thus
being able to relate to the others and to communicate to them one’s pleasure. This proves that, for Nietzsche and, as I argued in Chapter Two, for Kant and Schiller, play is serious. Play has to be able to bring itself to form by limiting and moderating itself and thus making room for the other’s freedom. It is also dialogic, not an irrational and aggressive form of aesthetic creativity.

The most difficult challenge facing the obeying drive is to transform into creative resisting the fact of being affected, of being, as Karsten Harries points out, “cast into a world that we have not chosen.”595 Part of this is to prevent transforming the resistance and recalcitrance to the world into the spirit of revenge. The challenge is to transform such resistance into an incentive for affirming and expressing the power that the commanding drive did not incorporate or dissolve.

Furthermore, the challenge is to transform the negativity of resistance into energy for action, because, as Nietzsche points out, “by doing we forgo” (indem wir tun, lassen wir).596 The task is to transform the “individual’s discontent with himself,”597 with his own vulnerability, and with the world into which one has been cast, into an aspiration to expand (his) power and not into a desire to let oneself be drowned into an “orgy of feeling” and suffering.

The challenge facing the obeying drive is to turn the spiritual energy accumulated by individuals and cultures shaped by the ascetic ideal into worldly ingenuity and into political passion, which is different from frenzy. For Nietzsche, politically passionate are those individuals who engage and express themselves in the public life. To this extent, they share into the performative ethos of the heroic culture. They are those who are rich
and strong, namely, who have a lot to give in a way that does not preserve them, but transforms them through the encounter with the other.

Political passion expresses and develops itself through what Nietzsche calls living praxis. This is the performative and rhetorical act of addressing the other and of trying to persuade him by imaginatively inhabiting his masks and costumes, his narratives and horizons. Frenzy is the poverty of those who can see from their gloomy and egoistic corner only their own advantage and that of their own party. Thus, they are those who are prone to be dominated and regimented by aggressive ideologies, such as nationalism. Frenzy takes over those who did not manage to (heroically) overcome the moral and political language and imagination of the ascetic ideal.

Such individuals see themselves only as sufferers and as passively created and formed. The reason is that the ascetic ideal silences the feeling of life in them. Since the ‘essence’ of what Nietzsche calls ‘life’ is ‘defined’ by the open and dynamic interplay of commanding/affecting and of obeying/being affected, to silence the feeling of life means to cultivate and reproduce only one side of it. Through the passive drowning of the individuals into an “orgy of feeling” the ascetic ideal casts them only as sufferers.

By means of the ‘orgy of feeling’ one inflicts imaginary wounds on oneself, while creating, at the same time, their imaginary palliatives. One creates oneself as a patient. To this extent, the ascetic ideal brings to ‘perfection’ only the fact of being affected and a sufferer, namely, of being passively “shattered, bowled over, crushed, enraptured, transported.” As a result, the energy that resides in all strong affects, instead of being
oriented outwardly is turned against the agent, who thus sees himself only as acted upon and as a creature.

In short, bad conscience and the feeling of guilt originate in the fact of casting oneself exclusively in the role of the sufferer. In Nietzsche’s view this is intermeshed with the genesis of the human soul. The genesis of the human soul requires the exertion of violence and of the form giving power on the ancient animal self. It requires the cruelty of staging one’s suffering, as well as that, which comes with discipline. Given the perennial human appetite for theatricality, the cultural (and inventive) strategy of the ‘slave’ is to stage the cruelty that is exerted upon the animal self as a genuine and beautiful festival where one can see oneself as suffering and as being affected/created, where one sees oneself as a patient. It is to spiritualize cruelty and to move it to the realm of the imaginary.

Eventually, the ascetic ideal and its moral discourse passively stage one as a debtor that cannot ever pay back a debt that grows uncontrollably greater. The crushing impossibility of ever paying one’s debt back, eternalizes man’s condition of patient, since it becomes impossible to transfigure his suffering into the energy for new (‘original’ and outwardly oriented) action. Instead, eternal punishment is invented, which is the arch-instantiation of a situation where one is just affected, where one is passive, because acted upon by other forces. This is bad conscience, the ultimate conclusion of a morality based on the idea of equivalence. Such morality ends by transforming the notion that everything has to be equally paid for into an iron necessity that inhibits further achievement (Leistung) and the occasion for achieving the highest (das Höchste leisten kann).
According to its logic this morality cannot possibly free one for further action and achievement, because the energy accumulated as a result of not being able to pay one’s debt back can be discharged only against oneself, against one’s being and past. Such a situation casts one eternally as a lacking being (as a being of needs and fear). The only way such a being can achieve ‘wholeness,’ ‘completion’ is through (metaphysically) eternalizing (and freezing) its deficiency, its lack; the fact that he is a sufferer. A new beginning (as experimenting, originality, and initiative) thus becomes impossible. Consequently, history and (metaphysical) being come to be seen as the burden of an ineluctable necessity that a lacking and deficient being cannot possibly overcome, that is, turn into a source for the transformation of oneself and of one’s world. Nietzsche calls such a situation the “torment of being.”

When this happens, one’s creative power is subverted and weakened, because ‘being’ overpowers ‘becoming’ and the event-like character of the world. One can counteract the “torment of being” by transforming the energy that comes from dissatisfaction with the world and from recalcitrance to it, from suffering, “into life and life into its highest potency;” namely, into a source of original self-constitution, transformation, and empowerment.

However, such a transformation is possible only insofar as bad conscience is not entirely a dead end. True, Nietzsche declares, bad conscience is an illness, but immediately he twists the meaning, by adding that it is “an illness as a pregnancy is an illness.” This means that it is not an illness at all. Or, it is an illness only to the extent that one cannot transform the suffering of pregnancy, the birth pangs into a new child,
into a new promise. *Active* bad conscience “is the womb of all ideal and imaginative phenomena” (*imaginativer Ereignisse*, literally, imaginative events).\(^603\)

The challenge is to transform such a womb and pregnancy into a dawn, not into a protective cocoon and an escape. It is to transform, as Zarathustra does at the ‘end’ of his journey, disillusionment and dissatisfaction with oneself and with the others into a new *dawn*, namely, into a re-experiencing of the Dionysian world of emergent possibilities. Only to this extent, one’s imagination would capture new emergent possibilities and give them expression in the culture.

In sum, in an interlocked world of forces and relations, the ‘master’ – the cultural development of the commanding drive – has to learn the subtlety of obeying, namely, of conceding and of not willing. Only to this extent will he be able to give form to the sublime discharge of energy. The ‘master’ needs to learn how to overcome his own willing. At the same time, the ‘slave’ – the cultural development of the obeying drive – has to learn a type of commanding and a form-giving activity that is within his reach. Only thus obeying would cease to be passive (to be “violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree”\(^604\) becoming instead creative and imaginative resisting (“recalcitrance – that is the nobility (*die Vornehmheit*) of slaves”).\(^605\)

The task facing the ‘slave’ is to transform the imaginative cocoons that he used for hiding and escaping spontaneous and direct action into *his* own masks and disguises; after all he is “cleverer than any noble race.”\(^606\) Only insofar as the ‘slave’ transforms these security devices into bridges to new adventures and discoveries, into exploring means and antennae for palpating other, different worlds,\(^607\) only insofar as he puts
himself thus at stake, can he practice a form of commanding that is within his reach. Only
thus can he express outwardly, into the world, the distances that he created and grew in
his soul. The key to achieving such a transformation is the way one relates to one’s
‘body.

*The Complexity of Imagination: Its Analogical and Explorative Power*

For Nietzsche the world is a linguistic construct. Language is originally poetic,
not logical, which indicates that concepts originate in metaphors. This makes imagination
a key condition for experiencing oneself as a subject and agent of one’s activities.
Imagination is the faculty where emotions, willing, interpretation, and reflection first take
shape. Due to its essential connection with the body, imagination is the essential faculty
to capture and first give form to the Dionysian world.

Part of experiencing the Dionysian world is to be in tune with what Nietzsche
calls metaphorically, the ‘higher and healthy body;’ ‘the creative body’ for which the
spirit is just an instrument. Such an attunement should reflect the ongoing interplay that
body and spirit have (or should have in ascetic cultures). Nietzsche describes the body as
“a plurality with one sense, a war and peace, a herd and a shepherd.” Attached to the
body there is the self (das Selbst). It is not the “I” or the ego (Ich) that is in control, but
this body-self that seeks with the “eyes of the senses” and “listens with the ears of the
spirit.”
What one learns along “the guiding thread of the body” is that “our life is possible through an interplay of many intelligences that are very unequal in value, and thus only through a constant, thousand-fold obeying and commanding.” Thus (metaphorically) defined the ‘body’ (sometimes cognate to the ‘earth’ in Nietzsche’s narrative) summons the fundamental feature of the event of being human, as represented by the type of practice that the will to power illustrates. This is to act/create at the intersection of being affected and affecting, of being created and creating.

Reflecting such a view of the will to power, Nietzsche argues that in a world of forces and relations one should not take “one’s morality too seriously, but to insist in keeping a modest claim to its opposite.” Only thus, can one still “cast out nets of every morality towards things,” because one’s ‘original’ style proves to be just a mask, another perspective/valuation that increases one’s capacity for ‘objectivity.’ One’s ‘original’ style proves to be just another way of stepping into different territories, and thus of building bridges to them.

The key faculty through which the body reaches the higher levels of consciousness, and at the same time transforms itself into spirit, is imagination. Nietzsche observes that imagination is the faculty that literally puts “life in images,” while “images are primal thought.” The images that are produced by neural activity are, in the most fundamental way, situated at the intersection between being affected and affecting, between being formed and forming. In a fundamental way, images are “emanations of neural activity as viewed on a surface.” Thus, the body affects and touches us through images.
Meaning first emerges through the repetition and imitation of mnemonic images and of rhythms, through memory. However, one’s body is both the limit of one’s creativity, insofar as one is affected, and its source, because, the manifoldness of things, of stimuli, of images, and of rhythms, is mastered only by creating categories. The beginning of this creation is the translation of a nerve stimulus into an image. Then, the image is shaped as sound, and so on, until the conceptual level is reached.

Nietzsche argues that the origin of language is not a logical process, but a way of (imaginatively and artistically) translating ourselves to the world and of trying to persuade the others that, what we think is meaning and value. In Nietzsche’s opinion, “language itself is the result of nothing but rhetorical devices,”617 because it desires to convey only a doxa [opinion], not an epistêmē. One first reaches out, expresses oneself, and addresses the others, in brief, one wants to be recognized by them, through imagination. An essential part of ‘who’ one is resides in creating the form for presenting to the others and to the world the (subjective) way one is affected by nervous stimuli, by one’s own body, because language “does not desire to instruct (belehren), but to convey to others a subjective impulse and its acceptance.”618

Communicating with the others is not only a rational, argumentative enterprise. It is also an enterprise that engages artistic imagination, as well as one’s theatrical capacity to act one’s wisdom and at the same time to transpose oneself into the others’ appearances, into their masks and costumes, which are all of them the ‘slave’s’ devices. Nietzsche justifies such an aspect of persuasion by situating the origin of language and culture, more generally of a horizon of knowledge, in the aesthetic or the artistic drive.
and by arguing that rhetoric, which is “a further development…of the artistic means which are already found in language,” is the essence of language.

The aesthetic drive is the creative force that operates the transformation of a nerve stimulus into image and sound, and, eventually, into concept. The aesthetic drive refers to the capacity of imagination to see similarities between things. On the one hand, without the artistic power to create by simplifying, by “overlooking the individual and the real,” by omitting and failing to hear, no particular horizon of knowledge and valuation would come into being, and thus, no human subjectivity and agency would be possible. In this sense, through its analogical use, imagination generates productive illusions, being the source of the horizon that every living thing needs if it is to grow and become “healthy, strong, and fruitful.”

The “compulsion to arrange a world for ourselves where our existence is made possible” expresses the principle of identity that has behind it the “‘apparent fact’ of things that are the same.” This makes every culture (morality and valuations) the result of a (anthropomorphic and conditioned) simplification operated in the complex and interconnected texture of a web of relations, where “every thought first arrives many-meaninged and floating” and “a multitude of persons seem to participate in all thinking.” To this extent, whatever appears as new is recognized as ‘the same form’ by comparing (vergleichen) it with the old, and thus, to the extent that it is similar to this, this is included in and assimilated to the unity of the ‘form.’

On the other hand, the trouble with the analogical aesthetic drive is that what, initially, imagination saw as being only similar in one respect, metaphors (as analogical
devices) treat as identical (*als gleich behandeln*). Eventually, with concepts coming into being through “the identification of the non-identical (*aus einem Gleichsetzen des Nichtgleichen*): that is, by means of the illusion that there is something identical (*ein Gleiches*), by means of the presupposition of *identities,*” one forgets that ‘walking’ was initially uttered about a diversity of situations; of a man, a dog, an ape walking.

Through the movement of language from *similarity* to *sameness* and, finally, to *identity* an array of nuances, hints, shades, variations, family resemblances, as well as tensions, is expunged and forgotten. Thus, the analogical nature of the aesthetic drive imprints in the human language a bias toward forgetting the non-identical (*Nichtgleichen*) and polyphonic origins of categories and moral valuations. This is a bias toward forgetting that a thing (*Ding*) is just “the sum of its effects, a synthetic binding together through a concept, an image,” and not something in itself. When this happens, one forgets that ‘being’ is just “the projection of breath and life onto all things.” Thus, an anthropocentric idiosyncrasy is consecrated as the measure of things, “as the rule (guiding principle) for determining ‘real’ and ‘unreal.’”

Such amnesia about the aesthetic and non-identical origins of cultural categories also feeds the false belief that there is an “unrhetorical ‘naturalness’ of language to which one could appeal.” When this happens, the limits of one’s cultural (anthropomorphized) world, of one’s “socially constructed consciousness,” are identified with *the* world. Sarah Kofman argues that, eventually, one just keeps reproducing a life that has been already anthropomorphized and one keeps “regaining security by narcissistically assimilating the world to oneself.”
This shows that to follow only the logic of analogy takes one to the dead end of only (securely and uncreatively) reproducing and preserving the same (das Gleich). The latter refers to what one had already anthropomorphized and put in things (the old defined as the familiar, the ‘normal,’ and the ‘true’). At this point, the capacity to simplify ceases to be creative. Instead, it becomes just the reproduction of the same. Thus, an anthropocentric idiosyncrasy is consecrated as the measure of things, “as the rule (guiding principle) for determining ‘real’ and ‘unreal.’”

Moreover, a primeval mythology and vanity of mankind” is translated into a “hard fact,” which congeals into what Nietzsche calls a narrow, Frosch-Perspektive. This is a perspective that refuses other perspectives, because it forgot its anthropomorphic and aesthetic origins. It forgot that it came into being as a human artistic fabrication (Erdichtung), as a metaphor and a creative illusion, not as a ‘truth.’

In short, something conditioned (Bedingtheit) is made absolute.

To this extent, culture, its values, and symbolic networks of meaning become ideological and uncreative, because they forget the polyphonic, aesthetic, and rhetorical origins of language and because, as a result, the aesthetic “drive to invent new metaphors” and concepts is inhibited, as well. Consequently, one succumbs to the vain and naïve human pride to think that one’s idiosyncrasy is universal, because “wanting our human interpretations and values to be universal and perhaps constitutive values is one of the hereditary insanities of human pride, which still has its safest seat in religion.”

As always alert to the intricacies of human psychology, Nietzsche opines that slipping into such a situation is not easy to avoid, since such a fake ‘naturalness’ of
language serves more efficiently the utilitarian purposes of better mastering the world and of “the easy communicability of need,” of survival, security, and expediency. In brief, humans tend to perpetuate the illusion of ‘identity’ and ‘being’ that is induced by the reproductive force of analogical imagination, because it better serves the purposes of satisfying needs and of quelling fears. Thus, in order to live with calm, security, and consistency, man “forgets himself as a subject, indeed as an artistically creative subject.”

When this point is reached, what began as the product of imagination becomes a deception, which language and concepts solidify through building a “regular and rigid new world” as a prison fortress. Analogical imagination, which proved to be initially the very origin of human growth, health, and sanity, becomes counterproductive and dangerous delusion. It becomes noxious, because it starts duping one about the nature of reality.

This is the case because analogical imagination covers the Dionysian world as summoned by the body-self. Nietzsche thinks that the result of such a covering is a progressus in simile, namely, the continual development of man, of language, and culture toward the common (Gemeine, here in the sense of ordinary, average). This is a ‘development’ toward the secure and superficial realm of intermediate cultural forms and the mediocre man. These are not desirable because they lack distance, tension, and resistance. Thus, they are devoid of creative power.
analogical into simply reproductive, the field of emergent, yet culturally unarticulated, possibilities is reduced to what is just familiar (das Bekannte), to what we are used to (wir gewöhnt sind). It is reduced to our everyday (unser Alltag).

One could argue that, at this point, if one wants to redeem the meaning of communication and the creativity of language, the challenge is to see the familiar (our everyday) as a problem (als Problem), namely, as strange (als fremd), as distant (als fern), as ‘outside us’ (ausser uns).\(^{642}\) The question culture faces at this point is “whether there could not be many other ways of creating such an apparent world.”\(^{643}\) Given the pivotal role that imagination plays for Nietzsche in the human psychological makeup, the challenge is to develop a different way of exerting its power. Such a new manner of exerting the imaginative power would be geared, this time, not toward producing similarities and identities, but toward generating what Nietzsche calls an “artistic distance” (künstlerische Ferne).\(^{644}\)

Such a form of imagination,\(^{645}\) which produces an “artistic distance,” is needed “in relation to ourselves” and our culture, because it is explorative and tentative. It is distance-generative, thus preserving our “freedom above things.” To this extent, it makes it possible to look down upon oneself and thus to see further possibilities for becoming and consequently, for expanding one’s power. Explorative imagination makes one aware that one has always more to present to the others and thus the task of persuading them of the meaning and value of such presentation is unfinalized. In brief, the distance-generative and explorative imagination makes it possible to see the unfinalizeable and still becoming nature of our ‘identities,’ of our subjectivity and agency, because we
understand the appearing nature of the actual. Thus, the incentive to create new metaphors and concepts (Begriffsdichtung)\textsuperscript{646} can be regained.

Such a more sophisticated form of imagination is a skill and a power of the ‘slave’- or a power that the ‘slave’ could develop out of his cunning capacity to invent and dissimulate - than of the ‘master.’ One could argue that explorative imagination is not conceivable before the slave revolt in morality, before the invention of an imaginary revenge (imaginäre Rache)\textsuperscript{647} and of an active bad conscience, as the womb of all imaginative events. It is not conceivable before the ‘slave’ invents and widens the distances in his soul. It is not conceivable before the slave starts using imagination as a device for forging alternative worlds and for staging and acting the incentive for such a creation, namely, his suffering and distress.

\textit{The Moral-Aesthetic Virtue of Greatness}

A culture that would be capable of engaging distance-generative and explorative imagination as an antidote to the distortions of its analogical use, would give priority to the aesthetic ‘ought’ over what it ‘is.’ The artistic distance that explorative imagination would open at the heart of ‘is’ and the familiar would make it possible to look down upon oneself and thus to see further possibilities for becoming and consequently, for expanding one’s power.

However, in Nietzsche’s philosophy, the role that the aesthetic ‘ought’ plays in keeping ‘identity,’ ‘subjectivity,’ and ‘agency’ in the process of becoming and
transformation is not at all an expression of the romantic drive to fly into the unconditional. Nietzsche vehemently criticizes the unconditional as it is expressed in the ascetic ideal, in Kant’s thing in itself and in the categorical imperative, or in the Romantic poetic flight from reality.

The ground of such criticism is the key premise that humans are inescapably embodied (conditioned) creatures. Our bodies, our experiences, and our genealogical pedigree ‘make’ us. Individuals are every choice, mistake, excess, failure, and success that happened to them in life (and history). Since everything is interconnected, we are the necessity of being. Thus, Nietzsche’s notion of ‘aesthetic’ cannot be possibly akin to that of the German Romantics.

At the same time, it is true that what redeems one’s life as it happened is the aesthetic ‘ought.’ This redeems the necessary interconnectedness of what it ‘is,’ by creatively adding a new facet to it. However, as interiorized by Nietzsche’s philosophy, such an aesthetic imperative expresses Goethe’s anti-romantic task “to give poetic form to reality,” while “others try to give reality to the poetic.”

The force that gives poetic form to reality is imagination (Einbildungskraft). Imagination makes anew what appears to be the ‘same’ (das Gleich) horizon, the ‘same’ culture, life, history. It has the power to reinvent the common, defined as the shared (gemeinsam), as different, because, “the well-being of the common (Gewöhnlichen, here in the sense of the habitual) lies in its elevation, its augmentation into something rare, its reminting as something uncommon and new.”
Individuals that would be able to engage imagination in such a way would not transform the dissatisfaction (*Umzufriendenheit*) with what it *is* into an escape (into peace and unity) from the tensions of life. They will not transform it into “the need for a faith, a support, backbone, something to fall back on.”\(^{650}\) They will not transform dissatisfaction with what it *is* into an ‘identity need,’ or into a will to truth, namely, into the belief that, opposite to the false world of experience and appearances, there is a ‘true’ and absolute world. Instead, such individuals would make the dissatisfaction with what it *is* into a source of renewed creativity. In brief, they would deal with it in an aesthetic, not in an ascetic, manner.

This means that, instead of escaping into a life in imagination (*Imagination*), which is the eternal form of ‘Redemption,’\(^ {651}\) such individuals would transfigure the suffering that comes with the dissatisfaction with what it *is* into the discipline of heightening themselves and of overcoming their ‘highest’ peak. Their ‘redemption’ would be their power to constantly overcome themselves, their pride and highest achievement, their will. In this sense, their virtues would be parables of elevation (*Erhöhungen Gleichnisse*).

One could argue that, similar to Bakhtin, Nietzsche brings the moral and the aesthetic into a symbiosis! The aesthetic ‘ought’ becomes a moment of practical reason. It becomes the essential element in ‘achieving’ one’s individual excellence and perfection through the overcoming of one’s ‘highest’ peak. Such self-overcoming and the capacity to give exemplarity to one’s achievement becomes an essential moment of practical
reason. Consequently, in Nietzsche’s view, virtue has not only an ethical and an intellectual aspect, but also, and very importantly, it has an aesthetic dimension.

Nietzsche considers greatness (die Grösse der Menschen) to be the central human virtue. Greatness is the virtue of the exceptional and strong creative individual and it refers to one’s spiritual range (Umfänglichkeit) and multiplicity (Vielfältigkeit). In tune with the idea of virtue as a parable of elevation, the principle that moves a great person is that one “does not merely have but also acquires continuously, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up,” because one can overcome one’s ‘highest’ peak, one’s ‘truth’ and willing.

In Nietzsche’s rhetoric, the metaphor for the virtue of greatness is that of an all-coveting self that would like to be “reborn in a hundred beings.” A great human being has “to be able to see (blicken zu können) with many different eyes and consciences, from a height and into every distance, from the depths into every height, from a nook into every expanse (in jede Weite).” This would be the proof of having the great health (die grosse Gesundheit) of a soul “that craves to have experienced the whole range of values and desiderata to date” and of someone that “wants to know from adventures of his own” how “a discoverer and conqueror of the ideals feels, and also an artist, a saint, a legislator, a sage, a scholar, a pious man, a soothsayer.”

That is why the philosopher, the exemplary possessors of greatness, has to be acquainted with many experiences. A great individual “must have been critic and skeptic, dogmatist and historian, and also poet and collector (Dichter und Sammler) and traveler and solver of riddles and moralist and seer and ‘free spirit’ and almost everything in order
to pass the whole range (Umkreis zu durchlaufen) of human values and value feelings.”

Such a broad experiential field is possible only if one, instead of escaping and hiding into a metaphysical ‘beyond,’ into an eternal being or one’s ‘true home,’ through a “life in imagination,”\textsuperscript{655} uses imagination aesthetically, theatrically, and rhetorically.

Nietzsche argues that only an individual with a wide and varied spiritual range can sense and feel, imagine and empathize with the diversity of voices, experiences, and roles that make up the fabric of an interlocked world of forces and relations. Only such an individual can love, because greatness indicates “how much and how many things one could bear and take upon himself, how far one could extend his responsibility;” (wie weit Einer seine Vorantwortlichkeit spannen könnte).\textsuperscript{656} In this sense, responsibility is unconceivable in the absence of explorative imagination, but also of the capacity to empathically feel what it is like (nach empfinden).

At the same time, such (imaginative) responsibility involves strength of the will, hardness and firmness, as well as the courageous capacity of the architect to make plans that encompass the distant future\textsuperscript{657} and long-range decisions,” because, as Nietzsche explains, your “children’s land shall you love: this love shall be your new nobility.”\textsuperscript{658} It also presupposes humanness, because through it one would manage “to experience the history of humanity as a whole as his own history. Such a person would feel and endure “this immense sum of grief of all kinds” with a dawn mood, because he would be “the first of a new nobility.” Thus, he would be able to contain all this grief into his soul and “crowd it into a single feeling.”\textsuperscript{659} He would be powerful and loving; capable to redeem
the past, namely, to recreate it, to elevate it, into a new future. His power would be imaginative and creative. In a word, it would be aesthetic love.

However, Nietzsche points out that one’s spiritual range and multiplicity are only preconditions for the creation of values. That is why greatness denotes one’s “wholeness in manifoldness” (Ganzheit im Vielen). It refers to “being capable of being as manifold as whole, as ample as full” (ebenso vielfach als ganz, ebenso weit also voll).

In sum, greatness combines both the capacity to increase the experiential field of one’s self and culture, their diversity, and the capacity to comprehend and synthesize the ‘unity’ in this diversity. It combines the power to have been guest in many countries, and thus, to be able to wear many masks, and the power to ‘unify’ such diversity into a ‘home,’ while being aware that any form-giving act is just one possible synthesis of what otherwise is, eventually, indeterminate, mixed, and “many-meaninged.”

Nietzsche thinks that through greatness, which is the most important parable of elevation, the point is reached when life becomes “greater, more manifold (vielfacherer) and more comprehensive (umfänglicher), thus living beyond the old morality.” He conveys this idea through the metaphor of the tree that grows “not in one place by everywhere, not in one direction, but equally upward and outward and inward and downward. As much as a tree, the great men are not “free to do only one particular thing (etwas einzeln zu thun), to be only one particular thing” (etwas Einzelnes noch zu sein).

Nietzsche’s notion of greatness is similar to Schiller’s view of freedom. As Schiller’s freedom, greatness requires both multiplicity and variety of experiences and the capacity to bring them under the unity of form, namely, under the unity of one’s
personality. An individual with such a moral character would be free because of his capability to be both self-determining and active (imposing form), as well as receptive (open to a large variety of experiences). Thus, he would combine features of both ‘master’ and ‘slave’ morality.

Moreover, greatness is an aesthetic-moral virtue. It is aesthetic because it requires the capacity to give form to the manifoldness that is one’s soul or one’s culture, and thus to awake, through such an exemplary achievement, the admiration of the others. It is also aesthetic, because, as the capacity to have multiple eyes and ears, of being able to imaginatively enter and be a guest in so many lands, it has the artistic and explorative power to make the familiar look distant and the distant familiar. It is a source of artistic distance.

At the same time, greatness is moral because it forces one to honesty, and thus to the discipline of admitting and creatively surpassing the limits of any particular action or way of being; the honesty of giving up and of constantly acquiring, of growing and transforming oneself, by overcoming one’s ‘highest’ peak and will, one’s ‘truth.’ In this sense, through the imaginative honesty and responsibility that characterizes it, greatness is a way of overcoming the vanity, the pride, and the insanity that are dormant in any individual and culture, in the unavoidable human drive to impose as universal what is just idiosyncratic.

Thus defined, greatness makes possible the art of learning subtle commanding and subtle obeying. Such an art is made possible by the democratic “world of the ‘almost.’” This is a world of nuances and gradations, where commanding and obeying are not
entirely separate. Nietzsche calls “noble” a self-constituted agency, which combines with subtlety, namely, with nuances and at varying degrees, as an exercise into moderation, practices that belong to both commanding and obeying.

Due to its spiritual range, to its manifoldness, and comprehension, a noble or self-constituted agency would not allow distances (between different values and ‘truths’) to become immeasurable (Masslos) and boundless (Umbegrenzt). It would not allow distances to become so “dispersed and remote (entfernt) from each other that there is no bond that embraces (umschlingt) them all (sie alle).” In brief, a noble self-constituted agency would be not only free and open, but also creative.

*The Miniaturization of Man and Its Cultural and Political Solution*

Stefan Elbe argues that Nietzsche sees nationalism as a form of incomplete nihilism. The reason is that, in nationalism, one earthly idol or an ascetic ideal, the nation, replaces God. Individuals, who unreflectively and unimaginatively cling to such earthly idols, engage in incomplete nihilism. Such individuals do not manage to free themselves completely from the ‘identity need,’ namely, the “*demand for certainty*” and the “need for a faith, a support, backbone, something to fall back on,” and from the will to truth, namely, from the belief that, opposite to the false world of experience and appearances, there is a ‘true’ and absolute world. They are not powerful and free enough to escape the spell of abstract notions, such as nation or state.
Nietzsche argues that modern nihilistic culture encourages the idolization “of abstract general concepts such as state, nation, humanity, world process.” This “has the disadvantage that it lightens the burden of the individual and lessens his responsibility.” State bureaucracies and those who are interested in money and material wealth are not interested in or capable of overcoming nihilism and nationalism. As a result, they do not encourage the cultivation of powerful, creative and imaginative, individuals. They do not encourage reflection and inventive reason either or the type of cultural criticism that Nietzsche practices. Thus, they distort what it means to be ‘cultivated.’

‘Cultivation’ comes to be identified with the ability the “culture of luxury” has to “disguise the disease of this undignified haste” and “not to let others notice how wretched and base one is, how predatory in striving, how insatiable in acquiring, how selfish and shameless in enjoying.” Such haste and impatience, such “breathless seizing of the moment” are also encouraged by the journalist who is “the slave of the three M’s, Moment, Majority Opinion, and Modishness.”

State bureaucracy and the financial elites, which represent, in Nietzsche’s view, the values of the “last man,” disguise “things that are not above reproach: state, war, money market, inequality (Ungleichheit) of human beings.” They hide that opportunities are wasted in a time when “the seeds are present for the most marvelous development of humanity (herrlichste Entwicklung des Menschen).” In brief, all these powerful agents, the state, the financial elites, and the journalistic culture keep modern politics at a very low level.
The lack of greatness, nobility, and creativity in modern individuals is also a consequence of the fact that the state and the large (mass) political parties are conducive to centralization and conformity of opinions. Centralization is a consequence of nihilism insofar as it divorces values and political institutions from practice, from the social and historical, from the living, polyphonic and rhetorical, contexts where they originate. Thus, it tends to make individuals weak and fearful, because it encourages their lack of political passion and thus their retreat into the internal realm and into their nook.

Consequently, people develop as a herd-like species; namely, as a type of community (Gemeinschaft) where the order of the day is “you scratch my back and I will cover yours.” This means not only instrumental politics and power. It means primarily a form of politics where people hide behind such a community their lack of creativity and spiritual vitality in presenting themselves to the others, namely, their lack of true power. True power would consist of one’s ability, as a strong individual, to creatively refashion what is publicly shared. Instead, weak and fearful, as they are, such ‘individuals’ end by always coveting faith and “someone who commands, who commands severely – a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience.”

Such badly turned-out individuals can too easily slip into fanaticism; which is their surrogate for a strong and self-commanding will. They also develop a bad form of egoism. As a result, they retreat “into the smallest egoistic region.” From here they understand only how to seek their own advantage or that of their party, or nation-
state! Thus confined to a “gloomy corner,” incapable to inhabit many places and to connect to a communal horizon, they fail to develop and engage their explorative imagination; a consequence of the conformity of opinions.

Conformity of opinions discourages and in the long run makes impossible the exemplary and noble deeds of strong individuals (“powerful, provocative orators – instead of bad preachers”). Instead, it produces “solid mediocrity” and the “miniaturization of man” (Verkleinerung des Menschen), which are both the opposite of greatness. “Solid mediocrity” consists of the cultivation of human beings in one single respect, while all the other aspects are neglected and stultified. The trouble is that individuals thus (de)formed tend to excessively nourish “a single point of view and feeling that henceforth becomes dominant.” The “miniaturization of man” denotes the narrowing of man’s spiritual range and multiplicity, as well as the diminishing of his power to transform manifoldness into wholeness, into a new synthesis. It denotes one’s incapacity to grow, like a tree, “greater, more manifold (vielfacherer) and more comprehensive (umfänglicher).

Those affected by “solid mediocrity” and the “miniaturization of man” are narrow minded people. They are people who know only the language of the opposites (good and evil!), while completely ignoring the (subtle) art of shades and hints, of gradations and nuances, of tensions and diversity, as well as the nobility of moderation and measure that never allows distances to become immeasurable and boundless. These people are most exposed to separatist nationalistic discourses and policies, because the only way they see themselves and their own culture is only as separate from and opposed to the others.
All these aspects describe a cultural, social, and political crisis that can “be solved only at the level of the city, not at that of the state.” Expressing such a commitment, Nietzsche argues for the freedom of the cities to have control over schools and customs and for locally developing (Herstellung) a community of the people (Volksgemeinde) and its representatives (Gefolgschaften, literally, followers!). In brief, Nietzsche calls for the “exercising (Ausübung) of the immediate duties of the citizen on the local level (Gemeinden).” Only thus modern societies would educate strong and creative individuals and a people.

Instead, modern societies are populated by a herd that is controlled and dominated by a remote and centralized state and by mass parties. This is the case because the state, modern political parties, as well as financial elites failed to engage individuals in a sound (Kräftige) and living praxis (Praxis). Such praxis forms people to be persons of action (Handelnder), namely, persons that have eloquence, reflection, long-term thinking, a strong and self-commanding (Selbst-Herrlichkeit) individual will, and responsibility. It forms the people to be a public, not a herd.

The right model for such praxis is not the journalist and the culture of luxury and disguise. It is neither the culture of the scholar. It is philosophy (which, in Nietzsche’s redefinition, is closely connected to both rhetoric and art) and the (moral-aesthetic) culture of greatness. As understood by Nietzsche, the culture of greatness cultivates rhetorical/imaginative and theatrical skills in the citizens through their direct engagement on the public stage, thus increasing their power for self-constitution and self-development. Therefore, it is reasonable for him to hope that this would be more possible
on the local levels of action and decision than in settings where individuals get lost in the quantitative mass of sheer numbers.

It is also reasonable to think that on the local level, where abstractions, the inevitable product of analogical imagination, did not completely take over the political and cultural realms it is easier to preserve the connection with the Dionysian world of emergent possibilities. Thus, it is easier to keep vivid the memory that any abstraction, such as the state, nation, and culture, has rhetorical and imaginative origins. It is easier to keep alive the representation of ‘unity’ as only a temporary binding of forces and as a synthesis that cannot completely pacify tensions and resistances, or reduce the diversity of voices to only one dominant speech. It is also easier to remember that differences are never absolute, but they are already a crossing over to and an anticipation of the other, because of the gradations and the nuances that map the space between them.

However, Nietzsche’s faith in the capacity local political institutions have to develop persons of action and strong and creative individuals (which is the role of culture and cultivation for him) is neither an invitation to parochialism nor a nostalgic longing for some pristine traditions and traditional forms of communal living. On the contrary, it is an invitation to a dynamic, open, and creative interchange between, on the one hand, strong individuals and active local centers of action (eloquent speeches and exemplary deeds) and, on the other hand, a shared public language and culture, with a dynamic and open ‘unity.’ However, this is possible only in a culture where language has not been impoverished and where people still know how to engage their imagination (exploratively) for crossing over to the others and for rhetorically addressing them.
At this point, one could argue that, in Nietzsche’s view, the role of a “bearer of culture (Kulturträger)” is to counteract such destructive tendencies in the political culture by cultivating the right imaginative and rhetorical skills in the individuals. In Nietzsche’s own words, the role of a bearer of culture is to build a culture around Goethe’s transformative value, ‘Stirb und werde!’ (Die and become!), thus allowing a culture to reinvent itself anew. A true bearer of culture (Kulturträger),” namely, a creator of culture such as Goethe, is someone who knows that “we must always begin anew,” thus transforming determinations and limitations, frustrations, and suffering, our everyday, into possibilities to expand one’s imaginative and creative power.

Opposite to a badly turned individual, such as the philistine, a bearer of culture has a “sense of the flaws of culture (Kultur) and of the experimentation done by people like Schiller and Goethe.” Thus, he can be critical and live an experimental life. For the bearer of culture his culture never reached the zenith. He understands that Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing “sought a culture (eine Kultur suchten).” As a result, they are “not a foundation upon which one can rest,” but a ground to develop and bring to higher development.

This shows that the bearer of culture is “acquainted with a type of culture (Kultur) that constantly makes demands.” Consequently, he can be a seeker after culture (Kultur sucher). This would lead him to reject the nationalistic cultivation of what is accepted as German” and strive, instead, toward the “creation of what is German,” because “what is
German needs to be created: it does not yet exist." It is a (cultural) project with an open, dynamic, and relational ‘unity.’

A dynamic ‘unity’ is one that never completely covers tensions and resistances, without, nevertheless, erasing the possible nuances and gradations that could bridge these. A dynamic ‘unity’ is made out of “an insoluble multiplicity (eine unlösbare Vielheit) of ascending and declining processes of life,” with “juxtaposed (durcheinander) and intermixed (übereinander)” layers and forces. It is a ‘unity’ of forces and occasions.

A relational ‘unity’ is one that does not cover its perspectival character, the fact that what keeps it together is always the expression of one possible way of looking at it, besides and beyond which, there are always other eyes and ears. It is “only unity as organisation and connected activity (Zusammenispiel Einheit): not different from the way a human community is a unity: thus the opposite of atomistic anarchy; and thus a formation of rule (Herrschafts-Gebilde) which means ‘one’ but is not one.” At the same time, a dynamic and relational ‘unity’ is also open, since it can never be reduced to one final interpretation or perspective. It is a dynamic and “living unity” (lebendig Eines).

On the one hand, a culture with a dynamic, relational, open, and living ‘unity’ is geared toward development (Ausbildung), namely, toward increasing one’s power to “take possession of oneself, to organize the chaos, to jettison all fear of ‘cultivation’ (Bildung) and be honest.” Such a culture is geared toward “the education (Erziehung) of a people to cultivation (Bildung).” Bildung refers to a “notion of culture that is individual and progressive.” Such a notion originates in the German culture with
Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt. Its purpose is individuation, the cultivation of “individuals’ interest in subjectivity.”\textsuperscript{700} It is higher self-constitution and individuation.

Here education takes place through “good models (gute Vorbilder) and cultivation of noble needs (Bildung edler Bedürfnisse),”\textsuperscript{701} which elevate (erheben) through the admiration for the exemplary (vorbildlich), the rare and the great.\textsuperscript{702} This reflects the fact that the aim of education is exertion not complacency. It is to stimulate one to overcome one’s highest ‘peak.’ As Nietzsche explains, the aim of true education (and exertion of power by teachers, preachers, classes, or princes) is not to transform children (subjects, citizens) into something similar to their parents (or to other forms of authority), into their possessions. Instead, it is to make them better and higher, more powerful. It is to incite them to resistance and rebellion, and, ultimately, to turn them into creators.\textsuperscript{703}

On the other hand, the higher self-development and self-constitution of the individual should be reflected by the Kultur of a society. This is defined as “the general state or level of cultivation of human faculties.”\textsuperscript{704} Kultur is a collective phenomenon and it is mostly related in Nietzsche’s philosophy to the notion of people (das Volk).

However, the German philosopher abhors any herd-like image of das Volk. The reason is that nationalistic politics is possible and successful when a society has a herd-like Volk. Opposite to such a situation that makes nationalism possible, Nietzsche argues that modern society needs a “noble (edlen) concept of the peuple publicum,”\textsuperscript{705} one which can engage in a sound (Kräftige) and living praxis (Praxis), because it is made out of strong and creative individuals, of “free spirits” and “good Europeans.”
By placing moral demands that incite individuals to responsibility, commitments, initiative, and effort, the bearer of culture discourages their complacency and pulls them out of a slavish and barbaric attitude. This is the attitude of someone who cannot expose and express himself. It is the attitude of someone who cannot speak and write, namely, who cannot make visible his inside; someone who’s inside cannot “take on word and color.” In brief, it is the attitude of someone who fails to construct a public appearance (Auftreten) through speaking. It is the attitude of someone who lacks political (rhetorical and theatrical) passion.

By pulling people out of their slavish and barbaric attitude the bearer of culture increases the level of Bildung in a Kultur, which in the long run ennobles the people. Nietzsche argues that a Kultur is “really high when powerful (mächtige) and domineering natures have little influence and create only sects.” This means that the more (exemplary, rare, and great) individuals are in a Kultur (as a result of Bildung), the less people would be there defined as a mass and the less they would develop herd instincts. In such a Kultur people would be less affected, and shaped by the powerful natures into homogenous wholes. Thus, they would be more able to creatively resist the strong wills and to themselves become an active source of diversity, of new sectarian effects (sektirerischen Wirkungen).

At the same time, a bearer of culture sees ‘unity’ in the cultural diversity (Einheit im Verschiedenen) of modern democracies. The ‘unity’ of a culture is constructed through speaking; namely, it is metaphorically and rhetorically constituted. This indicates that the dynamic, relational, and open ‘unity’ of a culture should originate in a
certain way of using imagination. It is the role of a (democratic) bearer of culture to cultivate language and the powers of imagination in ways that enhance one’s capacity to present oneself to the others and to eloquently convey the meaning and value of one’s subjective impulses to people across differences, in a way that keeps the dynamic and relational ‘unity’ of a culture open.

In this sense, a bearer of culture should be someone who has a soul that is “more grand (grösser), more loving, more communal (gemainsamer, here in the sense of ‘more shared’), and living more or less in all places (my italics) rather than in one single gloomy corner.” He should be someone who speaks a language that would preserve differences and distances. Thus, he will not claim that he can persuasively address all. At the same time, he should be someone who can speak with many, because he can reach across differences, thus, guarding that distances do not become opposites. The bearer of culture should speak a language that cultivates and is sensitive to the art of nuances, of degrees, and of the many subtleties of gradation. In Nietzsche’s opinion, such a language is essential in the attempt to reach across differences and to avoid transforming them into opposites.

The cultural ‘unity’ that this language would create through the speaking acts would not be the monotonous, homogenous, comfortable, indolent, and secure repetition and reproduction of our meaning, our value, or our opinion, which is the product of centralization and conformity of opinions, but a ‘unity’ that transforms itself into a new meaning, value, or opinion when it touches the individual soul (thus generating a higher Kultur). In return, through its capacity to change the common into new meaning, the
individual soul would increase its greatness (spiritual vitality), its manifoldness and comprehensiveness, thus avoiding the solid mediocrity and the miniaturization of man.

Thus, the individual soul would “appropriate many individuals as so many additional pairs of eyes and hands,” which would increase its greatness. As a result, plurality would not become idiosyncratic specialization. This occurs only when individuals lack political passion and are incapable of publicly appearing and addressing the others, when they hide in their unimaginative, selfish gloomy corner or in the nook of the expert, thus allowing frenzy, the substitute for a strong self-commanding will, to take over their minds and souls.

Such a translation of higher Bildung into higher Kultur and vice versa requires both the explorative and the analogical power of imagination. On the one hand, a bearer of culture would be able to experiment with himself. Thus, he would be able to perform many roles, thus engaging the democratic multiplicity of masks, roles, and costumes as antennae for exploring in many directions. This would make him capable to persuasively speak with many different audiences.

However, Nietzsche argues, if one goes too much in this direction, then the danger is that one really becomes an actor. As a result, one is only a dispersed collection of appearances without the strength to build a ‘unity,’ to give form. Thus, on the other hand, a bearer of culture would have the architectural capacity to build a future. This would reflect his capacity to see similarities between differences, thus restoring the ‘unity,’ which every living thing needs if it is to grow and become “healthy, strong, and fruitful.” It reflects his capacity to analogically project a ‘home.’
I will argue in what follows that Zarathustra acts as a democratic bearer of culture and a wanderer, who aims to cultivate such a new attitude and new ethos in him, as well as, in the democratic citizens of the town of the Motley Cow. In this enterprise, one burden of a democratic bearer of culture is to redirect the use of imagination. It is to transform imagination from an ascetic device for creating the soul’s labyrinths and depths, its transcendent escapes, into a worldly and rhetorical device; that is, into a device through which one can address the others in the democratic marketplace, in the attempt to convey to them the value and meaning of one’s subjective impulses.

**Zarathustra: A Democratic Bearer of Culture**

The town of Motley Cow, where Zarathustra descends from his alpine solitude, is a place of “compressed souls” and “narrow chests,” of shopkeepers and “last men,” who love their neighbor, maybe, but not the farthest and the future. These people have a monotonous imagination, one that failed to exploratively and experimentally open up artistic distances. It failed to wander and explore new territories, and thus to expand the spiritual range and multiplicity of their souls.

At the same time, Motley Cow is a town where there is potential for developing such a power of imagination, because here people are avid for theatrical performances. They are also passionately dedicated to the democratic practice of talking, although they are still deficient in their capacity for listening. It is, after all, from here that Zarathustra takes his disciples, those who want to follow and listen to him. Motley Cow is also a
town of great diversity and historical sensibility, where all the characters of the past are
preserved, where all customs and faiths speak through the gestures of its inhabitants. It is
a town gifted with democratic sensibility, since it can empathize and feel with so many
costumes, “I mean those of moralities, articles of faith, tastes in the arts, and religions.”714

Such a historical sensibility gives one “secret access in all directions, as no noble
age ever did; above all, access to the labyrinths of unfinished cultures and to every semi-
barbarism that ever existed on earth.”715 It gives one insight into the ‘nature’ of what
Nietzsche calls semi-barbaric and unfinished (unvollendeten, more like unperfected)
cultures. Such cultures are still a goal, a going out (Ausgang) and a going up (Aufgang).
They are still a task, something still to be created. They are cultures that still have
unexhausted and unexpressed possibilities. Similar to the democratic marketplace, the
central action site of the Motley Cow, such cultures are cauldrons where new potential
creations and syntheses of taste716 still foment. Thus, they introduce the moderns to a type
of ‘unity’ that the modern nation-state failed to educate in a culture and in its citizens.

In short, the democratic town of Motley Cow possesses the means for its cultural
metamorphosis from within. Such means refer to people’s appetite for speeches, to their
democratic and historical sensibility, to their propensity for speaking as well as to their
proneness for being educated to listen. However, in the absence of a true (democratic)
bearer of culture, all these capacities are misdirected, miscultivated, and misused. This
explains why Motley Cow is a town where noisy actors (and journalists!) practice false
persuasion, namely, one that produces absolute frenzy and a selfish and greedy
“breathless seizing of the moment” in the minds and the souls of the people, instead of
educating them into cultivation, namely, into a sound and living praxis that would allow them to become higher, imaginative and creative, individuals and not a herd.

The town is the prey of those who misuse power in the service of nationalism and of aggressive nationalistic politics. In Nietzsche’s view, they are those who use power for their own class and social group, thus abandoning the people to the condition of being a herd. As a result, they do not aim at transforming the people (das Volk) into a source (or a well, as Nietzsche metaphorically likes to say) of stronger, higher, and healthier, namely, more imaginative and creative individuals.

Nietzsche thinks that such a negligence to educate the people for cultivation and higher imaginative and creative power is a political failure, because, opposite to the educated layers of society and to the priests, the lower, unlearned, and the working classes are able to understand beyond their own social group. He argues that the key to their wisdom is a condition and a feeling that belong to the psychological makeup of the ‘slave’ and to his way of experiencing the world: distress. When the power for direct action is absent, distress is the source of one’s imaginative escapes.

Opposite to complacency, which is the attitude of those who are affected by collective mediocrity and the miniaturization of man, distress can expand one’s spiritual (and imaginative) horizon, thus feeding the explorative capacity to understand the different, the strange, and the alien. However, the burden of a (democratic) bearer of culture, such as Zarathustra, is to reorient such an expansion of the emotional and imaginative horizon from the transcendent realm of the ascetic ideal (and nationalism) to the realm of a post-nihilistic and post-national political practice and ‘identity.’
The challenge of a democratic bearer of culture is to situate such an expansion of the imaginative horizon in the realm of the sound and living praxis, where one has to construct a public appearance through the rhetorical engagement of language, in a way that keeps one’s ‘identity’ and the ‘unity’ of one’s Kultur, dynamic and relational, open and unfinalizeable. It is to illuminate and transfigure the town, which symbolizes democracy, from within. It is to redeem it, through a change from within its mobile, plural, and vital heart, which is the market place. The market place is the most probable site for engaging in a sound and living praxis, for which eloquence and theatricality are essential.

Nietzsche announces such a possibility by changing the market place, right at the beginning of Zarathustra’s journey, after the death of the tight-rope walker, into a sea. The event announces the possibility of profound transformation, since the sea is the pregnancy of chaos, the promise of new forms and syntheses, of new metamorphoses and expansions of power. The transformation of the market place into a sea also announces the open nature of Zarathustra’s cultural self-constitution and self-development, who thus becomes a seafarer, one who is “spiritually at sea” and, thus, “a voyager in search of himself.”

Zarathustra’s open process of cultural self-constitution and self-development takes place symbolically between the mountain and the valleys, where the town of the Motley Cow is situated. His journey embodies the ethos and the attitude toward existence that should characterize the members of a post-nihilist and post-national culture. The mountain is the place of Zarathustra’s (situated) solitude. It is also the site where his
transformation from a sufferer (someone shaped by the acetic culture) into a healthy and powerful, creative and imaginative individual begins. This is where Zarathustra carries his ashes (his idols, previous valuations and conceptions of man, in brief, his past, his spirit, his ideals), in order to invent himself anew (brighter and lighter). The town of the Motley Cow symbolizes the disordered and hasted manifoldness of cultural roles and practices that inhabit, according to Nietzsche, the (political) culture of modern democracy. Zarathustra’s wisdom is tested in the market place of the Motley Cow.

There are two practices that ‘constitute’ Zarathustra’s voyage between the solitude of the mountain and the noisy and hasty manifoldness of the market place. One is his descending to the depths, his going under (Untergang, sinking, ruin, destruction) and down from the heights of the mountain. The other practice is that of “mountain climbing” and of wandering.

Through going under and down, Zarathustra acts as a Versucher. He acts as somebody who tries something uncertain; who engages in an experiment. He tests his wisdom, thus recognizing its conjectural character. However, such a testing of wisdom requires that he plunges his speeches down into the valleys; namely, it requires that he would be able to address the others, to speak with them, to convey to them the meaning and value of his solitude and idiosyncrasy. In brief, Zarathustra needs to perform (his wisdom) by addressing the people, his disciples, the wise men, the crippled, the great men; the whole array of roles and costumes that make up the multitude of the market place.
This performance requires creativity and imagination. It requires Zarathustra to transpose himself; namely, that he crosses over (sie gehen hinüber)\textsuperscript{724} to the other. It requires that he participates in the other’s symbolic universe and thus identifies himself with all the roles and costumes that populate the human world, because if he “wants to move the crowd, then he must become the actor of himself.”\textsuperscript{725} In this sense Zarathustra’s wild wisdom becomes pregnant in the mountains.\textsuperscript{726} This reflects the condition of the (wise) creator, who is both alone and (already) with (and anticipating) the other, as a pregnant woman is. The wise creator is both at a distance from and already engaged with the other. He is the newly born child, the mother who gives birth, and “the pangs of the birth-giver.”\textsuperscript{727} Thus, he can make suffering fertile, as a mother does, namely, by creating out of it the innocence, the forgetting, the new beginning and game, the self-propelled wheel that the child is.\textsuperscript{728}

This suggests that the moments of experimentation and of testing conjectures are not moments of preservation, but of transposition and, eventually, of transformation, because being a \textit{Versucher} means being ready to “retract one’s presuppositions and to rethink one’s assumptions,”\textsuperscript{729} and thus, to change not only one’s thinking, but one’s whole way of life. As Kofman points out, the moments of transposition and metamorphosis are achieved through the metaphorical use of language. It is through addressing the others metaphorically that Zarathustra changes himself, thus inviting a transformation in them, as well. In brief, one cannot be a \textit{Versucher} and someone who lives an experimental life, without being, at the same time, an imaginative creator.
Such a twofold transformation, of the wise man and of his audience, is connected to the rhetorical skills of speaking and of listening. Zarathustra needs to learn to speak with his audiences, namely, he needs to learn how to put his solitary wisdom into speeches, if he wants to eloquently convey to the others his message. His audiences need to learn to listen to him, in an active way. This means in a way that ennobles them, namely, it transforms them from corpses, jesters, believers, or apostates {all of them symbols of interlocutors that lack self-mastery (Selbst-Herrlichkeit), thus, being prone to become a herd and fall prey to nationalism and other forms of fanaticism} into his companions and equals, into potentially higher individuals, into creators.

Since the skills of speaking and listening originate in the senses, in the capacity senses have to speak to each other\textsuperscript{730} and since “good rhetoric must take the body as a guiding thread,”\textsuperscript{731} speaking with the others and eloquently conveying to them the meaning and value of one’s subjective impulse, require the help of artistic imagination. Nietzsche thinks that artistic imagination opens up the common place or the topic, which alone makes possible the ulterior act of eloquent conversing. In short, art is the beginning and the basis of persuasion.\textsuperscript{732}

Persuasion also has a strong theatrical dimension, since one cannot expect to be successful in such an undertaking, if he cannot act his wisdom and, at the same time, perform the roles of the others and wear their costumes and masks. Moreover, acting one’s wisdom through the wearing of the others’ costumes and masks changes both these and the ‘identity’ of the performer. Thus, in line with the requirements of rhetorical tradition, if persuasion is to be successful it has to move, dislocate, and transform both
the speaker and the listener. If it wants to be successful, persuasion needs to be mutually engaging and participatory. The result is not the expression of an inner, true or authentic self or tradition, but an increase and diversification of (the forms of) sociability,\textsuperscript{733} of the common places from where common thinking and acting can originate. The result is a soul that is more comprehensive, more loving, ‘more shared,’ and living more or less in all places.

One could argue that, as conceived by Nietzsche, the rhetorical skills of speaking and listening, which Zarathustra and, respectively, his audience need to learn, have a profound democratic potential. To begin with, they can be learned only amidst the metamorphic plurality of roles and costumes that characterizes the market place, only among its “tremendous manifoldness of practice, art, and mask,” which makes prejudice absent.\textsuperscript{734} Only this “plurality of norms” educates the “free spiriting” (\textit{Freigeisterei}) and “many-spiriting” (\textit{Vielgeisterei}) of man, thus reminding one that “man alone among all the animals has no eternal horizons and perspectives” and that one god is not “a denial of another god, nor blasphemy against him.”\textsuperscript{735} In brief, speaking and listening can be learned only when one has the opportunity to learn and practice openness toward the others, as well as an experimental manner of presenting opinions.

At the same time, speaking and learning can be learned only to the extent that one is capable of increasing the manifoldness of “practice, art, and mask” through the explorative moments of imagination. As moments of crossing over and of transposition, these are facilitated by the chaos of the market place. ‘Chaos’ describes for Nietzsche a profoundly democratic situation where boundaries have been crossed, where mixtures
and hybrids came into being. It describes the “democratic mingling of classes and races.” As a result, “modern men are determined (bestimmt), thanks to the complicated mechanics of our ‘starry sky,’ by different moralities (verschiedene Moralen); our actions shine alternately in different colors, they are rarely univocal – and there are cases enough in which we perform actions of many colors.”

However, such a situation undermines secure and clearly demarcated situations, locating one instead in-between one’s and the other’s individuality. To this extent ‘chaos’ describes a situation of pregnancy, one of Nietzsche’s most favorite metaphors, and of gestation. It is here that creativity and love originate. In this sense, Nietzsche argues that the ‘plurality of norms’ educates “the strength (die Kraft) to create for ourselves our own new eyes – and ever again new eyes that are even more our own.” The pregnant and creative democratic ‘chaos’ is an invitation to create our own ideal and a preparation for new cultural syntheses. It incites to (higher) individuation and to the renewal of common horizons.

The ‘result’ of transposing oneself into such a creative chaos should be to (ceaselessly) rebuilt one’s self and culture; an issue of honesty for Nietzsche. Since, in the end, one experiences only oneself, because what finally comes ‘home’ are one’s journeys into strange lands and one’s scattered fragments “among all things and accidents,” the task is to recreate and rebuild oneself; to reinvent oneself as an individual with a higher power. As a result, a practice such as listening can increase and qualitatively improve the plurality of the market place only if it functions as an
individualizing and educating practice, as a renewed occasion for the self-constitution and self-development of people that are both receptive and creative.\textsuperscript{741}

However, such a task should be achieved without annulling the dynamism and openness of one’s self and culture (\textit{Kultur}). That is why the experiences of “mountain climbing” and wandering symbolize such a remaking of oneself through the two (active, process-like) practices of striving and aspiring. The two practices are an exercise of learning how to creatively transcend one’s ‘highest’ achievement, namely, how to build oneself, without paralyzing one’s creative will; in brief, without leaving the productive insecurity and instability of the sea/market place. For this one must also learn that the ‘ultimate’ peak consists of looking down upon oneself and even upon one’s stars.\textsuperscript{742}

The ‘ultimate’ peak, one’s ‘highest’ achievement, should be just an ongoing exercise to keep one’s range of vision and hearing endlessly open; to be able to constantly increase one’s capacity to see, speak, and hear. Thus, the ‘end’ of Zarathustra’s journey can be only a \textit{perfecting} of several cultural skills, which a “free spirit” or a “good European” should possess. The “elevation of man” consists in such a perfecting of cultural and imaginative skills, which is also an increase of power. Only thus “the elevation of man” “brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations,” while “every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives” and it “means believing in new horizons.”\textsuperscript{743}

First, Zarathustra \textit{increases the range} of his seeing and listening, and thus he experiences a fuller world. It is an increase in ‘objectivity.’ Second, he is \textit{able to form} new perspectives and horizons, because one is not just a spectator and listener, but also
the poet “who keeps creating this life.” It is an increase in creativity. Third, he *multiplies*, as a good actor, *the roles* he can play. He extends the repertoire of roles/masks, of ways of crossing over to the other, of carrying meaning over to him, of partaking in the other. In short, the ‘end’ of the journey is an increase and a heightening of one’s greatness.

Since life “overflows any interpretation,” there cannot be any final interpretation and answer to the question about one’s ‘identity.’ The ‘highest ‘unity’ one can hope for is only a more comprehensive capacity to incorporate the manifold costumes, images, forms of appearance that life keeps generating. A self with such an open ‘unity’ is not afraid to grow, because it can transform chaos into a higher and more comprehensive power. This resides in the capacity to master (increased) manifoldness (chaos), by creating new forms and syntheses that avoid becoming ideological mastery. The source of such a higher power resides in keeping oneself open to the fact that every attempt to ‘unify’ belongs, in the end, to the market place and thus, it engages one’s power for honest creativity, namely, for change and transformation, as Zarathustra does, every time, throughout his journey.

The source of such an imaginative and creative power, through which one transforms oneself, resides in the capacity to be a wanderer. This is someone who can practice explorative imagination, as an antidote to the potentially insane derailment of its analogical use. Such a character, also called by Nietzsche a ‘free spirit’ (or a “good European”), can look at his culture and time (the familiar) from a distance and from outside, as an emigrant (*Auswanderer*) and a foreigner. He can see himself as homeless,
as well as enjoying the advantages and “the full benefit of the open air and the
magnificent abundance of light” that come with such exile. However, in being
homeless he manages to be always, already, at ‘home.’

On the one hand, the wanderer has no land where to be at ‘home.’ Metaphorically
speaking, he (imaginatively) dissolves the land of his culture into a sea. This means that
the familiar becomes a sea to be explored, to look for the “untried, the undiscovered.”
It becomes a problem, something strange and distant. It becomes something still to be
reached and found; a task and a goal, which, the wanderer, capable of staging and
watching himself as a hero engaged in this adventure, attempts to reach. It becomes a
site of potential transformations and metamorphoses. On the other hand, Nietzsche points
out that the wanderer or the free spirit would not be able to travel if he would not be able
to already fancy (stelle) himself at every point as he were at ‘home.’ He would not be
able to travel if he would not represent his journey as something already past and whole,
as completed, as being.

In building his ‘identity,’ the wanderer would alternate two imaginative practices.
First, he would be able to exploratively dissolve the familiar into the distant. Second, he
would be able to analogically see the distant as one more way of being at ‘home.’ In
Nietzsche’s words, he would be able to practice in his (cultural) creations, in the way he
shapes his individuality and agency, both the desire for being, for a ‘home,’ for sheltering
and security, and the desire for destruction, for change, for becoming, for the uncanny
and the risky. He should be able, as Zarathustra, to build a house for himself “right into
the sea.”
In sum, the sea, the key and recurrent metaphor of Zarathustra’s journey between the solitary mountains and the chaotic, noisy, and plural marketplace, symbolizes a culture where the back and forth movement between the (pregnant) chaos of plurality and the rigor and restraint of form is a source of higher power. It symbolizes a culture that cultivates both the theatrical capacity (of explorative imagination) to see with many eyes and hear with many ears, to wear many masks and costumes, and the architectural capacity (of analogical imagination) to turn the chaos of many masks and costumes into creativity and love, into a new, future shared horizon and ‘home.’

Such a shared cultural horizon and ‘home’ would not be homogenous for two reasons. One reason is that it would come into being as the result of the open interplay of analogical and explorative imagination. The other reason is that such a horizon would never be final or absolute, since, in the logic of Nietzsche’s conception of power, the ‘peak’ is only a transcending and transformation of oneself. It is the higher self-development of the individuals, namely, the increase of their imaginative and creative power. In this sense, the ‘ultimate’ test for the higher creative power of the individual, which is the ‘ultimate’ test for a democratic bearer of culture too, is to renew the common cultural horizons of a society.

Thus, a culture that reaches its ‘peak’ in such a dynamic and transformative way would continue to enrich itself, namely, to enlarge its range and the multiplicity of values and ideas that exists within its confines, thus never allowing the dangerous gap between the familiar and the foreign/distant to become that between ‘normal’ and ‘exotic’ or between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal.’ At the same time, such a culture would still be capable
to produce new syntheses and forms, thus preventing the transformation of differences, antagonisms, and antitheses into extremes that cannot be bridged anymore. This would happen because such a culture would cultivate in its members a strong sense for the nuance and shades, for all the family resemblances that the analogical power of imagination and the fake naturalness of language that serves so well one’s calm and security tends to forget.

‘Beyond Good and Evil:’ The Experiment of the “Good Europeans”

Zarathustra provides an example of “good European” insofar as he “responds to the experience of meaninglessness in European culture by pursuing a strategy of complete rather than incomplete nihilism.” Complete nihilism accepts the implications of the advent of European nihilism and does not try to escape them. Elbe argues that the goal of the “good Europeans” is to cultivate in themselves a new disposition toward existence. As an expression of this they would be “willing to accept the ambiguous and diverse aspects of existence” without escaping into the realm of ascetic ideals and earthly idols. This will be their great spiritual vitality, which would allow them “to achieve the novel and harder task of leading an experimental life without determining the overall truth of existence.”

Elbe also argues that, because of his focus not on institutions or abstract ideals, but on individuals and persons, Nietzsche would reject the definition of the political project of Europe in terms of an overarching (Christian) idea, ‘unity’ or ‘identity.’
Instead, Nietzsche would promote “Europeanization from below.” This refers to the fact that Nietzsche would recommend, as a way to achieve the political project of Europe or other post-national political projects, the cultivation of a new breed of individuals, ones who, as in Warren’s argument, would take themselves, their culture, and their political institutions as a task and as a goal, not as something given. Zarathustra provides a model for how such individuals should develop their ‘identity’ and for how they should ‘conceive the ‘unity’ of their culture. He also provides an example of overcoming the temptation of self-incurred guardianship, namely, the temptation of guiding the others, instead of inspiring them and of anticipating their own freedom. In this sense, Zarathustra is an author-inspirer, a notion I will develop in the last chapter, drawing on Arendt’s philosophy.

Through his argument for “Europeanization from below” Elbe democratizes Nietzsche’s conception of individuality and power as a goal and a project. His argument is that, if the political project of the European Union wants to be successful, namely, to overcome nihilism and nationalism, then a new breed of (democratic) citizens needs to be cultivated. Thus Nietzsche’s “free spirits” and “good Europeans” do not represent a new aristocracy, even less a new ‘race’ of masters. Instead, they represent a demanding conception of democratic citizenship, which requires philosophical, but also creative, and imaginative skills. Only citizens thus educated would make possible the construction of post-national political institutions.

This would also be possible because the cultural exercise of becoming a “good European” takes one ‘beyond good and evil,’ namely, beyond a perspective that has no
grasp of nuances and hints, of shades and tensions. To this extent it reflects the attitude and the ethos toward existence (one’s self and culture) that Nietzsche calls ‘noble.’ The ‘noble’ has both spiritual depth, because it has the slave’s imaginative ability to hide and dissimulate, and good (classical) taste, because it has the capacity to give form to the dangerous violence of the sublime, to make it visible as the beautiful. Whoever engages in such a practice would be able to handle both the (affirming) commanding capacity to form and the (negating) obeying capacity to resist and revolt, to imagine oneself somewhere else.

Tracy Strong and Douglas Burnham argue that Nietzsche does not desire or think that a return to the heroic and master morality of raw violence and discharge (auslassen) of energy is possible. Nietzsche himself clearly points out, that, we, the ‘free spirits’ and ‘wanderers,’ the “good Europeans” “‘conserve’ nothing; neither do we want to return to any past periods.”759 It is uncreative and even naïve to think that this is possible. It is sterile melancholy. The aim is not to escape from modernity, but to engage modern (and democratic) features in a creative and inventive manner, in view of a post-nihilistic and post-national(istic) future.

As a result, the noble way of life that Nietzsche has in mind is a modern and, most probably, a democratic creation. This is the case for two reasons. On the one hand, the refinement and the good taste that Nietzsche associates with the noble, as well as the capacity to see the world as complex and intertwined is the result of cultural development; it is a late, modern and democratic cultural phenomenon. On the other hand, the noble cannot be conceived in the absence of the cultural practices that belong to
the slave, such as his tremendous capacity to dissimulate and imagine himself somewhere else, but also to stage himself and to enact his own situation (distress, suffering).

I define the ‘noble’ as the capacity to connect content (spiritual depth and complexity) and form (spontaneous action and appearance), inside and outside in a living manner, namely in a manner where the inside is strong and ordered enough to have an “external effect and give itself a form” (um nach aussen zu wirken und sich eine Form zu geben) and a public appearance. Meeting this requirement is a challenge for both the commanding and the obeying drives, for both the ‘master’ and the ‘slave.’ The ‘master’ needs to discipline the sublime energies and thus form them, if he wants to have any external effect at all. The same applies to the ‘slave,’ who needs to transform the complexity of his soul (its depth) into the energy for rhetorically designing/making and acting his public appearances (masks, roles, and cloaks, as Nietzsche calls them).

The ‘slave’ needs to transform the complexity of his soul into a guide for understanding the profundity (multiplicity) of the world. For this, he needs to act himself out, namely to engage the masks (that were created initially as hiding devices, as ways to probe the depth of one’s soul) as both distancing mechanisms and as tools of investigation, if he wants to have any external effects whatsoever. From such a perspective, the inside and the outside are not strictly separated, because the mask, which hides one, could also be a “mode of relation,” a way of appearing, of forming one’s external presence.

I will argue in the reminder of this chapter that the “good Europeans” should be more than just open, free, and capable of living an experimental life, as Elbe describes
them. They should constitute their own subjectivity and agency through the nuanced and
gradual, noble, interpenetration of the commanding and the obeying drives, of the
‘master’s’ and the ‘slave’s’ ways of experiencing the self and the world. They should
constitute their own subjectivity and agency through creative and imaginative self-
constitution. Such an interpretation would be consistent with Nietzsche’s concern that
cultural distances should not become oppositions and with his conception of the role that
imagination and the aesthetic moral virtue of greatness can play in creating new cultural
syntheses, namely, new bindings of differences. In brief, it would be consistent with a
certain understanding of ‘unity’ as open, dynamic, and relational.

In Nietzsche’s vision, the “good Europeans” would be “born Midlanders,”
because they would be “too comprehensive (umfänglich) to find satisfaction in any
fatherlandishness and know how to love the south in the north and the north in the south.
(my italics)”762 This would be possible because, capable of inhabiting, not through
descent, but through faith, both cultural spaces, south and north, a “good European”
would have (creative) distance and perspective on each of them. Thus, Nietzsche
concludes, a “good European” would mark a return to reason (Vernunft), namely, an
overcoming of fatherlandishness and soil addiction.763

This would be the result of developing a distance/perspective on both the south’s
capacity to know the sea, the adventure, and the Orient and on the north’s capacity to
know lawfulness and obedience, the capacity to posit oneself as equal and to subordinate
to law. This distance would give the “good European” the power to love the south in the
north and the north in the south. Thus, he would be able to change and transform each of
them from inside. In brief, he would engage himself in the type of cultural practices that combine both the commanding and the obeying drives. Thus, in a very subtle and allusive manner, while, at first sight, he (monochromatically) describes the south as aristocratic, masterly, and commanding and the north as slavish and obeying, in reality, Nietzsche infiltrates in the description of the masterly practice of the south some of the slavish features of the north and vice versa. The dislocation and the transformation from the inside of the modern democratic culture are thus initiated.

On the one hand, the people of the south are conquerors. They are deeply involved in spontaneously and violently fitting every city and sea into their plan and making everything their possession. In brief, they build the world through direct and very individualized action. At the same time, the masterly people of the south measure “everything old and established with envious eyes” (envy being a value of the ‘slave’). With the “cunning of his imagination” a member of the south establishes and refashions his own homeland anew. Thus, he sees it differently, as through a sort of dissimulation, of seeing it ‘as if.’ Thus, his masterly attitude toward the world and toward other human beings displays the slave’s profound cunning of spirit, a type of creative power that engages imagination in an explorative manner.

On the other hand, in the cities of the people of the north one can see the slavish delight in lawfulness and obedience. At the same time, the same people display, through their attitude and actions, masterly features. These refer to the capacity, deep down in the souls of those who built the cities of the north, to posit oneself (Sich-Gleichsetzen, Sich-Einordnen) as equal. In brief, the heroic and conquering, the commanding, attitude of the
southerner displays the (envious) cunning spirituality of the slave (to imagine oneself somewhere else and thus, in rebelling against one’s neighbor, to imaginatively explore and possess other lands), while the obeying attitude of the northerner shows the masterly power to posit and order oneself as equal and subordinate. With this the northerner proves to have the power to command oneself to equality.

Consequently, a “good European” will be able to explore with his imagination other lands and thus, refashion his homeland, because he is capable of seeing it with many eyes. It is in this sense that, as Nietzsche emphatically declares, he would rebel (an activity of the slave, after all) against his neighbor. The “good European” would thus prove able to cultivate the aesthetic-moral virtue of greatness in his soul.

At the same time, a “good European” will be able to conquer equality. For him equality would not be a doctrine, but something conquered, and achieved; something for which one needs to prove one’s worth. It would be “agonistic equality,” namely, the “equality of the capacity to act,” which relies on agon and public confrontation, not on sameness (Gleicheit). It would be an equality that relies on one’s capacity to construct a public appearance as an exemplary individuality, thus inciting the other’s admiration and respect.

In sum, the “good Europeans” would be able to incorporate the creative tension of the open and dynamic interplay of the commanding and the obeying drives in the way they build their selves, as a task still to be achieved. They will also conceive their culture as having a dynamic, relational, and open ‘unity.’ Also, opposite to the badly turned individuals, such as the philistine, and to their ideological deformation(s) of culture, the
“good Europeans” would be true bearers of culture, namely, they will keep open a sense of the possible in the actual and familiar ‘unity’ of their culture. At the same time, they would never allow differences and antitheses to become extreme, because they will always be able to create new bindings of differences and dialogize ideals.

Thus, in my reconstruction of Nietzsche’s notion of “good Europeans,” these would be able not only to cultivate and live an experimental life, because they would be free from the past ideals, as in Elbe’s argument. They would also be able to engage in a public agon by constructing their public appearance through theatrical and rhetorical skills. They would also practice a form of imagination that is both synthetic (analogical) and pluralistic (explorative).

On the one hand, the “good Europeans” would not be afraid of producing new syntheses, because they will be capable to see similarities and, thus, possible bindings of differences. However, they would do so in a way that keeps open a sense of distance from the actual and familiar ‘unity’ of a culture, from the secure familiarity of one’s home. Thus, they would be able to see the familiar as distant and problematic, as strange. They would be able to dissolve the familiar into the distant and thus to explore and experiment new perspectives and ways of seeing, new masks and costumes. They would be able to imagine and perform new roles.

On the other hand, in increasing plurality the “good Europeans” would keep open the creative capacity to coalesce diversity and distances into new cultural syntheses and forms (‘unity’). In brief, the “good Europeans” would combine direct and spontaneous action and poetic and artistic imagination in the building of their culture. As Elbe argues,
they would experiment new perspectives and would be open to diversity and difference, to “those who currently remain outside the borders of the European Union”\footnote{767} or outside the legal borders of any political entity. They would not shy away from affirming their freedom and thus from making a public appearance and of engaging in the democratic agon.

However, at the same time, they would have strong imaginations. They would thus be able to imaginatively explore and inhabit other cultures, their masks and costumes, their ‘ideals’ and dreams and to dialogue with them. They would also be able to rhetorically address them and, in the process, to create bridges and bind differences. In brief, they would be able to create and recreate, to dialogize and hybridize ‘ideals’ and dreams, ‘unities’ and ‘identities’ in ways that, nevertheless, keep them open and unfinalizeable. This would be possible because they will be aware that the aim of a post-nihilistic and post-national(istic) culture is “to open up distances (Distanzen), but not to create oppositions (aber keine Gegensätze schaffen).”\footnote{768}

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Thus far, I argued that intercultural understanding requires the cultivation in the participants to the communicative praxis a manifold sensibility and a form of imagination that is not uniform, but receptive to unfamiliar modes of representation. I also argued that intercultural understanding requires the cultivation of a common feeling of humanity through literature, broadly understood. Drawing on Vico’s philosophy, I argued that creative imagination plays an essential role in a form of symbolic politics that is characterized by creative contestation. This is a form of contestation that issues in the
invention of more inclusive, and thus, more democratic civil metaphors. Intercultural understanding requires such a form of symbolic politics, as well as the cultivation in the democratic citizens of a form of practical wisdom that is both poetic and rhetorical.

Drawing on Nietzsche’s philosophy, I argued in this chapter that intercultural understanding requires seeing culture as having an open, dynamic, and relational ‘unity,’ thus reflecting the capacity its members have to engage both the analogical and the explorative power of imagination. I also argued that intercultural understanding and, consequently, democratic cosmopolitanism requires the cultivation in the citizens of an attitude towards existence as that of the “good Europeans.” It requires the freedom and the openness of the “good Europeans,” their capacity to live an experimental life. It also requires the capacity that imagination, rhetoric, and theatricality, as well as the virtue of greatness have to overcome nationalism.

In brief, intercultural understanding requires a demanding form of democratic citizenship. Such a form of citizenship requires the education of the individuals through a living *praxis*, which would cultivate their thinking and their eloquence, their independence and self-mastery, as well as their theatrical capacity to publicly appear; in brief, such a living *praxis* would develop in the democratic citizens the moral-aesthetic virtue of greatness. This would make them being receptive to nuances, degrees, and shades and, at the same time, capable of bridging differences, thus preventing distances from becoming oppositions. Such citizens would also have strong imaginations. They would have the capacity to explore with their imagination the masks and costumes of the others.
I also argued that intercultural understanding requires a form of creative political power. Such a form of political power comes into being through the open interplay and the mutual transformation of the commanding and the obeying drive. As a result, no domination can be absolute and no obeying totally passive. This indicates that the value of the confrontation in modern democracies between different moralities resides in the creative power to generate new cultural common horizons. Only such creative power can take one beyond the unproductive, unimaginative, oversimplifying, and separatist either/or thinking and public speech-construction that could generate (aggressive nationalism), secular fanaticism, or political aestheticism. Such an interpretation of power subordinates the confrontation of the interlocked and sometimes conflictive traditions that characterize modern democracies to the more important aim of creating and imagining new cultural common horizons, which is a prerequisite of intercultural understanding.

However, one could still argue that Nietzsche’s conception of power is, fundamentally structured by the belief that everything can be made if only one musters the will to it. To this extent, its poetic and imaginative aspects can still be conducive to plastic and aesthetic politics, namely, to the belief that there are no limits to one’s sense of possibility. In the attempt to explain and understand the pathologies of politics in Nazi Germany, but also the way the modern essence of technology can colonize culture and politics, thus leading to political aestheticism, Martin Heidegger makes such an argument about the dangers in Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power.

According to Heidegger, man is fundamentally a disclosive and a revealing being (Da-sein): a being that discovers or encounters himself, other human beings, things,
equipmental totalities, and nature only insofar as he discloses a world, as a totality of references and relations, “a space of intelligibility,” where understanding, acting, and thinking first become possible. Man’s world-disclosive power exerts itself through language. Such a fundamental disclosive action frees Dasein, other human beings, nature, and the sacred, namely, it delivers them to their possibility to be.

This gives Heidegger reasons to think that Nietzsche’s argument for the plurality of interpretations and opinions and thus for seeing such perspectives as ways of experimenting with ‘truth’ (perspectivism) needs to be situated in a context where truth and the capacity to disclose, through language, a world are the conditions for the will to power and not an expression of it. Only thus, Heidegger points out, the will to power would become “a will to found and build.” Such a ‘will’ is for the sake of the world, which is understood as a totality of references and relations that alone makes it possible to discover oneself as an individual self, as well as other human beings, artifacts, and nature. In short, Nietzsche did not see that the world belongs to the selfhood of man and thus “it is essentially related to Dasein.”

Henceforth, answering to such objections, Chapter Five will argue, through an interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy, that, if aesthetic creativity and imagination are to be politically effective, namely, to work not for nationalism, political aestheticism, and for mass-murder politics, but for democratic cosmopolitanism and intercultural understanding, they need to be situated in the context of one’s (poetic) care and freedom for the world, of man’s disclosive and revealing being.
Chapter six, the last of the dissertation, will argue that intercultural understanding requires political creativity as an essential attribute of democratic power and authority and, in general, of the form of (symbolic) politics that would make intercultural understanding possible. Political creativity combines receptivity to the otherness, to the foreigner and the unfamiliar, with the creativity that brings him inside the space that the author already disclosed.

Authority/authorship is an (imaginative) anticipation of the others’ or heroes’ freedom to respond to the author, while the freedom of the heroes is a (rhetorical) listening attunement to the voice of the author, a creative answering to it. As I will argue, drawing on Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism*, nationalistic, totalitarian, and, in general, aesthetic forms of politics occur when both leaders and citizens fail to engage poetic and rhetorical imagination in such a creative and dialogic way.
Chapter Five

Heidegger: Poēsis and the Danger of Political Aestheticism

In Heidegger’s view, Nietzsche’s philosophy of the will to power, of truth, and of art still harbors a danger. This refers to the belief that everything “‘is made’ and ‘can be made’ if one only musters the ‘will’ to.” In the 1930s Heidegger calls such an interpretation of beings machination and defines it as the “domination of making and what is made.”774 Such a way of interpreting beings and of dealing with them originates in ποίησις τέχνη or making.775 In the essay on The Question Concerning Technology, Heidegger defines poēsis techne as a form of revealing - enframing - that sets upon and challenges forth, namely, that reveals the actual “in the mode of ordering and of standing reserve;” that is, in the way of standing by and of being immediate on hand,776 and not in its possibilities to be, in its possibilities for meaning, actions, and relations.

Machination and enframing refer to the type of production that moves the essence of technology; namely, mass and ruthless production, which Kateb identifies as the origin of political aestheticism. The type of production that moves the essence of technology, of machination and enframing, sees human beings in the same way technicians see human wants, namely, as problems to be solved. Kateb interprets Heidegger’s thoughts by pointing out that much like brilliant technicians and scientists, rulers such as Hitler and Stalin set no limits to their hyperactive imagination in the attempt to impose and complete a pattern for which human beings become only material that awaits its aesthetically compelling shape and representation.777 Such rulers are led by a passionate
and limitless sense of possibility to make the world meaningful by design. This reflects the fact that they engage in a form of politics that is moved by the spirit of machination, for which everything can be made, and of enframing, for which everything is orderable and serviceable.

I will first argue in this chapter that Dasein’s failure to care for the world, namely, to practice its disclosive power and its freedom, generates what Heidegger calls in the 1930s machination and in the 1950s enframing. Kateb does correctly relate political aestheticism to the importation into the realm of praxis of a type of production that breeds a form of aesthetic imagination, which is moved by a limitless sense of possibility. However, he does not explain why and how the technological type of production spills over into the realm of politics. In brief, he does not argue that this type of production colonizes the realm of praxis when Dasein fails to experience temporality as a temporal manifold. This refers to a temporality where future, past, and present do not linearly and indifferently follow each other, but they are imbricate with each other, in such a way that the anticipation of the future is already a coming back to one’s having been that is still present.

Political aestheticism can occur whenever Dasein fails to authentically care for the world, that is, when it fails to get tuned to and involved with the world according to such an understanding and experiencing of temporality. Such an experiencing and understanding of temporality provides the source for a specific form of aesthetic or poetic imagination. This is a creatively preserving form of imagination, which combines actuality and presence, possibility and absence. To this extent, it is an alternative to
poēsis techne and to its exclusive focus on the actual and on constant presence, on the ordering and the mastery of what has been already disclosed. In short, political aestheticism occurs when Dasein succumbs to “the will to security.” This reflects the incapacity to live with the constant lack that temporality, as constitutive of human existence, places at the center of man’s being. Instead, the (metaphysical) “will to security” tries to find and provide substitutes for a certainty and stability that is not within the reach of temporal beings, such as Dasein.

Second, I will argue that, as an attempt to understand the political plight of Germany after 1933 (political aestheticism), but also his own catastrophic, mistaken, and failed political involvement with the Nazi political regime, as a rector of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger develops a conception of poetic dwelling and of language where the main emphasis is on the dialogue with the foreign as the passage and the journeying home. Such a conception of poēsis or creation, as a dialogue with the foreign and the unfamiliar, is connected to “a language that does not calcify time,” but sees meaning as emerging, and to a form of inventive or poetic thinking, which Heidegger calls in Contributions to Philosophy, enthinking (Erdenken). Heidegger intends poetic thinking as an alternative to poēsis techne, namely, to poēsis as re-presentation and mastery.

In connection with this conception of poēsis, a conception of culture can be developed which, if politically engaged, does not result in secular fanaticism or political aestheticism, but, it is, instead, conducive to intercultural understanding. From such a perspective, intercultural understanding would be facilitated by the creative power that speakers have not to confine the dialogue to what is directly said, but to “involve each
other in that realm and abode about which they are speaking and lead each other to it. Such involvement is the soul of the dialogue. It leads the speakers into the unspoken.781

In brief, intercultural understanding would be facilitated by the capacity speakers have to remain open and attuned to possibilities of meaning that are still not revealed, still not made manifest. A culture where speakers would practice such a dialogue would be receptive to otherness and difference. At the same time, such a culture would engage otherness/difference in the (co)participatory and co-responsible performance of (re)creating its familiar horizons.

Third, I will argue that Heidegger’s conception of poēsis, as a dialogue and encounter with the foreign and as world-disclosive, which he develops as a response to what politics becomes in Nazi Germany after 1934, as well as his conception of enthinking and of language need to be situated in the realm of public and plural opinions. Heidegger himself suggests such a move through the conception of everydayness that he develops in 1924, based on the interpretation of Aristotle’s Rhetoric. As a result of such a positioning one can argue, as Daniel Smith, that the notion of authentic care from Being and Time is an intensification of Aristotelian phronesis.

As interpreted by Heidegger, Aristotelian phronesis is a way of orienting oneself in the world and a way of inhabiting a place. It is a “social ‘positioning’ of oneself that enables a particular way of being concerned;”782 a particular way of caring, namely, of Being out toward something. An intensification of Aristotelian phronesis, Heidegger’s notion of care refers to a way of Being out toward something where poēsis, (re)defined as the inventive and timely crafting of a response to the singularity and alterity of an event
and of an audience, is in view of praxis. Poësis is in view of enriching one’s practical capacities, namely, one’s capacity to communicate and deliberate with the others on the common advantage, thus (re)creating through speech the world, the relations, and the meanings that people have in common.

Situating poësis, the great works and reinterpretive events, in the context of public and plural doxai makes it possible to distinguish between a harmful and machinational type of rhetoric and imagination that is associated with political aestheticism and bad leadership and a form of rhetoric and imagination that is associated with what Nancy S. Struever calls “timeful politics.” While the first type of rhetoric and imagination is in the service of the total mobilization and organization of the human beings because it is only “technical mastery,” the latter investigates the “possible political uses of technique.”

“Timeful politics” investigates how doxai can be created, altered, and received in relationship with the changing constraints of time, thus finding “connections between shared beliefs and particular cases” in a way that does not damage “the continuity and integrity of the grossly episodic law of the state.” It investigates, in line with Vico’s argument about the poetic origins of law, how new civil metaphors and narratives can be created through the ongoing, risky, but also inspiring encounter and dialogue, with the foreign, the guests that were invited in the first and sacred human locales, in the asylums. Such civil metaphors provide the poetic unity that the abstract and procedural body of law needs if it is to be effective, namely, connected to the concrete lives of the people. At the same time, one could argue that “timeful politics” does not violate the autonomy of the others. On the contrary, it respects their autonomy and it incites the others to question
and resist one’s opinions. It incites the others to the formulation of their own opinions and interpretations of the world.

The argument I make in this chapter cannot avoid answering the fundamental question about the relationship between Heidegger’s philosophy and (his) politics. This is triggered by Heidegger’s short, but, nevertheless, genuine involvement with National-Socialism, by his lasting membership in the Nazi party, and by his post-war refusal to speak about these political mishaps. In short, the nagging question is to what extent Heidegger’s philosophy contains the seeds for such wrong political choices and involvement.

It is an undeniable fact that Heidegger explicitly and persistently denied any interest in ethics. In this sense, he claimed that *Being and Time* offers an apolitical stance, one that does not value a way of life (a political regime) over others. At the same time, he irresponsibly refused to explicitly clarify the general relationship between philosophy and politics, a Socratic issue that his student, Hannah Arendt, never got tired of addressing and reflecting upon.

No wonder that Mark Blitz can argue that it is precisely the priority that “being” has over ethics, as well as, the understanding of freedom as (irrational) decision and destiny, not as “spirited reasonableness and reasonable desire” that leads Heidegger to an “‘ontological’ understanding of the polis,” which “recommends supporting the Nazis, at least for his time.”784 The assumption that guides Blitz’s argument is that Heidegger’s philosophy does not provide any moral templates for the public appearance of philosophy and of the philosopher, and, at the same time, it defines freedom as the uncritical
commitment to whatever values are present in one’s world at a given moment in time. As a result, Heidegger sees the polis as both too comprehensive and inclusive and as too disjointed.

On the one hand, he “replaces what limits and moderates actual politics – internal partisanship and the necessary cosmopolitanism of any country’s arts, philosophy, and poetry – with a certain kind of totality.” Reflecting such replacement, Heidegger carelessly and naively reduces America to Americanism, which he equates with Bolshevism, thus ignoring the real political and institutional differences between a liberal and a totalitarian political regime.

On the other hand, Blitz points out that the polis is too disjointed, namely the great works and reinterpretive events “erupt against and are not built from the insufficiencies of familiar experience and opinion, however much they differ from them.” One implication of Blitz’s argument is that Heidegger eliminates from his understanding of the polis, and implicitly from the political, the possibility of resisting bad leadership, of criticizing it and of overturning it in ways that are continuous with, thus, improving the experiences and opinions that people hold in a country.

The line of argument that I develop in this chapter will contradict, at least partially, such a trenchant interpretation as that of Blitz. Such an argument draws on Heidegger’s deep involvement with rhetoric and on its lingering echoes throughout his work, as well as on his interpretation of Hölderlin’s poetry in the 1930s. As a result, it claims that Heidegger’s philosophy does not eliminate the possibility of resisting bad
leadership and that such resistance can be continuous and enrich the opinions that people hold in a country.

Especially after he resigns his position as a rector of the University of Freiburg in March 1934, Heidegger uses *philosophy as a critical tool and as a form of (political) resistance*. Thus, he engages philosophical reflection in the attempt to rethink the polis and its essential relation with the foreign, as a reaction to the political situation of Germany under Nazi rule. The link between one’s own and the foreign is the artist and the true creator. Such a role of the artist becomes for Heidegger also a model for rethinking the role of the true and creative leader and statesman. This shows that his philosophy contains resources that are richer than some of his actual political judgments and choices.

Such an interpretation is based on an assumption that I share with Kersten Harries. Harries argues that *Being and Time* does indeed contain ideas that lead to Heidegger’s involvement with Nazi politics. At the same time, he points out that the book contains ideas that allow Heidegger to critically judge Nazi politics, as well as his involvement with it. On a deeper level, the assumption that I share with Harries is based on the idea that the purity of the analytic of the Dasein that Heidegger exposes in *Being and Time* is an illusion. The analytic is not descriptive. Instead, as I will argue in this chapter, it distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic care, as two different ways of living with the others. In this sense, there is no absolute priority of being over ethics in Heidegger’s philosophy and no real ethical neutrality.
Harries argues that this is the case because authenticity requires one to be resolved. It requires one to accept one’s freedom, namely, the fact that there is no certainty and security on which one can base one’s life. It also requires situating such freedom in a concrete context, “in the world and with the others.” In this sense, one’s resolve and freedom cannot avoid clarifying one’s stance in relationship with politics and political power. It cannot also avoid making a distinction between bad and good leadership.

In short, freedom requires situating oneself in the context of a tradition, thus it is not anarchistic. At the same time, such situating is not uncritical. Instead, authenticity requires that one makes what others have established his own. Thus, it “precludes any unquestioning following of some leader.” To this extent, it implies that one has to interpret and decide what a genuine leader is. Heidegger suggests that a genuine leader is one that grants the other’s freedom. As I will argue in this chapter, he is someone who uses language and rhetoric not in a way that dominates the others, but in a way that recognizes their freedom and, in allowing it to manifest, as in the case of poetic care, he creates a situation where the other guides and, at the same time, confronts him.

In short, Heidegger’s philosophy does contain ideas that can lead to undemocratic political choices. Thus, the fact that “implicit within Heidegger’s project is a heroic individual and a dubious vision of communal life” endorses argument such as that of Blitz’s. There are indeed undeniable heroic overtones in the notion of authenticity from Being and Time, namely, in the fact that one individualizes oneself not with the others, but only when alone and anticipating one’s death. Such heroic individualism also can
account for Heidegger’s own ambitious and naïve dreams of philosophical policy; for his hope of changing the German university through the sole vision of the philosophical Führer, who could thus direct and guide the political Führer. It might account for connections between Being and Time and Heidegger’s inaugural address as rector of the University of Freiburg, thus proving that his involvement with National-Socialism was genuine.

However, what makes Heidegger’s philosophy politically relevant is its capacity to provide resources for theorizing and understanding what Kateb calls political aestheticism. In this sense, I agree with interpreters such as Harries and Fred Dallmayr, that Heidegger’s philosophy becomes an increasingly critical, but also constructive, discussion of the totalizing tendencies of modern politics, which reflect the essence of (modern) technology. It becomes an increasingly critical and constructive discussion of the meaning of a true creator and of a genuine leader. To some extent, this is the case because of Heidegger’s incorporation of Aristotelian philosophy and rhetoric in the way he conceives and develops, over time, the analytic of Dasein.

Harries points out that Heidegger did very soon (after ten months) recognize the mistake he made by accepting to be a rector of the University of Freiburg. The reason, Harries argues, is that Heidegger realized that Hitler is not a genuine or creative leader. According to Harries, Being and Time allows for defining a creative leader as someone “whose work lets others discover their own essence and place,” as someone who allows the others the freedom to interpret leadership and thus determine its authentic or inauthentic nature. After 1934, Heidegger’s work focuses on clarifying the meaning of a
true creator, thus following a path that comes from *Being and Time*. However, although, his focus is the artist, this provides the model for understanding the work of the statesman, as well. It is this discussion of the creator that also provides the framework for distinguishing between a domineering, manipulative, and uncreative use of language, imagination, and rhetoric in politics, and one that is creative and grants to other human beings, but also to the earth and gods, the freedom to discover or manifest their own essence and place.

Furthermore, Heidegger’s philosophy is a complex construction, one that does not allow for simplifications or for the immoderation, which the German philosopher would have probably labeled as ideological. It is an attempt to question and rethink the fundamental categories of Western philosophy and culture. In this sense and despite Heidegger’s explicit statements, it is a daring attempt to intimate and inspire new ways of thinking about ethics, aesthetics, and politics through an intense, original, and creative dialogue with different philosophers and poets. Given the manifold avenues that Heidegger follows in constructing his philosophy, it would be counter-productive to cage this into only one set of consequences.

In short, on the one hand, there are threads in Heidegger’s philosophy that can lead to undemocratic forms of politics. There are also threads that show that his involvement with the National-Socialism was genuine. On the other hand, an important part of Heidegger’s philosophy is constructed as an attempt to theorize and offer an alternative to what the German philosopher perceived as being the event of the modern age, namely, the totalizing (domineering and manipulative) tendencies of philosophy,
culture, and politics. In this context, his philosophy provides a fruitful framework for thinking and understanding the meaning of genuine creation and leadership, as well as the pathologies of language, speech, and culture that come with bad leadership. In short, the resources for rethinking Heidegger’s project are immanent to the project itself.790

Thus, while Heidegger’s criticism of liberalism shows a complete lack of understanding of its true political nature, still his discussion of poēsis techne and of the dangers of colonizing politics by a representational form of culture, language, and imagination can enrich the liberal and democratic engagement of culture. This is possible because Heidegger’s own philosophical framework provides the basis for distinguishing the critique of the totalitarian uses of technology from the critique of liberalism. As a result, Heidegger’s philosophy can enrich the very resources that a liberal and democratic form of symbolic or cultural politics needs for a humane and instructive encounter with different cultures.

**Authentic Care and Time**

In *Being and Time* Heidegger describes the basic structures of Dasein (man’s being), namely, the basic categories that structure the (practical) understanding that men already have of their being and thus of Being, prior to any scientific and philosophical knowledge (*theoria*). Being-in-the-world, namely, the fact of being already practically (in the twofold sense of poēsis and praxis) involved with equipmental totalities and other human beings and having an (emotional) understanding of them, is fundamental to
Dasein’s being. It is fundamental to its existence and prior to any theoretical and contemplative approach to the world. Heidegger calls such a pre-theoretical interpretation and understanding of man’s being, existentiell, as opposed to existential, which is the ontological and philosophical approach to the categories that define Dasein’s existence.

From the very first pages of Being and Time, Heidegger argues that the being of man, what he calls Dasein, is not something obvious or self-evident. It is not presence-at-hand, the way of being of a thing, or readiness-to-hand, the way of being of equipment, but a possibility to be (Zu-sein). Dasein exists; that is, Dasein is a ‘Who’ not a ‘What.’ Man’s being is a task for him, namely, “Dasein itself, insofar as it is, is nothing but being-possible.” As a result, Dasein is always “out for something” and ‘ahead-of-itself.’ Dasein is “out for what it still is not.” Heidegger defines this as care. Care is “the term for the being of Dasein pure and simple.”

As care, “Dasein is essentially underway towards something; in caring it is toward itself as that which it still is not. Its own sense of being is to always have something before itself which it still is not, which is still outstanding (was noch aussteht). That something is always still outstanding means that the being of Dasein as care, insofar as it is, is always incomplete (immer unabgeschlossen, not closed yet); it still lacks something so long as it is.” Dasein is fundamentally an anticipatory being. As a result, as long as Dasein is, not yet belongs intrinsically to its being, while, at the same time, Dasein is already its end too. Consequently, “insofar as Dasein shows itself in this structure of being of care, it stands in direct opposition to the possibility of ever being grasped in its wholeness and so brought into prepossession.”
Dasein’s existence and the task facing each and every one of us, namely, to make existence mine (mineness), are grounded in a state of being that Heidegger calls Being-in-the-world. Being-in describes the fact that Dasein “‘dwells alongside’ the world, as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way.”\(^7\) Dwelling means here “taking care of something in intimate familiarity, being-involved with [Sein-bei].”\(^6\) The world of everyday Dasein that is closest to it is the environment, the world around. This is closest to Dasein as the work-world, namely, as the world of usability and serviceability, of equipment and production; as the world of what gets used and produced. The world of equipment is the world of the readiness-to-hand.

In short, in Heidegger’s view, man’s proximal and fundamental way of being in the world and of dealing with the beings that he encounters within its confines is not theoretical and contemplative, but practical. The closest to Dasein in practically dealing with the world are equipmental totalities and the type of production (poēsis) that fabricates them. In Being and Time, Heidegger defines equipment as “πράγματα – that is to say, that which one has to do with in one’s concernful dealings (πραξις).”\(^7\) As Roberto Bernasconi points out, “πραξις is all doing, pursuing and enduring, which also includes ποίησις.”\(^8\) Thus, poēsis appears as an inherent aspect of praxis.

Their intermingling shapes the practical dealings of man in his everyday existence and it determines his orientation in the world, the scope of man’s circumspective deliberation. Smith explains that their intermingling determines the extent to which man can approach the world phronetically, namely, in “its possibilities for relations and actions,”\(^9\) and not just as a site for ordering and planning what has been already
disclosed, made manifest. As Bernasconi points out, Heidegger’s “account of 
equipmentality in *Being and Time* is not an account of production as such, but of our 
relation with things which have been produced.”

It is, as Villa argues, further exploring the meaning of Being-in, an account of the 
constant danger that equipmentality and production as *technē* could colonize in the 
modern world *praxis* and *phronēsis*, namely action and communicative rationality. In a 
nutshell, Heidegger’s discussion of equipmentality is an account of the extent to which 
one’s way of being concerned with equipment and principles of production undermines 
or enhances one’s capacity to creatively renew the world, as a totality of meanings and 
relations that is disclosed through language, and, consequently, one’s deliberative and 
discouraging capacity.

Such an interpretation is re-enforced by the fact that, in Heidegger’s view, *with* 
the world of equipment and of production the others are present too. Thus, “the public 
world is always already there with the work to be provided” and it “is included in the 
very sense of the work and of its usability.” In the world of concern “others are 
encountered; and the encountering is a being-there-with.” Being-in and being-with-
one-another (co-*Dasein*) are co-original, because “Being-in is Being-with Others.”
Heidegger explains that entities that are themselves *Dasein*, namely, have my way of 
being and not that of things or equipment, are objects of solicitude (*Fürsorge*). In Being-
with *Dasein* is for-the-sake-of Others. Concern, namely, involvement with equipmental 
totalities and with work, and solicitude for the others are the two facets of care.
In everydayness, the who of Being-with-one-another is interpreted by the “they” or the Anyone. The “they” belongs to “Dasein’s positive constitution.” Namely, as it is characteristic for *Dasein* that closest to it in its everydayness is the work-world and the equipmental world of usability and serviceability, in the same way, proximally “Dasein is the “they,” and for the most part it remains so;” in a word, Dasein’s “who” is proximally and for the most part defined by the “they.” One could argue that, in Heidegger’s view, there is an authentic and an inauthentic form of “they.”

One the one hand, as belonging to Dasein’s positive constitution, the “they” represents the medium where the act of individualization starts. The “they” is also the symbolic medium that can be enriched by the act of individualization. This refers to the fact that only an individual who affirmed his freedom, namely, who reappropriated the world from his own perspective, can engage in authentic relations with the others. Only such an individual can respect their (interpretative and world disclosive) freedom. Only such an individual can listen to them and, at the same time, can confront them, namely, he can challenge the others in ways that bring into the manifest their exceptional and outstanding capacities. This describes an authentic form of “they.” On the other hand, insofar as the “they” is not challenged and transformed by Dasein, it is inauthentic. Such a state of inauthenticity is further aggravated and congealed, as I will argue further in this chapter, by the colonization of one’s relations with the others, as well as of forms of authority and leadership, by machination and enframing.

Still, Heidegger argues in *The History of the Concept of Time*, the task for each and every one of us is to “to force this being in the Anyone before a question or even to
modify it." The task, he states in *Being and Time*, is to modify the “they-self” “in an existentiell manner so that it becomes authentic Being-one’s self.” In this quality, the act of individualization through which one becomes one’s self “is not something which floats above falling everydayness; existentially, it is only a modified way in which such everydayness is seized upon.”

To the extent that Dasein fails to question and modify the “they-self,” it fails to affirm its freedom and authenticity. It fails to individualize itself. However, such a failure also affects the possibility of having an authentic way of being with the others, namely, an authentic “they-self.” This is a way of being with the others that does not consist in the reproduction of what has been already disclosed. Instead, in an authentic “they-self,” social and cultural symbolic networks are enriched and renewed through the disclosure of new possibilities of meaning.

Since Dasein’s everydayness, namely, its practical involvement with the world, which precedes any theoretical understanding of itself, is a mode of temporality, the modification of the “they-self” should be a modification of the way time and its moments are experienced. It should be a modification of Dasein’s “characteristic inclination (*Tendenz*) to nearness, which in its sense stands in a correlation of being with the present. But the present is one possibility of time itself.” Such modification requires that Dasein experiences the intermingling of the moments of time and the fact that, for a finite being, the future, namely, what is not present and actual yet, the possible, has priority. Otherwise, Dasein’s anticipatory being would be covered. This refers to the fact that
Dasein would identify its existence exclusively with what is immediately and familiarly
given to it in the near world of the everyday involvement with equipment.

This indicates that the modification of the “they-self” should also be a
modification of Dasein’s inclination to lose itself in the familiar, and, thus, be tempted
and distracted “with the objects of one’s closest concern;”810 namely, equipmental
totalities and the way the “they” defines the everyday “who.” In brief, it should be a
modification of Dasein’s inclination to get alienated from its being as being-possible and
to be lured, instead, into interpreting its own being and that of alien Dasein after the mode
of equipmental being, which requires completeness in order to be (efficient). By keeping
an ongoing sense for its being as being-possible, Dasein grasps the fundamental fact that
its being and the world, as a part of it, cannot ever be pre-possessed and wholly
represented. It cannot ever be securely and wholly given.

The modification of the “they-self” is initiated by an emotional disposition,
attunement, or mood (Befindlichkeit). This should be an emotional disposition that would
allow Dasein to anticipate, namely, to project into the future, its wholeness, its
completion and actualization; namely, the experiencing of one’s mortality and finitude,
the anticipation of one’s death. In Being and Time, Heidegger emphasizes the power of
anxiety to make Dasein understand that not being at home in the everyday world is more
primordial that being at home and familiar with one’s everyday totality of references and
relations and with one’s closest objects of concern.811

However, the anticipation of wholeness, of one’s completeness through anxiety
only makes Dasein come back towards its past. It moves Dasein back towards its birth
and it makes the present look uncanny. Thus Dasein comes to understand itself as that Being which is “‘between’ birth and death” and which, as long as it exists, must in each case, not yet be something. Dasein understands that its ‘totality’ or ‘wholeness’ “stretches along between birth and death” and in this quality, it is both Being-towards-the-end, namely, an anticipation of one’s death, and a Being-towards-the-beginning, namely, an understanding of the fact that existentially, “birth is not and never is something past in the sense of something no longer present-at-hand.”

In short, the modification of the “they-self” is initiated by Dasein’s understanding that the future, the past, and the present coexist in such a way that each and every one of them is both inside and outside the other. Thus, the anticipation of the future, of the not yet, namely, of one’s own death, can happen only to the extent that Dasein has been (born). To this extent, the anticipation of one’s own death (being towards the end) makes one coming back to one’s ownmost having been, to one’s birth (being towards the beginning). At the same time, in authentic care the having been of the past is never past, but it is still present, thus it can be repeated in a more ‘original’ way, namely, in a way that discloses new meanings in one’s own heritage.

Only when Dasein understands that the future is finite, namely, it comes towards it from the past, that the past is something possible that can be creatively repeated, and that the present is a threshold, a back and forth movement between the past and the future, can it individualize itself; can it become one’s own self as a result of grasping its freedom. In experiencing temporality, Dasein comes to have a conscience and thus to grasp the meaning of care. Care is the mode of being through which Dasein’s possibility
to be, namely, its future, its having been, and its present involvement with “those things ready-to-hand within the world with which one concerns oneself” coexist.

In (authentic) care, existence (namely, Dasein’s possibilities, its future), facticity (namely, the contingency of Dasein’s past world, in which Dasein did not chose to be, its thrownness), and falling (namely, being alongside things, equipment, and other human beings, already involved and familiar with them, the present as the habitual) are imbricate with each other. Falling refers to the fact that Dasein is already involved with the world, that Dasein is lost in the publicness of the “they,’ and that Dasein did not chose itself, it did not individualize itself.

In contrast with falling, thrownness is associated with facticity. In this sense, Dasein did not choose to be there, in the midst of beings. Also, after being thrown, Dasein remains caught in the inauthenticity of the “they.” As thrown, Dasein projects itself, namely, it chooses itself in its possibilities. Thus, in disclosing a world man first differentiates himself from other beings. At the same time, all projection is limited by one’s thrownness. Also, unlike falling, thrownness is associated with one’s emotional attunement.

Only (authentic) care can make Dasein see its (ownmost) possibilities in the context of its past. As a result, the past appears as just one possible disclosure of meaning (one way of experimenting with the truth), beyond which other unfamiliar and unspoken disclosures are still concealed in one’s origin (namely, one’s birth as an individual or one’s heritage and tradition as a community) and can still be brought forth into the emerging present.
Only when Dasein experiences the temporal manifold in such a way can it be free. As Villa argues, this freedom is neither “mere absence of constraint” nor “readiness for what is required and necessary.” Freedom would be “mere absence of constraint” if Dasein would not experience the future as finite, namely, as coming towards it from the past. Freedom would be “readiness for what is required and necessary” if destiny would be fate, namely, if the past would not be seen as possible, as a path that could take different turns. Freedom as understood by Heidegger is prior to both negative and positive freedom. As ontological freedom, it is their condition of possibility.

In brief, it is the “freedom of an ‘open comportment’ toward the world,” a “freedom for the world,” which “the will (the organ of our choice or purposiveness) covers over.” It is a freedom to see the future as finite (not as limitless or infinite possibility), the past as one possible meaning, and the present as still in the making. Only thus understood, freedom can be “a continuing taking up or creative appropriation of possibilities that are ‘given’ to us, but unrealized as possibilities.” The trouble is, Villa explains, that there is a built-in tendency in Dasein to “‘forget’ its disclosive or projective character.” This is a consequence of the character of everydayness, which enforces Dasein’s tendency toward nearness and the comfortable certainty and security of familiarity.

Thus, Dasein can engage itself in care and be free in the sense defined above only insofar as it listens to the call of conscience, only insofar as it discourses with the alien voice that summons it. The caller to whom Dasein listens to and discourses with, in acquiring a conscience, is “Dasein in its uncanniness; primordial, thrown Being-in-the-
world as the not-at-home.” It is “something like an alien voice.” Through conscience, as the capacity to listen to and discourse with its uncanniness – namely, with the yet unactualized possibilities of interpretation and understanding in one’s past that speak to it from its future, thus enriching its present – with meanings that are still unfamiliar and unspoken, Dasein comes to understand that “the ‘not-at-home’ must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon,” of everydayness, that the unfamiliar, “the uncanniness is the basic kind of Being-in-the-world.”

Smith argues that such a requirement reflects the fact that “wholeness, which implies full presence, actuality, and completeness is rethought by Heidegger as having absence, possibility, and incompleteness immanent to (but still ‘outside’) itself.” This expresses a topos of being, which, “because of the ek-static temporal movement that ‘is’ the event of being, is atopos, which in ancient Greek means out of place, odd, strange, extraordinary; we might also say uncanny.” In a nutshell, if lived authentically, Dasein’s life emerges. It is not static. It is a renewed attempt to come to one’s own, to the familiar and the homely from the unfamiliar and the unhomely.

The implication is that what is given to Dasein as present, as conventional, traditional, and habitual, as actual and present and as being “at home in the everyday insofar as it in-habits these familiar possibilities,” in brief, what congeals in the ways of the “they” is, in reality, grounded in the uncanny and the unfamiliar, in the unhomely. Only to the extent that Dasein understands that the actual as the present is grounded in “a being-out-toward the past-future that is already (never-) present,” can it authentically care for its own being and that of alien Dasein, as well as for the being of things and
equipment, of nature and the gods; because only to this extent can Dasein exist in view of itself and of its freedom to disclose a world.

In short, in order to engage in authentic care, Dasein has to successfully meet a twofold task. On the one hand, Dasein has to understand that uncanniness is “the basic kind of Being-in-the-world, even though in an everyday way it has been covered up.” On the other hand, Dasein should not just get lost, carried as it is by curiosity, into a far and alien world, because then care becomes the shallow desire and wishing for the far away “simply in order to bring it close to itself in the way it looks,” just in order to see, and not in order to understand what is seen. Thus, the far away and the alien, the uncanny becomes the exotic that Dasein cannot in any way meaningfully connect to its present and to its past, interpret it through them. Eventually, Dasein loses sight of familiar everyday things and gets lost in the unfamiliar. These are the incipient symptoms of a Dasein that develops a limitless sense of possibility or of freedom as mere absence of constraint, one, as I argue, of the pathologies of care.

Thus, Heidegger argues, in authentic care one has to combine “the courage for the old and the freedom for the new.” This refers to the fact that in authentic care what is old is not the antiquated, but it is, instead, that which “manifests itself only to historical (geschichtlich) encounter and to historically mindful deliberation,” namely, only to the event of reinterpreting the past, to the unique and singular performance of reinventing and renewing the past and its language in the context of the present. Also, what is new is not the “modern,” but the freshness of originariness of recommencing, what ventures out into the hidden future of the first beginning and thus cannot be ‘new’ at all but rather
must be older than the old.” The new is just a possible past, an unfamiliar and still unspoken meaning of it.

Moreover, while it is true that authentic care can happen only insofar as one removes oneself from the idle talk of the “they” and in anticipatory resoluteness chooses and decides to become a free individual, because one understands oneself in one’s concrete and finite (ownmost) possibilities, the nature of such ‘withdrawal’ should not be too hastily judged as heroic and solitary or private. As Smith argues, one’s removal from the idle talk of the “they” “need not be understood as a literal withdrawal from the ontic-ness of communal life and discourse into a private meditation of the meaning of being.”

On the contrary, in the attempt to develop Heidegger’s philosophy in its possibilities, ‘withdrawal’ should be understood as an attempt to inhabit the everyday (which is always a social and cultural inhabitation) differently. It should be understood, in the tradition of rhetoric and of kairos, which shapes Heidegger’s conception of everydayness before 1927, the year Being and Time was published, as an attempt to inhabit/to dwell the (cultural or symbolic) everyday differently. This expresses one’s individualizing answer to concrete and changing circumstances and audiences. Thus, through authentic care one intensifies the questionableness and not-at-home-ness, “the possibilities for things to become otherwise,” in view of “the releasing of new attunements to the world and the emergence of new possibilities for (communal) life.”

In sum, authentic care or authenticity is the capacity to disrupt the familiarity of the habitual in order for things to become otherwise, thus releasing new attunements to the world and new possibilities for communal life that would transform and enrich the
everydayness. Or, as Dana Villa puts it, “authenticity in Heidegger’s sense is a certain way of taking up what is given yet ‘dimmed down,’ the creative appropriation of contents and possibilities that are encountered within our lifeworld yet which have in their codified, reified, and clichéd forms, ceased to signify.” They ceased to indicate that “for-the-sake-of-which” (Worumwillen) equipment and the realm of everydayness exist, namely, the world and Dasein’s freedom to disclose a world and care for it.

Only such a relationship between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between the “they” and the act of individualization would prevent culture from freezing over, because authentic care or freedom “neither removes itself from its ‘there’ nor creates a world of its own; rather it is a mode of activity and understanding that breathes new life into the familiar.” By breathing new life into the familiar, authentic care reinterprets the familiar or the habitual in new ways. The familiar refers to past meaning and language that is not questioned anymore and thus it is not seen as just one possible interpretation of the world. It refers to congealed forms of authority. To breathe new life into past meaning and given forms of authority is possible only insofar as one individualizes oneself, namely, only insofar as one answers to one’s unique and changing circumstances and audiences, only insofar as one projects oneself out of one’s facticity and thrownness. Part of such an endeavor is also an interpretation of the meaning of genuine leadership and authority.
If Dasein successfully questions and modifies the “they-self,” namely, if it becomes one’s self, if Dasein individualizes itself, then a possible and original way of being-in-and-with opens up for it. This is a way of being where both my own and the alien Dasein exist in view of freedom and authentic care, which is an authentic way of being with the others. To exist in view of freedom or authentic care means to exist in view of transcending all the beings in the world, things, equipment, “the alien Dasein as well as my own,” thus discovering itself in its finite, but precisely, because of that, creative, capacity to disclose a world, as a totality of references and relations, which alone makes it possible to encounter things and equipment, “the alien Dasein as well as my own.”

World-disclosive activities take place through language. Language is grounded in the social practice of discoursing, which has a strong poetic and rhetorical dimension. Given the proximity of poēsis and praxis in Dasein’s practical dealings with the world, the challenge in practicing authentic care and freedom, thus engaging in world-disclosive activities through language, is to bring production/poēsis into praxis in a way that does not cover the manifoldness of temporality and does not calcify it into constant presence and endurance.

Heidegger argues that the world is not a being, but what makes the very manifestation of being possible. It is a possibility of Dasein. In this quality, the world is
“never an object that stands before us and can be seen,” but “the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into being” and where “all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits.” This means that the world can never be re-presented and made available, and, consequently, mastered. It cannot be pro-duced. The world worlds, namely, it is an emerging disclosure and meaning, not a picture. It is not something that is re-presentable, makeable, and orderable because the actual has been reduced to constant presence and to “the quantum of actual effect.”

Consequently, a world that worlds, namely, emerges, requires a language that poetizes. This is a language that does not suspend and cover the temporal manifold, the imbrications of the different moments of time. It is a language that rather points and hints than re-presents; that both intimates the future and remembers the past. Otherwise, if man confuses the world with a being that can be re-represented and pro-duced, then he would come to think that he has such a convincing power over the world and its “spaces” and “times” that “the space of our planet is shrinking and the annual seasons and years of human life are being condensed into diminutive numerical values for the purposes of our calculative planning in advance.” Eventually, Heidegger points out, “the only thing that is ever questionable is how we can measure and fathom and exploit the world as quickly as possible, as securely as possible, and as completely as possible.”

However, given the character of everydayness, namely, Dasein’s tendency to get lost into what is near and constantly present, there is a constant danger (which Dasein has to fight) that the world would be understood, not as a possibility and as emerging
meaning, but as something that can be *seen*, as a view or an image (*Bild*). There is a danger that the world would be seen as something that can be re-presented and produced; as something that can be mastered and controlled, as something to be made meaningful according to a design. There is also a danger that language would be calcified and thus words and meaning would be reduced to something orderable and manipulable, to something quickly and easily accessible that can be used up and misused. In Heidegger’s view, this is a type of ‘creativity’ that leads to political aestheticism.

Heidegger argues that these dangers come from the fact that in falling everydayness Dasein “has mostly the character of Being-lost in the publicness of the “they.”” One could argue that such dangers also come from the fact that machination, the irrationality that underlines the essence of technology and of modern production, reinforces and intensifies the inauthentic publicness of the “they.” The “they” refers to public and accepted, to common and unquestioned authoritative ways of interpreting and understanding the world in a given community at a given time in history.

The danger, which machination intensifies, is that this commonality can become anonymous and thus, vulnerable to being reduced to sheer quantity, where all beings are the same as. It can also become a form of anonymous (anyone) authority, which cannot be questioned, interpreted, and criticized. Consequently, one forgets that the public and common, the authoritative networks of meaning and language (the “they”) are created by other Daseinal beings, as I am. One forgets that public meaning and language are the manifestation of other individuals’ freedom and authentic care, and not something to be used up, ordered, and manipulated, because one accepts them and reproduces them as
they are. Instead, meaning and language are not something to be reproduced, but something to be enriched in their imaginative and disclosive potency.

Both the publicness of the “they” and machination tend to focus on the actual as the present and the familiar. They both tend to cover the unfamiliar. Also, they both float into a generality and an emptiness that discourages everything concrete and singular. As a result, they both tend to dissuade mindfulness (deliberation) and creative thinking (enthinking or inceptual thinking), as well as the emotional disposition, the attunement that is conducive to them. In brief, they both tend to discourage authentic care and freedom.

When reinforcing each other and growing out of each other, machination and a “they” that has been deprived of its Daseinal, world disclosive capacity, transform the “there”, namely, the world as the space of intelligibility that takes a historical and cultural form, into worldview and ideology and politics into political aestheticism. Heidegger explains that this is the case because in “what is nearest and the ordinary and the continual, beings will always outdo and chase away be-ing. And this occurs, not when a being itself gathers unto itself and unfolds, but when a being has turned into the object and state of dissembling machinations and is dissolved into non-being. Here, in the most ordinary publicness of beings that have become all the same, the utmost squandering of be-ing occurs.” One could argue that, in a form of publicness where beings have all become the same, individuals lack creative imagination and creative thinking. Instead, they just keep copying and reproducing the “same,” as congealed in the averageness of the “they.” Such a reproduction uses the “same” up and, in the end, it destroys it, because
Heidegger argues that the “they” is given in the guise of averageness. Thus, it has the tendency to cover everything unfamiliar. The “they” “keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore,” thus revealing “an essential tendency of Dasein, which we call the ‘levelling down’ of all possibilities of being” to “what is proximally at its everyday disposal.” Dasein “becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquillizes itself with that which is merely ‘actual,’” thus getting lost into the “comfortableness of the accustomed” with which the “they” tempts it. The “possible as such” is thus dimmed down. Moreover, the ”they” keeps tempting Dasein into the “tranquillized supposition that it possesses everything or that everything is within its reach.” Eventually, because the “they” is blind for possibilities and it evades any choice, it just “retains and receives the ‘actual’ that is left over, the world-historical that has been, the leavings, and the information about them that is present-at-hand.”

Machination is an “interpretation of beings as re-presentable and re-presented” and thus, of the world as something that can be seen, looked at, an image that is orderable and calculable. For machination only the representable is. This means that “only what man is able to bring to and before himself,[only that] can count as ‘a being.’” Only what is constant and unquestioned presence counts, therefore, as ‘a being.’

Heidegger situates the origin of machination in the replacement, in the Western culture, of a way of experiencing and interpreting being as emerging and as an ongoing coming to presence with a way of experiencing and interpreting being as the static form.
of a present idea. Initially being was experienced and interpreted in Western culture as rising, as coming forth, and yet as offering a view. Eventually, however, being is reduced to the offering of a view and, eventually, to just being a constant presence. As constant presence, being comes to be seen as unifying and as general. It is reduced to an empty abstraction. With time, being as a unifying and general presence, as an empty abstraction, is reduced to something just familiar and proximate. It is reduced to what is simply at hand, a thing.

Such a reduction of being from emerging and an ongoing coming to presence to just the constant, general, familiar, and static presence of an idea becomes with Descartes just an idea in the mind of the subject, which depends on its subjective representation. Furthermore, such a reduction of being is also accompanied by the replacement of the dynamic conception of truth as unconcealment with the conception of truth as correspondence. Heidegger defines truth as unconcealment. To this extent, truth does not belong to propositions, but to the fundamental act of disclosing a world or a space of intelligibility where asserting something about things first becomes possible. From the perspective of a dynamic view of being, concealment also belongs to the essence of truth.

Truth and authenticity are related concepts for Heidegger. This means that one is always delivered to a world that is a mixture of truth and untruth, of unconcealment and disguise or semblance. One is delivered to a world that one did not appropriate, did not make one’s own. This means that it belongs both to truth and to authenticity that one should explicitly interpret the world anew, that one should uncover it in its still
undisclosed meanings, thus contributing to an experiencing and interpretation of being and language as emerging.

In brief, it belongs to truth (and authenticity) that one becomes oneself and, in the process one adds new meanings to the world’s symbolic network. In this sense, truth is not primarily agreement or correspondence between assertions and reality, but a creative act of disclosing new meanings and new language, thus making possible new assertions about the world. Truth is an interpretative and creative act through which one becomes oneself (authentic care) and, at the same time, one enriches the space of intelligibility that the world is.

Heidegger identifies this twofold reduction, of being as emerging to being as constant and static form and of truth as unconcealment to truth as correspondence, with the transformation of the Platonic ἰδέα into Platonism. The twofold reduction, of being to constant and static presence and of truth to correspondence, is also connected to the imposition of a certain meaning of poēsis as τέχνη or making. Such a form of poēsis leads to the re-presentation and pro-duction of the world, because it reflects an understanding of ‘to be’ as nothing other than to be a function and to be a functionary of something else, i.e., of the subject that represents, and the result of a willed action that is in view of a re-presentable end. ‘To be’ is thus not seen as an independent coming to presence and to manifestation, as a phenomenon, but as something that depends on a subjective representation of it.

Machination understands ‘beings’ as “accessible to intention and calculation” and as “advanceable through pro-duction and execution.” Moreover, for machination
“there is nothing question-worthy, nothing that could be esteemed through enactment of questioning as such, simply esteemed and thus lit up and elevated into truth,”\textsuperscript{840} namely, freed to be encountered in a world. Thus, machination deals with (human) beings, as well as with language, either by mobilizing and organizing them or by steering and planning them, because they are treated as problems to be solved and overcome. When beings resist, thus trying to set limits to machination, this deals with them as “only the material for further elaboration and the impulse for progress and an occasion for extension and enlargement.”\textsuperscript{841}

With this experience and interpretation of beings becoming dominant, the moments of time are not anymore experienced as intricate with each other, but as external to each other and as linear. With it, the fundamental, ontological, sense of freedom is lost. Freedom for the world is covered over by the will (to make). This gives the false impression that the world and its beings can be pro-diced and pre-possessed. Thus, Heidegger warns, “the fundamental condition is created for a human epoch in which ‘technicity’ – the priority of the machinational, of the rules for measuring and of procedure vis-à-vis what is absorbed and affected by it – necessarily assumes mastery.”\textsuperscript{842}

The impression is thus created that everything can be organized and calculated and that the incalculable is “only what has not yet been mastered by calculation.” Calculation becomes “the basic law of comportment,” which “belongs to every human action.”\textsuperscript{843} With calculation, that is, with the “reversing of all events into what is produceable and instituteable,”\textsuperscript{844} the denial of history (of the throwness of Dasein)
emerges. As a result, calculation sees no limits to one’s sense of possibility and power, to one’s will to make, because one forgets that every disclosive action, namely, every creative attempt to open up a world as a totality of references and relations, is grounded in the act of covering and concealing other possibilities. Every disclosive action is grounded in the fact that one cannot re-present and thus, control the whole field of possible meanings and references. Every disclosive action is grounded in the fact that man cannot take over the clearing of Da, the place of dwelling that the disclosure of a world frees. Every creative attempt to open up a world is grounded in Dasein’s freedom for the world, which alone makes possible its choices and constraints.

As fallen, Dasein is trapped into idle talk (Gerede), curiosity, and ambiguity. Idle talk engages language, namely, discoursing with the others, in a way that “releases one from the task of genuinely understanding” by “making the thing one’s own.” Instead of encouraging one to re-discover and reappropriate what has been already disclosed, namely, to reinvent language according to the exigencies of the moment and as an expression of this Dasein’s ownmost possibility to be, idle talk just repeats words, views, and opinions in a way that covers up the ground of what is talked about, the uniqueness and singularity of the human situations. Idle talk listens “only to what is said-in-the-talk as such.” To this extent, it can turn into a dangerous way of public speaking. This is the consequence of “an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, which feeds the illusion that “nothing is closed off any more.” Idle talk can turn into an unreflective, non-individualizing, and uncreative acceptance and reproduction of given forms of (symbolic) authority and of given forms of anonymous commonality.
When idle talk and its “undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, which nourishes the illusion that “nothing is closed off any more” is conjoined with the “divesting, publicizing, and vulgarizing of all attunement”\textsuperscript{846} that machination makes possible on a mass-scale, words and language are reduced to something that can be used up, handled and manipulated. They are reduced to instruments. Thus, language ceases to be understood as a making manifest of a disclosed world in discoursing to and with one another, becoming instead a means for organizing and mobilizing the indefinite others, the masses, or for unquestionably reproducing given forms of authority.

Dispositions, which are deeply intermeshed with language and discoursing, thus become artificial, namely, uprooted from their concreteness. As a result, words are disempowered too. Dispositions are for Heidegger fundamentally world disclosive and inaugurating.\textsuperscript{847} When they become artificial, they block Dasein’s access to “a disclosing of existence,”\textsuperscript{848} namely, to creative freedom and thinking, which is always individualizing, because it reflects the understanding of one’s singular and unique situation and of one’s interlocutors in their particular possibilities to be. Only thus language and, consequently, the world are renewed. Instead, “word then is only the shell and magnified stimulation, in which there can no longer be a connection to a ‘meaning,’ because all gathering of a possible mindfulness is removed and mindfulness itself is scorned as something strange and weak.”\textsuperscript{849}

The word ceases to be a way to questioning and an expression or articulation (\textit{aussprechen}) of creative thinking (enthinking), becoming, instead, a cliché in the service of “exaggeration and uproar and the blind and empty yelling, in which one yells at
oneself and deludes oneself about the hollowing-up of beings.” Thus, the tendency inherent in idle talk, to discourage “any new inquiry and any disputation, the tendency to suppress them and hold them back” is exacerbated to the point where any questioning and thus any new possibility, any new ‘seeing as’ of the familiar and the habitual, are refused, because the unique aim is to preserve what has been already disclosed and made present.

Intensified and distorted by machination idle talk feeds a form of culture that becomes worldview, namely, a culture which “has to refuse any new possibility, in order to preserve itself.” This is a culture that never puts itself and its comfortable familiarity into question, but preserves it at any price. Thus, preservation ceases to be a path to disclosing culture in a more original way, namely, in its concealed and unfamiliar possibilities. It ceases to be creative. This is the case because culture as worldview does not displace man into distress, namely, into the attunement to what is still unspoken and thus unfamiliar, not made habitual yet; to what is still a task. In brief, it is a culture that loses the attunement to the uncanniness and the strangeness that ground openness and the familiarity with what has been already made manifest and brought into the nearness.

Thus, it cannot grasp that every ground and every disclosure of a world closes off other possibilities; that the ground resides on an ab-ground, namely, on negations and concealments, on refusals. However, Heidegger argues, these are not privations, but possibilities, hints for new meanings, because “as essential swaying of ground, ab-ground is not a mere self-refusing as simply pulling back and going away. Ab-ground is ab-ground.” In brief, culture as worldview does not see that the ground hesitantly refuses itself and that there is always an “essential swaying of ground as ab-ground.” It does not
see that the refusal of the ground is a hint to occasion the creation of new spaces of intelligibility,\textsuperscript{853} an occasion for manifesting, for articulating, one’s freedom for the world by bringing new ‘entities’ – vocabularies, practices, beliefs – to light within the clearing,\textsuperscript{854} in the “there” of being, in one’s culture.

Instead of delving into the “expanse of the hidden possibilities of the hint,” culture as worldview grips to the power to represent, to reproduce, to imitate, and thus, to master what has been already disclosed and made manifest. Nonetheless, Heidegger argues, this is not true power, since it does not preserve and safeguard the still concealed possibilities of meaning. Moreover, culture as worldview or ideology does not make possible anymore the disclosure of be-ing as “incalculable and unique;”\textsuperscript{855} as event (\textit{Ereignis}), because it also reduces language and meaning to accessibility and manifestness, losing “the originary depth and abground-dimension.”\textsuperscript{856} Culture as worldview speaks a language that calcifies time; a language that is not grounded in the temporal manifold.

Curiosity, the second aspect of falling, expresses another fundamental aspect of everydayness, namely, the fact that Dasein has a tendency towards ‘seeing.’ In curiosity, Heidegger argues, Dasein practices, as part of its positive everydayness, a “liberated seeing” or “a free floating seeing” through which it can express its concern for distance. Now Dasein cares “for the discovery and the bringing-near of what is not yet experienced or of what is not an everyday experience, the care of being ‘away from’ the constantly and immediately handy things.”
However, curiosity is not interested in a definite presence, but rather in “the possibility of a constant change of presence.” Thus, it craves for the new and even “if one has seen everything, this is precisely when curiosity fabricates something new.” When curiosity is conjoined with machination, with its craving for mastery and for making everything accessible and available, then, it turns into acceleration, namely, “the mania for what is surprising, for what immediately sweeps [us] away and impresses [us] again and in different ways.” Thus, “fleeting” becomes the basic law of ‘constancy,’ because it is “necessary to forget rapidly and to lose oneself in what comes next.”

At the same time, curiosity “does not let Dasein come back to itself and is constantly tranquilizing it anew.” Curiosity does not let Dasein to come back to the definite world to which it has been factically submitted. It does not let it understand itself in its ownmost, namely, concrete possibilities and in its finite and creative freedom for the world. The result is that neither one’s own Dasein nor “one’s solicitous Being with Others” can be given a definite character in terms of their own ownmost potentiality-for-Being-their-Selves. Indefiniteness and indeterminacy, as well as a sense of limitless possibility, the sense that endless operations are possible, come thus to characterize Dasein’s relation to the world, to its own being, and to that of the others.

When conjoined with machination, curiosity deprives Being-in-the-world, namely, those beings that are ready-to-hand, as well as beings that exist in the mode of Dasein, of history (Geschichte). As a result, curiosity serves a form of re-presenting and interpreting beings that “recognizes no limit in the given, and wants to find no limit. Rather the limitless is what is deciding, not as the mere flux and mere ‘and-so-forth,’ but
as that which is bound to no limit of the given, bound to no given and to no giveable as limit. There is in principle no ‘impossible’; one ‘hates’ this word; everything is humanly possible, if only everything is taken into account in advance, in every respect, and if the conditions are furnished."

The third feature of falling, ambiguity intensifies the indefinite and indeterminate relation that Dasein has with the world, with itself, and with the others, as a result of unrestrained curiosity, to the extent to which it becomes impossible to say “who” discusses with “whom,” since everyone “knows already how to talk about what has to happen first” and already “everyone has surmised and scented in advance what Others have also surmised and scented.” As a result, “ambiguity does not let Dasein come to an original relationship of being in being with one another.”

If conjoined with machination, with the calculation and the acceleration that come with it, ambiguity turns into massiveness. Massiveness refers to the fact that what is “common to the many and to all is what the ‘many’ know as what towers over them.” Heidegger calls this presence that towers over the “the rare and the unique,” thus obstructing the possibility of an authentic many, the ‘masses.’ These, he argues, “mount up only because numbers and the calculable already count as what is equally accessible to everyone.”

Massiveness is an intensification of the fact that in everydayness as defined by the “they” one’s attempt to distance oneself from the others, to be apart from them is hampered by the fact that the Others are not given as definite. On the contrary, “any Other can represent them.” The only decisive thing is the “inconspicuous domination by
Others” and the fact that one “belongs to the Others oneself and enhances their power.”

What makes the others as interpreted by the “they” indefinite is not only ambiguity, but also another aspect that has to do with the proximity of poēsis and praxis in the everydayness. It is the fact that the others are encountered together with and through the framing provided by certain types of modern equipment.

Heidegger explains in Being and Time that in the public means of transport and in information services such as the newspaper “every Other is like the next.” These forms of modern equipment seem to encourage a situation where “being-with-one-another dissolves one’s own Dasein totally into the mode of being of the others. Thus, Dasein allows itself to be carried along by others in such a way that the others in their distinctiveness vanish even more.” As a result, the “public being-with-one-another is lived totally from this Anyone” and “Dasein as being with is lived by the co-Dasein of others,” because “it is the others who live one’s own Dasein.” In brief, such forms of modern equipment refer to the others only as being similar to the next one to them and as indistinct, and not as something historical, namely, concrete. The others are encountered only as the repetition of “the same as,” which is, according to Kateb, one of the sources of political aestheticism, insofar as the others are not imagined in their living and singular presence, namely, as agents that can carry disclosive activities in the manner of Dasein.

In The History of the Concept of Time, Heidegger clarifies that the reason for encountering the others as the repetition of “the same as” is that the public means of transport and the information services, such as newspapers, reflect the nature of modern
mass production. Mass-produced articles “do not lack reference, but it is quite generic; they have an indeterminacy, an arbitrariness, but they nevertheless have a reference to indeterminate others.” It is the type of reference or relation, namely, the type of orientation in the world and toward the world and thus, the way of framing it, of the mass produced articles that can transform the “they,” authority and leadership included, into a real dictatorship, thus hampering the modification of the “they-self” into one’s own and individualized self.

While the notion of machination that Heidegger develops in the 1930s emphasizes the idea that beings are makeable and controllable, because they are re-presentable, the discussion of the essence of technology from the 1950s stresses the idea that beings are revealed as orderable. What Heidegger highlights now is also the violence that works through the essence of technology, the fact that the type of revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging forth. He calls this form of revealing enframing. Enframing does not let beings come forth into the manifest, but it almost compulsively forces them into the mode of standing reserve. It expedites everything in that it unlocks and exposes.

Enframing reveals the actual as standing reserve, namely, as something to be ordered and made available on demand, as (human) resources and supplies. When this happens the concrete living conditions of men disappear and the forester, for example, who belongs to a distinct world, loses his definite profile in order to “be made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered to newspapers and illustrated magazines.” The dangerous consequence is that when man comes to see himself only as “the orderer of the
standing-reserve,” then “he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve,” namely, as something on hand, finished and orderable, and not as a possibility to be, as a task to become one’s self by disclosing, both creating and preserving, a world.

When colonized by acceleration and massiveness, the machinational pathologies of curiosity and ambiguity, and by enframing, which denotes the essence of technology, culture as worldview becomes total worldview; it becomes “propaganda” and “apologetics.” Its aim is total mobilization. It is “the purely setting-into-motion and emptying all traditional contents of the still operative education [Bildung],” namely, of their potential to contribute to individualization, because the only goal that matters is “‘struggle’ for the barest conditions for continuing life and surviving in gigantic proportions.” By the ‘gigantic’ Heidegger means the limitless possibility to control and organize beings and to make history as “a prolongation of subjective re-presentation unto the whole of beings.” That is, the prolongation of man’s incapacity to encounter anything else except himself, that is, the meanings and the ways of defining himself that he disclosed hitherto.

Culture as worldview becomes “the means for the strategy of struggle for a will that no longer wants a goal; for, preservation of a people is never a possible goal but only the condition for setting goals.” Politics becomes political aestheticism and total-itarian politics, namely, the impulse to make the world meaningful by design, to which no limits can be set. Politics is also fictionalized and staged, in the sense that it becomes a way to
repeat and preserve, by a massive and gigantic display, what is considered to be the latent, cryptic, and true essence of a people.

This is made possible by the capacity to organize, order, and steer indeterminate others by using language (and rhetorical speech) not in a creative and mindful manner, but as the clichés and empty shells of total and noisy mobilization of curios, hasty, and forgetful beings. Because they have no time for understanding themselves and the others in their ownmost and concrete possibilities, in their living and unique presence, people can be easily mobilized and enframed through the hysterical and superficial repetition of the same.

In a nutshell, political aestheticism and totalitarian politics do not engage language in the individualizing interpretation of the familiar and the habitual, one that transforms and enriches everydayness through the capacity to listen to the voice of the uncanny and the foreign. Their aim is not to question the actual, the conventional, and the authoritative, but to preserve it and reproduce it in a way that is completely opaque to the dialogue with the foreign and the uncanny. One could argue that such a form of politics sees whatever resists and refuses itself to its attempts to willfully order and master only in the manner of violence, namely, as a counter-movement and a negation that invites further calculation and challenging forth. It sees everything that resists its ordering cravings as inviting to further violence in the service of reproducing and imitating, of preserving what it proclaims to be the true essence of a people or a culture, and not as a hint and as an occasion to create new vocabularies, practices, and beliefs, new
connections between the familiar and the new, singular and unique, human situations and the changing circumstances of time.

Through his analysis of the way in which the public means of transport and the information services enhance the massiveness and anonymity of social life, thus undermining the possibility of individual freedom and of authenticity Heidegger enriches, in important ways, Mill’s analysis of the tyranny of the majority and Nietzsche’s discussion of collective mediocrity and of the miniaturization of man. Heidegger is sensitive to the effects that the essence of technology has on modern societies, namely, on individual freedom and on political power. He is sensitive to the ways in which the essence of technology makes possible new and more encompassing forms of (anonymous and mass scale) domination and new forms of violence.

Thus, he comes close to saying that modern technology makes possible totalitarian forms of rule, namely rule by terror and ideology. According to Arendt, terror and ideology have no limit. Terror, she argues, “rules supreme when nobody any longer stands in its way.”872 It rules supreme when it can “race freely through mankind, unhindered by any spontaneous human action.”873 It presses men against each other.874 Eventually, they all become One,875 the Anyone, which is the result of a “they” that is intensified and framed by the modern equipment. At the same time, in Arendt’s view ideology cannot learn anything new form experience and it is moved by the tyranny of logicality.876 It is the climax of violent anonymity, of a form of domination, of organization, and regimentation that races through mankind unencumbered by creative and spontaneous human action. It races through mankind unhampered by Dasein’s
disclosive power and freedom, by the capacity to become oneself, to individualize and, by the same movement, to refashion the common horizons of meaning of a society, to breathe new life into them.

One could argue that the anonymity and the limitless movement, which both terror and ideology require, are made possible by pathologies that can mar the nature of (modern) equipment, as this is described and analyzed by Heidegger. They are made possible by the fact that through modern equipment as defined by machination and enframing the others are encountered only as the repetition of “the same as” and thus are indefinite. At the same time, the essence of modern technology removes all concrete and historical breaks. Thus, it makes possible the process like nature of politics, the fact that no barriers, historical, legal or individual, can be erected against the sweeping and anonymous violent movement of terror and ideology.

Poēsis, Imagination, and Culture

as a Dialogue with the Foreign and the Unfamiliar

Culture and total worldview, as well as total-itarian politics are, in Heidegger’s view, the result of a form of poēsis that moves Dasein into the wrong kind of attunement to the world, namely, one that does not encourage questioning thinking and mindfulness; undermining, eventually, Dasein’s freedom. Due to the proximity of poēsis and praxis in the practical everyday dealings of Dasein, which allows for the intensification of falling everydayness by machination and enframing, a way of interpreting beings that is
grounded in *poēsis techne* or making colonizes culture, politics, the public sphere in
general, as well as the human (or social) sciences.

The result of such a colonization is the hysterical, nosy, and massive mobilization
of human beings through the vulgarization of language, of words and images, as well as
of *pathos*, in brief, through the vulgarization of speech and rhetoric, in view of organizing
and steering human beings, because they are just problems to be solved and material to be
further elaborated, and of enrolling them in political struggles.

Aware of these pathologies, which reflect the colonization of politics and culture
by technology, Heidegger starts, as early as 1930s, conceptualizing an alternative
meaning of *poēsis* or creation and a form of non-representational, creative and
performative, but also questioning and mindful, type of thinking, which he calls
enthinking. He also sketches a notion of culture that, opposite, to worldview is a
consequence of poetic dwelling and of a certain understanding of imagination, language,
and (the work of) art; in brief, it is moved by poetic care.

Enthinking is not a “doctrine” or a “system,” namely, a calcified re-presentation,
an enchanted, namely, rigidified image or view of the world, but “actual history” and
“historical encounter.” Enthinking sees meaning as a reinterpreative event, namely, as a
turning point, as a critical juncture or as a crossing. Meaning originates in the creative
and poetic capacity of a thinker to invent the right names, namely, to adapt the inherited
word to the exigencies of the moment. Heidegger argues that in enthinking “the whole
must be put up for decision every time. In each case this succeeds only in *one* purview
and turns out to be all the more needy, the more originarily the hinting of be-ing strikes this thinking.”

Enthinking resembles Vico’s topical thinking. This refers to a form of thinking that does not categorize, but invents the name that “helps what it names to come forth in its singularity,” because “[i]t is the calling of thinking to rescue for be-ing the uniqueness of its history – and not longer to fritter away what is ownmost to thinking into the compartmentalization of the worn-out ‘generality’ of categories.” The reason is that “be-ing which must be enthought in its truth ‘is’ not what is general and empty but rather holds sway as what is singular and has the character of an ab-ground, in which the one-time occurrence of history is decided.” As a result, “the saying ‘of’ be-ing does not have be-ing as object but rather springs forth from being as its origin and therefore, when the saying the be-ing is to name the origin, it always speaks back to origin.”

Therefore, Heidegger points out, every ‘logic’ here ‘thinks’ too short, because λόγος as assertion can no longer remain the guiding-thread for representing being.” Instead, enthinking adds to the logical dimension of language, a poetic and rhetorical dimension. Thus, enthinking refers not only to how we think, but also to how we discourse. Enthinking consists of the poetic act of naming, through which a space of intelligibility is disclosed. However, as for Vico, the poetic act of naming is a discourse. It is fundamentally, a listening to the foreign and the unfamiliar in one’s ‘origin’ or ‘beginning,’ which reflects Heidegger’s “acute sense of rhetoric’s intense commitment to the priority of hearing over speaking.” After all, Heidegger points out, someone who can discourse and hear can also speak.
Heidegger touches here upon an essential topic. On the one hand, as Richard Polt points out, ‘beginnings’ such as in the act of naming can “initiate a domain of reproducibility and representability.” In this sense, such ‘beginnings’ unavoidably belong to the realm of the equipment. At the same time, Polt observes, such ‘beginnings’ still “can only be retrieved in a creative re-engagement,” because only “what is unique is retrievable and repeatable.” Such a possibility is inherent, not in the logical, but in the poetic and, especially, in the rhetorical power of language, namely, in the capacity to listen to the other, thus granting him the possibility to find his own freedom and place. This indicates that the challenge is to preserve the poetic and rhetorical power of written language or of the language that took the mold of the equipment. The challenge, as I will argue further in this chapter, is to practice a form of rhetorical remembrance and of poetic care that constantly prevents language from turning into a form of equipment that only (violently, by organizing and controlling the others) reproduces an original domain of representability.

Only thus publicness would not become the domination of massiveness and the terror of masses, but an individualizing and transforming dialogue, an encounter through which the ‘reproducible’ is creatively, poetically and rhetorically, repeated; it is reinvented. Consequently, enthinking (or inceptual thinking) is creative and performative thinking because in repeating the ‘same’ or the beginning “it reaches ahead and thus each time reaches beyond what is begun through it and determines accordingly its own retrieval.”
As creative and performative thinking, enthinking engages the temporality of authentic care and language, where reaching ahead is a coming back to a more original past, namely, to a past that is creatively repeated, in its still unactualized possibilities and unspoken meanings. This is made possible by its receptivity to the ab-ground, namely, to the still undisclosed possibilities of meaning, which reservedly and thankfully enthinking preserves, thus making it possible to intimate the “inexhaustibility of be-ing.”

Thus, enthinking understands that the ab-ground “is not –like a groundlessness – the no to every ground, but rather the yes to the ground in its hidden expanse and remoteness.” It also develops “a language that does not calcify time,” but sees meaning as emerging.

This is the case because enthinking stands in an essential relation to what Heidegger calls poetizing. Poetizing is the non-representational act of telling “something that, prior to this, has not yet been told.” It is an act of naming, namely, the act of calling “to its essence that which is named in the word of poetizing and to ground this essence as poetic word.” However, such an act of telling and calling is grounded in the rhetorical act of listening to the unfamiliar and of bringing it forth into the word, which is for Heidegger, as for Vico, language in “the proper and originary sense.” In this quality, enthinking is both embedded in language and it takes its orientation from pathos or one’s attunement to the world.

As embedded in a language that avoids the distortions that can be caused by the nature of the equipment, poetic thinking depends on discoursing, as both listening to and speaking with the foreign. Language has concealed and unspoken meanings, which need to be brought forth. Thus, such a form of enthinking or thoughtful saying, as Heidegger
calls it in *Letter on Humanism*, needs to be recalling memory or remembrance. In this quality it facilitates a dialogue of interpretations that can renew the commonness of language. To this extent, enthinking or thoughtful saying does not forget the multiplicity of meanings that are still concealed and unspoken in a language. This is important, because, according to Heidegger, “multiplicity of meanings is the element in which all thought must move in order to be strict thought,” because “all true thought must remain open to more than one interpretation.”

Creative thinking is grounded in *pathos*. The *pathos* or the emotional attunement that *moves* one into enthinking, is distress. It is the unsettling feeling that one is not at home in the world as actualized and presented by one’s own familiar horizon. To this extent, man’s disposition can intimate the future and thank for, welcome, and preserve the having been. Only such a form of thinking can make nearness problematical, because such thinking does not forget the still unspoken meanings of language and, at the same time, it can *transform* man’s attitude toward the world, toward other human beings, and toward beings in general. This reflects Heidegger’s conviction that, in the tradition of Aristotelian and Vichian rhetoric, *pathos*, as “a disposition toward other human beings, a Being-in-the-world,” is the condition of critical and reflective judgment. *Pathos* shows the ways in which one can be moved and thus *brought to change one’s opinion*, seeing, at the same time, that one’s ‘truth’ is just a way of experimenting different disclosures in the attempt to ‘ground’ the inexhaustibility of being.

As Gross suggests, as understood by Heidegger, emotions can be treated as structuring ‘turns,’ namely, as decisive moments of transformation, “that like tropes,
constitute a domain of mental perception that make language possible.” To this extent, logos, namely, thinking and judging, depends on language’s capacity to disclose unspoken meanings by discoursing with the foreign and the unfamiliar. This reflects the pathos’s capacity to produce “a sudden change and hence a transformation to…out of a previous situation, but not a sudden change that would take its own course.” This is the case because pathos is always connected to hexis. It is a “new being composed from the old.” Thus, “[t]his way of losing composure, being-made-to-lose composure (Aus-der-Fassung-Kommens), is done in such a way that composure can be regained (Aus-der-Fassung-gebracht Werdens).”

Similar to Vico’s conception, which situates the origin of the first civil metaphor in one’s inventive perception and rhetorical skills to listen to the voice of the thunder as conveying meaning, Heidegger also thinks that logos, thinking, and judging depend on one’s rhetorical power to listen to the Other, the uncanny, and to poetically call the unspoken meaning to word, thus disclosing a new space of intelligibility. However, for this to be possible one has to learn how to properly inhabit language, namely, one has to learn to engage language in a way that never exhausts it, but creatively preserves it in its unspoken possibilities of disclosure. Part of this is also to know how to engage dispositions or attunements, such as fear, an emotion that plays an essential role in the creation of human and cultural institutions for both Vico and Heidegger, thus reflecting their acquaintance with Aristotle’s rhetoric, in a way that shatters the familiar and at the same time re-glues it into a new frame or equipment, without covering the possibility of new possible disclosures.
The rhetor, the poet, and the creative or performative thinker are for Heidegger characters that can provide models for such an engagement of emotions and language, in view of cultivating Dasein’s freedom for the world and the care for its beings. They provide models for how to dwell, namely, for how to inhabit one’s own culture and language, the familiar and the habitual, for how to be (un)homely. They provide models for how to engage culture and language, namely, for how to work and achieve, for how to build and cultivate the “there,” the disclosure of a world, of a space of intelligibility, for how to care for it. To this extent, they indicate that the ‘hearth of the house,’ namely, one’s own locale, is “nothing that could be discerned or seized upon through making or achieving within the realm of whatever is actual,” namely, in the realm of the makeable, orderable, and controllable, of machination and enframing. Instead, they indicate that dwelling itself, namely, “being homely, is the becoming homely of a being unhomely.”

In Heidegger’s view and interpretation, Hölderlin’s hymnal poetry is an example of enthinking, creative thinking, or thoughtful saying and of culture in the above discussed sense. It is an example of engaging language in a way that keeps its unavoidable equipmentality open to new disclosures, capable of remembering and of dialoguing with the foreign. Fred Dallmayr explains that, in Heidegger’s view, Hölderlin is the “poet of the Germans” because, “his poetry ‘constitutes’ the ‘being’ of Germans by opening up a historical possibility for them albeit a possibility they tend to ignore.” In this sense, Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s poems is not a retreat from politics, but a “kind of counter-politics” or the signaling of “a radical change of political course.” As Heidegger himself points out, “[s]ince Hölderlin has this hidden and difficult meaning
to be the poet’s poet and the poet of the Germans, therefore he has not yet become a
guiding force in the history of our people. And since he is not yet this force, he should
become it. To contribute to this task is ‘politics’ in the highest and most genuine sense –
so much so that whoever makes headway along this line has no need to talk about
‘politics.’” 900

‘Politics’ in the highest and most genuine sense would then be to see (German)
culture (and, consequently, people, das Volk, the native earth and one’s homeland,
Heimat) as a “coming to be at home in one’s own,”901 and not as the imitation and
repetition of some true essence. Such a view of culture reflects the fundamental
assumption that “initially human beings are not and indeed never, ‘of themselves’ or
through any self-making, in that which is their own. In that case, however, to dwell in
what is one’s own is what comes last and is seldom successful and always remains what
is most difficult.”902 If this is the case, then the foreign is the nearest and the coming to be
home is “a passage thorough the foreign.” ‘Home,’ as brought forth by the image of the
river Ister, is both “locality and journeying.” Thus, Heidegger states, one’s own is rather
emerging meaning and a task, which singularly vanishes into the past and intimates into
the future. It is a back and forth movement between the foreign and the homely, a
journeying home.

The “law of the encounter [Auseinandersetzung]903 between the foreign and one’s
own is the fundamental law of history.” The foreign, Heidegger argues, is not “the alien
and the exotic, that which the adventurer sets out in search of in order to settle his
conscience.” On the contrary, spirit “is essentially unhomely only when, for the sake of
what is its own, from out of the will for its essence, it wills the unhomely, the foreign.”

The spirit loves the foreign and thus it has the “knowing and mindful courage to experience the foreign, an experiencing that, in the foreign, steadfastly gives thought to one’s own.” Heidegger calls such individualizing and singularizing intimacy with the other “bold forgetting,” namely, the “readiness, while in the foreign, to learn from the foreign for the sake of what is one’s own, so as to defer what is one’s own until it is time.”

Moreover, a genuine relationship with the foreign can take place only when this is “known and acknowledged in its essential oppositional character.” If the foreign is refuted or annihilated, “what necessarily gets lost is the possibility of a passage through the foreign, and thereby the possibility of a return home into one’s own.” Only if the foreign is known and acknowledged in its “essential oppositional character” the possibility exists for a “uniting that is not a confused mixing but a conjoining in distinction.” Only thus the possibility exists for inviting someone as a guest, namely, as a “foreigner who for a time becomes homely in a homely place foreign to them, and thus themselves bring what is homely for them into the homely of the foreign and are received by the homely of the foreign.” In short, the presence of the guest in the homely locale “makes the thinking of the homely into a steadfast remembrance of the journeying to the foreign.” Through the guest the journeying still prevails and remains determinative in the locality of the homely.

As a result, the genuine relationship with the foreign that leads to a conjoining in distinction is never “a mere taking over of the Other,” a refutation or an annihilation, but
a recognition of him in his “essential oppositional character,” in his unique and distinct character. At the same time, the “relation to one’s own is never a mere self-assured affirmation of the so-called ‘natural’ or ‘organic,’” Heidegger argues, but a passage through the foreign and the remembrance of such a journeying. In short, “[t]he appropriation of one’s own is only as the encounter (Auseinandersetzung) and guest-like dialogue with the foreign (gastliche Zwiesprache mit dem Fremden).

Thus, in Heidegger’s (political) interpretation of Hölderlin’s hymnal poetry, Germans miss precisely “the readiness to acknowledge the foreigner and his foreignness.” On the one hand, they miss the hospitality that makes possible the guest-friendship (Gastfreundschaft), through which alone one comes home into one’s own. On the other hand, they miss the resolve “to let the foreigner be the one he is,” because only “thus is a learning possible in guest-friendship,” namely, the possibility to listen to another’s distinct voice and to learn through such listening to be oneself and thus to individualize oneself. In short, the relation with the foreigner, guest and friend, is confrontational and unsettling, but because of that it is a genuine dialogue and learning through the other.

On the one hand, one has to let the foreigner be the one he is. One cannot enclose him in the violent, domineering, and reproductive way of machination and enframing, namely, of a form of equipment that is deprived of the sense of possibility, of the receptivity for still hidden and emergent meanings, for the ‘unhomely.’ On the other hand, such a retreat of oneself, such stepping aside, which alone makes listening to the foreigner possible, takes place from within one’s familiar ‘home,’ from within one’s own
space of intelligibility. To this extent, one’s listening to the foreigner is a remembering act, which brings him in one’s nearness. This is possible only insofar as one makes the foreigner re-presentable by projecting unto him one’s familiar categories and symbolic networks.

To this extent, the foreigner is placed in the being of the equipment. The unavoidable equipmental character of remembering explains why confrontation is necessary. Only thus, the foreigner is not reduced to the reproducible, but he is recognized in his freedom and disclosive capacity, as well as, in his capacity to resist. At the same time, such confrontation is never absolute because the ‘home’ and the ‘unhomely,’ one’s own and the foreigner are intertwined with each other, they cannot be separated. They are already dialoguing with each other, insofar as being at ‘home’ presupposes an antecedent understanding of the foreigner. In this sense, one never possesses one’s ‘home,’ one’s ‘home’ is never really one’s own and the ‘foreign’ is never totally strange and unfamiliar.

Unfortunately, when he argues in the 1940s that the guest-friendship with the foreigner, the hospitality that makes it possible and the willingness to let the foreigner be the one he is, thus not taking over the Other, are missing from the way the German people defines itself, Heidegger mentions only the Greek heritage in the German culture. He is utterly silent about the Jewish heritage. Thus, one could object that, if these were indeed Heidegger’s (cultural and political) convictions about the important role the passage through the foreign has in the coming home into one’s own, he should have publicly objected to the annihilation of the Jews from the German society and culture,
from German history, since such a genocide extirpates the possibility of the German culture and politics to come into its own.

Unfortunately, Heidegger never publicly objected to the extermination of the Jews. Such a crucial failure does very much weaken the argument that Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin is a form of counter-politics. However, it does not completely refute it. In the 1930s and 1940s, Heidegger did critically discuss the failure of the German political project to include other cultures in the definition of the German people. His criticism was formulated in the lectures that he delivered in the 1930s and 1940s to his students, within the institutional framework of the university. It is here that Heidegger did dare to publicly criticize the German politics of the time, thus trying to move and transform the attitude and the thinking of his students. 907

Still, from a philosophical point of view, Heidegger’s argument does preserve its full power and its capacity to inspire a certain form of politics. The main point stays, namely, that every building of a culture or of edifices (institutions) is a renewed journeying to coming home into one’s own in which the guest-dialogue and the guest-friendship with then foreign plays the essential role. It is a renewed journeying home in which the encounter with the foreign is decisive for the coming home into one’s own. Heidegger calls this poetic care (der dichterischen Sorge), namely, the knowing awareness in a culture that “the homely (das Heimische) always remains related to the unhomely (das Unheimisch) in such a way that the latter is present in the former.” 908 In this sense, poetic care is a creative task, not an imitation and “utilitarian artisanship.” 909 Thus, a culture can avoid becoming (total) worldview only to the extent that it invites in
its ‘origin’ the unhomely or the foreign as guest; only to the extent that it understands that it can be into its own only through the encounter and the dialogue with the foreign; only to the extent that it practices poetic care.

Poetic care transforms both one’s own and the foreign, but not in the way of machination and enframing, namely, as something to be processed and ordered and as something that has been deprived of particularity and freedom. It is a transformation that enriches both the foreign and one’s own through dialogue, where listening plays an important role, remembering, and interpretation. In brief, such a transformation occurs through discoursing, where the partners listen to each other, while, at the same time, confronting each other.

The foreigner is a guest. He is someone who is invited in one’s ‘origin.’ Thus he can be the one he is. According to the law of hospitality, one listens to the foreigner in the sense that one lets him guide oneself, one lets him show the way ‘home.’ At the same time, insofar as the foreigner is not squeezed into the processing entrails of machination and enframing, he is recognized in his Daseinal capacity to disclose a world. He is recognized in his freedom. Thus, one engages with the foreigner in confrontation, because differences are allowed to surface.

However, this is a dialogized and creative confrontation or agon. This the case because the foreign guides one ‘home’ and one’s ‘home’ starts as an invitation of the ‘foreign’ as a gust in one’s origins, which makes one’s ‘home’ a remembering of the ‘foreign.’ The two sides are inseparable. Thus defined, poetic care is an essential
component of a demanding conception of citizenship that a successful form of intercultural understanding would require.

The poetic image that occasions and guides the thinking about and the meditation on the “finding and appropriating of one’s own” is that of the river Ister, the Greek name of the Danube. Heidegger argues that Hölderlin engages poetic language and poetic images in a non-metaphysical and non-representational manner. Thus, the image of Ister does not symbolize something cryptic. It is not an after image (Nachbild) of what truly is. It is not the symbolic image (Sinn-Bild) of a primary image (Vor-Bild). But, it is in the nature of the river to be “a singular kind of journey, insofar as it simultaneously proceeds into what has been and what is to come.” The poetic essence of the river gathers together the temporal manifold, namely, the fact that the future, the past, and the present are intricate with each other. In this sense, the poetic image of the river (the Ister or the Rhine) combines actuality and possibility, presence and absence.

The poetic image of the river does not make accessible, it does not clarify (and represent) some cryptic and nonsensuous meaning, some true essence. It is not reproductive. It also does not bring a true meaning and essence into the nearest and the familiar. On the contrary, the role of the poetic image is to take one into the rare and the exceptional, into the distant (in die Ferne). The role of the poetic image is to take one to the boundaries of one’s own familiar territories, where one can encounter and dialogue with the foreign and the distant. Such an engagement of images reflects the fact that the poet’s poetizing does not revolve around his ego, it does not express his inner feelings. On the contrary, the poet reaches out into the foreign and almost loses ‘our’
tongue in foreign parts. He engages ‘our’ tongue in the dialogue with the foreign, who was thus invited in the ‘origins’ of a culture as a guest, in order to intimate a new historical possibility, a new beginning, for that culture. In this sense, the engagement of imagination and of images is creative.

Thus, creative thinking and poetizing are connected to a form of poēsis or productive agency that is different from poēsis techne. As a bringing forth, namely, as a producing and presenting which “lets what presences come forth into the unconcealment” this form of poēsis belongs to the realm of art. Art, Heidegger argues, “as the setting-into-work- of truth, is poetry.” Art is not an expression of an artist’s feelings. It does not revolve around his ego, but it is a happening of truth. It is the strife of world and the earth. It is the strife between what has been disclosed (and thus tends to become familiar and ordinary, to freeze over and calcify time) and what shelters itself from total opening (thus remaining unfamiliar and uncanny, the foreign that should be invited as a guest). Strife, Heidegger explains, is not discord or dispute, but rather the encounter and the dialogue through which “the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures” and “each opponent carries the other beyond itself.”

Strife is a striving, but also “the intimacy with which the opponents belong to each other.” Thus, what opposes the world and the earth, the clearing and the concealment, also brings them together, it brings them into a common outline. The world and the earth, what has been disclosed and what has been concealed, call upon each other. They inter-act with each other. The implication is that the act of creation, as the “bringing forth of a being such as never was before and will never come to be again”
requires preservation. That denotes the responsibility to listen to the foreign and the unspoken that underlines and surrounds the clearing of the world and on which the world comes to rest upon, in view of making possible another beginning or historical possibility, namely, another creation.

Creative preservation reflects the fact that an ‘original’ and unique work of art transports one into the openness of what has been disclosed and at the same time transports one “out of the realm of the ordinary.” It displaces one from the realm of the ordinary and thus transforms one’s accustomed ties to world and earth and restrains “all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work.” In brief, it transports one into the realm of truth and at the same time it equips one with the right attitude and attunement, that of questioning and creative thinking and of poetizing, that is required for the becoming and the happening of truth, namely, for the activity of renewing and enriching the world (of everydayness), one’s own culture and language.

What Heidegger says is that the work of art is the encounter and the dialogue between the clearing (the world that is disclosed) and what is still concealed, namely, what refuses or dissembles itself (the earth). The work in the work of art is a responsible way of originating, causing, or effecting. It is creative preservation. The more creative and ‘original’ an act of bringing something new forth is, the more it moves and displaces people into the creative preservation of what happens in the work, namely, of truth; the more it brings them into the freedom for the world. The more it moves (a) people in the direction of encountering and dialoguing with the foreign, the extraordinary, the
unfamiliar, and the unspoken that the work of art reveals as underlying the familiar and the ordinary.\(^9\)\(^{17}\) Thus, “a work is in actual affect as a work only when we remove ourselves from our commonplace routine and move into what is disclosed by the work, so as to bring our own essence itself to take a stand in the truth of beings.”\(^9\)\(^{18}\)

This shows that the work of art or, perhaps, the way art \textit{works} or produces has a \textit{praxis}-like dimension. The work of art is its own end, namely, it is the world that it discloses and the fixing and the happening of the truth. Heidegger explains this in the following way. Art works in the sense of the Greek \textit{ergon}. It is a performance and a “propriative event \textit{[Ereignis]}.”\(^9\)\(^{19}\) In brief, art works in a way that brings us in the openness of what has been disclosed in view of creative preservation; namely, in view of creatively repeating the thrust, the path, the hint that ‘origins’ and ‘beginnings’ bring forth.

On the one hand, the work of art \textit{fixes} the truth, the rift between the world and the earth, between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the canny and the uncanny into a frame (\textit{Ge-Stell}) or an outline. On the other hand, such fixing is “doing in the highest degree.” It is \textit{ergon}. It is a creative repetition. It is a reinterpretive event in view of truth. It is an act or a performance. Such creative repetition is achieved by creative imagination, never by its reproductive version. As a matter of fact, one could argue that reproductive imagination works too well with machination and enframing, namely, with a form of equipmentality that is based on representability, ordering, and processing, and not on remembrance, poetic care, and creative preservation.
However, in preservation as a performative and creative reinterpretive event “the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work, because the “proper way to preserve the work is co-created and prescribed only and exclusively by the work.”920 In brief, art works in a way that engages people in the co-creation of and co-responsibility for their horizons of intelligibility. In this sense, art “grounds being for and with one another as the historical standing-out of human existence in relation to unconcealment.”921 Art works in a way that discloses and enriches the world of being for and with one another, which Heidegger defines in the early 1920s, following Aristotle, as the act of speaking with one another. Art works in a way that enriches and renews, in Arendt’s words, what lies between people and “therefore can relate and bind them together,”922 namely, the world as the public realm, the realm that is common to all of us, the speeches and the deeds that brings us together.

Timeful politics, Poēsis, and Rhetoric

In Villa’s argument, although Heidegger rethinks a meaning of poēsis that is alternative to enframing, at the end of the day, his destruction of metaphysics is not radical enough, since he still attempts to come to terms with metaphysics through poēsis, and not, as Arendt does, through praxis, namely, through speech in the realm of plural and public opinions. Thus, Heidegger chooses the lonely path of extraordinary works and poetic words and images, while Arendt chooses the realm of politics as the realm where
authentic care (for the world) and authentic disclosive actions, freedom for the world, happen. However, Gross argues, one aspect that Villa leaves out in reaching his conclusion is Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* from 1924, and in general his reading of Aristotle, which “leaked into Arendt’s political philosophy, even though she did not arrive in body at Marburg until the winter semester of 1924.” In this sense, “Arendt’s ‘speech’ is for all intents and purposes, Heideggerian/Aristotelian ‘rhetoric.’”

Heidegger does interpret Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* as “a hermeneutic of everydayness in crisis, of being with another in an everydayness that has been radically disturbed and thus exposed, in its structures, for ready ontological examination.” This interpretation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* echoes throughout Heidegger’s late philosophy influencing the manner in which he defines *poēsis* and art with a poetic essence as opposite to *poēsis* as machination and enframing. To this extent, Heidegger’s conception of *poēsis* has a *praxis*-like dimension. This refers, in the tradition of rhetoric, to the fact that “a speaking being can size up an immediate mood, redescribe the world in creative and persuasive terms, come to a radical decision (given the circumstances), and act in concert upon it.”

Gross points out that, in 1924, the rhetor illustrates this capacity of a speaking being, beginning with the 1930s, the poet. While it is true that in moving from the rhetor to the poet, Heidegger loses sight “of the institutional weight of politics in everyday life,” it is also true that he “describes in new terms how the author is rhetorically constituted.” Thus, Heidegger brings rhetoric into the *origin* of art, namely, into its *work* or production. His rethinking of the author as rhetorically constituted resembles
what Bakhtin calls, based on his interpretation of Dostoevsky’s novel, polyphony. This refers to the capacity of the ‘author’ to anticipate the others’ freedom to answer to his call, to his speech. Thus, the ‘author’ is not a plastic and utilitarian artisan. Instead, as someone who is moved by poetic care, he engages in dialogue and discoursing with the foreign, with his heroes, namely, with those of whose freedom to creatively answer to his act of addressing them, he anticipates through his work. The ‘author’ is someone who practices the freedom and the poetic care for the world and thus brings the others in as co-authors of and co-responsible agents for the world.

Through his 1924 interpretation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Heidegger attaches a rhetorical dimension to *praxis*, namely, to the act of communicating with one other in the realm of plural and public *doxai* and to the act of deliberating with one another in the attempt to decide on the common advantage according to changing historical and cultural circumstances. Heidegger points out that the grounding mood or attunement of man is being with one another (*Miteinandersein*), namely, the possibility to be political, to live in the polis. Thus, the being of man has the character of speaking, because being with one another is not being one next to each other, but existing as beings that speak with each other, in the modality of communication, refutation, and disagreement. In this sense, discourse as a social practice has priority over language as concept. There is “language only because there is discourse” and “the very sense of any discourse is discourse to others and with the others.” In this sense, rhetoric is the “first part of logic rightly understood,”
Heidegger argues that for beings such as the Greeks, who existed in discourse, the rhetor has the authentic power over the world, over the there. The reason is that “rhetoric is nothing else than the interpretation of the concrete Dasein, the hermeneutics of the Dasein itself.” As Kisiel explains, rhetoric is, in Heidegger’s interpretation, “the cultivated power of situational insight, phronēsis, of being able to see, hear, and feel, in a temporally particular situation of action, what speaks for the matter at issue.” It is a form of caring for the world, for the there, in concert with the others. It is how freedom for the world manifests itself.

Heidegger still holds to this idea in Being and Time, when he argues that rhetoric, as understood by Aristotle, is the “systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of Being with one another.” Consequently, understanding oneself in one’s concrete possibilities, which is the basic aim of everyday natural discourse, is not a solitary, but a dialogic act. In this quality, it requires to publicly share a mood (a way of being emotionally situated and orientated in a world, of being attuned to it, namely, a pathos) with the others. To this extent, the capacity to listen to the others and to speak with them originates “into such a mood and out of such a mood.”

The dialogic act of understanding also requires publicly appearing to the others through one’s manner of speaking and through one’s attitude, through the general position that one takes toward the matter at stake; in brief, it requires ethos. Such requirements reflect the fact that speech is constituted by pathos and ethos. Pathos is a disposition of men and a capacity for transforming. Passions are dispositions oriented on other’s dispositions that define our Being-in-the world. Kisiel explains that, in
Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle, ethos, is “not just character, let alone moral character, but is to include both where the speaker is coming from and in particular how he projects himself out of this throwness.”

The aim of rhetorical speech is to cultivate the right opinion; namely, to persuade. Heidegger explains that doxa is “the way in which life is had in its everydayness.” It is the “authentic discoveredness of being-with-one-another in the world.” On the one hand, doxa “has a certain fixity and solidity in its peculiar familiarity and confidence in what first shows itself.” On the other hand, doxa “is always open to discussion and thus subject to negotiation,” because it is having only a view; it is how things look to me (Ansicht). Doxa is “that which always can be otherwise.”

Thus, doxa is characterized by provisional openness. Its tendency is “to leave the discussion open,” as a result, “doxa is the ground, source, and motive for speaking-with-one-another.” Pathos plays the essential role in changing one’s opinions, in bringing them to logos. However, to the extent that logos is language and to the extent that language is essentially word, namely, the poetizing act of naming, pathos also makes possible “the creative appropriation of contents and possibilities that are encountered within our lifeworld;” the creative disclosure of new spaces of intelligibility. Thus, “without the dynamism that only pathos can provide, doxa would remain frozen and inarticulate,” but also incapable of connecting to other and new opinions and beliefs.

Also, pathos “alone has the power to provide logos with a critical moment, kairos.”
Heidegger defines thoughtful deliberation in a concrete situation as authentic *kairos*. He translates *kairos* into German as *Bersorgen*, concern.\(^{942}\) *Praxis* is *Besorgen*, namely, the concern for being with one another through speech. *Kairos*\(^{943}\) is the character of *Besorgen*, while the “action itself has its *telos* in *kairos*.” In this sense, the purpose of the action is to *creatively* repeat (*Wiederholung*) the habitual, as a response to the concrete and changing circumstances and as “an appropriate decision”\(^{944}\) about the right technique and strategy for dealing with the contingency of practical life.

Through such creative repetition the precarious continuity and stability of political communities is reaffirmed, while not yet actualized possibilities of the ‘habitual’ are brought forth. Judging and reflecting, in view of renewing familiar and given horizons of culture by connecting them to new cases, happens through one’s capacity to be involved, in the tradition of rhetoric, with people living in concrete situations, thus being able to answer to their uniqueness and singularity, as well as to the exigencies of the time.

Heidegger argues that such an understanding of being with one another in the manner of speaking with one another that leads to the creative renewal of common and familiar cultural horizons requires “an original relationship of being in being with one another.”\(^{945}\) This refers to the fact that it requires recognizing the other in his freedom, namely, in his resolute capacity to disclose a world, which alone leads to his individualization. Only then “can people authentically be with one another – not by ambiguous and jealous stipulations and talkative fraternizing in the “they” and in what “they” want to understand.”\(^{946}\) Only then can people be with each other neither in “a leveled and indifferent side-by-side state” nor in a way where they “intensely watch and
furtively listen in on one another.” The reason is that only when the other is recognized in his freedom to be, can he be encountered in a manner, where what is at stake are “the superlative (ausgezeichneten, exceptional, outstanding) possibilities of being-with-one-another.” Heidegger describes such an encounter as “a resolute and thus mutually generous way of siding with one another in the world;”\(^947\) the opposite of enclosing the other in a prior frame that allows his constant check (der ständigen Kontrolle) and watching (aufpassen).

To recognize the others as objects of solicitude in a way that pertains to their existence, and not to a “what” with which they are concerned or distracted by, or simply busied to the point where they forget and abandon themselves, means to recognize them in their capacity as speaking beings to poetically and rhetorically answer to the unfamiliar and the uncanny. It means to recognize them in their willingness to risk the familiar, to lose their composure, in the attempt to disclose new possibilities of meaning. Only thus, they are helped to become transparent to themselves in their (poetic) care for the world and to become free for it,\(^948\) because only a Dasein that individualizes itself “first makes it possible to let the Others who are with it ‘be’ in their ownmost potentiality-for Being.”

Heidegger argues that only a Dasein that thus “frees itself for its world” can co-disclose the potentiality-for-Being of the others, because only such a Dasein can engage into an original “being-with-one-another in the same world…in communication and struggle.”\(^949\) As Kisiel points out, ‘communication’ and ‘struggle’ are two rhetorical dimensions and they represent “a path out of the leveling impersonal anonymity of the masses.”\(^950\) Only such a Dasein can “focus on life and motion and on the interruptive
demands of being-with-one-another – enhanced by the rhetorical devotion to occasions for speaking-out and listening-for.”

In this sense rhetoric “enables a sense of time as simultaneous, intricate, experientially complex.” While rhetorical speeches are about time (judicial rhetoric deals with past justice or injustice, deliberative rhetoric deals with future policies, and epideictic rhetoric secures the shared values of the present), through his performance the orator actually integrates the different times, as Dasein is expected to do in authentic care and freedom. As a result, in a politics where rhetoric is thus practiced there “is no pure present, no unmotivated future, no isolated past.”

Thus understood, as an ongoing attempt to bring the logos out of doxai through communication and struggle (confrontation) with one another and as a response to changing circumstances, in Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle, rhetoric reflects a “shift in focus from the being that always is (aei on) to that which can also be otherwise (endechomenon allos echein), the being that manifests itself in the vicissitudes of history and thus displays an ever-changing context, je nach dem.”

Kisiel points out that such “temporal science of the ever-unique human situation,” “which is ‘in each case mine (ours),’ with each human being or generation allotted its own time, must accordingly develop those peculiarly temporal universals sensitive not only to the distributive ‘each’ (jede) but also to its varying temporal contexts, ‘je nach dem.’” It needs to develop a sense and a receptivity for the different, for the foreign and the extra-ordinary; a capacity to see the different as what is outside the given and unquestioned confines of one’s own and, at the same time, as a guest-friend, namely, as
part of the outline that brings together what is familiar/disclosed and what is unfamiliar/still concealed.

If I correctly understand Kisiel, then, based on my discussion of Heidegger in this chapter, one could argue that precisely because “temporally particularizing universals” require receptivity to one’s unique situation, they also require the sensitivity to what it could be otherwise, to the different. That is why the foreign is not, in Heidegger’s conception, the exotic and the alien, but a guest-friend, because he only temporalizes ‘the universal’ differently. As Heidegger explains in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, from the perspective of his conception of truth and being, the cleavage that separates what is mine and what could be otherwise or different is also an outline that brings the rifted parts together.

Only such a creative receptivity to the foreign and inventive perception of the different can create, and not just simply proclaim or reproduce, values and new communal attunements, and thus it can keep “the continuity and integrity of the grossly episodic law of the state.” Vico argues that only such creative receptivity to particularity and to its incomplete character, namely, to the fact that it can always be otherwise, can create the civil metaphors that keep communities together. Concretely, this is made possible by not allowing the memory to fade away that the first human communities started as an asylum, namely, as a place where the foreigner was invited as a guest in one’s ‘origins.’ Only such creative receptivity keeps the memory vivid that the human locale or abode is an asylum, namely, a way of being at home as a journeying and becoming homely through the dialogue with the foreign. Such an understanding of
‘home’ reflects the fact that one invited the foreigner as a guest in one’s ‘beginnings’ and
‘origins.’ Thus one’s home is an act of remembering and a journeying from the
foreign.954

In brief, such a creative receptivity or inventive perception is required by the fact
that the universal has to be, in rhetoric and the type of politics to which it is central,
related to the particular. It has to be temporalized. Such temporalization reveals the
incompleteness and unending task of politics.955 This is the opposite of what culture as
worldview and totalitarian politics proclaim. It is the opposite of thinking that one can
see the world and look at it, that one can re-present it and thus make it meaningful by
design. It is opposite to the way images and rhetoric are used and misused in the
fictionalization of politics and in political aestheticism. While in the latter, images and
rhetoric repeat and reproduce the familiar as the actualization of some latent and true
essence of a people, in the case of timeful politics, where the universal is related to the
particular and temporalized, images and rhetoric are engaged as a way to articulate
(aussprechen) the uniqueness of human situations, and, consequently, to encounter and
dialogue with the foreign-guest. Only thus the memory is kept alive in a culture that the
familiar could have always been otherwise. It could have been different.

Given the important role that rhetoric plays as the “systematic hermeneutic of the
everydayness of Being with one another,” Gross argues that the interpretation of tradition
and of the habitual is and remains for Heidegger, not only the reception/preservation of
tradition, but also “a kind of ‘performance’ that is simultaneously the instantiation of
tradition and an expression of freedom;” an act of individualization. However, the act of
individualization, through the performance of interpreting the tradition and the familiar, the past and the present, is also utterly creative. It is in the tradition of Vico’s rhetoric a poetic making, a way of producing something utterly new, out of the ‘same.’

Such a grounding of hermeneutics in rhetoric, Gross goes on, is better suited for an account “of performative discourse constitutive of a pluralistic community,” because, on the one hand, it accounts for the plurality of doxai and for individualization, and, on the other hand, it requires that one’s individualization through the dialogue with the foreign and the unfamiliar, the disruptions of familiarity and common sense have to be reconnected to authoritative linguistic and cultural horizons as interpreted by the “they,” because the aim is to enrich everydayness and to transform it. The aim, in Vico’s spirit, is to create new civil metaphors that keep the continuity and the solidity of the episodic law of the state.

To engage in the expansion of given cultural horizons and in the creation of new civil metaphors requires creative non-representational imagination. It requires a form of imagination, which because it absorbs the imbrications of the three moments of time, it is capable to move between actuality and possibility. It is capable to project new ways of envisioning the familiar. In the next and last chapter of this dissertation I will read Arendt’s conception of the human condition, of the life of the mind, of the work of art, and of imagination from a perspective that brings into relief and intensifies their creative aspects. These refer to the role that creative imagination and aesthetic creativity can play in renewing and expanding the artificiality of politics, namely, the common cultural and
linguistic horizons, which can enhance, as Herder argues, the political capacities of human collectivities.

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Theodor Kisiel points out that Arendt’s *Human Condition* is, by her own admission, “a critical appropriation of Heidegger’s *Daseins*-analytic that she first learned from his lecture courses, seminars, and more private tutorials in her three semesters at the University of Marburg.”

Reflecting such an appropriation, in Arendt’s account of the human condition work and action are continuous with each other. On the one hand, deeds, facts, events, and patterns of thoughts and ideas also need to be “remembered and then transformed, reified as it were, into things – into sayings of poetry, the written page or the printed, into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents, and monuments.”

Thus, the acting and speaking men need artists and poets to give permanence and endurance to their fleeting deeds. Acting and the act of speaking need the space that is disclosed by the work of art. They need a remembering form of equipment. This suggests, as Bernasconi argues, that “πραξις shows itself only by submitting to the manner of revealing characteristic of ποίησις, so that it does not show itself as itself and according to its own manner of appearing, except as a trace;”

as the memory of the having been that is stored in cultural products. In this respect, both Arendt and Heidegger agree, in the tradition of judicial rhetoric that “linguistic disclosure of the past helps constitute who we are.”
On the other hand, the conundrum is to find a form of equipment that can accomplish the transformation of the utilitarian and monological frame of mind of the *homo faber* into receptivity or sensibility to difference and plurality and into the creative power to reinvent the familiar and the common sense, the dimmed down everyday meaning. It is to move *homo faber* into a disposition “to lay out concrete possibilities for future action, and forge a common opinion regarding what is to be done,” because essential for praxis is the speech that allows humans to “plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them.” The challenge is to find a form of equipment that does not cover Daseinal freedom and care for the world.

As a result, the works of art should have both an outstanding permanence, due to the fact that they are things, and a praxis-like capacity, due to the fact that they are thought things, which as thought itself have neither an end nor an aim outside themselves, and do not even produce results. Thus, on the one hand, they will stabilize the frail realm of human actions, and, on the other hand, they would free one from the (distorted equipmental, namely, turned machinational and enframing) view that the world can be made, ordered, and mastered, that it can be made meaningful by design. The works of art will free one for future possibilities, for creating new vocabularies, practices, beliefs.

Given the pivotal role that *poēsis* plays for Arendt, the task is to resituate *poēsis* or creative making as (re)defined by Heidegger, namely, as having a rhetorical and praxis-like dimension, in the realm of plural and public *praxis*, instead of simply trenchantly divorcing the two activities from each other. Only thus the stabilizing force of poetic and narrative remembrance would give permanence and stability to the realm of
plural and public speeches. Only thus would one make one’s nearness and familiarity problematic in a culture, thus becoming sensitive to the encounter and the dialogue with the unfamiliar and the foreign, through which the habitual and the conventional is recreated. Such a resituating would connect Arendt’s conception of action to a meaning of the aesthetic, of the work of art, and of imagination, which is neither just contemplative (the model of the Kantian judge) nor just theatrical performance and appearance (the Nietzschean artistic illusion), but creative.

This is a form of creative making, which, instead of issuing in machination and enframing, refashions common cultural horizons. It refashions the artificiality in the absence of which, according to Arendt, politics would not exist. It provides the permanence and the stability without which politics would not be possible, without, at the same time, blocking the access to the changing plurality and contingency of the world, to its inexhaustible strangeness, to the unsettling and uncomfortable presence of the different others.

Such intensification of the poetic and rhetorical dimensions of Arendt’s notion of action, through the re-situation of poēsis or creative making as (re)defined by Heidegger in the realm of plural and public praxis, adds to the three activities that define the human condition, labor, work, and action, the fourth category of poēsis. This would further expand on the concept of creation, which Heidegger concocts as a reaction to the danger that the wrong kind of equipment could colonize the realm of politics, of Daseinal freedom and poetic care for the world. As defined by Heidegger, such a form of poēsis is non-domineering and thus, able to engage in a dialogue with the unfamiliar and the
foreign, because it does not lead Dasein into forgetting its world-disclosive character and its poetic care for the world.

Arendt does develop a view of the political role of imagination and of the work of art in the footsteps of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. However, as I argued in Chapter Two, she does not fully exploit all the implications of Kant’s text. She does not sufficiently emphasize the role of creative imagination, of aesthetic and linguistic creativity as essential aspects of human actions and of acts of understanding and judgment.

On the one hand, Arendt keeps at bay a more creative meaning of the aesthetic because she wants to keep at bay from politics the Platonic idea of author, the philosopher-king. This is the philosopher who engages himself in utilitarian artisanship, namely, in the act of producing the world in accord with his design, as a mimetic and reproductive enterprise. On the other hand, in sketching her understanding of political agency, Arendt emphasizes the aesthetic, namely, theatrical, appearance of the actors.

In the spirit of Nietzsche’s philosophy, she emphasizes the possibility to have an open construction of the self and of the world, because there is no inner or true self, but just so many facets that gain reality and actuality through one’s interactions with different others and different circumstances. In Nietzsche’s understanding of the aesthetic as theatrical appearance there is already a strong rhetorical element, which Arendt intensifies through her encounter with Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle in the 1920s.

However, according with my interpretation of Nietzsche from the preceding chapter, the rhetorical element in the construction of the self through one’s varied appearances has also a strong imaginative dimension. It requires creative imagination,
namely, the explorative power to make the familiar problematic and to discover new facets to it, as well as the analogical-architectural ability to reconnect such wanderings to given and familiar cultural horizons, thus recreating and, accordingly, expanding their commonality. Nietzsche calls this the task of a true bearer of culture.

In this chapter I argued that Heidegger’s conception of poetic care and of the work of art relies on a non-representational form of creation and imagination. This is a form of creation and of imagination that expands the world, the “there,” by bringing forth unspoken meanings and unactualized possibilities in a culture, and not by reproducing or re-presenting a true essence or a given familiarity. Arendt does embrace a non-foundational vision of the self and of politics and thus she would never see agency or action as the reproduction of a true essence or as an absolute beginning.

However, she still defines imagination in line with what Ricoeur calls reproductive theories of imagination, namely, as the re-presentation of a previous presence, of a faint perception. In brief, while Arendt embraces Heidegger’s non-foundational conception of authentic disclosive actions and applies it to the realm of plural and public opinions, to the realm of praxis, her conception of poēsis and of imagination still lags behind. It does not reflect the same radicalism. Thus, Arendt fails to rethink aesthetic creativity, imagination, and authorship in a non-representational and non-foundational manner.

One aim of this dissertation is to rectify the absence of a more creative role of imagination in Arendt’s performance model of democracy, by intensifying the poetic and
rhetorical skills that the democratic reflective citizens need if they are to engage in successful intercultural understanding and forms of democratic cosmopolitanism.

Thus far, I have argued that democratic citizens need to cultivate a varied and flexible aesthetic sensibility, as well as a common feeling of humanity. They need to practice of form of practical wisdom, namely, a reflective receptivity to particularity, which has a strong poetic and rhetorical capacity, thus making the civil metaphors, where solidarity, laws, and institutions originate, more inclusive and thus more democratic.

Also, democratic citizens need to be able to practice both analogical imagination, namely, the capacity to recreate their ‘home’ or their particular horizon, and explorative imagination, namely, the capacity to inhabit and colonize other symbolic spaces. Only thus will they be both able to play multiple roles, to wear many masks and costumes, thus, addressing the different others and persuading them that one’s opinions are meaning and value, and to organize and give ‘unity’ to differences, thus not allowing distances to become oppositions and antagonisms.

Henceforth, the next and last chapter of this dissertation will be dedicated to a reconstruction and intensification of aesthetic and linguistic creativity in Arendt’s conception of politics, namely, of action, law, and authority, in connection with a non-representational and non-foundational conception of imagination. It will also be dedicated to defining a meaning of political creativity that would make it possible to distinguish between a form of aesthetic imagination that is conducive to political aestheticism (totalitarianism) and one that can facilitate intercultural understanding in democratic contexts.
Intercultural understanding requires a form of political creativity that, in poetically intensifying the questionableness and not-at-home-ness of culture and language and in poetically producing the otherness at the heart of experience, in Ricoeur’s words, would, at the same time, rhetorically release “new attunements to the world” and bring forth “new possibilities for (communal) life,” new civil metaphors that re-envision what living together means in a plural and changing world.
Chapter Six

Arendt: The Promise of Creative Politics in a World of Plural Cultures

In Arendt’s view, the gradual coming into being of totalitarianism is largely facilitated by distortions of imagination. It is facilitated by the incapacity to dialogize difference, either that of Jews in Europe or that of the aboriginal tribes in South Africa, and by the reduction of imagination to ideological fantasy. As a result, the artificial bonds between people(s), which are created by work, culture, and laws, are gradually eliminated. Such elimination, is, eventually, reflected by the catastrophic modern political failure to define humanity and to guarantee and enforce human rights.

Arendt’s line of reasoning is that the absence of cultural ties between people(s) facilitates the coming into being of imperialism and of (tribal) nationalism. Moreover, the failure to engage imagination dialogically is responsible for the gradual transformation of the different into something utterly alien. As a result, differences become absolute and unbridgeable, because one’s capacity to imaginatively and creatively deal with the accidental and the incomprehensible is gradually atrophied.

Unfortunately, modern alienation curtails the possibility of creative (cultural) making. Modern alienation consists in the disappearance of political situations and in the loss of common sense. Political situations refer to what Arendt calls “spaces of appearance,” where one’s opinions are significant and one’s actions effective, namely, they equalize and humanize people. Common sense is characterized by imagination, not fantasy, namely, by the capacity to present to the others one’s initial strangeness to the
world and, at the same time, to accommodate this to the plurality of the world, thus
reconstructing and renewing its commonality, making it, in Vico’s sense, more inclusive.

Arendt argues that the “remedy” to modern alienation consists in the recovery of
the finite character of human time, in the guise of what she calls the “origin- al” character
of man. This refers to man’s creative power to begin something new. Only thus would the
moderns regain the capacity to make a common world, one that is held together not by
the strengths of their mind, but, as for Herder and Vico, by the creativity of their culture
and of their common sense.

I will argue in this chapter that Arendt does not separate praxis from any form of
poēsis. On the contrary, poēsis is an essential activity of the human condition, which can
either act as a source of political aestheticism or as a source of both plurality and
commonality, thus facilitating intercultural understanding. By intensifying the
Heideggerian elements from Arendt’s conception of the human condition and the life of
the mind, a distinction can be made between, on the one hand, technical making and, on
the other hand, creative-poetic making. Such a distinction is grounded in the different
manner technical and creative-poetic making relate to time. Poetic making is creative and
non-domineering because it does not efface the aporiai of time. Instead, it deals with
them productively.

As a consequence of poēsis thus becoming a category of praxis, history turns out
to have not a philosophical, but rather a narrative structure. This means that human time
is a combination of fiction (‘seeing as’) and history. As a result, the past appears as a
field of possibilities that need a ‘figure.’ The present’s field of experience appears as
indeterminate. This refers to the fact that there will always be aborted or repressed possibilities of the past that still need to be provided with a figure. While the future takes shape within a horizon of expectations that express the present’s care for the generations to come, as well as for the humanity as a whole.

With more than one path from the past entering the present, with more than one possible future coming out of a given historical configuration, and with a present field of experience that is never completely determined, but in the making, tensions and thus incomplete mediations emerge between the different moments of time. A sense of the possible and of absent otherness, still waiting to be given a figure, thus becomes constitutive to all three moments of human time and, consequently, of action.

What confers to the making of history its dialogic and creative character is the possibility of productively dealing with the finite character of human time. Refiguring (human) time throughout history results from a dialogue with the past and the future, which is made possible by the imagination’s ability to function as analogical perception. As defined by Ricoeur, this is the capacity to transfer my “here” into “there, and thus to see both the past and the future as made out of human beings that are originators of meaning as much as those who live in the present. To this extent, “it is still the imaginary that keeps otherness from slipping into the unsayable.”

Insofar as action is connected to dialogic and creative poësis, human agents develop a narrative identity. This is a dynamic identity that can always refigure its unity in light of new possibilities and new interpretations of its history, of its past, present, and future. Thus, narrative identity adds new practical possibilities to the present’s field of
experience. It is in such a quality that the poetic narrative (poēsis) functions as a category of action (praxis).

The work of art best exemplifies this type of non-violent and non-domineering, but, nevertheless, creative and dialogic making. On the one hand, the work of art has a transfiguring and metamorphic capacity. This means that the work of art can free “the living spirit,” namely, the sense of immateriality in anything material and the sense of possibility in anything given. Through the work of art, time can be experienced as transcendence, namely, as a source of world-disclosive actions.

In this sense, the work of art acts as a source of plurality, because it can transform the necessary permanence of the world into the unexpectedness of novelty, innovation, and uniqueness. The work of art creates the possibility to add new meaning to given and familiar symbolic spaces and thus, to expand both cultural and political identities, insofar as, according to the argument I make in this dissertation, the two are connected. Also, through its metamorphic power, the work of art can make the familiar and one’s ‘home’ problematic and distant, thus making one receptive for the encounter and dialogue with the foreign.

On the other hand, the works of art can “fulfill their own being, which is appearance, only in a world which is common to all.” Through taste, the work of art becomes an exercise into publicity and commonality. It becomes an exercise into the “making” of a common world through judgment and imagination. Thus, man’s disclosive power is intersubjectively framed. It is neither violent compulsion nor monological imposition. As creative receptivity, taste is, for Arendt, the core of political freedom. It is
the freedom to care for the world and to engage cultural plurality in its making, in a responsible and creative manner.

Thus, one can argue that the work of art functions as a form of dissent and criticism, facilitating thinking and reflection. However, its role is not entirely negative. Instead, insofar as dissenting from given horizons of meaning makes one available, as I argued in Chapter Five, for the encounter and the dialogue with the foreign, the work of art makes possible poetic care, which is a creative task, namely, one that expands one’s ‘home’ or world.

To this extent, my discussion of Arendt in this chapter adds a new dimension to Dana Villa’s notion of Socratic citizenship. In Villa’s view, Socrates invented a “form of philosophical or dissident citizenship.”965 This refers to the fact that Socrates enacted thinking in conversation, namely, he practiced a form of examination that “dissolves opinions rather than solidifying them.”966 Practicing such a form of examination frees one for the possibility of thinking of oneself otherwise.967 This is the result of a capacity that every human being has, namely, the power to “estrange oneself and reflect.”968

Arendt shared with Socrates the same appreciation for the purging role of thinking, for its power to enable one to think of oneself and of one’s world otherwise. My argument, in this dissertation and, particularly, in this chapter, emphasizes the role that imagination plays not only in helping one to “estrange and reflect,” but also in facilitating the complementary act of reconnecting oneself to the world, thus renewing one’s own, one’s ‘home.’
In short, insofar as Socratic citizenship means to enact thinking in conversation and insofar as thinking and reflection require creative imagination, then such a form of demanding or philosophical citizenship is not only dissident, but also imaginative and creative. Imaginative and creative citizens would be able not only to free and estrange themselves for reflecting and thinking otherwise, but they would also be able to present this strangeness and novelty to the world in a way that (ceaselessly) renews its commonality. Such a power of imagination belongs to a form of creative making, to a form of *poēsis* that is essential to the human condition, to both action and mind.

Arendt’s notion of creative making or dialogic *poēsis* resembles Bakhtin’s notion of polyphonic novel. For Bakhtin, the author of the polyphonic novel does not merge with the heroes and does not see them as an expression of him-self. On the contrary, in a dialogic form of authorship/making the heroes are the equals of the author. Thus, the leading idea of dialogic *poēsis* is that one always needs the excess of seeing of the other in order to have access to one’s life or to one’s action as a whole. As in Heidegger’s conception of poetic care, one’s locale is a journeying ‘home’ from the unhomely, it is a coming to one’s own through the encounter and the dialogue with the other, the foreign.

Based on such a similarity, Arendt’s notion of creative making or dialogic *poēsis* makes possible a form of political creativity, which should characterize both authority and law. The author-inspirer anticipates the creative freedom of the heroes, of the Socratic citizens. He inspires them to broaden his design or the ‘origins.’ Thus understood, political creativity combines creativity and receptivity. It combines the creative and imaginative anticipation of the other’s freedom to think otherwise and to
creatively renew the ‘origins’ and the dissident’s receptivity to the voice of ‘authority,’
his capacity to creatively repeat it.

Moreover, law should disclose spaces of plurality and commonality and it should create lasting ties and linkages. This is relevant because, according to Arendt, the main aim of law is to create increasingly more world. This refers to the creation of increasingly political situations between peoples. These are situations where people(s) can share speeches and memories, and where their opinions can be significant and their actions can be effective. Only thus, Arendt argues, one can hope to make humanity.

Intercultural understanding requires both a form of Socratic citizenship that is imaginative and creative and forms of authority and normativity that are characterized by political creativity. As poetic and dialogic care, such political creativity keeps constitutions (foundations in general), institutional designs, and (national) cultural and political identities open to the newcomers and the foreigners, to the strange others that the temporal nature of the human condition keeps bringing into one’s ‘home’ and familiar symbolic horizons. In this sense, Arendt’s conception of the human condition and the creativity of natality that resides at its core incorporate and radicalize Heidegger’s notion of poetic care, as this is constructed through his interpretations of Hölderlin’s hymnal poetry.

*Political Aestheticism and the Distortions of Imagination*
I started this dissertation with a critical discussion of Kateb’s analysis of political aestheticism. According to Kateb, political aestheticism is made possible by the hyperactive creative imagination of leaders, such as Stalin, Hitler, and Pol Pot, and by the lack of a form of active benign imagination in their followers. In the Introduction of the dissertation, I argued, against Kateb’s position, that the hyperactive imagination of Stalin or Hitler was not creative. Instead, it has narcissistic and monological. It was fantasy.

In short, neither the imagination of totalitarian leaders nor that of their followers was dialogic, because, it did not need the excess of seeing of the other. It did not anticipate the other’s freedom and it did not engage in a dialogue with the ideas of others. In this sense, my argument is similar to Margaret Canovan’s, who also observes, against Kateb’s reading of the Origins of Totalitarianism, that totalitarianism was characterized precisely by the lack of “the free play of human creativity”\(^{969}\) and by the lack of imagination.

Instead, as Arendt argues, totalitarian leaders transcend elements of reality and of verifiable experiences into a “chosen fiction,” which they remove from all possible control by individual experience.\(^{970}\) Through this, they provide the masses with an escape from reality. Such an engagement of imagination, by both the totalitarian leaders and by the masses they organize, is monological and solitary. It is neither dialogic nor creative. The monological imagination of the leaders concocts the “fantastically fictitious consistency of an ideology,”\(^{971}\) which the solitary and escapist imagination of the European mass-man needs in order to shelter from the accidental and incomprehensible aspects of the world, from the different and the uncanny. In short, neither the imagination
of the leaders nor that of their followers was creative in Bakhtin’s sense, namely, it did not answer to the other’s unique life. This is the case for two reasons.

On the one hand, the leaders did not want to persuade the masses, but only to organize their numeric solitariness. On the other hand, the masses chose loyalty and the activism of “sheer action and the overwhelming force of sheer necessity” instead of creativity in dealing with the accidental and the incomprehensible. The result was the isolation of the people from each other and, on the deepest level, their loneliness.

Isolation, Arendt observes, is “that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of their common concern is destroyed.” It is the result of an uncreative form of authority, one which fails to make room for freedom, and of a form of law, which fails to create ties and linkages between peoples.

Loneliness, which is the common ground of both terror and ideology, reaches much deeper. It concerns not only the political sphere, but human life as a whole. To be lonely means “to be deserted by all the others.” It means to be uprooted and superfluous. To be uprooted means “to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by the others.” To be superfluous means “not to belong to the world at all.”

Arendt argues that, an important factor in the production of anti-Semitism, imperialism, and, eventually, totalitarianism was the desire of the 19th and 20th century European men to escape, from a world of profound changes and transformations that increasingly confronted them with accidental and incomprehensible events, into fantasy.
Anti-Semitism, imperialism, and totalitarianism were the result of a longing for fantasy and for ideological consistency.

According to the story that Arendt tells, the bourgeois society of the 19th century gradually developed a “morbid lust for the exotic, abnormal, and different as such.” Jews became the arch-instantiation of the exotic, the abnormal, and the different as such. Arendt observes that the willingness of the 19th century bourgeois society in Europe to be on a constant “lookout for the strange, the exotic, the dangerous,” made it ready to admit “monstrosities” and the “utterly alien.”

As fantasy or illusion, imagination thus facilitated the total escape from the bonds of common sense, of a shared world of speeches and deeds, of memories and culture. In the process, it pushed the utterly alien and “abnormal,” the Jew, to the fringes of society. This was possible because of the unbridgeable strangeness of the other. Imagination as fantasy separated people one from the other. It favored their isolation and, eventually, their loneliness. The only way one could deal with the unfamiliar or the strange was by transforming it into a curiosity. It was by transforming it into a total diversion and escape, into an absolute negation of one’s world.

The 19th century bourgeois society failed to practice what Heidegger calls poetic care, because it did not see the essential role that the dialogue with the foreign plays in the journeying ‘home,’ to one’s own. It did not see that the dialogue with the foreign was essential in the creation of the categories for understanding the meaning of one’s own life. As a result, the foreign became absolute difference. The foreign ceased to be a
dialogized difference, namely, a difference that one can inhabit, colonize, and change, as well as connect to one’s familiar symbolic horizons, to one’s memory and hope.

Eventually, being Jewish came to be seen as “an inherent psychological quality which man cannot choose or reject, but which is imposed upon him from without, and which rules him as compulsively as the drug rules the addict.” Jews could not transform anymore. They could not be seen as something else. They could not think of themselves otherwise; neither did the others.

Reflecting the growing gap between Jews and the “bourgeois society of the 19th century,” their growing isolation from each other, their identities congealed. Their identities got stuck into a given and unchangeable, psychological or inner, quality. No world of speeches and deeds linked them to each other, anymore. Thus, each side was deprived of the possibility of developing a narrative, namely, a dynamic and open identity, one that can still change.

On the one hand, the Jews retreated into “inner experience and private emotions.” Thus, they exaggerated their unbridgeable difference, ending by “constantly justifying not what they did, but what they were.” They reified their identity in a way that did not allow for further transformation. On the other hand, the bourgeois society saw the Jews as the “attraction of everything that could be supposed to be mysteriously wicked or secretly vicious.” Jewish identity was too different, exotic, and alien, a curiosity that one could not possibly dialogize, namely, one could not possibly see as changeable and connectable to one’s own.
Aware of the political dangers that are inherent in the proliferation of difference as such, Arendt points out, in *The Human Condition*, that uniqueness, not otherness, is one of the features of plurality, which is the basic condition of speech and action. Uniqueness includes the moment of internal active self-definition, while otherness seems to be more a quality given from the outside.\(^{983}\) The reason seems to be, as for Bakhtin, that uniqueness is dialogic. One answers to and anticipates the other’s uniqueness. One presents one’s uniqueness to the others. Instead, otherness is devoid of theatrical and aesthetic qualities.

Both, the bourgeois society and the Jews engaged imagination in an irresponsible way. The result was isolation from each other and the transformation of their difference into something given, absolute, and unchangeable, namely, into nature. When imagination is engaged in an irresponsible way, either one fails to answer to the unique lives of other human beings or one fails to present to them one’s existential strangeness to the world, as well as one’s uniqueness.\(^{984}\)

One could argue that such a lust for the different and the exotic from the part of the bourgeois society was nothing but the symptom of a profound incapacity to be creative. To be creative would have meant not to see the other as an embodiment of clannishness, of a social position or of a psychological quality that is forever frozen by and as nature,\(^{985}\) but to encounter the other in a way that recognized his outsideness, namely, his individuality and the uniqueness of his life.

It would have meant to recognize the other as capable of revealing,\(^{986}\) of disclosing, the novelty and uniqueness of his life, through speech and action, as well as
the unfinalized nature of his narrative identity. It would have meant to encounter the 
other in a way that would have given both sides the chance to formally enrich their lives, 
by giving each of them the possibility to accomplish the task of becoming oneself through 
answering to the other’s uniqueness. It would have meant to give each of them the 
possibility of becoming equal and human, which, for Arendt, is always the result of 
agonistically creating and sharing a world of cultural artifices and actions with the other.

As told by Arendt, the story of anti-Semitism in Europe shows that, in order to 
develop forms of togetherness, namely, forms of being with others, and not “for nor 
against them,” one needs to practice a form of dialogic imagination. As defined by 
Bakhtin and Vico, in practicing dialogic imagination one inhabits and answers to the 
uniqueness of the other’s symbolic horizons, while being, at the same time, capable of 
making them more inclusive. Only thus, the artificiality of politics, the ties and linkages 
that bring people together, can be created and made more inclusive. In this way one 
defies the ideological or fantasy-like reification of the other, thus avoiding the 
transformation of culture into a worldview and of politics into aestheticism.

Being for or against the others is to replace who they are with what they. Thus, the 
possibility that they can change is eliminated. As I will argue further in this chapter, this 
happens when one fails to productively engage human time and its aporiai. To be for or 
against the others means to uncreatively and lazily reify them. When this happens, either 
one follows the anonymous masses selflessly, because one longs to be “just a number and 
functioning only as a cog,” one longs to be organized and made to feel secure by the 
perfect coherence and consistency of ideology, or one sees the others only in terms of
opposition and rejection. As Bakhtin would argue, this means to deal with the other compulsively, by either assimilating him or by rejecting him and his ideas. When this happens formal enrichment and cultural creation are not a possibility anymore. There is also no expansion of civil metaphors, no increase of the artificiality and commonality that make politics possible.

Arendt continues the narrative about the origins of totalitarianism by pointing out that imperialism exported the incapacity of the European society to face the other in a creative and dialogically imaginative way, into the larger world, while, at the same time, giving it a stronger reality in Europe under the guise of tribal nationalism. The lust for the exotic, as well as the fact of seeing the other as strange and unfamiliar in an unbridgeable manner, found its ‘mature’ expression in European imperialism. The story of imperialism is meant to throw light on a way of encountering the other that is uncreative because it is unlimited and un-limiting, and, thus incapable, in the end, of any fabrication whatsoever.

Expansion for expansion’s sake was the hallmark of imperialism. The logical consequence of the concept of unlimited expansion was “the destruction of all living communities, those of the conquered peoples as well as of the people at home.” The unlimited and un-limiting character of the imperialist expansion reduced the identity of its protagonists to a fantasy. The “heroes” of imperialism, the mob, “were nothing of their own making, they were like living symbols of what had happened to them, living abstractions and witnesses of the absurdity of human institutions. They were not individuals like the old adventurers, they were the shadows of events with which they had nothing to do.”
Instead, they were just players in the Great Game of life, a game that has no ultimate purpose and where “man has cut himself off from all ordinary social ties, family, regular occupation, a definite goal, ambitions, and the guarded place in a community to which he belongs by birth.”992 Thus, “a world of infinite possibilities for crimes committed in the spirit of play, for the combination of horror and laughter, that is, for the full realization of their own phantom-like existence”993 opened up for the mob.

Imagination ceased to be checked by experience and common sense, by the presence of the other human being. Instead, it became an infinite and passionate sense of possibility, which was in no way limited by the excess of seeing, knowing, and feeling of the other, which is “the bud in which slumbers form, and whence form unfolds like a blossom.”994 Already anticipating Stalin and Hitler, the actions and speeches of the agents of imperialism lost any possible spectator or judge, insofar as the black inhabitants of Africa became inferior races and peoples where transformed into animal species, “so that a Russian appears as different from a German as a wolf is from a fox.”995

The story of the racism of the South African Boers shows how the complete destruction of the world, and especially, of culture, plays a crucial role in the European failure to encounter the uncanny in a way that dialogizes it, thus, expanding the frame of reference for humanity. In Arendt’s view, such a failure is catastrophic in the modern world, where, as a result of increasing changes and displacement of people, the occasions of meeting the different and the uncanny become highly probable.

The increasing number of such encounters, outside the mapped and safe symbolic spaces of the nation or of one’s civilization shows that, in the modern world, humanity
ceases to be a regulative idea as it was for Kant. Instead, Arendt observes, it becomes “an inescapable fact.” Thus, defining and expanding the frame of reference for humanity becomes an essential part of the world.

Arendt argues that racism was the result of the destruction of the world as a human-built, artificial and cultural space, where one can be with the others, thus not allowing differences to become absolute. It was made possible by the destruction of the artificial world where people can equalize their differences and become human. Instead, racism threw people back “on their natural givenness, on their mere differentiation.”

Arendt situates the origin of racism in the loss by the Boers of the human capacity of making the world. Part of this capacity is the transformation of nature that stabilizes human existence, that roots it and makes it visible, that gives it endurance and memory, and that provides the stage where people can act in a way that equalizes their differences and expands their humanity. In brief, it is the ability to create culture. Thus, the “rootlessness of the Boers was a natural result of early emancipation from work and complete lack of a human-built world.” This made the Boers “the first European group to become completely alienated from the pride which Western man felt in living in a world created and fabricated by himself.”

The story of the Boers speaks for the European failure to recognize the human features of the others. It speaks for the European failure to create a political space, where opinions are significant and actions are effective, namely, where humanity can be culturally fabricated and the human features can be made visible, where the world can be augmented. The test that the Boers failed was that of keeping themselves connected to the
world despite its strangeness, despite what they perceived as the “horrifying experience of something alien beyond imagination or comprehension.”

As a result, instead of fabricating a human-built world where both the Europeans and the black tribes would create a visible existence, namely, common traditions, institutions, and culture, the Boers chose to transform the others into a black (‘inferior’) race and themselves into a white (‘superior’) race. Such a choice indicates their failure to humanize the strangeness of their experience by speaking about it. It also indicates their failure to become human themselves. In this sense, race, one main political device of imperialism, was “an escape into an irresponsibility where nothing human could any longer exist.”

Tribal nationalism, instead, reflects the transformation of the state from an instrument of law into an instrument of the nation. Arendt argues that the practical outcome was that human rights, which were protected only as national rights, could not be extended to those who did not enjoy national sovereignty, to national minorities or to those who happened to be stateless. Thus, similar to the situation of the black and white races in Africa, national minorities and the stateless people were also deprived of the (agonistic) political space were they could become equal and human.

Arendt concludes her discussion of imperialism by pointing to the fact that the challenge that imperialism and nationalism failed to meet was to imagine and culturally fabricate humanity beyond the boundaries of European civilization and beyond the borders of the nation-state. Instead, imperialism and tribal nationalism reduced nations and peoples to tribes “separated from each other by nature, without any connection
whatever, unconscious of the solidarity of mankind.” It made them superfluous. It uprooted them, as well. In short, it deprived them of a world where people could become equal and human through actions, where they could “change and build a common world.”

Anti-Semitism and imperialism failed to create spaces where humanity can be defined. To this extent, they failed to engage culture and imagination in a way that creates, in Herder’s words, a “common feeling of humanity.” The strangeness of the other was not an occasion for exerting one’s imagination in a manner that increases the artificiality and the commonality in the absence of which politics cannot take place. Instead, the strangeness of the other and the fear that he inspired led to isolation and loneliness. This was the result of congealing the identities of the ‘political’ protagonists into the givenness of nature, namely, of race or of inner (psychological) qualities.

To this extent, anti-Semitism and imperialism failed to practice, as Lessing, “vigilant partiality,” namely, the capacity to enrich the world through imagination, because, despite one’s fear, one does not escape the world. Consequently, it failed to exert power, as well. This is the case because, for Arendt, power is essentially creative. Power, she explains, “is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities.”

In short, both the coming into being of anti-Semitism and the expansion of European imperialism illustrate an uncreative, unimaginative, and disempowering
encounter with the other. In both cases, the unfamiliar has been reified as demonic and evil, as exotic and unbridgeable. As a result, the gap between the strangeness of the other and the “familiarity” of one’s world, between the foreign and one’s home, became, eventually, unbridgeable. This made the dialogization of difference and of the foreign impossible, because one failed to engage imagination in a creative manner, namely, in a way that, in answering to the uniqueness of the other, establishes relations and creates new realities.

The gradual destruction of political creativity culminated with the coming into being of totalitarian ideology. In Arendt’s view, an ideology claims to provide the total explanation of all historical happenings. In trying to achieve such a task, ideological thinking becomes independent of all experience, by exclusively focusing on the ordering of facts into a logical procedure. Totalitarian ideology, in particular, lacks the imaginative mobility that sees things in their particularity and not as the result of “the tyranny of logicality” for which one “can’t say A without saying B and C and so on, down to the end of the murderous alphabet.”1005 The “tyranny of logicality,” which is the very opposite of creativity, means to follow one single idea “with a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality.”1006

In Arendt’s view, only “the great capacity of men to start something new” can be opposed to the “tyranny of logicality.” Only freedom can counteract both terror and ideology. She defines freedom, in two ways: as “an inner capacity of man,” which is “identical with the capacity to begin” and as “a political reality,” which “is identical with a space of movement between men.”1007 Part of being free in this twofold sense is to keep
oneself in the world, and not to escape into the fantasy of ideology, despite the fear that
the encounter with the accidental and the incomprehensible will arouse.

Part of keeping oneself in the world is to be able to exert imagination dialogically
and to engage in the right type of poēsis. Only thus people will also have power, because
only thus they would be able to establish relations and to create new realities, expanding,
consequently, the frame of reference of humanity. On the one hand, the right form of
poēsis is connected to the spontaneous creativity of those whose being is to be a
beginning. On the other hand, it consists in the tasteful, receptive, creativity of those who
adjust spontaneous creativity to the commonality of the world. The task is to make a
world out of the diversity of opinions and voices, of cultures, namely, an in-between
space of unfinalizeable, because on the boundary, identities.

Modernity, Alienation, and History

In Arendt’s view, the coming into being of totalitarianism reflects one crucial
feature of modernity. This is world alienation, namely, the loss of a “common public
world,” “the atrophy of the space of appearance and the withering of common sense.”
The withering of the common sense reflects the replacement of what is “sensuously
given” as the source of our commonality “by a system of mathematical equations where
all relationships are dissolved into logical relations between man-made symbols.” As
a result, the moderns forget “the indissoluble connection between our thinking and our
sense perception.”

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Moreover, Arendt points out, what “is lost in the mathematical reckoning is the actual function of the metaphor, its turning the mind back to the sensory world in order to illuminate the mind’s non-sensory experiences for which there are no words in any language.” ¹⁰¹¹ As a result, what “men have now in common is not the world but the structure of their minds, and this they cannot have in common, strictly speaking; their faculty of reasoning can only happen to be the same in everybody.” ¹⁰¹²

What men have now in common is the desert ¹⁰¹³ (of isolation and loneliness) that stretches between, on the one hand, the Cartesian ego, and, on the other hand, a not less abstract humanity. Nonetheless, Arendt points out, the promise of politics in the modern world is “that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world.” ¹⁰¹⁴ The coming into being of “a human world” requires a certain form of imagination and of creative making, as well as a certain form of authority and of law, both characterized by political creativity. It requires cultural and linguistic creativity.

Unfortunately, the modern loss of common sense is also a loss of creativity to the extent that the need to invent words was not felt anymore. Such a loss reflects the effacement of the temporal character of the human condition. This is regrettable because such temporality is the source of both individual creativity and (cultural) commonality, which are the two facets of worldliness.

On the one hand, “the creation of words is the human way of appropriating and, as it were, disalienating the world, into which, after all, each of us is born as a newcomer and a stranger.” ¹⁰¹⁵ Thus, it is an intensification of one’s temporality and finitude, which faces one with the burden of creativity. To this extent, every newcomer has to create the
language (the words) for appropriating the world and thus for appearing to the others, for
making sayable to the others one’s strangeness and novelty to the world. Natality and
freedom require linguistic creativity.

On the other hand, through analogies and metaphors, “the mind holds on to the
world,” because these “guarantee the unity of human experience.”\textsuperscript{1016} This suggests that,
similar to Vico, metaphors can act as civil forces, namely, as spaces that define symbolic
commonalities. However, similar to Nietzsche’s conception of the ‘unity’ of culture,
which the true bearer of culture, seeks and preserves, it seems that, for Arendt too, the
unity of human existence that is guaranteed by metaphors needs to be continuously
renewed and reconstituted, readjusted to the gaps in the continuity of time that the
newcomers produce.

To come to the point, Arendt argues that, in order to renew modern poetic and
political creativity one needs to experience a human time that is structured by finitude.
Arendt calls such a structure the “origin-al character of man.” This refers to the fact that
through his natality “man has not only the capacity of beginning, but is this beginning
himself.”\textsuperscript{1017} It is this feature of the human condition that moderns need to reinvent. Its
importance resides in the fact that the birth of the individual “re-affirms the origin-al
caracter of man in such a way that origin can never become entirely a thing of the past;
while, on the other hand, the very fact of the memorable continuity of these beginnings in
the sequence of generations guarantees a history which can never end because it is the
history of beings whose essence is beginning.”\textsuperscript{1018}
The counterpart of the “origin-al character of man” is imaginative understanding. Only “a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality.”\textsuperscript{1019} Without imaginative understanding we “would never be able to take our bearings in the world,” because we are “contemporaries only as far as our understanding reaches.”\textsuperscript{1020} Thus, the burden of the moderns is to create their own present, to imaginatively and culturally coagulate their own contemporariness. The present cannot be seen as something inherited by testament, because there is “no willed continuity of time.”\textsuperscript{1021}

Instead, the present is the creation of imaginative understanding. Since the present is a battlefield opened up by thinking, the task is to (imaginatively) sow it together. Only to the extent that they create their present, the moderns \textit{start or initiate} having a past and a future. Only to this extent, historical time regains its depth, starts flowing, because it has a beginning and an end. In sum, Arendt concludes her argument, historical time can be reinvented, other than as “sempiternal change of the world” or as a “biological cycle of living creatures,” only by uncovering the “origin-al character of man,” his finitude, and by productively dealing with it. Since the present is not inherited, then one needs to make it through a \textit{praxis} that has a poetic core. Only through such a poetic making of the present, one \textit{initiates} the flow of time into the past and into the future.

This implies that humans are remembering beings\textsuperscript{1022} only insofar as they are origin-al beings that, in being born, are given the occasion to creatively \textit{initiate} the disalienation of the world. By making the past present, thus, depriving it of its bygone
character, memory transforms it “into a future possibility.” At the same time, through remembering we learn how “to deal with things that are absent.” Only thus we prepare to “‘go further,’ toward the understanding of things that are always absent, that cannot be remembered because they were never present to sense experience.”

Human beings thus prepare to deal with the future. The capacity to deal with the future is analogous to the capacity to deal with the (has been of the) past, because both deal with absences. Also, both capacities start with an act of remembrance initiated from the present. In brief, the focal origin of this (imaginative) temporal exercise is the creative making of the present through which the finite newcomers appropriate the world, thus, initiating both the past and the future.

Part of accepting this, somehow, paradoxical character of time is to understand that the new cannot be seen as being “potentially contained in ‘the preceding series.’” As a result, time and history cannot be conceived anymore in terms of the Aristotelian couple of potentiality and actuality. Instead, for the moderns, history is possible only as a story, as having a fictive core, namely, as the narrative (plural) unity and identity of a past constructed from the present in view of a possible future. Poetic configuration, which is a product of judgment and productive imagination, imperfectly mediates between, on the one hand, the past of the action and, on the other hand, the future of the reader.

The past of the action is assembled into a unity, into a story, by the creative imitation of the action. This is the work of poetic configuration, which thus adds a sense of possible to the action. At the same time, the future of the reader gives the fiction back
to the world of action, thus, opening it to further enrichment. This situation singles out poetic configuration and thus, the aesthetic, form giving, moment of imagination as being quintessential to the modern attempt to find a “remedy” for their world alienation, namely, for their loss of common sense and of a space of appearance.

Poēsis and Time

Dana Villa argues that Kantian aesthetics is the “unlikely mediator” of the contradiction that he sees as being present in Arendt’s conception of political action. This is the contradiction between “her Aristotle-inspired image of a deliberative politic based on equality, plurality, and the absence of coercion,” and her “Machiavellian/Nietzschean emphasis upon initiation, virtuosity, and the agonistic.” Kantian aesthetics limits the Nietzschean agon, because it adds an intersubjective dimension to the aggressive creativity of the will to power.

However, as I argued in Chapter Two, the core of the Kantian reflective judgment or the judgment of taste is poetic. As Ricoeur observes, reflective judgment is a synthesis (prendre ensemble) operated by productive imagination and thus a poetic configuration. Such an observation is consistent with the argument I made in Chapter Two, according to which Kantian aesthetics values productive or creative imagination in connection with the work of the moral politician. If this is true, then the notion of aesthetic that Arendt incorporates in her view of action cannot be simply contemplative. It needs to be a form of poēsis.
Moreover, for Arendt the role of aesthetics is not primarily to mediate between, on the one hand, heroic virtuosity and spontaneity and, on the other hand, plurality and commonality. Instead, the fundamental role of poēsis as creative and non-reifying making is to give form to the experience of our finitude. Thus, one productively deals with the aporiai of time through poetic configuration.

Such a line of argument is facilitated by the similarity of meaning that exists between Arendt’s notion of poēsis and that conceptualized by Ricoeur in Time and Narrativity (Temps et récit). Arendt divorces the notion of poēsis from the Platonic mimesis (which one can define as a type of making that “never really creates anything new”). With this, she takes a decisive step towards the rethinking of poēsis as spontaneity, namely, as the capacity to begin something new and unexpected that cannot be traced back to a given form or chain of occurrences.

Consequently, similar to Vico’s conception of the cultural and historical genesis of humanity and to Heidegger’s conception of world-disclosive action, poēsis refers not to the subjective, intentional, and to the epistemological creation with the mind, but to the creation through original language. To be ‘creative’ is not to reproduce a given conceptual model through one’s making, but, as for Vico and Heidegger, it means to disclose a world through one’s “word, deed, thing.”

Nonetheless, in tune in with the tradition of rhetoric that influences Vico’s and Heidegger’s conceptions of culture and language, Arendt sees such ‘creativity’ as an act of repetition and reappropriation. She sees it as the creative imitation of something given, of something that already precedes and shapes one’s ‘creative’ deed and one’s freedom.
As a result, she considers the Aristotelian mimesis, as exemplified in the Greek tragedy, to be the only acceptable type of making or “reification” in connection with action. This is the case, because Aristotelian mimesis repeats and imitates “the living flux of acting and speaking.” Thus, as for Vico and similar to the rhetorical tradition, which is also incorporated by Heidegger’s understanding of preservation, every repetition is creative.

Similar to Arendt, Ricoeur starts by making a distinction between Aristotelian and Platonic mimesis. Aristotelian mimesis is different from Platonic mimesis in the sense that it does not reflect the mentality of the craftsman and it applies only to the human making, to the arts of composition. However, Ricoeur argues, Aristotelian mimesis is not a copy or the repetition of the same. It is poetic and thus dynamic. It is creative mimesis. In Ricoeur’s reconstruction, mimesis as poēsis, namely as dynamic and creative, is connected to praxis. It is its counterpart. It is a category of action. It is mimesis praxeōs.

Creative mimesis “‘metaphorically’ transposes the practical field through muthos” (mise en intrigue, plot). Its function is two-fold. On the one hand, it links praxis to muthos. On the other hand, it introduces a variation, a sense of possibility, by assembling the facts, by giving them a unity. Through judgment and productive imagination, creative mimesis brings to the fore the “intelligible in the accidental, the universal in the singular, the necessary or the credible in the accidental.” In this sense, the creator of words makes quasi-things, namely, he invents “as ifs” (du comme si). At the same time, creative mimesis mediates between praxis and the reader/spectator, thus enriching the world of cultural objects and symbols where actions take place.
In Ricoeur’s interpretation, the core of creative mimesis is poetic configuration or the “indirect discourse of narration,” as well as productive imagination. Through poetic configuration and productive imagination one addresses and deals with one’s temporality. Human temporality is defined by what Ricoeur calls the *aporiai* of time. However, poetic configuration does not solve the *aporiai* of time. It makes them productive.

According to Ricoeur, the first and fundamental *aporia* of time, first formulated by Augustine, is that between objective and lived time. Every attempt to get to an objective and unified (cosmological) time is, unavoidably, filtered by the human finitude. This refers to the fact that it is filtered by the phenomenological or lived time, which invariably breaks the continuity of time into the past, the present, and the future. However, it is precisely this breaking that plunges one back into what one did not live or constitute, namely, the past and the future. Thus, every attempt to measure time dissolves its unity into the passing of time. Paradoxically, such a dissolving plunges one even deeper into the unity of objective and cosmological time. This is a time that, in its overall and final meaning, man did not constitute.

The second *aporia* is that between time as one and its moments. Every attempt to make time and history a totality is undermined by the fact that something is left outside, that something cannot be included. Time thus proves to be a collective singular or a plural unity. The third *aporia* surfaces an idea already contained in the other two. This is the idea that every attempt to constitute time “reveals itself as belonging to a constituted order.” Such a constituted order is “always already presupposed by the work
of constitution.” This is called the inscrutability of time and it expresses the fact that time always escapes “the human will to mastery.” ¹⁰³⁷

The first aporia is made poetically productive through narrative identity. Narrative identity makes the first aporia of time poetically productive, because it captures this twofold status of the individuals in the realm of praxis. It captures the fact that individuals are both active and passive. This is productively captured by the fact that the subject of narrative identity appears simultaneously as reader and writer of his own life, ¹⁰³⁸ as both an actor and a sufferer. In Bakhtin’s view, even when I narrate my life, through autobiography, “I put myself in the hero’s place, I captivate myself through my own narration.”¹⁰³⁹ In this sense, both individuals and historical communities take their identity from the reception of the stories they produced, being, at the same time, able to ceaselessly recreate and renew what constitutes and affects them, what captivates them.

This means that, in the field of history and culture, which are both essential in the production of the artificiality, of the world, in the absence of which politics cannot take place, even when being receptive, one is affected and constituted by products that one can still perceive and recreate as being human. In this sense, no unity or objectification can be absolute, but only reflectively transformed and changed into new stories about one’s own life or about a community’s history. Ricoeur argues that this is the case because “the story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself of herself. This refiguration makes this life itself a cloth woven of stories told.”¹⁰⁴⁰
Thus, the “self-sameness” of the self is dynamically refigured through the reflexive application of narrative configurations, not congealed into nature or some inner psychological, soul-like, qualities as in the story of the origins of totalitarianism. As a result, Arendt too thinks that, in the realm of *praxis*, the answer to the question ‘who’ someone is can be only narrative. It consists in the act of telling a story. To this extent, it can be only a dynamic identity, namely, one that includes “change, mutability, within the cohesion of one lifetime.”

The second *aporia* is made poetically productive by recognizing that between the expectation of future, tradition, and the force of historical present, mediations are imperfect. As a result, no Hegelian totality of history is possible, only totalization. Also, history does not have a philosophical structure, but a poetic one. In this sense, one’s present identity is not the necessary unfolding of developmental stages that are already contained in the origin. One’s present identity does not mirror one’s past, but it rather expands it in a practical way that is both poetic and imaginative. This is possible by the creative repetition of the origin through which the past is refigured in its possibilities.

Nevertheless, imperfect mediation does not entirely renounce ‘unity.’ Still the imperfect mediation of totalization is guided by a limiting idea, in the sense of a Kantian regulative idea. This is an idea, which, while it does not constitute experience and thus, it does not provide knowledge, it, nevertheless, guides experience towards more comprehensive unifications. In brief, it is an idea that serves as a critical device for improving experience. As I argued in Chapter Two, such an idea serves the work of the moral politician. This is someone who tries to bring political and historical reality closer
to the commands of reason and who engages, in this enterprise, creative or productive imagination.

Ricoeur calls such a limiting idea that is similar to the Kantian regulative idea “an epic conception of humanity.” This is a regulative narrative that keeps history open in its possibilities as a potential unity, despite the limitations and violence of what actually happened. Arendt deals with this aporia of time through her Kantian post-Hegelian conception of history. Such a conception sees history not as a (rational) totality that brings to its full conclusion only one line of development, but as constituted through a plurality of narrative totalizations and judgments that are made by a historian and a world-observer, who trained “one’s imagination to go visiting.”

The third aporia is made poetically productive as “working at the limits.” Such a way of working produces imaginative variations of the other of time, namely, of eternity. Fiction works here as a “laboratory for an unlimited number of thought experiments.” It is, perhaps, this “working at the limits” that Arendt exercises when she engages literature and “fictional ability” in the attempt to give a figure to uncanny phenomena, such as totalitarianism.

“Exercises of imagination” are like thought-experiments. They expand the horizon of one’s understanding and thus they can bridge abysses. They can bridge what seems to be so unfamiliar and unconceivable that may darken the world in a way that could alienate one from it. Imagination can thus still provide the distant with a figure. To this extent, imagination does not allow the strangeness of the other to turn into a difference as such and into the utterly ‘alien,’ which is ‘unsayable.’ Imagination can still
engage one in the dialogue with the foreign that one, as Heidegger argues, has invited as a guest in one’s ‘origins.’

One can also argue that, by giving up the Platonic mimesis, Arendt situates creative making in the context of plurality and finitude, of Aristotelian *praxis*, because what matters is not the relationship with a (conceptual) model, as for Plato, but the creative and personal relationship with another human being, the neighbor. At the same time, by instituting narrative identity as the core of history and political action, Arendt develops a form of aesthetic creativity that avoids the dangers of machination and enframing.

Such a form of aesthetic creativity becomes the core of a non-Platonic moral code. Arendt explains that such a moral code “rests on experiences which nobody could ever have with himself, which, on the contrary, are entirely based on the presence of the others.” She mentions as illustrative for such experiences the faculties of forgiving and promising. These two faculties free political agents from the limits that the irreversibility and the unpredictability of their actions set on their narrative identities, namely, on the possibility of refiguring and changing their identities through new actions, through the establishing of relations and the creation of new realities. Such freeing requires creativity.

Similar to Bakhtin’s view of aesthetic experience, experiences that “are entirely based on the presence of the others” take place “on the boundary between one’s own and someone else’s consciousness, on the threshold.” As a result, they reflect the fact that a “person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary;
looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another,”

from the outside. Every attempt to look inside is a deepening of the I’s otherness and thus
unfinalizability, of the non-effaceable presence of the other. Thus, instead of seeing the
others as raw material and dirt, as indefinite and anonymous presences, which can be
ordered and processed for the sake of one’s designs, forgiveness, for example, is moved
by respect for them.

As Arendt argues in her book on Saint Augustine, Plato’s conception of
“imitation” “indicates clearly the dependence upon a model that is above both the maker
and his product,” while for Augustine “imitation” “indicates dependence upon the
Creator.” Thus, Augustine’s meaning of “imitation” makes possible a personal
relationship with the other (neighbor) as a creative relationship, where the other is seen in
his possibilities, while Plato’s concept of mimesis presupposes only the conformity to the
rational, conceptual model.

In brief, Arendt’s argument is that, since man aims at imitating God, namely, of
explicitly following the demand of ‘being as God,’ it is divine love that provides the
model that one aspires to apply to all human relations, with oneself as well as with the
others. Thus, part of the aspiration to imitate God is to develop a certain manner of loving
the world, oneself, and one’s neighbor. This consists not in loving what actually belongs
to the world, to oneself, and to one’s neighbor, but in loving what each of them could
become. It is to love them in their possibilities. To see someone in his possibilities,
translates politically, as respect. Thus, to respect the other means to treat him in a way
that makes possible new actions and a new beginning of the world, of oneself, and of one’s neighbor, thus making possible to establish relations and to create new realities.

It thus seems plausible to argue that, given the active relationship Arendt entertained throughout her life with this early text, the Augustinian meaning of imitation is one possible source of inspiration in making, in her later work, the sense of possibility central to the creative relationship with the other. The faculties of forgiving and promise give shape in the realm of action to a personal relationship with the other through which this is creatively freed for future possibilities. To this extent, forgiving and making promises incorporate in the moral code that they help to define the power to productively and poetically deal with the human (finite) time and with its aporiai, because it gives priority to narrative identity and to the sense of possibility that rules it, thus keeping its ‘unity’ dynamic and open to change.

Forgiving transforms the past into a future possibility. To this extent, it is, in Heidegger’s language, a form of authentic care, because it reflects one’s power to see the past as possible and thus as something that can be creatively repeated. At the same time, making and keeping promises disposes of the future as though it were present. Both are creative and dialogic powers. Both seem to require creative and dialogic imagination. Forgiving can see possibility, concealed and unspoken meanings and values, in the given unities of (past) identity and tradition.

Only insofar as it exhibits the analogical power of imagination, respect makes forgiving possible. To respect the other is to see him as I see myself, namely, as a person. It means to see the other in his possibilities, in what he can still become, in his narrative
and open identity. To this extent, forgiving means to grant to the other the possibility of creatively and imaginatively repeating his past, the possibility of enacting something new and unexpected through an action that frees him from the burden of what is, otherwise, irretrievable. At the same time, to make and keep promises is possible because of the imaginative enlargement of one’s power, namely, of one’s capacity to erect islands of credibility and reliability in the future. This is how the trust that one will continue to be the same, despite the unpredictability of the human heart and of the future, is (imaginatively) created.

*Imagination, Thinking, and Judging*

Citizens who can practice forgiving and promising in such a way are imaginative and creative individuals. They are also thinking individuals, namely, as indicated by Villa’s notion of Socratic citizenship, they can estrange themselves from the familiar and the given, thus dissolving opinions and preparing themselves for seeing themselves and the world otherwise. However, in Arendt’s view, thinking and judging require, in a fundamental way, creative imagination and linguistic inventiveness.

Arendt argues that, in order to think, humans need to withdraw from the world of appearances. Thus, to a large extent, they need to go against common sense. At the same time, humans are, in an inescapable way, beings *of* the world. They are moved by “an urge toward self-display,” toward appearing to the others. Thus, it seems to be in the nature of thinking to be paradoxical, namely, to be caught between the need to retreat
from the world of appearances and the urge to appear. As Taminiaux explains this is the reason for which the criterion of true thinking, namely, non-metaphysical and non-foundational thinking, is to assume, and thus not to cover, the tension between appearance and retreat.  

Not to cover the tension between appearance and retreat means to assure that language that became conceptual does not cover the fact that the origins of our concepts are frozen metaphors and analogies. This is important because the thinker is “an appearance among appearances.” Thus, his concepts originate in metaphors, and, at the same time, as Zarathustra, he needs metaphors in order to address the others in a transformative manner, namely, in a way that, in inhabiting the other’s masks and costumes, changes both the symbolic universe of oneself and of the other. Similar to Zarathustra, the thinker needs to reconnect himself to the space of appearance, to the market place.

Arendt argues that the true meaning of concepts discloses itself only “when we dissolve the term into the original context,” namely, when we retrieve its particularity. The search for meaning in which thinking is engaged requires the back and forth movement between concepts and the particularity of their original (metaphorical) contexts. Such a movement allows one to see concepts as crystallizations of sensible experiences. To this extent, thinking undoes and unfreezes what language “has frozen into thought-words” and thus, it “dissolves and examines anew all accepted doctrines and rules.”
However, such an examination is not only negative and purgative. It is also creative. This is the case because to retrieve the particularity of the original context, where the meaning of the concepts originates is also the experiencing of an absence; of a strange otherness, that confronts finite creatures. It is, to come to the point, to experience the very nature of human time, and thus to experience the initial strangeness to the world of every individual. As a search for meaning, thinking reveals and connects one to one’s initial strangeness to the world. The demand for the creative appropriation of the world originates in the fact of this fundamental strangeness, which is akin to the solitude that thinking requires, namely, to the retreat and the estrangement from the world that this requires.

Arendt argues that insofar that “speaking and thinking spring from the same source,” language is a proof that human beings are “naturally endowed with an instrument capable of transforming the invisible into an ‘appearance.”’1053 The contiguity of thinking and speaking, as well as their grounding in language, suggests that an essential aspect of thinking is also to create the language for bringing to presence one’s absence and for giving a figure to one’s strangeness, to make it “sayable,” in the effort to appropriate and, thus, to disalienate the world. Thus, origin-ally, namely, in its temporal character, thinking consists in the attempt to provide absence with a figure (image), to make it appear.

The capacity thinking has to provide absence with a figure reflects the fact that it is in its nature to actualize difference in its unending process.1054 Arendt illustrates such a capacity of thinking with two examples. One example is the Socratic two-in-one, which
is the essence of thought, the dialogue between me and myself. Such a dialogue takes
place in solitude, not in loneliness. It also requires imagination. As Zarathustra’s pregnant
wisdom, it is an imaginative anticipation and colonization of the other’s speeches and
symbols, which makes it possible to speak with and to address him from inside his
symbolic universe. The other example is metaphor, which, as much as the Socratic
duality, points “to the infinite plurality which is the law of the earth.”

This is the case because, as bridges that mediate, without ever ever closing the gap that
thinking opens up between retreat and appearance, metaphors reveal the variety of
sensible experiences that are connected and synthesized under the ‘sameness’ of the
concept. Concepts thus appear to have a narrative and dynamic identity, the rule of which
is the non-coincidence with itself. In this sense, both metaphors and the Socratic duality
point to the unfinalizeable character of a concept, a thought, an idea, to its non-
coincidence with itself.

However, they also point to the need, as in Schiller’s conception of individuality,
to be receptive, which is an aesthetic experience, to unfamiliar modes of representation
or, as in Nietzsche’s conception of greatness, to be able to play several roles and to wear
many masks, in brief, to develop many imaginative insights, because only thus one would
be able to comprehend the meanings of concepts and ideas. Only thus one would be able
to bring them under the umbrella of a provisional, dynamic, relational, and open ‘unity.’

Thinking can function as the making visible of an absence and as an actualization
of difference because of its imaginative nature. As the capacity “to make invisibles
present,” imagination is an ongoing awareness of difference, of an absence that can be
brought to presence. In a nutshell, imagination captures the fundamental thing about being human. This is to present one-self to the others in a manner appropriate to be seen by them.\textsuperscript{1058} It is to \textit{stage} one’s own strangeness to the world.

In this performance, metaphors and analogies are “the threads by which the mind holds on to the world.” They are the “‘proof’ that mind and body, thinking and sense experience, the invisible and the visible, belong together, that they are ‘made’ for each other, as it were.” Staging one’s appearance thus consists in creating, through language, a figure to the “origin-al” absence from the world that everyone experiences as a newcomer to it. To create such a figure is also a dynamic, open, and unfinalizeable task. It belongs to narrative identity, for which “who” one is matters more than “what” one is.

Staging one’s appearance does not so much aim at expressing an inner self, but it is from the beginning other-oriented and thus driven by the care for the world. The leading urge is to \textit{appear} to the others by \textit{making} visible one’s absence from the world, thus, accommodating one’s strangeness to it. Metaphors and analogies are modes of staging, of presenting to and enacting for the others, one’s origin-al strangeness to the others. As civil metaphors, they are also modes of accommodating one’s appearance to the plurality that makes up the world and, at the same, of renewing and making the commonality of the world more inclusive. To this extent, metaphors and analogies are the necessary companions of any act of thinking.

This makes thinking a preparation for judging. The latter is the mental activity that best exemplifies the capacity that imagination has not only to actualize difference and thus to point to plurality, but also to make difference part of the world and
consequently to lay the ‘ground’ for commonality. The model for conceiving this political faculty is Kant’s notion of reflective judgment. As I argued in Chapter Two, the aim of reflective judgment is not to subsume the particulars under a given concept or rule, but to find a concept or a rule for them, thus being able to communicate to the others what according to our taste pleases or displeases us. The challenge is to communicate to the others the particular idiosyncrasy of the taste.

The riddle is to find out what makes matters of taste communicable. This is where imagination steps in. Due to its capacity to make present what is absent, imagination removes the object that confronts and affects us directly. Thus, it establishes “the proper distance” or remoteness “for evaluating something at its proper worth.” To this extent, imagination disconnects from self-interest, namely, from utility. Thus, it disconnects from objectivity as thinghood and makes one receptive to the pleasure that one can take from the existence of phenomena. Insofar as it removes the object, imagination establishes “the conditions for impartiality.”

In Arendt’s view, impartiality does not mean an Archimedean point. On the contrary, impartiality never presupposes giving up one’s particularity and boundedness, one’s worldliness. On the one hand, impartiality is disinterestedness or “disinterested delight in the Beautiful.” In this sense, it is an aesthetic attitude toward the world, namely, an attitude that can make men “feel at home in the world” because they can see it as having all its possible meaning contained within itself.

On the other hand, similar to Nietzsche’s view of a thing, as “the sum of its effects, a synthetic binding together through a concept, an image” or of ‘unity,’ “which
means ‘one’ but is not one,” Arendt sees impartiality as “polyphonic generality” or “perspectival objectivity.” She sees it as a generality that is constructed without giving up one’s own particularity, but by enlarging it with the voices of the others that are thus brought into a space of visibility.

This can happen either as critical thinking, namely, as visiting and inspecting through imagination other particular standpoints, or as a historical narrative, which, as the Homeric poems, makes audible not only the voice of the winners, but also those of the vanquished, thus paying attention to all sides. In this way, imagination makes present the plurality of the world, its doxastic character. However, plurality is not dispersed and parallel. It is not endless proliferation of new vocabularies and narratives (as Rorty likes to think). As Etienne Tassin argues, the problem is not (only) plurality, but the first relation based on which a commonality can be constituted, based on which a plurality can be considered to form a community.\footnote{This is the political problem par excellence and it is creative, not contemplative, imagination that provides the ground for first addressing it.}

In preparing the ground for reflection, imagination connects to sensus communis. The result of reflection is communicable because one “judges always as a member of a community, guided by one’s community sense, one’s sensus communis.”\footnote{It is the appeal to sensus communis that functions in everyone that gives judgments their special validity.} Sensus communis is taste. It is the sense for humanity. Communication and speech depend upon it.\footnote{One is human and thus sociable (and, consequently, political) only to the extent that one can communicate to the others one’s judgments.}
The implication is that the larger the company of those to whom one can communicate one’s judgments, the larger one’s culture is, and, consequently, one’s political situation. As a result, the larger one’s humanity is. However, since the aim is to make particulars communicable, the vehicle of communicability, and thus of one’s sociability and humanity, is imagination. That is why, in the attempt to communicate to the others the result of one’s judgments, examples, which are provided by imagination, are those that “lead and guide us.” The example is a particular that contains a rule in itself. It has exemplary validity. To this extent, judgments bring together the particular and the general. The link between them is (creative) imagination.

To sum up, without imagination, “there would be neither the objectivity of the world…nor any possibility of communication.” Imagination bridges, without closing, the gap between retreat and appearance that characterizes non-metaphysical or non-foundational thinking. Thus, it reveals and connects the one who thinks to the fundamental fact of being human, namely, of being an appearance among other appearances. Thus, part of thinking is to invent the language for making present to the others one’s fundamental strangeness to the world. In the case of judging, imagination makes present the polyphonic reality of the world, its inescapable plurality, and at the same time makes a world out of this plurality. In both cases, that of concocting the image and the language for making present for the others one’s origin-al absence and novelty to the world and of making a world out of the plurality of doxai, imagination is creative.
Arendt defines imagination as re-presentation, namely, as the making present of what is absent. However, despite her claim that re-productive (remembering) imagination is the ground of productive imagination, re-presentation does not mean re-production here, but rather projection and disclosure. In short, re-presentation needs to be conceived as being more creative than Arendt is prepared to admit. This is the case because making present what is absent is, in a deeper sense, an act of giving form to the moments of time, which is the condition of all appearance. Thus, re-presentation can be interpreted as a form of transcendence, in the sense given to this notion by Heidegger, namely, as the disclosure of a world, of a “horizon of objectivity and space of intelligibility. To ground in this sense is to project a world.

Arendt does not develop, as Heidegger, a non-representational view of imagination, which would be more compatible with her non-foundational notion of action and freedom, as well as with the overall importance of creativity in her conception of the human condition. In the attempt to correct such a flaw in her conception, the foundational role that imagination plays for the activities of thinking and judging needs to be intensified and connected to time.

Thus, it can be argued that, as a non-representational faculty, imagination first discloses the space where a world, as understood by Arendt, namely as the in-between of words and deeds, as a place where one can make opinions significant and actions effective, can be projected. However, such a world is never self-sufficient or closed,
but dynamically connected to yet unexpressed possibilities and meanings. It is the role of imagination to bring forth such unexpressed possibilities and concealed meanings. It is its role to keep meaning emerging.

In Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, every finite creature needs a *Spielraum*, a space for play, in order to start relating to something in the world. Finite creatures need to keep themselves in advance in such a space. They need to *form* it originally. Imagination provides this space by forming the temporal syntheses, of present, past, and future, which “ground” any further syntheses, both sensible and conceptual. In this sense, time is more primordial than mind. Time makes “mind into a mind.” As the power to re-present, imagination *makes visible*, it gives a look to the horizon, to the world in which one dwells. It provides the space where one can appear and presents oneself to the others.

Moreover, the aesthetic, *form-giving*, moment of imagination makes possible both the syntheses of perception and the concepts of understanding. This makes aesthetic creativity the “foundation” of both thinking and judging. On the one hand, concepts are syntheses, namely, they are origin-ally unifications of an experiential manifold that are produced by imagination. Also, as I argued in Chapter Two, the rules for judging require the creativity of aesthetic imagination, as well as originality.

On the other hand, situating concepts in a worldly context (a task that both thinking and judging face), namely, amidst appearances and opinions, is a creative enterprise. It is an enterprise that requires metaphors and analogies, in the case of thinking, and examples, in the case of judging. As for Herder and Vico, the concepts of
reason require the work of narratives and myths in order to connect their meaning to feelings and emotions, which define, more fundamentally than reason, what it means to be human.

Such a foundational role of imagination seems to suggest that, for Arendt, the aesthetic has preeminence over both the rational and the ethical, pervading not only her theory of action, but also her conception of thinking and judging. This seems to confirm Kateb’s judgment that Arendt’s overemphasis of the creativity of political action is dangerous because it is conducive to immoralism. Kateb argues that this is the case because the moral limitations of action (in the guise of forgiveness and promise) are not enough to contain the violence of the self-assertive virtuosity of the political actors. In thus interpreting Arendt’s emphasis of the creativity of action, Kateb expresses the same (legitimate) concern that aesthetic imagination can be a source of political aestheticism and of mass murder politics.

One objective of this dissertation was to define, against Kateb’s premature identification of aesthetic creative imagination as a source of political aestheticism, a form of creative imagination that is moral and dialogic. As I tried to argue, drawing on the conceptions of Bakhtin, Ricoeur, and Vico, the dialogic creativity of imagination consists in its capacity to answer to the other’s particular, living, and unique presence. It also consists in its capacity to colonize the other’s symbols and narratives and to start expanding them, thus making them more inclusive and democratic.

This is creative dialogism. In inhabiting the narratives of the other, and in expanding their symbolic capacity to provide solidarity and to define humanity, one also
learns to address him. One learns to communicate with the other. One thus expands the artificiality of the political world, the space where opinions are significant and actions effective, because in the process people can change, they become equal and human.

The creativity of imagination also consists in its capacity to listen to the voice of the foreigner and to interpret it as having meaning. It consists in the capacity to dialogue with the foreign and to understand that coming ‘home,’ to one’s own, is always a journeying through the foreign. In this sense, there can be no absolutely alien or foreign presence that one cannot dialogize, namely, one cannot change through dialogue.

In Chapter Five I defined such a dialogic capacity of imagination as poetic care. Insofar as imagination is foundational for both thinking and judging, as well as for the Aristotelian praxis that inspires Arendt’s view of action and the public realm, poetic care should be an essential part of one’s attempt to make opinions significant and actions effective. Poetic care should be an essential part of one’s power to establish relations and to create new realities.

Thus enriched, Arendt’s conception of action is connected to a form of aesthetic creativity that is not heroic and irruptive. It is not “a hubristically exaggerated faith in the power of human beings to remold the world in accordance with imagination.” Instead, as origin-ally unifying and forming time, the aesthetic creativity of imagination combines spontaneity and receptivity.

The twin presence of creativity and receptivity reflects the productive incorporation by imagination of the ineluctable alternation that traverses the aporiai of time: between the time that one constitutes and the time that one is constituted. Such
alternation provides the human condition, as Schiller would agree, with an aesthetic core. As a result, one needs to practice both receptivity and creativity. One needs to let oneself be captivated and affected and, at the same time, one needs to be spontaneous and creative.

    Thus, on the one hand, as spontaneous, imagination is not mastering and domineering, it is not virtuosic and heroic, but also a receptive letting-be, attuning, and listening. It is the power to listen to the absent and the concealed. On the other hand, as receptive, imagination is also a sketching of possibilities, a creative forming. It is a making sensible of a horizon of objectivity. This means that, through imagination thus defined, receptivity is creative, namely, it carries with it the promise of a world, and spontaneity is receptive, namely, self-limiting.

    As for Schiller, in being receptive one’s does not get lost to the world, because one is able to incorporate the unfamiliar mode of representations into one’s freedom, thus, expanding one’s power of becoming human. At the same time, as for Nietzsche, in being spontaneous and creative, one also sets limits to one’s sublime energy. One disciplines one’s discharge of energy. One gives it form and makes it beautiful. Thus, one makes room for the other’s freedom to resist to such an imposition of form.

    Thus defined, the aesthetic creativity that characterizes both action and mind belongs to one’s poetic care for the world. This refers to one’s creative capacity to disclose a world, in a way that never disconnects one’s familiar horizon of meaning, one’s ‘home,’ from the “alien” and the “foreigner,” thus not allowing him to turn into the unsayable and the unchangeable, into an absolute difference. In Vico’s vocabulary, it is a
form of aesthetic creativity that can produce civil metaphors that expand the frame of reference for humanity, in ways that redefine the artificiality of the political (in a post-national way).

As non-representational, the aesthetic creativity of imagination is more about retrieving and projecting absences and not yet presented possibilities than about the manipulation of given and present actualities and presences. It is more about being receptive and listening to the voice of the other, the foreigner that one invited as a guest in one’s origins or the refuge to whom one has offered asylum or shelter in one’s political, cultural, and historical space, in one’s narratives and myths.

Thus, the aesthetic creativity of imagination cannot function in the absence of the capacity of being receptive, attentive, and responsive to the other’s life. As for Bakhtin, imagination is a way of anticipating the other and of dialoguing with him. It is a way to get to the meaning of one’s own life, because through imagination one can tell the story of oneself as another. Thus, one becomes a hero. Only, by seeing oneself as another, one can reflect and better understand oneself, because one can see one’s own life from the outside and as a whole, with the eyes of the foreigner.

Thus, although, the sense of possibility has indeed priority, it is possibility as an absence that has always the face of the (human) other. Aesthetic creativity is both a retrieval and an anticipation of the absent other. It is, after all, the function of poetic configuration to both retrieve the (past) absent other (the doer of great deeds) and to anticipate the (future) absent other (the reader, the audience).
Thus, creative mimesis, which always adds a sense of possible to what is repeated, takes place in the interval between two (personal, meaningful, and human) absences. As a result, its product, narrative identity, has a dynamic and living character. Its core is creative temporality, namely the capacity to productively use the *aporiai* of time. In short, such a sense of possibility cannot be passionate, heroic, and virtuosic, because, as Ricoeur observes, every reference is co-reference or dialogic reference.1079

Reflecting the combination of creativity and receptivity that is at work in imagination, judging is not only receptive and contemplative, but it is itself a form of spontaneity and creativity. Judging is creative receptivity. Not only that judging lets particulars be, because it is receptive to their unique phenomenality, thus taking a disinterested pleasure in their existence, but it is also engaged in the (poetic) *making* of the world. It contributes to the making of the company of those to whom I communicate the results of my reflections. As I will argue further down, this means to have taste.

Moreover, Arendt argues that even the actor and the fabricator should have the capacity to communicate their originality, namely, they should engage in acts of judging. If the actor cannot do so, then “he would be so isolated from the spectator that he would not even be perceived.”1080 Thus, the originality of the artist and the novelty of the actor depend on their ability to communicate these to the others. They depend on their imaginative capacity to anticipate the others’ freedom and thus their answer to one’s deed. Action is not a heroic and irrational discharge of energy. Instead, it requires imaginative and judging power. It requires taste, which is a form of receptive creativity. Taste is the capability to anticipate the non-expert or the outsider, and thus to see across
domains and boundaries, which is a true talent of the humanist and of the orator in the humanist tradition.

The same limitation is at work in the case of willing. Willing, the faculty of absolute and spontaneous beginning, of absolute creativity, the very origin of action, is receptive as well. This is the case because, for an origin-al being like man, beginning is never absolute. It is only beginning again. Thus, one can form projects for the future only by repeating the past. One’s novelty (natality, birth) is eventually a rebirth. It is a creative reappropriation or repetition. As a result, any act of beginning or founding needs to turn “to the legendary tales that in our tradition have aided former generations to come to grips with the mysterious ‘in the beginning.’”

Thus, action and willing can be reconstructed as forms of receptive creativity, while thinking and judging can be reconstructed as forms of creative criticism and contemplation. Such a reconstruction reflects the fact that the origin-al character of man continuously generates the need to accommodate and to dialogize difference and thus to reinvent the common world. When such a need is successfully met, through the combination of receptivity and creativity, there should be no differences as such, but only dialogizeable differences.

Such a combination of receptivity and creativity is the nub of Arendt’s notion of political creativity. The two sides are inseparable. They presuppose each other. Without the miracle of beginning, which is associated with freedom as spontaneity and creativity, there would be no incentive to recreate and readjust the commonality of the world. There would be no reason to be receptive, to accommodate, and dialogize differences. Without
the public common world, which is associated with freedom as a space of movement, no beginning would be a miracle, because it would have no stage to shine on and against.

To sum up, because humans are temporal, namely, finite creatures, their mental faculties and their actions are ‘grounded’ in imagination, the faculty that forms the temporal syntheses, the three moments of time. To this extent, their mental activities and their actions combine in different degrees creative receptivity and receptive creativity. This creativity, which is a function of human temporality, provides the meaning of poēsis that can replace technical making. Human temporality requires creativity and, by the same stroke, limits it, by making it receptive. As a condition of all appearance, it is in the nature of time that every coming to presence is also an absence (of past and future).

Imagination forms the moments of time. Thus, by first making a horizon of objectivity or a space of intelligibility sensible, imagination initially forms one’s appearance. In this sense, imagination is the initial act of disclosure, of transcendence, of forming a world, as a plural, doxastic sharing of words and deeds. Imagination is creative bringing to presence. At the same time, because of its temporal nature, it is also receptivity to the absences that make it possible, to the strangeness that makes presence possible, that “grounds” it. Imagination cannot be creative if it is not receptive to the nature of time, which is a coming to presence as absence, a coming to unity as dispersion and deepening of plurality.

In this sense, nothing is really “primordial” or “origin-al” if in time. It is just a deeper plunging into the past and into the future. That is why “to be worldly in Arendt’s sense is to inscribe a certain modality of alienation at the heart of one’s existence.” As a
result, to be at “home in the world in Arendt’s sense means to be at home with the
estrangement that permeates both the performative conception of action and the notion of
‘disinterested’ judgment.” Villa calls this “a worldly form of estrangement,” which is
not the same with “estrangement from the world.” Villa sees the source of this worldly
estrangement in the tension between theatricality and the lack of alienation of
commonality.

It is my point that the source of the unavoidable worldly estrangement of man
resides on a deeper level. It resides in the temporality of the human condition, namely, in
human natality and mortality. Born as newcomers to the world, humans remain,
fundamentally, strangers to it. This is the case because one’s origin-ality, namely, the
presencing of one’s novelty to the world, is, in reality, an even deeper plunging into the
otherness of the past and of the future. As I argued in Chapter Five, drawing on
Heidegger’s philosophy, temporality consecrates otherness as the core of ‘identity,’
absence as the core of presence, the foreign as the core of one’s own or of one’s ‘home.’

Such a dynamic unity of one’s present (narrative) identity, which presupposes
one’s dependence upon the absent others, trumps sovereignty. Due to the nature of
human time and of imagination, one is always outside and ahead of oneself; always
dependent on the others and, at the same time, trying to assert and enact one’s origin-
ality. The situation streams from fact that one has to begin, namely, one has to give a
figure to the discontinuity that one’s birth introduces into the continuity of time and of
the world. However, such beginning only plunges one deeper into the otherness of the
past and of the future. Paradoxically, freedom, namely, the capacity to begin and, thus, to
give a figure to one’s novel presence in the world, plunges one even deeper into the (past and future) world of the others. However, such plunging makes resurfacing the constant need to come to one’s own, which, as Heidegger points out, is always a journeying from and through the foreign.

As origin-ally forming the moments of time, and thus as first giving a look to one’s world and presence in it, imagination projects the absent other as the constitutive element of a dynamic present narrative identity. In this sense, story-telling is an exercise not in image making, but in the dialogue with the other, in discourse making. Dialogism is possible because in a human world structured by a temporal structure that is organized around finitude and the aporiai of time, individuals are always in-between, ahead of themselves, constantly oriented toward the others. They are engaged in the making of a narrative identity that is dynamic and open; unfinalizeable, indeed. Such a narrative, dynamic, and open identity is the result of poetic care, namely, of one’s constant effort to come to one’s own through the dialogue with the foreign.

**The Work of Art and the Possibility of a Common World**

One reason Arendt prudently confines technical making to the private realm of work is the danger that *homo faber’s* experiencing of time might become dominant in the realm of human action. Thus the actuality of the artifact would come to dominate over the sense of possibility. The receptivity for what can still be brought to presence would, consequently, fade away. Since for *homo faber* the world is not an opening, a making manifest, and thus a model (*Vor-Bild*) for “all of manifest being,” the danger of
forgetting the finite nature of human time becomes imminent, if his way of forming and
experiencing time becomes dominant. Consequently, time would cease to be formed and
experienced as a source of novelty.

The danger that lurks in fabrication is to interpret time only as a multiplication of
sameness, and not as a source of new refigurations, because homo faber “multiplies
something that already possesses a relatively stable, relatively permanent existence in the
world.” Thus, if homo faber’s experiencing of time entirely colonizes the public
realm, it might happen that society would fail to “maintain a sense of the fluidity of the
possibilities” that are available in culture.

Animal laborans reduces time to the repetition of the endless biological cycle.
With both of them there is a danger that one would expunge the possibility to experience
human time as an incomplete coming to presence and, thus, as the source of new creative
appropriations of the world. Both expunge the possibility to see meaning as emerging.
With this, the receptivity for what is still absent is lost, and with it the occasion for the
renewed creation of the world. The dynamism of possibility and open ‘unity’ thus breaks.

It is, nevertheless, true that homo faber makes the world as permanence and
stability, without which political life would not be possible, because “without the
enduring permanence of a human artifact, there cannot be ‘any remembrance of things
that are to come with those that shall come after.’” Since, as Margaret Canovan points
out, the world Arendt envisages and values “is more emphatically a world of cultural
objects and milieux than of engineering,” in the absence of cultural artifacts, politics
would not be possible. At the same time, as Dana Villa points out, the challenge is
“whether the world built by *homo faber* provides a stage for authentically disclosive (revelatory) action, or remains simply the site of productive comportment.”  

In a nutshell, the challenge is twofold. On the one hand, politics needs the permanence and the stability of the cultural artifacts. On the other hand, the permanence of the cultural artifact needs to be transformed into “a scene of (new) action(s) and speech(es),” into a “worldly in-between” and a dialogue of *voices*. The cultural artifact needs to be transformed into a boundary and on the threshold site and aesthetic experience. The field where the “veritable metamorphosis” of *homo faber*’s experiencing of time, and thus of the ‘nature’ of the cultural artifact, can happen is the work of art. It is here that the direction in which the quasi-cultural artificiality of politics will go is formed.

The quasi-cultural artificiality of politics could go either in the direction of political aestheticism, because the technological mood of *homo faber*, which sees everything as standing reserve, namely, as something to be processed and ordered, is exported into politics. Or it could go in a direction where culture brings into politics the dialogic and answerable creativity of imagination, because the cultural artifact has been transformed into a “scene for action and speech,” into a polyphonic dialogue of different voices.

The work of art bridges a paradoxical feature of the human condition. On the one hand, the materiality of the artifact is required to provide the worldly character of human polities, namely, their permanence and stability. On the other hand, the power to transfigure the deadness of the material and the actuality of the given into a new
possibility, is equally necessary, if the world is to continue to be further enriched through
the novelty of its newcomers, thus expanding the frame of reference for humanity.

In short, the work of art intersects these two aspects, because it is both a thing,
something given, and a potential source of new possibilities and imaginative variations. In this sense, it belongs both to the world, which as permanence and stability, constitutes and affects the individual and to the realm of freedom, to the origin-al power to initiate something new, to bring an absence to presence, through which the individual constitutes and affects the world.

For Arendt, as for Heidegger, the work of art is a paradigmatic instantiation of authentically disclosive actions that are done for the sake of the world. In the same way as thinking, the work of art has a performative, disinterested aspect, one that is not geared toward a telos. The contemplation of beauty teaches us how to distance ourselves from the things or from other human beings through the forgetting of our interests and urges, “so that we will not seize what we admire but let it be as it is, in its appearance.”

The contemplation of beauty reveals that the world should not last in view of its manipulable actuality and utility. On the contrary, it should last in view of its possibilities and not-yet-made-present absences, namely, as a never completed “space of display” for “things whose essence it is to appear and to be beautiful.” The true vocation of the work of art is to free us “for the world and its culture.” To this extent, art works are not fabricated for men, but for the world, being thus a focal space of disclosure where the world and its plural voices can come to the fore, because the works of art can “fulfill their own being, which is appearance, only in a world which is common to all.”
The work of art makes possible transplanting *homo faber*’s experiencing of time into a different temporal register, because through art one can anticipate the invisible (*Unsichtbare*), and thus, one forms and brings to presence an absence. Thus, one can experience time not as the repetition of sameness, but as an ongoing figuring of possibilities, as a harbinger of novelty. It is such a different perception of time that can transfigure *homo faber* into an actor, into “a doer of great deeds and a speaker of great words.” Art can achieve this through beauty and through imagination.

As the “origin-al” forming of time, imagination acquaints one with an incomplete coming to presence, where there are possibilities that can be still provided with a figure. Thus, it teaches one to free “the living spirit” in the artifact, namely, the sense of immateriality in anything material and the sense of possibility in anything given. Arendt defines the capacity to sense the possible in the work of art (and consequently in culture and in the world) as taste.

Taste is the capacity to judge particulars in view of their worldly suitability, and thus, to augment the world. The reason taste can accomplish such a task is that it “truly humanizes the beautiful and creates a culture.”1093 To “humanize the beautiful” means to contain the (non-political) violence that is implicit in any form of making by the creative (and imaginative) distancing of the spectator, the judge, the poet, or the humanist.

To this extent, taste, an imaginative faculty, is an essential aspect of political freedom. As “the ability to see the same thing from various standpoints” and “the ability to consider all standpoints,”1094 taste makes possible an essential freedom of movement in the mental world, which “parallels our freedom of movement in the physical one.”1095 In
Arendt’s view, the humanist is capable of such imaginative and mental flexibility and comprehensibility, thus knowing “how to take care and preserve and admire the things of the world,” because he is able to “rise above specialization and philistinism.”  

However, the freedom of the humanist is both a creative and a receptive practice. The reason is that, in his case, poësis is guided by the receptivity to the particularity of the other and by the capacity to judge his potential suitability to the world. It is poësis in the service of making a common world, namely, of increasing the number of those whom one can address and speak with.

Taste is aesthetic because it brings together the receptivity to uniqueness and particularity and the (responsible) creativity to make a world, without taking away the partiality of its different voices. The implication is that one has taste when the sense of possibility, that beauty and imagination acquainted one with, is not an escape from the world, when it is not a longing for fantasy and ideological consistency, but a power to augment the world.

Arendt presents as an example of such a worldly engagement of taste the case of the German writer, G. E. Lessing. Lessing proved to have taste because he kept himself connected to the world and engaged himself in its making, despite its discouraging and demobilizing strangeness. Such an attitude was aesthetic, because the pleasure in dealing with the world sprang “from a passionate openness to the world and love of it,” despite the fear that the strangeness of the world awakened in his soul.

Lessing’s concern was how to “strip fear of its escapist aspect in order to save it as a passion.” His worry was how to save fear as an incentive for creating a form of
art, theater, which could augment the world, namely the company of those with whom one can communicate. At the same time, because he did not quit the world, Lessing had the courage to put in speech the truly sublime, the uncanny, and the unfamiliar. This is important because we “humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human.”

This was possible, because, on the one hand, Lessing did not expect the world to confirm the products of his mind. Thus, he showed imaginative flexibility. The darkness of the world was an incentive to change his definition of the world, and thus, to bring himself in harmony with it “by the detour of thought.” On the other hand, Lessing augmented the world because he was capable of “vigilant partiality.” This refers to the attentive cultivation of the other’s standpoints, as being necessary for ‘completing’ and augmenting one’s own world.

With the notion of “vigilant partiality” Arendt touches upon an aspect of art that she carefully avoided all along her discussion of taste: the artist, the creator of the work of art. She limits the capacity to sense the possible in what is given and actual, which art shapes, to the skill of the judge/contemplator of the work of art. The perspective of the artist/author is prudently kept out of politics. The reason for this is that Arendt sees the artist/author exclusively after the model of the Platonic maker, namely, as engaged only in a monological and violent form of poēsis.

Such a Platonic reminiscence in her conception of art is incompatible with her overall criticism of Plato. It is also incompatible with her non-foundational conception of thinking and action, as well as with the attempt to define a creative form of poēsis, one
which, as a category of praxis, can augment the world namely, both the company of those whom one can address and the practical possibilities in the present’s field of experience.

However, with the notion of vigilant partiality, where the author, Lessing, the playwright, anticipates the voices of the others as part of his attempt to augment the world, Arendt moves her understanding of creative making a step closer to Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the polyphonic author of novels. Such an author is not engaged in a monological and violent form of making, but in a dialogic one.

The author of polyphonic novels does not stifle the freedom and the independence of his heroes. He does not force them to merge with his idea or design. On the contrary, he anticipates their freedom to answer, and, in this sense, the final word does not belong to him, but to the heroes, to the doers and sufferers. As the notion of vigilant partiality only suggests, for the polyphonic author the anticipation of the other’s freedom plays an essential role in the broadening and the augmenting of his own design.

Through the joint employment of taste and of polyphonic authorship the work of art can bring culture (poēsis) into politics (praxis) in a non-violent and non-domineering manner. This is the case for two reasons. On the one hand, taste denotes one’s capacity to be receptive to the other’s particularity and, at the same time, to creatively and imaginatively judge its worldly suitability. On the other hand, polyphonic authorship can create responsibly, namely, in a way where the design made by the author does not stifle the other’s freedom to answer, but, on the contrary, it anticipates it, and, at the same time, it adjusts it to the commonality of the world.
Taste and polyphonic authorship show that a common cultural world can come into being only as an open and dynamic ‘unity,’” namely, as a ‘unity’ of dialogized differences. This would be the result of a twofold process. First, cultural products, such as ideas and values would have to be freed in their living spirit and in their sense of possibility. They would have to be freed in view of their unfinalizeable meaning and unity. Second, and as a result, this would transform the cultural artifact into a “scene of action and speech.” Thus, it would dissolve the artificiality of cultural products back into ideas that can livingly address each other and speak with each other, without bracketing or effacing their particularity.

The transfiguration of the cultural product into an event reveals its open and dynamic ‘unity.’ It reveals that this is emerging meaning. It reveals its praxis-like and narrative identity. As Bakhtin argues, in the spirit of Arendt’s thinking, every cultural idea has an “unfinalized and inexhaustible” character. What makes other ideas and cultures addressable is precisely their unfinalized and indeterminate core, not the givenness of the product and their present actuality. It is the possibility to dialogue with them, to act them and thus to change them.

As a corollary of such an interpretation, without the other, the foreigner that one invites as a guest in one’s origins, this sense of further development and determinacy in a cultural idea would never get the chance of being “finalized,” even if only asymptotically. This shows that the idea “begins to live, that is to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationship with other ideas, with the ideas of others.” It is in
this sense that to think means “to question and to listen, to try out orientations, to combine some and expose others.” Ideas, as voices and truths, never merge, which is the source of their indomitable diversity, but also of their renewed sowing into a commonality.

On the one hand, diversity provides one with the task of being receptive and open to varied particulars. On the other hand, diversity makes commonality a dialogic and unfinalizeable task. In forbidding the impersonal truth of a monological world, diversity connects one to the temporal character of the human condition. It connects one to the fundamental fact that one is both constituted and one constitutes. Thus, diversity brings into politics the creative making that is a function of finite temporality. It reveals that one’s present identity and the world’s present ‘unity’ are dynamic and open, because they are perpetually other-oriented and other-dependent. They are unfinalizeable, indeed, because living in time is just a deepening of otherness in me. However, this can happen only when politics is characterized by a form of authority and of law that are characterized by political creativity, namely, by the interplay of receptive creativity and of creative receptivity.

Political Creativity, Authority, and Law
Arendt thinks that both authority and law should be characterized by a form of political creativity that combines creative receptivity and receptive creativity. Only such a form of political creativity as embodied by authority and law would make a human world out of the “desert” that the modern world became. The reason is that only such a form of political creativity would be able to dialogize differences, by culturally, imaginatively and linguistically, disclosing spaces where one can practice poetic care.

These are spaces where cultural ideas can dialogize their unfinalizeable core, where they can become alive, changing and developing through the encounter with the ideas of others. Only in such political situations one’s opinions are significant and one’s actions effective. It is my point that in Arendt’s view it is the role of both authority and law to facilitate such political situations where one can become equal and human. Imagination plays an essential role in creating such political situations, where one can speak with, not about, the others.

Arendt criticizes Plato and Aristotle for using prepolitical relationships to define authority. These are relationships that tend to favor the expert, as well as pyramidal, hierarchical structures, thus, admitting obedience as constitutive to the notion of authority. Arendt observes that the trouble with the Platonic model(s) of authority is that it cannot account for both authority and freedom. Since, in her conception, the two concepts are inseparable, an alternative is required. Arendt finds the alternative in the Roman concept of authority, which brings together authority and freedom. I will argue here that the (imperfect) mediation between authority and freedom is achieved through
the combination of creative receptivity and receptive creativity, which characterizes political creativity.

In Arendt’s view, the main difficulty (and danger) with authority is that it is a form of making. Arendt’s conception of praxis has a poetic character. However, as I tried to argue in this chapter a distinction can be made between two different forms of making: technical and creative. Technical making is associated with imagination as fantasy and as a source of ideological consistency through which both leaders and citizens escape reality, experience, and common sense. It is also associated with the use of imagination as fantasy and ideological consistency for the sole purpose of organizing the masses.

Instead, creative making is associated with a form of creative imagination, which is dialogic and answerable. Such a form of imagination presents one’s strangeness and novelty to the world in a way that accommodates it to its plurality, while, at the same time, renewing its commonality. The aim of creative making and of dialogic imagination is to augment the world, by establishing relations and creating new realities. In this enterprise, creative making combines dialogic and answerable creativity and receptivity and the capacity to listen to the other.

If this is true, then it is also reasonable to assume that the two different forms of making match two different forms of authority. One can argue that Arendt suggests a distinction between the author-expert and the author-inspirer. The author-expert is a monological creator. For him, ideas are not events, where multiple voices discourse with each other. Instead, ideas are measures that guide. They are “absolute” standards. The others have no voice in the “making” of the idea.
For the author-expert truth is a ready-made reality to be contemplated. Thus, the author-expert is always tempted to transform his ready-made truth into an official monologism, into some sort of ideology that is driven by the “tyranny of logicality.” Arendt points out that this transformation occurs when ideas thus conceived enter the public realm, of plural doxai. At this point, the author-expert needs tales and stories. He needs myths. However, for the author-expert these are only means to present dogmas, truths that cannot be demonstrated.

As Arendt observes, the author-expert uses stories as means to dominate, subdue, and control the multitude through the promise of rewards and punishments. The author-expert, as the totalitarian leaders, uses stories and, implicitly, imagination, not to persuade the masses, but to organize them. In this sense, stories become, indeed, forms of violence that is exerted over the others, definitely a form of aestheticism in politics, namely, a form of organizing and regimenting the others in the one-voiced designs that are concocted by the author (or the leader)-expert.

For the author-expert myths are means for promoting culture as worldview, which, as I argued in Chapter Five drawing on Heidegger’s philosophy, is a form of culture that has to refuse any new possibility in order to preserve itself; a culture that never puts itself and its comfortable familiarity into question. They are also means for promoting different forms of political aestheticism, where language and imagination are used to manipulate, regiment, and organize the indistinct, voiceless and faceless, numeric masses.
In agreement with Heidegger, Arendt argues that this form of *poēsis* is dangerous in the realm of politics. She offers two reasons for this. First, absolute standards cannot be imposed “on a realm which is made up of human affairs and relations,” a realm of temporality and change, a realm where one needs to encounter the accidental, the incomprehensible, not as an incentive for escaping the world, but as an incentive for augmenting it. The second reason that Arendt invokes against the form of *poēsis* that is associated with the author-expert is that this form of making is not intersubjective, namely, it is not “primarily directed toward human beings.” It is both violent and reifying.

To the author-expert, Arendt opposes what one could call the author-inspirer. This is a dialogic creator. Arendt defines this notion of “author” in connection with the Roman form of authority. One could argue that by trying to rethink a non-Platonic notion of authority by drawing on the Roman conception of authority, Arendt attempts to reconnect authority to a dialogic and creative form of making, as this is described by Bakhtin under the guise of dialogic authorial world and of the author of polyphonic novel/discourse.

Both Bakhtin and Arendt would agree, opposite to Foucault, that the notion of author cannot be renounced, and that the author has to be active. What is required is not to make the author absent, but to rethink his role. Arendt’s non-foundational conception of action and judgment makes such a rethinking of the notion of author possible. Thus, one could argue that, both Arendt and Bakhtin would agree that the active presence of the author cannot stifle the freedom and the independence of the heroes. The author-inspirer does neither guide the others, nor forces them to merge with his idea or design.
He inspires them and thus he broadens, deepens, and rearranges his creation, his own ideas.\textsuperscript{1111}

As Arendt argues, the author-inspirer augments his creation, namely the plural, doxastic life of the city, always, however, as a commonality, as a common public world. To some extent, the author-inspirer acts as Nietzsche’s bearer of culture, insofar as he tries to inspire the others through his exemplary deeds, while, at the same time, trying to always engage exemplarity for the renewal of common symbolic horizons, of one’s ‘home.’

As Bakhtin asserts, the author-inspirer can augment his creation because the form, the design, the frame he makes “liberates and de-reifies the human being,”\textsuperscript{1112} namely, he sees the other, analogically, namely, as a source of meaning as he is. The design that he makes does “not dissolve in itself the other’s power to mean.”\textsuperscript{1113} The author-inspirer anticipates the response of the others, their freedom to answer, and in this sense the final word does not belong to him, but to the heroes, to the doers and sufferers.

One could argue that, because she makes a similar assumption, Arendt thinks that “the biding force of authority,” as created by the author-inspirer, exerts itself as advice and as example, not as command or as external coercion. Examples are a form of imaginative universals. In having recourse to examples and advices and not to commands or external coercion, the author-inspirer does not engage narratives as forms of violence through which the others are organized. Instead, he engages them as polyphonic spaces, where a multitude of voices co-exist and thus co-create the idea as a live event.
In this sense, authority/authorship is, as for Vico, an imaginative anticipation of the response of the strange others/the heroes, namely, of their freedom to colonize and start changing, making more inclusive and democratic, the symbolic spaces that define authority. At the same time, the freedom of the strange others/the heroes is, as for Heidegger, a listening attunement to the voice of the author, an answering to it in an active and creative way, in a way that creatively repeats it and reappropriates it.

Both sides combine creativity with receptivity, either as anticipatory or as remembering. Creativity is a letting be, as well as a coming to presence. It is polyphonic and dialogic. From such a perspective ideas or opinions are neither assimilated nor polemically repudiated. They are not ways of being for or against the others. On the contrary, they illuminate each other. They intersect each other and answer to each other.

Ideas augment and broaden each other. Thus, they neither merge with each other, nor are indifferent to each other. They livingly address each other. Inspiring authorship, as opposed to expertise-like and guiding authorship, is not violent and organizational, but answerable and dialogic. It is also world-disclosive. The focus is not an author who express himself or who seeks to make reality fit into his design, but the co-creation of a polyphonic, namely plural and dialogic, world. The focus is indeed the world, because what moves one is freedom as the (poetic) authentic care for the world.

Arendt also discusses the Greek and the Roman concepts of law as examples for how a human world can be created, in a way that engages poēsis or the act of making and being an author as a category of praxis. Both notions of law are grounded in a poetic, aesthetic experience. She argues that the Greek nomos despite the (pre-political) violence
that was at work in the making of the law by the legislator (the artisan of law) bordered and thus opened up a world as a plurality of opinions and voices, after the model of the Homeric (poetic) impartiality.

This is the “ability to see the same thing first from two opposing sides and then from all sides.”\(^\text{1115}\) It is the ability to “truly see topics from various sides.” To be able to do this is more than simply “putting aside personal interests.”\(^\text{1116}\) It is “a true freedom of movement in our mental world that parallels our freedom of movement in the physical one.”\(^\text{1117}\) As in the case of the humanist, it is the freedom of imagination to move from one standpoint to another and to imaginatively bind them into a dynamic, relational, and open ‘unity.’

The Roman \textit{lex} created lasting “ties and linkages.” In this sense, the Romans were the first to create “the Western world as \textit{world},”\(^\text{1118}\) because for them law could build bridges between one nation and another, by linking human beings together through speech. They politicized the space between peoples and thus turned it into an in-between space, namely, a space where “even the most hostile encounter between people gives rise to something they have in common.”

The model for the Roman law was the story of Aeneas. This undid the annihilation that is at work in war by turning the defeat of the Trojans into a rebirth, namely, into the foundation of Rome. Thus, the Romans invented a new outcome for the war’s conflagration\(^\text{1119}\) and transformed a defeat into a treaty and an alliance, into a tie and linkage. This reflects, in Arendt’s view, the Roman capacity for rebirth, for reinventing given outcomes, which the Roman notion of \textit{lex} incorporated.
The aesthetic creativity of the Greek *nomos* or law enhances the plurality of the world. Arendt argues that this is politically relevant because the more “people there are in the world…the more world there is to form between them, and the larger and richer the world will be. The more standpoints there are within any given nation…the more significant and open to the world that nation will be.” Thus, if one wants to avoid transforming nations into tribes as tribal nationalism did, one should cultivate a form of law that aims to increase the plurality of opinions and voices that define a nation, thus, correspondingly, increasing its capacity to encounter and address other nations.

The aesthetic creativity of the Roman *lex* consists in the making of ties and linkages between these peoples. One could argue that the two forms of aesthetic creativity need to complement each other in the making of the world. The main reason is that the more voices there are in a nation the more that nation would be able to further the plural making of the world as foreign policy. Thus, law as bordering should be a condition for internal plurality, not as a way to isolate from each other.

Law as bordering should work as a complement to law as the making of ties and linkages between different nations. In this sense, the main aim of bordering is not to demarcate a sovereign territory, but to make possible, to facilitate the creation of new ties, relations, and linkages. It is to make possible the establishing of relations and the creations of new realities, which alone can help to expand the frame of reference of humanity, a notion that, in Arendt’s view, replaced in the 20th century the importance that the notion of nature had for the 18th century and that of history had for the 19th century.
Only a world that is the result of both bordering and of making ties and linkages can produce a web of human relationships. Only such a world can be defined as the “in-between” interval of the “deeds and words” that owe their “origin exclusively to men’s acting and speaking directly to one another.” This is what Bakhtin describes as speaking with, not about, the other.

Such a speaking with, not about the other is at the origin of narrative identity. The latter brings together the open, never finalized, fabric of human stories. Narrative identity, which is the core of political identity for Arendt, is not a sovereign identity, but a boundary and a threshold identity, because its nucleus, the aesthetic form, is a boundary itself. This means that it comes into being only when the distance between the I and the other, the very origin of plurality, is not abolished, but, at the same time, as Nietzsche would say, it is not transformed into an opposition and an antagonism.

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I have argued in this chapter that, in Arendt’s view, the modern democratic citizens need to resuscitate their “human capacity for building, preserving, and caring for the world.” This is important if modern democratic regimes are to successfully fulfill the task of encountering the uncanny and the strange in a way that does not allow to what is different to become alien, but, instead, transforms it into a source of renewed commonality. In short, the task facing the modern democratic citizens is to dialogize the uncanny, to never allow it to become unsayable, as it happened in the case of anti-Semitism, imperialism, and totalitarianism. In this enterprise culture and imagination play for Arendt a pivotal role.
Trying to explain how culture and imagination could keep the different from becoming alien and unsayable, it was one aim of the present chapter to argue that poēsis is a fundamental category of the human condition. This is possible because, drawing on Arendt’s philosophy and intensifying the Heideggerian elements from her conception of the human condition, a distinction can be made between technical and creative making.

Technical making is associated with imagination as fantasy and with the longing to escape the world. Its result is the organization of the masses. This is made possible by the gradual isolation of the individuals from each other and, eventually, by their loneliness, namely, by the fact that they are entirely deprived of a world. Such a form of making invades the space of the political when the otherwise necessary utilitarian and technological mood of homo faber fails to transform the cultural artifact into a scene of action and speech.

Creative making is world disclosive. Its aim is the augmenting of the world. In this enterprise, creative making engages dialogic and answerable imagination. Creative making can be imported into politics through the work of art, a cultural artifact that combines both permanence and the sense of possibility and imaginative variation. Creative making can be defined as a form of poetic care. For Heidegger poetic care is a way of augmenting one’s ‘home’ insofar as one understands that coming to one’s own is always possible only through the encounter and the dialogue with the foreign. Arendt’s notion of creative making adds new meanings to the Heideggerian notion of poetic care.

On the one hand, for Arendt, poetic care is the ability to give to the realities that words disclose, to the relations that are established and to the new realities that are
created whenever people come together, the enduring shape of poetic memory. This is an essential prerequisite for politics. Otherwise, peoples are reduced to animal species and races or to psychological inner qualities. They are reduced to nature or to the impersonal laws of history. This is the role of creative mimesis, the core of which is poetic configuration, which, as Ricoeur argues, can deal productively with the *aporiai* of human finite time.

On the other hand, poetic care is the capacity to transform the human artifice into power, namely into a “scene of action and speech.”1123 It is the capacity to create a ‘unity’ that is the “dialogic concordance of unmerged twos or multiples.”1124 Only such an open ‘unity’ can avoid reification and the transformation of culture and ideas into official monologism and ideology, into a longing for fantasy and an escape from the world. Only thus, one can create humanity. This can be only the result of cultural products that developed a praxis-like quality. Such cultural products enter into dialogue with each other. Thus, they start acting on each other. They start changing and transforming each other.

Also, I argued in this chapter that the “human capacity for building, preserving, and caring for the world” requires a specific form of political creativity, which combines creativity and receptivity. Such a form of political creativity is at work in the notion of author-inspirer and in the form of authority that is modeled after it. This is a form of authority where the freedom and the imaginative capacity to anticipate the other’s freedom play an essential role, as much as the capacity to the receptive to the author’s design and to creatively repeat it.
Such a form of political creativity is also at work in a form of law that, in bordering political spaces increases their plurality. Thus, it augments their capacity to establish ties and linkages between people(s). As a result, instead of transforming peoples into tribes, which are isolated from each other, and individuals into lonely cogs in the mechanisms of ideologies and bureaucracy, law thus conceived broadens the world and it makes the frame of reference of humanity more inclusive.

To anticipate the conclusions of this dissertation, intercultural understanding requires democratic citizens who, not only think and reflect, thus dissenting from unjust and oppressive politics and policies, but it also requires imaginative and creative citizens. Such citizens would not allow the fear that the incomprehensible and the uncanny can arouse in their hearts to become an incentive for escaping the world. Instead, they would transform this fear into a passion for changing themselves. Thus, they will show imaginative flexibility.

They would also engage their imagination dialogically, thus anticipating the other’s freedom. Only thus, they would be able to enter into a living dialogue with the ideas of the others. In short, intercultural understanding requires not only thinking and reflection, but also the capacity of the democratic citizens to practice poetic care. It also requires a form of political authority and a form of law that facilitates the engagement of the democratic citizens into poetic care. As I will argue in the conclusions of the dissertation these are essential features of a form of symbolic democratic politics that is creative dialogic. Such a form of politics is conducive to intercultural understanding.
Conclusions

Democracy as Creative Dialogic Politics and Intercultural Understanding

I argued in this dissertation that, if Habermas is right and intercultural understanding becomes a contemporary political task, then discourse ethics needs to value and incorporate in a deeper way the communicative and dialogic power of linguistic creativity and of creative imagination. In brief, I tried to argue that discourse ethics needs to define the dialogic not only as discursive but also as creative and imaginative. I also argued that discourse ethics needs a concept of culture that accounts more for the role that imagination and emotions, as well as imaginative practices, such as ideology and utopia, play in encountering and dialoguing with the (foreign) others.

Thus, one aim of this dissertation was to enrich both the general epistemological and the linguistic assumptions of discourse ethics. Part of enriching the epistemological assumptions of discourse ethics was to define dialogue as a performative and polyphonic action. Drawing on Bakhtin’s philosophy, I argued that dialogue is an action and truth is dialogical thought. A person becomes “for the first time that which he is,” not only for the other, but also for himself, through dialogue. Dialogue pervades the life of the person. Thus, a person participates in the dialogue “wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.”

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In short, dialogue is the life-long act of making oneself, of answering to the other’s outsideness and particularity, and of transforming oneself and the other in the process. Thus defined, dialogue requires continuous creativity and imagination in presenting oneself to the others, in familiarizing oneself with the others, as well as in staging the encounter of different ideas, as live events. In short, dialogue penetrates the phenomenology of everyday life and it engages one’s whole being. It engages not only one’s reason, but also one’s body, emotions and sensibility, one’s imagination.

Part of enriching the linguistic assumptions of discourse ethics was to intensify the role that linguistic creativity plays in the communicative practice. The main line of argument was that the communicative power of language resides not primarily in its transparency and clarity, but in both its disclosive and in its dialogic power. The disclosive power of language refers to the fact that meaning is emerging, unfinalized, and inexhaustible. It cannot be entirely re-presented. When language, the meaning of the words and truth, are frozen into one representation or, as Nietzsche would say, into a *Frosch Perspektive*, there is a high danger that culture would become ideology, in Heidegger’s and in Arendt’s sense, namely, the organization of the masses in the name of one ‘idea,’ and politics would become aestheticism, in the sense defined by Kateb.

In order to avoid such pathologies of culture and politics, one needs to see meaning as emerging and truth as dialogic thought. Thus, meaning requires the constant work of disclosing through the act of naming, which is an act of metaphorical creation, concealed and still unexpressed, emergent possibilities. The dialogic power of language refers to the capacity to make vocabularies speak with each other, to inter-illuminate and
hybridize each other, in short, to creatively and imaginatively interact with each other, thus mutually enriching their meaning and symbolic power, and consequently, one’s freedom and capacity of becoming human.

Part of thus enriching the epistemological and linguistic assumptions of discourse ethics was to recognize the contribution that the linguistically creative capacity to answer to the particularity, outsideness, and uniqueness of one’s life makes to the process of communication and dialogue. Imagination plays an essential role in creatively answering to the particularity of another human being and to the particularity of a symbolic space, as well as in making the particularity of one’s own life communicable to the others. Arendt’s performance model of democracy incorporates more than discourse ethics such recognition of the role that imagination plays in making one’s particularity and idiosyncrasy communicable to the others.

However, Arendt does not emphasize enough the creativity of imagination. Thus, it was another aim of this dissertation to enrich her performance model of democracy by intensifying the role that creative, poetic, rhetorical imagination plays in making a common world with a cultural core, in the absence of which politics cannot take place. It was also to intensify the creative and transformative power of culture. This refers to the capacity that, cultural artifacts, specifically, the work of art, have, not only to stabilize the fluidity of human actions and speeches in the public realm, but also to operate as dialogic and praxis-like spaces. Thus, cultural products can operate as sites where homo faber can change his utilitarian and technological mood into the power to establish relations and disclose new realities, in brief, into the power to make a public world where opinions can
be significant and actions effective. An essential component of such a power is creative
and dialogic imagination.

Thus, part of intensifying the creative role of imagination in Arendt’s
performance model of democracy was to stress more the dialogic nature of poetic care
and of rhetoric. Arendt sees the work of art as capable of bringing culture into politics in
a way that contributes to the augmenting of the (common) world that action needs.
However, she carefully keeps out of her discussion of the political role of art the
character and the role of the author. She prudently restrains the discussion to the role of
the judge and the observer.

However, one main line of argument that this dissertation developed was that, if
culture is to bring into politics the capacity to augment both the plurality and the
commonality of the world, then more (authorial) creativity is required. This can be
achieved by seeing the author of the work of art as a polyphonic author, who engages in
poetic care, and, at the same time, discloses through his work a space where different
ideas encounter and engage each other, as live events, where they can change and
transform each other, and, consequently, the ‘identities’ of their bearers, producing at the
same time more inclusive civil metaphors.

Such a model guides the theorizing of the creative and imaginative capacities that
democratic citizens should cultivate and be able to practice, if they are to successfully
engage in intercultural understanding. It guides the theorizing of a demanding form of
democratic citizenship. Such a form of citizenship requires not only the (philosophical
and dissenting) capacity to think, but also the creative, imaginative, and poetic capacity to
increase one’s power of individuation, one’s freedom and greatness, as well as one’s capacity of becoming human.

A polyphonic author never stifles the freedom of his heroes, who thus have always the last word. Thus, he keeps the meaning of the cultural products open. He inspires the other democratic citizens to engage in the creative and imaginative, dialogic, practice of seeing their own ideas and opinions as having an unfinalized and inexhaustible meaning, thus needing the ongoing dialogue with the ideas of the others.

To engage oneself in such a cultural practice is also a form of poetic care insofar as it requires seeing the dialogue with the other as being constitutive to one’s ‘identity.’ It requires seeing one’s ‘home’ as a journeying through the foreign, as an encounter and a dialogue with the foreigner, whom one has invited as a guest in one’s ‘origins.’

However, polyphony and poetic care need to serve the ultimate purpose of renewing and of making more inclusive the commonality of the world, the civil metaphors that bring people together in a human community. They need to expand the language and the culture that people share, thus enhancing their solidarity and their communicative capacity. In this enterprise, they need to follow the logic of a cultural or symbolic politics, where (national) narratives and symbols become more inclusive and democratic throughout human history, thus, making the meaning of what it means to be human and a citizen more inclusive and democratic. To this extent, polyphonic authorship, poetic care, and transformative symbolic politics increasingly equalize and humanize the political actors.
The dissertation critically enriched Habermas’ discourse ethics in two important ways. Thus, it suggested two possible features of a form of democratic politics that would favor intercultural understanding. On the one hand, it intensified the agonistic nature of dialogue. More precisely, it made it possible to argue that, even when consensus and agreement are not reached, this does not entirely preclude dialogue. As Bakhtin points out, the reason is that agreement always retains its dialogic character. The voices that agree never dissolve the outsideness and uniqueness of their lives into a ‘unity.’ It is such persistence of outsideness, uniqueness, and difference that keeps ‘unity’ open to emergent possibilities and concealed meanings. I argued that it is the role of creative, as opposed to reproductive, imagination to disclose and to bring forth to language and reason such concealed meanings and emergent possibilities. The corollary of a dynamic, relational, and open ‘unity’ is that there are no absolute, but only dialogized differences.

On the other hand, the result of thus enriching the epistemological and linguistic assumptions of discourse ethics was to suggest that an important role in creating the political willingness of the people to communicate and dialogue with each other is played by emotions, aesthetic sensibility, and imagination. If properly cultivated, aesthetic sensibility and imagination can play an important political role in creating forms of affective solidarity and citizenship. They can make people receptive to unfamiliar and different modes of representation across (national) cultures.

Drawing on Herder’s and Vico’s philosophy, the dissertation argued that, the willingness, as well as the capacity to communicate and dialogue with each other in ways that enrich both sides depends very much on expanding the symbolic or cultural frame of
reference for humanity. The building block in this enterprise is to create a common feeling of humanity, namely, the capacity to affectively and imaginatively participate in the symbolic fabric of other cultures, thus expanding one’s own (national) capacity to grasp, to apprehend and comprehend, what it means to be human. The result of cultivating and exerting such a capacity is to make one’s national narratives and myths more inclusive and thus more democratic. An essential role in this enterprise is played by literature, understood in a very general sense, as language and poetry, as rhetoric and history, as travelogues and novels.

The dissertation critically enriched Arendt’s performance model of democracy in two important ways. This made it possible to suggest two more possible features that the form of democratic politics that would favor intercultural understanding should possess. On the one hand, it made it possible to rethink the agonistic nature of politics in a direction that emphasizes more the need to create a common world with a cultural core. In brief, it emphasized more the creative aesthetic nature of agonistic politics. Such an emphasis presupposes an enlargement of the meaning of aesthetics that guides Arendt’s understanding of politics.

Aesthetics denotes not only the contemplative and disinterested attitude of the judge of the work of art or of history. It denotes not only the heroic and virtuosic theatricality of appearing to the others. It also denotes the capacity for creative receptivity and receptive creativity. First, in being receptive to the other’s outsideness and uniqueness, one already judges its worldly suitability, namely, one proves capable of connecting it to one’s familiar and given symbolic horizons in ways that expand,
transform, and renew them. To this extent, one’s receptivity to the other’s outsideness is an increase of one’s freedom and (imaginative and cultural) power of becoming human.

Second, in being creative, one already receptively anticipates the other’s freedom to answer to one’s imposition of form, to one’s design. This is an inspiring form of creation, namely, one that anticipates the other’s freedom and power to broaden one’s ‘origin-al’ designs and forms. In both situations, imagination plays a significant role, as the dialogic power to inhabit the others’ narratives and symbolic horizons and to anticipate their suitability for renewing the commonality that one shares with the others.

On the other hand, such a critical enriching of Arendt’s model of performance democracy made it also possible to intensify the creative nature of power, by recognizing that having power requires creative imagination. For Arendt, similar to Nietzsche, power is a potential. It emerges whenever people come together and whenever “word and deed have not parted company.” As I argued, drawing on Nietzsche’s philosophy, part of such a potential, emerging power is also the capacity to engage one’s imagination both analogically and exploratively. It is to be able to dissolve the familiar, to see it as problematic, and at the same time, to explore the uncanny and the incomprehensible and to devise ways of speaking about it, thus not allowing it to become unsayable, difference as such, or utterly alien. It is also to be able to analogically reconnect the different to one’s ‘home,’ without forgetting that any (post-metaphysical) ‘unity’ is dynamic, relational, and open, which is, according to Nietzsche, the task of a true bearer of culture.

Thus, one could argue that, according to Arendt’s narrative of the origins of totalitarianism, in encountering the different, the uncanny, and the incomprehensible,
namely, the Jews, the black tribes of Africa, or the national minorities and the stateless persons that did not belong to a national sovereign space, the modern European men failed to generate power. The reason is that they did not engage their explorative imagination, in a way that would have allowed them to question their identity and culture. This would have freed them to see their identity and culture as one possible way of being European or human. They also did not engage their analogical imagination in a way that would have renewed their ‘home’ through the receptive dialogue with the foreign. To this extent, the modern European men failed to create a political situation. This is a situation where the transformation, the equalization, and the humanization of both sides would have been possible. Such a transformation would have made the symbolic frame of reference, of Europe and of humanity, more inclusive, while increasing, at the same time, one’s power of becoming human.

A form of democratic symbolic politics that favors intercultural understanding would thus cultivate in its citizens not only the capacity to think and reflect, not only the capacity for dissidence, but also the imaginative and creative capacity to present to the others their strangeness and novelty to the world in a way that renews the commonality of their world. In her book, The Rights of the Others: Aliens, Residents, and Citizens, Seyla Benhabib provides such an example when she argues that Muslim girls in France used the veil/scarf as a transformative symbol. In this way, they created a new identity and, at the same time, mediated and transited between two different symbolic spaces, that of secular France and the religious space of their home. On the one hand, they wore the veil, as a religious symbol, an act that is required from the perspective of their home culture. On
the other hand, they used the veil in the public space of the secular political culture of France as a way of individualizing themselves and of constructing their public appearance. They creatively used the veil as a mask, thus being both ‘oneself’ and ‘another.’

The Muslim girls did not only argue and debate, but they also acted creatively, by taking a symbol from their culture and transplanting it in the secular space of France. In this sense, they hybridized both cultural spaces, while using a cultural symbol to construct their public identity. They acted creatively and imaginatively. As Honig and Vico would argue, the Muslim girls in France staged nonexistent rights, namely, they created and imagined the symbolic space where their rights can first begin to exist. In this enterprise, they transformed themselves and the public space of secular France. However, as Vico would argue, such a symbolic creation and transformation constitutes the poetic origin of law.

In Benhabib’s vocabulary such a poetic origin of law, which expands the frame of reference for humanity, is achieved by the democratic iterations. The role of democratic iterations is to mediate between the context-transcending cosmopolitan character of the human rights claims and principles invoked by democratic constitutions and the democratic commitment to locality and to a given constituency. Democratic iterations are repetitions, invocations, and revocations of meanings through which people can transform the norms, the authoritative precedent.

In Benhabib’s view, the mediation provided by democratic iterations takes the form of public argument and debate, but also of social and symbolic interaction. It takes,
as for Vico, the form of poetic and linguistic creativity. Law (*iura imginaria*) is grounded in the poetic and rhetorical performance through which, in a universe of diverse voices, of mixed voices of strangers and hosts, people learn to live on the threshold, between familiarity and strangeness.

A form of democratic symbolic politics that favors intercultural understanding would also cultivate in its citizens the capacity to affectively and imaginatively inhabit the others’ narratives. An important role in thus familiarizing oneself with the other’s symbolic universe is played by literature. As the Turkish writer, Orhan Pamuk, observes, central to the art of novel is the “question of the ‘other,’ the ‘stranger,’ the ‘enemy’ that resonates inside each of our heads.”

Thus, through the “patient reading of great novels” we learn how “to share in unique lives that trouble us” and thus to expand our imaginative and cultural horizons.

In this process, we learn how to deal with the fears and anxieties, hatreds and anger that the other awakens in our soul. We learn to see ourselves and the other in our possibilities. This is possible, because, through the imaginative novelistic journey, we dialogically penetrate into the unfinalized core of our and the other’s personality. This shows that reflection, communication, and dialogue cannot take place in the absence of imagination.

One also needs imagination both in order to familiarize oneself with the other’s symbolic space and in order to envisage alternatives, new possibilities. The explorative power of imagination is required for entering the other’s universe and, at the same time, for (reflectively) distancing oneself from one’s own familiar symbolic horizon, for
defrosting identities and memories. The creative power of imagination, namely, its sense of possibility, is necessary to invent new ways of looking at oneself and at the other, as well as to disclose new spaces of intelligibility and to expand and renew the existing ones.

I call a form of democratic symbolic politics, which presents these features, thus favoring intercultural understanding, creative dialogic. This is a form of democratic politics where imagination is publicly used in a responsibly creative way, namely, in a way that answers to the other’s living and unique presence. It is a form of symbolic politics where cultural products are understood not as expressions of some authentic traditions, but as world-disclosive, as dialogic, and polyphonic.

At last, but not at least, it is also a form of symbolic politics where power relations are agonistic and creative in a manner that keeps renewing the mechanisms of confrontation and the common stage where the confrontation can take place, where the protagonists can make their uniqueness visible. Such an understanding of power would never allow any of the protagonists of a political situation to be either totally subjugated and assimilated or totally alienated and transformed into an adversary. It would also not allow any of the protagonists of a political situation to be transformed into a difference as such and into something utterly alien, into a presence that gradually becomes unsayable.

Creative dialogical politics is similar in meaning to Charles Taylor’s politics of recognition. However, there is one crucial difference related to the definition of dialogism. Taylor’s politics of recognition tends to rely on an expressive model of meaning, language, and action. Thus, the focus is on the expression of an inner,
original, authentic self, which recognizes the dialogue with the other as constitutive to it. Creative dialogical politics relies on a polyphonic and dialogic model. The focus is the imaging forth of the form that mediates dialogue. The focus is the disclosure of a world and the (poetic) care for it.

Form or design is a polyphonic creation that cannot be traced back to the expression of an inner, authentic self, thus reducing the number of participants “to the unitary plane of a single consciousness.” To this extent, form is situated outside both the I and the other, although filtered through their particular lives. The creation of the form through which the other becomes my hero and I discover the incompleteness of my life and cultural identity replaces here the expression of my inner, authentic self. Moreover, the other (the foreign) is central to one’s own ‘identity’ and ‘home.’ Thus, the deeper one tries to recover an authentic self or identity, the deeper one falls into otherness, the longer one’s journey back ‘home’ from the foreign is.

An example of how imagination should be engaged in order to facilitate intercultural understanding and promote democratic cosmopolitanism in the sense required by creative dialogic politics is provided by Pamuk’s conception of a “novelist’s politics.” Pamuk argues that a “novelist’s politics” arises “from his ability to imagine himself as someone else.”¹¹³⁰ Thus, one could argue that, insofar as the reader engages himself in the same imaginative exercise as the writer, then, his politics too should arise, as an expression of a practice that belongs to the “‘literary’ public sphere in the broader sense,”¹¹³¹ from the same ability to imagine himself as someone else.
Similar to Bakhtin, Pamuk recognizes the polyphonic nature of the novelistic imaginative exercise. He recognizes that the world of the novel is “in the process of becoming; unfinished” and somehow lacking. Thus, the reader starts feeling responsible for the “uncertainty of this world still in progress.” Struggling with the uncertainty of the book, trying to understand the rules that govern its world, the reader begins to feel like he is part of this “half-finished world that the book is trying to fathom.” Reading the book becomes more than just a “part of a personal struggle to decipher our own beings.”

However, to engage in such a cultural practice is not a gratuitous inter-textual game. Pamuk’s use of the aesthetic in the sense given to it by Bakhtin is meant to have a political impact, because, as the Turkish writer declares in a recent interview, politics has a deeper, cultural, meaning. This refers to the fact that Pamuk, as many others in Turkey nowadays, aim to achieve political change through cultural criticism and through narratives. This proves to be important, especially when politics can be dangerous, because not enough freedom of speech is granted to the citizens of a country. In these situations, culture and cultural criticism can provide the medium for achieving political reform and for staging and enacting, for performing nonexistent rights and liberties.

Thus, to “read a novel is to confront both its author’s imagination and the real world.” It is to travel back and forth in one’s imagination “between the world in that novel and the world in which we still live.” It is an imaginative journey through which...
“by putting ourselves in another’s shoes and using our imaginations to shed our identities, we are able to set ourselves free.” Through the novelistic exercise of imagination “[o]thers become ‘us’ and we become ‘others.’” Such an act is political because it helps one to reflect on one’s memories, hopes, and dreams, in ways that reveal the centrality of the ‘other’ in one’s own culture and history. Such an act is political because it dialogizes ideas and memories, identities and visions, thus creating a situation where they can change and transform.

As a result, the novelistic exercise gives us the power to “begin to test the lines that mark off that ‘other’ and thus, to alter the boundaries of our own identities,” the geography of our daily lives, as summoned by “the collectivity, the nation, the society to which we belong.” The novel thus becomes an exercise of thinking, understanding, and imagining ‘identities’ in worlds, where “borders, histories, and national distinctions are in constant flux.” It becomes an exercise in transcending the either/or thinking of nationalism and Westernization, as well as, the obsessions with identity. It becomes an exercise in transcending the clear cut distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ which underlines the ideology of nationalism. It becomes an exercise in denationalizing myths in ways that make them more inclusive. It becomes an exercise into democratic cosmopolitanism, thus facilitating intercultural understanding.

As practiced by Pamuk’s “novelist’s politics,” imagination constructs culture and cultural products not as monolithic and organic wholes, but as the open-ended dialogue of different voices and centrifugal forces. However, in order not to allow these voices, centrifugal forces, and distances to become oppositions and antagonisms, where the other
should be either assimilated or rejected, one should have a manifold and variable sensibility, as well as the imaginative capacity to inhabit many masks and costumes. One should also have the ability to look at one’s own familiar and given symbolic horizons from the “nowhere” of utopia or from the unhomely and the unfamiliar to which poetic thinking transports one and the ability to comprehend this manifoldness into a ‘whole.’

In a nutshell, one should possess the virtue of greatness. This would make one capable to generate new meanings, to establish relations, and create new realities through the inventive application of what is present and familiar to unfamiliar, uncanny, and incomprehensible situations (their “metaphorical capacity”). It would also make one capable of seeing one’s own culture in light of its unspoken possibilities and meanings, in light of its unfinalized and inexhaustible core, in light of its dynamic, relational, and open ‘unity.’

A “novelist’s politics” proves to be an imaginative exercise that is conducive to intercultural understanding especially when it is practiced in places that uncertainly waver between East and West, places on “the edge of Europe” and “on its periphery.” In such situations, a “novelist’s politics” has the merit of not allowing distances to become antagonisms. Pamuk argues that, people living in such places admire Europe and the West and emulate them. At the same time, they are driven by the proud desire to find their own voice against them. Thus they experience anger against those who in their own countries transform the West into a path to an easy pleasure, success, or power. They are also haunted by the potential shame for not being able to live up to the dream and the
vision, to the ‘ideal’ that Europe or the West represents for them; “an apparition at times desired and at times feared…a future – but never a memory.”1142

Such places press into each other different tensions and contradictions, as well as split identities. To this extent, (violent) conflict potentially lurks within their frontiers, because the other is always an uneasy presence. The other, as in Arendt’s story of the Origins of Totalitarianism, could any time become the uncanny, the accidental, and the incomprehensible. The other is permanently a potential source of fear and of the comfortable longing for escaping into ideological fantasy, which moved the followers of leaders such as Stalin or Hitler. Such a danger is constantly growing in the contemporary world, where changes and displacement more frequently undermine and challenge one’s secure familiarity, one’s complacency.

On the other hand, such places do have the potential of turning identities into a creative task and into an emerging power. However, this can happen only to the extent that the identities that confront within their frontiers can mutually inspire and transform each other. It can happen only insofar as they can dialogize each other. Such a situation captures the transformative power of these places. It captures their twofold power: to become oneself through the aspiration for achieving an ideal (of West), a vision, or a dream and in the process to (origin-ally) alter and expand the very ‘same’ idea(l), vision, or dream. It captures their changing and hybridizing power.

Thus, Pamuk observes, someone who would practice a “novelist’s politics” from such places would come to understand that he “can only criticize his own culture and can only move from a conservative nationalism to a creative modernity to the extent that he
clings to a fairy-tale image of an ideal Europe or the West."1143 Thus, he needs the utopian force of imagination. At the same, he has to recreate his imaginative escapes in his ‘own’ world, by connecting them to the memories and the traditions of his people, to their ‘ideology,’ in Ricoeur sense, namely, to the image that a groups has of itself. As Zarathustra, he needs to plunge his speeches into the market place, to connect his (pregnant) wisdom and his solitude to the masks and the costumes of the others, to their own re-presentations of themselves.

If he fails in this enterprise, he engages in political aestheticism, because he proves incapable of inspiring the others to dialogically broaden his design, his ideal. On the one hand, he just perpetuates the cliché of the West as superior and as standing for civilization, instead of seeing it as an opportunity for creatively reinventing his dreams and visions of the other within the frontiers of his own world. On the other hand, he continues to cling to the impossible idea that a return to the old days, when his culture was not affected by the other, is still possible.

At the same time, one would come to understand that the ‘ideal’ of Europe cannot rely on a “contradictory and hostile other,” but rather on the mutually inspiring and transformative interplay with the other, through which identities are altered and expanded.1144 If the dream of Europe (or the West) is turned into a weapon for affirming Western superiority and difference from the ‘others,’ from ‘them,’ the result is just Westernization. This refers to the colonization of the other in a way that does not make room for his specific power and creative resisting; for his freedom and imaginative power to alter and expand the dream and vision, the ideal of the West. Such a “self-
congratulatory, self-righteous West would only bring about the “impotence born of a constant humiliation, of a failure to make oneself understood, to have one’s voice heard” Pamuk.¹¹⁴⁵

The turning point between, on the one hand, nationalism and humiliating Westernization and, on the other hand, creative modernity, namely, one where cultures and idea(l)s dialogize each other, resides in the manner in which one engages the power of imagination. This can be engaged as a source of illusions and escapes from the world, as in Arendt’s view the European modern men chose to do throughout the 19th and the 20th century, thus becoming responsible for the coming into being of racism. However, imagination can also be engaged as a creative exercise, as in the dialogic and polyphonic novelistic exercise recommended by Bakhtin and Pamuk, through which identities are transformed, expanded, and, eventually, hybridized.

Imagination can be engaged only to analogically project the superiority of one’s ‘home.’ Or, it can be engaged in an explorative and creative fashion, as a way to cross over to the other and put oneself in his shoes, thus transforming oneself and the other in a way that expands one’s given symbolic horizons, one’s memories and dreams, one’s visions. Thus, imagination works as a device where the sense of possible, its creativity, increases one’s capacity to apprehend and comprehend the unfinalized and inexhaustible core of oneself and the others, thus increasing one’s dialogic power.

By making possible, encouraging, and shaping such a dialogic confrontation, interpretation, and enrichment of voices and vocabularies, of memories and dreams, even in cultural and political spaces that are characterized by tensions and contradictions and
where identities are contested, a “novelist’s politics” proves Bakhtin’s point to be
correct, namely, that even when “intense interaction and struggle between one’s own and
another’s word is being waged,” instead of reaching an agreement, still the dialogue
continues, because this is a process in which the two parts “oppose or dialogically
interanimate each other.”1146

Thus, even when there is no consensus, there is still an interpenetration of
languages and speeches; there are still multiple voices that, while remaining outside each
other, can, nevertheless, mutually dialogize, and thus can inter-illuminate and inter-
animate each other. Any genuine attempt to address the other and to speak with, not
about, him in a living manner, namely, one that does not reify him, is aesthetic. However,
as Bakhtin points out, to “aestheticize,” is to commune,1147 namely to (co)create an
intersection, a hybrid boundary that brings together different voices, opinions, ideas while
transforming them, at the same time, and formally enriching them. Cultural creation thus
practiced facilitates intercultural understanding.

The result of such a cultural creation would be a form of creative modernity.
Pamuk suggests that this would be a Europe that does not define itself “in narrow
Christian terms,” as well as a Turkey that does not try “to derive its strength only from its
religion.” If either Europe or Turkey fails to achieve such a form of creative modernity
then each would be just “an inward-looking place divorced from reality, bound more to
the past than to the future.”1148 Each of them would be just a symbolic place that, instead
of dialogically penetrating the other into its unfinalized and inexhaustible core, escapes
into the isolation and loneliness of ideological fantasy.
An example of formal enrichment and cultural creation, in the sense defined by Bakhtin, as inter-illumination of two languages in a way that brings them in a dynamic, relational, and open ‘unity,’ while preserving each other’s outsidedness, is Pamuk’s description of Istanbul as a cultural construction of Istanbul writers. This is the case because the way Pamuk uses the aesthetic in his narrative does not stand for expressive, but it stands for a situation that is “on the boundary between one’s own and someone else’s consciousness, on the threshold.” It refers to a non-sovereign and polyphonic, to a dialogic situation in the sense given to this by Bakhtin.

As a result, what matters from the perspective of Pamuk’s narrative is not the authenticity or the sincerity of what different cultures express, a language usually associated with nationalism, but how these cultures transform each other, how they dialogize each other, how they inter-illuminate and hybridize their languages and memories and how, in the process they transform each other and expand the symbolic frame of reference for (Europe and) humanity.

Pamuk argues that the Istanbul writers narrated about their city neither as Easterners nor as Westerners. They were writers who in order to “see the city with new eyes,” had “to cleanse themselves of their traditional identities. To be western, they set out on an irreversible (my italics) journey to that twilit place between East and West. As with our three other melancholics, Koçu’s most beautiful and profound pages are the ones that remain between worlds (my italics).” Because they kept themselves between worlds, the people of Istanbul were able to look at the Eastern aspect of their city with Western eyes and to the Western aspects of their cities with Eastern eyes. Thus, they did
not collapse East into West or West into East, as they did not keep them completely separate and opposite. They formally enriched each of them, because they opened an “inspiring and critical new space” between cultural worlds. Thus each ceased to be ‘itself,’ while being itself at its most.1151

In Pamuk’s interpretation, this cultural construction has a specific political consequence. Because of this inter-illumination of the two languages, of West and East, “Istanbul’s own residents felt like outsiders half the time”1152 and the “resulting uneasiness made them fear they didn’t quite belong.” The positive (denationalizing) political role of Pamuk’s cultural construction and narrative resides in the signaling of the constitutive role that the other plays in constructing one’s own ‘identity,’ one’s own hopes, dreams, and memories. Thus, his narrative makes it impossible to pinpoint, to indentify - is it West or East?- an authentic self or tradition, some genuine national core or an organic and pristine whole.

Such a cultural exercise cracks the taken for granted familiarity and the secure feeling of belonging to unquestioned (national) wholes. At the same time, it does not allow any of the two sides to escape into the fantasy of nationalism or of Westernization. Instead, it stages and enacts the dialogic (inter)penetration into their unfinalized and inexhaustible ‘cores.’ Thus, similar to Nietzsche’s explorative imagination, which creates an artistic distance from one’s ‘home,’ Pamuk practices through his reconstruction of the memories of the city of Istanbul and, at the same time, cultivates in his reader, the capacity of looking at what is “familiar” with “the eyes of a foreigner” and thus of reminding oneself “that there is something foreign in my way of looking at the city.” The
aim, as Pamuk points out, is to see “the city from many different points of view and thereby maintain the vitality of my connection to it.”

Pamuk’s cultural reconstruction of Istanbul, as an example of formal enrichment, can thus play the political role of fending off “narrow nationalism and pressures to conform.” Narrow nationalism and successful pressures to conform come into being from lack of polyphony (“many different points of view”) and lack of vitality, of living addressivity, in one’s connection with a particular cultural value, object, or space. Nationalism is successful when people lack imaginative mobility and flexibility. It is successful when the secure and protective isolation and loneliness “might kill the desire” for what is different.

In short, what favors nationalism, as well as, the more radical versions of political aestheticism, such as racism and totalitarianism, is the incapacity to incorporate otherness in what one takes to be familiar and present. It is the incapacity to see otherness at the heart of one’s experience. It is the lack of creative and dialogic imagination in the members of a culture, society, and polity. What Pamuk ultimately tells us through his story of Istanbul is that he came to understand what it means to be Ottoman through the eyes of the other, of the foreigner, through the Western eyes.

He gained the necessary distance for such an understanding in the in-between space where the East and West transformed each other. He gained this grasping distance because of the creative presence of the other at the core of his ‘familiar’ universe, because of the foreigner that one has invited as a guest in one’s ‘origins.’ Such a distance is the result of a creative intensification of particularity. This leads to a transformational
and metamorphic in-between world, which expresses neither East nor West. Instead, it is
a world of creative dislocations and further possibilities, a world where civil metaphors
can be made more inclusive, more democratic, and more human.

However, one could object that it was precisely this intensification of particularity
that was conducive to political atrocities and crimes such as those committed in Bosnia
and Kosovo, or, unfortunately, in many other parts of the world. Against such an
objection, I would argue that it was precisely the lack of imaginative mobility and
flexibility that the ‘rhetoric’ of people such as Milosevic or Wilders encouraged and
cultivated in the citizens that was responsible for such atrocities.

It was the imaginative blindness to the existential animateness and living
particularity of the other. This allowed for the wicked and destructive aesthetic shaping of
reality that Kateb attributes to the fantasies and hallucinations of hyperactive imagination.
It also deprived the people of communicative power, which springs up only when people
are together in a way that does not distort their living particularity. In short,
responsible for such atrocities was the ideological escape into fantasy, which stunts and,
ultimately, kills the creative and dialogic power of imagination. It was the lack in both
the leaders and their followers of a poetic and rhetorical form of practical wisdom. This,
as I argued drawing on Vico’s philosophy, is a reflective receptivity to particularity,
which has the poetic and rhetorical capacity, to create more inclusive and democratic the
civil metaphors, where (emotional) solidarity, laws, and institutions originate.

In sum, overcoming nationalism and preventing political aestheticism in general,
thus favoring democratic cosmopolitanism and intercultural understanding requires
cultivating in the democratic citizens a form of responsible and dialogic creative imagination, as an indispensable part of thinking and reflection. Consequently, this would increase the power of the democratic citizens. Thus understood, power would indicate not only their capacity for higher individuation, but also their capacity for renewing their worldly commonality, the cultural core of their world, the artificiality in the absence of which politics cannot take place, as well as the symbolic frame of reference for humanity.

This indicates that a common liberal political culture could provide a cushion that would prevent a nation of citizens, which can no longer rely on ethnic association, from dissolving into fragments, as well as a world of nations from dissolving into tribes, only if it can connect itself to the way social bonds are symbolically and imaginatively defined in a national culture. This is the case because wanting to have a common liberal political culture, namely, one that produces solidarity among strangers through patriotic constitutionalism, thus replacing nationalism and acting in the direction of democratic cosmopolitanism, is not a realistic expectation as long as it is not supported by a common feeling of humanity and by forms of affective solidarity and citizenship.

However, such a deepening of one’s imaginative and emotional embodiment would activate liberal and democratic values, such as dialogue with and respect for the other, because culture would be engaged in the sense defined in this dissertation, as the coming to one’s own and as a passage through and a dialogue with the other, the foreign. Also, imagination would be exerted in its analogical and explorative power. It will also be exerted in its creative power to produce civil metaphors. Also, as in Pamuk’s conception of a “novelist’s politics,” imagination would be engaged in its power to
transform and expand one’s identity. In brief, only to the extent that a liberal political culture would connect itself to such a way of practicing (national) culture and of engaging one’s imagination, it would be able to redefine democratic (emotional) solidarities in ways that trump the foundational distinction of nationalism, that between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ thus facilitating intercultural understanding.
Notes

4 “Struggle for the Soul of Pakistan,” in *National Geographic*, September, 2007, 44.
7 Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 117.
8 Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 118-119.
27 Kateb, “The Adequacy of the Canon,” 496.
31 What makes Bakhtin’s discussion of aesthetic imagination politically relevant is that while living under the most repressive, bloodiest, and highly bureaucratic decades of Stalin’s dictatorship, he did not give up the belief in the moral and dialogic power of aesthetic imagining forth, which, as a moment of practical reason, connects the I to the other. Aesthetic imagination provides in Bakhtin’s view not only the model for creatively answering to the other’s living presence, but it also provides a weapon for resisting, through irony and carnival laughter, Stalin’s dictatorship. In this sense, Bakhtin’s view of aesthetic activity offers an alternative, for example, to the pessimistic and resigned conception Max Weber has of art, as just a private and false hope nourished by intellectualism and by a society that lost religion and ethics alike. Instead, for Bakhtin, aesthetic creativity plays the truly redemptive role of both opposing the dictatorship and of connecting to the other through responsible, respectful, and loving aesthetic creativity. In brief, aesthetic imagination and cultural activity are for Bakhtin means for constructing a political space that
exists as an alternative to the official rigidified ideology of Stalinism. Aesthetic imagination and culture thus functions as subversive means for undermining the official language and culture of the time.

33 Kateb, “Aestheticism and Morality,” 33.
35 Kateb speaks about the “ferocious power of the creative, hyperactive imagination” (Kateb, “The Adequacy of the Canon,” 499).
39 Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 76.
41 Kateb, “Aestheticism and Morality,” 10-11
52 Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 104.
54 Ricoeur, “Le cercle de la démonstration,” 139.
56 Ricoeur, “Le cercle de la démonstration,” 142.
57 Ricoeur, “Imagination in Discourse and in Action,” 182.
60 Ricoeur, “Le cercle de la démonstration,” 132.
63 Ricoeur, “Imagination in Discourse and Action,” 182.
64 Ricoeur, “Imagination in Discourse and Action,” 184.
68 Ibidem.
71 Ibidem.
72 Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 297.
78 Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 322.
81 Ibidem.
92 As Bakhtin argues, these criteria are to be achieved throughout my unique life, as my non-alibi in Being,” as my “obligative (ought-to-be) uniqueness.”92 The ought-to-be is an acknowledgement of my uniqueness. As a result, the root of the answerable deed and of all the categories of the concrete ought is “I, too, exist [et ego sum] actually – in the whole and assume the obligation to say this word.”92 No ideology can do the thinking for me, as Arendt would say. Bakhtin’s notion of one’s “non-alibi in Being” is similar to Heidegger’s idea from *Being and Time* that, characteristic for Dasein’s existence is mineness, namely, the task to be me. However, while Heidegger sees acquiring one’s authenticity, namely, individualization, rather as a solitary enterprise, Bakhtin sees it as an engagement with the living and concrete other.
93 Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 309
96 Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 41.
100 Ibidem.
102 Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 46.
According to Stuart Hampshire, the rationalistic program of the 18th century, “involved eliminating from our thought, and therefore from our language, all figurative and metaphorical conceptions, all expressions that could be understood only by reference to images” (“Vico and the Contemporary Philosophy of Language,” in Giambattista Vico. An International Symposium, editor G. Tagliacozzo, co-editor. Hayden White, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 477).

“The symbolic structures of the lifeworld are reproduce by way of the continuation of valid knowledge, stabilization of group solidarity, and socialization of responsible actors” (Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 137).


In this role, aesthetic ideas reflect a central feature of culture, in Kant’s view. They reflect the fact that culture consists in taste for the ideas of reason, defined as the fundamental receptivity to ideality, to what surpasses actual and finite experience (Olivier Denkens, “L’Homme kantien et le désir des idées. La culture et l’unité des questions de la philosophie,” in *Kant-Studien* 93. Jahrg., S. 158-176, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2002, 161), but also as “the faculty for the judging of the sensible rendering of moral ideas” (Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 5:356).


Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, 127.


Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*, 115.

Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” in Kant, *Political Writings*, 111.

Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” 112.

Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” 113.

Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” 117.


Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” 123.

Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” 103.

Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” 222.

Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” 227.

Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” in *Political Writings*, 49.


Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, 170.

Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, 112.

Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, 113.

Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 5:283.

Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 5:283 (this is Makkreel’s translation).

In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant defines imagination as “a power of [producing] intuitions even when the object is not present.” Thus defined, imagination is either productive or reproductive. Productive or inventive imagination refers to the “power of exhibiting an object originally and so prior to experience.” Reproductive imagination refers to the power of exhibiting the object in a derivative way, by bringing back to mind an intuition we have previously had (Kant, *Anthropology*, 44). There is, of course, Kant points out, a limit to imagination’s creativity or inventiveness. This refers to what is given in the senses either directly or indirectly. However, Young Lawrence argues that imagination is for Kant fundamentally creative, since it refers to the capacity to “see more than meets the eye” (Young Lawrence, “Kant’s View of Imagination,” in *Kant-Studien*, (79) 1988, 141). Thus, Lawrence argues, imagination means to take, treat, or construct what is sensibly present as something other, or something more than what immediately appears. Imagination refers to the capacity for construal or interpretation (Lawrence, “Kant’s View of Imagination,” 142). It is a form of creative sensibility.

As Rebecca Kukla argues, in moving from the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant considerably expands and strengthens the role of sensibility and imagination in his critical philosophy. In the *Critique of Judgment*, imagination is not treated anymore as a receptive faculty, but rather as active and creative. As a result it ceases to be a mere function of the understanding. In this quality, “imagination is capable not only of synthesis, but also of play, including, crucially, play that is free from the rule of the understanding.” Still, “imagination has creative responsibility for directing reflective judgment” in the attempt to find the missing universal (Rebecca Kukla, *Introduction*, in *Aesthetics and...*
209 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:240.
213 In the Critique of Pure Reason, schemata are “a priori products of imagination that mediate between concepts and empirical appearances.” Their role is to “show the understanding, from within sensibility, how the presentations of sensibility can be categorized and comprehended under general concepts” (Rebecca Kukla, Introduction, “in Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant’s Critical Philosophy, 10). As interpreted by Makkreel in the context of the third Critique the schemata are indeterminate and open, inviting to further revision in light of new particulars that are judged as being humanly valuable or significant.
216 Ibidem.
217 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:216.
218 Ibidem.
220 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:293.
221 Kant, Anthropology, 96-97.
222 In a similar manner, Anthony Savile also points out that there seems to be a contradiction in Kant’s conception of taste. On the one hand, taste seems to be an original and natural faculty depending on our possession of a common sense. On the other hand, taste seems to be a regulative principle, and thus something we need to acquire and cultivate. Thus, it can be argued, according to Savile, that Kant sees taste as a capacity to take universal subjective pleasure in things, which needs to be cultivated and actualized as an ability to do so (Anthony Savile, Aesthetic Reconstructions: The Seminal Writings of Lessing, Kant, and Schiller, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).
224 Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” 44.
225 Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” 45.
226 Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” 49.
227 Kant, “The Contest of Faculties,” 182.
228 Kant, “The Contest of Faculties,” 183.
229 Kant, “The Contest of Faculties,” 184.
232 Kant, Anthropology, 74.
233 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:352.
235 Savile, Aesthetic Reconstructions, 173.
236 Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” 221-222.
237 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:317.
238 Makkreel, Reflection, Reflective Judgment, and Aesthetic Exemplarity,” 243.
243 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:314.
Pillow, “Understanding Aestheticized,” in Aesthetics and Cognition, the footnote on page 254.

Kneller, Kant and the Power of Imagination, 158.


Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:432.

Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:430-431.

Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:431.

Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:433.

Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:356.

Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:432.

Kant, Critique of Judgment, 5:306.

Kant, Anthropology, 108.

Kant, Anthropology, 145-147.

Kant, Anthropology, 111-112.

Kant, Anthropology, 112.

Kant, Anthropology, 147.

Kant, Anthropology, 30 and 32.

Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” 224.

Ibidem.

Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” 225.

Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” 226.

Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” 227.

Geiman, “Enlightened Cosmopolitanism: The Political Perspective of the Kantian ‘Sublime,’”


Beiser, Schiller, 184.

Friedrich Schiller, Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind, in Friedrich Schiller, Essays, New York: Continuum, 1993, 93

Schiller, Letters, 93, 94.

Schiller, Letters, 90.

Schiller, Letters, 88.


Schiller, Letters, 114.

Schiller, Letters, 115.

Schiller, Letters, 106.


Beiser, Schiller, 132.

Schiller, Letters, 103.

Schiller, Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, in Essays, 256.

Schiller, Letters, 99.


Schiller, Concerning the Sublime, in Essays, 71

Habermas, Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, 49.

Schiller argues here for the autonomy of art. However, this does not mean that art is not, in his conception, civically and politically engaged, in the sense in which it aims at forming in the citizens the right type of moral character, which allows them to experience freedom and the full cultivation of their
individuality (both rational and sensuous aspects). Schiller himself has been engaged in Weimer in the
intense activity of reforming the German theater and of transforming the stage into a forum where people
are educated for freedom.

Friedrich Schiller, Über die Äesthetische Erziehung des Menschen, 43, München: Carl Hanser Verlag,
1981, my translation.

Schiller, Letters, 117-118.

Schiller, Letters, 119.

Schiller, Letters, 122.

Schiller, Letters, 125.

Schiller, Letters, 95.


Schiller, Letters, 128.

Schiller, Letters, 147-148.

Schiller argues in Kallias that beauty is “freedom in appearance” (Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters
to Gottfried Körner, in Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics, edited by J. M. Bernstein, Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2003, 152). This means that beauty is analogous to freedom, which is an idea
of reason that can never be given to the senses. In this quality it is a way of being-determined-from-the-
inside (Kallias, 162) a way of giving itself the form. In brief, an object is beautiful when its form is
determined by its inner being (not by its concept) (Kallias, 169) or when its perfection appears as nature.
An object is beautiful when its form derives spontaneously from its inner energies. As Frederick Beiser
explains in the attempt to clarify Schiller’s idea, “to be beautiful an object must appear to acquire its nature
from within rather than from without, from its spontaneous energies and organic growth rather than as the
result of external causes” (Beiser, Schiller as a Philosopher. A Re-examination, 68).

Schiller, Über die Äesthetische Erziehung des Menschen, Wolfgang Düsing’s comments, 159.

Schiller, Letters, Thirteenth Letter.

Schiller, Letters, 100.

Schiller, Letters, Thirteenth Letter, footnotes.

Schiller, Letters, 122-123. Schiller’s ideal of person is akin to Nietzsche’s conception about the moral-
aesthetic virtue of greatness, which denotes one’s “wholeness in manifoldness” (Ganzheit im Vielen) and
one’s capacity to be “as manifold as whole, as ample as full” (ebenso vielfach als ganz, ebenso weit also
voll), Nietzsche explains (see chapter four for a discussion of Nietzsche’s notion of greatness).


Mill, On Liberty, 128.


Schiller, Letters, 144.


Schiller, Naive and Sentimental Poetry, 189.

Schiller, Letters, 93.

Schiller, Letters, 110.

Schiller, Letters, 108.

Schiller, On Naive and Sentimental Poetry, in Essays, 256-257.

Schiller, Kallias, 159

Schiller, Kallias, 171.

Schiller Anmut und Würde, 73.

Schiller, Anmut und Würde, 113.

Beiser, Schiller, 141, Schiller, Anmut und Würde, 111.

Schiller, Kallias, 173-174.
For Herder ‘nation’ is a cultural, not a political concept. For Herder true religion is not, in the spirit of his overall conception of humanity and culture, one denomination. It is, as a matter of fact, not denominational at all. Instead, it is “an exercise of the human
heart, and the purest direction of its capacities and powers.” It is “the emulation of the highest and the most beautiful in the human realm,” namely, an exercise into effective goodness and human love, which are made possible by one’s imaginative and empathic powers.


360 Herder, Ideen, 207.

361 Herder, “On the Cognition and Sensation,” in Philosophical Writings, 204.


376 Herder, Outlines of a Philosophy, 451. In the more general philosophical sense, Herder defines every creature as being “in all its parts one living co-operating whole (zusammenwirkendes Ganze).”


381 Herder, “This Too a Philosophy,” in Philosophical Writings, 270.

382 Herder, “This Too a Philosophy,” in Philosophical Writings, 292.


384 Herder, “A Monument to Baumgarten,” in Selected Writings on Aesthetics, 44.

385 Redekop, Enlightenment and Community, 197-198.


According to the expressive turn, which is mainly the Romantic turn, “In realizing my nature, I have to define it in the sense of giving it some formulation; but this is also a definition in a stronger sense: I am realizing this formulation and thus giving my life a definitive shape. A human life is seen as manifesting a potential which is also being shaped by this manifestation.” This is called expressive individuation. According to this an individual realizes his nature when he brings it to expression, in the double sense, of formulating it and of shaping it (Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, 375-376).


Honig, Democracy and the Foreigner, 97.

Honig, Democracy and the Foreigner, 94-95.

Honig, Democracy and the Foreigner, 104.

Honig, Democracy and the Foreigner, 101-102.

Honig, Democracy and the Foreigner, 61.


An illustrious example of narcissistic imagination that has catastrophic political consequences is that of the German poet Stefan George. For George poetry was the way to aesthetically redeem Germany. He despised theater and prose. Thus, through his conception of poetry as a complete evasion and escape from reality, and not as a bridge and cultural connector, and of poetry as an entirely oneiric enterprise, Stefan George prepared, from an ideological point of view, the symbolic space for the coming to power of Hitler. In this sense, narcissistic reproductive imagination sees the word as “separate, thing-like and complete,” while creative imagination sees it as “the word which is lived, the language which we inhabit and which we must treat as a tool, and use for making disclosures” (Iris Murdoch, “The Sublime and the Beautiful”). Narcissistic imagination cannot livingly address the word. It cannot activate its polyphony in Bakhtin’s sense and its capacity for metaphorical dislocations in Vico’s sense.

Enthymeme is the rhetorical argument, an inference from probabilities that appeals not only to the reason of the interlocutors but also to their emotive side. Also, to a large extent, enthymemes have compressed premises and conclusions, thus, reasoning relies here on maxims and proverbs, on metaphors, which, Vico explains, are fables in nuce.

Mooney, Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric, 149.
Mooney, Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric, 150.
Goetsch, Vico’s Axioms, 72.
Metonymy is “the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary).
Synecdoche is “a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary).
Schaeffer, Sensus Communis, 73-78.
Vico, Institutiones oratoriae, quoted in Goetsch, Vico’s Axioms, 74-74.
Schaeffer, Sensus Communis, 66.
Vico, New Science, #364.
Vico, New Science, # 706.
Vico, New Science, # 7.
Vico, New Science, # 142.
To know something for Vico is, of course, to know its cause. To have the knowledge “of the causes that are necessary for a science of the human world” is to “discover the commonplaces that make up its sensus communis. These are originally created by humans through their power of fantasia” (Donald P. Verene, “Vico’s Philosophical Originality, in Vico: Past and Present, edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981, volume 1, 140).
Vico, On Humanistic Education, 117-118.
Vico, On Humanistic Education, 98.
Vico, First New Science, # 254.
Vico, On Humanistic Education, 41.
Vico, First New Science, # 42.
Verene, Vico’s Science of Imagination, 53.
Verene, Vico’s Science of Imagination, 216.
To some extent, for Vico as for Kant, “any attempt to prove a priori the existence of God exhibits an impious curiosity” (Nathan Rotenstreich, “Vico and Kant,” in Giambattista Vico’s Science of Humanity, edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, 24). In this sense, as Kant, Vico does indeed limit human foolish ambition, but not human wise creativity, one that originates in the recognition of human finitude and limits.


It is in this sense that for Vico we “first feel things without noticing them, then notice them with inner distress and disturbance, and finally reflect on them with a clear mind” (New Science, # 218). I take this to mean that without the moving power of emotion and without the capacity to creatively coagulate, form, and shape the disorder produced and infused by them, there is nothing to reflect upon.

Mazzotta, The New Map of the World, 60.
Mali, The Rehabilitation of Myth, 56.
Vico, First New Science, # 45.
Vico, First New Science, # 1109.
Vico, First New Science, 400.
Vico, First New Science, 146.
Mazzotta, The New Map of the World, 175.
Mazzotta, The New Map of the World, 175.
Mazzotta, The New Map of the World, 175.
536 Mazzotta, The New Map of the World, 174-175.
537 White, Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism, 208.
538 White, Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism, 211.
540 Mazzotta, The New Map of the World, 175.
547 Bakhtin, Rabelais, 165.
548 Verene, Vico’s Science of Imagination, 180.
551 Mali, The Rehabilitation of Myth, 49.
552 Mazzotta, The New Map of the World, 12.
558 Friedrich Nietzsche, Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated from the German by Kate Sturgeon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 11[310].
561 Warren, Nietzsche, 144.
562 Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 36[31].
564 Nietzsche, KSA, 11, 34 [247].
565 Nietzsche, KSA, 11, 26 [204].
566 Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 9[91], 9[98].
568 Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 14[93].
569 Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 36[22].
570 Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 2[84].
572 Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 14[93].
573 Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 14[79].
574 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, #225.
Passive nihilism is a sign of the “decline and retreat of the spirit’s power” (Niedergang und Rückgang der Macht des Geistes). This means that ‘syntheses of values and goals’ in a strong culture dissolved and thus “individual values wage war on each other.” As somebody who “judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist,” the passive nihilist is an unproductive man, because for him ‘ought’ cannot possibly be a task, a goal, and an attempt. Opposite to this, the active nihilist can live with the tensions and the resistances that make up the dynamism and the becoming of life and world. He accepts that destruction and negativity are an indispensable part of the changing fabric of the human life and of the world. Thus, he can see the world as continuously transforming. In this sense, active nihilism is a “sign of the increased power of the spirit” (der gesteigerten Macht des Geistes). Those who engage in active nihilism understand that a gap might exist between their given goals and ideals and their new “conditions of existence” (Existenzbedingungen). Thus, they can see that there are no absolute truths and ideals, but only a “desire to create a world as it ought to be” (Late Notebooks, 9[35] and Will to Power, 317-318.

In a manner similar to Nietzsche’s ontology of the event, for Whitehead the “ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction.” Thus, the “many become one and are increased by one.” It is through creativity that “the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively.” In such a universe, every actual entity creatively transcends itself by producing novel togetherness, namely, another actual entity, which thus adds to the universe of the many. Thus an actual entity is never a substance in this universe, but an actual occasion, an active and creative process of self-constitution; a higher level or degree of power (Process and Reality).

Feststellung is the noun from the verb feststellen, which literally means to stand somewhere solidly, fixedly. Nietzsche uses the adjective from this verb in his famous definition of man, in Beyond Good and Evil, # 62, as the “noch nicht festgestellte Tier,” which Burnham translates as “the animal that that has not yet reached its final form.” (Douglas Burnham, Reading Nietzsche. An Analysis of Beyond Good and Evil, Montreal and Kingston, Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007, 95) In the present context, Kraftfeststellungen refers to the unfinalizeable attempt of the forces of commanding and obeying to capture in one final interpretation, form, what the world is.
In Nietzsche’s view forgetfulness and memory are closely interconnected. Memory is partially forgetfulness. Memory starts as a mnemonic image. This comes into being by reducing the non-identical to the identical, thus it incorporates forgetting from its inception. Such a reduction, for example, is the origin of causality, of the possibility to anticipate the future. In this sense, one can anticipate because one remembers, namely, one can repeat the similar. Thus, in the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche argues that man develops a memory of the will, only because he is capable to become calculable, regular, and necessary. Since, memory in general is made possible by thinking causally and thinking causally is made possible by the partial forgetfulness of what is subjective, unique, and different, developing a memory of the will requires, paradoxically, forgetfulness and the embracing of the average and the common. This is not only the logic of abstractions and concepts, but also the logic of the morality of mores. In short, these two forms of logic make the world and man calculable because they encourage a selective memory, namely, one that partially forgets that both abstractions and customs come into being through the metaphorical intuitions of artistically creative individuals and unique subjects. The free and sovereign man, one who has his own right to make promises, combines intuition and reason, because in his case conscience becomes instinct. In his case conscience is not formed only on the level of abstractions and of socially defined customs, but it is also formed through the creative and intuitive capacity to form new metaphors and language, and thus new ‘truths’ and values. In this sense, he *never forgets* that truth and moral values...
are metaphors, namely, thinking by analogy, and that abstractions are simplifications of a complex and non-identical reality. In this sense, the free man with his own right to make promises never forgets that he is a unique and individual creator. It is in this sense that he has a protected will, namely, one that can grow through an increase of (imaginative and rational) power.

Nietzsche, KSA, 13, 1887-1889, 14[98].

Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings, 23[13].

Friedrich Nietzsche, “Description of Ancient Rhetoric,” in Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language, 23.

Nietzsche, Will to Power, 328.

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, #2.

Burnham, Reading Nietzsche, 15.

Nietzsche, Will to Power, 315.

Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings, 9[230].

Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 6[14].

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, #268.


Nietzsche, KSA, 11, 45.


Nietzsche, Gay Science, #355.

Nietzsche, Will to Power, 307.

Nietzsche, Gay Science, #107.

This would, perhaps, be the right place to point out that for Nietzsche art should be directed toward cultivating individuality. As Matthew Rampley argues Nietzsche criticized both romanticism and realism for not cultivating individuality: romanticism because of ‘destructive and self-destructive resentiment against the world’ and realism because of its refuge ‘in an ‘objective’ order of things’ (Matthew Rampley, Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 223) Thus, while romanticism does not succeed in turning the rebellion against the world into energy for regenerating one’s public appearance and stepping on the public stage (Auftreten), realism cultivates a false ‘objectivity,’ which takes away from the individual the burden and the task of creating their own ideal, of becoming who they are. It is for the same reason that, eventually, Nietzsche parts with Wagner’s music. With Parsifal, Nietzsche thinks, Wagner willfully annihilates “the individual in the search for redemption” (Rampley, Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity, 228).

Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings, 19[322].

Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, 36.

Bishop and Stephenson, Nietzsche and Weimar Classicism, 123.

Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings, 29[218].

Nietzsche, The Gay Science, #347.

Nietzsche, KSA, Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1887-1889, volume 13, 11[382].

Nietzsche, Gay Science, # 382.

Nietzsche, Gay Science, # 249.

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, #211.

Nietzsche, KSA, Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1887-1889, volume 13, 11[382].

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, # 212.

Nietzsche, Gay Science, # 356.

Nietzsche, Zarathustra, 316.
It is important to keep in mind that this is the time when in Europe mass parties start replacing the club party. To a large extent, Nietzsche is, of course, unrealistic in completely ignoring the capacity these new parties have to integrate new groups of people and to function as transmission belts between population and government. At the same time, he senses the danger in this new type of mass parties, a danger that has been fully manifested by the totalitarian (Bolshevik and Nazi) parties.
This is a belief that Nietzsche entertained in the early 1870s. This symbolizes the failure of man’s premature attempt to act as a bridge and a path, as an in-between, thus avoiding the sad and uninspiring sterility of being just an end and a conclusion.


Harries, “Philosopher at Sea,” 30.

**Nietzsche, Zarathustra,** 312.

Bishop and Stephenson, *Nietzsche and Weimar Classicism*, 78.

As Zarathustra points out, “you shall learn solely in order to create.” (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 318)

**Nietzsche, Zarathustra**, 199.

**Nietzsche, Zarathustra**, 139.

Harries, “Philosopher at Sea,” 31.

**Nietzsche, Zarathustra**, 133.


**Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings**, 30[10].

**Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings**, 19[193].

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil**, #242.

**Nietzsche, Gay Science**, #143.

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil**, # 224.

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil**, # 224.

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil**, # 224.

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil**, #223.
In *Being and Time*, Da-sein refers to the world (the there) that is disclosed through human finite freedom and, thus, to the relations man has with things, equipment, and other Dasein-al, world-disclosive, beings. It is a way of being. In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger defines Da-sein as “the clearing of Being itself, whose openness first of all opens up the space for every possible here and yonder and for arranging beings in historical work and deed and sacrifice.” Here Da-sein refers to a crossing and a juncture, namely, the every time unique actualization of possible relations between man and the gods, world and the earth. It refers to indications to and hints at future disclosive possibilities, particularly, at the “possibility of future humanness” (*Contributions to Philosophy*, 210, 218, 209). Da-sein is an interpretive and performative event of actualizing sheltered and still concealed possibilities of meaning.

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**Nietzsche, Gay Science, #240.**

**Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings, 29 [141].**

**Elbe, Europe, 90.**

**Elbe, Europe, 116-117.**

**Elbe, Europe, 90.**

**Elbe, Europe, 119.**

**Nietzsche, Gay Science, # 377.**

**Nietzsche, On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life, 26.**

**Nietzsche, Unpublished Writings, 19[118].**

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, # 254.**

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, # 241.**

**Nietzsche, Gay Science, # 291.**

**Nietzsche, Gay Science, #18.**

**Warren, Nietzsche and Political Thought, 72.**

**Elbe, Europe, 121.**

**Nietzsche, Late Notebooks, 10[63].**

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**In *Being and Time*, Da-sein refers to the world (the there) that is disclosed through human finite freedom and, thus, to the relations man has with things, equipment, and other Dasein-al, world-disclosive, beings. It is a way of being. In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger defines Da-sein as “the clearing of Being itself, whose openness first of all opens up the space for every possible here and yonder and for arranging beings in historical work and deed and sacrifice.” Here Da-sein refers to a crossing and a juncture, namely, the every time unique actualization of possible relations between man and the gods, world and the earth. It refers to indications to and hints at future disclosive possibilities, particularly, at the “possibility of future humanness” (*Contributions to Philosophy*, 210, 218, 209). Da-sein is an interpretive and performative event of actualizing sheltered and still concealed possibilities of meaning.**

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**759** Karsten Harries, “Heidegger as a Political Thinker,” 656.


**761** Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy,* 68.


**763** Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy,* 76.

**764** Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy,* 88.


**766** Kateb, “Adequacy of the Canon,” 503.

**767** Karsten Harries, “Heidegger as a Political Thinker,” 665.

**768** Karsten Harries, “Heidegger as a Political Thinker,” 666.


**771** Ibidem.


**774** Blitz, “Heidegger and the Political,” 187.

**775** Harries, “Heidegger as a Political Thinker,” 647.

**776** Harries, “Heidegger as a Political Thinker,” 660.
Later, however, he explores the power of distress, grief or mourning to act in a similar manner. The relevance of distress and grief as emotional attunements reflects Heidegger's own reaction to what he perceives to be the tragic political and historical destiny of Germany, as a result of the National-Socialist experience.
Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 220.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 168.

Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 422.


Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 90.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 134, 146.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 147.

Heidegger, Hölderlin’s *Hymn ‘The Ister,’* 41.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 76.


Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 167.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 233.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 84-85.


Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 344.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 95.


Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 278.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 85.


Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Basic Writings*, 323.


Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 310-312.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 68.


After all, this is how Heidegger defines the historic destiny of a human community and generally of Dasein, namely, not as fate, as he repeatedly says, but as a direction that is opened in the beginning and as many possible turns that can be taken along the way, to the extent that one keeps a remembering relation with the origins, namely, with what has been initially disclosed (What is Called Thinking?, 164).

Auseinandersetzung literally means ‘a setting apart from [and of] one another” and it is sometimes translated as “confrontation.” However, as the translator explains, in the present context “its meaning seems less ‘polemic’ and carries more of the sense of a dialogical exchange or encounter between parties” (Ister, 174).

In a totalitarian regime criticism does take, in many situations, masked and hinted forms. Also, not all forms of (political) resistance happen in the (political) form of the Polish Solidarity. Lesser forms of political resistance could also include the (cultural) interpretation of the official ideology of a totalitarian regime, through one’s lectures, in front of one’s students, within the public space of a STATE (!) university, in a manner that cracks the wooden tongue of totalitarian ideology, thus opening sites for critical thinking. The implication is that when the terror is so total the meaning of the ‘political’ and of ‘political resistance’ expands, thus covering forms of human activity that otherwise, in the conditions of normal politics would not appear as resistance and courage.


Heidegger, Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister,’ 132.

Heidegger, Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister,’ 21.

Heidegger, Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister,’ 49.

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Heidegger, Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister,’ 137.


Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister,’* 152.


Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe*, 103-104.

Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe*, 47.


Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 263.


*Kairos* is both measure of time, the moment, and the response to the moment, the appropriate strategy, to *prepon*, and in Latin, what is fitting, *quod decet*, for dealing with the radical contingency of practical life” (*Heidegger and Rhetoric*, 110-111).


Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 278.


Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 159.

Kisiel, “Rhetorical Protopolitics in Heidegger and Arendt,” in Heidegger and Rhetoric, 139-140.
Arendt, Human Condition, 95.
Arendt, Human Condition, 169-170.
Villa, Socratic Citizenship, Preface, XII.
Villa, Socratic Citizenship, 23.
Villa, Socratic Citizenship, 29.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 362.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 352.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 331.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 474.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 476.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 475
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 68.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 82, 83.
The same process is at work not only for Jews as a pariah (Proust) or as a parvenu (Disraeli), but also for the common Jew. “The average Jew, neither a parvenu nor a ‘conscious pariah’ could only stress an empty difference which continued to be interpreted, in all its possible psychological aspects and variations from innate strangeness to social alienation” (Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 67).
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 80. Arendt also states that “Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was no escape” (87).
Arendt compares the way the bourgeois society represented the Jews with strange and unfamiliar “Russian and Japanese plays” (Origins of Totalitarianisms, 82).
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 84.
Speech and revelation are as close to each other as action and beginning (Arendt, *Human Condition*, 178). Also, “[i]n acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world” (Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 179).


Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*.


Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 197. Also, this once again supports Villa’s argument that, “the relation Arendt describes between the world of work (the “human artifice”) and the public realm is more complex, complementary, and “Heideggerian” (Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 139).


Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 55.


Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, 201.


Ibidem.


Villa, Arendt and Heidegger, 56, 81.


Villa, Arendt and Heidegger, 257.

Rudnick Luft, *Vico’s Uncanny Humanism*, 175.

Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*. L’intrigue et le récit historique, 93.
Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*. L’intrigue et le récit historique, 93.


Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, 43.
Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott argues that after her arrival in the USA, Arendt started working on the English translation of her dissertation on Saint Augustine. This (re)involvement with the text resulted over time in a constant interchange of ideas and concepts between her mature work and her (earlier) approach to Augustine (1996).

Ibidem.
Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky*, 117.
Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, 83.
Arendt, *Lectures*, 73.
Arendt, *Lectures*, 76.
Arendt, *Lectures*, 75.
Arendt, *Lectures*, 70.
Arendt, *Lectures*, 84.
Arendt, *Lectures*, 84.
Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 296.
Heidegger, Kant, 134.
Heidegger, Kant, 64.
Kateb, Politics, Conscience, and Evil, 31-32.
Canovan, Hannah Arendt, 57.
Ricoeur, Temps et recit. L’intrigue et le récit historique, 148.
Arendt, Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy, 63.
Arendt, Life of the Mind. Willing, 203.
Villa, Arendt and Heidegger, 203.
Heidegger, The Essence of Reasons, 89.
Arendt, Human Condition, 142.
Villa, Arendt and Heidegger, 131.
Arendt, Human Condition, 204.
Canovan, Hannah Arendt, 109.
Villa, Arendt and Heidegger, 139.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 205.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 218.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 224.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 168,169.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 169.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 225.
Arendt, Men in Dark Times, 6.
Arendt, Men in Dark Times, 25.
Arendt, Men in Dark Times, 8).
Arendt, Men in Dark Times, 27, 29.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 64, 65.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 86.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 88.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 95.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 132.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 110.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 132.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 111.
Bakhtin, Dostoevsky, 64, 65.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 122, and Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 68.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 63.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 64.
Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, 85.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 167.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 168.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 169.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 189.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 176.
Arendt, The Promise of Politics, 176.
Arendt, The Human Condition, 183.
Arendt, Between Past and Future, 95.
Arendt, The Human Condition, 204.

Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 293.


Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 229.


Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 149).


Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 232.

Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 229.

Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 228.

Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 233.

Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 233.


It is borrowed from Marcel Danesi, *Vico, Metaphor, and the Origin of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Danesi defines this capacity, which structures the way humans use language in the everyday life, as “the transformational feature of the mind” (Danesi, *Vico*, 73).

Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 190-191.

Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 190.

Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 210


Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 221.

Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 354.


Pamuk, *Other Colors*, 235.

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