

# Daring of Be(com)ing Wise: Perspectives on Embodied ‘Sapere Aude’ En-lightened for Today

Wendelin Küpers<sup>1</sup>

*Wise people [sapientes],  
who through all the obliquities and uncertainties of human actions,  
aim for eternal truth, follow roundabout ways,  
because they cannot take straight ones;  
and execute plans which in the long run are for the best,  
as far as the nature of things allows  
(Vico, 1725, SR 7)<sup>2</sup>*

*“The function of Reason, is to promote the art of life”.*  
(Whitehead 1958, p. 4)

*Sapere aude* is often translated as ‘dare to think,’ especially in the sense of dare to think critically for one-self, or with a community in mind and for a different world! But *sapere* is not simply ‘thinking’, merely mentally, but closer to bodily sensing and this is making ‘wise’ sense, thus having an embodied sense of what is the ‘fitting thing’ to be done or not and how to make it happen. Therefore, *sapere aude*, is not merely daring to think or being cognitively critical, but more processually daring to be and to become wise. Such be(com)ing implies to give sense via coming to the senses and common sense, and making sense anew, culturally and politically as well as ecologically. Thus, living *sapere aude* is the be(com)ing of a living embodied and practical wisdom, embedded in, shifting and shaping to social and environmental dimensions!

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<sup>1</sup> **Wendelin Küpers** is Professor of Leadership and Organization Studies at Karlsruhochschule International University in Karlsruhe, Germany and affiliated Professor at ICN Business School in Nancy, France. Combining a phenomenological and cross-disciplinary orientation, his research focuses on embodied, emotional and creative, as well as transformational dimensions in relation to more responsible, and sustainable forms of organising and managing. Furthermore, his research focuses on design, integrating artful and aesthetic dimensions as well as practical wisdom in leadership and organization theory and practice.

wkuepers@karlsruhochschule.de

<sup>2</sup> SR = «De nostri temporis studiorum ratione” (Vico 1709/1990). Vico (1725/1968) envisioned in his ideas about a ‘poetic’ (anti-Cartesian) form of knowledge (*sapienza poetica*) - as part of his ‘*Scienza Nuova*’ (‘New Science’ 2014) - a historical movement that was neither linear, nor circular, but following a spiral-like dynamics (see also Miner 1998, Strati, 2018). For Vico, wisdom has a double meaning: a ‘poetic’ (sense) and a philosophical or ‘scientific’ (intellect). Poetically, it provides intelligibility for the peoples of societies or nations and their myths that arises out of and is sustained by piety. Scientifically, as noetic knowledge, wisdom refers to contemplating concrete historicity and its human praxis cultures, customs and languages in the light of the New Science.



Historically, the legacy of *sapere aude* as Leitmotif of wisdom traditions and ‘the Enlightenment’ as formative period and ongoing transformative program, was and is pervasive as many of the past and contemporary ways of thinking, values, practices and institutions of our present civilization are rooted in them.<sup>3</sup>

Various rationalist development and expansions of scientific discovery, technification and its applications, modern economic institutional arrangement, political and administrative reforms, state sovereignty, individual social liberations and emancipation, religious tolerations and secularization as well as democratization, nation-based and world citizenship have historically emerged from enlightened spirit, however full of variations and ambivalence.<sup>4</sup>

But then, what does it mean to become wise today, to live this *sapere aude*, enlightenment and wisdom in the 21 century, a time characterised among other phenomena, by socio-economic and political instability, worsening local and worldwide injustice and inequalities, resurging of nationalism authoritarianism. As we’ve seen with the recent Black Lives Matter protests, Covid-pandemic, stagnant economies and mass unemployment as well as protests all kind fires a lighting up beneath ongoing ideological battles over history and social justice.

Related to these developments, can we still sense the signs of those tremendous engaged revolutionary commitments that enlightened men and women, communities and collectives fought and stood for? Are those, who strived and enacted enlightened values calling us to condemn

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<sup>3</sup> Having partly its origin in the so-called Scientific Revolution, the Western Enlightenment, often referred to as ‘The Age of Reason’, eighteenth century named by French as ‘*le Siecle des Lumieres*’; by Germans, as ‘Aufklärung’; by Italians, as ‘L’*Illuminismo*’; by Spanish, as ‘L’*aIlustracion*’. Interestingly, there was also an Arabic tradition which called it ‘*tanwir*’, ranging according to Kassab (2020) from Damascus to Cairo that is from Syrian-Egyptian tradition up to 19th-century, to Arab modernist movement known as the *nahda* (renaissance) and the withered Arab Spring recently. Historically, this age was differentiated in an Early Enlightenment (1685–1730), a High Enlightenment (1730–1780), and a Late Enlightenment (1780–1815). Only recently criticism has begun to rework the historical category of ‘the Enlightenment’ in terms of its geography and history, but also in terms of its historical significance, self-image, ethnocentric and racist assumptions (Peters, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Graeme, (2006) studied in detail those variations and ambivalences that have gone and still go the promising rise and tragic fall and failures of the ‘Enlightenment Project’. He refers to Lester Crocker (1959, 1963) for outlining how the ‘philosophes’ set out in search of a new foundation for ethical life, and ended up lost in an abyss of nihilism as a consequence. According to this critique philosophes failed to construct a naturalistic substitute for the religious order, not being able to bridge the nature–culture abyss and getting lost in a futile search for an universal civilisation based on reason and a rational justification for morality. According to the ‘inversion thesis’ the attempted implementation of Enlightened principles and ideals produces the very opposite effect to that intended, resulting in disaster. While liberal assumptions about rights, liberty and rational self-interest arose out of the Enlightenment, it also produced theories of indoctrination, of conditioning and control, which compromised them. The destructive potential at the disposal of the human appetite for power, cruelty, stupidity and hatred is now enormous and growing. In addition, the increase in individual freedom of conscience, religious expression, mobility and self-determination that the Enlightenment helped to facilitate has undermined many traditional sources of conflict while fostering others (Graeme, 2006: 1).

Today positions of counter-Enlightenment have becomes part of a more general critique of the West and its values, losing the reflexive dimension that had so long been at its core (Jung 2016: 220). For further sources and discussions concerning the ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ as endarkenment see footnote 10!

forms of neo-authoritarian rule reactionary and dogmatic orthodoxy, rigid intolerance, fearful xenophobia, and group chauvinism?

When we look around today we see how human and other incarnate beings are suffering from various forms of direct and structural and symbolic violence, ongoing institutionalized austerity, imperialist warfare, and religious fundamentalism, extremist terrorism, refugees crisis, nothing to say about human caused unprecedented ecological crisis, climate heating and its environmental disasters and suffering.

We are living in a time that is cast in the twilight of the ‘Anthropocene Idols’ (Cohen et al. 2016, Küpers, 2020), illuminating that the light of reason progressed only by co-opting fire, coal, oil, nuclear energy and the exploitative labor of many beings not blessed with the spoils of enlightenment. Can reason, especially the one of instrumental rationality, appropriated by the forces of unreasonable commercialism and wealth-craving, be made aware of that shadow side and ‘debt’ only when the source of light is waning, in an age of depletion and ecocidal destruction?

The related narratives range from dystopian and (post-)apocalyptic imaginaries<sup>5</sup> and stories of disaster, decline, demise and extinction in an eco-eschatological vision<sup>6</sup> to neo- and eco-modernist visions of progress, salvation and solutionist mastery. For some, the end of the world has already occurred and implying that civilization, organisms and organizations are already deceased and must simply begin the difficult task of adapting, with mortal humility, to this new reality. Lingering in the shadowy world of irony and difference, ugliness and horror, such a dark ecological orientation is announcing the coming climatic Armageddon or other apocalyptic framings often used as discursive-representational tactics or rhetorical strategy. For others, the Anthropocene offers a hopeful opportunity for a profound transformation via a heroic neo-Prometheusian Earth-mastery, playing with ‘fire’ via techno-scientific knowledge in neo-technocratic solutionist ways. Such orientation is following a hyper-accelerationist vision in which big science, geo-engineering, and big capital save both earth and earthlings or a specific problematic politics of partly illusionary hope (Küpers, 2019). These narratives are taking us either towards the edge of a personal, socio-political, economic and ecological abyss or towards promising land of saved ascendance where all problems and conflicts are or can be re-solved.

However, all these imaginaries and interpretations are in danger of foreclosing the asking of serious political questions, for example, about the possible organisational and socio-environmental trajectories of continued neo-liberal practices or of the possibility of transitioning to something even more reasonable and wise.

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<sup>5</sup> Apocalyptic imagination has been described as uncovering revelation of and through the elements envisioning the imperceptible toxification and elemental dissolution of the annihilated world (Toadvine 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Eco-Eschatology and eco-eschatological narratives as end-of-the-world fantasies suspend the present between a geologically deep past and an indefinitely distant future. As Toadvine (2019) elaborated, our obsession with the end of the world finds expression in the form of the eco-eschatological narrative and frames speculative fiction as well as environmental prediction. Such obsession is a phantasm that reflects our desires and anxieties in the present, which leaves its mark, directly or indirectly, on our individual and collective identities, institutions, and sense of the world here and now.

Instead of seeing a storied account as a single hegemonic, linear one that is supposedly apolitical, there are multiple, debatable and polemical narratives. These storylines range from Cassandran versus Panglossian advocates to slowing-down Doomsters versus accelerating Boomsters and are thus situated as either tragic, elegiac stories with hopeless endings and the collapse of civilization or heroic, hegemonic stories of awakening.

Furthermore, our time is also characterized by ‘retro-progressive’ moves and neo-conservative or neo-authoritarian trajectories, including revived tribalist and populist contagion, and manifestations of personal and functional stupidities, and illiberal democracies’, attacks on cosmopolitan orientations and institutions, spreading throughout Europe and the USA as well as many other countries and parts of the world. For example we might ask: Does the so called “Intellectual Dark Web” use a veneer of ‘reason’ and ‘science’ to justify prevailing inequalities economic, gender, and racial as natural, thus defending (neo-)liberalist capitalism while drawing on biology and the dreary science to bolster the status quo by depoliticising politics (Brooks, 2020)?

But there are also old and new, social movements and advocating political activism, like the environmentalist movements, anti-racial and black-rights movements, feminist movements and LGBT movements among others. All of them are manifesting a radical democratic politics of dissensus and attempting to radically, ethically and often publicly challenge existing reactionary orientation, given social norms, and, reclaimingly, who is recognized as being a competent agent to speak and shape civil life.

Why does reconsidering ‘Enlightenment’ may help for understanding and interpreting these developments? What would historical enlightened figures or philosophers who reflected on the role of wisdom and enlightenment tell us from their respective perspective?

Historically, the ideas of the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ undermine(d) the authority of the traditional aristocracy and monarchy as well as religious orthodoxies of Churches, while preparing and enacting ways for the scientific, socio-cultural political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, reaching into the 20 century and today. Based and centred on regimes of reason and scientific approaches as principal sources and media of authority and legitimacy as well as knowledge<sup>7</sup>, enlightenment functioning as a formational event established and advanced powerful ideas and ideals, and. These include among others those like freedom, progress, tolerance, fraternity, (we would today call brother- and sisterhood), constitutional government and separation of church and state, all serving as a base for civil society. In this way,

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<sup>7</sup> A key idea of the Enlightenment, especially the French Enlightenment, was to learn from scientific progress how to make social progress towards an enlightened world, but the philosophes of the Enlightenment and later institutions of learning failed to generalize these methods sufficiently so as to facilitate progress in other fields of human endeavour besides science or knowledge (Maxwell 2019). According to Maxwell there is an urgent need to transform what we have inherited from the Enlightenment in order to move towards a better, wiser, more enlightened world. “Academia seeks *knowledge*, and fails to give intellectual priority to the task of helping humanity make progress towards a more civilized, enlightened world.” (ibid p. 4).

Enlightenment brought cultural political ‘modernization’ to the West, in terms of introducing democratic values and institutions and the creation of modern, liberal democracies (Gay, 1996).<sup>8</sup>

Enlightenment yes, but which one: a moderate or a radical one, and how was and is it related as such with its clandestine underground to the making of modernity (Israel 2001, 2006, Jacob, 2006, Muslow 2015, 2018)?

And today? Is this present a time of an “Enlightenment NOW” (Pinker, 2018)? Or do we need understanding for how irrational conceptions of reason are harmfully defective in relation to what the traditional rationalistic Enlightenment was and is?

In particular:

- What would the mentioned and other intellectuals and lovers of wisdom (*philo-sophers*) say about why unenlightened politician and populists, extremists, including left- and right-wingers, and ideological, religious and other fundamentalist are again and increasingly influential today?
- How would they respond to the re-emerging radicalizing conservative or progressive ideologies and movements, especially neo-identitarian, alt-right shift in public spheres all over the world?
- How would Enlightenment thinkers interpret resurging of neo-authoritarian politics of power with its rhetoric and practices that are having far-reaching effects on various levels (Fielitz & Laloire, 2016).
- What do calls for an enlightened life and a wisdom-oriented citizenry<sup>9</sup> mean today? How is daring to know and ‘be(com)ing wise’ constituted by an embodied practice and co-created by a ‘body-mindful’ cultivation of a well-understood *tasteful art(istry)* of living?

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<sup>8</sup> For Peter Gay (born as Peter Joachim Fröhlich) Enlightenment was the unified work of a small group of men, "the little flock," who shared liberal progressive attitudes, a critical method and mind, working for a better future, who knew and admired one another's work. According to him they shared an understanding of Enlightenment as a program of secularism, humanity and above all freedom in its many forms; it is humanity's claim to be recognized as adult, responsible beings and an Enlightened optimistic faith in social progress by the use rational principles to solve problems of social interaction.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Civilization’ although often associated solely with certain levels of technological, social, and cultural advancement, can also refer to the reflective and moral status or level of development concerning enlightenment. To be ‘civilized’ in this sense is to have a disposition to be concerned with civic excellence (*politikē aretē*) and virtue (*arētē*) in feelings, thoughts, competencies and action. Respect for others (*aidōs*) and a sense of justice (*dikaiosynē*) moderation or self-control (*sôphrosynē*), holiness of life or piety (*hosiotēs*), and courage were among the foundation of political wisdom guiding all civic endeavors. Historically, this disposition and positioning was considered as required to live a good and successful human life and seen as the result of proper education and habituation. Moreover, the enactment of individual and collective wisdom was understood as a *form* of civilization, as the result and expression of a moral civilizing-process that comes about through the creation and transmission of interpretations of human experience and the concomitant skills to be developed (Kiefer, 2015).

Accordingly, the underlying concern of the following is to inquire into the status of an illuminating Enlightenment (Aufklärung/Erleuchtung) in relation to signs of reviving of an obscuring Endarkenment (Verfinsterung/ensombrement/nigredo),<sup>10</sup> including to understand an elusive ‘*twilightening*’ as a kind of entwinement of both.

This inquiry implies the quest and question about how to rethink, reimagining and re-evaluate integrally an Enlightenment beyond traditional orientations.<sup>11</sup>

Correspondingly, the following asks: In which way can the call for *sapere aude* still mean experiencing and thinking the world and future by opening out; while we are facing the present

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<sup>10</sup> Endarkenment can be related to the tradition of ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ movement as part of history of ideas’ that have been characterised as relativist, anti-rationalist, vitalist and organic connected to supposed proto-romantics, like Vico or Hamann (see Berlin, 1973, 2013). According to Berlin, this Counter-Enlightenment consisted of a ‘family of political and moral conceptions ... based on the defiant rejection of the central thesis of the Enlightenment, according to which what is true, or right, or good, or beautiful, can be shown to be valid for all men by the correct interpretation of objective methods of discovery and interpretation, open to anyone to use and verify’ (Berlin, 1990: 19). As Berlin (1973: 19-20) stated: “The rejection of the central principles of the Enlightenment universality, objectivity, rationality, and the capacity to provide permanent solutions to all genuine problems of life or thought, and (not less important) accessibility of rational methods to any thinker armed with adequate powers of observation and logical thinking – occurred in various forms, conservative or liberal, reactionary or revolutionary, depending on which systematic order was being attacked.... In all cases the organisation of life by the application of rational or scientific methods, any form of regimentation or conscription of men for utilitarian ends or organised happiness, was regarded as the philistine enemy.” Critics found little historical evidence for what they called Berlin’s essentialist dichotomy between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment as two coherent and unchanging traditions (Mali and Wokler, 2003). Overall, “modernity is inherently multiple. It comes in different blends, including Enlightened, non-Enlightened and Counter-Enlightened currents” (Lok & van Eijnatten, 2019: 415). This multiple interpretation includes for Lok and van Eijnatten also a global Counter-Enlightenment that is existing in different times and places. “The Enlightened, liberal, progressive modernity so widely applauded as the way upwards and forwards had failed to deliver; it could never deliver because it was unable to meet the deepest spiritual needs and time-tested values of mankind, the principles, tenets, customs and ethical precepts embedded in age-old civilizations...” (ibid 417). There has been a ‘flight from reason’ manifesting in dark and occult counter-movements to enlightenment (Webb 1971, 1976, 2009). Eeven efforts to eradicate the irrational appear as being themselves irrational, and often manifesting a disclosure in time of foreclosure (Smith, 2019). There was a rationality of irrationality in connection to enthusiasm especially in late enlightenment (Conrad, 2008). See also Nick Land’s ‘The Dark Enlightenment’, that – as part of accelerationism – opposes egalitarianism, incorporates explicitly racist views and is sometimes associated with the alt-right or other right-wing movements. <http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/> Millgrams (2015) sees a great endarkenment related to our age of hyperspecialization and entrenched in disciplinary conformity. Scholars and their scientific work are becoming more narrow, self-contained, and disintegrated as they don’t know and don’t care about anything other than their own tiny field, reviewing each other’s papers and training each other’s students to behave in the same fashion. All this results into deterioration of creative, integrated, systemic and critical thinking in the academic world, a corruption of scientific integrity by a slow, degenerative process of endarkening. Nikos Kazantzakis: “The real meaning of enlightenment is to gaze with undimmed eyes on all darkness.”

<sup>11</sup> For example those that take light as a major metaphysical symbol, equating with spirit and its manifestation as intellect, virtue, morality, healing both physical and spiritual, and other positive set values or traditional political orientations like socialist versus liberalist worldviews.

enclosing turmoil in socio-cultural, and political cultures and dominance of non-integrative economic imperatives? And, how to respond to the challenges for transforming from an unsustainable Anthropocene towards a more sustainable wiser 'Ecoscene' (Küpers, 2020)?

For responding to all these quests and questions as well as diving in an uplifting way deeper into the reasons and responses to the current state of affairs and actual and acute developments, it makes sense to learn from different positions or contentious perspectives and connecting them to our times and futures to come.

In order to explore the same, the following invites you, dear reader, in the form of an alternative textual/contextual narrative practice, first to a thought experiment and then to enter a multi-layered dia- or metalogue.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Rather than constructing separate, fixed or closed individual-based definitions of realities or rational-lines of argument, such poly-logical practice of a metalogue (see Bateson 1972; Bateson & Bateson, 1988) open up to a living relationality and possibilities of a spiraling, disclosing and co-emerging flows. Polyphonic voices, individually and interwoven in an arguing chorus as a kind of aesthetics of (re-) presentation. Such presentational practices uncover and allow other modes of communication, including felt sensitivities, imaginative sounds, visual associations etc. Accordingly, such dia- and/or poly-loguing is opening for a poly-sensuous interplaying of tasted, gestured, and viewed expressions thus multi-voiced con-versation that is a living narrative, which includes a diversity of points of standing and moving. Not aiming for a single vision or finalizable version, these inter-exchanges are an array of juxta-positioning reasons for or concerns about and perspectives on various angles. In terms of epistemology, this implies that if there is any truth to be found or better to say co-created, it happens through a multitude of simultaneous expressions with their quests and questions, engagements and commitments. This kind of heteroglossia can help to question, test and contest our own and others' ideas, those established and those merging or to be developed. It is through the plurality of our consciousness, inter-relationships and hybridised negotiations that the potential can be actualized or "actuated." In particular, these are possibilities of 'trans-individualistic', post-entitative and more integral understandings of and repertoires for creative interpretations and enactments. As a writing modality, this form, much like a sounding board opens up for complexity, ambiguity, and emotional resonance. Such resonance comes from making the words – for lack of a better word – embody what they are about and make them breathe experience. Hopefully, the listening reader can relate to those or invoke in them likewise sensory experiences that may lead to a more nuanced understanding, and invite them to extend the text, or relate to their life-worldly con-texts. By practicing a dialogue as a "discipline of collective inquiry" (Isaacs, 1996) or co-inquiry (Heron, 1996), you the reader(s) are thus invited to open-up to discover or co-create inter-pretations of what appears as "real", relevant or insightful. Listening to multiple voices, incarnated in presences of different persons and propelled contents, allows participatory witnessing an embodied relational logic and enacting an inter-practice in praxis that is sensitive for the oblique, meanings *between* lines and alluded hints, revealing other ways of being and becoming. As active audience or engaged readers of this concert of voices, we are becoming listeners, and perhaps are provoked to comments or to ask possible questions, state contestations or find other forms to contribute with our own ideas. This can lead to further weaving the con-textures or advancing the ongoing, unfolding fluid dis-courses to emerge. Please feel invited to share your responses, reflections or imaginations by writing, dabbling, drawing or expressing them and, if you like, forward them to the author for co-creating a hyper-contextual repository: mail@wendelinkuepers.eu. The idea is to set up a web forum or blogging space on-line, where all comments will be gathered, as a forwarding feedback and continuation of an ongoing inter-involving conversation...

Imagine enlightened men, who meet, and are having conversations about events in 21 century and the status actual en-darkening reality and still potential ‘en-lightening’ wisdom therein. The chosen personalities – representing selectively different and contested positions – in the following are Horace, Kant, Nietzsche, Foucault, Habermas and Merleau-Ponty and some more. This conversation does not include Aristotle and only implicitly refers to the Aristotelian tradition of phrônêtic wisdom (see Küpers 2013), nor indigenous and non-Western wisdom traditions in poly-cultural world (see Intezari, et al. 2020).

The first one, Horace was an antique Roman poet, then Kant, who was *the* philosopher of Enlightenment and the post-Enlightenment philosopher Nietzsche as well as then also Foucault as post-structuralist/postmodern scholar, focusing on power and conflict and Habermas as representative of the unfinished project of modernity as well as finally Merleau-Ponty as post-Cartesian philosopher of the body and embodiment.

You might ask: What do these so unlike personalities with their very different ways of feeling, thinking, speaking and writings in quite different languages<sup>13</sup> have in common?<sup>14</sup> Well,

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<sup>13</sup> Just a word on words and language: The conversation you are going to listen to uses English as ‘lingua franca’. For many of those who speak here this is not their mother tongue. Using another language and any language at all is, at one and the same time, enabling and limiting, liberating from the confines of our own spoken tongues and restrictive and constraining by using a foreign lexicon and its loss of subtleties and cultural qualities in translation. Speaking about translation, another related challenge concerns the transference of ideas of distant and different times and contexts to our world today and for a future to come. All what was presented here, all the expressions of representations were done in ways the author understood and understands them provisionally, informed and related to the world arounds him. Correspondingly, the same might be true for you as a reader who interprets and uses in your own ways. Overall, while questioning an unreflexive use and hegemony of English in academic practices, what would be wise!, is to become more imaginative, inventive and experimental in performing multilingual forms of expressions (Steyaert & Janssens, 2013), and making the multiplicity and linguistic repertoires involved visible or hearable, moving towards a Cosmopolitan *Multilingual Franca* approach (Janssens & Steyaert, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> As these authors and their writings manifest, the courage to use reason and wisdom as well as the project of enlightenment are not unified on a single set of doctrines, but serve a diverse set of ends, a pluralized interpretation – ranging from cosmopolitan ‘radical’ enlightenment to various, more conservative, national enlightenments (Israel, 2001) – as well as Enlightenment as transfiguration (*Verklärung*) of reason and also Counter-Enlightenment (Mali & Wokler, 2003). However the unrestricted definition of Enlightenment, or its alternative, the admission that there were multiple Enlightenments, has rendered the subject so blurred and indeterminate that it is impossible to reach any assessment of its historical significance (Robertson, 2003: 82). With Robertson, the Enlightenment for which a case is made here is one, which existed as historical phenomena, rather than an artificial philosophical construct. It is not an Enlightenment which can be held directly responsible for the horrors, any more than for the advances, of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; far too much history lies in between. But as a specific intellectual movement of the eighteenth century, it is an Enlightenment which can be matched against the conditions which faced it in its own time. (ibid, p. 82). Accordingly, Robertson (2003) proposed that the intellectual content of the Enlightenment is to be found in its “commitment to understanding, and hence to advancing, the causes and conditions of human betterment in this world” (ibid, p. 78). He emphasized the following three concerns as central to the Enlightenment’s efforts to understand the causes and conditions of human betterment: (a) the systematic study of human nature; (b) inquiries into the causes of “material betterment, the subject matter of political economy”; and (c) more



they all have thought about the role of reason and wisdom in and for their time and beyond. Correspondingly, they have all written programmatic essays that are calling and processing the status of enlightenment and daring to know, respectively to become wise!<sup>15</sup> Some of these voices and reports may appear as hopelessly outdated historical accounts, others may appear as revealing in being revisited others promising or providing inspiration for us today and a future to come....

Let us enter and ‘zoom’ into the symposium and listen to the ongoing conversations of this meeting of embodied minds as a co-inquiring process of various con-verging but also diverging stances and dialectical dances.

*Stage: The “dramatis personæ” are gathering at a round table in a beautiful room with natural light, and a view to the cultivated and wild nature around, designed for having such a symposium. There is an ongoing informal conversation, as some of the participants know each other, while others are introducing each other, and again some are casting suspicious glances or remain in silence. Some refreshing drinks and light food are offered, and an overall relaxed atmosphere pervades the gathering.*

*After some time, the facilitator rings a mindfulness bell and as the participants have found their place he commences speaking:*

**Facilitator:** Welcome everybody to this symposium! We have gathered here for a conversation about what ‘sapere aude,’ daring to know and becoming wise, meant in the past and may mean today and a future to come. This gathering aspires to revisit and reflect critically the meaning of ‘Enlightenment’ in and for a time in which enlightening orientations seem to be overshadowed by various forms of a multiple crisis and unwise realities, economically, socio-culturally, politically.

First, I would like to thank you all for that you have accepted the invitation for what promises to become an extra-ordinary event. Timely, we will move through time, chronologically but also throughout with links to the present. Furthermore, an interjecting observer is guiding us and I as a facilitator will try to moderate the discussion.

Salve Horace, can I ask you as pioneering thinker who coined the term, to share your understanding of sapere aude and its context and also why its practice, thus wisdom seems to be not present or event lost in our crisis-driven time today? What would you recommend to us today?

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general investigations, beyond the more specific concerns of political economy, with the historical progress of society “from ‘barbarism’ to ‘refinement’ or ‘civilization’” (ibid p. 78). Enlightenment was an actual historically situated enlightening activity, especially; the framing of sciences of human nature, political economy, and a historical development, but also a construct relevant for us and a future to come.

<sup>15</sup> *Sapere aude*” (Horaz/Horatius, 20 BC/ Epistulae 1,2,40)

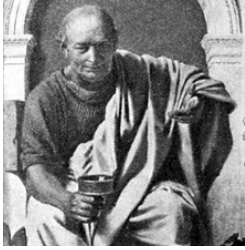
„Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung“ /

“Answering the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” (Kant, 1784, 1999),

“Qu’est-ce que la critique? / “What is Critique?” (Foucault, 1978, 2007),

“Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?”/ “What is Enlightenment?” (Foucault, 1984, 1997),

“Theory of Communicative Action” & “The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity” (Habermas, 1990)



**Horace:** *Gratias vobis ago*, for the invitation here! Dear wisdom-loving friends (*philosophoi*), as you know, I have been concerned for the public welfare and the need for returning to early Roman standards of morality after those cruel periods of bloody decadence, that I experienced. And it is not only me, as I am speaking and echoing the aspirations of a war-weary society at large. Accordingly, I warn you not to fall into a retro-regressive, degenerative and even decadent state-of-affairs, characterized by intrigue, conspiracy, demagoguery, and vain and fierce ambitions and bloody civil unrest ...

You ask: Why is there not more reasonable processing and acting in accordance with reason (*akrasia*), when facing the challenges of your crisis today? Well, you know your situation reminds me of what I experienced during my life in late-Roman time with its paralysing politics. In that context, I called for daring to know and to begin again. For me to begin is already to be halfway. Get your-self going with efforts and properly being underway is what matters. Dare to know, begin! And dare to begin is to know qualified as daring to become wise! How to do so? Well with elegance in simplicity (*simplex munditis*) and perhaps sometimes even being nobly untruthful (*splendide mendax*).

But never forget: *carpe diem*: be in and enjoy the moment, thus make the best use of your day and night. This focus on the now does not mean to ignore the future. Rather it is not to trust that everything is going to fall into place for you, but that you need taking action for the coming. In other words, be mindfully present and to cultivate what is called a *Stoic and Epicurean* sentiment and practice!

**Stoics:** Yes, using one's mind to understand and resonate with the natural world helps accepting the moment as it presents itself. But for us, all this means not allowing oneself to be controlled by the desires for pleasure, nor the fear of pain. Against your misinterpretation of our approach today, being wise for us does not seek to extinguish emotions and passions of anguish or suffering. Rather, we need to liberate ourselves from and transform what affects us - what you may call sublimate – by resolute exercises (*askesis*) of self-discipline. And this needs to be employed by methods of logic and reflection that enable developing clear judgment and inner calm....

**Epictetus:** This helps to realise that not things, but opinions about things, trouble you and all men. Test and assess all impressions by asking yourself: 'Is this something that is, or is not, in my control?' And if it's not one of the things that you control, be ready to realise: 'Then it's none of my concern.' Review then your emotional responses, for example. What made you angry? What

nagging fear continues to wear at you? To whom do you have antipathy? What other negative emotions are you experiencing and why? To what inappropriate impression have you assented? What form of being virtuous and virtuoso have you lacked to respond impulsively and to allow this disharmony into your “inner citadel”? Thus, take a moment and deep breath before responding, preserve your serenity and remain above the fray.

**Stoics:** Thereby, we can maintain equanimity in the face of life's highs and lows as well as to cultivate modesty. Thus, this self-mastery is not about repressing feelings, but about becoming emotionally resilient to misfortune and having *eu-pathos* and perpetual tranquillity, while being one with the workings of nature and fate as well as the cycles of existences and the divine orders of the pulsating universes. Thereby you can cope with any tragedies and all suffering and cultivate a life of *eudemonia*.

**Facilitator:** So it is all about learning to think clearly, consistently and see things as they really are in a controlled way. Then we can make good choices from smallest everyday actions - including those about where to focus our time and energy - to the biggest decisions of your life? As much as I understand your humble program of being happy with what you have, but how do you find a sense of inner peace, while also dealing with other people not with anger but with compassion and in a democratic way.

**Hierocles:** One must consider that, in a certain way, one's brothers are parts of oneself, just as my eyes are parts of me and so too my legs and hands and the rest.

**Stoic Zeno:** Let us gather under the shade of the Stoa porch (*poikile*) in the public space (Socrates: or market place) of our polis, where anyone can listen and join in the debate. For us certain and true knowledge (*episteme*), can be attained only by verifying the conviction with the expertise of one's peers and the collective judgment of humankind. And for us striving to become citizen of the world external differences such as rank and wealth are of no importance in our social relationships.

**Diogenes:** In this sense, I am also a *kosmopolitês* as that is where I come from ...

**Stoics:** To get a more objective perspective, it's helpful to take a step back and view an issue as if you were a disinterested, but sympathetic, 3rd party. Importantly, our stoicism is not a religion, but is compatible with different faiths and religious traditions. There is room for different interpretations and different levels of philosophical commitment.

**Seneca:** Organise your Self, including knowing your strengths and weaknesses, handling your negative emotions while maintaining spaces to form reasoned responses and considering what you would call in your time now contingency planning, and repurposing!

**Irvine:** Mastering one's self is being engaged in the only moment where we exist, this one, while trying to understand the ways things are and living modestly, that is program of a good life via an ‘Art of stoic joy’ (2009).

**Epicure:** Indeed, we need to gain knowledge of the workings of the world, while we limit our desires in a simple life to attain a state of tranquillity and freedom from disturbance, or

imperturbability (*ataraxia*) as well as freedom from fear as well as an absence of bodily pain (aponia), independence (*autarkeia*), good disposition (*euthumia*) and so forth... Apropos 'joy': But what is also important indeed is to cultivate the presence of intrinsic pleasure without denying its life-enhancing qualities.

*Voice from off-stage Marx:* Epicurus is the 'greatest representative of the Greek enlightenment' as I have shown in my dissertation on the difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature.

**Lucretius:** *nodding in agreement* Yes, how essential are those quiet, long-lasting and never cloying pleasures and the appreciation of embraced natural beauty gained by contemplative pursuits in the spirit of the wise Epicurus. This even more in those times of violent civil wars, political assassinations, massacres, revolts, conspiracies, mass executions, and social and economic chaos, a world of anxiety and turmoil that I have experienced with cities decayed, trade declined, and an anxious populace scanned the horizon for barbarian armies.

My life has taught me – as expressed in my book 'On the Nature of Things' – that there is no hope of bribing or appeasing the gods, no place for religious fanaticism, no call for ascetic self-denial, no justification for dreams of limitless power or perfect security, no rationale for wars of conquest or self-aggrandizement. And for you urgently to relearn is also that there is no reason to set humans apart from other animals thus that there is and cannot be a triumphing over nature. Rather, human beings should conquer their fears, accept the fact that they themselves and all the things they encounter are transitory.

**Seneca and Montaigne:** That is another reason why a wise life is learning to die!

**Lucretius:** ... and embrace the refined phenomenal qualities and the pleasures of this incarnation in this very material world.<sup>16</sup>

*Interjecting voice from contemporary time*

**Roy Scranton:** Today now it is learning to die not as individuals, but as a civilization. in the dire so-called Anthropocene as that period of a large-scale die-off in the biosphere and global ecological collapse that's already well underway, caused by and ending the global capitalist civilization as we know it, within decades and the possible extinction of the human and other species within centuries. But there is a New Enlightenment possible: Through interrupting social circuits of fear and reaction, looking deep into the face of death, and open up a human relationship to the universe in which we might live not as parasitic consumers, but as co-creators—a relationship in which we might learn to live as the very light from which all our power ultimately flows. Our future will depend on our ability to confront it not with panic, outrage, or denial, but with patience, reflection, and love (2016).

<sup>16</sup> **Bergson:** Lucretius you are not only a genial poet, but also an inspired and singularly original thinker. We need to see the world sub specie durationis, i.e., as enduring (see Ansell-Pearson, 2018).

**Santayana:** I praise you Lucretius as true creator of scientific materialism and the real founder of Epicureanism. Certainly in an Orphic spirit sings Hölderlin; "For we are a conversation and have been able to hear from one another...". Has humanity learned; but soon [we] will be song!" "Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören von einander, Erfahren der Mensch; bald sind [wir] aber Gesang" (Hölderlin, 1975–2008, FHA VIII, 643).

**Epicureans:** We need the higher art of life! Cultivating an art of living in our sense is the opposite of what is connoted to our philosophy, misunderstood as a self-indulgent hedonistic, luxurious pleasure-seeking affair. On the contrary, to such superficial life, daring to know and pursuing a serene elevation of refined sensual and intellectual pleasures and a tranquillity of body and mind constitute a flourishing happiness in its highest form.

**Epicur:** Indeed: it is better to abstain from coarse or trivial pleasures if they prevent our enjoyment of richer, more satisfying ones...And this all is best celebrated in a beautiful garden with a circle of friends, being open to both slaves and women as part of a community for joint philosophising, but also growing our own food: going against the mores of the time!

Why with friends? Well because of all the things which wisdom has contrived that contribute to a blessed life; none is more important, and more fruitful, than genuine friendship. In such circle of friends everyone can self-improve, experience mutual admonition and gentle correction in the ethos of goodwill, respect, frankness, and gratitude as well as with an openness and moderation in all things.

For this kind of life, we have to shun politics and public affairs because it could lead to frustrations and ambitions, including lust for power or a desire for vain fame, all in vain. Please hear me well: ‘do not get involved in political life’! Such undertakings cause mental disquiet and disturbance and thus can directly conflict with our epicurean pursuit for peace of mind and eudaimonia as well as lived virtues. Only indirectly by our alternative ways of organising communities, promoting practices – such as justice, friendship, and economic co-operation – that are genuinely useful to people’s needs and eliminating all that promotes false conceptions of values and places our happiness in danger we may inspire others to create their ways of life and modes of virtuous communities or societies.

**Christian Theologian and Priest:** Speaking about virtues, reinterpreted in religious form and opposed to vice, our theology provided an explanation for the chaos of the Dark Ages. And we, with help of our almighty God, know the way back into light, provided only by the church. For us, human beings are by nature corrupt, sinful inheritors of Adam and Eve, and therefore deserve every miserable catastrophe that befell them. God cared about human beings, just as a father cared about his wayward children, and the sign of that care was anger. It is only through pain and punishment and even then only some pious faithful believers in Christ as the incarnation of God, the creator can find the narrow gate to salvation and see the divine light. Augustine: Again it is our Christian doctrine of salvation and damnation that offers human existence hope for an eternal happiness out of the misery and suffering of the ‘interim’ world.

**Petrarch:** No, I do not need you priest and dogmatic lessons. I experienced delight and found enlightenment on Mont Ventoux that I climbed for pleasure alone and could return then descending to the valley of the soul with my inward eye upon myself. Afterwards I could then travel on as an international scholar and singing poet-diplomat, retreating to contemplate on enlightenment of humanism that was than mediating the flowering of what you call Renaissance, the re-birth of the lift of antiquity.

**Observer:** Now we have listened to representatives from ancient times. We learned about the difference between Stoic focus on cultivating life, advocating debate in public spheres and becoming cosmo-political versus Epicurean exercises or ‘*askesis*’ of refining private pleasures with friends, while shunning politics as well as various tensions between religious and secular orientations!

**Hadot:** We need to revive the existential dimension of (ancient) philosophy today as therapeutic, transformative way of life (*manière de vivre!*). Let us rescue the synthetic nature of wisdom by which practical skill, rational knowledge, political acumen, artistic expertise and mystical experience are different facets of the same! I’m very much convinced that it is possible for modern man to live, not as a sage (*sophos*), but as a practitioner of the ever-fragile exercise of wisdom (1995, 211). But he needs relearning recognizing imaginatively himself as all things in a perpetual state of transformation or metamorphosis, while being part of the Whole and elevating to cosmic consciousness, thinking and acting in a universal perspective.<sup>17</sup>

**Observer:** Next, we will listen into a continuation and furthering of discourses in ‘modern times’ where the advocacy of a reason-based Enlightenment is voiced by Kant that in turn is provoking a radical critique and counter-orientation expressed by Nietzsche.



**Kant:** Dear Horace and Stoic, respectively Epicurean friends! I still resonate with some of your orientation and agree with your intentional thrust, but cannot accept your positions that appear to me as outdated approaches as well as the forms of operation you suggest and status of reason you presuppose!

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<sup>17</sup> The absence cosmos and cosmic Whole (and considering the underlying mysticism) and the other in the technologies of the (politically) caring relational understood self in Foucault and the insufficiency of his program of an aesthetics of existence as an ethical model for the present as well as some of his philological deficits, e.g. a mistaken emphasis on pleasure, are reasons why Hadot criticized him (But see: Testa 2020). Hadot argues that two broad attitudes have dominated our understanding of nature over the millennia, each of them with a god to represent it. The first is the Promethean, the second the Orphic. The first Promethean one is voluntarist and grasping, seeking to impose cultural forms on nature the better to understand and control it and this conception shows up in the history of both magic and mechanics. The second Orphic one, by contrast, is essentially cautious and as perspective is more aesthetic, contemplative and disinterested compared to the Promethean. Unlike the latter, it seeks out and is content to abide in nature’s irreducible mystery and wildness. Both approaches, says Hadot, have as their goal the defense of humanity’s “vital interests” (Hadot 2006: 317).

I am using your motto *sapere aude* in my answering of the quest and question of what Enlightenment is, responding to a critical inquiry by a master free-mason, namely: „Was ist Aufklärung?“ (1783). Importantly, this Aufklärung does not only characterize the period of my lifetime. As was the spirit of the time, the *Zeitgeist*, I am designating ‘Aufklärung’ as something each reasonable man can pursue, rather than merely an age in which one is living. You know ‘*aufklären*’ literally means to illuminate and to clear up. Accordingly, I am using this – itself wise – leitmotif for developing my theories of the application of Reason – yes written with capital letters – in the public sphere of all human affairs.

**Facilitator:** What does Enlightenment mean for you then?

**Kant:** For me, Enlightenment is man's departure and emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance (Kant, 1996: 58), The German word for immaturity, ‘Unmündigkeit’ means not having attained age of majority or legal adulthood. ‘Unmündig’ also means dependent or unfree, and another translation is tutelage or ‘non-age’ (the condition of not [being] of age). My moral philosophy is centred on the concept of autonomy, and here I distinguish between a person who is intellectually autonomous and one who keeps himself in an intellectually heteronomous, i.e., dependent and immature status. And this very unenlightened immaturity is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of knowledge and understanding, but lack of resolve and indecision, and thus lack of courage to use one's own mind and reasoning without another's guidance.

**Facilitator:** What is needed beyond courage and determination?

**Kant:** Enlightenment not only requires courage! What is needed is ‘orientation in thinking’ and giving direction of thought that is to reflect on what basis does our thought path determine the way we act.

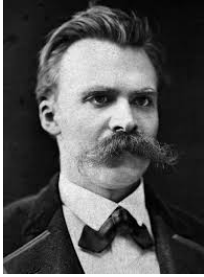
**Cassirer:** Indeed enlightenment is a ‘*Denkform*’ a form of thought/reason (1951, Renz 2020)!

**Kant:** Thus, we need to enquire into the conditions necessary for the possibility of knowledge as well as morality and wisdom. Likewise, what is called for are institutional changes and a corresponding ‘carrying’ machinery and institutions, like my envisioned cosmopolitical League of Nations, or ‘*Völkerbund*’, which became the United Nation!<sup>18</sup>

So you see: The Enlightenment program is a universal one of rationality, equality and practical morality as well as inner autonomy and political authority, all based on private and public use of reasoning, preparing eternal peace.

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<sup>18</sup> In my essay ‘Perpetual Peace’ (1795, 2016), I proposed a peace program to be implemented by governments while demanding a commitment between states and organizing peace (as teleological goal of history) as contract by following these principles: “The civil constitution of each state shall be republican” and “The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states” as well as that “The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality” (*ius cosmopolitanum*).



**Nietzsche:** And it is that very spirit of Aufklärung that is an essential step into decline, ending in passive nihilism, starting with the French Revolution, *Aufstand* a rebellion of slaves, a victory of egalitarianism of the weak. What we need is re-evaluative transformation of all values. And it is the will towards power as driving force that deconstructs existing values and raises itself as highest value. With the passing of the old moral, after the remaining death of God and Gods killed by us and our Enlightenment! (A greatness of a deed perhaps too great for us?), we need to give a different meaning, thus to lay a new significance into what became meaningless.

Your rationality-based enlightenment appears to me as an arrogant intellectual ethos that made troubling universal assertions about the nature of human existence, knowledge and society. The pious faith of Descartes, and his doubtful belief in rational autonomy, the revolutionary fantasist and moral fanatic Rousseau and his social contract and egalitarian politics of general will, you Kant, misunderstood reason, categorical imperative and universalistic morality as well as secularised subterranean Christianity in your values, but also Mills utilitarianism and ideas about freedom and later then the beliefs of Darwin and Spencer an others in progress, I have a disgust for the demagogic traps for these ideas of 'enlightenment' for being cosy and for their plebeian familiarity.

**Facilitator:** What do you think about the philosophical base of Enlightenment and in particular the reasonable autonomous self?

**Nietzsche:** All those claims of Cartesian and Kantian metaphysics and epistemologies cannot hold. Cogito is after all only a word, a grammatical custom and its use a linguistic trick. You see, the Cartesian method of universal doubt and Kantian quasi-theological prejudices of reinvented fictions of transcendental ideals for justifying a moral scheme, are all based on an unconscious dogmatism. All of them are actually an impediment to knowledge and opposed to life, precluding a joyous science and perspectivist approach. We need an autonomy beyond good and evil, defined not in terms of moral laws, but in terms of character and nobility, enacting a creative will that engenders the new that transgresses reason itself.

**Facilitator:** On what do you how lay the foundation for wisdom that can serve us well also in the 21 century?

**Nietzsche:** For me, before all, it is the Leib (Body) is the great reason and wisdom. And this very 'bodied' reason becomes a function of the other, the a-rational, as part of an intensified life. I tell you, there is more sagacity in thy body than in thy best knowledge. Again, in the corporeal is a real and great sagacity, a plurality with one sense... Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brothers, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage, whose name is self. In your body s/he dwells; s/he is your body.



**Kant:** No, not the irrational body, but the Reason – yes with capital letter – is the source of all knowledge and wisdom! We need to keep reason ‘pure’ from merely contingent bodily and social influences, It the reason-based Enlightenment that liberates us from passions and from authority and authoritarianism by making use of our rationality and knowledge that can be understood by others, who are equally rational beings, thus open the possibility for universalisation.<sup>19</sup>

**Facilitator:** Why then, do unenlightened politician and populists as well as extremists and neo authoritarian regimes find such influential followership in our contemporary world?

**Kant:** Perhaps for similar reasons as the avaricious Sophists with their specious and rhetorical practice using also fallacious and deceptive arguments gained currency before in Greek and Roman times. I do not think, like the elitist Plato seems to be inclined that it is because people were and are too stupid to see through them. Rather, the sophists had been influential and ‘successful’, because they met with the expectations that a majority of debarred and frustrated people had, with regard to the needs and wishes they wanted to be fulfilled.

Likewise, radical forms of doubting scepticism that deny that knowledge or rational belief is possible feed into populist power, although I learned a lot from the mitigated scepticism by Hume. While he was right to claim that we cannot strictly *know* any of the existence of God, the soul, free will, etc. our moral experience entitles us to believe in them.

**Facilitator:** What about ordinary humans? How can moral philosophy help for our behaviour? What power has Aufklärung for humanity today?

**Kant:** Admittedly, as an academic, I was tempted to be sceptical about the abilities of ‘ordinary’ human beings, but reading Rousseau had taught me that morality was not the exclusive field of expertise of philosophers. Human beings act morally quite independently of philosophers’ thinking about it. What moral philosophy can do is help to achieve clarity about what motivates us in our moral behaviour and can give us reasons and confidence. This is what the critical method is designed to do in the field of ethics and

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<sup>19</sup> **Gerhardt:** As important as it is to take the departure of the body, there is the need for moving beyond the same and developing the organisation of reason which enables also a social connection through mutual communication and evaluation out of an individual-including, liberal, but ultimately public consciousness ("*homo publicus*"). And as "*animal sociale sive rationale*" humans have the ability to rule themselves normatively, thus to act according to reasons that have to be justified factually and societally. Yes he can play, say not and create! "*homo ludens, homo negans et homo creator*" (2019).

beyond, as I develop in the *Critique of Pure and Practical Reason and Critique of Judgement!*<sup>20</sup> And I discussed with my friends that Aufklärung carries the power to make humanity more mature, also today.

**Facilitator:** Would you say that we are living in an actual or potentially enlightened age?

**Kant:** Again, my and your age was and is one of enlightenment, by which a process of emancipation has become possible – in my days also because of the enlightened monarch King Frederick, who you call ‘the Great’. But, I concede, it is not an enlightened age yet. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the progress towards a full Enlightenment is humankind’s final coming of age, the cultivation of the human consciousness from an immature and dogmatic state of

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<sup>20</sup> While the first one focusing on ‘Theoretical Reason’ was dealing with questions concerning the foundations and extent of human knowledge, thus a critique of the pretensions of pure theoretical reason to attain metaphysical truths beyond the ken of applied theoretical reason. The conclusion was that pure theoretical reason must be restrained, because it produces confused arguments when applied outside of its appropriate sphere. The second one of ‘Practical Reason’ defended that (theoretical) reason is capable of grounding behavior superior to that grounded by desire-based practical reasoning, thus is actually a critique, of pretensions of applied practical reason. Practical reason is the faculty for determining the will, which operates by applying a general principle of action to one’s particular situation. And here wisdom in particular is concerned with the practical end of humans’ existence on earth. (see also Rowley & Slack, 2009). Pure practical reason – as opposite of impure or sensibly determined practical reason – that drives actions that are good in themselves without any sense dependent incentives, must not be restrained, in fact, but cultivated. Thus, how can the principles of practical reason be brought to bear on real life (via moral education) how can we make people live and act morally. Reason, common to all human beings, must be properly controlled: Reason itself is not an unqualified good but must be employed critically to lead to moral principles. Likewise, people can understand the moral law without the aid of organised religion. There is an inherent tension between morality and religion because there is a danger that people may act morally not because it is the right thing to do but because their religion prescribes it. This would take away the value of a good act: I am convinced that we can do the right thing for the wrong reasons, which would be devoid of moral merit. Achieving desirable outcomes is not enough; moral merit lies in the right intentions that are freely willed. Freedom is the necessary ground for the existence of the moral law. In my ‘*Critique of Practical Reason*,’ I elaborate on ideas about how moral judgements can be made. A maxim, a moral belief, must stand the test of the ‘categorical imperative’ before it can become a moral law. Moral laws are not contingent, they are not ‘hypothetical’ imperatives, but universal principles, ‘categorical’ imperatives. Pure reason fails in the area of knowledge but comes into its own in the area of moral judgements. We can rationally figure out what to do by identifying the principle – of praxis - that lies behind a proposed course of action: What do I commit myself to by doing x? Next, we need to find out whether the principle can be a categorical imperative by asking ourselves if we could will it to be a universal law, as unbreakable as a natural law. The categorical imperative is strongly bound up with a belief in the dignity of the human individual (and ‘Perpetual Peace’ for human kind). It would be absurd to deny that all human beings are moral lawgivers, and as such merit our respect. It is therefore rational to treat them accordingly, i.e. never to simply use others for our own ends but to respect that they too have ends. In philosophy we are interested in three great questions: “*What can I know?*”, “*What should I do?*” and “*What may I hope?*” These three, however, can be subsumed under one great question: “*What is a human being?*” If making a contribution to this project is the aim of all philosophising, we must go further than talking only about knowledge and ethics. Therefore, I wrote a third *Critique*, *the Critique of Judgement*, being concerned with the areas of aesthetics and religion. After all, the question of the human being would be very inadequately answered if we didn’t for instance examine the fact that we can appreciate things from an aesthetic point of view.

ignorance is our future! But affect and passion shut out the sovereignty of reason and no human being wishes to have passion, for who wants to have himself put in chains when he can be free?

**Nietzsche:** As much as I share to a certain attach your attack on superstition, religious dogmatism, outmoded forms of governance and resonate with some of your ideas of liberation (/in my middle period (late-1870s to early 1880s), your disembodied life-alienating Aufklärung will never be the one I call for to be enacted experimentally and artfully by an avant-garde of free spirits!

A life without genuine passions, life is rigidified and the world reduced to simply ‘quantity and line and law and nonsense. And if this is all that existed, life would be turned into something strictly mechanical, automatic, predictable, regular, and even boring. We need learn loving, elevating, gilding, cultivating, sublimating and singing our passions, transmuting passions (*Leidenschaften*) into joys (*Freudenschaften*)! Instead of obedience for predetermined ventures, other-worldly escape, or metaphysically defined purity, we need free adventures towards the indefinite, this-worldly exploration, allowing the discovery of the alloyed and the possible!

*Nietzsche getting up and moving, while shaking head, shivering with his body, leaving the room for traveling to the ‘de-lightful’ South...calling back with the voice of Zarathustra:*

**Nietzsche:** All your pseudo-enlightening morality and moralising are oppressive, punitive, and a normalizing force, prisoning genuine life and living. This moralism is a weapon of the weak ‘serving’ the decadent people and their apathetic superstitions with all their *Ressentiment* of being the last men of this nihilistic age unable to build and act upon a self-actualized ethos!

**Facilitator:** What is truth and what to live for then?

**Nietzsche:** The truth to live for is one of the new *Übermensch*, the overcoming man, who is more than human and who remains faithful to the earth. Once again: The human is something that must be overcome: and for that reason you must love your virtues as being themselves sublimated – i.e. rising to a limit or upper threshold – transfigured passions and expression of your unique self-cultivated character dedicated to overcoming as practice of wisdom – for you will perish by them.

Hear this naked truth: And you wise and knowing ones, you would flee from the solar-glow of the wisdom in which the overman joyfully bathes his nakedness and then walks and dances with light feet and in a non-fanatical mode beyond human, all too human, unintelligent good and evil! Let us – like incarnated in Epicurus who has been alive in all ages and lives now, allow wisdom to assume bodily form (as I outlined in ‘Human All too Human’ II 224) a poiesis that enables the individual to negotiate and affirm the most demanding and challenging questions of existence! Overall: The secret of realizing the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live dangerously!

**Lewis Call:** *shouting back to him in a post-anarchist voice:* The irony of your relationship Nietzsche with the Enlightenment, is that despite your virulent and profound critique of its rationality, its misunderstanding of the individual, its politics and its science and moral schemes, you retained its faith in progress and its desire to construct a better world, thus an utopian project

that retained enlightened ideas. However, yes, you were in favour to create some kind of modified or transformed Enlightenment. Your attacks of the conventional Enlightenment, was done so in the name of a project that is in its goals and in many of its methods, fundamentally enlightened. Isn't for you the *Übermensch* or Overman – as neo-aristocratic, this-worldly figure of an avant-garde – representing the fulfilment of a different but, profoundly 'enlightened' project'? And for you this is realised by facing and affirming willingly, the most abysmal thought that is the eternal recurrence of everything and *amor fati* or love of one's destiny, passionately beyond endurance and fatalism. While this affirming might include suffering, pain and evil, it allows creating the meaning of the earth anew, and faithing into a future, yet to come. Importantly, for you this fate-loving overman does not mindlessly accept the world fatalistically with all its sorrow. Rather, the true power of the one, who overcomes lies in his or her ability to choose and make decisions, as s/he is able to affirm only that which is worthy of being affirmed (2002).

**Hegel:** Wait, wait, I think we need to radicalise your philosophy Kant, through understanding an absolute as all-encompassing, self-realizing spirit that includes otherness. Enlightenment reason (*Verstand*) with its insistence on abstract opposition had to be integrated into a more comprehensive, speculative, form of reason (*Vernunft*) of absolute knowledge as *Weltgeist* that could even unify the opposition between unity and difference. This allows us to think dialectically of what Enlightenment reason excluded as other than reason, as reason's own other. With this transformation of the Christian eschatology into Absolute Spirit, the 'cunning of reason' into the history helps to rationally comprehend that all tragedy and suffering, are part of the progression of the Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> **Critchley:** Well dear Hegel (and Marx) tragedy is neither progressive as you thought or regressive as others would have it, but retains an 'ambiguity' to be reconsidered. What if we took seriously the form of thinking that we find in tragedy, and the experience of partial agency, limited autonomy, deep traumatic affect, agnostic conflict, gender confusion, political complexity, and moral ambiguity that it presents? Adopting a theatrical standpoint, in the tragedies reason is not a tool that can stabilise the contradictions of experience. Rather, tragedies are giving voice to what is contradictory, constricting, and limiting about human beings and the space between freedom and necessity. The power of tragedy as a political mode lies in its tendency to subvert the penchant for reasonable, neat plots and outcomes! It confronts us with the unknown forces that move human being and doing in the basic activities of life, including love, war, worship and grief. Thus, it confronts us with a chaotic order of dissonant energies where multiple claims on our lives have reason on their side! Tragedy is thinking in action, thinking upon action, for the sake of action, where the action takes place offstage and is often described to us indirectly through the character of a messenger. This type of thinking, is not resignation but rather disorientation, and takes the form of a radical questioning: How do I act? What shall I do? And this in a fractured world, without the capacity for redemption and of 'irreducible violence revealed by tragedy! (2019).

**Marx:** We need to put this spirit on its feet and realized a revolutionary practice. Yes history follows dialectic meaningful pattern of progress, but it is be found in relation to concrete material, economic conditions of human existence, in particular modes of production and labour.

**Darnton:** By the way, we need to see the material basis of literature.

**Sangmeister & Mulso:** ....including the dissemination (sic!) by erotic. pornographic novels and gossiping short stories, expressing also political critique!

**Darnton:** .... literature and the technology of its production and distribution – including roles of publishers, book dealers, traveling salesmen, and other intermediaries in cultural communication – that affected the substance and diffusion of ideas, including those of the business of Enlightenment!

**Marx:** History unfolds towards enlightenment in a rational process towards greater freedom and rationality, but through a conflict of classes over resources! You philosophers also all you of enlightenment until now have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however is to change it! We need a collective prâxis, as activity of human emancipation to overcome all forms of alienation, and reification. A from this prâxis new social formations, ideas, theories and consciousness and ultimately a post-capitalist communism as gruel enlightened way of living together in perpetual peace will emerge.

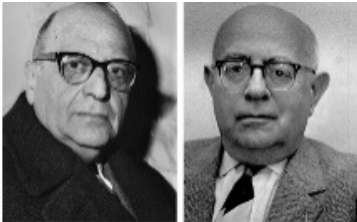
**Post-Colonialist:** Related to your critique, I still try to understand how it came about that liberty, intellectual freedom, and constitutionalism were in many or most cases actually set back, rather than advanced in 18- and 19 century Europe, and still more in the European colonial empires, despite the tremendous escalation in the justifying rhetoric of enlightenment, liberty, and reason. Disinclined to oppose actual inequalities and hostile to actual universalising proclivities, on the contrary ‘enlightened’ reforms and rhetoric were misused for crushing opposition, suppressing criticism, and furthering colonial economic exploitation often for consolidating personal control and profit.

**Historian Israel:** Well this is a known pattern: ideas promoting the interest of society as a whole came to be almost defeated by ideas buttressing the interests of the privileged few (2019)!

**Observer:** Hello again! Just as a brief comment from my meta-position. Again different historical voices and patterns of thinking and relating to the world by emphasizing different perspectives and orientations, as particularly expressed by Nietzsche and Kant who represent voices of that influential intellectual and philosophical movements in Europe during 17, 18, and 19 centuries.

As we have seen all those distinct and critical understandings and interpretations of Enlightenment are themselves enlightening. Revealingly, but also elusive the status and role of objective rationality, subjective relativism, logos and pathos, status of reasons, monist-unity and pluralist orientation, evolution and revolution were put and seen in quite different lights, twilights and/or shadows.

By listening to the next round, we come even closer to our times including what we used to call modernity and postmodernity, entering 20 century. These are voices from Critical Theory, expressed by Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas in dispute with poststructuralist/postmodernist, especially Foucault, who is even speaking with Kant directly.



**Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno:** Yes my dear Kant and Hegel as well as particular dear, lieber Karl Marx: Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet, the wholly enlightened earth radiates under the sign of disaster triumphant (1947: 3).

In the process of enlightenment, modern philosophy and (positivist) science, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had become over-rationalized and an instrument of technocracy. There is a continuity of the age of myth within Enlightenment and modernity. Modernity fulfils what myth always wanted to. For us, Enlightenment is a kind of totalitarianism. It is mythical fear radicalized! Enlightenment regresses to the mythology it has never been able to escape. Thus: ‘Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology’ (1947, p. xviii). Accordingly, we need to reflect critically the “*Dialectic of Enlightenment.*” With this orientation, we can understand the relapse of reason into mythical irrationality that leads to the necessary distortedness of reason.

**Cassirer:** As I have experienced painfully it, the NAZIs, had combined the regressive and mystifying powers of myth with technological advances and the methodological precision made possible by the Enlightenment (1946, 282-92)

**Horkheimer and Adorno:** As propounding a rationalist dogma without capacity for self-criticism, Aufklärung was and is bearing a potential for the massively efficient and dehumanizing myth-making perfected jointly not only by NAZI propaganda but also by what we experienced and observed at the (American) 'culture industry'!

**Bredvold:** Even worse: we will see the breakdown of civilization as the result of the Kafkaesque systematizing of the modern age inaugurated by the 'Brave New World of Enlightenment' (1961).

**Gray:** Enlightenment's wake is the close of the Modern Age (1995)!

**Horkheimer:** And therefore, we need moving from traditional theory towards critical theorizing! And you Nietzsche as a defender of naturalized, elitist, socio-political hierarchy and stance against democratization appear as anti-emancipatory, conservative even reactionary (2011).

**Heike Schotten:** What about rereading and reinterpreting Nietzsche's critique re-deployed from the queered perspective of the other and the oppressed? Let us openly and radically embrace immoralism in the name of emancipatory rejecting and undoing morality and its array of punitive moralisms (2009, 2018).

**Adorno:** Moreover, we need moving away from identificational and teleological approaches towards mimesis and a negative dialectic that allows a systematic critique for example of the cultural industry as one of the ideological distorted forms of capitalist society. As our life in late modernity that is an inhuman society affecting everyday behaviour, a good, honest one is no longer possible. While we live in an untrue whole, No Hegel not as you stated: „*Das Wahre ist das Ganze*“ (“The True is the whole“), but „*Das Ganze ist das Unwahre*“ (MM 55), (“The whole is the untrue”) and „*Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im Falschen*“ (MM 43) (“There is no right life in the wrong one“)!

Nevertheless, with my friends, like Walter Benjamin, I have had still the vision of redemption as only valid viewpoint with which to engage a deeply troubled world. By bringing the "Messianic light" of criticism on a landscape of consummate negativity, I tried and suggest to you to project negatively an image of utopia (1978 *Minima Moralia*), while you are facing those crisis and re-totalitarising developments again. For me late capitalism totalitarianism is an ineluctable destiny of modernity.

**Arendt:** Totalitarianism is a system of power that destroys politics. As such it is an attempt at building a monolithic, homogeneous community in which any form of pluralism and division of the social body is eliminated, thus destroying politics as realm of infra, a space of interaction between citizens, very different human beings sharing a common political sphere as equal actors (1951).

**Leftist:** We need to fight political totalitarianism with its abolition of pluralism and representative democracy, suppression of constitutional rights, concentration of power and leadership and persecution of deviancies. Similar let us critique economic neoliberal totalitarianism that would lead to a reified world, in which all human and social relationships take a commodity form, and in which the market becomes a universal anthropological model and human beings are unable to conceive of their relationships outside of individualism and competition. Such a world would be totalitarian, though even dressed in anti-totalitarian clothes of market and individualism as symbols of freedom against racial and class collectivism.

**Koselleck:** We need to understand the conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) notions of Enlightenment and related 'modern' guiding terms and meanings and when and how they were employed. The study of the changing semantics and pragmatics of these concepts in their social and political contexts showed that these were transformed during the transition time between circa 1750 to 1850 that I call 'saddle period'. Moving from civic-war preventing absolutism, to enlightenment, to French revolution, away from transhistorical-static to future-oriented anticipatory contents including showing a more dynamic form as politicisation, democratisation, ideologisation. Also contemporary understandings of politics have become dangerously depoliticized by Enlightenment utopianism! As I have shown in my book "critique and crisis – pathogenesis of bourgeois world" the modern that originated out of the Geist of Enlightenment carries the seeds of its own crisis due to a critical understanding of an enlightened understanding of history.



**Foucault:** Well my dear friends, "What is Enlightenment?" – *les Lumières* – is also a question that I processed and which I propose to re-open. I took up the formulation of daring to know, and became very interested in the interpretation of Enlightenment as a modification of the preexisting relation that is linking will, authority, and the use of reason. As you all were in your time, pursuing your own philosophies, I was intrigued to think about and to find a place for the individual as supposed autonomous man and woman in my time and what is called post-structuralist and post-modern philosophy that is rejecting Enlightenment metanarratives.

**Lyotard:** *nodding* intensively, oui! incredulity versus totalising grand narratives, méta-récites! Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? My answer: Avec *petits récits*, or more modest and localized narratives and local micro-legitimations, as a progressive politics has to be grounded in the cohabitation of a whole range of diverse and always locally legitimated language games (1984)!

**Foucault:** Connected to my thinking about critique, governmentality and resistance ("Qu'est-ce que la critique?" 1978), in reopening this quest(ion)–that became my last lecture (1984) and



you may see it as a testament, I tried to come to terms with the problematic legacy of the so-called age and project of ‘Enlightenment’!

**Kant:** Monsieur Foucault, Qu'est-ce que les Lumière pour vous?

**Foucault:** Pour moi, cher Monsieur Kant, your interpretation of Enlightenment as the opposite to a state of immaturity or tutelage, specifically as incapacity to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another (heteronomy) are interesting. I find it fascinating how you suggested a connection between an excess of authority, on the one hand, and a lack of courage and resolution, on the other. You showed that the courage to know is at one and the same time the courage to recognize the limits of reason (to be seen as a play of power and truth that is of obedience and argument, acknowledging the authority of the sovereign and a self-determining subject retaining its autonomy) thus critique as art of ‘voluntary inservitude.’ I see the domains in which the contest between a state of immaturity and one of enlightenment takes place are those of the opposition of critique to governmentality, namely, religion, law, and conscience.

**Kant:** *et voila! comme je dis!*

**Foucault:** Turning directly towards Kant: Interestingly, for you Kant, Enlightenment has to be considered both as a process in which men participate collectively – even universally – and as an act of courage to be accomplished personally. Thus, men are at once, submissive elements part of an imposed agency and voluntary actors and of a single process. One of the most bewilderingly unsatisfactory moments in your essay is that famous and fateful distinction between the realm of obedience<sup>22</sup> and the realm of reason, among other dichotomies, like duty and inclination and coercion and freedom as well as transcendence and immanence.

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<sup>22</sup> Your obedience with this notorious nonaggression pact (tutelage of a king?!) with Frederick the Great, committing yourself to applauding the sovereign's suppression of politically subversive acts in exchange for your own intellectual liberty disappointed me. A subtle, daring, and psychologically penetrating you Kant may have enticed a sovereign hungry for a reputation, not just for overmastering puissance, but also for wisdom into an agreement in which the sovereign obliged himself to permit freedoms that the philosopher well knew might be radical in their ultimate, if not their immediate, effects. Perhaps a generous heart might argue this is why the argument conveys a powerful sense of lulling: In some ways your obedience anticipates not liberal democracy, but totalitarianism. Accordingly, Answers to the Question: 'What Is Enlightenment?' would then be (1) a piece of flattery thrown off by a tame intellectual; (2) a shrewd effort to circumscribe the sovereign's recognized appetite for the suppression of (especially religious) dissent; and (3) a prescient disclosure of the (totalitarian) obscenity of Enlightenment itself. Whatever it was, it did not work. When you published “Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone” nine years later, you were rebuked by the official censor and forced to apologize. This exercise of old-style power in the very heart of the Aufklärung raises once again the initial question: What is Enlightenment?

In retorting to your propositions for intellectual courage, I do not share anymore that inherent spirit of rational optimism for a fulfilling promise of reconciliation or happiness – and naïve faith that all will be good via rational reasoning and universally valid statements – that are inherent in your thought. Even more, I do reject much of those hopeful politics that were proposed by you Kant and your contemporaries and those, who followed and still follow.<sup>23</sup>

**Kant:** But for being enlightened, we must understand that the private use of reason renders individuals both submissive to external political authority and identifiable in terms of strictly definable social roles. This has ramifications at both the level of the individual (ethics) and that of the collective (politics). To see reason as that what must be free in its public use, but submissive in its private use, is opposite of what is ordinarily called freedom of conscience! The question we are called to ask is how can we take the use of reason the public form that it requires, how can the courage, the audacity to know be exercised in broad daylight, while individuals are obeying as scrupulously as possible? For responding to this, we need a transcendental, formalized system that allows universalization.

**Foucault:** For me, the criticism inherent in critical work of reason is no longer to be used in the search for formal structures with a universal value. Rather, the task of Enlightenment thinking is to make a historical investigation into those particular events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are thinking, doing and saying... How does the 'Age of Reason' had to construct an image of 'Unreason' – and treating all those 'insane' accordingly – against which to take an opposing stand...

**Facilitator:** Can you rephrase this and elaborate please?

**Foucault:** In other words: The ways in which we think and act or the rationalities or games of truth that we play out in diverse institutional fields have a history and should be analysed as a product of particular contingencies and struggles. Accordingly, I see a great potential in a genealogical critique to understand the constitution of sub-jectivity. We do not have to be for or against the Enlightenment and do not need to escape the principles of rationality. Rather, we have to accept that the Enlightenment was a powerful event or set of events that has made us, who we are. What role did power play for being free, how much was there a force to be autonomous, and what delusion of progress were all stabilising each other based on rationality?

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<sup>23</sup> The idea of a people ruled by just rulers; ethical leaders and those 'modern' heroes, well-educated class scholars and academically trained men of genius, spokes-persons of the Enlightenment, who are inspired by the existential dare advised in the phrase *sapere aude* and the idea of a transcending knower, all of this appears to me as problematic. My underlying issues and question is how do we experience our own freedom, our ability to reject as freely as we affirm possibilities for our lives, without falling prey to nihilism? Without engaging in a form of criticism that once again emphasizes limits rather than the transgression of limits and the production of possibilities? Concerning the promise of *Aufklärung*, in relation to expectation of autonomy, and claim for authenticity see Rosa (2010).

The problem is not rationality as such, but the form it took and can take. Such critical reconstruction is a vital resource for questioning societal, political, economic or managerial regimes as ‘common-non-sense’ and ideologies. We need debunking them as oppressive and limiting systems of thought that inhibit our capacity to imagine other possible ways of organizing and living.

**Kant:** What does your historical and genealogical interpretation imply, in particular in relation to status of the Reason of Enlightenment and the autonomous subject?

**Foucault:** Historio-genealogically, there is not an essential kernel of primary universal rationality and an unified rational subject that you Kant and your followers presumed to be found during the process of enlightenment. There exists multiple and historically specific forms of rationalities, due to which reason can never discover its essence or founding act. Rather, what is reasonable can only reveal different modifications in which rationalities engender one another, oppose and pursue one another as well as the elements of rational disintegration within the subject itself and within reason. Accordingly, I re-interpret *sapere aude* as practice of a radical, critical thinking and as a permanent reactivation of an attitude and an ethos as a critique of our and your historical era and practice of fearless speech (2001).

**Facilitator:** What does this mean for our lives? How can we dare to be wise today?

**Foucault:** For me, daring to be wise is realizing a life – in sensu of the aesthetics of existence – in which the critique of what we are can be found and unfold, while promoting possible changes and thus the practices of freedom, including restraints imposed by institutions. Such an enlightening approach applies pluralized and decentered reason to experience. This kind of criticism and lived aesthetics is thus an experiment with the possibility of going beyond forced limits, of centred modern individuality in order to reach intensifying limit-experiences. Then adopting an ‘ethos of enlightenment’ enacts experimentally a courageous practice of liberty (1984: 1388–1393) as perpetual self-elaboration and self-problematization (1984a: 1431, 1984b). And such orientation is moving towards perpetual becoming by creating our-Selves as a work of art (1983: 1211) also as one involved organizing and managing (Bardon & Josserand, 2011). Thus, rather than universal structures of reason it is all about autonomous self-government and aesthetic self-creation. Being critical against the ‘modernist’ colonialization of perception by our logical faculties and cognitivist assumptions of high modernity, such aesthetic program is about tuning in and turning toward tactile and passionate alternatives.

**Facilitator:** I understand your emphasis of ethos-oriented, aesthetic and critical orientation! But how is this approach different compared to the progressive continuity of traditional enlightenment?

**Foucault:** Turning the life and body of an individual into a transgressive site of a living artwork, does not merely continue your tradition of philosophical Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). Rather, such undertaking transform the same into a new program of sublation (*Aufhebung*), which is a different one compared to what you Hegel, or you Adorno and Horkheimer thought of. Here ‘*Aufhebung*’ is taking and lifting up (‘sub-late’) that is exceeding the limits and decoupling of the autonomous spheres of aesthetics, ethics and politics as well as those between the supposed ‘high’, (rational, universal) and the devalued ‘low’ (passionate, bodily, historically engaged). Taking Enlightenment as the ‘on-going’ age of critique (1997: 308) calls us to ask what this means in the very historically constructed and relative present that is the neo-liberalised global world in the 21 century!

**Facilitator:** Speaking about present, can you share your pondering about why unenlightened politician and populists and their programs are ‘successful’ today?

**Foucault:** Well, in a way, this does not surprise me! I fear that it is a kind of ‘normalization’ of foolishness that will dominate more and more. I am concerned about the far-reaching implications if this all becomes a generalized ‘normal-ness’ and when old or new authorities are imposing order to achieve obedience and conformity. Therefore, for me, the question is in particular how ‘Discipline and Punish’ are used that is which and how ordering disciplinary technologies, and ‘micro-technique of power’ are employed for which purposes.

Moreover: How are power and knowledge as well as its nexus exploited for what kind of supposed ‘post-factual’ or ‘post-Truth’ politics? Furthermore, what forms of ‘*governmentality*’ emerge from all this, defined as all those organized practices (mentalities, rationalities, and techniques) through which subjects are governed? In particular, how are these visions policed by social pressure, while attacking and excluding other imaginations and undermining subversions?

**Malette:** To be added with „Ecogovernmentality“ for considering and as a response to our ecological crisis!

**Kant:** Considering all this, will we as mankind ever enter a genuine enlightenment of living maturely, and autonomously in freedom ultimately?

**Foucault:** My dear Immanuel: Considering your hope for humankind’s final coming of enlightened emancipated age, I do not know whether we will ever reach such mature post-dogmatic adulthood and freedom. From my perspective, we can never become totally free, because freedom is not a fixed state of being. Rather, *becoming* free is alive in possibilities to create ourselves and transgress the limits imposed on us, not in the sense of overcoming these limits, but as illuminating and critically testing them. What is important is that ‘the process of transformation from immaturity to maturity – on your terms Kant - can be enhanced, valued, and intensified insofar as it is a process of realisation (Pryor, 2002: 320-1). This is what being ‘determined’ by the Enlightenment means and engages us with a ‘trans-evaluation’. So you see, I am not an anti-Enlightenment thinker! What I try to do – at least in my late work – is re-visting

and reworking some of the central categories of Enlightenment and its values, such as the interrelated notions of the caring self,<sup>24</sup> autonomy and emancipation.

**Facilitator:** What does *sapere aude* then call for today? Is your approach not an elitist and aesthetising one that for many people appears as unreachable or even ‘otherworldly’?

**Foucault:** *Sapere aude* in our times calls for and enacts an entanglement of aesthetics and ethics of self-empowerment and -unfoldment! Please hear me right, I am not for a decadent or otherwise understood aestheticism, nor any kind of frivolous aestheticization or light-headed ‘devil-may-care’ form of dandyism. Because of their critical function, aesthetically refined and artful practices of the caring self are not confined to aesthetics. Rather, they are also essentially part of one's personal and interpersonal realizations of ethics, politics and freedom. Thus, these practices are searching and creating alternatives to modern self-subjugation.

It is about re-defining identity as a site for cultural resistance and individual autonomy that might pave the way for alternative styles of living and identification. And critique will be the art of voluntary inservitude, of reflective indocility and a care of the self!

**Derrida:** All critique and deconstruction for an ‘Enlightenment to come: *Le monde des lumières à venir!* (2003).



**Habermas:** There are many misunderstandings here! What we need is: ‘*sapere aude in communitas*’ via what I call Communicative Reason – beyond your Kant monological approach – and that implies following the regulative idea(s) of ideal speech situation and ever better rational argumentation. For me valid knowledge can only be reached in ‘ideal speech situations’ where the only acceptable power is that of the ‘better argument.’ I thus invite you to respect the rules of the ‘discourse ethic’ to reach a consensus, which would constitute the condition of our emancipation (Habermas, 1994). In the best Kantian sense, the normative criteria of any ‘validity claim’ is universal and it is the only acceptable way to emancipation as enlightenment in 21 century! Since validity claims require that interlocutors justify their claims to reach a consensus, they will subscribe to a universal morality that they agree to and can live up to it.

Your totalizing critique of reason, my dear Foucault, deprives your own work of the normative grounding and still requires civilizational approach and perspective, everything else would be a

<sup>24</sup> Foucault's French translation of the old concept of care ‘to ‘care of the self’ or ‘care of oneself’ *Le souci de soi* i.e. ‘attending to oneself’ or ‘being concerned about oneself’ (Foucault, 2005, p. 2) is not an egoistic process; but it is an action that includes relationships to others, where the individuals are involved with each other through shifting constellations.

performative contradiction! And this modernist heritage is part of the very Enlightenment goals of human emancipation and the expansion of reason, non-violence, and recognition of and in relation to the ‘other’!

Modernity, initiated by Enlightenment, is a worthy project – albeit unfinished. Modernity is unfinished, because there is a gap between the specialized knowledge i.e. scientific, moral and aesthetical knowledge and everyday life. It is worthy because of the gains it has made, especially in the expansion of individual freedom and a post-national orientation, urgently needed in our times of neo-nationalistic resurgence.

To complete the project of modernity requires a discursive selection of scientific, moral and aesthetical values that the modern enlightened age has to offer that is created its normativity out of itself. And this discourse-based process have to be organised in such a way that there are more possibilities for valid claims, while not compromising the lifeworld by the encroachment of systems of power and money.

**Foucault:** From the beginning with the reformers of the Enlightenment, modernists have succeeded in influencing the mind by turning the individual into an object of knowledge. Hence, the glorification of knowledge lies not in its capacity to understand the objective world as commonly celebrated by Enlightenment thinkers. Rather, modernist power lies in its success in microscopically analysing the internal and the external conditions of individuals to allow better institutional coercion thus, processing a normalization of human behaviour and enforcing the power structure of modern society.

All communication is integrally embedded in power in an existing social system, serving interests of domination and manipulation as much as enlightenment and understanding. Language and knowledge are subject to historically contingent and specific constraints and biases in contemporary society. These are functionalized and rationalized, their meanings and uses are socially constructed to serve hegemonic interests, including legitimation and control and so never universal and transcendent of social conditions.

Dear Habermas! Your vision of enlightened communication through which minds can meet, and a shared understanding can be established, truth can be revealed, and that unforced consensus can be reached, is merely a utopian ideal, like the regulative ideas by Kant before. Even more, and you won’t like me saying this, but your emphasis on discursive-mediated political will-formation through the process of deliberative and procedural democracy, as your discourse theory conceived are very problematic. These discursive processes that cultivate rational and moral subjects through reflection, argumentation, public reasoning, and reaching consensus are and remain illusionary and may be misleading.

**Habermas:** No, I am not convinced and do not agree at all, on the contrary: Your approach remains for me a detractors of reason as you cannot account for an alleged validity of itself you claim and collapsing the ineluctable Kantian distinction between genesis and validity, between questions concerning the factual origin of claims and its possible justification on grounds that cannot be reduced to its de facto origin.

Like Nietzsche, you are blurring the principal distinction between the three equiprimordial spheres of claim and adjudication: the cognitive sphere in which claims concerning factual correctness are raised and adjudicated, the moral-legal sphere in which claims concerning normative correctness are raised and adjudicated, and the aesthetic-critical sphere in which claims regarding artistic authenticity are raised and adjudicated. Therefore, I have to dismiss your genealogical historiographies as relativistic, and crypto-normative illusory science. You are not giving an account of the normative foundations' for your thinking. To avoid relativism our thinking must be rationally and universally grounded.

Again, we need a minimalist theory of rationality that attempts to replace the unacceptable substantialist notion of reason as universal subject with a conception of rationality based on reason as the necessary standard of interaction between subjects that rely on each other for the recognition and adjudication of their claims. What we need is a communicative rationality and to keep the emancipatory potential of reason alive. This alone allows developing a deliberative democracy, whereby only the weight of the better argument prevails.

**Foucault:** Monsieur Habermas, you are functioning as a standard-bearer of the legacy of Enlightenment rationalism, and a corresponding normative stance. But the distancing from foundationalism and metaphysics does not leave me normless or without any value-orientation. Norms cannot be given a universal grounding independent of those people and their context. Contextually situated, my norms are expressed in a desire to challenge 'every abuse of power, whoever the author, whoever the victims' (Miller, 1993: 316).

No, mon cher Jürgen Habermas, it is not the force of better reasoned argument that encourages consensus by informed and intellectually competent citizenry. Rather, it is through control of minds that produces compliance. As we are institutionally coerced into complying with the norm of docile body, we must re-empower and re-embody ourselves!

**James Schmidt:** There was and is a lot of problematic misunderstanding concerning the very question 'What is Enlightenment?' and need for rethinking today as well as with regard to the debate between Habermas, and Foucault (2011, 2018ab).

**Matytsin, et al.:** And we should not underestimate the religious and mystical sources of the rationality of Enlightenment (2018).

**John Dryzek:** Let me add a word on embodied dimensions. Part of this embodiment is extending and re-interpreting communicative rationality to be open to unconstrained dialogue with the non-human voices located in the natural world having its own agency (Dryzek, 1998: 588). This is relevant also as the 'ideal speech situation' seems somewhat detached from the realities of the empirical social world and lived experiences in all their corporeality.

**Observer:** Before we learn more about the reality of this corporeality related to wisdom and enter a preliminary final part, once more, a few words of transition from me the observing agent. After all those radically critical reflections, ideas and approaches situated in creative tensions between modern and post-modernist orientations, we now turn to embodied wisdom, the tasteful original, presence and future of *sapere* and *sapiential*. With this we re-enter the territory of embodiment, and will hear about sensual qualities and

moves towards a more integral understanding of wisdom and Enlightenment. Thus, enlightenment interpreted as a period, practice, and project may have been wound up and further unfolds as various accounts required it (Schmidt, 2011) and as our voices here confirm. And as we will see, with its Leitmotiv and call for daring to know and becoming wise *sapere aude* well again and remain in need for a further interpretation, different realisations and ‘creative’ enactments as the open(ing) questions and quest in the end invite....



**Merleau-Ponty:** Yes, daring to be-come wise in the 21 century calls for being re-embodied.

We need to move away from the cerebrocentric, information-processing, and representational models of mind, cognition, knowledge and wisdom towards the corporeal, enactive, and world-involving understandings and relationships.

**Varela:** even more a “*disenchantment of the abstract,*” i.e., for a move away from “the rarefied atmosphere of the general and the formal, the logical and the well-defined, the *represented* and the foreseen” and a “*re-enchantment of the concrete,*” i.e., for a “radical paradigm shift” based on a stronger recognition that “the proper units of knowledge are primarily *concrete, embodied, incorporated, lived*” (1999, 6-7).

It is about embodied meaning as experiential, lived-through in and through practices that bring forth and allow further emergences of incarnated and cultured existence as well as living ‘civilisation.’ These bodily-mediated practices are not (only) those of subjugation, not merely processes of subjection through which the individual submits to the imposition of social forms and passively mediates this imposition. Rather, incorporeal meanings are really more intricate, and open for transformative creativity than are the meanings imposed by social formation.

**Spinoza:** Knowing what the body can do is the route to better knowing, and, ultimately, the kind of grounded wisdom or ‘blessedness’ that I see as coming from recognising the world’s immanence to our own being.

**Jonathan Israel:** you dear Baruch Spinoza and the so-called Spinozism were the intellectual backbone of the European Radical Enlightenment (2001) and foundational for the origins of modern democracy (2009).

**Shaw:** Yes: Men are wise in proportion, not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience (1903: 239).



**Bähr:** How the body was constructed and killed in and by enlightenment showed its limits.

**Polylinguist:** And with this, we need a taste-ful understanding of wisdom as the very ‘*sapere*’ means in Latin and before all to taste! In French, *tâter*, that is to palpate, to explore by touching, is kin to the English taste, to explore by the mouth, ‘*aude sapere*’, thus could also be translated as ‘dare to taste’, and in Spanish ‘*con sabor*’ also means with gusto.<sup>25</sup>

**Serres and Latour:** Yes, human ancestors associated wisdom with taste as the Latin sapien(t)s connotes knowing and wise with ‘tasting.’ Taste, i.e. *sapor*, is itself knowledge (*sapere*), and thus wisdom (*sapientia*), an association that is also present in the present participle of sapere ‘to taste, to savor’ and ‘to be wise’ (which also gave us sage and savant). While sapient suggests subtly sensing flavour and aromas, having taste as sagacity, sane just merely stresses mental soundness, rationality, and levelheadedness and judicious emphasis a capacity for reaching wise decisions or just conclusions. Accordingly, homo-sapiens means both ‘men of wisdom’ and ‘men of taste.’ When we say homo sapiens, we should keep in mind that the origin of the notion of wisdom, or of discourse – man as speaking man – lies in the capacity to taste with the mouth, and with the sense of smell (1995).

**Hutcheson and Hume:** Oui, Si, Yes, value judgments are expressions of taste, rather than reasoned analysis alone. And the faculty of taste can be used to determine an object’s aesthetic value. Thus taste is a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises, in a manner, a new creation of beauty and deformity, virtue and vice. For use, taste is immediate and spontaneous, yet the application of ‘good sense’ and sound understanding of ‘reason’ improves it. Accordingly, for cultivating this valuable taste we need to expose ourselves to variety, learn about artistic media and practice imaginative associations and pleasure of ideas. Tasteful aesthetic appreciation involves disinterested delight that does not regard the aesthetic phenomena as a resource or instrumentalist tool for serving our interests and purposes.

**Kant:** Indeed, cultivating taste reasonably is vital and aesthetic judgments of taste must not only be disinterested, but also be universal, exhibit purposiveness without purpose, and be necessary. It is the objective, disinterested, pure aesthetic pleasure in the presentation (*Vorstellung*) that allows a universal agreement, validity and judgement.

**Deleuze, Lyotard, and Rancière:** Considering your third ‘Critique of Judgment’: What about rethinking the formless Sublime as incomprehensible event and a kind of aesthetic break and reconfiguration that challenges all tastes, imaginations and sense-making while providing openings for new political formations and initiatives?

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<sup>25</sup> Dare to be-come wise was and is about a cultivation of the Wo-Man of taste, who share those in a proto-political community. Displaying taste as an exercise of judgment even and especially in public affairs would enable citizens to regain, having pursued a sense of place in the world.

**Romantic Poets:** Yes, yes sublimity, the elevation of the sublime that is the very visionary gleam of being lightened!<sup>26</sup>

**Shapiro:** In particular, the experience of a ‘Political Sublime’, including contemporary threats of annihilation and violence, may lead to an ethico- political sensibility that recognizes the fragilities of our grasp and enjoins engagement with a pluralist world in which the in-common of different communities must be continually negotiated (2018: 4) and thus allowing to reveal, redistribute, and create conditions of possibility for alternative communities of sense.

**Kant:** Well these are all post-Kantian ideas that go beyond my understanding of the sublime as overwhelming overawing the imagination a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason recognized by the same. For me your political interpretations are not compatible with my commitment to a universalising community of taste: *sensus communis*, as we seek in reflective judgment we seek unknown universals. Only transcending from individual whims and idiosyncrasy, there can be a common sense and correspondingly, taste reflects the transcendental principle of general acceptability, and only transcending from individual whims and idiosyncrasy, there can be a ‘*sensus communis*.’ And we need to focus also on the beautiful, and the good, connected with the form of the object!

By the way, for cultivating taste in a social context, I have developed rules for a tasteful feast at our ‘Tischgesellschaft,’ which is a kind table community for gathering at a dinner party:

- a) To choose topics for conversation that interest everyone and always provide someone with the opportunity to add something appropriate,
- b) not to allow deadly silences to set in, but only momentary pauses in the conversation,
- c) not to change the topic unnecessarily or jump from one subject to another . . . topic that is entertaining must almost be exhausted before proceeding to another one . . .
- d) not to let dogmatism arise or persist, either in oneself or in one’s companions in the group
- (e) in a serious conflict that nevertheless cannot be avoided, carefully to maintain discipline over oneself and one’s emotions so that mutual respect and benevolence always shine forth (Kant, 1798/2007a, p. 381, 7: 281)

These rules are providing the guidelines for sociable exchange and, more generally, ethical and productive conversation! Such sociality cultivates not only taste, but in various ways, the very vitality of the body and the mind related to pragmatics (Ercolini, 2012). Thus the conversations should be of taste, and enjoyable, while leaving the guests feeling something had

<sup>26</sup> Different from pleasure in the beautiful, the shock of the sublime forces us out of stable states. The sublime is not something we bask in, but something we pass through or undergo. Furthermore, the sublime isn’t simple like the beautiful, with its straightforward connection to the pleasurable. The sublime combines passions such as terror and delight (Burke: what I call delightful horror) or pain and relief. As such, though it involves negative effects, these can serve positive outcomes coming as a result of the initial shock.

**Charles Taylor:** We need romantic expressionism and overcoming excarnation even more as the naturalism of atomising, disengaged and instrumental reason and a disenchanting immanent frame we are living in today.

been accomplished on the level of culture. At the same time, the conversations are regulated by certain rhythms, specific movements, and itineraries (Kant, 2007; Ercolini, 2012).

**Friedrich the Great:** We need to dine and drink together to bring Enlightenment alive, like in my philosophical “*Tafelrunde*” at my castle Sanssouci and ‘*Vereinigungen*’ in my kingdom.

**Ursula Pia Jauch:** ... I need to throw some light on shadows of that light. In your intimate male circle you staged yourself imitating as a philosopher in Machiavellian ways for using this for your authoritarian paternalistic rule and propaganda. Simultaneously, you did not believe that the majority of your people would be able to be ‘enlightenable’ at all.

**van Dulmen:** There would be no Enlightenment in Germany without the emergence and growth of the many different learned societies, clubs and associations, including masonic lodges, and secret societies, winning the support of princes and aristocrats, that created a self-confident bourgeois elite and early middle class culture (1992).

**Coffee House owner:** This sound rather like a private gathering. What we need are also public places, like coffeehouse where people can congregate, to read, write, to learn and to debate with each other, including urban artisans and businessmen to discuss latest reform ideas! (2004).

**Salonnière:** What we need is both public and private institution of intellectual sociability. We, as socially conscious and learned women, regularly organised and governed salons in which we were hosting and regulating discussions of literary works, artistic creations, and new political ideas. Although, our need to be recognised us into Enlightenment cultural practice, and our expressions of aesthetic *bon goût* and political ideas were more and more ousted and silenced by the male ‘philosophes’, for example the misogynistic Jean Jacques Rousseau. And often we were not afforded the same opportunity to publish, and our feminist claims and women civil rights ignored: so much about the supposed ideal of free thinking and openly questioning the world.

**Connoisseur:** What these salons mediated were also those gustatory moments that shaped individual and communal identities and their style et esprit, sensually and metaphorically! The enlightening aesthetic taste, the nuanced ethos of *gustus* is to be developed through discretionary cultivation of worlds of food and drinks as much of those of words. Just like the tongue and the palate are able to appreciate the quality of dishes tasted, we need to cultivate a faculty that entail judging the value of literary or artistic works and practices.

Used as a metaphor, that is an expression for a set of preferences and dispositions that admit shared social standards and public criticism taste functions for an aesthetic discernment and appreciation or dis-appreciation. The taste of the body as well as the one of the mind is perceived through an immediate sensation of pleasure or repulsion. Having cultivated and enjoying delicate, refined, exquisite tastes, the ‘*esprits bien faits*’ (refined/proper minds especially among the French as a refined form of civility expressed in superiority of their taste) revolt the bad taste as one of excesses or exaggerated artifice; breaking aesthetic rules and declining to vulgar. Instead of awe bad taste is just awful, like kitsch, quite unrefined taste of mawkish sentimentality and faked sensation.

**Gadamer:** Yes in kitsch as in all bad art e we see only what we already know, not wishing to see anything else. We enjoy the encounter insofar as it simply provides a feeble confirmation of the familiar, instead of changing us. For something can only be called art when it requires that we construe the work by learning to understand the language of form and content so that communication really occurs.” (1986, 52). What is needed is *Bildung* as connected to tact, judgement and taste for acquiring and intensifying sensitivity, subtlety and selectivity as well as a capacity for discrimination. The personal and civic arts of wisdom, when practiced well, can be beautiful, not only in terms of thinking beautifully, but also enacting a beautiful ethical life (1982, 1986).

**Perullo:** The Wisdom of Taste and the Taste of Wisdom are connected! Wisdom thus does not correspond to a strict rule, but rather to a suggestion: trying to understand as many different experiences as possible in order to joyfully participate in the variety of ecological gustatory occurrences (2016, p. 116). Practical wisdom and gustatory wisdom in particular allow moving skillfully in accordance with the rhythm of experience (2016, 118). Wise taste capacity implements perceptual sensitivity toward little variations and nuances: minimal differences in qualitative characteristics of the objects enjoyed, but above all, minimal differences in the contexts of experience and the connections in which the qualities of the objects emerge..... Wise taste capacity is not acquiescent to extant cultural codes, but expresses critical potential. It promotes the ability to make independent choices and resist imposed models..... Wise taste capacity allows for exploring the connection between consumption and production in the food chain. It therefore allows a critical look at production issues, the environment, nature, and the economy (2016, 124).

**von Hoffmann:** As a move from gluttony to enlightenment, we can observe a spiritualisation of culinary, medical, religious, and philosophical tastes that is the invention of taste as the seat of a system of representations defined as a new sense modality that was no longer perceived as being exclusively material.”(2017: 136).

**Connoisseur:** Complementing taste, all senses contribute to an aesthetic sensible judgement. As a ‘*judicium sensitivium*’ it processes via integrated operations case by case in a situation-specific way of assessing, appraising and evaluating thus appreciating particular phenomena. The wisdom of taste can also be understood as the constant exercise in gustatory empathy in situations of diversity and contention

**Robin Holt and Frank den Hond:** What configures enlightenment is the experience of knowledge being created and savoured, especially when daring to push at the edges of convention, to enquire along the limits of common sense. To taste and to dare are far from metaphysical experiences, they are rooted in one’s empirical awareness; enlightened knowledge remains with life and the things of life (2013: 1587).

**Serres:** Importantly, it is through taste we experience ourselves sensually thus ‘sense-makingly’ as matter, bodies among other bodies, unavoidably ‘complicit with anonymous materials’ in a ‘continuity of material transformations of decomposition and regeneration’, whose immanence, as a certain Adam and Eve experienced, radically denies any transcendent God or Law, facilitating the expulsion from an Edenic world with relatively known consequences. Rather than God throwing out and banishing hu(wo)man from the Garden Paradise, it was the(ir) very

act of tasting the forbidden fruit (of knowing) that immediately engendered the collapse of the Garden itself.

This act was and has ever since projected human-kind into the materiality of a world devoid of the hopes and fears of a transcendent beyond. This is our sapid knowledge: “We were too quick to forget that *homo sapiens* refers to those, who react to sapidity, appreciate it and seek it out, those for whom the sense of taste matters – savouring animals – before referring to judgement, intelligence or wisdom, before referring to talking man ... Sensation, it used to be said, inaugurates intelligence. Here, more locally, taste institutes sapience (2008: 154).

In doing so we make of our own bodies, our sensibilities, the principle which marks the passage from local to global. It is sensibility which renders our bodies as able to mix, to create knots of relations, and thus to ‘multiply between-spaces’ (2008: 302) in topological transformations. Because we can taste, we can discern and build a practical body of knowledge, a wisdom or ‘sapience’ that materially links vines and grapes with the soil and climate of particular regions. The body ‘smells a rose and a thousand surrounding odours at the same time as it touches wool, sees a complex landscape and quivers beneath waves of sound’ (2008: 306). The senses are then best characterised as ‘exchangers’. They agitate mixtures, make new knots and proliferate space through prolonging and extending relations. A taste becomes a spectacle; a touch gives rise to a song. Sensation becomes the very thread that weaves things together.

**Merleau-Ponty:** Thus, it is sensation that inaugurates intelligence, and it is taste that constitutes a form of sapience as wisdom! Let us process *Körper* (physical body we have as corps) and *Leib* (we are ‘becomingly’), unearthing the flesh-and-blood texture of lived experience of becoming wise!

**Munro:** Exercises, as practiced in slow food movement, can help caring for the self (2014).

**Panagia:** and educating the senses, because there is a political life of sensation (2009).

**Küpers:** ... as does knowing about the “Sense-Makings of the Senses,” applied to organising and organisation (2013a).

**Munro:** Yes indeed and also cultivating to enjoy the pleasures of ‘conviviality’ by transforming experiences of taste and intensifying the appreciation of the pleasure of eating together mindfully. This entails exercises to test and enhance one’s sensory experiences including: (i) the testing of five taste sensations (sweet, salty, sour, bitter and 旨味 umami in fermented and aged foods, described as pungent “meatiness”, “relish” or “savoriness”; (ii) the testing of one’s experience of different aromas in terms of their intensity and duration; (iii) the testing of one’s experience of trigeminal sensations and texture; (iv) the testing of one’s perception of the sound of foodstuffs (e.g. crunchy); and (v) the testing of one’s visual sensations (e.g. smooth and rough).

All of these practise and politics of taste can contribute to micro-emancipations, resistance and creating agents capable of challenging the status quo by running counter to the prevalent hegemonic forms of neoliberal subjectivity (2014).

**Green:** and not only eating, but also speaking with your own cultivated mouth with maturity. Already the German usages of ‘*Mündigkeit*’ im-maturity refers to the bodily organ of the ‘Mund’ (mouth) - indicating that the underlying meaning that those, who are ‘*Unmündige*’ (the immature ones) are being unable to speak on their own behalf (1996: 292).

**Röttgers:** Therefore, we need a ‘critique of the culinary reason’ (2015). To taste and to dare are far from metaphysical experiences, but they are rooted in one’s empirical awareness; as enlightened knowledge and orientation remains with life and the things of life. Daring to know’ and becoming oriented by wisdom is the experience of respecting and upending the world into which we are thrown and situated, also culinary. This could be done through enquiry that occupies the space between ordinary, everyday understandings and distant, generalized assertions.

**Küpers:** Yes, wisdom integrates the particular and the general (2013) and leave the polarising either/or orientation behind, overcoming a parochial identity towards an open integral pluralism. Consequently, it would be wise to leave the metaphorical dichotomy between light and darkness and thus Enlightenment (*Aufklärung/Erleuchtung*) and Endarkenment (*Gegen-Aufklärung/Verfinsterung*) behind, and not entering into the political game of playing one out one against the other. The enlightenment, *lumieres*’ self-conception casted in a denouncing way the supposed *anti-philosophes* regularly in philosophe discourse as obscurantists and deceptive shadow-creatures, while seeing themselves as representing the true and eternal light.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned before, in the twilight of our complexified times and as many have shown, the binary categories and framework of interpretations and a Manichean struggle between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment are insufficient and its simplistic dichotomistic modes, appear as flat and overly schematic.

**Schmidt:** Knowing this is itself enlightening, a new level of an Enlightenment (2018b)!

**Küpers:** Connected to the patterns of the old struggles between the forces of good and evil, the long-lasting popularity of these binarising can be found on their usefulness for polemical purposes. To this their role as pivots of historical narrative is ultimately subservient and might continue to function in the same way today as they did when emerging in former centuries.

Incarnating the wisdom of *sapere aude* today, daring to become wise needs to be an embodied integral practice. As such it would process positions and oppositions, structuring and de- and reconstructing, moving between aspirations for modernist deliberations and consensus (e.g. Kant/Habermas) and post-modernist dissensus and conflict (e.g. Nietzsche/Foucault) also in

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<sup>27</sup> **Jung:** To emphasise the contrast between the eternal light and the worldly light sources championed by the philosophes, the anti-philosophes exploited the latter’s blinding and potentially destructive metaphorical implications to their rhetorical advantage (2016: 219), such as when the Sabatier de Castres warned that the supposed ‘*lumieres*’ had in fact proven themselves to be burning torches, ready-made to carry fire everywhere (“des torches ardentes, pretes a porter par-tout l’incendie“) (Sabatier de Castres 1779: cf. Deprun 1973: 717).

relation to a revived practical wisdom for a civil society and applied ethics that is enabling a sustainable development.

**Flyvbjerg:** Practically, this requires wisdom-related, de-biasing planning and *decision making* in *megaprojects*, and *city management* [Ed. Note – italicized text here are links] as well as conceptually a phronetic social science (2015a, 2015b).

**Xiang:** What is needed is also an ‘eco-phrónêsis’ as ecological practical wisdom for and from ecological practice - what I call ‘eco-practicology’, including planning, design, construction and management (2019, 2019a). This wise practice is integrating (moral) knowledge and (virtuous) action and by employing the master skill of moral improvisation the *ecophronimoi* are capable of being responsible in a double sense. That is in any particular instance of ecological practice they are showing “honoring commitments and upholding principles on the one hand and attending specific circumstantial particulars, on the other” (2016: 58), thus enacting ethical beliefs and mindful actions.

**Integral Voice:** Yes, we need an *Integral Enlightenment* that embraces premodern, modern and postmodern orientation towards a ‘postpostmodern’ integrative understanding and practice. It embraces the wisdom of the great meditative traditions, but also reaches forward to unleash the profound spiritual potential inherent in our recently evolved capacities for self-awareness, introspection, self-authorship and relational intimacy.<sup>28</sup>

**Meta-Modern Voice:** (alias Freinacht, 2018, 2019): Yes and even more! Enlightenment for us is the realisation of a ‘postpostmodern’ integrally informed form of metamodern politics. This is an interactive view of politics that includes the interrelated elements of the Politics of Democratization, Theory, Empiricism, Emancipation, Existence and *Gemeinschaft*<sup>29</sup>, enacted by a metamodern aristocracy as avant-garde, reintroduces non-arbitrary and well-founded hierarchies of complexity! A metamodern enlightenment is redefining what appropriate progress and development entails, based on the postmodern critique. But it is doing so without throwing out the hope that we can develop things for the better. Going beyond an anti-thesis stance and deconstructions, the task of reconstructing our symbolic universe and reconnecting it to other aspects of reality. Yes, the great objective of our Metamodernism, is to erect a new grand narrative by combining all known knowledge and wisdom, well aware that it is a never ending endeavour and that the only achievable synthesis (of apparent opposites) is a proto-synthesis of a ‘both-and’ thinking, forever subjected to critique and never without flaws.

<sup>28</sup> <https://integrallife.com/integral-enlightenment/>

<sup>29</sup> Democratization Politics, aims to create ongoing processes for developing and updating the system of governance and the quality of institutions. *Gemeinschafts*-Politics (politics of relationships and community) aims to improve the quality of human relationships across all aspects of society. Existential Politics, aims to support all people on their life’s journey and spur inner growth mental health and strong moral integrity Emancipation Politics, aims to create ongoing processes protecting citizen from all sorts of oppression, not least from the other new forms of politics. Empirical Politics, aims to evaluate all policies and institutional practices and make sure they are based on the best available evidence. Politics of Theory (or narrative) aims to create ongoing processes for developing and updating the narratives society relies upon, who it “brainwashes itself” (2019, NI, 174-175).

Metamodernism offers to keep the postmodern irony, keep the distance, but creating a new sincerity and self-consciously naive belief on top of it.

**Critical Voice:** But what gives you critical metamodernist theorists ('the enlighteners') the epistemic authority to tell ordinary people ('the to-be-enlightened') that they are alienated and how they are to be emancipated etc.? Moreover, what if the latter not only ignore the concerns expressed by the former but also enjoy the seemingly disempowering elements commonly associated with alienation and not being emancipated, like in capitalist consumerism and mass entertainment, fundamentalism and tribalism, esotericism and mysticism, hedonism and escapism, populism and authoritarianism. Who are we, as critical theorists, to affirm that those relishing these (or other) types of 'alienation' are victims of social domination?

And your interpretation of wisdom is highly problematic.<sup>30</sup>

**Facilitator:** What a neo-progressive, re-evolutionary agenda for a game-change, is this metamodernist one, but also those concerns raised are critical ones to be considered and further discussed indeed. What is the future of enlightenment and in particular of homo-sapiens also in relation to other, more-than-human beings with regard to the mentioned sustainable and meta-modern developments?

**Future Researcher:** With regard to the future of enlightenment it remains ambiguous, defying prediction. The terra incognita of the future is uncharted land, it is beyond what any scientific projection or social prophesy can tell. All what we know is that any pursuit of pure

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<sup>30</sup> Let me respond to your section stating that "Wisdom Is Overrated" <https://metamoderna.org/wisdom-is-overrated/> Your discussion criticises rightly certain interpretations of "hyped wisdom," I have trouble with your "Wisdom Troubles" as a "relatively overrated notion of wisdom and spiritual enlightenment". Wisdom does necessary entail believing in "a variable that is always good, and the more of it, the better" (connotation of goodness and normative, perfectionising progress orientations are historical relative, constructs, to be deconstructed and misunderstanding wisdom in the sense of a resentful and self-righteous moralism to be attacked by all means! For me wisdom is not "entirely beneficial and unproblematic" While sharing your scepticism there are attempt to "operationalize" the concept; to make it workable and it is possible to show what and how wisdom is a practice (not only for solving wicked problems). That wisdom is appropriated by preacher of ascending "higher consciousness" does not exclude its relevance of being an embodied down-to earth practice! Wisdom is not (only) about "inner dimensions of people and society and the possibility of an active and deliberate development of these". There are integral and interrelational understandings of practical wisdom that criticises and leaves those reductive ideas behind. Yes we need to consider different developmental capabilities and context, influencing wisdom as a processual culture-dependent practice evolve! There is empirical research on showing in which context and "mechanisms" wisdom has what kind of complex effects that are not always "good", sometimes even tragic! Yes, you are right, there is a danger that the concept of wisdom becomes a projection folio for wishful images and desires, and like you I am in favour of specific, operationable "stricter" definition, related to an uplifting "great depth" and we could discuss the status of complexity of the same. Although the quest and question and methodological challenges of measurability required an elaborated investigation and practice in empirical research. Wisdom is (not only a combination but) a proto-integral development practice of bodily, mental social structural systemic health, with high processual complexity and uplifting great depth. Considering a more comprehensive understanding and the actualisable potential of a practice of wisdom for meta-modernism and its politics: that would be wise.



states of being turns totalitarian and incompatible with diversity and plural dispositions of human nature. These might be idealised pasts or utopian futures, supposed true religions, superior races or territorial chauvinism, unsustainable productions, unbridled consumerism. We need to be aware of dangerous forces stirring up at present, including social polarization, economic failures, local, regional and geopolitical conflicts, environmental degradation, barbarised social chaos and disintegration on all levels and all over.

**Küpers:** As a counterforce a new sustainability-oriented ‘*enlightenmentality*’ can help overcoming conservatism and resistance of special interests, via decentralising the overconcentration of power, towards ‘*glocal*’ governance, political subsidiarity and direct democracies. Such planetary orientation may contribute healing from the myopia of narrow short-termist towards more integral and long-term outlooks and solidarity, community based living help getting out inertia of complacency, asking critically and responding practically to the question how shall we live how to co-create congenial meaningful and fulfilling lives, all leading towards genuine transformations as fulcrums in time, situated in places, but now planetary!

**Paul Raskin:** I would call this the great transition as a “*Journey to Earthland*” (2016)?

**Yuval Noah Harari:** Concerning the status of homo, do we now again aim to upgrade humans into gods, and turn homo-sapiens into homo-deus?<sup>31</sup>

**Facilitator:** There are many open questions: Do we need to relegate humanity back to one of many natural species, thereby rejecting any claims founded on anthropocentric dominance, or extend subjectivities beyond the human species (Wolfe, 2009)? Do we need re-centering on the human(ism) or an anthropo-decentering (Küpers 2020) and moving beyond the human towards anti-, post-, trans-, or meta-humanism (Ferrando, 2013; Miah, 2008)? What would it then mean to

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<sup>31</sup> **Yuval Noah Harari:** Do we now (again) aim to upgrade humans into gods, and turn Homo sapiens into Homo deus? Moving from humans who worship gods into humans who become gods... Mythologically and historically, playing god – apotheosis – is an old recurring theme. You might ask: How is it envisioned today for which kind of future? Well, by bioengineering and cyborg-technology and production of non-organic entities?! What we can observe is that technology overtakes religion; the fear of nature transmutes into an unprecedented capacity to control nature. Are we humans doomed by superhuman biological or computational machines? Our capacity to manipulate two fundamental forms of information – the biological and the computational, the byte and the gene – will thus result in the birth of superior beings who will ultimately overrun our world. In my reconstruction of “Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind” I discussed the genetic, anthropological, cultural, social and epistemological (macro-)history of humans over the last 100,000-odd years processed by three broad “revolutions.” The first, the “cognitive revolution,” resulted in humans acquiring the capacity to think, learn and communicate information with a facility unprecedented in the animal kingdom. The second – the “agricultural revolution” – allowed humans to domesticate crops and animals, enabling us to form stable societies and intensifying the flow of information within them. The “scientific revolution” came last. Humans acquired the capacity to interrogate and manipulate the physical, chemical and biological worlds, resulting in even more potent technological advances that surround us today. Why should we assume that sapiens are the end of the evolutionary line? What comes next? Are we given ourselves over completely to machines, to re-engineering bodies and brains? This dystopian vision rests on many questionable assumptions. For example, that we don’t have free will, and never did, or that humans will somehow shed their collaborative, social instincts which, are what made us so successful in the first place.

examine discourses and practices to uncover inherent humanistic, anthropocentric, normative notions of humanness and the concept of the human, versus exploring possibilities of posthuman-centred ways of living and enacted convivialities?

We're going to need not only new conceptual understandings, but new and different imaginations, images, imaginaries, myths and stories. We are in urgent need for new *INTER*-relationships to our self, to other selves, to plants and animals, relating to nature as part of us! Likewise what is called for a ways of relating to 'proto-wise' traditions of human culture about what makes live good, just and truthful those that have been suppressed, marginalised or forgotten by our capitalising and commodifying systems of appropriation? What does it mean and imply to live a meaningful live, while facing death? Who are we all as a communal and collective existence? Not only asking: What does it mean to be human? But: What is our vision of conviviality of 'hu-(wo)-man' and 'more-than-human'? What role might the digitalisation and digitalised (trans-)formation play in all this?

We cannot respond to these questions and underlying quests here anymore. But in any case, for all these inquiries, we need more of these forms of encounters and dialogues, not only between philosophers, scholars and scientist, but between people in public spheres...

To regain wise forms of daring and wayfaring may then become, as described in mystic and Asian wisdom traditions, an awakening that allows to sense and see 'truthfully' through. This implies seeing through misleading orientations of illusion and ignorance, and through the dark veils of habitual comprehension towards an immanent bodied-spiritual self-transcendence... Perhaps this also helps practically to cultivate a '*well-be(com)ing*' in and through organisations (Küpers, 2005) of a sustainable and wiser praxis, practices and actions as well as a responsible engaged 'letting go' (*Gelassenheit*<sup>32</sup>) as a lived, living and enlivening enacting of the 'Art of Wisdom' (Küpers, 2013).

As such art an embodied wisdom is personal and professional artistry that integrates a refined sensibility, creative imagination, implicit knowing and explicit knowledge, poignant acuity, experiential and reflective learning and the ability to make 'optimal' micro-, macro- and meta-judgements about the feel and significance of the particular and given circumstances effectuating action characterized by virtuosity and excellence. This all serves a careful concern for the

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<sup>32</sup> Such *Gelassenheit* is not a consoling form of quietist tranquility, a kind of Schopenhauerian release from the turmoil of existence and the cravings of the will, not as one that is one of promotion of contemplation as a way of life amounting to a decadent form of nihilism, or a flight from the realities of existence! This '*Gelassenheit*' translated as letting-go, serenity, composure, detachment refers to a non-objectifying ethos of active and ongoing passivity, to an accepting by letting-go, implying an abandonment of habitual, representational and appropriating orientations. In this letting-be of things, the one who acts wisely does not attempt to manipulate, master or compel things, but instead let things be in their vital nature. More importantly, '*Gelassenheit*' is not about the indifference or lack of interest in things, but rather an 'engaged letting.' Entering a modus of letting-be is realized through a receptive waiting and listening, thus more an active non-doing, rather than a willing and controlling business of mastering. It moves specifically from representational and calculative modes, via presencing, meditative thinking towards more poetic relations. Following an ethos of '*Gelassenheit*' the wise cultivates remaining present, responsive and ethically responsible as well as connected to the 'materio-socio-cultural' practices and worlds they participate in and co-constitute while detouring (Küpers 2015).

common good and transforming today's personal, social, cultural, political and economic realities into a more equitable, peaceful and enjoyable existence and evolution, a lived and living, convivial 'Sapientism'!

May the sagacious 'owl of Minerva'<sup>33</sup> take her flight, not as a fight at the dusk of the Western philosophical tradition, as Hegel would have it, but – via a post-Eurocentric<sup>34</sup>, global and local thus 'glocal' and inclusive integration as a common planetary hi-story – towards into the emerging faint silver lining light of a dawn in the clear-obscure 'a-wake' of daring to 'be(come)ing' wiser...

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<sup>33</sup> The metaphor of the flight of the owl of Minerva refers to a quote in the concluding paragraphs of the Preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, by Hegel where he examines the role of philosophy in prescribing principles on how the world ought to be. 'When philosophy paints its grey in grey', Hegel writes, citing a part of Goethe's *Faust*, "A shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only when the shadows of night are gathering" (Hegel, 1991: 23). "if we are to avoid that 'cold despair' which confesses that 'things are bad or at best indifferent, but that nothing better can be expected here', we need to do more than simply watch the owl of Minerva spread its wings at dusk. We might also need to *tell her where to go* by identifying appropriate principles orienting moral and political reform" (Ypi, 2013: 131).

<sup>34</sup> Contemporary Enlightenment calls for global integration as we need more inclusive post-national, global and less Eurocentric approach. But as much as there might be moves towards a Global Enlightenment in all its ambivalent legacy there will be *Global Counter-Enlightenments* existing and emerging in different times and places (Lok & van Eijnatten, 2019: 415). Various global crossings, encounters, exchanges, transfers, appropriations and diffusions are at the root of the European Enlightenment, which can itself be defined as an accelerated and enhanced "movement of ideas across borders and overtime" (Nussbaum, 2003: 2), rather than as a fixed set of genuinely European ideas. ....European travellers, emperors and scientists didn't come to the extra-European world with ready-made models of an Enlightened society, but rather, the global experience is at the root of concepts that are generally seen as genuinely European and/or Enlightened (D'Aprile, 2019, p. 394).

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