HIAS

#02
Transforming
Environments

It is evident that rampant technological change is rapidly altering our sense of what a community is and how a community functions.
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The QR codes in the magazine link to supplementary material online, such as photos, audio files and videos or the long versions of shortened texts in this printed edition. You will also find further «kitchen talks» and «not without», as well as numerous additional articles.

Crises do not stop at an IAS — especially when fellows, due to their subject, are intensively involved with certain countries or topics. This applied in particular to October 7 and its consequences, but also to Germany, its role in the EU and its relations with its eastern neighbors. The fact that public intellectuals were fellows at HIAS for the first time this year contributed significantly to these discussions, which were held both inside and outside HIAS.

As a result, these issues were repeatedly taken up and addressed in various events, including a panel discussion at the Hamburg State Representation in Berlin immediately after the European elections on the topic of «How European do we want/should we become? National Interests versus Global Challenges.» Especially in light of the current geopolitical crises, it is extremely important to maintain channels of communication worldwide. HIAS provides a safe space where opposing views can also be discussed off the record. Divisions that seem to be caused by cultural backgrounds or political camps can often be bridged. Special moments this year in this context were certainly the afternoon, shortly after October 7, when a political scientist from Washington, who researches the relationship between religion and state, and an American artist with Lebanese roots, invited all

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HIAS Fellows to a conversation to discuss the events together and try to put them into context. Or the evening on which an Israeli sociologist discussed Hannah Arendt's philosophy and Israeli positions at a Hamburg university, while a Jewish-American expert on the Middle East, invited by the demonstrators, gave a lecture on the student protests at US universities in a pro-Palestinian camp a few hundred meters away. But the scope of *Transforming Environments* was broadened to include the role of academia itself. At the request of several fellows, there was a discussion on the role of the humanities in higher education systems worldwide, as well as various discussion forums that dealt intensively with the topic of science communication. IASs in particular offer an ideal framework for creating surprising connections between the most diverse disciplines. This is what happened with this cohort of fellows, as an example, between Computational Systems Biology and various humanities subjects, e.g. ancient Greek Philology. Wherever possible, it is important to allow discussion and exchange and to create and use every possible framework for this. HIAS is such a place and wants to remain so. Democracy thrives on discourse, respectful cooperation and openness to other positions.

Dorothea Rüland, Secretary-General

Read this editorial in full length online.

Michael Schnegg Reflection on HIAS Tandem Partnership

04

In public debates, the lack of financial resources is often identified as the main problem of German universities. In my experience as a scholar in the humanities, money is certainly necessary to be scientifically productive, but it is not sufficient. Often, my main problem lies elsewhere: in the lack of time and opportunities to work with colleagues on research and writing projects. In 2023, HIAS gave me and my tandem partner, Thiemo Breyer (Professor of Phenomenology and Anthropology, University of Cologne), a unique opportunity to do this. I will briefly reflect on how this came about and what this gift meant to us. I work as an anthropologist at University of Hamburg and recently developed a strong interest in phenomenology, a branch of philosophy. In my view, phenomenology provides very sophisticated concepts that describe modes of experiencing (Schnegg 2023). The notion of «empathy» through which people connect with others, and the notion of «atmospheres» that permeate situations more holistically and that describe a situation's overall feel or tonality are examples of productive tools from phenomenology that I use to theorize ethnographic observations.

Engaging with philosophical texts, I experienced some insecurity as to whether I was getting things right. It did not help that in anthropology, these philosophical texts are interpreted in diverse and partly contradictory ways. To gain more security, I consulted Thiemo Breyer, a well-known expert in the field. I reached out to someone within the distance of a train ride because in my experience, novel interdisciplinary communications like this require a mutual understanding that takes time to build. Such an understanding is reached more easily if we sit in the same room and we have the opportunity to exchange «off the record» thoughts, thoughts that often do not appear on a preset agenda. The collaboration with Thiemo became so productive that we decided to apply for a HIAS Fellowship that would allow him to stay in Hamburg for some time. With this time, we wanted to finish the projects on empathy we had started. Furthermore, we wanted to begin working on new ideas we had been talking about online. Thankfully, the fellowship was approved. What then made the collaboration especially productive was the fact that I was eligible for a sabbatical during his stay. This allowed both of us to focus on the joint projects.

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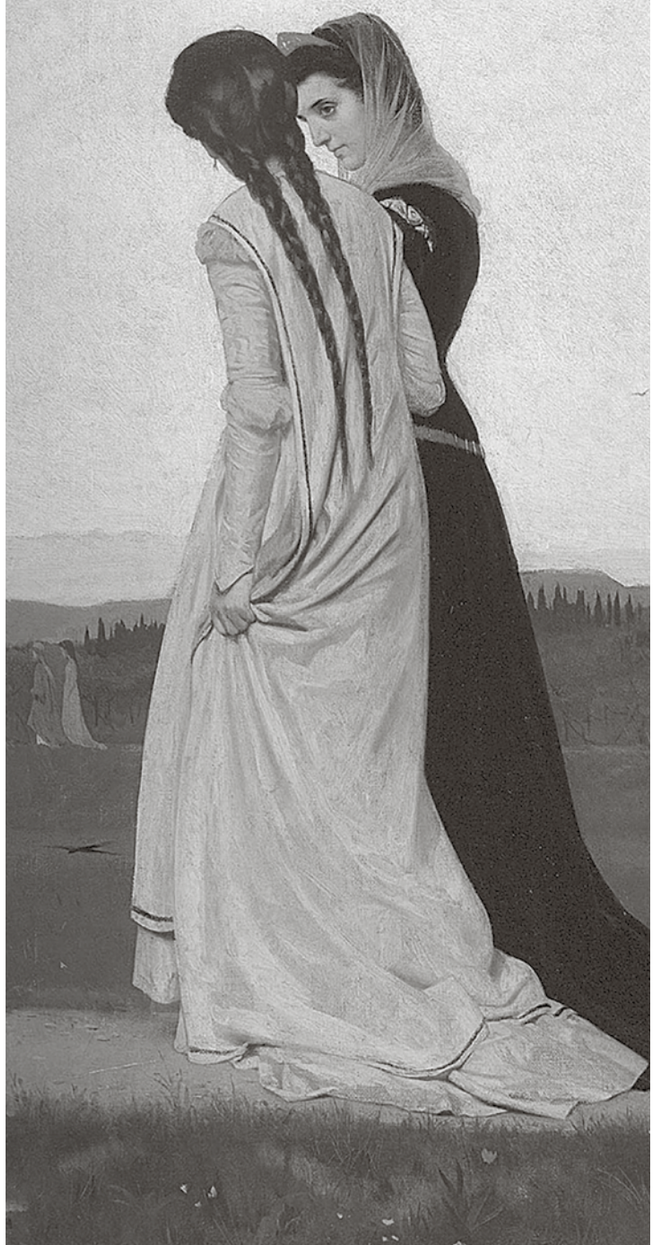
Michael Schnegg is Professor of Ethnology and Head of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Hamburg. His work engages anthropology with a range of disciplines to better understand how people collectively enact and make sense of the world. In the field of phenomenological anthropology, he established the international conference series «Hamburg Symposium on Philosophy and Anthropology» with Thiemo Breyer at HIAS and a joint publication that broadens Stein's notion of empathy for the study of multi-species worlds.



The first project we realized was on empathy. I had observed that the pastoralists I work with in Namibia empathize with human and non-human beings and that this strongly shapes their perception of reality. I was curious to learn whether the phenomenological concept of empathy would facilitate theorizing this. Together we found that Edith Stein's notion of empathy is a very productive tool for distinguishing how people empathize differently with different beings, including livestock, elephants, and tricksters. In this empathic process, assumptions about the other's bodies and their sensual capacities play a central role. To describe this process, we coined the term ‹pre-reflective other-awareness,› which aptly describes the empathic relations in Namibia and adds to the phenomenological debates (Schnegg and Breyer 2022). Taken together, our results show that by empathizing in a particular way, a multispecies world emerges that is different from any world in which those perspectives do not exist.

Inspired by this success, we planned and outlined an introduction to phenomenological anthropology. During the months Thiemo stayed in Hamburg, we wrote (and threw out) numerous tables of contents and texts. I am rather sure that we would have lost confidence if we hadn't had the chance to debate what the other had thought and written at length and in depth, sitting at a table in the office or in a café. In my experience, such a project requires people to be in one place for some time. Even if the project cannot be finished on the spot, these joint experiences give us the energy to persist. We are still working on the manuscript, and while progress slowed as we fully re-immersed ourselves in our regular routines, we are confident we will finish it.

In 2023, Thiemo and I initiated the first international conference to bring together philosophers and anthropologists to debate how one experiences social norms. Inspired by its success, the HIAS agreed to continue these workshops under the title, «Hamburg Symposium on Philosophy and Anthropology.» In 2024, I organize the second workshop with Robert Desjarlais (Sarah Lawrence College) on the question of what experience is, and Thiemo will play a significant role in it. There are already plans for a 2025 symposium that institutionalizes the tremendously valuable collaboration Thiemo and I have. It will make Hamburg a place for the debates not only between Thiemo and myself, but between the two disciplines generally.

Natan Sznaider

The Venture of the Public Realm:

Hannah Arendt meets Günter Gaus

07 It is the 16th of September 1964 in the studio of the new ZDF, the Second German Broadcasting Company. The stage was set for a man and a woman to record an interview, which was to be broadcast only once.

If you watch the interview today, you will see that the man looks quite tense. It's not easy for him. His interviewee was already a famous thinker, an older woman, a Jewish woman who had found a new home in New York. He, 23 years her junior, is one of Germany's most respected journalists, at the beginning of a great journalistic and political career. The curtain rises and the show begins.

In the prologue the Jewish woman claims that she is not a philosopher. Our journalist plays the confused one, insisting that she is. Viewers might think that this is not a good way to start a conversation. The woman explains herself and tries to enlighten our journalist about what she thinks it means to be a thinking person in the world. She emphasizes that politics is about acting in the world, while philosophy is about thinking about the world. This may be difficult for him to understand, but the tension between thinking and acting determines the woman's existence. This is the basic tenor of her life. That is what this conversation is about.

A few weeks later, on October 26, 1964, at 9:30 p.m., the newly established ZDF broadcast the interview. There was no mention of it in the newspapers.

«Zur Person» is the name of the later legendary program, the first version of which was broadcast between April '63 and April '66. Hannah Arendt was the 17th guest, the first woman after 16 men, in a series of interviews conducted by Günter Gaus, who later went into politics. Both are smoking during the show, so we know it is an older program. The two talk about philosophy, writing, the role of women, Arendt's Jewish childhood, emigration, the Holocaust, and her infamous Eichmann book, which had just been translated into German. This German translation was actually the reason why she was in Germany and why Gaus interviewed her.

Arendt rarely talked about herself. Here she makes an exception. She is visibly nervous, but her nervousness only makes her more focused in her language and in her answers. She speaks very clearly, her German sharper than ever. Like everyone else, Hannah Arendt carries her personal, family and collective history with her. Every single sentence bears witness to this. Born Jewish in 1906, she was only 27 when the Nazis seized power. She fled from the Nazis to France and from there, via Lisbon, to the United States in 1941. She lived through the war and the so-called post-war period in New York. But there is no post-war period for Jews. The time after the Shoah is never ‹after›, it is always in the here and now.

Arendt knows that she is already famous at the time of the interview. Her books have been published, the book on totalitarianism, the book on Rahel Varnhagen, the book on the Eichmann trial. In 1959 she was awarded the Lessing Prize of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. She wanted to be seen and heard. Jews had not been heard in Germany for a long time. At first, she was flattered by the attention. As a Jew, it was not a matter of course to be invited. Arendt and Gauss are gifted actors, they both play their roles. It is not a monologue, but a dialogue between generations. Gaus, born in 1929, embodies the new Germany after the Nazi era. He was a left-liberal journalist, part of the new West German elite. He believed that, as a German, he could speak freely with a Jewish woman.

But this is about more than the German-Jewish conversation. Arendt is the first woman to take part in this ZDF discussion series. We are witness to an unusual conversation between a man and a woman. Arendt speaks openly about the role of women, which she hadn't done very often, perhaps it was the first time she had done it in public. She was not exactly known as a feminist. She sneers at the male desire for importance. But behind the dialogue between generations and genders, there is another layer that is more difficult to recognize; it is a dialogue between a German man and a Jewish woman. The language may be deceptive; both speak brilliant German. Arendt was educated in Germany, and it shows. At first glance she could be mistaken for a German woman.

As simply as she says these words, she was aware that it had always been confusing that Jews spoke and wrote German and yet were not Germans. After 1945 this is even more ruthless than before, because it creates the illusion of a conversation and at the same time controls its boundaries. The language does not betray it, but this is not a dialogue between two Germans, but a dialogue between a German and a Jewish woman, and more than that, an American Jewish woman, which Arendt already was at the time of the interview. Arendt had been living in New York for more than 20 years and Gaus is well aware of this. After talking briefly with her about politics and philosophy and what it means to write, he asks her why she had to leave Germany in 1933 after her brief arrest for being Jewish. This is the crucial point in the conversation. Exile became a state of mind for her. The anti-Jewish world became the focus of her thoughts and actions. She was granted American citizenship in 1951, which not only changed her legal status but also gave her existential security as an American.

The interview grows in intensity. As a thoroughly Jewish thinker, she emphasizes, after a short detour into her childhood, the catastrophe of the Shoah, the rupture of civilization for Jews and the world. She has always been concerned with Jewish visibility, and the politicization of this visibility is also the state of Israel. As she clearly states:

«If you are attacked as a Jew, you have to defend yourself as a Jew. Not as a German or as a citizen of the world or of human rights or anything else.»

And then, of course, Adolf Eichmann, about whom she wrote in her trial report. When interviewed by Gaus, she repeats her basic thesis:

«But I was really of the opinion that Eichmann was a buffoon.»

What she insinuates is that his sentences sound as if they have been memorized. He answers questions with memorized phrases, and it's as if these clichés allow him to concentrate and trust himself. She saw him almost as an empty shell, without an inner life, without a conscience, filled with platitudes that he calls up at the right moment. Just a buffoon

«It wasn’t the German language that went mad. And secondly, there is no substitute for the mother tongue.»

Watch the original recording of the interview online.

spouting banalities. And so Arendt unfolds the concept of the banality of evil with an almost poetic tone. And as a Jewish woman who was born in Germany, studied there, and lived there until her mid-twenties, she constantly asked herself how she, as a Jewish woman, could speak to Germans and in Germany in German. This is the only way to understand and comprehend her conversation with Gaus. How can the inner Jewish language be linguistically translated to the outside world? What language is appropriate to describe, even explain, what happened from a Jewish perspective in German to a German audience when one is still speechless? So how to have an honest conversation? We don't really know, but Arendt does appear on the ZDF stage. She dares to go public with this conversation, just as all Jews in Germany must dare to go public. She concludes the interview by saying the following emphatic words:

«The risk of publicity seems clear to me. You expose yourself to the public, as a person. Although I believe that one should not appear and act in public and reflect on oneself, I know that in every action the person is expressed in a way that no other activity can. Speaking is also a form of action. So that is one thing. The second venture is: we start something; we weave our thread into a web of relationships. We never know what will become of it. We are all dependent on saying: Lord, forgive them for what they do, for they know not what they do. This applies to all actions. Simply because you cannot know. That is a risk. And I would say that this risk is only possible by trusting people. That is, a — difficult to grasp exactly, but

fundamental — trust in the humanity of all people. Of all human beings. There is no other way. The venture into the public realm seems clear to me. One exposes oneself in the light of publicity as a person. If I am of the opinion that one must not appear and act self-consciously in public, then I also know that in every action the person is expressed in a way that is unlike anything else the person does. Whereby speaking is also a form of action. This is one venture. The second is: we start something, we weave our thread into a network of relationships. We never know what will come out of it. It is imperative to say, ‹Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.› This is the case for all action. Simply, quite concretely, because it is not possible to know it. It is a venture. And I would say that this venture is only possible through trust in other people — through a difficult to grasp but fundamental trust in the humanity of all people. Without this it is impossible.»

After this sentence, Hannah Arendt looks into the camera, somewhat distraught. Since 2013, more than a million people have watched the interview on YouTube, a platform that neither Arendt nor the journalist Günter Gaus knew about in their lifetimes. A public undertaking indeed.

Natan Sznaider is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at The Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo. Sznaider has also taught and conducted research at Columbia University, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. The central themes and questions of his research are cosmopolitanism, memory, anti-Semitism, sociology of knowledge, Hannah Arendt, political theory, and the Shoah.

Reinaldo Funes Monzote
Urban Environmental History and Climate Change in the Caribbean

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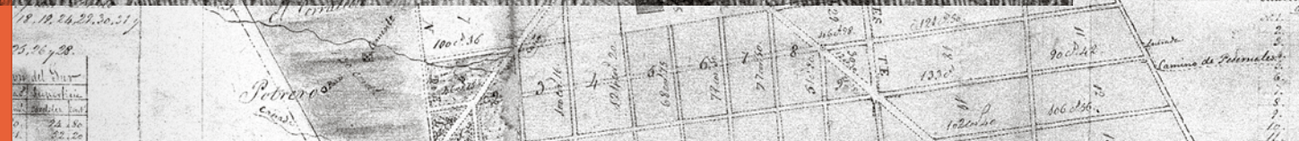
Environmental history is a field that transcends disciplinary boundaries, connecting researchers from the humanities and social sciences, as well as the natural or basic sciences. It is a rich and diverse field of historical studies with more than half a century of formal existence.



Fifty years ago, the American Society for Environmental History was founded as the first association to promote this interdisciplinary approach in the United States. After some efforts since the late 1980s, the European Society (ESEH) was established in 1999, and others like the Latin American and Caribbean (SOLCHA) were organized in the following years. Finally, in 2009, the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICEHO) joined the stage, further highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of this field.

Since the 1990s, environmental issues have gained increasing prominence in Latin America and the Caribbean's social movements and governmental agendas. With their multidisciplinary approach, the scholars have played a crucial role in this process. Environmental historians have contributed significantly to the debates around the so-called Anthropocene or Capitalocene, inspiring political ecology and ecological economy discussions. The evolution of the environmental question will remain central, whether in a present world order or a new one.

The Caribbean region, both the islands and the surrounding Caribbean Sea basin, was a significant player in the 1492 clash between the Old and New Worlds. It was among the first areas to be part of the post-Columbian globalization process, with the Atlantic world as the center of new European powers established through the possession of colonies on the American continent.

Most of the continental Caribbean, part of the Spanish empire, gained independence after the 1820s. The Dominican Republic broke away from Spain during the Haitian occupation of the entire island in 1822 and later, in 1844, became an independent republic. In 1898, the Spanish colonial presence in Cuba and Puerto Rico ended, marking the beginning of the United States' dominance over the entire Caribbean basin. This included a growing influence over independent republics or the colonies of England, France, and Denmark. However, the United States' hegemony was not unchallenged. The Caribbean's spirit of resilience was evident in the region's resistance and challenges to this dominance, particularly after the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

A common characteristic of the hegemonic powers in the Caribbean is that all the metropolises were part of what has been known as Western civilization. Colonial control over the Antilles and other territories around the

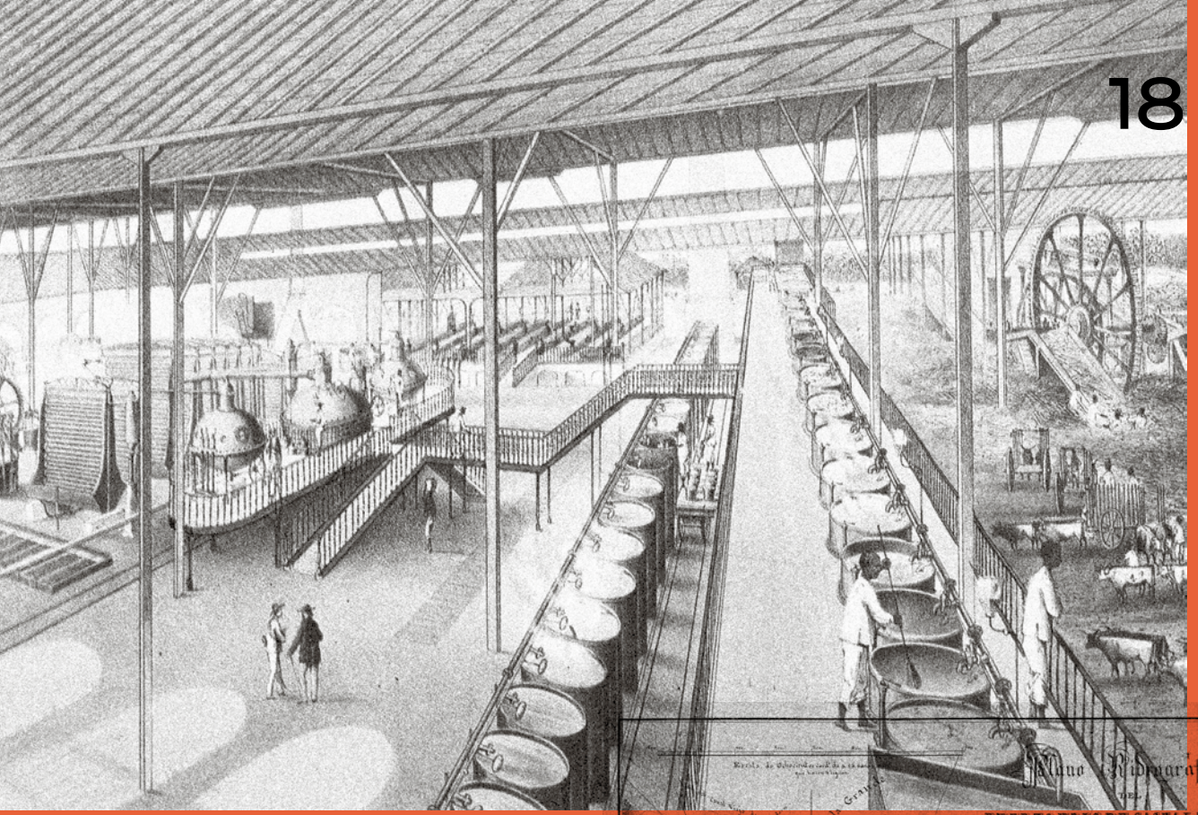
The Caribbean, especially the islands, are among the most vulnerable in the region to climate change threats.

Caribbean Sea contributed to the idea of the superiority of the West over Asia and Africa. The so-called sugar revolution from the mid-17th century and the formation of the slave plantation system in the non-Spanish Antilles were a central ingredient in the growing differentiation between Europe and other regions of the world. That gap widened with the Industrial Revolution and a new socio-metabolic regime that spread from Great Britain to different areas of Europe and the United States.

At the beginning of the transition to an industrial age, after a visit to the Americas between 1799 and 1804, Alexander von Humboldt criticized the colonial system created by Europeans, especially the French and British in the Caribbean. In his opinion, the «sugar and slave islands» had been transformed into European workshops, specialized in a few colonial crops, where the order of nature had been reversed. This also included the denunciation of the massive employment of enslaved Africans as a labor force. In some way, the Caribbean colonial plantations represented an antithesis of the European enlightenment.

The tropical climate was one of the arguments used to justify enslavement and later racialized labor, arguing that white Europeans were less able to withstand the heat and humidity. The material and intellectual differentiation through colonialism and imperialism between temperate and tropical climates is at the origin of dichotomous terms that express the inequality of the current global system: Core and Periphery, First and Third World, Development and Underdevelopment, and North and South.

Two centuries after Humboldt's ideas about the plantation system and slavery, much has changed in the region because of the global rise of industrial society and its ramifications. However, the form of insertion into the world order that emerged with the European colonization



of America remained similar. Paraphrasing Humboldt, one could say that the order of nature continues to be inverted for the region's countries. It is no longer the classic plantation to produce sugar, coffee, or bananas, although those crops are still present in some territories. It has now been transformed into a mass tourism destination, mainly from the old colonial or hegemonic powers. As one of the favorite spots to enjoy tropical nature and be served by its inhabitants, the Caribbean is today considered part of the «periphery of pleasure.»

This shift from plantations to mass tourism is the best example of the socio-ecological transition on our planet to a society dominated by industrial metabolism over the last two centuries. From organically based agrarian or agro-industrial societies dedicated to the export of calories to the world market to a leisure destination for the masses of workers from the industrial North, most of them. Therefore, instead of exporting calories, a high amount of energy and materials must be imported to sustain a service economy that resembles the colonial relation of the old plantation model.

In the new era of uncertainty about the emergence of a new global order, the Caribbean countries are seeing new paths that allow a greater margin of independence and equidistance from the former colonial powers. The main challenge is to be able to speak with one voice in the face of the old idea that because they are small countries or because of their heterogeneous populations, the possibilities for effective self-government would be limited. The people and governments of the region assume a proactive position and create their organizations or new alliances. In some cases, this attitude takes the form of a demand for reparation for the damage caused by the massive use of slave labor in the past. One might ask whether this demand could include the ecological debt generated by plundering the region's ecosystems or unequal economic exchange.

The Caribbean, especially the islands, are among the most vulnerable in the region to climate change threats. Most of the archipelago's nations are part of the Small Island Development States, a category created by the United Nations in 1994, even Cuba, which is the largest. The threats of natural hazards like hurricanes, volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, landslides, or droughts are many new threats associated with global warming. These include rising sea levels, intensification of water scarcity, growing incidence of tropical diseases, increasing fragility of coastal zones and coral reef ecosystems, and impacts on agricultural activities.

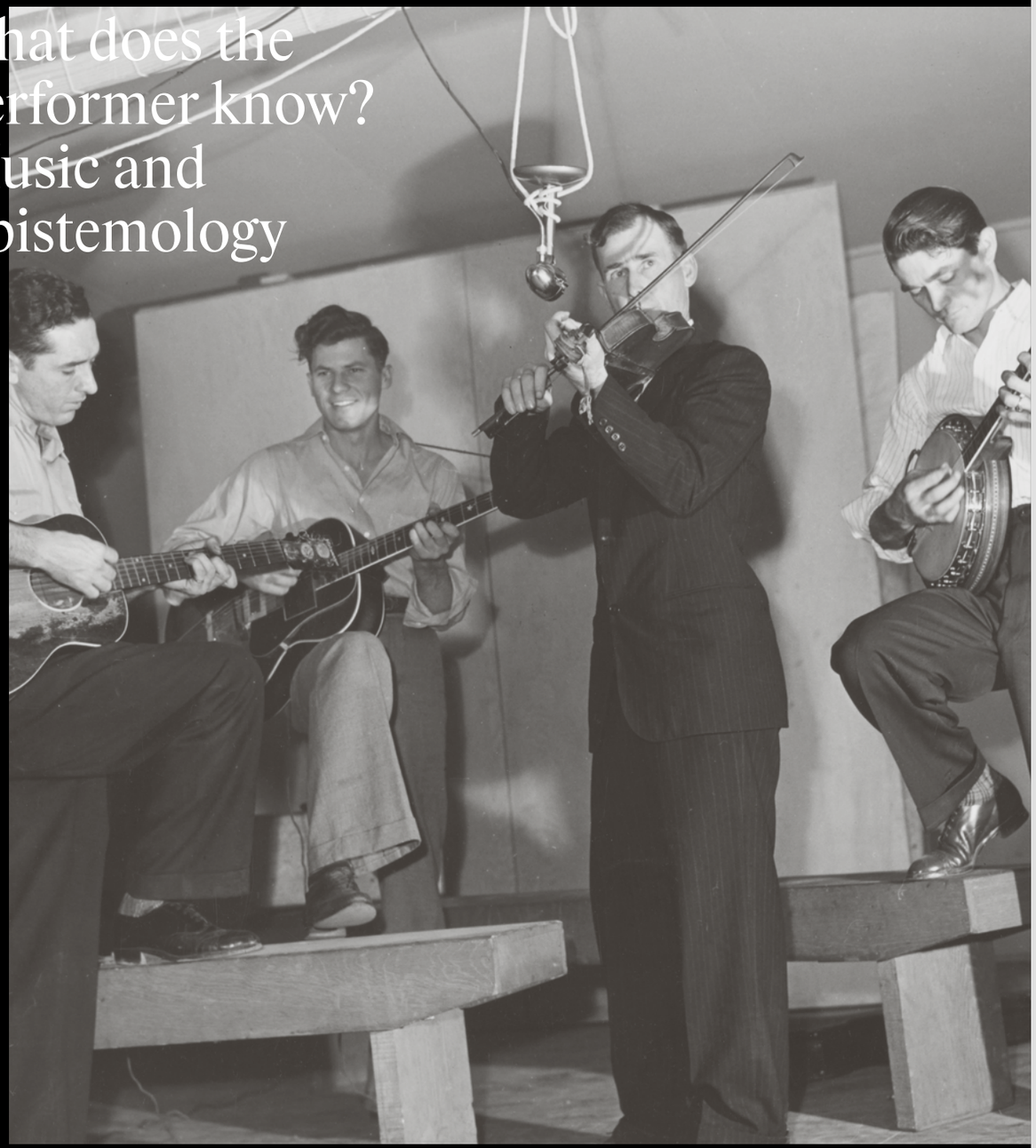
Of course, countries in the region confront environmental or social challenges differently depending on their geographic characteristics or historical processes. In general, however, we can find many similarities that contribute to more robust connections to collectively face the new world order in the age of climate change. A deeper understanding of the region's common environmental history and the specificities of each place would contribute to the goal of a new, more just, and equitable global order that considers the interests of small nations.

Incorporating the environmental turn in the study and reconstruction of the Caribbean past will help to raise awareness to confront the challenges of climate change, the depletion of natural resources, the loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, pollution, and the scarcity of drinking water. As one of the most vulnerable regions in the world to all these threats, the region is looking for more sustainable development, such as the so-called «carbon-free vacation» for the tourist sector. Climatic vulnerabilities are linked to historical patterns, but also to new challenges posed by the rise of ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, racism, and climate denialism in former metropolises, which may affect the foundations of the search for effective global solutions to the planetary environmental crisis that threatens the human species and other life forms.

Reinaldo Funes Monzote is professor at the University of Havana and coordinator of the Geo Historical Research Program at the Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation (Cuba). He is also president of the Cuban Society for the History of Science and Technology and an Academy of the History of Cuba member. Since the 1990s, he has been involved in the Environmental History movement in Latin America. Collaborations with international research teams have contributed to expanding his research on the relationship between slavery and the socio-ecological consequences of the plantation system, agrarian metabolism, and commodity frontiers. Recently, he aimed to write a synthesis of the Greater Caribbean environmental history.

Andreas Dorschel

What does the performer know? Music and Epistemology



Musical performance is often seen as a matter of feeling or of sheer bodily dexterity. The swiftness by which, typically, one tone follows the other seems to foreclose thought about what one does during performance. It is certainly true that, in most cases, there is little room for reflection. Players or singers may reflect before their performance, or after it, but not while they perform. Yet that does not rule out a whole range of cognitive dispositions and/or activities. Among them can be memory, auditory perception, haptic perception, visual perception, self-perception, audience awareness, awareness of co-players, spatial experience, temporal consciousness, anticipation and orientation along cultural norms, be they artistic, aesthetic, or generally social. Feeling and the body do not oppose or preclude an understanding of musical performance as an epistemic practice, because they may incorporate cognitive features themselves.

Of all epistemological notions, perhaps that of knowledge is bound to be met with particular scepticism in the context of musical performance. The point made with regard to reflection applies here as well: Knowledge is slow, performance is quick. Knowledge needs to be pondered, but there is no time to ponder in performance. A composer can pore over each note precisely because composing isn't performing, although it is related to it. All of this is obviously true. But performing does not arise out of the blue. Typically, it arises from years of training, hours of rehearsing. During these years and hours, performers get to know their instruments (including the human voice, that embodied instrument) and their repertoire. Hopefully, they also get to know themselves — to some extent. This acquired and in part embodied knowledge they bring to their performances. We cannot simply rid ourselves of a knowledge which we have, even if we wished to. Of course, performances are never simply the ‹outcome› of training and rehearsing. There is still room for sudden insights, epiphanies, intuitions that hit like a flash in real-time performance. At the same time, cognition, even widely construed, is just one stratum of performance. Yet wholesale apprehension about knowledge in the context of musical performance will definitely, for the reason given, be off the mark.

Performers' knowledge will always be partial knowledge. On the one hand, no performance could ever take place in complete ignorance. Nobody would be able to perform knowing simply nothing about him- or herself, about the music, about the instrument, about the space one is in etc. On the other hand, total knowledge is not even conceivable. What could it mean, e.g., to know ‹everything› about music? Consequently, performers' knowledge is bound to be and to remain piecemeal. Nevertheless, there can still be huge differences between performers along that line.

We construe the notion of knowledge in terms of intentionality. Intentionality is that feature of mental states by virtue of which they are *about* something or have an object. (Intentionality is not to be confused with ‹intentions› in the sense of ‹wanting›; Latin *intendere* merely means ‹to be directed at›.) You don't just know; you know *something*. In German, there is an interesting contrast between ‹Wissen› (‹knowledge›) and ‹Weisheit› (‹wisdom›) which go back to the same etymological root. If you say of a person that she is wise, you don't need to state or even to assume what she is wise about. But when it comes to knowledge, inevitably the question arises: *What* does she know?

The grammar of performance works in a similar fashion. You don't just perform; you perform something. That something can exist, e.g., as a score, before the performance: ‹She performs the second of Ligeti's *Études*.› Even then, however, the two objects will not be identical: The performed *étude* isn't the scored *étude*. The former relates to the latter, but they cannot converge. (If the work converges with what is presented, there is no performance, as in the case of a painting; in analogous cases for music, performance is erased.) The relation between a performed piece and the scored piece is mediated, i.a., through knowledge. You must know Ligeti's *étude* in order to perform it, especially in order to perform it by heart. In the case of *prima vista* playing, you don't know it, but still you need to know something — at least the notation used.

Not all cases of performance are like that. Often, there isn't a work or a score prior to the performance. Improvisation is a case in point. This does not mean that there is simply nothing before the performance. There may be ideas in your head, or a jazz standard your improvisation will refer to, or still something else. But: ‹I know exactly what I am going to do and now I am going to do it› is never a requirement. In fact it could and probably would

lead to a performance lacking all spontaneity. It definitely would not deserve to be called an improvisation. But even in the performance of works, stiffness is a flaw. For the distinction between those two ‹ideal types› (in the sense of Max Weber), performance of works and improvisation, is gradual rather than absolute. Performance of works, if it is any good, also contains improvisatory elements. In any musical performance worth its name meanings emerge temporally, through time — meanings that weren't already in place beforehand.

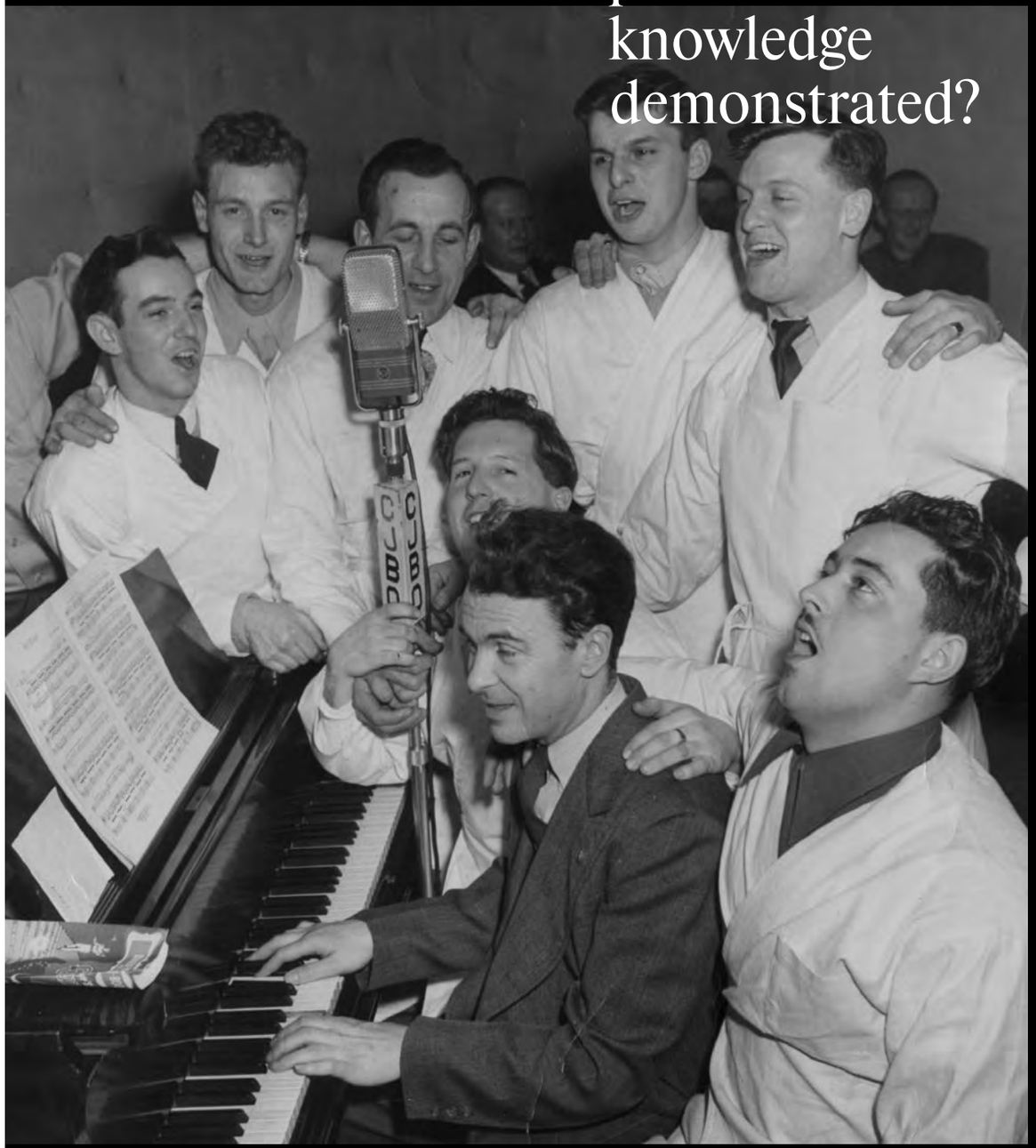
Even a mere description of a performance has to refer to its intentionality, just as a competitive game, like football, cannot even be described without reference to its overarching purpose, i.e., scoring goals. (This is merely an analogy, not a case within the same category, but it helps to see the point.) Beyond description, however, intentionality also enters the dimension of assessment. We judge a performance in terms of its intentional object — i.e., in terms of the answer to the question: ‹What is being performed here?›. Yet the view of what something is a performance *of* can change — switch, as it were — while we actually listen to it. An act that was announced as a performance of Carl Maria von Weber's *Aufforderung zum Tanz* op. 65 and turned out to be an inadequate performance of that rondo due to the performer's obvious ignorance of some of the finer details in the piece's score may nevertheless be exciting and thus enjoyed as a performance due to, say, the display of pianistic fireworks the performer shows off. As a fanciful virtuoso homage to Weber, it may be simply brilliant.

If we then ask the epistemic question, ‹How do we know of performers' knowledge?›, i.e., ‹How is performers' knowledge demonstrated?›, the answer has got to be: ‹Through the performance› or, at least: ‹Primarily through the performance›. By way of contrast, being able to put their knowledge into words is always a contingent feature in musical performers. Such an approach of course clashes with any view of knowledge that envisages as its primary or even its sole manifestation propositions, because — so the argument goes — (a) only propositions can be true or false, and (b) knowledge implies truth. If that were so, it would rule out cases where performances demonstrate lack of knowledge, which implies that alternative performances could demonstrate knowledge. But such cases are all too common. Thus, there are performances that show that a performer does not know his or her own limitations as shown by attempts at achieving feats he or she is not able to bring off. There are other performances that show that a performer does not understand the structure of the piece of music he or she is playing, e.g. by mindlessly running over important caesuras in the development of the musical ideas while breaking apart what belongs together. And there are still further performances that show that a performer does not know the breathing space needed by his or her co-players, as shown by inadequate performance choices *vis-à-vis* his or her ensemble, e.g. dynamics that crush the other performers, or articulation that is at odds with theirs.

Consequently, propositions cannot be the sole manifestation of knowledge. This is not to rekindle faith in a mystical ineffability of music. In retrospect, the observations of a listener can be put into words, as the above descriptions just did. But the relevant phenomena neither come about as propositions in the first place. Nor does the knowledge performers might have consist in such sentences. Conversely, their lack of knowledge does not consist in having them at their disposal. The point of a musician's self-knowledge, including knowledge of one's limitations, is not to be able to assert certain things of oneself. Rather, the point is sensing — often in bodily sense — where one better stops. In short, as long as we grant a privilege to (verbal) language, we will never do justice to the knowledge musical performers have as musical performers.

Andreas Dorschel has been, since 2002, head of the Institute for Music Aesthetics at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (Austria). The essay printed here is connected to a workshop held at HIAS from 28 to 30 April 2025, funded by FWF, the Austrian Research Fund (grant no. P-34449). For the workshop, the research team from Graz liaised with Michael Schnegg (Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Hamburg), Olaf Kirsch (Lead Curator, Musical Instruments Collection, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg) as well as Jan-Philipp Sprick (President, University of Music and Drama, Hamburg) and the team of ARTILACS Graduate School (University of Music and Drama, Hamburg). Andreas Dorschel's HIAS Fellowship 2024–2025 is provided by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and the federal and state funds acquired by University of Hamburg in the framework of its Excellence Strategy.

How is performers' knowledge demonstrated?



Nathan J. Brown

It's not What People Believe; It's What They Do

Today, a third of a century after the phrase «new world order» was commonly and optimistically used, each of its elements may seem to be mocking the current period of conflict and polarization. The «order» anticipated in the late twentieth century was to be liberal, peaceful and democratic. But trends now seem to be moving in the opposite direction — towards illiberalism, violent conflict and authoritarianism. Optimistic references to the «world» were based on what all members of humanity share, but politics now seems to be based on disagreement. And rather than a new agenda emerging, the subjects of current disagreement seem to be old — identity, religion, justice.

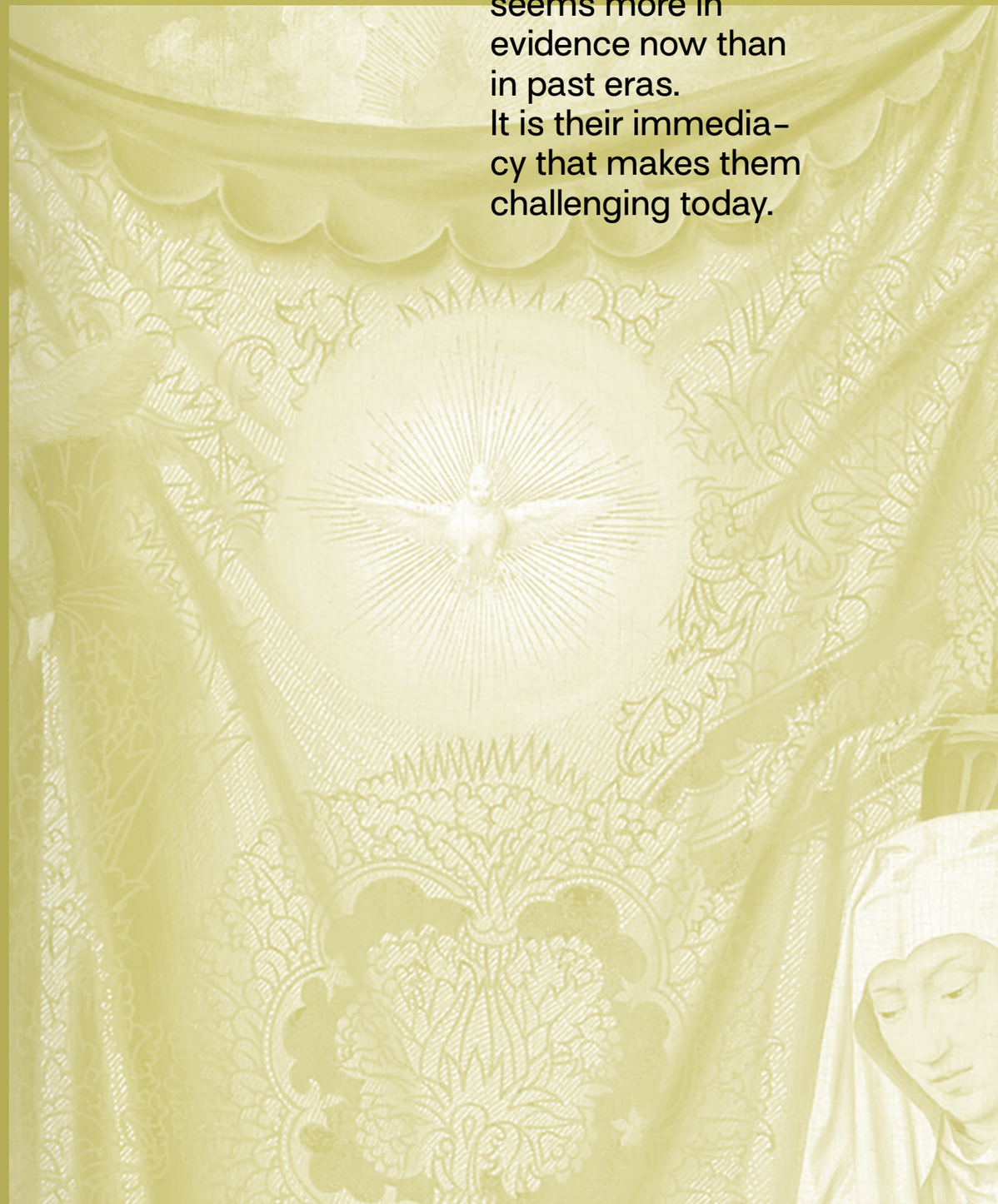
Religion seems at the heart of much disagreement. How can those who begin from one set of religious truths agree with those who begin from another? How can those who argue from a religious foundation accept the claims of those who do not — and vice versa? Secularism is one response to such disagreements — it insists that beliefs are private and should not guide politics. For many living in a secular world, bringing religion into political or other spheres makes conflicts unbridgeable. But secularism's incomplete triumph may only change deep conflicts rather than resolve them. For many of the faithful, losing religious guidance in public life is the problem.

But such pessimism linking religion with conflict, polarization and disorder may itself be the problem. It only deepens conflicts by making them seem essential. Religion and religiosity — or their absence — may indeed lead to deep differences but differences do not necessarily engender conflicts. It is thus without irony that I refer here to a religious tradition other than my own when I quote the Qur'an: «We have created you out of a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you might come to know one another.»

Is such a hope naïve? I think instead it is based on a realistic view of politics. Were humans to have no differences, politics would be unnecessary. And much learning and growth would disappear in a stagnant sea of homogeneity. So we should move beyond a view of politics as based on what we share and instead focus on how we disagree. I wish to suggest that our divisions may be more manageable than may initially seem. And that can happen if we acknowledge that for all their depth, what is really challenging about our differences about religion is actually their form and immediacy.

The global focus of the «new world order» was not misplaced but it may have overstated how easy it is to live together in a world where we are brought close together and become more aware of our disagreements. Migration, both forced and voluntary, has brought deep differences into matters of daily life; social media have created transparent communities in which self-referential groups carry out discussions among themselves in echo chambers —

A basic sense of shared humanity seems more in evidence now than in past eras. It is their immediacy that makes them challenging today.



but ones in which non-members easily overhear what is being said. It is difficult not to hear the most outrageous and intolerant statements that are shouted out from camps other than our own. And that physical and virtual proximity is what makes it so often seem that we live not under conditions of a «new world order» but a disorderly old world.

But what makes the disagreements so difficult today is not that their depth is new; if anything the precise opposite seems to be the case. A basic sense of shared humanity seems more in evidence now than in past eras. It is their immediacy that makes them challenging today. The «world» in which we hope some «order» might emerge is one in which people cannot avoid each other.

To return to my earlier claim, that is the task of politics: not to impose uniformity but to find ways to manage difference.

So many of the difficult conflicts that we see in daily life come not because we value things differently but because we do things differently; our own established ways seem natural and those who do things differently thus can appear to be acting according to different natures. When we encounter people who do things very differently, we can rush too quickly to assume it is because their values are fundamentally different — but very often it is how they understand how those values are to be applied in a particular case.

Casebooks of constitutional law can be written about the politics and laws regulating women's head coverings. There seems to be no issue on which each society frames the fundamental questions so differently, but sometimes arguing from the precise same principle: tolerance, religious freedom, state fairness, individual rights, communal rights. There are differences in how people balance private freedom and public morality to be sure. But those who oppose female subjugation can decry «imposing» the veil; others use the same principle to oppose making female bodies the subject of state regulation. So there is much more general common ground on matters of principle than people are often aware of. The most profound differences concern the detailed application of those principles.

So when I enter a classroom and start a discussion about the subject, I am almost always struck by how the policy issues seem easy and obvious to each individual (depending on a participant's background) and often stress the same underlying values: freedom, fairness and human dignity. The policy differences are real but they become particularly conflictual when people see their own preferences as so obvious and natural that they assume those who disagree do so because they do not see things clearly. Policy paths followed can change particularly radically as one crosses state borders.

I selected the example of head coverings for a reason: they are a political issue in many societies but also a very personal matter for those who wear them (or not). And many of the polarizing differences within and across societies equally link the intensely personal with the political. A large number involve family life. Who gets custody of children? Who should teach children and what should they be taught? Who can get married — and whose approval is necessary? Again, differences in principle are often less profound than they seem and differences in practice far greater. In my work at the Hamburg Institute for Advanced Study, I have been focusing precisely on such arrangements and how they differ globally.

And what I find is that abstract ideas cross international borders with greater than expected ease: the best interests of the child; the role of law in protecting the weaker party; the interests of entire societies in stable and healthy family life; deference to the decisions of parents to raise children in the manner that seems appropriate to them; the freedom of groups who share religious traditions to observe them and transmit them to the next generation. Yes, there are differences in how these are understood and how much they are stressed.

But the real conflicts arise when people cross borders or talk across them — when they have very different ways of doing things and very different reactions to arrangements for schooling, communal worship, custody, marriage and divorce.

And those conflicts fill the files of consular officers with custody disputes; of school principals with complaints from parents about instructional material; with municipal officials with disputes about construction of new houses of worship; with editors of newspapers and administrators of websites with expressions that are taken by some to be disrespectful or impious.

And it is thus in matters of practice and practical arrangements that universalism fails us: there is no easy way of accommodating those who have such different expectations of what is the natural way to do things. The task for those who wish for a new world order is not to eliminate difference over fundamental values but to manage a world where people who pursue those values do so in such different ways — and come into direct contact while doing so. More abstractly, the challenge of the current moment is how to manage a world where widespread values seem to conflict in practice with each other.

To return to my earlier claim, that is the task of politics: not to impose uniformity but to find ways to manage difference; to make the different ways people understand the same principles understandable rather than offensive or threatening. That is more difficult in a world in which people do things so differently.

Nathan J. Brown is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs and Nonresident Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC. His fellowship at HIAS was devoted to drafting a book manuscript tentatively entitled Religion in State, an effort to ask broadly why states structure religious institutions the way that they have and how official structuring of religion changes over time.

John T. Hamilton Dialectic of Convenience

To be sure, countless appliances, devices and gadgets, along with a vast repertoire of platforms and services, have greatly reduced the time and effort required to perform our jobs and realize our projects. An ever-increasing amount of what we wish to accomplish or acquire can be fulfilled with ease and efficiency, through channels that are nearby and accessible, and in ways that ideally suit our needs and accord with our personal agenda and schedules. In our overburdened lives, any opportunity to save time, effort and energy is held to be a value that hardly needs justification. When given the choice between an easier and a more difficult way of doing what we urgently need or desire, the preference is perfectly clear. The expectation that our chores, errands and tasks should be completed with minimal difficulty and frustration, that goods and services should be available on call, that delivery should be quick and gratification almost instantaneous has become prerequisite for our well-being. By extension, convenience becomes a moral concern that addresses ideals of equity and justice. Every person everywhere should have equal access and equal opportunity to thrive — physically, mentally, emotionally and financially. No one should be excluded from resources and services; no one should be unnecessarily inconvenienced.

From a historical perspective, digitization can be regarded merely as augmenting the capacity for the kinds of convenience that machines and technologies have always afforded: the promise to reduce effort and labor, the opportunity to save time, the ability to travel vast distances quickly and comfortably, the benefits of bringing the far near. Accordingly, there has been no lack of prophets and evangelists who champion the advantages of new tools and media which furnish exciting means for scientific advancement, for social connection and collaboration, for sharing and disseminating novel ideas and opinions, for granting everyone an equal voice in democratic conversation and making institutional power transparently accessible. By comparison, older forms of physical work and engagement seem like unnecessary burdens: inexpedient, suspicious and grossly inconvenient.

Nonetheless, although opting for the path of least resistance may well be logical if not innately biological, there lurks a palpable disdain for taking the easy way out. It is commonly feared, for example, that convenient technologies breed incompetence, that surrendering more and more tasks to automation may detract from our capacity to intervene. Routine abstractions, shortcuts and acronyms may function as time- and labor-saving devices, yet they also seem to prevent new ways of recognizing and responding to complex issues. Computational thinking is said to reduce intellectual activity to unreflective calculation, while free moral judgment is delegated to algorithmic processes. As big data makes nuanced arguments superfluous, artificial intelligence threatens to replace human cognition and cause it to atrophy. Even when it is affirmed that we seek convenience only for tasks considered to be of less value, there remains the serious risk that, when practically everything can be achieved with convenience, everything may come to be depleted of substantial value.

Perfectly content with what digital technology can do for us, we tend to shy away from asking what it is doing to us. We acknowledge yet generally ignore the ramifications of constant, ubiquitous surveillance, we complacently accept the commodification of our personal data, and we cope, however begrudgingly, with the exhaustion that invariably occurs with restless multi-tasking and super-human speed. In our war on idleness, we become burnt out. More broadly, although touted as an engine for global exchange, communication and democratization, data capitalism appears only to exacerbate social inequalities and promote exploitation. Analogously, the digital economy adduces many environmental repercussions: the unsustainable mining of rare minerals, the energy depletion caused by round-the-clock consumption. Such downsides are concomitant with the demand for alleviating work, ensuring accessibility and promoting leisure; and may be inherent in the very concept of convenience.

Derived from convenire, the Latin verb for coming together, convenientia denotes an «agreement» between two parties or a «conformity» between two poles, the way one side fits with another. In the modern sense of convenience, limits are readily overcome to facilitate the passage from subjective intentions to objective goals, to smooth the route from Here to There. On the one hand, the effect is liberating: By eradicating obstructive limits, there seem to be no more strict distinctions, no more hierarchies of power, no more exclusions. At least potentially, everything is accessible to everyone. On the other

hand, however, by removing bothersome constraints, convenience threatens to eliminate the very limits that define horizons of meaning. When everything and everyone is but a click away, we come to expect that we can attain what we want whenever we want without physically going anywhere, without leaving the convenient comforts of home. Whatever There we may imagine turns out to be already Here, which means there is nowhere left to go, no specific place or transcendent ideal that would make one's existential position meaningful.

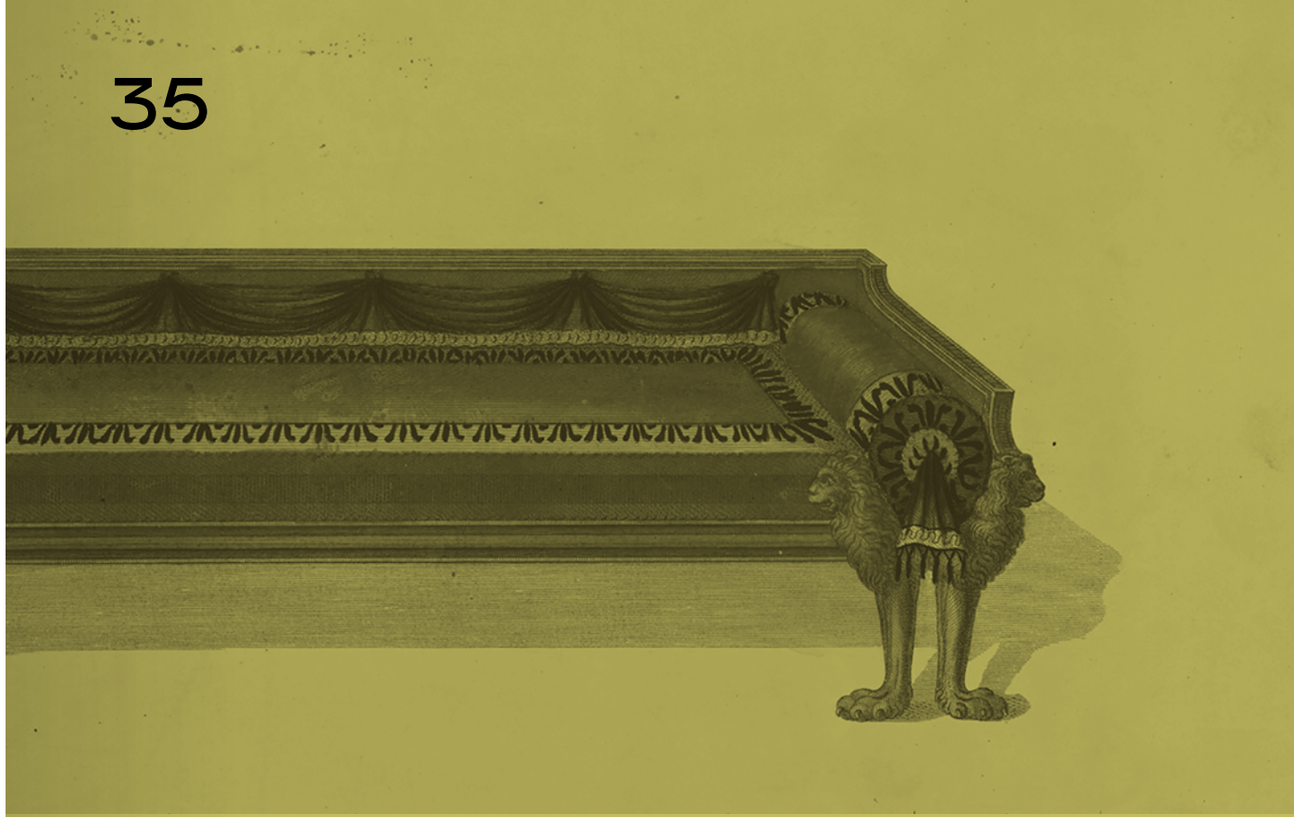
In utter thrall to convenience, radical otherness becomes grossly problematic. It becomes ever more unpleasant to abide with anyone or anything that does not agree with one's beliefs or conform to one's particular store of conventions. A true, uncontrollable There thus turns into a source of profound discomfort, a disagreeable inconvenience. Although this inconvenience can be variously felt, I would like to focus on two prevalent dispositions, the multicultural and the reactionary.

Unlike pilgrims, who endured and even welcomed difficulties, Multiculturalists more closely resemble tourists, who travel with minimal friction. For them, otherness is subsumed under the banner of diversity and inclusion, whereby difference is reduced to variety, that is, to mere variations of the Same, a kind of exciting exoticism, conformable to touristic expectations, novelties that are consumable and digestible, friendly and fun, available for sightseeing and souvenir photos. In contrast, Reactionaries take the opposite extreme: In their critique of multiculturalism, they double down on essentialized identities, they fight to preserve a fixed, exclusionary culture, and thereby promote nationalism and xenophobia. Yet despite their clear opposition, both dispositions share an aversion to anything that is too foreign, too weird, too disruptive and painful, too offensive, too unsettling, too inconvenient. However differently, both mindsets strive to overcome the problem of the There: Whereas Reactionaries define the Here as a site that needs protection from the There, Multiculturalists like to believe that the There is already Here.

Multiculturalism and Reactionism may account for the political polarization that defines today's brave new world and seems to represent a complete reorientation of the traditional Left and Right. Transformed by a lust for convenience, both sides seem to expect total conformity, complete agreement, either by entertaining otherness superficially like a tourist or protecting one's homeland from outside incursion. Because modern technology has made convenience itself convenient, we seem to have reached the point where saving time and energy is not simply a wish but rather an emphatic demand, where the avenue taken is expected to convene perfectly with the planned destination, with any conflicting view discredited as annoyingly valueless, a merely technical problem in need of a technical solution, as if otherness could be swiped off the screen with the flick of a finger. When shortcuts are favored and patience short-fused, sober debate yields to heightened rhetoric, courtesy slips into fits of road rage, and with magical networking technology, impulsive tweets race along a superhighway, traveling the globe with exorbitant alacrity and damaging impact. When convenience becomes the ruling criterion, when easy is always better and easiest is best, disagreement must be dispatched as quickly as possible, without holdups, without hurdles, without difficulties.

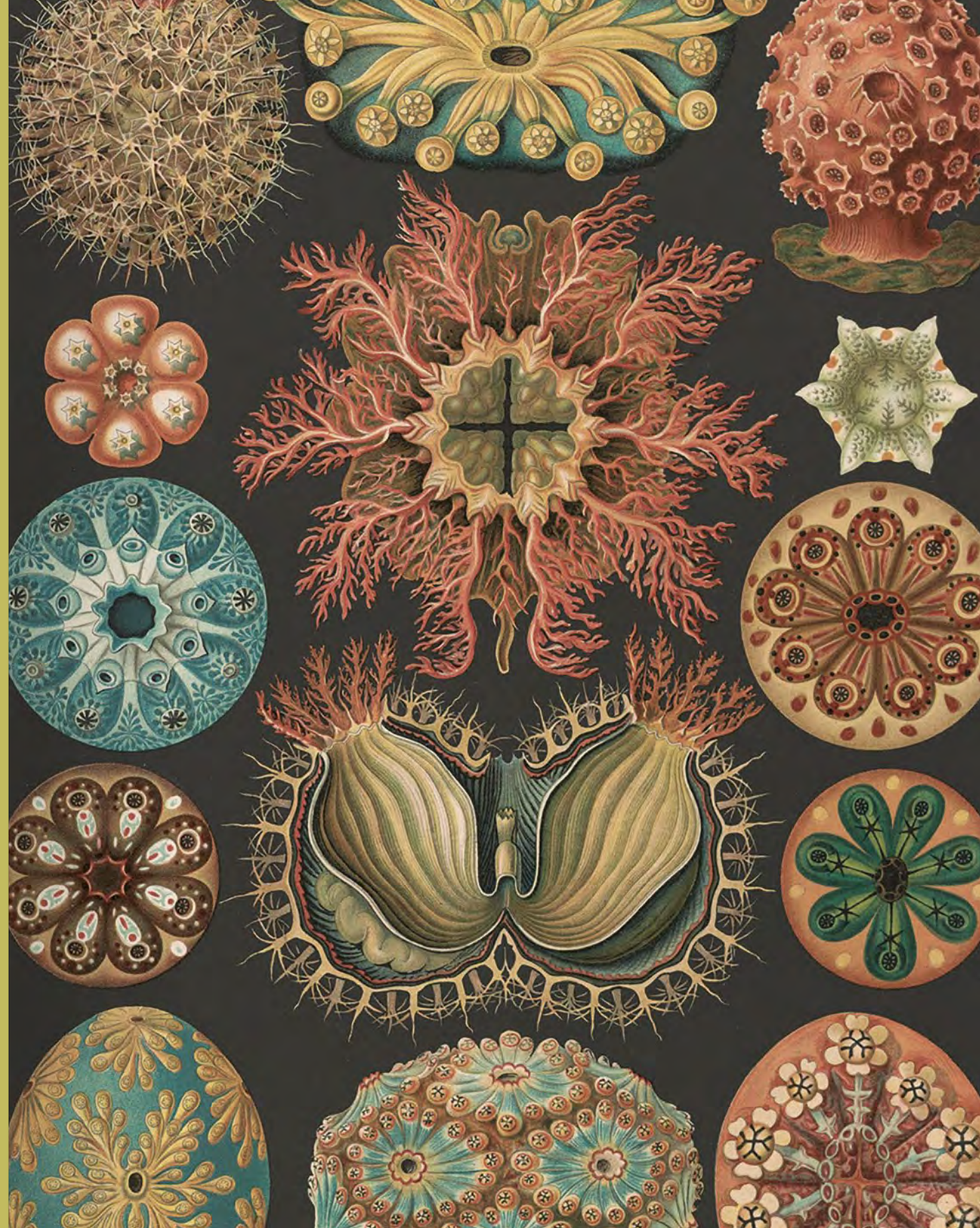
Today's culture of unparalleled convenience may try to convince us that our lives can be lived without disappointment and frustration, without losing time or even without loss itself. Yet such a worldview would appear to be driven by a rather shallow and anaemic understanding of what life is, if only because we can only be who we are with difficulty, that is, inconveniently, by taking the arduous, painstaking detours of what we are not.

John T. Hamilton Prior is the William R. Kenan Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. His current project is tentatively titled Culture of Convenience. In addition to examining the historical shifts in the word's meaning, from a sense of agreement to a general idea of ease, efficiency, and opportuneness, the study reflects on how convenience has become a dominant criterion for determining what is valuable in present-day society. How did «easier» come to mean «better»?



Today's culture of unparalleled convenience may try to convince us that our lives can be lived without disappointment and frustration, without losing time or even without loss itself.

The world in which Europeans have been able to build and enjoy their peace and prosperity was «made in America». Defending it is above all a matter for the Europeans themselves.
Janusz Reiter



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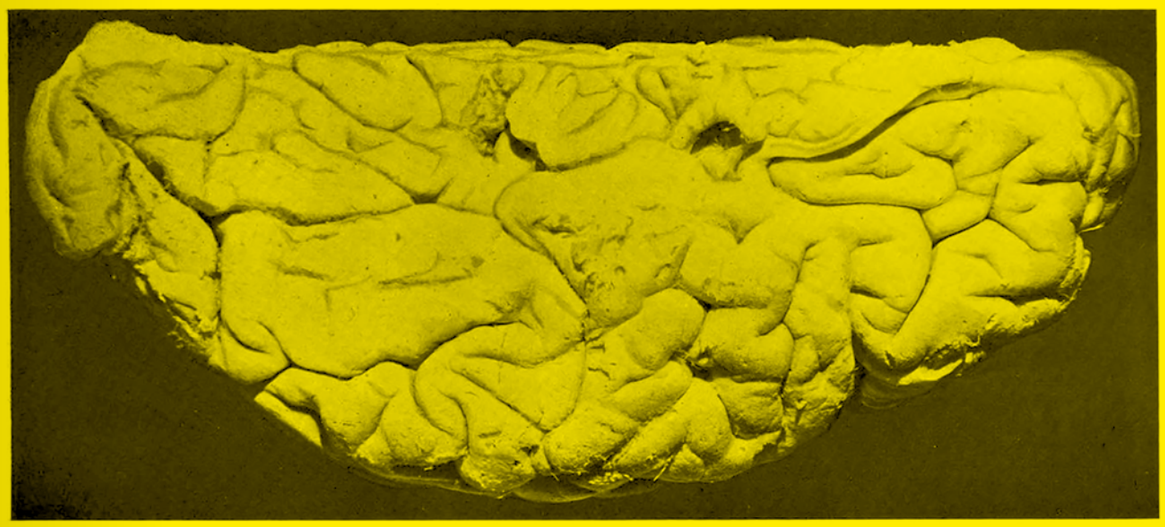


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(still), 2023, Ydessa Hendeles, Found documentary footage, dated March 1939, from Munkács, Hungary, Courtesy the Artist © Ydessa Hendel. / p. 60: River Walk, photos by Tobias Schmitt and Katrin Singer, with illustrations by Katrin Singer. / p. 61: The Elbe and the Chinese mitten crab, illustration by Katrin Singer. / p. 62: Elbe as a hydro-social relation, photos by Tobias Schmitt and Katrin Singer, with illustrations by Katrin Singer. / p. 63: «what then is what we do not understand?», photo and illustration by Katrin Singer. / The water cycle on the Elbe, illustration by Katrin Singer. / p. 64: Tide, photo and Illustration by Katrin Singer. / p. 65: Is there a river that resonates with you?, photo byTobias Schmitt, illlustration by Katrin Singer. / p. 70: Passport J.Reiter (privat), picture: HIAS. / **PICTURES IN THE MIDDLE**: Ascidiae – Seescheiden, 1904, Ernst Haeckel, Germany, 1834–1919, artvee.com, public domain. / NASA Administrator James Webb, Vice President Lyndon Johnson, NASA Launch Center Director Kurt Heinrich Debus, President John F. 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Massimo Leone

The Meaning of the Face in the Digital Age

p. 38 — Digital reconstruction and multiplication of Angelina Jolie's face; Mario Savvides. 2018. «Advanced Facial Recognition Technology»

left: Digital Make-Up by Adam Harvey

Massimo, you have been a Fellow at HIAS in Hamburg since September. To kick things off, you have put together a small interactive exhibition for the Hamburg public entitled «Facets of the Face», which shows what you and your international team have been doing research on for the past five years. You made it clear how ubiquitous facial recognition through AI is already in our lives — irritations included …

Leone The face is something commonplace — and mysterious at the same time. In the exhibition, we wanted to de-familiarize people from their own faces, i.e. from something they think they know very well. We wanted to encourage them to think about what constitutes their face and what has been lost in the excessive use of the face through digital technology. At the same time, we didn't just want to scare them, but also give them hope for the future.

Your research project on the topic of «The meaning of the face in the digital age» is global in scope. What specific insights do you hope to gain from your research in Germany — and Hamburg?

The topic of the face and artificial intelligence is viewed differently depending on society, history and culture. In Germany, there is a particular sensitivity to the collection of data. It is a country that pays great attention to the issue of data protection and privacy. That's why I want to investigate how people here relate to AI and facial recognition. Hamburg is a metropolis, and I am curious to see how privacy, ethical standards, and traditions can be reconciled with the use of digital technologies in this setting. My research in Hamburg is part of a comparative study that will lead to a larger publication. Another German reference for us as a comparatively small city is Freiburg.

How has the pandemic, which began shortly after you started your research on the face in the digital age, influenced your work?

The pandemic was a moment of crisis for the face. We were forced to cover part of our face and understood how important the faces of others are to us. There was a boom of technology used in digital exchange to replace the face in public and private interactions. That's why I'm interested in what's left of this technological change. Generally speaking, we have never returned to the way we were before the pandemic. We meet each other face to face less than before.

Are you missing that?

ML I am neither technophobic nor culturally pessimistic and therefore do not share the sceptical attitude of those who believe that more digital interaction is destroying communities. However, it is clear that technological change is definitely changing our sense of what a community is and how a community functions. Just one example from academia that might apply to many working people: I used to meet my colleagues weekly, now it's monthly. We usually only see each other face to face on the screen. What I miss is the direct contact, the context, the place where you meet, have a coffee and chat with someone — that's very Italian. There is the digital space where you are active, and there are other spaces that you use in your life, but what is missing are the spaces in between, the no man's land in which we were used to move as well. And that was important in order to create less static, more fluid relationships between people. When you meet colleagues in the digital space, they are colleagues — you don't perceive the person next to their professional life in the exchange via the screen, you don't gain any insights into their personal life.

Anti-facial recognition mask by Leonardo Selvaggio

You conduct research worldwide. What global trends do you see in the use of AI?

The very different approaches to the use of AI in the USA and China are undoubtedly formative. The question that concerns Germany and Europe is whether there is a specific path to AI of our own, whether we can construct a European approach to the development of AI that can be competitive on a global market.

How do you interpret the current competition?

At the moment, it's a bit Wild West — and Wild East. In the USA, the market is driving the use of AI and big business is leading the development. China, on the other hand, envisions political control; AI is being developed in relation to the political goals of the political establishment. And Europe, as a potential challenger, is basically striving for normative, i.e. legal, control of the new technologies; the law as an expression of a certain ethics should guide the development of AI. This leads to various problems. In the USA, for example, possibilities are being explored regardless of the consequences. If you read interviews with AI tycoons like Sam Altman, they engage in a paradoxical discourse because they constantly warn of the dangers of AI for humanity and at the same time collect money to push research even further. In fact, we need to think AI through carefully and develop it cautiously because it is so powerful. In the EU, the guiding principle is that AI should not be detached from a certain idea of humanity. From a commercial perspective, however, this humanistic understanding is a limit that makes global competition more difficult.

Do you think it is possible for AI to be used in a thoughtful way that can hold its own in international competition? You yourself work together with computer engineers for a private company in Bologna that develops AI applications.

I am more optimistic than pessimistic about the benefits of AI for humanity. Ultimately, it depends on us what we make of it. It depends on how we work together. And it should always be clear to us that AI content is never value-free, because it is already a product of the past that cannot simply be repaired. I would like to illustrate this with the example of CGI, which produces computer-generated images that appear to be visual truths, but which are based on huge image databases whose individual components may be questionable because they also contain errors and forgeries or have been guided by prejudices — so something false is added to what is supposed to be true. In other words: There is also evil hidden in our AI applications because humanity has provided the input. In contrast, I hope to establish ethical criteria by design in the technology, i.e. in the algorithm.

Filter giving a «Jewish nose» by Maayan Sophia Weisstub.

Fight for Future activists provocatively use automatic face recognition in Washington, DC

How can this work?

In a way, this is impossible if we continue to separate the knowledge of the philosopher from that of the engineer. Instead, we need quasi-renaissance engineers, humanistic technologists who are aware of the risks of what they are doing. And our philosophers and ethics specialists would also need to know more about technology if they want to make competent statements about it.

What could AI ethics look like?

Very simple. Before AI developers send their ideas out into the world, they should try them out in the sandbox, so to speak, and play with them in order to recognize dangers early on. But unfortunately, they usually don't want to wait because the market is so fast — so they immediately pass their algorithms on to the public and are supported by venture capital for rapid commercialization.

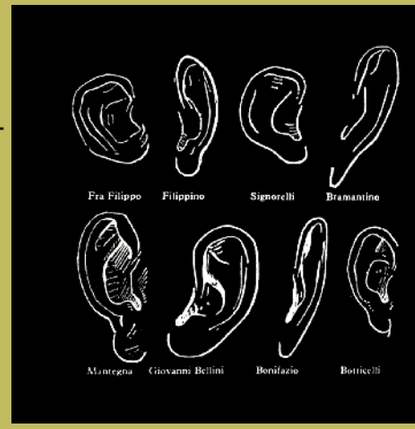
You also teach and conduct research in Shanghai. How do you experience control there with the help of AI?

Facial recognition is omnipresent there. It's clear that it's a massive surveillance operation because all this data could be used by government forces. However, there is another aspect that we in the West often don't realize. The face in China, unlike in Western societies, is not a strong expression of uniqueness — the social face is more important than the physical face. An interesting example of this was the use of masks during the pandemic. Unlike in Western societies, their use was uncontroversial in Japan, Korea or China. These countries have different political systems, but they have a very similar understanding of the position of the individual in society.

So if you wear a mask in China, it's not because you want to protect yourself from others, but because you want to protect others from yourself. Knowing this is important for understanding how AI is used in China. And it is also important to know that the significance of new technologies in Southeast Asia is different from ours, which also has to do with religious attitudes. A Buddhist, for example, has no problem with new technology; it manifests itself as a religious force in Buddhist understanding.

How important are your own impressions when you explore a foreign city?

They are fundamental. One of my first activities is to walk around and look for faces in the streetscape — how and where there are faces and how they are represented. We take faces in the cityscape for granted, but in cities in North Africa or cities that are deeply influenced by Islamic culture, you will hardly see faces because in these traditions the representation of the human body is not taken lightly. We take for granted that our heroes are represented sculpturally as statues, but this concept does not exist in Islamic civilizations. We, on the other hand, represent everything with a face, because Christianity manifests itself in incarnation, and this has a face.



Giovanni Morelli. 1892. Italian Painters: Critical Studies of their Works.

And what is your attitude to your own face?

I realize how unrecognizable our face is to ourselves. We can only visually perceive our face indirectly: in the mirror, in pictures or in movies. Although the face has been the most important link in social interaction since we were born, we have to accept that this interface remains hidden from us. Although our face is so important, we ourselves do not know it.

Interview by
Lutz Wendler

Massimo Leone is Professor of Philosophy of Communication and Cultural and Visual Semiotics at the University of Turin. In the academic year 2024–25, he is a University of Hamburg Fellow at HIAS, where he will continue his research on «The Meaning of the Face in the Digital Age», which he has been conducting for five years in the framework of a European ERC research project. The academic global player seems to feel at home at many different places of the earth, as well as in the digital world. The 49-year-old Italian also teaches and researches at Shanghai University, is an associate member of Cambridge Digital Humanities at Cambridge University, Director of the Institute for Religious Studies of the «Bruno Kessler Foundation» in Trento, and a lecturer at the Catholic University of Caracas in Venezuela.

Decolonial Narratives in Economics: Alternative and Underrepresented Voices

Edited by
Altuğ Yalçıntaş
and Arne Heise
Decolonial
Narratives in
Economics:
Alternative and
Underrepresented
Voices
Edward Elgar
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January 2025

This publication is the outcome of a workshop, organzied by Altuğ Yalçıntaş and Arne Heise at the Hamburg Institute for Advanced Study in March 2023. This collected volume challenges the dominant economic discourse by highlighting how colonialism has influenced knowledge creation in economics. This publication brings together diverse voices to explore overlooked scholarly contributions and their relevance today. The work examines how colonial thinking affects research practices in economics and proposes ways to address related ethical concerns. The book creates a platform for scholars to share decolonial perspectives from underrepresented nations and cultures in economics.

Altuğ Yalçıntaş is an institutional economist at Ankara University with a research focus on the economics of digitization and the Internet. His HIAS Fellowship 2022–2023 was provided by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and the federal and state funds acquired by Universität Hamburg in the framework of its Excellence Strategy.

Arne Heise is Professor of Economics, in particular Finance and Public Governance, at the University of Hamburg. He specializes in macroeconomics, economic policy and European integration. Beyond that he was Altuğ Yalçıntaş' tandem partner during his fellowship.

Janusz Reiter
Quo vadis, Europe?

Everyone agrees that Russia's war against Ukraine is about more than the invaded country itself, but that does not mean that everyone is acting out of the same motives. The Ukrainians have a legitimate, self-evident interest in not being left alone in their struggle for survival. Only if they succeed in presenting Ukraine as the scene of a conflict of global significance can they mobilize allies to stand by their side. Otherwise, they will remain alone with the overwhelming aggressor Russia, a tragic but local conflict, as seen so many times before.

This strategy, as understandable and inevitable as it is, has a dark side. What motivates some to support Ukraine may be reason enough for others to side with Russia or to stand on the sidelines and wait. For if it is true that this war is also creating a new world order, then we must soberly recognize that the ideas of a new world order are extremely contradictory. The Western liberal democracies are, arguably, defenders of the status quo — plagued by self-doubts. This is also true of their leading power, the United States. For old-school transatlanticists like Joe Biden, Ukraine's commitment to liberal democratic values is welcome proof that the idea of the West is alive and kicking. We may find out next year whether Donald J. Trump shares the outgoing president's understanding of America's international obligations. Or we will see a US president who does not believe in the Atlantic community of values and is not convinced that there even is an Atlantic community of interests. In the 20th century, America made two completely contradictory decisions about its role in the world. After World War I, it withdrew from Europe and from world politics. After World War II, it stayed on the shattered continent and became a Euro-

pean power. What's more, America largely created the new world order for which it had to take responsibility. Whether it was security or trade, the US provided the so-called public goods. Its power was limited by its rivalry with the Eastern superpower, the Soviet Union. America could not retreat from the bipolar world. Nor could it do so when, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it found itself in a world described as «unipolar». But this did not last long. Nevertheless, several countries, including Poland, were able to use the «window of opportunity» to find a secure place in the Western communities of the EU and NATO. Washington initially had many doubts about their desire to join but decided to open up the Atlantic alliance. Germany, also skeptical at first, supported the candidate countries, especially Poland, for moral and, above all, strategic reasons. A «gray zone» between the Federal Republic and Russia would sooner or later have become a playground for power rivalries, the end of the Europe in which Germany could build its security and prosperity. For Poland, this would have meant a return to the disastrous geopolitical limbo from which it had sought to escape.

When NATO members met for a summit in Bucharest in 2008, the «window of opportunity» was no longer wide open. In the face of opposition from Germany and France, the United States was unable to push through an invitation to Ukraine to join. In principle, it should be allowed to join, but de facto those who feared that the West would lose Russia if Ukraine were invited to join prevailed. 6 years later, the membership option was still open in principle, but the Ukrainian Crimea was already occupied by Russian troops. And it took another six years for Russia to launch a massive attack on Ukraine, which was ready to join NATO. Suddenly, the Atlantic community was in danger of losing not only its enemy, Russia, but also its friend, Ukraine.

The Ukrainian drama cannot be explained by Russia's strength and America's weakness alone. By Western standards, Putin's empire, an economy the size of Italy, is a colossus with feet of clay. But the world does not work by Western standards. Russia is not creating a new world order, but it can sow chaos very successfully. And America? It is still the No. 1 economic and military power, with global influence. It is the context that has changed. And

that context is being shaped by new powers, first and foremost China, which have their own ideas about the world order. They are not (yet?) strong enough to shape the world as they wish. Nor do they have a precisely formulated vision of the world order. They do not want to be bound in their power politics by institutions, especially those invented by America, nor are they bound by norms or even values. This understanding of politics links authoritarian China not only with Russia, but also with fundamentally democratic countries such as India or South Africa. They want the kind of flexibility in foreign policy that was taken for granted in the 19th century, which rings a bad bell for Europeans. Not flexibility, but reliable integration has become the new European understanding of politics. It is no coincidence that the foreign policy orientation of the Federal Republic of Germany is called Westbindung.

So, is Ukraine swimming against the tide of world politics with its pro-Western course towards the EU and NATO? Its choice of the West is rational because it is only there where it can survive as a nation and develop in freedom. Neutrality is not an option, as only a strong, viable country could try to maintain its neutrality. But Russia does not want a strong Ukraine. It wants a failed state as a neighbor. But does China, Russia's most important ally, also want a weak, failing Ukraine? The Ukrainian government is constantly trying to find cracks in the pro-Russian alliance. It sends conciliatory signals to Beijing in the hope that the Communist rulers can be pragmatic as well, as they were earlier.

In 1956, China played a significant role in European politics. It was the year of great unrest in the so-called Eastern Bloc. In Hungary, a national uprising against Communist rule was ruthlessly crushed by the Red Army. In Poland, riots broke out in the city of Poznan and spread. A moderate wing of the Polish Communist Party attempted to take power in order to calm the situation in the country. Moscow watched the situation with suspicion and sent in its military troops. Then came a warning from Beijing. The Chinese Communists let their Russian comrades know that they considered military intervention in Poland inappropriate. The Soviet tanks were stopped.
So why did Beijing intervene? And why did it not intervene in Hungary? The Hungarian uprising was a national uprising against communist dictatorship. China gave the Soviets a free hand because they did not want to overthrow the system in a communist country in Europe. In China's view, the Polish unrest was a conflict within the system, within the family, so to speak. Hence China saw no reason to use force. However, a key factor in Chinese policy was the concern that military intervention in Poland would establish the Soviet Union as the sole ruler of the communist world. Certainly, China did not want too much Soviet influence in the Communist world.

When Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Moscow could at least be sure of Beijing's tacit approval. China has an unemotional attitude toward Ukraine as Chinese interests are not directly affected there. Unlike in 1956, however, Beijing has no reason to fear an overly strong Russia. In fact, the opposite is true. The Chinese perception is that Moscow's failure would affect the global balance of power in favor of the West, and Beijing wants to prevent that.

For several centuries, Europe determined world politics and shaped the world order. In the 20th century it lost this ability and America took over. The world in which Europeans have been able to build and enjoy their peace and prosperity was «made in America». Defending it is above all a matter for the Europeans themselves. Because if it is true that the Russian war against Ukraine is about more than the country itself, then the «more» is first and foremost Europe. Do Europeans understand this?

Janusz Reiter is founder and chairman of the independent *Center for International Relations* in Warsaw. 1990 he became the ambassador of Poland to Germany. Later he worked as ambassador to the United States and as Special Envoy for Climate Change. His research focuses on international politics, particularly the transatlantic relationship, Europe, and the German-Polish relations. Another area of interest is climate and energy policy.

Tsitsi Dangarembga Decolonizing the Screen: An Intersectional Approach

In the contemporary globalized, digital era, moving images circulate increasingly freely to express ideas and opinions and convey information. Theoretical discussions of the power that moving images exert in society suggest that this power is derived from the ability of such images to engage a single individual deeply and to engage large numbers of individuals across big populations deeply. [1] As early as 1988, inquiry into moving images discourse suggested that the dominant tradition of the practice, typified by Hollywood, contributed to underpinning social inequality in two demographic categories, namely class and gender. [2]

More recent investigation has inquired into the functioning of other social demographics in film narrative. Prominent amongst these other demographics is the category of race, referred to here as «melanation». «Melanation» here refers to the amount of melanin pigmentation present in a person's skin. This term is used because it is a physiological description, unburdened by the socio-psychological meanings of the word «race», or the colour adjectives commonly used to describe the various members of the category. Findings support the notion that contemporary moving images narrative discriminates systematically against individuals on the basis of the melanin content in their skin, with discrimination taking place at the level of narrative content, access to means, and the functioning of technology, whose interaction causes cause different marginalizations of different demographic populations.

p. 49 — Two students in Fort Myer Elementary School face each other on the first day of desegregation in 1954. Bettmann Archive

Time online of July 24 2020 observes that, «Technologies, such as photographic film, sometimes capture the issues and beliefs and values of the times.»[3] The article goes on to discuss an inbuilt anti-melanin bias in much contemporary image capturing technology, whose result is that highly melanated people are often distorted and rendered unrecognizable or all but invisible. A well known example of this bias is this February 13, 2022 tweet posted by Prince Akamura,[4] an American football player who is a United States citizen of Nigerian heritage. The technology used to take the photograph erased Prince Akamura as a subject, leaving only the two lesser melanated men he is with as prominent, visible subjects of this visual narrative. While the subject of the Akamura tweet is a still photograph, the Times article also refers to digital technology's inability to follow a melanated form.

The first technique of capturing moving images was demonstrated in France in 1895, a decade after the Berlin Conference ended. The Berlin Conference cemented colonization as a politico-economic system of global northern expansion predicated on extractive suppression of melanated people. A key symbolic tactic of this process was negation of melanated people's humanity. The chemical procedures developed to fix visual images on celluloid in the era of colonization resulted in film stock whose dynamic range favored light tones, which rendered dark tones indistinct. Often all features of highly melanated subjects were lost, apart from the whites of the eyes and the teeth. This constituted technological erasure of the melanated human subject at the very onset of moving image capture. This deficit persisted in both still and moving image capture technology following the development of color stock. This erasure persists until today as the newest technologies with increased dynamic range are costly and therefore inaccessible to many, including those who have traditionally been prejudiced by erasing distortion of their physical likeness in photography. In this way photography reflected and supported the operation of the colonial system.

Although colonial France and England, the biggest colonizers of highly melanated people, administered the practice of moving images narrative differently in their African colonies, there

were similarities. In the French colonies, Africans were explicitly forbidden by the Laval Decree of 1934 from making films in Africa (Cassis 2010[5], Ugor 2007[6]). In British colonies, a system of censorship stifled attempts by Africans to engage in film practice (Ugor ibid). Attainment of independence in the 1950s and 1960s by the majority of African countries liberated melanated people on the African continent legally to represent themselves in moving images and to engage, as melanated people in the Americas also engaged, with the inadequacy of the technology for their representation.

The 1960s were a critical period in the African-American civil rights struggle. Desegregation policies, including bussing of melanated children to school in neighborhoods inhabited by lesser-melanated people, that had been initiated in the previous decade were consolidated. African-American mothers in recently integrated schools began to complain about the way their children appeared in school photographs, especially in juxtaposition to lesser-melanated schoolmates. Kodak, the market leader in still and moving images photographic stock at the time, did not pay attention to such complaints until manufacturers of dark-hued commodities such as chocolate and wooden furniture also complained of the narrow dynamic range available. It was only then, in response to the need to photograph commodities rather than human beings more reliably that film stock capable of obtaining definition of darker content was developed.

An anti-melanin bias of moving images narrative is also evident within gender categories. Herbert (2018), observes how «the story of Black women in British mainstream cinema is certainly one of invisibility and misrepresentations»[7]. The same article notes that social institutions are not interested in the work of Black British women filmmakers , so that this group of filmmakers is rendered invisible, where what is invisible is unimportant, not to be spoken of. Herbert states that as of 2018 only four black British women filmmakers had had a cinematic release. She updates this figure to six in a 2020 article [8]. This state of affairs suggests the moving images industry places no value on the lived experiences and struggles of this demographic of human beings, at least not as narrated from their own perspectives.

Zimbabwean NGO, the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa (ICAPA) Trust hosts the International Images Film Festival for Women (IIFF), an annual festival that foregrounds films with a strong female lead, with the objective of narrating female agency to audiences in Zimbabwe and elsewhere on the continent. Research carried out by ICAPA Trust found that between 2013 and 2017, only 17 % of IIFF documentaries, and only 14 % of fiction films with a running time of 45 minutes or longer were made by African women.[9] The 45 minute running time criterion was chosen because a cut-off of 90 minutes, the approximate running time of a feature length film, the number in the fiction category would have been zero.

ICAPA Trust's decolonial, gendered intellectual inquiry and practice in moving images continue with the support of Gabriele Sindler of dfk films. Further research is needed into the presence and absence of melanated women in front of and behind the camera, into the reasons or the absences, and into the nature of their presence across categories such as age, class and nationality. Effects of current diversity, inclusion and equality programs on different melanated women's participation in the socially influential sector of moving images narrative requires further evaluation.

The author, director and cultural activist Tsitsi Dangarembga lives and works in Zimbabwe, USA and Germany. She attended Cambridge University and Sidney Sussex College before studying psychology at the University of Zimbabwe and screenwriting and directing at the German Television Academy Berlin. She co-founded the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa (ICAPA) Trust. In 2003, she founded the International Film Festival for Women in Harare, Zimbabwe, a festival that screens films featuring female protagonists and offers training programs.

All sources cited [1–9] can be found online.

Elisabeth Bronfen

Haunting Journey into the Past: Ydessa Hendeles and her «Grand Hotel» in Venice

Midway through my stay at the HIAS I took a flight to Venice to see «Grand Hotel» in the Spazio Berlendis, one of the collateral exhibitions at the Biennale. The Polish Canadian artist Ydessa Hendeles had told me about her project during conversations the previous fall and it immediately resonated with my own fascination for my mother's photo albums.

In them, she had meticulously documented scenes of recreation with my father and their friends that took place in Bavaria in the aftermath of WWII. In Hamburg, I had been walking up and down the Rothenbaumchaussee and the adjacent streets for weeks, stopping over and again at the many Stolpersteine paving the way. Stooping down, so as better to read the names on the brass plates, I couldn't help but imagine the lives of the Jewish people who used to inhabit these stylish buildings, now reminiscent of the irrevocable destruction of their world. My own journey into a haunted past had already begun and so it made sense to follow Ydessa Hendeles' personal excursion into the remains of history.

The voyage begins with a black-and-white photograph. It is the point of departure but also the narrative frame for the passage into what the artist calls a «nether space between documentary and fantasy». The photo was taken in the summer of 1946, fifteen months after her parents were liberated from Bergen-Belsen. They are seated on the front bumper of the second-hand 1938 Opel with which they took road trips with family and friends through Hessen and Bavaria until the early 1950s, when they emigrated to Canada. Her mother is holding her pet dog on her lap. The expressions on the faces of the three couples vary. Some are smiling outright; others are simply looking into the camera with the determination of the living. If we take this photo to document that the scene which the camera has captured took place, it also signifies that although they were there they no longer are. Furthermore, the photograph contains an extraordinary moment of survival, a tourist experience against the backdrop of mass destruction, a fragile sense of hope. Yet it contains this scene in another sense as well, controlling and restraining the intensities the image preserves. Only the auto-biographical information Hendeles offers in her notes to «Grand Hotel» allow us to surmise what we don't see. Her parents are tourists in the summer of 1946, but a few years earlier they were deportees, with a suitcase in hand, going on a journey to a place of ultimate horror. The photograph thus holds my attention both because of what it tells, namely their wish to document their enjoyment of a motoring trip in former enemy territory; but also because of what the freedom of travel they now enjoy screens off.

«Grand Hotel» invites me to take a multi-layered journey into the past. At the end of the corridor where this snapshot is placed, I encounter a painting of Jewish merchants in a small village in Ukraine at the end of the 19th century. Turning to the right, I find myself looking at a brief sequence from found documentary footage, depicting a man carrying a goose under his right arm on a street in Muncacs, Hungary. Two scenes of Jewish life in a world that no longer exists. Turning to the left, my eye is immediately caught by a VW with

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p. 53 — Architectural model, 19th century. Wood, pressed paper, glass, iron, electric lights

Volkswagen Type 1, «The Beetle,» 1953, in pearl paint finish and with a split «Brezel» rear window

Village Merchants: Street of Yarmolyntsi in Podolia, 1897. Franz Roubaud (Ukrainian-Russian, born 1856 in Odessa, died 1928 in Munich)

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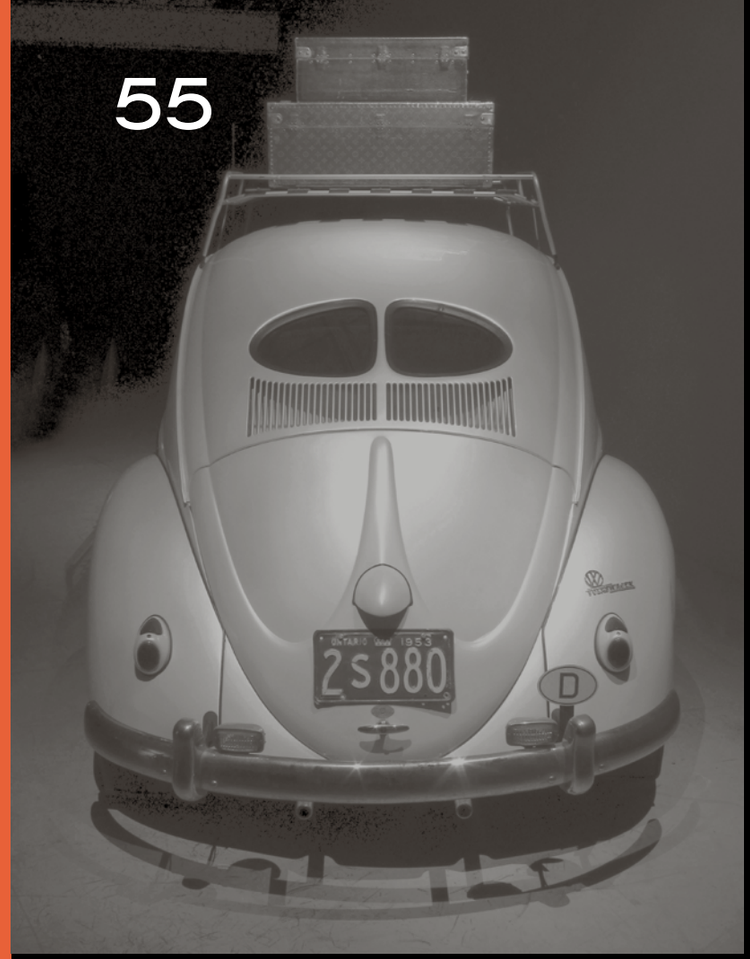


Elisabeth Bronfen is Professor Emerita at the University of Zurich and Global Distinguished Professor at New York University. Her research is in English, American, and Comparative literature from the 18th century to the present. Her interest in gender studies, cultural analysis, psychoanalysis, visual culture, and intermedia studies includes monographs on the aesthetic representations of feminine death, on hysteria as a form of artistic expression, on the cultural history of the night, on Hollywood genre cinema, on contemporary TV drama as well as on literary and cinematic representations of pandemics. She publishes countless essays for exhibition catalogues, as well as her cooking memories and a novel.

Ydessa Hendeles is a Polish-Canadian artist, curator and philanthropist who was born in Germany. She is also the founding director of the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation in Toronto, Ontario and an adjunct professor in the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto.

a pearl paint finish and two pieces of Louis Vuitton luggage on the hood of the car. Ontario 1953 is written on the license plate. To reach it, however, I have to pass by the portrait of the Empress Elizabeta, painted in 1750. A large, pear-shaped baroque pearl is at the center of the elaborate devant de corsage she is wearing; the piece of jewelry pinned to her bodice. This detail holds my attention because Hendeles has paired it with a similar baroque pearl, fashioned into a dog-form pendant, studded with diamonds and rubies. The vitrine in which it is exhibited is meticulously placed to draw out the dialog between these two objects, but also between this jewel and the exquisite Louis Vuitton picnic set, also exhibited in a vitrine, along which I pass on the way to the VW.

The fantasy world I have stepped into is so perfectly composed that it seems real. What is produced is not a virtual site but a staged world, anchored in historical knowledge, interweaving personal memory with collective historical imagination. A complex network of conversations emerges between worlds that no longer exist and the ambivalent aura surrounding them that remains, drawn out and enhanced by virtue of the curatorial composition of the objects — the Eastern-European Shtetl, the Russian court and the paraphernalia of luxury tourism of the early 20th century. The car in the family snapshot resonates with its pearlized double, the dog with the exquisite jewel. To augment the sense of fantasy, Hendeles is strict regarding the height of the exhibited objects, the color inside the vitrines she designs for them and, above all, the lighting, meant to produce a glamorous glow; but also reflections on the glass and shadows on the wall and the floor. In the way the selected objects are placed in relation to each other, I discern what I have come to call crossmapping. By virtue of visual analogies the objects speak to each other and this dialog, in turn, speaks to me, the spectator. The objects contain intensities and the stories they evoke engender a multi-vocal narrative that I, in turn, am encouraged to further develop for myself.

As I turn away from the VW, I find myself facing an architectural folly of a Grand Hotel which serves as the threshold to the last part of the exhibition — an assemblage of baggage by Louis Vuitton, flanked on the right by a portrait of Nicolas I. of Russia, and on the left, by a portrait of his wife, Empress Alexandra. Each painting, in turn, is accompanied by a collapsible toiletry case, reducing the aristocratic figures to these accoutrements of grand travel. At the end of the cul de sac I find myself standing in front of the boiserie, salvaged from a sale at the Grand Hotel Continental in Munich, when it closed in 1994. A hand-woven silk rug hangs from one of the panels and on it lies a «neonate phantom figure», the wooden manikins used in teaching obstetrics at the beginning of the 20th century. Through these material re-

mains of the past, history remains, tarries with us, appeals to us, asks us to look, to take note of connections between the various scenes. The crossmapping proposes a shifting view, a revisitation of the past that appeals to our capacité imaginaire. We weren't there, but we can imagine the experiences invoked by the curatorially assembled and composed objects. And because the exhibition space is a cul de sac, when I retrace my steps on my way out, I once again pass by the luggage, the vitrines, the portraits. The manikin and the pearlized VW compel me to reconsider the fragile hope I want to see on the faces of the people in the photograph at the entrance.

Two films come to mind as my personal frame for this journey into the past. At the end of Grand Hotel, directed by Edmund Goulding in1932, the war veteran, who is a permanent resident, notes: «People come, people go. Nothing ever happens». For us, watching it, however, something did happen. For the duration of the film, this Grand Hotel in Berlin brought together a group of people, whose fate was decided there: A Baron, who, because he has squandered his fortune, has become a petty thief. An accountant, who wants to spend his last days in luxury because he is terminally ill. An industrialist, who expects to close an advantageous deal. His stenographer, who is hoping for a more prosperous future. And a Russian ballerina, who contemplates suicide because her career is waning. Some find love or companionship. Others are murdered or arrested by the police. Some of them might well have arrived with Vuitton luggage. In this 1930s film, the Grand Hotel has become a place where the luxury it affords is not just available to a mixed class of people. The fact that they only temporarily enjoy this home away from home also draws attention to the transitory nature of this elegance.

With this film in mind, I notice something else about the pieces of luggage. Stickers of the places the former owner has visited. Exquisitely designed monograms that indicate the initials of a name. But we don't know who the owners are nor what became of them. The assemblage of bags becomes uncanny, recalls phantom people, who once used them but are no longer there. They signify the remains of a past hovering over them like a spectre. One piece of luggage has many drawers for shoes, another small one has several hangers. As Ydessa Hendeles suggest, it could be the coffin for the baby manikin. The exhibition space recalls a storage room. But it is also the archive for stories. Each piece of luggage is the starting point of an untold narrative about those who used it to transport what they needed on their journey—like the toiletry cases, the nécessaire de voyage, which are coupled with the portraits of Russian royalty. Each piece is a layered symbol—it implies the idea of leisure. But it also serves as the glamorous cover for a different exhibition of suitcases. Those behind glass vitrines in the museum in Auschwitz.

Goose! (still), 2023

What is Water? A River Walk

by
Tobias Schmitt
Katrin Singer

Hamburg, its port, its Hanseatic and colonial history, and its tourist attractions are all inextricably linked to the Elbe. We (mostly) take water for granted, yet it is a vital commodity. Water is life and brings death. Water can take on all aggregate states and forms, yet it slips through our fingers when we attempt to grasp it. Like water, the various representations and narratives of water are fluid and fluidic.

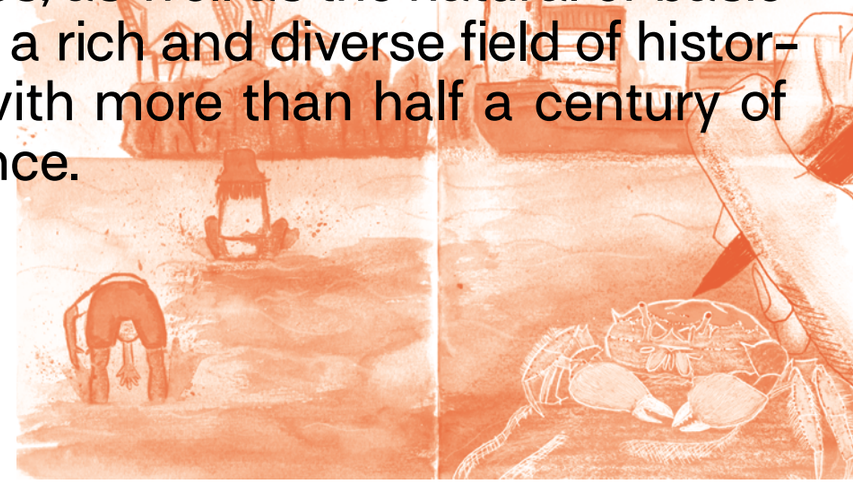
What, then, is this substance that we call water? To answer these questions, we embarked on a journey to the River Elbe, the lifeline of the city of Hamburg. During this expedition, we engaged in a theoretical and artistic-creative exploration of the river, the water and ourselves. The theoretical and conceptual considerations (Schmitt 2022) led to the development of a river walk by Tobias Schmitt (conducted in German), which we used to move along the Elbe, discussing, photographing and painting along the way. Therefore, this article is a translation of the audio walk and an invitation to readers to set out and follow the water themselves. We invite you to open up to the ideas that flow, and to ask yourself what a more amphibious life might look like …

The question of the origin and destination of water has been the subject of considerable debate. What images do you associate with the concept of the water cycle? It is fair to say that most people will immediately think of a diagram with a sea, mountains, rivers, lakes and arrows, illustrating the eternal water cycle. Do you see human beings within your conceptual framework? What is the objection to this representation?

It is not intended to negate the hydrological cycle or declare it false, but to distinguish between representation and reality. The water cycle remains one of the most powerful representations of ‹modern water› as Jamie Linton (2010) has termed it. However, it is crucial to recognize that the water cycle is not a neutral scientific concept. Rather, it is a social construct with political implications that has emerged in a specific historical and social context. It is based on a particular understanding of nature, is linked to particular interests and uses a particular form of expertise.

This has led to the creation of a scientific discipline centred on the water cycle, which has privileged a specific, predominantly engineering-related body of knowledge,

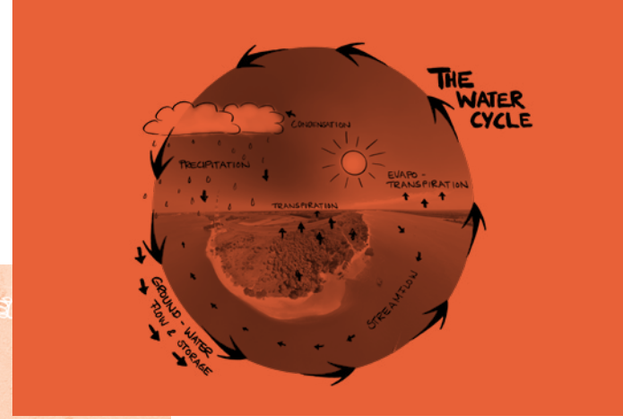
Environmental history is a field that transcends disciplinary boundaries, connecting researchers from the humanities and social sciences, as well as the natural or basic sciences. It is a rich and diverse field of historical studies with more than half a century of formal existence.



legitimized certain forms of water use and promoted the institutionalization of water governance and management. We have learned to understand water through certain scientific discourses and representations, which have led to the perception of water as timeless and ahistorical, as well as natural and untouched by social conditions. In his book «H20 and the Waters of Forgetfulness», the theologian and philosopher Ivan Illich describes how modern society has developed the idea of water as a scientific abstraction, thereby demystifying this substance called water. This process effectively erased the water's historical context, making it difficult to comprehend water's «deep imagination» (Illich 1985: 75). The abstraction of concrete social contexts also made it possible to understand water as a resource at all. Furthermore, the progressive commodification, valorization and privatization of water within a capitalist mode of production is also based on the concept of water as an entity that can be separated and delimited from nature, which can be measured, owned, valued and sold (Köhler 2008: 20).

Since our bodies mainly consist of water, we cannot treat water as an independent, sovereign subject. The concept of the «irrevocable dependence of man on water» challenges the traditional dichotomy between man and water and between man and nature. It suggests an existential, intimate, and embodied relationship between these entities that is no longer clearly defined as internal and external. As Alfred North Whitehead observed: «We are in the world and the world is in us» (Whitehead 1934 as cited in Linton 2010: 224). Water has always been both a material and an ideal component of thinking, naming and imagining. Water is involved in all the physical processes (such as the provision of nutrients and oxygen, digestion or the regulation of body temperature) and mental processes (such as the transmission of neurotransmitters) of human existence. It also provides the imagination for thinking in movement and fluidity.

Understanding the human body as a «body of water» (Neimanis 2013) also means understanding how we are embedded in a (natural) world in a very material way. The water that we absorb and excrete, that flows through us and keeps us alive, connects us beyond the boundaries of our bodies to other human, animal, plant, geophysical and meteorological bodies of water. The presence of water



Water is a kind of teacher or guide that leads and unites the struggles for decolonization.

serves to blur the boundaries that are typically perceived as stable and absolute, and to facilitate the mediation between different scalar and temporal levels. Water plays a pivotal role in both cellular osmosis and planetary circulation. It connects freshly fallen rainwater with centuries-old groundwater reservoirs and can constantly switch back and forth between different aggregate states. Water thus acts as a mediator between entities, «because water knows no borders; because it not only moves in a complex natural world cycle, but also flows through the bodies of all people and living beings at every moment, as well as the bodies of societies, houses and factories, cities and villages, and because this anthropogenic cycle is inevitably included in the natural cycle of water and changes it at the same time» (Böhme 1988: 9).

Understanding the mutual influence of water and society can be taken even further. Rather than assuming a pre-existing relationship between water and society, where the two entities exist independently of each other and only engage with each other as such, we propose that water and societies emerge from reciprocal relationships: the constitution of societies depends on their relationships with water. Rather than simply flowing through streets, factories, homes and bodies, water plays a constitutive role in organizing and structuring social relations, imaginations and cultures. The seasonal rhythm of precipitation regimes and rivers can determine the rhythm of economic activities, eating habits, transport options and accessibility, festivals, and anniversaries. This, in turn, creates identities and social formations.

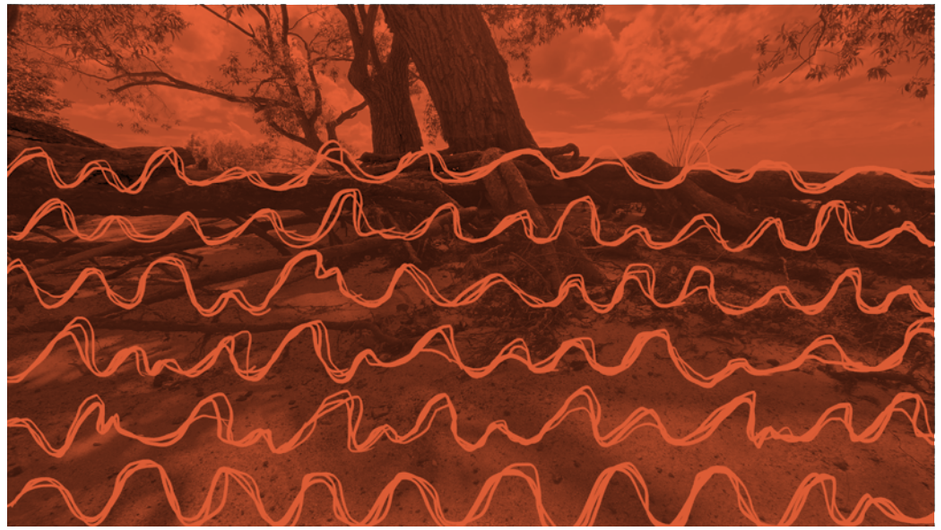
Conversely, the specific conception of water, its material and discursive constitution, emerges from social relations. Consequently, water and its particular physical and chemical properties can only be produced with specific knowledge, technologies, cultural, spiritual, economic and political arrangements, and concern for the unique needs of the human body. Water manifests in a variety of ways: as H2O, as one of the four elements, as drinking water, as a source of life, as a river, as a snake, as a limited entity, as a holistic system, as a flood, as God's punishment, and so on (Schmitt 2017).

This co-constitution of hydro-social relations (Linton & Budds 2014) is always contingent on historical and socio-material conditions. The characteristics of water arrangements vary according to the geographical context. For instance, the water arrangements in desert regions differ from those in tropical rainforests, while those in island regions differ from those in mountainous regions. Similarly, water arrangements in agrarian, spiritual societies differ from those in urban, modern and secularised societies. However, such a co-constitution implies that water can only be integrated into the hydro-social relations through the prevailing material conditions. The fundamental properties of water are its ability to follow the force of gravity, its capacity to dissolve substances, its tendency to change its aggregate state in response to temperature, its tendency to mix and change its quality, its specific surface tension, its density anomaly and its conductivity. The materiality of water thus allows it to enter into relationships with human and non-human actors and to constitute connections.

At a meeting of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous communities protesting against the diversion of the São Francisco River in north-eastern Brazil, Marcos Sabaru, representing the Tingui-Botó Indigenous community, gave a speech from which the following extract is taken:

«Talking about the Rio São Francisco is an honour for me because I am talking about my home. Because from our point of view, the Indigenous point of view, there is no river, no human being, no animal, and there are no plants. It is all one entity. For us (...) the river is a sacred place, a dwelling place for us humans, a source of life, a source of food. So sometimes it bothers me when people talk about the river and use words like water resources. I think we should not talk about the river as if it were just water. We should talk about the river as a people. We should talk about the river as a bank, a human being, a fish (...) We should understand that it's all one and not just talk about water, water, water and forget about the people, the living beings, the shore, the faith» (Sabaru 2008: own recording).

Understanding water as a unifying element that transcends the boundaries between human bodies, rivers, fish, trees and clouds, between the material and the social dimension, may seem challenging to those who espouse ‹enlightened›, ‹modern› thinking. In many Indigenous ontologies, however, relationships and mutual responsibility are deeply embedded. Two feminist Indigenous scholars, Melanie Yazzie and Cutcha Risling Baldy, have



described this way of thinking as ‹radical relationality›. This concept holds that the self can only be thought of and experienced as part of the other, and that the other always exists as part of the self. In this context, Yazzie and Risling Baldy conceptualize the relationship with water as a form of kinship based on responsibility, reciprocity, and respect:

«We conceive of radical relationality as a term that brings together the multiple strands of materiality, kinship, corporeality, affect, land/body connection, and multidimensional connectivity coming primarily from Indigenous feminists» (ibid. 2018: 2).

Water is a kind of teacher or guide that leads and unites the struggles for decolonization. For example, the slogan «Mni Wiconi — Water is Life» was central to the resistance against the Dakota Access Pipeline in the United States. It unified several hundred Indigenous groups and allowed them to unite their different struggles, origins, and orientations. In Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Whanganui River was legally recognized as a distinct entity in 2017, following a 140-year struggle by the Māori to have their relationship with the river recognized (Wilson & Inkster 2018). Recognizing rivers as subjects with inherent values, rights, and voices, a notion advocated in countries like India, Ecuador, and Colombia, demonstrates a deep respect for Indigenous ontologies and their principles of reciprocity, responsibility, and respect. This actively challenges the Western anthropocentric perspective focused on (property) thinking.

At the same time, Indigenous scholars such as Sarah Hunt have highlighted the potential dangers and pitfalls of uncritically adopting and appropriating Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. If Indigenous concepts are used merely as a source of inspiration, without acknowledging the complex knowledge systems, lived practices and experiences of Indigenous peoples embedded within them, and without challenging the dominance of Western structures and knowledge systems, then the reference to Indigenous ontologies ultimately constitutes a form of ‹epistemic violence› (Hunt 2014).

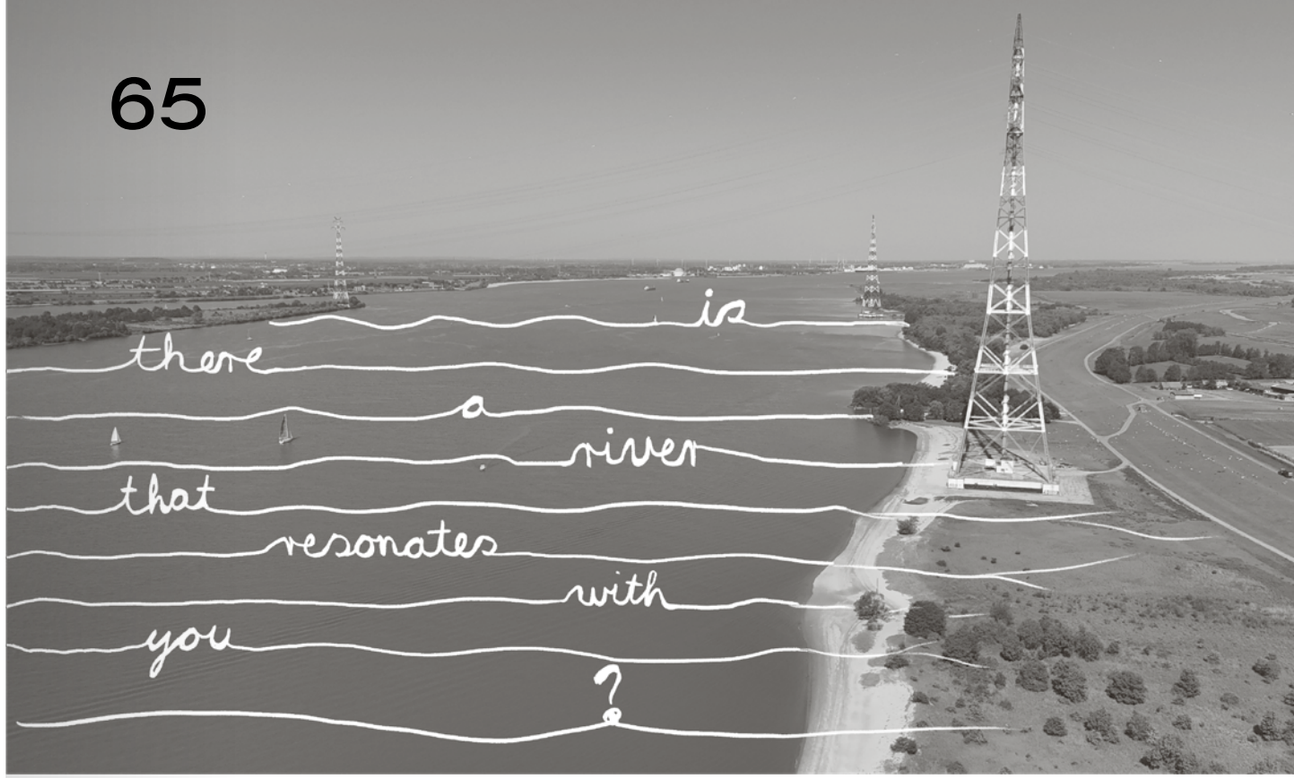
In her book «Confluencing Worlds», Katrin Singer also highlights the potential dangers of exoticizing and appropriating Indigenous (water) ontologies from a Western perspective. She combines her analysis with reflections on her own positionality, the dangers of complicity with the coloniality of knowledge, and questions about the (im)possibility of unlearning dominant Western ways of thinking and interpreting (Singer 2019).

The water debate is not just an object of social discourse. Instead, it can be used to illuminate the interconnections between social relations and the natural world, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the relationality of social relations to nature. For instance, Jessica Hallenbeck notes that «centering water opens up space for political and relational attention toward the bodies, beings, stories, and histories that run through it» (Hallenbeck 2015 as cited in Stevenson 2018: 103). Recognizing the existential importance of water for all life and the regenerative power of water also implies that the concept of an agency of water is no longer a mere epistemological consideration, but rather a significant aspect of water relations. The concept of water challenges the traditional understanding of clearly definable, fixed, separate and constant entities and opnes up new possibilities for fluidity, circulation, the indeterminate and the boundless. The concept of «thinking relationships through water», as articulated by Franz Krause and Veronica Strang (2016), can help to overcome dichotomous thinking and facilitate the identification of connections that might otherwise remain obscured.

Katrin Singer is a postdoc at the University of Hamburg. Her geographical work is inspired by theoretical thinking from the fields of critical geography and feminist political ecology. Along a spectrum of cartographic, artistic and methods, she follows ethnographic traces and river-based research in Europe and South America.

Tobias Schmitt is a geographer and part of the working group «Critical Geographies of Global Inequalities» at the Institute of Geography at Universität Hamburg. His focus is on political ecology and post- and decolonial theories, whereby reflections on water permeate many of his works.

Listen the
Audio Walk along
the river.



67 *«Oh My God! It's Brain!»* HIAS chef Leoni is having one of her «kitchen talks» with Emily Jones

Leoni **First of all, I would like to know where you come from, what brought you here and so on, just so that we know who we're dealing with today.**

Emily Jones So, originally, I'm from Indiana in the U.S.A. but I live in Washington State in a very small town called Walla Walla.

That sounds very cute.

It is named from one of the local Native American tribes that originally occupied the area, so that means that we also have a lot of wonderful food and besides my work, food is a big passion of mine, so this is very exciting for me. And then professionally, I wanted to come to HIAS because it is such an amazing opportunity, the fellowship is great, but also because I have a long-standing love affair with this city. I spent a year here in 2002–03 as a student at the university and everything that I have done since then has been with the goal of getting back to Hamburg for some time. *So, I'm very happy to be back here in the Land of Franzbrötchen!* Here at HIAS I am working on a new book that will hopefully help us to think differently about the relationship between plants and people through the specific question of plant propagation. So, I am looking at seeds and especially the kinds of plants that just grow everywhere, those things that we call weeds. And that's a category I want to challenge with this work. So now we know.

Is there anything like a favorite food from your childhood? Or something that makes you think of your parents or of being at home?

Definitely. So, this is a big topic in my family because my mom is also an excellent cook, she actually started cooking family dinners for her family when she was, I think, 12 or something like that, when she was pretty young. She has a long family tradition of Appalachian and Southern food. And that's really the kind of food tradition that I grew up with. Things like green beans that have been cooked with a little bit of pork. They're very, very soft and most people would say that's not the proper way to cook green beans, but they're very delicious that way. I grew up in the Ohio River Valley, just downstream from Cincinnati, and we always had Cincinnati-style chili growing up, which is very, very different from a Tex-Mex chili. So, when most people in the United States say chili, what they think of is big chunks of beef and lots of peppers and big chunks of onions and so forth, and something that's very, very spicy. But the chili that I grew up with is finely ground meat, tomatoes, onions, maybe, but not always, red beans, and it's got the spice blend that I read somewhere came from the influence of Greek immigrants to the area that has cinnamon in it. So, it's almost sweet but it's got a little bit of spice to it and then you finish it with a little bit of chocolate.

Is there anything you will always have in your fridge?

I always have cheese in my fridge, usually at least four or five different kinds. I always have Parmesan because I cook a lot of pasta, partly because I love it and partly because it's fast and easy and the kids will actually eat it. Here in Germany, I always have a couple of different kinds of classic breakfast cheeses, Gouda, Butterkäse, nothing very respectable, but delicious. And then I usually have one kind of fancy cheese that I bought for some fancy occasion, so right now there's a little block of Taleggio, that I hope to eat with some fancy crackers I got in an Italian shop.

Is there anything you would not eat? Like never?

So, this also goes back to local food traditions from growing up. The town that I grew up in is famous for its brain sandwiches. Pork or veal brains. And I would never ever eat it in one million years. And for what?

Is it just because of the brain thing? Have you tried it?

Oh my god, it's brain! I also grew up when mad cow disease was kind of a big story in the news. I find the smell of it very upsetting. And I'm sure there are social pressures too, like the people who eat it are not people that I would associate with very much, which is an incredibly snobby thing to say. But no, so my hometown has the second biggest street festival in the US after Mardi Gras. And they sell all kinds of bizarre foods there. It was the first place I ever saw alligator, like alligator nuggets or ostrich burgers. But they always have brain sandwiches there. So that's something I would never ever eat.

What food would you take with you from Hamburg when you go back?

Franzbrötchen!

Yeah, I knew that.

So, what food I absolutely will take back with me is a suitcase full of chocolate. Chocolate here is delicious and not nearly as expensive as similar quality chocolate at home. It is my favorite.

Emily Jones is Associate Professor of German Studies and Environmental Humanities at Whitman College. Her research engages with contemporary literature's engagement with the environment. She is interested in the intersections between literature, art, history, and the natural sciences, particularly in the way that these various modes of interacting with the world can work together toward a more ethical engagement with the other than human world in the era of the climate crisis.

Leoni Schmitz — a studied designer — is known throughout Europe as a «multitool» with experience in journalism, PR, graphics, community management and street music. For almost 20 years, she has been cooking in other people's kitchens for — and often with — people who are strangers at first, but who have become friends by the end of the day!

Listen and read the entire conversation online.

not without:

my passport. In communist-ruled Poland, the passport was a symbol of freedom, of the freedom to travel, and it was either dosed or even withheld by those in power. I waited years for it. For most people in Poland it is now just a document, but for me it is still a piece of freedom.
Janusz Reiter

Janusz Reiter is founder and chairman of the independent *Center for International Relations* in Warsaw. 1990 he became the ambassador of Poland to Germany. Later he worked as ambassador to the United States and as Special Envoy for Climate Change. His research focuses on international politics, particularly the transatlantic relationship, Europe, and the German-Polish relations. Another area of interest is climate and energy policy.

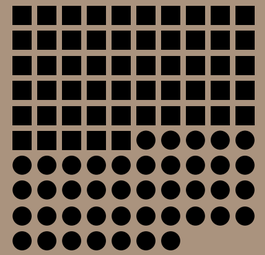
In 2025, HIAS celebrates its fifth anniversary! It was founded by eight member institutions with the ambition to make Hamburg even better known as a location of research in the world, to invite excellent researchers and artists to get to know the diverse research here and to network — across disciplines and career levels and from all over the world. HIAS also aims to promote cooperation between the various scientific institutions. That was the idea.

Has it been a success? For five years now, fellows, their tandem partners and colleagues from all over the world, politicians, public intellectuals and journalists have been meeting at HIAS's two premises in Rothenbaumchaussee and Mittelweg to discuss research projects, visions for the future, administrative challenges as well as crises and opportunities in different countries. These discussions always take place on an equal footing and with mutual respect. Curiosity, interest, compassion and often joy fill the rooms. People discuss, eat and drink together. HIAS has been a protective space for all of this since it was founded. This year we are celebrating this special place and planning the years to come ...

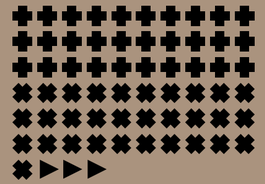
Some facts and figures from five years of HIAS.

5 years of HIAS in figures

97 Fellows
55 Men
42 Women



30 Partners
21 Kids
3 Dogs



108
#Thursday Colloquia

11
#Tuesday Spotlights

46
Conferences, Workshops, Round Tables, Seminar Series & Panel Discussions

3
Summer Schools

2
Opera premieres

4
Art Exhibitions

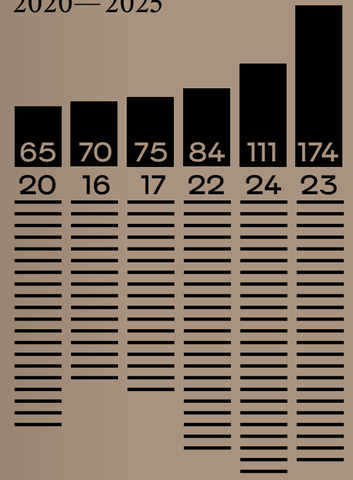
11
Book Launches

3+19
3 Bands/Ensembles and 19 active musicians

8 Kitchen Talks

Consumption of
342 cloves of garlic
80 litres of cream
136 packets of butter
1,776 espressos

Number of applications
2020 — 2025



Number of countries from which applications originate

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