

A
WALL
PART 4

NEAN'S WRITINGS
on
NeanSite

Earlier and later versions of the same painting, grand total of 17 oils and 10 gouaches from 1949 until 1961, exist under the same or other titles, such as: *Hommage belge au crépuscule de l'impérialisme*, *Surréalité de l'indépendance congolaise*, *Et in Wallonia negro*, *Le petit René vous explique Héraclite*, etc.

Whereas to Hegel, identities cannot be defined without opposites and thereby are endowed with an immanent dialectical “calling” to reach their optimal definition through processed change, Heraclitus emphasises the necessity of contrasts, not opposites, whose dynamic, as in the Yin and Yang philosophies, is exempted from teleological navigation. Roni Horn does the same, she copied Heraclitus. Taking another photograph of a sitter immediately after she has photographed that person or animal, and exhibiting the two near-identical images next to one another, the artist magnifies the slightest differences into amazing pools of interest. Art historical essay question: *Is Roni Horn an Impressionist and a Surrealist?* We think (at least) “twice” about visual and/or notional ideas, about which clichés would prefer us to think (at the most) once. For instance, tiredness and discomfort are customarily experienced as the opposite of being rested and well-being, because we think about them in disturbing circumstances, not in other circumstances where they may be perceptible through subtle variations. Nevertheless, a prevalence of polarised perceptions does not affect perceived phenomena to the extent that what the perceived phenomena actually are, at a particular time and in a particular place, happens in relation to perception at the expense of all other factors. Furthermore, though tiredness and discomfort are universally defined as unpleasant experiences which most people would prefer to avoid when they can, attempts to temper with them in careful programmes that should eliminate their perceived negativity are not going to work. If medication or doping are taken to alleviate tiredness, messages sent by tiredness to the whole body will not be decoded but ignored, a hazardous censorship. As for warnings, they won’t be heeded. Without health, one would manage to get rid of disease. Maybe a highly desirable outcome, but what could be the gain in eradicating disease when the process eradicates health? By eliminating all lies, errors and inaccuracies, one could finally destroy truth. To strive for a universal definition of happiness with the intent of securing the highest common good, as if such a phenomenon could exist and be defined in contradistinction to conflicting phenomena rated as opposites, of which we may dispose at will, is under that philosophical angle a non sequitur. Eudaemonia no more blesses our divided humankind than truth, the philosophers’ highest common good, rewards them for their never-ending efforts. As soon as one claims to have found it, all start to bicker and turn again one another. In short, the Heraclitian idea of interconnectedness compromises ontology and raises the profile of an underrated principle: non-being. What does being’s dependency on non-being signify for Heraclitus? Permanent change: *flux*. Heraclitus understood life’s force as fire whose cyclical transformations create the other elements: earth, water and air. And as a result, he understood the mutating manifestations of life’s force as strife. Fire is aggressive, it does not wear plucked flowers in its hair and sways or holds clammy hands singing: *Love, love, love... Love, love, love... Love, love, love...* It burns physically and metaphorically scalds and blisters. The term Πόλεμος (this essay, for example, is

polemical) which Heraclitus uses in fragment 53, translates as war or strife. *War ["polemos"] is father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men; he makes some slaves, others free.*

Fragment 80 allocates an overall importance to an impulse that, centuries later, Freud called the aggressive drive (*Aggressionstrieb*): *One must realise that war is common and justice strife ["polemos"] and that all things come to be through strife ["polemos"] and are (so) ordained.* No great inclination towards consensus or conciliation in this statement, none. Reading the two fragments together highlights the Heraclitian defiance towards ontological tautology; there is not such a thing as a slave or a king or even a god. Slaves become free as soon as their bonds are broken, they may have been born into slavery as a result of past or recent war or strife and in as much, certainly not in essence, happened to have become enslaved. Another war or strife (insurrection, rebellion) may radically change that status. By the same token, their new status will have no other foundation and no higher justification than the previous; since both are not endowed with an intrinsic merit, but have been obtained through strife or war. Considering that no status, be it inherited and defended or fought for and acquired, is destined to last forever; the Heraclitian concept of war bestows an anarchic flavour to life's force and what we make of it. Power, like any other phenomenon taken out of context, is devoid of hierarchical validity and struggles for meaning; whereas changes in power, and any powerful change, have contextual relevance. Power therefore, like any other phenomenon, has no value in itself and for itself, but gains value that can never be all negative or all positive through transformations. If not always changing powers, then powers to change have their finger on the pulse of life. How did Nietzsche cope with this attractive Heraclitian amoral element? How cautiously did he interpret it? The answer is: by throwing all caution to the wind. Polemos does not have to be violent, superior or cruel; strife or war means that exchanges will always have to take place and that no resulting exchanges, however desirable or superior they may be deemed by supporting or detracting parties, may halt and take over permanent flux. In that dynamic, *der Übermensch* could only be a phase or an opinion, a short-lived aim. Exchange is not an aim, but a modality. Fragment 90: *The totality of things [says Heraclitus] is an exchange for fire, and fire an exchange for all things, in the way goods (are an exchange) for gold, and gold for goods.* All things are not morally or intrinsically better than fire and fire is not morally or intrinsically better than all things, in the way that all things (e.g. goods) are worth what they can be exchanged for (e.g. gold) but have no worth in themselves. Biologists use the term *food chain* to account for inter-species communications and inter-connections. Species adapt to circumstances that modify the *food chain*, through these changes one or the other gains or loses power; better expressed: all gain and lose power and no one adapted species gains or loses all power.

The *food chain* is polemos, polemos is food chain; polemos, a.k.a. the *food chain* is distribution of power, whose worth is not power itself but its distribution in form of exchanges.

A more detailed interpretation of polemos is tentative to surmise, in that some of the fragments are only known through authors, who have relayed them to a written tradition whose reliability is questionable, in particular, interpreting inter-species relatability on the strength of fragment 4, written in Latin by Albert the Great in *De Vegetatione*, and fragment 9 written by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, since these fragments are second, if not third or nth hand. Fragment 9 makes sense when we recall that, for Heraclitus, nothing has an intrinsic significance, values are contingent on a series of transformations. Yet, to interpret further what could have been meant about the relations between human and non-humans, in that case animals, invites the risk of sheer speculation: *[For the pleasure of horse, dog, and man are different things, according to Heraclitus, who says that] donkeys would prefer refuse gold.* At any rate, the quote seems to discard hedonism in that the importance attributed to a type of pleasure reflects on the person or animal enjoying it, and has no other worth than that person's or animal's enjoyment, which appears to be confirmed by fragment 13b delivered by Clement, in *Stromateis*. Fragment 13b: *Pigs enjoy filth more than they do pure water.* To be disgusted by pigs because they "enjoy filth" shows either (zoological) ignorance or lack of logic. And if we transfer that thought to another historical context, namely to the current ideological discourse on diversity: misunderstanding or lack of open-mindedness, when terms of abuse and loaded expressions remove objective intent from names and categories. Pure water is a deceptive idea. Dogs shall drink rain water gathered in a puddle; that their tongue lifts some of the mud when it laps up the liquid does not disturb them. However, if clear water containing invisible chemicals is poured in a bowl, they will smell them and refuse to drink. Polemos and eudaemonia are not meant for each another. No eudaemonia for Heraclitus, but daemonia all the same. To the extent to which some or most pigs generically behave as the species into which they were born, thereby accepting and fulfilling their fate (daimon), enjoying filth (food which is unpalatable to humans) is normal and true to their characteristics and character (ethos/arete). Accepting and fulfilling one's fate, for animals and humans, rather than being uncomfortable with or resentful of the kind of being which one has been apportioned by chance, has a positive influence on one's daimon. There is no eudaemonia as such, acceptance of one's fate, which entails following one's character or disposition, is daemonia's eudaemonic dimension. If and only if, those oppressed yearn for freedom and agree that freedom deserves to be fought for, rather than being merely given, then they are acting according to character, whereby rebellion against their condition is a true and worthwhile part of their fate. An overturned fate therefore necessitates the acceptance of any kind of fate in the sense that fate, however adverse, is like everything else subject to change which has to be initiated through strife. Even though daemonia can be eudaemonic, eudaemonia contains no eudaemonia; it projects what it would like to be from a hollow center where panting desires get out of breath. Happiness is an attractive misconception, accepting hardship as part of any fate and fighting hardship according to one's nature or character (ethos/arete), if it is in one's nature to do so, enables a fulfilled life that can contain (among other things) a measure of true and just happiness against which, however, wishful thinking and rampant hedonism shall resentfully compete.

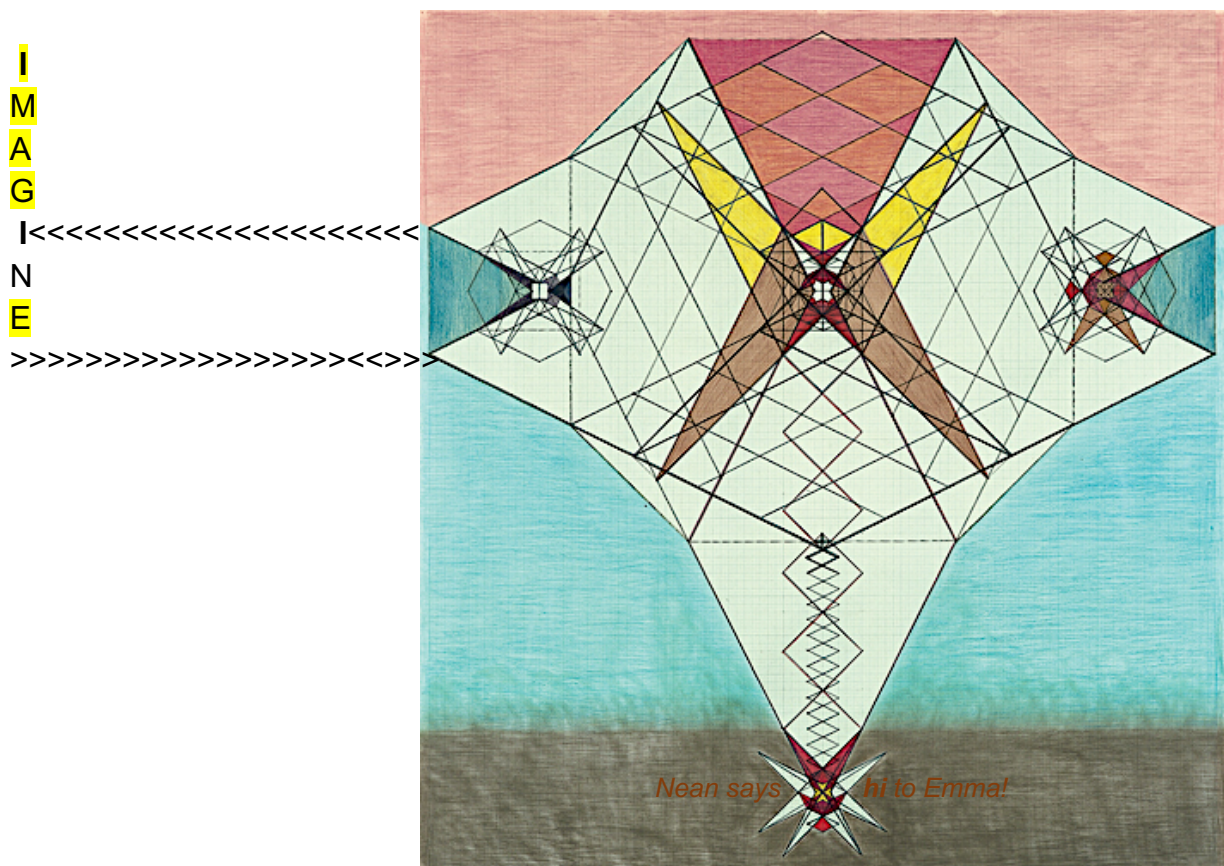
Bibliographical reference: *Heraclitus of Ephesos, Fragments, Greek text with English translation and commentary by Thomas More Robinson*, Toronto 1987.

So, why does a fulfilled life contain among other things happiness, rather than simply being a life fulfilled by happiness? Because between our origins and ourselves, between our deepest and oldest interconnections and ourselves, at all the points where moments of happiness can be gleaned, there are WALLS. But be these walls as shaky as this link, or sturdy or heavyset like brutes, their enabled filtering and deflecting functions shall not be diminished by length or strength. Undeniably, we have a good idea that change is necessarily afoot, for instance from genetics; yet by evaluating change according to the prevailing criterion that it should be positive, we deprive ourselves of the fairness we acclaim. Polemos operates beyond positives and negatives, and in so doing is unfathomably fair. Our self-righteous versions of change, progress, democracy, human rights and well-being lead in one direction held to be the right one, because we know better than fate and are less harsh than the law of the jungle. If we say so... The first time I slept in a bedroom with geckos on the walls, I felt uncomfortable about lizards creeping all over the place and dreaded they would pace on my face once I had fallen asleep. When I was told that they eat mosquitoes near the ceiling and move higher up in rooms to catch them, not lower down, I felt very stupid. If XYZ has been that stupid about gekos, how high is the likelihood that XYZ may not otherwise be just as dense?

Self-awareness and conscience build a WALL that desperately blocks our instincts, a partition constantly being rebuilt to “protect” us from the unconscious. In other words, secondary fear or civilised paranoia has replaced primeval angst and monitors our interconnecting with nature. How can we start to dismantle civilisation’s censorship of the natural world from which it has so far evolved that it mistakes it for an enemy? Even in the third century BCE, Master Zhuang’s suspicion that it is the animals, for example fish, not us, who are truly happy, fell on deaf ears. Reconnecting to fish in the way that water connects to fish or air and soil interact with trees is beyond our power, but reconnecting to phases of human evolution proven to have harmonised with life, such as tribal settlements, is possible since tribal settlements still exist all over the world, even though these types of society have long become either obsolete or merely surviving. That tribes have to be protected from tourism and curious travelers to shield them and their habitat from devastating incursions from the modern world does not mean that all access is barred. Ethnological research and ethnographic collections provide substantial contact with these endangered and under-rated cultures; whereas direct access to their territories gained by illegal goldminers and loggers provide destruction. A WALL, the installation, engages with that thought. It exhibits a collection of artefacts recycled from tribal clothing made of hand-spun and hand-woven hemp fibre dyed in indigo, so that the natural elements with which a particular tribal culture used to make clothes, even though these clothes are no longer worn and have been damaged by wear and time, reappear in other forms. The artefacts attempt through the natural and cultural mediation of the mentioned reworked materials of which they were made an indirect connection to the indigo and hemp plants, that is to say a

connection to the botanical characteristics of these plants and to their tribal cultivation. Once preserved in clothing, the plants now are preserved into artefacts shown in an art installation. When you are looking at *A WALL*, you are seeing what has crept onto the wall and what it supports in elaborate forms: vegetation. As if when we open our eyes, we struggled to see nature? As if a direct path no longer took us to a chosen destination?

Emma Kunz (1938-1963), *Drawing No. 012*, undated but meant by the artist to belong to the 21st century, © Emma Kunz Zentrum, work exhibited in *Emma Kunz. Visionäre Zeichnungen* curated by Hans Ulrich, Obrist and Melissa Blanchflower at Museum Susch, in Susch, CH, 27th of July to 24th November 201. Additional graphics © WIMZ 2023.



*Imagine? He or **she**, they? You?* You do not need to *imagine*. You do know of someone with a sweet tooth, if not a sweet-toothed someone yourself personally. Heedless of the quality of the food served, not to mention the drinks, they wait till the end of the meal with scant appreciation for the variety of flavours and ingredients in the courses served prior to their long longed for sugar kick. And so, what? Even though overindulging in that preference might induce diabetes, we are otherwise likely to treat it with tolerance. After all, if this is what *they* like... Yet, for those who enjoy perhaps not quite everything but many, the water and the wine, the starters and the main dish, a dessert might also crown the meal. Does a person with an exclusive inclination for

one type of dish enjoy that one dish, in the instance given a dessert, more than those who enjoy all or nearly all dishes and that one dish? Indeed, enjoyment of food varies from one person to the other; however, it is not solely determined by specific personal liking. Personal likings are affected by supply and demand. Let us examine a subjective preference we shall call AB1. A loves all dessert, but saffron ice cream or Pavlova or Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte (Black Forest cake) above all desserts. The saffron ice cream (or Pavlova or Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte) served disappoints A, but delights B, who usually does not care that much about sweets. In the case of a very or exceptionally good dessert, both table companions with different preferences are likely to enjoy the same dish they have been served. Who relishes it the most is impossible to decide, even when asking, as A or B may not give a spontaneous, but a reflective answer based on habitual preferences. In some situations A, in others surprisingly B, will experience a greater satisfaction. Or both, or none. In the case of an indifferent or second-rate dessert, that situation alters the problem. Instead of: *Which table companion is likely to enjoy a dessert the most, those with an allround dietary preference or the ones with exclusive taste?* the question becomes: *How could the allround dietary preference not be an asset and the exclusive taste a liability?* Another setting shows the same shift we noticed when we asked the specific liking question regarding AB1, we shall call it AB2. A is not interested in aspects of an opera production that include acting, sets, costumes and lightning. He or she cares for the music, but predominantly delights in a specific type of operatic singing. A loves operatic singing and above all arias. Although the arias which A has heard have been praised by critics, they have not met A's high expectations; yet, they have delighted B, who usually prefers duets and recitatives. B, who is also interested in the singers' ability to act on stage, has had the most enjoyment of the evening. Even though in the case of a very or exceptionally good aria, both opera lovers are likely to burst into acclaim about the same singing they have heard, A may not be able to enjoy it more intensely than B, because a more intense enjoyment may not be possible. In other situations, B is winner and A loser. Eudaemonic thinking can compromise on preference, but is dependent on preferential settings. C1 has difficulties in building relationships and steers away from complications when immersed into work commitment. Either his or her success lasts without being overshadowed by a reliance on ignoring a problem that will not go away, or relationships issues encountered in a professional environment prove awkward to negotiate and become as frustrating as failed relationships elsewhere. C2 loves his or her partner and children, but is getting increasingly involved in his or her job. Either career interests take over family life and the family suffer, or the priority apportioned to family life reduces C2's professional success and leads to the family's financial and interpersonal crisis, when he or she is sacked. Only some cases are black and white, C1 should learn to manage relationships in a new job, and C2 might maintain the proverbial work-life balance under considerable pressure. However, C3 who adopts an addictive lifestyle to overcompensate unresolved dilemmas, is easy enough to judge. His or her pursuit of happiness that results in ill-health has to be, at least on that account, a fallacy. Yet even when we are spared the danger of looming addictions whose range, from substance ingestion to time online, constantly diversifies, is not the pursuit of happiness as the greatest good an enduring delusion? Eudaemonia relates

to trivial and simplistic reasoning, such as health is preferable to illness and life is better than death. These reasonings become pseudo-logical on and offline platforms for aberrations; longevity is desired as if death were a disease that had to be cured. As a result, one species' good health over all others is as inflexibly justified as the health of that same controlling minority species over its subordinated majority. The AB1, AB2 and C1 to 3 scenarios suggest that eudaemonia isolates happiness as the greatest good at the expense of other phenomena and experiences ranked as lesser or least good, although they are likely to possess eudaemonic characteristics.

Since least and lesser and greatest and greater are situationally exchangeable guidelines, the whole vague concept collapses. Concepts of happiness directing individual pursuits of happiness may, depending on the individuals and their circumstances, help or hinder them to achieve their goal; albeit one does not need a concept or even an awareness of happiness, to be happy. Do we need a concept of truth to act truthfully, and moral codes to act ethically? Conscience culture says we do and glorifies knowledge. The Daoists asked us to beware of all civilised perks, including knowledge. Using Heraclitus' fluctuating dialectic of permanent change, I shall try to formulate my interest in and lack of concern for knowledge. Thesis: Being. I am human, an evolved life form that stems from earlier developed species with which it remains biologically connected. Antithesis: Non-being. Culture increasingly keeps me apart from the natural world and boasts of my superior status; being civilised censors a return to the guidance warranted by the unconscious drive. Synthesis: Becoming. Denying that I am human and pretending that I can reconnect to nature in spite of my human condition is a laughable stance. Part of being human is natural and being purely human by excluding that part is impossible, therefore I am and am not natural, and I am and am not human and am becoming both in successful and unsuccessful changing states, therefore instinctual knowledge matters to me but cannot take over human knowledge and human knowledge may justify consciousness but cannot and will not supercede the unconscious.

To give it its due, the millennia-old Western eudaemonic tradition has contributed to visible political clarifications and social improvements, as well as to less noted but no less powerful contradictions and deadlocks. Eudaemonia is not rooted in, but culturally compromised within the paradigmatic Athenian democracy that functioned with and endorsed the practice of enslavement. Aristotle, the most prominent advocate of eudaemonia, did not raise his voice against slavery and dismissed the principle that power should be equally shared. Based on premises that political competence could not be merely quantitative (equal shares), but had to be qualitatively confined (meritocratic allocations), Western notions of freedom and fairness, individualism and happiness, indebted to the Aristotelian legacy, frame ideas of entitlement to happiness with democratic values. However, there are no more self-explanatory eudaemonic standards than self-explanatory democratic values. If slavery no longer existed in disguised forms, and if electoral systems were able to rely on societies administering accountable power shares, these philosophical clichés could be regarded as defensible. Unfortunately, for domestic and/or sexual purpose, there are worldwide

growing numbers of slaves today. Trafficked, coerced or abused, children and young adults are subjected to work conditions, if not to bonded labour, that are not called slavery but are either similar, or just as bad, or even worse than historically enforced modes of enslavement.

We should not underestimate the role that language plays in the dissemination and reception of these ideas. Politically and philosophically shielded as a meritorious ambition, the pursuit of happiness is a particularly influential idea enshrined in national constitutions, one bound to spread all over the media spectrum. Of course, neither party-political candidates nor opolafians will refer to the classical Greek concept, but their trending of the idea, rephrased for example in the expressions “having” and “wanting a better life”, is entrenched in the global expansion of the antique eudaemoic theories. Beliefs in the power and veracity of language are anchored in Western, not in Eastern thought: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” *John 1, King James Version*. Daoists do not share such beliefs: “The Way that can be told is not an unvarying Way; The names that can be named are not unvarying names. It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang” *Tao-Te Ching*, Chapter 1.

Bibliophile note

The oldest known original manuscript of the *Laotse* does not start with this statement; however, it can be found in a similar wording elsewhere in the text, for instance in Book 1, 1.9: “*Das Tao ist ewig und namenlos*”: (What we call) *The Way is eternal and has no name*.

Lao Zi (Laotse), Der Urtext, übersetzt und kommentiert von Wolfgang Kublin, Freiburg im Breisgau, DE, 2011

Bibliographical addendum

The same thought and sentiment are echoed by Wang Pi (226-249 CE) in his (the earliest known) commentary on the Lao Tse, chapter 32:

Heaven and earth unite to drip sweet dew. Without the command of men, it drips evenly overall. This means that if heaven and earth unite, then sweet dew will fall of itself without being sought. If I adhere to its true nature and take no action, then without my command, people will naturally become well adjusted. As soon as there were regulation and institutions, there were names. As soon as there are names, know that it is time to stop. It is by knowing when to stop that one can be free from danger.

Commentary on the Lao Tzu by Wang Pi, translated by Ariane Rump in collaboration with Wing-tsit Chan, Monographs of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, no. 6, Hawaii, 1979, p. 97

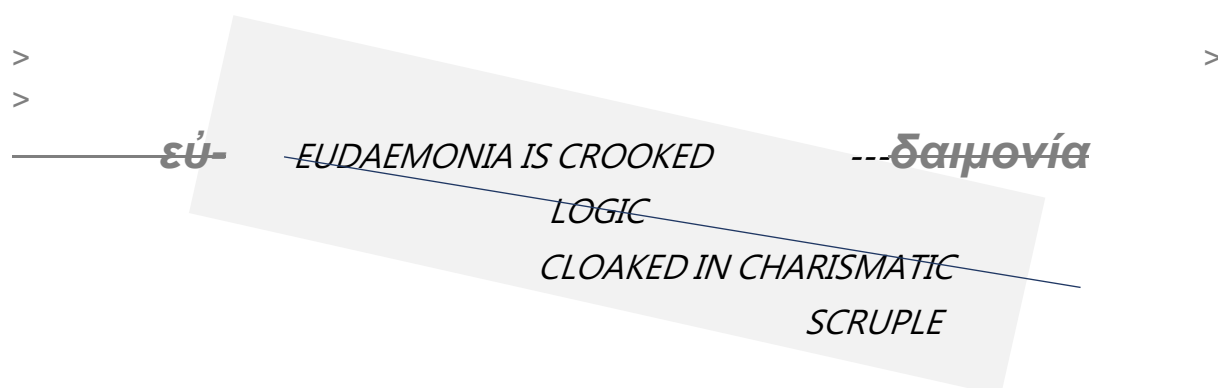
Electing happiness the greatest good defines one optimal or several contending prime notions of happiness, not happiness itself. For happiness itself to exist, conditions would have to be met where life itself and the greatest goal in life existed at all. Life itself does not exist; life and death are intertwined. Health itself does not exist; health and illness are co-relational. Happiness itself does not exist; self-delusional, elusive and justifiable

states of awareness focused on happiness, which could not exist without contrasting non-happiness, exist. The word happiness in Chinese, *lè* (乐/樂), is not what it is. The same character means happiness or music, arguably a major contributor to happiness, depending on the manner in which it is pronounced. Does not the word *lè* (乐/樂), issue a warning that what is construed as happiness may only sound pleasant to hear? Not that policymakers would prompt us to think in that direction, but at the end of the mediatised day filled to the brim with emotionally voiced ideological convictions, only a few (happy or not) will doubt that justice and equality, and against that background happiness, are sensible goals worth formulating. And far too few will wonder whether a balance between happiness and non-happiness, fairness and unfairness, equality and inequality should not be soberly reviewed and struck. However deflating a world view that humble achievement evokes, it compares well against inflammatory ideals provoking or reviving polarisation. As WIMZ said: “Eudaemonia? No thanks. For whom the damn’d gloom?” Talking about world views and flogging made-up stories to calm down not just the few but the many, the creation myth of PanGu does a good job. It gives us all a portion of existential reprieve by explaining the inexplicable. At the beginning there was nothing, and nothing condensed into the cosmic egg from which a cosmic figure called PanGu emerged and died. And from PanGu’s dead body the world was created, heaven and earth, flora and fauna. Guileless or subtle? Creating a god to rationalise creation, and then disposing of him for the same purpose, what a refreshing idea. Killing two birds with one stone, and getting rid of the stone.

“Does one way of thinking or the other, lead to different results or bind to unforeseeable consequences? One way of thinking should lead to careful wording and bind to partly plausible consequences. If the other does the same, the one should consider or reconsider the other. If the other succeeds in careful wording, though not in careful action, the one should reconsider and question the success of its wording. If the other lacks care in both wording and action, the one should still consider its impact and beware of unexpected consequences.”

Wolfgang Ink Mark Ziegler, *Incentivized Daoist Workshop*, secretly run at NY Stock Exchange and later in twelve L.A. Casinos, U.S.A, in the year 2000.

Yin and yang, or eudaemonia? Genesis or a creation tale so obviously symbolic that it deflects the possibility of a fundamentalist interpretation? Without further dithering, I shall drop eudaemonia like a cold cake in favour of hot Daoist concepts: > > > >



εὐ

EUDAEMONIA

CONFUSES

ACTION WITH NON-ACTION,
AND INACTION WITH NON-ACTION.

IT MIXES UP STRUGGLES WITH WARS, AND CALLS PEACE A STRUGGLE.

δαιμονία

ENOUGH OF STRUGGLES, THEY ARE APLENTY.

ACTION IS NOT ENOUGH.

NO AMOUNT OF ACTION

CAN UNITE. ACTIONS ARE DEVISIVE.

SOME INACTION CAN SOMETIMES UNITE. NON-ACTION MULTIPLIES.

Not knowing better, as if anyone should improve on nature, not *interfering* with nature and attempting to modify its cyclical order through civilisation, not seeking to gain so-called happiness outside nature's boundaries, all of this is enlightened non-action.

Enlightened non-action is wú wéi: 无为 / 無為

APPROPRIATE NON-ACTION IS AS CHALLENGING AS CORRECT ACTION

Natural course of events, unhindered flow,
harmonious spontaneity is shùn qí zì rán: 顺其自然 / 順其自然

SENSIBLE NON-ACTION IS AS DESIRABLE AS CAREFUL ACTION.
THE TWO NECESSARILY RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER

and so do being and non-being and happiness and non-happiness

Not seeking, but discovering,
not demanding but accepting,
not shaping but understanding,
not knowing but learning to know,
not harnessing, but experiencing happiness.

Lè: 乐 / 樂

denotes happiness

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Porcelain bottle vase of the yuhuchun pear-shaped type (玉壺春瓶), underglaze blue on white, glazed base, Ming dynasty period and reign of the Yongle Emperor, imperial kilns of Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, 1403-1425, height: 34 cm, registration number: PDF.601, The British Museum, London, © The Trustees of The British Museum

Residues of burned cobalt that turned almost black at the end of a firing and stayed darkly encrusted under a transparent glaze are typical for early Ming blue and white. They testify to experiments with a material and technique originally imported from Persia, which, in the Chinese workshops, soon were to be refined far beyond Persian practice. The glaze's whiteness and the two shades of blue are signs of quality which, in addition to the period piled cobalt, make this piece stand out. We shall analyse this vase using the Daoist ideas of action and non-action, and yīn and yáng characteristics. Most porcelain painters would have started their apprenticeship with ink. An ink painter's skills are evaluated against the handling of his chosen medium: silk or paper. Depending on its load, the artist's brush discharges thick or thin ink marks on the supporting medium. However, these marks which constitute the drawing do not stop on the medium's surface. Except when released by a very dry brush, the marks suffuse their receptive surface and expand underneath. Once the silk or paper has dried, outlines, graded and block-filled areas can be judged for their respective merits.

Yīn characteristics of ink painting and calligraphy: darkness, earthiness, water, passiveness, absorption, femininity

Yáng characteristics of ink painting and calligraphy: brightness, ethereality, air, activeness, penetration, masculinity

The ink has dark, earthy tones from brown to black.

Diluted with water from a solid block, the ink fluid flows into the paper or silk that absorbs it. Once dried, the tones vary from light to dark grey and to the lighter and darkest shades of black. The action of the air on the wet ink within and on the silk or paper ends its absorption and seals its permeation.

Yīn characteristics of the porcelain bottle vase of the yuhuchun pear-shaped type: darkness, earthiness, water, passiveness, absorption, femininity

Yáng characteristics of the porcelain bottle vase of the yuhuchun pear-shaped type: brightness, ethereality, air, activeness, penetration, masculinity

The bottle vase was potted out of kaolin clays turned into a complying shape with water. Once the shape had solidified, it was painted with cobalt-blue pigments and glazed. The glaze hardened and became bright through the firing process in an earth covered kiln, revealing the final shades of dark and light blue that lent to the hard shape a bright and light finish. The lily blossoms and leaves painted on both sides of the vase seem to sway as gently as their companion butterfly hovers in the summer air. Because the lily are perennials, they contain their entire life cycle inside a bulb buried in the earth. The plants grow out of their bulb, out of the earth and into the air, where they eventually blossom. To a Chinese scholar appreciating the precious vase, the lilies symbolise the eternal return of the same, whereas the butterfly symbolises lust, moments of bliss.

Set under a brilliant translucent glaze, the vase's cobalt pigments compare to ink marks on paper or silk, not in terms of colour but because of monochrome variations defined as if they had been applied on paper or silk. Shades of blue effortlessly emulate

black and grey tones in a fresh ethereal rendering and thus softly express the butterfly's sensual levity as it lingers over blooms and leaves. Nonetheless, the expressed effortless is an illusion. To imitate the tonal effects obtained by painting on paper or silk using clay, pigments, and controlling their setting through fire is a technical challenge requiring endurance, as well as inspiration. Early Daoists were keen to demonstrate that judgements conducted in haste and/or based on commonplace assumptions are likely to be deceptive, whereas apparently strange or unusual conclusions reached after careful examination may hold a truth that does not express a conventional appearance of truth, and therefore strike us as contradictory, provocative and unlikely, hence their preference for teasing paradoxes. Apart from teasing, they also caricatured foolish behaviour and alluded to attainable wisdom in perplexing riddles. Fools fancy an easy life filled with pleasures, but stumble from error to error without learning from them and lead a bruised existence. They want to float on air and feed on honey, if they could, they would gladly indulge in sloth and froth for ever. They want to be a butterfly for longer than a summer breeze. They want to blossom beautifully, but mind wilting like lilies and irises. Thus, they vow never to wither. Fools that wanna bloom! But how do they know that the pollinating butterflies are not working? They are less busy and less efficient than bees, but when they suck nectar, pollen sticks to wings. As well as looking pretty, hovering releases pollen. Butterflies provide a competent service. Fools don't. Fools trust their eyes. In relaxed petals and long leaves, they see beauty; in the roots that hold them above ground they see nothing, certainly not eternity encapsulated in a flower's whole life cycle. Irises and lilies are all they can become rolled into a bulb, a swollen point, an underground dot.

On each side of the vase, the predominantly floral composition finds its balance thanks to a hovering butterfly. Without its desirable presence, proportions would be askew and lines less well endowed with liveliness. Placing the vase = ping (瓶) on his desk = àn (案) to admire it, a scholar laughs recalling the homophonic pun. If he places them together, the characters for vase and table sound like the word for peacefulness: píng'ān (平安). An impoverished peasant putting a humble bottle, also called ping (瓶), on a plain table, also called àn (案), to bring safety, also sounding: píng'ān (平安), to his new home would act under the same belief, that thinking about what you would like to happen is a first step in the right direction. If the peasant protects his house against thieves and spurred by his commitment to safety takes further rational measures, his home should be safe: If he relies on a bottle placed on a table to guard his home, anything might happen. Conversely, if the scholar buys a vase with a long neck in the hope of getting long lasting peacefulness, his behaviour is as superstitious as the peasant over-relying on a ritual tradition.

The term yuhuchun (玉壺春瓶), literally: *Spring inside a jade jar*, which is allocated to pear-shaped vase bottles, evokes a protection sought in ancient times from properties attributed to jade: yù (玉). This further association places the vase in a deeply securing context, where a playful identification with the depicted butterfly would be granted under an absence of threats, be they unwanted interruption, being observed or otherwise disturbed. Delving into the butterfly's luminous world of gentle breeze, landing on petals and sampling nectar, the vase owner may not believe as in the Western Han dynasty, that wearing a suite of jade plaques should make his body

immortal. Yet, he would know that his ancestors had such beliefs. The vase is finite, a perfect summer day, a moment of bliss that may not deteriorate by lasting longer than it does, is equally finite. Knowing how a moment, which in its intensity feels like a taste of eternal bliss, might articulate onto eternity is impossible. Experiencing that moment and learning from that experience, not to extend what should not be extended, not to want, what does not need to be wanted, fits, with or without a vase, the scholar's taste. Undoubtedly, its brilliant clear white glaze and subtle shades of blue make the object precious. But the Daoist wisdom it disseminates makes it invaluable.



17.

One of the enduring images of Chinese culture, which one encounters in countless objects from porcelain dishes to embroidered sleeve bands, hats, hair pins and jade carvings, butterflies [modern Chinese: hú dié (蝴蝶)] symbolise the promise of a successful wedded life: marital bliss, as well as, on a lighter note, lustful delights. No doubt influential on this iconic development that, much later, expanded through the Ming and Qing dynasties, Master Zhuang's most popular conceit, his *Butterfly Dream*, contains a mix of humour, benevolence and meditative musing that complements a delicate evocation of the fluttering insect [classical Chinese for butterfly: dié (蝶)] with introspective profundity. It sets a hedonistic tone that also fits other parts of the

Zhuangzi, but by no means most. The topic inter-species connections we have so far discussed concerns the whole of this short text; no dialogal diversion dilutes the theme.

Master Zhuang narrates himself that upon waking from a dream, he became confused and doubted whether he actually was Master Zhuang who had dreamed of being a butterfly, or the other way around, a butterfly who had dreamed of being Master Zhuang. The story's charming tone of simplicity encapsulates the sense of freedom and happiness the writer accounted for in the more confrontational and complex dialogue about *Happy Fish*. Nevertheless, its form and message are no less intricate and puzzling, as they unite a buoyant lightness of being to jocular analysis and, when least expected, unshakable seriousness.

Be it mostly an academic exercise or a committed attempt to live a reflective life, one of philosophy's aims has to endorse some pursuit of the truth. In his *Butterfly Dream*, Master Zhuang tells at least two lies, a stylistic and methodological decision with strict logical consequences. Lying for the sake of telling the truth is illogical. Though the contrary method logically deploys paradoxical, unconventional, ironic, perplexing, and amusing or infuriating thoughts that appear to have been put together with insufficient care, a) they are not, but b) they deliberately make the impression that they are. These characteristics typify this short narrative as well as the whole *Zhuangzi*, and indeed Daoism as a whole: meticulously complex in a mock-disorderly guise. They strike at the core of Master Zhuang's thinking, and in the *Butterfly Dream* exclusively concern interspecies connections.

Butterflies do not dream of becoming humans. Even onirically, no wild animal would wish to degrade itself by turning into the most sordid and despicable species that ever has existed, one that has invented gods to disguise its self-loathing fueled by states of success taken for failure and scenes of failure hailed as success; one that has fabricated ethics to deny its hopelessly weak and mendacious inclinations; one that unleashes artificial intelligence and then moans it poses a threat. Yet, Master Zhuang surmises a butterfly could have dreamed of being a philosopher.

Master Zhuang may have dreamed of a butterfly, but he never dreamed of being a butterfly. No human being is biologically disposed to have and recall a pleasurable dream of complete self-denial. The human condition benefits from the advantage of reflective thought; nonetheless, that advantage is overshadowed by inherent liabilities: contradictions, uncertainties and worries. Conversely, the animal condition suffers under the use and misuse of the thinking powers with which humans are endowed, but is otherwise exempt from contradictions, uncertainties and worries. A person can become aware of these animal attributes and envy them, when observing a butterfly, or when daydreaming about a garden or landscape where butterflies sip nectar. That same person can then focus on an aesthetised sensation of freedom, feel it intensely and possibly resort to logic to realise that beyond a moment, be it called *carpe diem* or auspicious hour, such a state of natural bliss is not humanly attainable. Master Zhuang rationalised a daydream, a fleeting impression.

Logic alone cannot account for any of his narratives, as unwittingly proven by Hui Shi. In as much as Master Zhuang is and is not an animal, he knows that he cannot understand animals logically, which does not hinder him from appreciating them instinctively. To refer to logic to justify a communicative incompatibility between species, as Hui argued in the *Happy Fish* dialogue, is blatantly illogical since intuition,

not logic, can bridge or at least partly reduce the yawning inter-species gap, and since logical skills do not replace but, in a state of conflict or conciliation, co-exist with intuitive abilities. Given that worries and uncertainties represent a shortcoming of logical thinking familiar to Master Zhuang and that logic is an unsuitable method to address the inter-species communication issue, Master Zhuang chooses to ironise the remedial tool he uses: intuited logic, by playing on words. Dreams are not reality, yet they connect to and explore reality, and no human life is complete without day and night dreams. And albeit dreams should not be confused with reality, they inform and influence what happens. To that extent, the conceit of a butterfly dream allows Zhuang to contrast human and animals. If humans fully perceived animal bliss through a dream and realised that their greatest happiness pales into insignificance when compared with species they had deemed inferior, then to those capable of such an acute perception, human life would appear pointless, if not unbearable.



Not knowing can no longer be posited as the opposite of knowing, animal as the opposite of human, and happiness as the opposite of unhappiness. The pursuit of happiness is a rationalised aberration which intuited logic can philosophically correct. By accepting that he is no butterfly and being grateful for dreaming of a blissful state in which he dreamed of being one, Zhuang highlights that if we come to terms with the limited amount of happiness we can experience, instead of striving for what we cannot have and cannot be, for instance innocent animals or almighty gods, we might achieve a measure of inter-species communication. Not unlike the animals who do not question their fate, we could accept the truth of our limited capacity for happiness. Questioning or denying that truth leads to the dangerous pretense that entitles us to crave for more than we can handle and by that token to increase our exposure to created needs and obsessive desires.

Zhuang never said he was a butterfly. Although his argumentation depended on the conceit of a dream, he sensibly implied that if and only if a butterfly became Zhuang, then Zhuang should wonder about his being human or butterfly or both. Since no butterfly became or will become Zhuang, acceptance of one's connectable condition and the endeavour to deepen a sensible and practical understanding of inter-species respect and limitations lie at the core of a clever and witty as well as, even though in an ironic sense, concrete and realistic philosophy.

ZzZzz

ZzZzz

Ink Mark's Dadaoist Encomium has kindly been translated by Miss Joanne of Kuala Lumpur: PRAISE TO MASTER ZHUANG! (wǒ mén xiàng zhuāng zhōu zhì jìng 。) MAY HE LIVE THOUSANDS OF YEARS! (yuàn tā néng huó shàng qiān nián 。) AND PRAISE TO HERACLITUS OF EPHESUS AS WELL! (tóng shí, wǒ mén yě zàn měi hè lā kè lì tè 。) MAY MASTER ZHUANG AND HERACLITUS BE FOREVER THE BEST OF FRIENDS! (yuàn zhuāng zhōu hé hè lā kè lì tè yǒng yuǎn shì zuì hǎo de péng yǒu). Addendum: Praise Nean for gifting his new concept to the world: DADAO a.k.a. DAOMA. DADAO a.k.a. DAOMA. DADAO combines the ancient Taoist philosophy with the modern art movement DADA and preserves that fusion for all times. Am I dreaming? Has selfless praise really become recommendation? Or is having a self and being praised for this dubious possession the last thing Nean would ever have wanted?

ZzZz ZzZz ZzZzz

ZzZzz If anyone is reading this final paragraph, it might be on account of a bet, that a justified connection between the artwork *A WALL* and the philosophical developments contained in this eponymous essay, were past being broadly established. I beg to differ. Had I wanted to illustrate Zhuangzi's *Happy Fish*, I could not have done it better than with the already mentioned and further above photographically depicted *Nur Im Kreise*, which I completed long before I had ever read the text. Having read (and hopefully understood) the famous dialogue did not empower me to create an artwork directly relating to that text, but enabled me to see a direct connection between *Happy Fish* and *Nur Im Kreise*. Furthermore, I cannot think of a better illustration for the *Butterfly Dream* than a piece I made a few years later, possibly in 1998 or 99, at a time when I had not even heard of a sage called Master Zhuang. I remember the exact title: *Why don't you fly?*, but not the exact image which I did not photograph. Partly stitched and collaged rice and cloth paper brushed, like *Nur Im Kreise*, with Chinese calligraphic ink, the large size composition was stored in a loft when I left England in 2007. No idea what it looks like now. So, Hui Shi, to whom the remark is attributed, was right, that a journey started today or tomorrow may well end yesterday. Yesterday we were butterfly or fish, and the day before yesterday star dust, and later Heraclitus or Hui or Zhuang or Nean or whatever part of all parts parts with all, rejoins none, but eventually reappears.

Zzz

Having privately studied Chinese minorities textiles with Deryn O'Connor, I travelled to Northeast Thailand to collect Miao costumes in 1992. Deryn used to go to China twice a year every year and we met after each of her journeys to examine and compare her finds at length. Consequently, I was fairly well prepared to identify and acquire tribal costumes. What I was unprepared for, was the strong sympathy I experienced when I encountered Miao people. To Swiss friends who asked what the word *Heimat* meant to me, I answered being together with the people I care for, wherever they and I happen to be. That definitions applies to the moments I spent with Miaos, textiles appreciation

gave us a common ground to share an infectious feeling of well-being. Why was a smile as important as the textiles? Communication so effortless? Why was laughter so cleansing? Recently, I sourced some wax resist indigo cloth still completed by an elderly woman from Northern Vietnam with the same technique and design she used in the 1970s. Her name is Umm and she lives in a village called Pà Cò near Mai Châu. I'll probably never meet her, nor the English-speaking person selling items on her behalf, over the internet. Nonetheless, this new supply of material will help to extend A WALL, so that the quantity of objects with similar and different shapes and with similar and different colour tones be sufficient to conjure up the impression of infinity which hand-knotted rugs from the Caucasus, Persia and Anatolia convey ON THE FLOOR. Within their strict borders, a plethora of details melts into an overwhelming order, spellbinding the viewer with infinite variety and unity. Whether I come from Thailand, Vietnam, Blighty, Basellandschaft or the Free State of Bavaria does not matter to me. Home is not a place, but a mode of being set with modes of having. Like everyone else, I own things, but I would prefer to have nothing. I accept having to be someone, but would love to be no one, and am getting there.

Wolfgang Ink Mark Ziegler, *Vom Leben Und Tod Des PanGu / On The Life and Death of PanGu*, 2022, state of near completion, double-sided acrylic painting on a joined beech pedestal holding a double-sided bevelled painted slat; pedestal: 12 cm x 8 cm x 6 cm, full measurement of inserted slat: 45,5 cm x 4 cm x 1 cm, total height from plinth to slat: 50 cm; the paint from Germany, the wood from Canton Sankt Gallen, CH. Photo Ziegler 2022.



Fine. Yet, before getting there, I need to check the points I am making. A glib remark formulated against interconnectivity, will proclaim its broadness to be self-exonerating from any definable remit, and therefore ridiculously vague. If everything actually and potentially connects to other things, no area of imaginable relevance to interconnectivity could be off topic; therefore, interconnectivity, rather than being a specific domain, serves as an excuse to ramble about anything. Insofar as one can chat about everything and nothing, yes; insofar as chattiness precludes a concerted approach to interconnectivity, no.

I wrote earlier that we might re-examine Hegelian texts, if our topical study of interconnectivity warranted the effort. There had to be a clear focus to justify this re-examination, namely the unmistakable fact that scant attention has customarily been paid to interspecies communication by philosophers. The issue tends to have been ignored at both ends of the argument: pro and contra. Even though some philosophers indeed, from Pythagoras and Leibniz to Bentham, have defended animals as sentient beings who should be spared maltreatment, their main concern was not to investigate animal powers of understanding, but to oppose cruelty. Being cruel to an animal was for Pythagoras tantamount to being cruel to a person, since he believed that souls reincarnate into human as well as animal bodies. To Leibniz, animals have a lesser awareness of reality than humans, but still one that has to be respected: “la petite perception”. As to Bentham, he closed the matter by pronouncing that lack of reasoning did not prevent animals from feeling pain acutely. So much for the most noticeable exceptions. As a rule, philosophers engrossed in theories of knowledge whose purpose is to evaluate human faculties, respond lukewarmly to a serious prospect of interspecies communication. Likewise, they see no need to reconsider their assumption that knowledge is mostly accessed through articulated language, a process that de facto discards non-human life forms’ awareness processing. It therefore comes as a surprise, that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel should have made an intentional statement voicing outright hostility towards interspecies inclusiveness. In one fell swoop, he declared that animals have no rights. Why did he have to dot the i's and cross the t's at a time when philosophical anthropocentrism was entrenched and animal welfare in its infancy?

That vegetables, minerals and animals should have few or limited rights was an unspoken consensus, which the period in which Hegel lived, the industrial revolution, seldom and selectively challenged. In 1824, the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in England, and others would eventually follow throughout Europe. Yet, treating animals without brutality did not swell to a vocal condemnation of cattle breeding or threaten laboratory experiments. Certainly, more kindness was called for, but the human prerogative to exploit natural resources was not radically questioned. So, why bother to spell out in a callous tone what most people had either long tacitly agreed with or not irately rebuked? Let us consider a benchmark antecedent. Far from advocating animal welfare, Immanuel Kant had secured philosophical fame by pointing out that humans have the ability to free themselves from nature’s overbearing influence, so that they may fulfil their civilised ethical potential, a

respectable choice that thoroughly ignored interspecies communication. The deontologist contended, that when they choose reason instead of following impulsive drives, humans should be able to control their instincts. They thereby reap two main advantages that allow them to increase their significance in (not to say against) the natural world: developing knowledge and fulfilling their moral self-determination. Was this stance not dismissive and arrogant enough? If we belong to two worlds, one noumenal, the other sensory, why should it be safe to exclude or prioritise one of them? Yet, Hegel's statement surpasses Kant's deontology and the Old Testament's enshrinement of Man's dominion on earth. The reason why it does, is to be found at the core of the interconnectivity dispute. Two opposite schools of thought believe in, but clash over enlightenment. One wishes that people take into account that their actions have an impact beyond their needs, indeed beyond themselves, in a world in which they are not the sole predestined occupier. The other spurs society to celebrate its growth founded on the principle of ownership: ownership of ideas to be examined and put into practice, and ownership of rights to be legitimised and applied. If everything connects to everything, as Buddhist and Pythagorean theories expound through the concept of reincarnation or metempsychosis, then human domination is illogical and counterintuitive. If Civilisation, which is destined to take over nature, progresses through History until it reaches its perfect peak, then human domination enables the fulfilment of pure logic, be it called Ratio or der Geist. Asking why and how doctrinal ownership aims to systematise human participation and involvement enables us to define interconnective relevance by positing interspecies communication as its immediate concern. Whereas symbiotic relations abound in the natural world, contractual relationships replace symbiosis in Civilisation. Bearing in mind that interspecies communication between the civilised and natural worlds could possibly happen on a symbiotic, but not on a contractual mode, we realise that Hegel's Philosophy of Right intends that this eventuality should be chiefly hindered.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Die "Rechtsphilosophie" von 1820 mit Hegels Vorlesungsnotizen 1821-1825* (*The Philosophy of Right of 1820 with Hegel's lecture notes from 1821 to 1825*), Hegels Rechtsphilosophie Edition Itling Band 2, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1974. In his *Philosophy of Right* of 1820, Hegel avowed, in a conceptual legalist framework, which conditions had to be met to reach Civilisation's ultimate goal, which he calls "freedom". Following on Kant's deontology that, with the help of reason, sought freedom from the instinctual yoke imposed by nature on humans otherwise capable of civilising emancipation, *The Philosophy of Right* advocates a greater commitment to "freedom" than subjective moral duty: *die Sittlichkeit* (*moral orderliness*). Whereas Kant envisaged a gentle rational awakening, Hegel unleashed the full determination of a resolute will to power, with a word choice as raw as his resolve. In order to bring Civilisation to its ultimate stage of development, and thus to obtain the ultimate freedom, the individual must first grant it to the State, the only higher instance, which despite unavoidable errors and tolerated relative injustice, can be the vessel that carries Historical progress. In other words, the State is the tool that makes and secures Civilisation. And Civilisation, maintained through practised *Sittlichkeit*, the index that measures the respect owed to its necessary expansion, pays tribute to the

State to which it owes its construction. Like a theologian who scraps the barrel to explain the existence of evil in a world created by a loving God, usually also through a concept of freedom, Hegel defends the necessity of the State against accusations of miscarriage of justice. In agreement with Kant and in forcible disagreement with Rousseau, the idea that we should free ourselves from primitive behaviour and strive to achieve lawful order is pushed to the limit. One is in this respect not born free, but becomes free through adherence to *Sittlichkeit* and acceptance of the State's overall authority, a political position which clumsily explains why slavery, though in an absolute sense unjust, had been a historical necessity, in that only the State can truly embody ideal freedom through its development, on which the counterpart thriving of civic conscience depends: "daß die Idee der Freyheit wahrhaft nur als *der Staat* ist" (pages 241 to 244). Whereas in 1620, Francis Bacon had promoted, in his treatise *Novum Organum*, the empirical use of science to uncover *Nature's secrets*, two hundred years later, with no inhibition and no restraint, Hegel strictly praised the human will to power, as if *natural secrets* were meant to be disclosed for the benefit of society, just as people were meant to surrender to the State for the benefit of History. Furthermore, nature being deprived of reason (*Vernunft*) is thereby excluded from all moral realms and knows neither right nor wrong (pages 225 to 227); which implies that Rousseau's search for equality inspired by a perceived lack of inequalities in nature was misplaced. Inequalities, not symbiotic matches, are desirable. Without inequality there would be no actual appropriation and expansion but the opposite, an abstract levelling causing intellectual endeavour to vegetate. Equality therefore signifies mediocrity, since inequality is the fundament on which the possessing urge depends. Sealed by the key principle of ownership, Reason justifies unrestrained human appropriation, the transformation and consumption of all natural resources. And, in turn, ownership avails rational civic humans of advantages and benefits with which they support themselves and uphold the State. *Inequality is the fertile soil out of which ownership grows* (lecture note), in a nutshell: "Zu §49 A1 "Boden der Ungleichheit", Vorthail, Nutzen (p. 227). As in other sections of the text, the language used to describe ownership resembles descriptions of abuse, to coin an oxymoron: a civilised rape, " [unmittelbare physische Gewalt] (mein Willen und meine physische Gewalt und Form": > physical violence expresses my willpower thanks to which the things that I appropriate must lose their identity and surrender to my rightful consumption <: "(Eins) werden – ist nothwendig daß d<ie> Selbstständigkeit des Dings zugrunde geht – Gebrauch – diß erst die rechte Bemächtigung" (p. 233). Some descriptions are more repulsive than others. In modern German, a standard expression that translates the syntagm "to satisfy one's needs" would be: *einen Bedarf decken*, our lecturer and philosopher used words with unfortunate connotations. The substantive *Befriedigung* commonly alludes to sexual relief and *Bedürfnis*, though it generally translates as need, is also used for sexual and urinary urges. "§189 "Die Wirtschaft als System einer wechselseitig vermittelten *Bedürfnisbefriedigung*": *Economy as a system that gratifies mutual needs* (p. 640). Since inequality is the sine qua non condition to prosperity, neither needs nor their gratification can possibly be equal among citizens, who are therefore bound to exchange them in various forms and under various terms of reciprocity. Let us not forget what we have read and understood, as we progress in the text.

To those who won't plod their way through the heavy tome till its savage end, and assume that ownership may not quite mean outright possession, that the right to own does not quite mean appropriation and that a hypnotic possessing and consuming spree do not mean fanatical blindness, I would urge caution. Like other assertive philosophical systems, the Hegelian discourse prospers on complex elaborations and formulations that clad an abysmal anal retentiveness with intellectual rigour. One suspects that such a lengthy treatise cannot harbour uncouth thoughts, or else why should they painstakingly be developed through sublimating analyses? These analyses are necessarily complex and, frankly, readers may not always grasp them. Unavoidably, they can be misconstrued. Nevertheless, they should not be mistaken for what they could appear to mean but can't possibly intend to say, given the depth of thinking their brilliant author is able to reach and master. Really?

The different types of appropriation (*Besitznahme*) need to be meticulously analysed, so that their magnitude be thoroughly contemplated. *Mechanische Kräfte, Waffen, Instrumente erweitern den Bereich meiner Gewalt. (Mechanical devices, weapons and other instruments widen the range of applications where my violence can thrive)*, p. 236. Surely, a famous philosopher would not glorify an invasive and aggressive economy run by a regulatory state. That his idealistic thinking and intentions are bound to be misunderstood, not to say vilified by readers struggling with demanding philosophical concepts, is a par for the course. Incontestably, Hegel's "violence" (*Gewalt*) is not meant in the common acceptance of the term. Nonetheless, if instrumentalisation (in a finer or brutal sense) can be rightfully vindicated for some; logically, it might as well be whitewashed for all. Who would have thought that Mafiosi and their lawyers, dictators and their confederates were a bunch of subtle, misunderstood intellectuals? Should the most illustrious philosophical tenet, Reason, be called upon to hallow instrumentalisation? "Mensch nimmt in Besitz, hat Eigentum -als denkender Mensch-" (it is the *thinking* person that takes possession and possesses), p.237. Where there is a mean, there is an end and when one is advised to avail oneself of a plethora of means to achieve a higher purpose, that end is adamant, not questioned and questionable, on account of the noble means it justifies. If nature lacks equity and is bereft of ethical thinking, and only the State warrants freedom to the individual committed to goodness, namely a higher conscience bound by orderly propriety, that lofty promise will be made and held. "- die realisierte Freyheit, der absolute Endzweck der Welt." (*Implementing freedom has to be the world's absolute finality*), p. 464. Fascinating that, though they may not share Hegel's enthusiasm for an ideal controlling state as the means and end of complete freedom, many will echo a comparable enthusiasm when praising their own version of the liberating ideal they yearn for. As for the term *final aim* (*Endzweck*), its similarity with the better-known concept of a *final solution* (*Endlösung*) is accidental; yet could freedom be guaranteed by idealists? When members of a religious sect are driven to collective suicide? When mass extermination is meticulously planned and executed? "*Arbeit macht frei*", when we work against it.

As well as an idea, a principle and a wish, freedom is an obsession; some relentlessly fight for it, others resent and commemorate its loss. Major tragic moments in Israelite history are to this day ritually remembered, among them being taken into slavery by the Egyptians and the Roman capture of their land which became the province of Judea. After all, it is the scripturally recorded hardship and sufferings the Israelites endured that turned them into a “negative tribe” able to channel and elevate their struggle (their experienced negativity) into the redeeming principle of united human and divine nature. A principle Hegel honoured and linked to his own theory of rightful ownership and enterprise. From a negative to a positive civilising breakthrough, the resolution within conscience of a subjective truth expressed by individual willpower concurring with the civic objectivity manifested by the State was to take the Israelite vision of a human and divine unity to its destined equivalent. The accomplishment of the ultimate stage of History in Society had to be the fusion of State’s and individual interests. A time had come when the Jewish people expressed their ultimate trust in a guiding God. A time will come (*Wendepunkt*) when the *German tribes* will carry out the Nordic principle of “*realised freedom*” (pages 814 and 815). On one hand, Hegel followed a type of thinking popular at his time, namely Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s idealistic vision of Germany being the designated northern nation to accomplish historical change. Yet, on the other hand, in the face of rampant European anti-Semitism, the philosopher saw Jewish mysticism as the root of secular (civic) idealism, not as its enemy. Even though the Israelite mentality, when contrasted with the optimistic, positive Germanic outlook, was defined as *negative* (in the sense of tragic), respect was paid to its contribution that paved modern worldviews. It is important to acknowledge that Hegel held the unity of objective and subjective thinking for the re-emerged strengthened version of the antique dream of unity between man and god, a dream that should come true, not through religious rule, but the individually faceted assertive willpower implementing a just state. Hegel was definitely not antisemitic. Neither was the medical doctor and philosopher Oscar Levy when he blamed the Israelites for the provocative belief they had been chosen by God above all other nations. In his accessible, short and stimulating book *The Idiocy of Idealism*, London, 1940, the Jewish author argued that the ancient idea of a chosen race eventually festered into the national socialist ideology of the superior Aryan breed, its ironic and contradictory revival. He also disputed the difference between religious and secular principles when comparing the influence of religious fundamentalism exerted on revolutionary doctrines. By that token, he called Bolshevism a secular religion, since communism enforced an ideal of social equality differently justified, but strikingly compatible with the condemnation of the rich, and the defence of the poor and oppressed advocated by Christianity. Both Nazism and communism were therefore deemed to root into Judeo-Christian traditions. However, to Hegel that ideological ancestry was beneficial to the German nation; whereas Levy criticised both the early Jewish claim, that a race could have been chosen by God and the exemplary Messiah’s rise to power, which had been achieved by supporting the disadvantaged masses, those who never had anyone to champion them and who therefore held an impoverished itinerant healer for their rescuer. Rather than deploring a perverted revival of acceptable bygone beliefs, Levy held religious fanaticism responsible for the

influence it has exerted on secular philosophies and politics. He connected and condemned both the ancient and the modern versions of disparate ideologies that on the surface have nothing in common, but when submitted to careful examination reveal astonishing and deeply disturbing similarities. Since the 1940s, another global threat has succeeded European dictatorships. In the face of climate change we need to establish whether the Judeo-Christian hostility towards interspecies communication, which Hegel intensified in his *Philosophy of Right* (not to call it: The Philosophy of Wrongs to all but Humans). Can we impute to Hegelian thought a bearing on our widespread reluctance to acknowledge and solve man-made ecological crises? What did Hegel perpetuate, that had before him institutionally been taken for granted?

In his posthumously published unfinished treatises: *L'homme et un Traité de la Formation du Fœtus*, Paris, 1664, René Descartes explained what animals and humans have in common. Whereas in *Discours De La Méthode*, Leiden, 1637, he had presented a view, widely shared by his contemporaries, that animals have no reason, “do not philosophise” (sic), are bereft of a soul, and therefore, unlike humans, cannot be endowed with feelings, *L'homme* (who else would?) explained why. Bodies according to Descartes fulfil functions that have nothing to do with personal feelings and thoughts and therefore deserve to be classified as mechanical. We can agree with him that a continuously performed bodily function, such as breathing, appears to be mechanical, and that regularly performed bodily functions such as digestion follow procedures we could call mechanism. Even though heavy breathing suggests fear, exhaustion or arousal and links to emotions; and likewise, an upset stomach may have nutritional and/or psychological, not mechanical causes. At any rate, the similarity between animals and us, according to that theory, is that both have bodies that compare to machines capable of repeating the same functions, and that repetitive functions (kinetic, respiratory, etc.) can be described as mechanical, unlike the formation of unique thoughts. Thus, when Descartes operated vivisection on non-human creatures, he had no qualms, as he believed he was merely dismantling machines to expand his knowledge of anatomy. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is founded on the concept of ownership and properties (*Besitz und Eigentum*). The most important *properties*, which animals allegedly lack, are our abilities to articulate thoughts and reflect on them. Possessing these paramount faculties allows us to apply them in order to enjoy *properties* in the second sense of the word: appropriation and ownership secured through contracts, rights and prohibitions. These innate *properties* (faculties) credited to belong solely to humans have thus turned into rules upholding the jurisdiction of *properties* (belongings) for all. Typically for humans, criticism of this philosophy has argued that by no means the majority, but some, benefit from this divisive system. However, instead of stating that capitalism serves society at the expense of non-humans, our species driven emphasis remains that it does not reward all humans fairly. By coining the concept *conscience culture*, I have tried to point at the endemic flaw that puts self-consciousness on a pedestal, as if rationality superseded the unpredictable and “primitive” or “barbaric” roughness attributed to the instinctual drives; in other words, as if rational thinking were an activity exonerated from emotional bias. Even when we believe that reason can achieve a measure of

objectivity through method and consensus, we cannot deny that its justification at work in ethics and law has an emotive resonance rooted in affects. Conscience or the cultivation of moral principles, be they consistently understood and applied or not, attains nothing other than emotional rationalisation. A synonym for emotional rationalisation is the aestheticisation of reason. Immanuel Kant bonded aesthetics to general philosophy in a bid to make morality attractive and reason pleasurable at a “higher” level: civilised refined and pleasant, as well as respectful and aware of its duties and obligations. To say that philosophers heavily influenced by Kant such as Hegel have been intoxicated by the idea of a “higher humanity” suggests that, unfortunately, ideological pledges compare to a broad range of obsessive ideas, be they high or low. They all shy away from closeness to nature. We compare likes with likes when we compare dislikes with dislikes, likes with dislikes and dislikes with likes. Consumption of drugs and alcohol can be natural, some animals consume biological substances with comparable side effects in given situations; however, they do not exaggerate the merit of these substances and seek to consume them as often as possible. Therefore, humans addicts do not fall prey to an instinct that takes over their rational judgement but to an idea misrepresenting the advantages of mind-altering practices.

This idea does no more exist in nature than sexual promiscuity and deviance on a human scale. Animals do not reproduce outside their rutting period, during which they conduct sexual acts for the purpose of generation renewal. Ours have evolved to recreational self-affirmation guided by ideas of sensual and/or psychological gratification that are not formed in response to the sexual drive, but distort our responses to that drive through rationalisation. The more partners I have, the more likely I am to experience intense pleasure; likewise, other aberrations led by ideas, not by sensory impulses. Smoking tobacco or marijuana or consuming alcohol relaxes me. It doesn't, it saps my energy and induces a feeling of tiredness I construct as relaxing. A glass of wine tastes good, drinking a whole bottle cannot make it taste better; cigarettes do not initially release an exquisite flavour; yet the enjoyment intensifies once addiction has altered a person's physiological and mental reactions. On such grounds, moral apostles will champion other kinds of ideas. But are they less likely to garble their aspirations? Having high moral principles makes me a virtuous person, defending the ideals in which I firmly believe is a just cause. If self-indulgence and addictive consumption reflect poorly on Civilisation's professed superiority to nature, how could intolerance, sectarianism and terrorism improve that record? To top it all, be it burden or privilege, I shall play my trump card freedom. When an animal moves away from fire for fear of getting burned, it follows a survival instinct, not a deductive idea. Does this mean that when we survive by running away from a fire, we are not free? The counter-intuitive decision to get burned in spite of the pain and damage to one's body is too wilfully ridiculous to deserve attention. What freedom could that be? On one hand, animals are depicted as free because they have no master to obey in that they independently follow nature's universal laws. On the other hand, we deem ourselves capable and worthy of a higher freedom by setting and following our own rules, even though historical records provide evidence that tentative and contradictory

progress has been achieved. Reason and instinct are compatible, a balance between the two can be struck when civilisation stops denying where it comes from.

The idea of owning, or more currently expressed, to take ownership of our reasoning powers has a Cartesian basis. Any realisation that my intellect is more “advanced” than non-human creatures can incite me to justify an insatiable appetite for acquisition and consumption driven by personality. How else could Hegel have used the inapposite and anachronistic descriptor mechanical to describe animal action in contradistinction to ours?

„Absicht, - Bestimmung der Handlung – aus dem Selbstbewußtsein aus der Reflexion in sich aus meinem Wissen von mir. Handlung ein Thun (nicht mechanisch wie Thier – nicht bloß rechtlich, - Sphaere meiner Persönlichkeit, -)“ (Intentions determine actions that come from self-consciousness, itself a reflection made by myself out of my own knowledge. Action is doing, (not the mechanical act of animals, and not only legal, it is the domain of my personality), p. 427.

“So auch nach Bedürfnissen *bemächtige* ich mich äusserer Dinge – Thiere haben kein recht auf ihren Körper” (Thus according to my needs, I *take possession* of things outside me – Animals have no right to own their body) p. 221.

Quod erat demonstrandum: Cartesian and Hegelian perceptions of animals share a partly insensitive, partly bigoted attitude against interspecies communication and thus array spheres of human influence into entitlements to interconnectivity, yet thereby restricting and condemning enlightenment to an anthropocentric dead end. Animals have no idea of freedom as we do, does this prevent them from being free? When fellow humans restrict our freedom, do we experience freedom as a struggle or dream because we are human or because they are human? Does experiencing freedom as an idea or dream constitute freedom? Is freedom an intellectual phenomenon or a fun fact? The abstract idea that “animals have no right to own their body” accounts for the human creation of concrete demands. Whereby animals, having been denied the right to own themselves and being coerced to surrender their body, eventually end up with neither rights nor body. Human freedom estranged from natural empathy results in the human rape of nature which, in turn, ushers its ignorant perpetrators in a predictably consequential downfall.

A WALL, installation in progress

Artwork's place and date of further stage of completion: Oberwil, BL, CH, June 2023.

